



PROTECTED LANDSCAPES TARGETS AND OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

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Summary

This paper introduces the new Defra Targets and Outcomes Framework for Protected Landscapes. This applies to the areas rather than to the Protected Landscape organisations, and especially with the new legal duty on all public bodies to 'further' the purpose of designation, the targets will need to be supported by the activity of all partners.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note and comment on the information provided. Organisation representatives are encouraged to consider how their organisations will be able to contribute to delivery of the targets.

Background

Below are summary quotes from the Framework, published in January:

"To support Protected Landscapes in meeting their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place we are establishing ambitious targets for National Parks and National Landscapes. These targets will promote the actions that are most needed to achieve positive changes. They will set the ambition for how we expect Protected Landscapes to achieve 3 outcomes from our Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023:

Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife

Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change

Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

To work towards these outcomes we have identified the EIP targets that we expect Protected Landscapes bodies and other relevant authorities and partners to prioritise and focus on. These prioritised EIP targets are those that:

- are most relevant to National Park and National Landscapes' statutory purposes*
- have data available at the right spatial level*
- Protected Landscape bodies can influence the progress of, by mobilising partners, including through their statutory management plans.*

The framework builds on new legislation in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act that strengthens how relevant authorities must deliver the purposes of Protected Landscapes. We have committed to take forward secondary legislation that will require

relevant authorities to help develop and implement management plans for Protected Landscapes.

We want to support strategic planning across Protected Landscapes, supporting effective delivery plans to achieve multiple targets. Complementing existing protected sites' management plans, local nature recovery strategies (LNRS) will identify the best locations to deliver actions for nature recovery. They will be an important evidence base to aid effective planning for nature recovery activities as part of the Protected Landscapes' management plans. All public bodies within Protected Landscapes must have regard to LNRS. National Park Authorities will in future have to take account of them when preparing their Local Plan, including the specific locations and actions they propose.

The framework will empower Protected Landscape bodies, relevant authorities, farmers, land managers and other organisations to work together in planning and targeting resources and activity. This will improve outcomes at a local and national level. The Protected Landscapes Partnership will have an important role in identifying areas for joint working across landscapes, promoting rural growth through green financing initiatives, and sharing learning and best practice.

The Protected Landscape targets are non-statutory and create a shared ambition for all 44 of England's Protected Landscapes. The targets are for the Protected Landscapes as places (the geographic area covered by the designation). Action will be coordinated by Protected Landscape bodies through their statutory management plan. It will be the responsibility of all stakeholders, partners and land managers in the area to support their delivery.

Thriving plants and wildlife targets:

1. Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).
2. Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.
3. For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
4. Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.
5. Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change targets:

6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
7. Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.
8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment targets:

9. Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme (see Appendix 1).
10. Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

Embedding targets into statutory management plans

National Park Authorities and National Landscape Partnerships and Conservation Boards (Protected Landscape bodies) should incorporate the targets into their statutory management plans. Targets set a high level of ambition for Protected Landscapes. However, we believe the ambition is achievable based on:

- *the available baseline data*
- *opportunity mapping*
- *trajectory information derived from policy and project analysis.*

For some targets, including habitat creation, tree canopy cover and protected sites condition, the data shows that the potential to affect change within Protected Landscapes is greater than across the rest of the country. As such, we have set a higher level of ambition for Protected Landscapes to deliver on our national targets.

Natural England will work with individual Protected Landscape bodies to apportion the targets set out in our targets and outcomes framework appropriately between them, based on local circumstances including potential partner contributions and other evidence. Apportioned targets will be agreed between individual Protected Landscapes and Natural England within 18 months of publication of the Targets and Outcomes Framework.”

Commentary

The targets represent quite a significant change of culture for protected landscapes. This should be positive, but in some public services an over-emphasis on certain numerical metrics has not always been helpful for overall effectiveness of delivery. Discussion among the National Landscapes family has highlighted that the targets do not cover all aspects of work which teams undertake. Also there are some topics in the targets in which National Landscape teams themselves may not have typically had much direct role to date (e.g. SSSI condition), so the role of partner organisations will be very important.

We are to be provided by Natural England with baseline data against each of the indicators at the end of April. The apportionment process for targets 1, 7 and 8 will be led by Natural England, supporting us as protected landscape bodies to set our share of the target and incorporate these into our management plan.

The targets have a strong focus on nature. The document explains that targets have not been set for water quality or climate change adaptation but these are also topics relevant to protected landscapes and on which action is expected, co-ordinated with the broader processes on these topics. The net zero target obviously encompasses a very wide scope of emissions sources and therefore potential activities to reduce these. The Access for All metrics (shown in Appendix 1 have much more focus on physical access than on broader aspects of engagement).

A first consideration of incorporating the new targets into the management plan is included within the paper for item 6.

List of Background Papers

Targets and Outcomes Framework published 31st January 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework#:~:text=The%20framework%20provides%20a%20mechanism,economy%20and%20its%20rural%20communities>

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Access for All programme metrics

Appendix 1 Access for All programme metrics:

- metres of accessible path as a percentage of total path
- number of accessible toilets and rest stops
- number of disability accessible parking spaces
- number of accessible gates and gaps
- number of visits and volunteer days facilitated by new equipment
- number of schools engaged (primary and secondary) both inside and outside the Protected Landscape boundary
- number of volunteer days
- number of accessible or easy access routes for which wayfinding has been created or improved
- policies in place to ensure Protected Landscapes are taking positive action to widen the diversity of their staff, boards and volunteers