

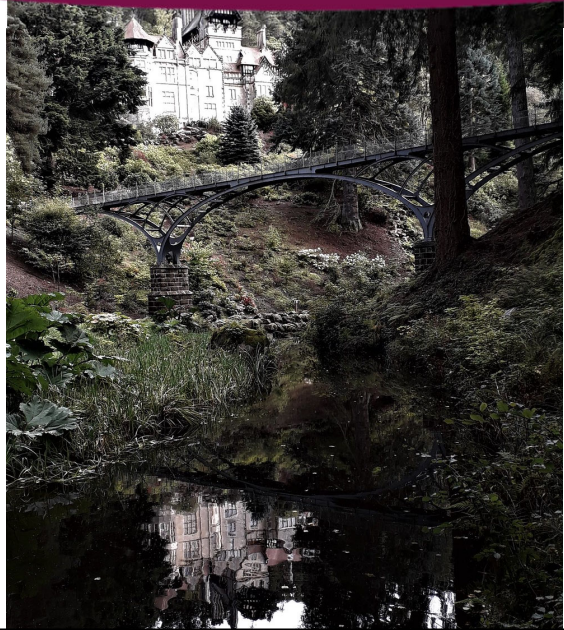
Natural England Update 2022



Natural England's Role



- Natural England is the Government's Statutory Advisor on the Natural Environment.
- A key purpose of Natural England is that of 'conserving and enhancing the landscape', including parklands and other designed landscapes.



Thankyou for inviting us to speak again, I'm Hannah Rigden, historic environment senior adviser for strategy and government advice. I thought I'd start with a quick reminder of Natural England's role.

We are the Government adviser on nature conservation and nature is not just the wildlife, but includes the geology, landscape and historic environment.

That cultural, historic dimension of England's landscape is acknowledged by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, which was the founding act for Natural England, and is included within the definition of the term 'natural environment'. It is [part of Natural England's core business](#).

The legislation is unambiguous about Natural England's role in conserving and enhancing the landscape "for aesthetic, cultural and historic purposes", which includes "monuments, buildings and sub-surface archaeological features which contribute to the landscape".



Since we last spoke, we have expanded the team and are actually in the process of recruiting another Senior Specialist to help with our evidence and monitoring programmes. We remain optimistic about the impact we are making in integrating the Historic environment into all 4 of our programmes which are

Resilient Landscapes and Seas

Sustainable Development

Greener Farming and Fisheries

Connecting People with Nature

And we are halfway through our 5 year strategy of building partnerships for nature's recovery.

This year our resources are focused on delivery in places, and working with and through others, to drive the nature recovery network, support and develop strategic plans for places, tackle barriers to people connecting with nature and be evidence and evaluation led. You may hear these called our Shifts and are intended to give a boost to our progress.

Strategic Direction and progress with legislation



- 25 Year Environment Plan
- Nature Recovery Green Paper
- The Fisheries act 2020 and Agriculture Act 2020
- New Agri Environment Schemes
- Biodiversity Net gain



There have been a number of policy developments since we last met. For instance

The Nature Recovery Network will help us deal with 3 of the biggest challenges we face: biodiversity loss, climate change and wellbeing.

Establishing the NRN will:

- enhance sites designated for nature conservation and other wildlife-rich places - newly created and restored wildlife-rich habitats, corridors and stepping-stones will help wildlife populations to grow and move
- improve the landscape's resilience to climate change, providing natural solutions to reduce carbon and manage flood risk, and sustaining vital ecosystems such as improved soil, clean water and clean air
- reinforce the natural, geological and cultural diversity of our landscapes, and protect our historic natural environment
- enable us to enjoy and connect with nature where we live, work and play - benefiting our health and wellbeing
- And our designed landscapes have a role to play in all of these

We are also continuing with delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies brought in with the 25 year environment plan, and piloted in 5 areas. Rosie in our national ops team is writing a historic environment standard on how to integrate the Historic Environment.

There was the consultation in the Spring on the Nature Recovery Green paper, which followed on from the Environment Act 2021, with the target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030, protect 30% of our land and sea and reach net zero emissions by 2015, and the Fisheries and Environment Acts created the powers to deliver these ambitions with sustainability objectives for our marine resources and change the way we support farmers and enhance the farmed landscape.

Despite the uncertainty round the changes in government recently, review and development of the new ELMS schemes is continuing and there will be updates in November and December.

We are looking for pilot schemes for the conservation covenants brought in under the Environment Act

Defra also consulted on plans for Biodiversity net gain which will apply to developments covered under the Town and Country Planning Act. We have been working with the team devising criteria and guidance for the pilot projects for the statutory biodiversity credits for habitats that will take a long time to establish – this includes wood pasture and parkland. It came out in the lessons learned exercise that landscape and heritage should be accounted for at the beginning of the every project.

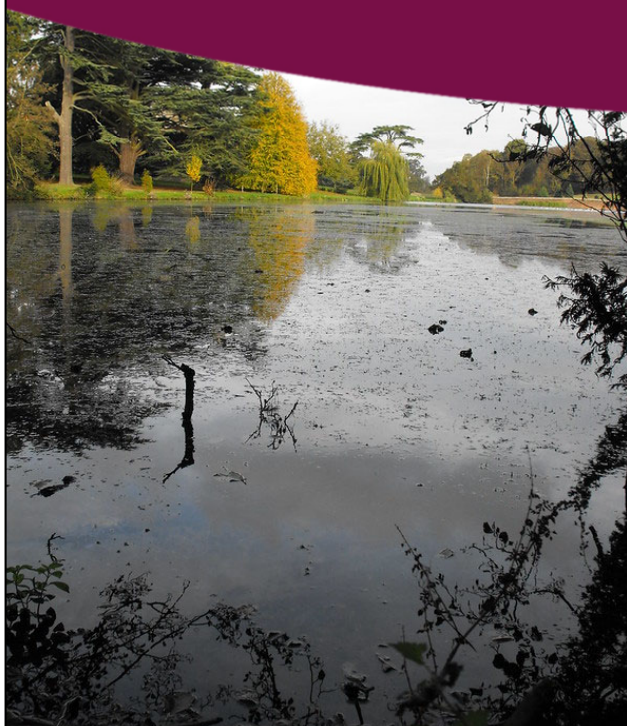
we are also working on the plans for highly protected marine areas, the England tree action plan delivery plans and revision of the woodland management guidance including that for woodland within designed landscapes alongside the forestry commission

Environmental Land Management Scheme



- **New post-Brexit agri-environment scheme**
- **Defra's scheme - Natural England provide technical advice**

As I mentioned earlier, the Agriculture Act made provision for the development of new funding schemes for the farmed environment based on providing payment for public goods – including cultural services and protection of the historic environment. At present Natural England are providing technical advice to Defra and working with our partners at Historic England, Forestry Commission and Environment Agency on the details of the options, we're currently waiting for the outcome of a review and more steer from Defra. Expect more information in an announcement in December, but this will be very high level, and we won't have detail for some time.



- HLS agreements have been being extended by 5 years, subject to criteria being met
- CS continues to be available to new applicants
- A parkland management plan (PA2 Feasibility Study), is required to inform restoration within 'priority parklands'

As with last year, our colleagues in area teams have been assessing HLS schemes which are about to expire, and if they are meeting their objectives and being managed well, the farmer will have the option to extend for 5 years but can exit without penalty if they want to come into the Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI) or Local Nature Recovery (LNR). If they need more capital works to reach objectives or have other problems they will end as normal and Countryside Stewardship will be open to them, in competition with new applicants. The presence of Wood pasture and parkland and designated sites and some undesignated parks and gardens continue to be eligible for the scheme and contribute to scoring used to decide on priorities.

We continue to require a conservation management plan for sites coming into restoration, this is a standalone agreement with no obligation on either side to take it forward if no agreement on the future scheme can be reached. We urge organisations to talk at least 2 years in advance of any agreement expiring to their local Natural England Area team to allow time for the project to be completed properly. If there is no existing agreement, a management plan agreement may be applied for at any time. We have been working on improving the guidance we provide to the advisers in the area teams, and now have a dedicated mailbox and guidance pages, we have spent the summer on parkland planning and management of ancient and veteran trees CPD for the whole team in anticipation of a large spike in parkland casework coming down the line as

large numbers of old HLS schemes expire and we need to inform CS and ELM applications



Inclusion advisers had training in how historic landscapes can be used to engage a variety of communities

Monitoring and evaluation – a review of buildings maintenance options and archaeological special projects is just about to report. There is Ongoing research on precision agriculture techniques, and bidding for literature reviews on holistic grazing and cultivation techniques to help provide evidence for Scheme development is underway. We are also developing a library of case studies showing Historic Environment as part of integrated projects, trying to ensure the historic environment is included in urban green infrastructure standards, and on the working group looking at potential nominations for world heritage sites.

Kat Hopwood Lewis is our archaeologist embedded in the team administering the Peat natural capital grant scheme ensuring that archaeology is considered in nature based solutions to flooding and peatland restoration. Steve Hall our NNR adviser is working on getting heritage at risk assets on our own land off the HAR register

We are involved in the resolution of EIA cases, where there is historical interest. Most recently on cases involving setting and views in and out of designed landscapes

How does our work affect your 2 themes for today

Climate change is included in the briefs for parkland plans

Planning – we suggest talking to GT – we do not comment on planning issues,

that is a matter for the Gardens Trust, local authorities and Historic England
Please feel free to find me or my colleague Louise Martin if you have any
questions for us.