



Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership

# Malvern Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030

Caring for this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**Consultation Draft**  
12th August 2024

## **Malvern Hills National Landscape Management Plan (2025-2030) Consultation Draft – August 2024**

Prepared under the Countryside and Rights of Way (Crow) Act 2000, on behalf of:

- Forest of Dean District Council,
- Gloucestershire County Council,
- Herefordshire Council,
- Malvern Hills District Council and
- Worcestershire County Council

Insert map and logo (to be added after consultation)

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**Contents graphic**

This table will be added at the design stage.

## Executive summary

The Malvern Hills National Landscape Management Plan is a statutory plan. It sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the area for the period 2025-2030. These are summarised in the table x **(to be added after consultation)**.

The plan also sets out the special qualities of the National Landscape. These are the aspects of the area's natural beauty that make it distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. The plan then considers the current condition of the designated landscape and identifies three interlinked key issues that will impact on the special qualities:

Key Issue 1 - Nature's decline and the ecological crisis

Key Issue 2 - The climate emergency

Key Issue 3 - Health and peoples' engagement with the natural environment

It is the impact of these key issues, amongst others, on the special qualities that has informed the development of the plan's vision, outcomes and policies.

The Malvern Hills National Landscape will celebrate 100 years since designation in 2059. The vision is how we would like the area to be in that year. It sets the overall context for the plan.

The Management Plan runs from 2025 to 2030. The outcomes are what we want to achieve by 2030. They are arranged under four over-arching headings that reflect Natural England's guidance for management planning:

1. Nature
2. Climate
3. People and
4. Place

When viewed together the outcomes paint a powerful picture of what the Malvern Hills would be like by the end of the plan period in 2030.:

### Nature

- Outcome 1 – Nature recovery and biodiversity: There is concerted unified action for a widespread recovery of nature – conserving, restoring and enhancing a connected mosaic of locally distinctive habitats and species.
- Outcome 2 – Geodiversity: All the locally and nationally designated geological and geomorphological sites are protected and mechanisms are in place to secure their long-term management.

### Climate

- Outcome 3 – Climate change mitigation: Action is taken to lessen the severity of climate change effects by reducing or preventing the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
- Outcome 4 – Climate change adaptation: Systems, behaviours and ways of life in the National Landscape are adjusting to help people and the environment withstand the current and future effects of climate change.

- Outcome 5 – Water: The water flowing within the National Landscape is clean and safe, helping to restore nature, improve people’s health and well-being, and contribute to the local economy; flooding is managed in harmony with nature.

## People

- Outcome 6 – Health and wellbeing: Everyone within and around the National Landscape can realise the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing its natural beauty.
- Outcome 7 – Volunteering: A wide range of regular voluntary activities is in place, conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape while improving people’s mental and physical health.
- Outcome 8 - Living and working: Ensuring vibrant communities by stimulating diverse and sustainable economic prosperity that conserves and enhances the distinctive character of the National Landscape.
- Outcome 9 – Regenerative tourism: Businesses and visitors have a shared commitment to enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape and the well-being of its communities.
- Outcome 10 – Transport and accessibility: People can reach and explore the National Landscape in ways that minimise the impact on the environment whilst promoting access for all.
- Outcome 11 – Recreation and access: The National Landscape is recognised as a welcoming place for quiet, informal recreation; a place where there are no barriers to access and everyone feels connected to the landscape.
- Outcome 12 – Information and interpretation: Residents and visitors value the special qualities of the National Landscape and support investment in their management.

## Place

- Outcome 13 – Landscape: The distinctive landscapes of the National Landscape and its setting are conserved and enhanced (particularly those that are the most sensitive to or have little capacity for change) for future generations to enjoy, and the benefits and services provided by the natural environment are understood and accurately valued by decision-makers at all levels.
- Outcome 14 – Tranquillity and dark skies: People can experience calmness and spiritual refreshment within the National Landscape, free from unnecessary noise, light and human induced disturbance.
- Outcome 15 – Historic environment: The historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape is conserved and valued, helping to deliver long-term benefits to the people, economy and environment of the area.
- Outcome 16 – Land management in the National Landscape integrates productive commercial activity with the conservation of cultural, natural and social heritage.
- Outcome 17 – Built development: The distinctive character and natural beauty of the National Landscape is fully reflected in the development and implementation of consistent statutory land use planning policy and guidance across the National Landscape, and in decision-making on all planning applications for development, enriching local distinctiveness and playing a key role in facilitating the economic and social wellbeing of local and rural communities.

The policies outline in detail how these outcomes can be achieved.

Although the National Landscape Partnership will play an important role in delivering the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan, successful delivery is also dependent on all individuals and organisations with an interest in the Malvern Hills.

**(Additional text will be added after consultation)**



## Chair's foreword

**(To be inserted after consultation)**

# 1. Introduction

## Management Plan – context

### What is a National Landscape?

- 1.1. A National Landscape is the everyday name for what is set out in legislation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). National Parks and National Landscapes are designated under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.
- 1.2. There are forty-six National Landscapes in the UK, including thirty-four in England. Their primary purpose is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty<sup>1</sup>. Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.3. Designation of the Malvern Hills National Landscape was in 1959. It covers 105 square kilometres and includes parts of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. Further information on designation is provided in Section 2 and information on ‘natural beauty’ is provided in Appendix 1.

### What is the Malvern Hills National Landscape Management Plan?

- 1.4. The National Landscape Management Plan is a statutory plan that sets out policies for the management of the Malvern Hills National Landscape<sup>3</sup>. It is a strategic over-arching document that coordinates and integrates other policies, plans and strategies where these relate to the purpose and duties. The Local Authorities with a National Landscape (the Responsible Authorities) are required by law to produce and review a plan every five years. Management Plans are of national importance. No major decisions should be taken affecting the future of the National Landscape without reference to its Management Plan. The Management Plan, in its entirety, establishes the management policy of the Responsible Authorities for the designation.
- 1.5. The Management Plan does not, and cannot, formulate land use planning policies. It provides evidence to assist in the policy and decision-making process in planning. The status of the Management Plan, combined with the formal process of plan making and review, means that the National Landscape Management Plan is a material consideration in planning matters. Therefore, it should be afforded weight in decisions. The National Planning Practice Guidance confirms this, stating that ‘AONB Management Plans may contain information which is relevant when preparing plan policies, or which is a material consideration when assessing planning applications.’<sup>4</sup>

### Why do we have a Management Plan?

- 1.6. The Management Plan is the only plan to guide the management of the Malvern Hills National Landscape as a whole. The Management Plan aims to:
  - Describe the significant attributes of the designation

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<sup>1</sup> Section 82, Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) and Planning Practice Guidance

<sup>2</sup> Countryside Commission Policy Statement on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 1991

<sup>3</sup> Section 89, Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as amended by the NERC Act (2006).

<sup>4</sup> Planning Practice Guidance paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 8-040-20190721

- Summarise the trends in the condition of the landscape and quality of life for people living and working in it
- Briefly describe the drivers for change and issues acting on the designation
- Present an ambition and strategy to achieve the purposes of the designation
- Establish management principles to guide the activity and decisions of others
- Establish measures of progress and success
- Identify the who, how, and when of delivery

1.7. The review of the Management Plan and the management of the Malvern Hills National Landscape is a shared task for all. The review process is vital in securing commitment to act jointly to conserve and enhance the landscape, galvanizing collaborative action. As well as being a statutory requirement, a five-year review of the National Landscape Management Plan is necessary to ensure continuing relevance considering changing circumstances, new drivers, and adaptive learning from implementing the plan.

### Who will deliver the Management Plan?

- 1.8. The Management Plan is for the geographic area not for one authority or body. It is the principal vehicle for ensuring that the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty is met. Delivering the vision and outcomes contained in this plan will require action from all those with an interest in the National Landscape.
- 1.9. A Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership exists to bring people together and encourage a strong sense of ‘ownership’ to care for the area. Its membership is wide-ranging. The National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) is the strategic arm of the Partnership. This Committee is made up of representatives of government agencies, local authorities, public bodies and a range of non-governmental organisations. The JAC has a formal role to play in overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the management plan.
- 1.10. The Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership will play an important role in delivering the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan. However, its successful delivery is also dependent on other stakeholders, including local authorities and other public bodies, land owners and land managers, non-government organisations, developers, businesses residents and people who benefit from the area. **This is a plan for the place and all the bodies and individuals engaged in it.**

### Duty to further the purpose of designation

- 1.11. It is a legal requirement for ‘relevant authorities’, including all public bodies, to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Malvern Hills National Landscape<sup>5</sup>. This legal requirement is known as the ‘seek to further’ duty. This duty applies to relevant authorities in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the National Landscape. More information about the ‘seek to further’ duty is provided in Appendix 2.

### The Malvern Hills Trust

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<sup>5</sup> Section 245 of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023

- 1.12. The Malvern Hills Trust is a major partner in the National Landscape partnership. Established in 1884 under the Malvern Hills Act, the Trust is one of the oldest conservation bodies in the UK. The Malvern Hills Acts were set up to protect the Malvern Hills lands, the rights of commoners and to establish a right of access for the public. The role of the Trust is separate from, but complementary to, that of the National Landscape Partnership. The Trust controls 11% of the land in the area. It publishes a management plan for its land. This is a significant document for the National Landscape and its management.

## How will the Management Plan be delivered?

### Working together

- 1.13. This Management Plan is a place-based plan for the Malvern Hills National Landscape, not just the National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee. The JAC is unable to deliver the plan by itself. The Plan helps inform the activity of a multitude of partners, stakeholders, landowners, communities and visitors to contribute to the purposes of the protected landscape designation.
- 1.14. The legal requirement for ‘relevant authorities’, including public bodies and statutory undertakers, to seek to further the purpose of National Landscape designation (the ‘seek to further’ duty) provides an important mechanism for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
- 1.15. There are a number of relevant authorities and other key stakeholders making decisions that affect the Malvern Hills National Landscape. This makes it very challenging to develop and deliver a consistent approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area, including its special qualities and increasing the understanding and enjoyments of its special qualities. However, the potential benefits are huge, including better coordination of planning, development, rural support schemes, nature recovery planning, tourism and recreation.
- 1.16. Taking a consistent approach means being consistent regarding (and, ideally, being compatible with): the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape; national policy relating to national landscapes; the policies of the Management Plan; and the guidance and position statements published by the National Landscape Partnership. However, this does not necessarily mean that decisions made or actions taken will always be the same across the whole of the National Landscape, as these will vary depending on local social, economic and environmental circumstances.
- 1.17. Development within the National Landscape should be landscape-led. Guidance on what is meant by ‘landscape-led’ is provided in the Partnership’s Landscape-led Development Position Statement.<sup>6</sup>
- 1.18. The new duty to seek to further the purposes of designation combined with a statutory targets and outcomes framework act as a powerful driver for relevant authorities, including public bodies, to continue working collaboratively towards the outcomes in the plan and to contribute even more.

### Working in partnership

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<sup>6</sup> Position Statement 3: Landscape-led Development <https://www.malvern-hills-nl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-Position-Statement-on-Landscape-Led-Development-FINAL.pdf>

- 1.19. A successful partnership requires an agreed delivery plan that translates the strategy and outcomes into actions. It is the working document of the Protected Landscape, used through the implementation period to track progress on targets and measures of success. Importantly it identifies the expected deliverers so that partners can be held accountable and is also the place to establish the 'how' of delivery.
- 1.20. Once the Management Plan is finalised and the implementation phase begins, activity springs from the Delivery Plan, which timetables the objectives across the life of the Plan. The Delivery Plan can also estimate the resources required for each objective, assisting with an understanding of the necessary budgetary requirements in the delivery phase. Measures of success should also be evident in the related outcome statement.

### Delivery Plan

- 1.21. How the Partnership will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan itself, as well as encourage and support other stakeholders, is set out in a Delivery Plan that is made up of a number of annual work programmes.

**(We need stakeholder input and commitments before the publication of the adopted management plan. We therefore ask the Local Authorities and other key stakeholders to identify those measures in this draft that they will help to deliver in 2025/26 by recording these in Appendix 3)**

### How will the delivery of the Management Plan be monitored?

#### Performance monitoring

- Performance monitoring will occur by assessing the success of partners in implementing actions. This will be documented in an Annual Review produced each summer.

#### Condition monitoring

- Condition monitoring is about the state of the land itself. In 2008, a core suite of indicators was selected to measure change in the condition of the key attributes of the area. These include its landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and built heritage. Information on these indicators is used to produce a full State of the Malvern Hills National Landscape report once every five years. Some new indicators are adopted for monitoring purposes as and when improved data becomes available and to reflect changing priorities, for example, in relation to nature recovery and climate change adaptation.
- Defra and its agencies provide environmental and social data cut to the National Landscape boundary. Natural England leads in this work, in close partnership with Defra, the English National Park Authorities Association, Historic England and the National Landscapes Association. Recently, Defra published a new Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF). In May 2024, it released its first set of national data, though several data sets are to follow. The framework includes 10 target indicators supported by 24 additional statistic sheets. These targets are listed in Appendix 4 where a suite of additional monitoring indicators that have been developed for each policy are also listed.
- A table combining the new targets and data sets made available by central government with more established, local indicators is set out in the National Landscape website at: [Data \(malvern-hills-nl.org.uk\)](https://www.malvern-hills-nl.org.uk/Data)

- 1.22. Implementation of the National Landscape management plan is intended to improve the condition of the area. Condition monitoring will be used to assess whether the management plan has succeeded or failed. Results from condition monitoring activities will also be used to inform future strategies, plans and management activity.<sup>7</sup>

### Adaptive management planning

- 1.23. An adaptive approach to implementing a Management Plan involves closely monitoring the impacts and effects of activity and then changing the approach if other courses of action are deemed more effective. Adaptive management planning, therefore, involves a cycle of act-monitor-learn-change, altering the course of action if there is an identified need for adaptation.

## Management Plan – review of the 2019-2024 plan

- 1.24. Engagement internally and with our local authority and other partners took place over the course of 2024. A summary of the timetable and key outputs from this consultation is set out in the National Landscape website at: [Management Plan Review 2024](#)

## Management Plan – structure and use

(Explanatory graphic to be inserted in the final document)

### Structure

- 1.25. The Partnership wishes to enhance the benefits the National Landscape provides for society. The plan is built around five components:
1. **Special qualities** - The special qualities of the Malvern Hills National Landscape are those aspects of the area's natural beauty that make it distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale.
  2. **Key Issues** – The key issues are those that will impact on the special qualities during the life of this plan.
  3. **Vision** - The vision sets the 30-year ambition for the area.
  4. **Outcomes and policies** – The outcomes express the desired state of the National Landscape by 2030 and the policies outline how this can be achieved.
  5. **Delivery** – Who is going to do what. **(This needs Local Authorities and other key stakeholders to confirm what they will do to implement this plan before the final document is published)**
- 1.26. The key issues are:
- Nature's decline and the ecological crisis
  - The climate emergency
  - Health and peoples' engagement with the natural environment
- 1.27. The outcomes and policies are presented under four themes:
- Nature;
  - Climate;

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<sup>7</sup> Monitoring is explained and data summarised at <https://www.malvern-hills-nl.org.uk/monitoring-the-state-of-the-national-landscape/>

- People; and
- Place.

1.28. For each theme, there are a series of topics, each with a defined outcome. The outcomes will be achieved through the policies that set out how the National Landscape should be managed. The policies serve four main purposes:

1. They provide a framework for action by all stakeholders with a role to play in the management of the National Landscape.
2. They represent the policy of the Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership and the responsible local authorities.
3. They are intended to guide, influence and be used by stakeholders in their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decision making.
4. Together with other guidance produced by the Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership, they are intended to facilitate a consistent and co-ordinated approach across the whole of the National Landscape.

Supporting text outlines the underlying issues that the policies are aiming to address. For each topic there is a brief statement describing the primary relevant drivers for change.

## Use

1.29. It is important that all the policies should be considered when considering actions, not just those policies under the topic of interest. This is particularly true in relation to development and rural land management. When a development is being proposed in the National Landscape, the developer and the local authority should have regard to all the plan's policies, not just to those under Built development.

1.30. One of the areas that the Management Plan relates to is in the policy-making and decision-making of local planning authorities (LPAs). They are obliged to seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes. Therefore, LPAs should have due regard to the Management Plan policies when reviewing and developing their own policies, including those within their development plans. The Management Plan policies are aspirational and as such, they might go further than current policies in individual development plans. It is intended that these aspirations will aid in helping to develop and evidence new local plan policies.

1.31. The Management Plan is a material consideration in planning decisions. However, it is recognised that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the LPA's development plan (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).

- The forthcoming Defra guidance on the 'seek to further' duty may provide guidance on how national landscape management plans should be taken into consideration in relation to this duty. In the meantime, it is important to note that Natural England's view, in this regard, is that proposed measures '*should align with and help to deliver the aims and objectives of the designated landscape's statutory management plan*'.
- Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act makes provisions for the Secretary of State to require relevant authorities to contribute to the preparation, implementation or review of national landscape management plans and to set out how a

relevant authority may or must do so.<sup>8</sup> These provisions could potentially come into effect, via secondary legislation, as early as 2025.

- 1.32. The plan goes on to consider how it can be delivered and monitored. Further detail and evidence are then provided in appendices.

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<sup>8</sup> [Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023](#).



## 2. The Malvern Hills National Landscape

### The special qualities of the Malvern Hills National Landscape

- 2.1. The 'special qualities' of a national landscape are those aspects of the area's natural beauty that make the area distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. They are the key attributes on which the priorities for its conservation, enhancement and management are based. They bring out the essence of the national landscape as an evocative description of the area rather than as a statistical account.
- 2.2. The special quality of the Malvern Hills lies in the contrasts. The distinctive, narrow, north-south ridge, a mountain range in miniature, thrusts unexpectedly from the pastoral farmland patchwork of the Severn Vale. The highest point is Worcestershire Beacon (425 m) and walkers along the ridge crest enjoy views as far as Wales and the Cotswolds. The geological variety, and centuries of traditional farming have given the National Landscape great ecological value. Herb-rich, unimproved pastures and native woodland support a wealth of habitats, species and wildlife. In addition, it is a historical landscape. The ridge is crowned by three ancient hill forts, the most famous being the ditches and ramparts of British Camp.
- 2.3. This is an area of pastoral farming, with stock-rearing and occasional dairying, plus fruit growing, mixed crops and forestry. Large areas are grazed as ancient commons. The National Landscape has a population of approximately 11,400 and villages such as Malvern Wells and Welland have experienced considerable growth in their retired population and in workers commuting to Birmingham and Worcester. The towns of Great Malvern and Ledbury fringe the area and the rural economy includes light manufacturing and prestige office development together with the important conference and tourism sector. Tourists have flocked here to 'take the waters' since the early 1800s and Great Malvern's formal paths and rides give the nearby slopes the air of a Victorian pleasure garden. The ridge and hillside paths and the commons are traditional 'day trip' country. The Worcestershire Way footpath is an important new recreation resource in the National Landscape.
- 2.4. The special qualities are:
  - A wide variety of landscape types in a relatively small area. Assessments of the area's landscape character identify ten distinct landscape types. Woodland and grassland in varying mixes are the most prevalent.
  - A distinctive combination of landscape elements that include orchards, parklands, ridgelines, ponds, quarries, hedgerows and watercourses.
  - A strong 'spirit of place', landscapes that have inspired and continue to inspire and which have a deep cultural narrative.
  - The Malvern Hills: a high, dramatic ridge of ancient rock that is visible from the Severn Vale and from the rolling hills and valleys to the west.
  - Dramatic scenery and spectacular views arising from the juxtaposition of high and low ground.
  - A history of recreation and tourism that continues today, with people coming to enjoy the hills, spas and the tranquillity of the rural landscapes.

- A sense of remoteness and tranquillity, underpinned by dark night skies and limited noise and disturbance. People feel calm and spiritually refreshed.
- Open access in many places over the hills and commons, providing opportunities for bracing walks with fine views.
- An unspoiled 'natural' environment supporting a wide variety of wildlife habitats and species, many of which are nationally rare.
- A distinctive and varied geology, with a variety of different rock types including granites, diorites, volcanic lavas, limestones, sandstones, mudstones and shales. This gives rise to a unique array of landscapes and natural habitats.
- An historic landscape of ancient unenclosed commons, varied field boundary patterns and designed parks and gardens.
- A rich and distinctive historic environment including Bronze Age burial grounds, Iron Age hill forts, moated sites and industrial architecture.
- Distinctive villagescapes, including conservation areas, listed buildings and local features that define a 'spirit of place' in the settlements.
- Thriving and active communities with a low deprivation index that reflects the area's prosperity and the availability of employment.

### **The significance of the setting of the National Landscape**

- 2.5. Defra and Natural England advise those carrying out management plan reviews to consider the effect of development in the setting of protected landscapes. It is common to express the extent and importance of setting in terms of views and vistas. Views are a crucial component of setting, being associated with the visual experience and aesthetic appreciation of the wider landscape. Views are particularly important in the Malvern Hills National Landscape. This is because of the juxtaposition of high and low ground and the fact that recreational users value them highly. Without careful management and planning, views and the broader setting of the area may be lost or degraded. Although views of or from the Malvern Hills do play an important part, the way people experience the National Landscape in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors; by spatial associations; and by their understanding of the cultural relationship between sites and places<sup>9</sup>.
- 2.6. Construction of a distant but high structure and any development or change generating movement, noise, odour, artificial light, vibration or dust over a wide area can reduce the biodiversity and degrade the sense of remoteness and tranquillity found in the National Landscape. This would diminish the area's special qualities.
- 2.7. The extent of the setting is not fixed and is likely to vary depending on issues being considered. A new understanding of the relationship between neighbouring landscapes may extend the setting<sup>10</sup>. If the quality of the setting declines, then the appreciation and enjoyment of the National Landscape diminishes. There may even be a detrimental effect on the purposes for which the area has been designated or the special qualities that define

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<sup>9</sup> Adapted from: 'The Setting of Heritage Assets – Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in planning Note 3 (Second Edition)', English Heritage 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (2023): The National Planning Policy Framework, HMSO, 2023.

it. Section 85 of the CROW Act requires public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the National Landscape may affect land within it.

## The condition of the Malvern Hills National Landscape

2.8. Understanding how and why the National Landscape is changing is key to our work in caring for it. Data is needed to establish the current condition of key features and aspects of the area and to provide a baseline against which future change and success or failure can be assessed. The National Landscape website provides a summary of the target indicators and data currently in place and being used to monitor changing condition in the Malvern Hills National Landscape. This combines new national targets and data sets published by Defra in 2023/24 with more established, local indicators, set out: [Data \(malvern-hills-nl.org.uk\)](https://malvern-hills-nl.org.uk/data)

**(Consultation question: should full details be in an appendix or is it acceptable to direct the reader to the relevant webpage? The webpage will be updated as new data comes available. To be agreed in the light of consultation responses.)**

## Key issues

2.9. After considering Defra's Environmental Improvement Plan goals<sup>11</sup>, the Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership finds three key issues that will have a significant effect on achieving the purpose of designation and the ambitions of this management plan. These can be summarised as follows:

### Key Issue 1 - Nature's decline and the ecological crisis

- 2.10. Growing a resilient network of land and water that is richer in plants and wildlife.
- Defra's apex goal is 'Thriving plants and wildlife', which all the other goals will help to achieve. The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan states that "over the last century, the state of nature in our country has declined dramatically as the pressure of our demands has made our habitats increasingly degraded and fragmented, and brought species to the brink of extinction". Wildlife loss is well documented and understood, see for example <https://stateofnature.org.uk/> Climate change is threatening the loss of already diminished wildlife at an even greater scale and pace. There is a need to create a robust and resilient nature recovery network – a landscape rich in joined up and well managed habitats. The need for action is urgent.
  - Growth in global demand for food is leading to worries about food security and the need to intensify food production. Many woodlands in the area are small, fragmented and difficult to access. There is often no infrastructure to make sustainable woodland management viable. A lack of management in most traditional orchards is hastening the demise of these very valuable wildlife habitats. Within the National Landscape, 80% of traditional orchards present in the 1930s have gone, unenclosed heathland has declined by 30% and the vast majority of the flower rich meadows have been replaced by agriculturally improved pasture and arable. Many remaining areas of habitat have become isolated, disconnecting their small populations of plants and animals.
  - National landscapes collectively signed up to the [Colchester Declaration](#) in 2019 to demonstrate their readiness to act to reverse wildlife decline and habitat reduction as part of a wider strategy to tackle climate change. The declaration contains commitments

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<sup>11</sup> Defra (2023) Environmental Improvement Plan

to produce nature recovery plans and restore habitats and populations of endangered species. The Malvern Hills [Nature Recovery Plan](#) was published in March 2022. It represents a detailed look at the species and habitats of the Cotswolds and what should be done to enable their recovery and adaptation to climate change, in a timely manner.

## Key Issue 2 - The climate emergency

- 2.11. Mitigating and adapting to climate change whilst conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
- Climate change was identified by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) as one of the direct drivers of biodiversity loss. Building the resilience of our environment, by creating more joined up and buffered places for nature as well as tackling hazards that are increased by climate change, is crucial to leaving our environment in a better state. Climate change is happening, and its impacts are unavoidable. There is already experience of the impacts of a rapidly heating climate and this threatens many of the defining characteristics and Special Qualities of the Malvern Hills National Landscape. The habitats most susceptible to harm are the rivers and streams, heathland and wet woods. Examples of the impacts include pest and diseases (ash dieback being a new and highly visible example); changing timings of seasons; low summer river flows; and damage to vegetation from high winds.
  - The Landscapes Review<sup>12</sup> emphasised the importance of the role National Landscapes should play in mitigating and adapting to climate change. The National Landscape Partnership endorses this, in line with the commitments in the [Colchester Declaration](#)<sup>13</sup>.
  - National Landscapes are also now required to embed climate adaptation plans within future Management Plans<sup>14</sup>, and will be expected to contribute to climate change targets in the [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework](#) (PLTOF). The intention is to produce a Climate Change Adaptation Plan and embed it within this Management Plan before its publication at the start of April 2025.
  - Land use and management practices must address climate change issues. Farming needs to adapt to focus on improving soil health to continue producing food, whilst reducing soil loss, sequestering carbon and providing better water quality and flood management; and tree cover needs to increase to capture carbon. Other areas such as energy and transport, and food and drink will also need to be addressed, with much more of our energy needs met through low carbon energy technologies, buildings becoming more energy efficient and greater resilience built into our infrastructure; and community food networks being created to link farmers, businesses and consumers.
  - Some climate change mitigation and adaptation measures have the potential to adversely affect the natural beauty of the National Landscape, but with careful design and implementation, many of these measures can not only conserve but potentially also enhance natural beauty. The challenge is to develop a pathway to net zero which also conserves and enhances natural beauty.

## Key Issue 3 - Health and peoples' engagement with the natural environment

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<sup>12</sup> Defra (2019) [Landscapes Review Final Report](#)

<sup>13</sup> A commitment to tackle the climate emergency and ecological crisis

<sup>14</sup> [Third National Adaptation Programme \(NAP3\)](#) Annex 1: Climate risks and opportunities

- 2.12. Ensuring the National Landscape helps to support and sustain livelihoods and realises the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing its natural beauty.
- Defra wants everyone to be able to enjoy nature and national heritage across the country. In line with the Countryside Code, we need to respect and conserve nature, and encourage managed access – so that everyone can enjoy and secure those treasures for every generation to come.
  - We must respond quickly and vigorously to environmental challenges and do so in a way that supports livelihoods and communities. The solutions must work in social and economic terms as well as environmental if they are to have a lasting impact. Development maintains economic viability, sustains the population and supports those who manage the land. The National Landscape covers several administrative areas. There is a need to coordinate policy to make sure that it is consistent across the area.
  - There is a need to provide more homes (especially affordable homes) and employment for local people. Achieving suitable infrastructure is a challenge due to the requirements to conserve and enhance the special nature of the environment. There is a need to retain the best and most versatile agricultural land.
  - There are declining farm and forest incomes. Land managers must find either additional or new sources of income. They may grow new crops and/or move into other sectors, such as tourism and recreation. They may use their land for energy or communication structures. This can help to maintain a viable business and improve the products and services on offer to the community and visitors.
  - Connections within the National Landscape and with its setting are important. The mental and physical health benefits of accessing natural beauty are becoming increasingly understood and appreciated. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on human behaviour. People are more aware of the importance of green and blue spaces.
  - For some people, particularly the less mobile and those with mental and physical health conditions it can be difficult to explore parts of the area. Standard practices sometimes create obstacles, like steps and stiles. There is a need to remove obstacles, promote routes that are suitable for people with limited mobility as well as to use technology to help all parts of society to benefit from this special place.
- 2.13. The impact of these key issues on the natural beauty of the Malvern Hills National Landscape were considered during the development of the vision and the outcomes.

### 3. The Malvern Hills National Landscape in 30 years' time

- 3.1. The Malvern Hills National Landscape faces the immense environmental challenges of nature recovery, climate change and societal change. There is a need for a transformational ambition that can translate quickly into game-changing action.

#### Vision

- 3.2. The Malvern Hills National Landscape will celebrate 100 years since designation in 2059. In that year, the Malvern Hills National Landscape will be a place where:

- The diversity of life thrives, and people act to conserve nature for its own sake and its ability to fulfil our needs and enrich our lives;
- The impacts of climate change are understood and managed to deliver a prosperous climate neutral local economy;
- Communities are thriving, sustainable and inclusive places to live and work, with opportunities for people to be healthy and make the most of the assets around them;
- The landscape provides an irreplaceable source of inspiration and engagement whose benefits to people and wildlife are valued and improved.

### **Vision for nature**

- 3.3. Nature has returned to the Malvern Hills. Emblematic species are increasing in numbers and extent. Threats to species are reduced, including from certain land and water management practices, and invasive non-nature species. All major habitats in the National Landscape, including grassland and native woodland are on a pathway to net biodiversity gain.
- 3.4. The loss of habitat through land use change is halted, over-exploitation is curtailed, and invasive non-native species are controlled. All sites of special scientific interest are in favourable condition and degraded habitats are restored.
- 3.5. Ecosystem functions and ecosystem services generated by the National Landscape are enhanced. Connectivity within and between ecosystems is increased to enhance nature's adaptation to climate change. All ecosystems within the area are managed to optimise ecosystem services, including food, water, climate and amenity values. Soil erosion, pollution, flooding and fire are lessened to support nature and society in adapting to climate change.

### **Vision for climate**

- 3.6. Actions across the National Landscape maximise efforts toward meeting our fair share of limiting global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees. Vehicle use has shifted away from petrol and diesel private vehicles to public transport, electric vehicles, and walking and cycling. Greenhouse gas emissions arising from land use are less because of habitat restoration, land use change and sustainable farming practices. Soils and plants hold more carbon through restored habitats.
- 3.7. Protected groundwater levels and good flow in watercourses promotes healthy ecology and enhances natural resilience to drought. Flood risk is reduced through natural solutions by restored nature limiting peak flows. The impact of temperature rises locally is lessened by restored nature, changes to existing buildings, and behaviour change.

### **& for water**

- 3.8. There will be clean and sustainable water resources for the Malvern Hills National Landscape and beyond with all water bodies fully restored and in good ecological health. Nutrient levels will be within safe levels for ecological resilience. Water levels within the rivers, ground sources and soils are sufficient for ecological and human health.
- 3.9. The health and wellbeing benefits gained from high quality, nature rich, water environments can be experienced by all who live within and visit the Malvern Hills. Residents and visitors will have a renewed relationship with our water environments, especially the springs and



spouts of the Malvern Hills. They will be celebrated for their cultural, recreational and environmental value.

### **Vision for people**

- 3.10. People feel a sense of belonging to the Malvern Hills area, they live in communities or enjoy visitor experiences that are caring, cohesive and enriching. Discrimination and barriers to participation are challenged and removed wherever they occur. The quality of life and well-being for all those who live, work and play in the hills is much improved. People who need to or want to live their lives here can do so within their means.
- 3.11. Local communities and businesses benefit from a vibrant and sustainable economy focused on local wealth generation. Sustainable new investment works alongside home-grown businesses to provide good quality employment opportunities. The demographic mix of people living in the Landscape has increased arising from investment in rural skills for the future.
- 3.12. The National Landscape is a torchbearer for regenerative tourism. Visiting the Malvern Hills provides a unique experience that enhances support for nature recovery, community wellbeing, and the local economy. Visitors know our story and want to help us respond to key challenges, especially through their own actions and behaviours.

### **Vision for place**

- 3.13. The National Landscape is an inspiring place where the culture, heritage, and the natural environment is celebrated. Natural beauty is conserved so that the landscape is valued and loved by all. The connection to natural beauty provides healing, health and happiness. Everyday connections to a nature-rich world are commonplace and valued. The cultural and historic environment is in good condition, valued, celebrated and better understood by residents and visitors alike. The towns and villages are vibrant and viable centres for the future. Everyone feels a connection to their place and this provides benefit to people's health and wellbeing. There is a high-quality built environment that provides residents and visitors a safe place to meet, live, work, play and connect.

## Outcomes into policies

The Vision and Outcomes establish the Management Plan’s ambitions for the Malvern Hills National Landscape. The Management Plan also has a role in guiding the decision-making and activities of all who care for this area of outstanding natural beauty. In this section of the plan, management policies are set out to guide action to achieve the long-term ambitions of the Plan. To be consistent with the new Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, the section is divided into<sup>15</sup>:

4. Nature;
5. Climate;
6. People; *and*
7. Place.

### 4. Nature

- 4.1. The National Landscape is remarkable for its wildlife habitats. They are as diverse as acidic and lowland limestone grasslands and mixed broadleaved woodlands. Traditional standard orchards, historic parkland and veteran trees, together with ponds, streams and marshes, add to the variety. Several habitats are nationally rare and some receive protection as SSSIs.
- 4.2. Geology underpins the area’s natural beauty. For such a small area, the National Landscape has a notable geodiversity resource including classic geological formations and sites. This is recognised nationally with the designation of some geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and locally with the creation of the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark by a partnership including local geo-conservation groups, and development of the Geopark Way by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust. The interplay between human activity and geology is much more complex than many people realise – geology underpins many of the everyday things that we take for granted. Building with locally available materials reflects local custom and tradition. Such vernacular buildings are a conspicuous and much-loved component of the landscape. The varied geology gives rise to a diversity of soil types that, in turn, underlie a range of wildlife habitats.

#### Nature topics

- Nature recovery and biodiversity
- Geodiversity

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<sup>15</sup> Natural England (2024): Draft Management Plan Guidance For Protected Landscapes in England – “Defra has been liaising with Natural England and other partners to identify the priority targets for all Protected Landscapes, covering the four themes of Nature, Climate, People and Place”.



## Nature recovery and biodiversity

### Outcome 1 – Nature recovery and biodiversity:

**There is concerted unified action for a widespread recovery of nature – conserving, restoring and enhancing a connected mosaic of locally distinctive habitats and species.**

### Policy NA1: Nature recovery and biodiversity

NA1.1 Nature (including the variety and abundance of wildlife) in the Malvern Hills National Landscape should be conserved and enhanced by establishing a coherent and resilient nature recovery network across the designated area and in its setting. This should be achieved in accordance with the outcomes, priorities, targets and measures within the [Malvern Hills Nature Recovery Plan \(malvernhills-nl.org.uk\)](https://malvernhills-nl.org.uk) and Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and focus on the key habitats and species listed as special features in this management plan. The relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies are:

- i. Gloucestershire
- ii. Herefordshire
- iii. Worcestershire

NA1.2 Proposals that are likely to impact on the biodiversity of the National Landscape should seek to further the conservation and enhancement of this biodiversity. They should have regard to, and be consistent with, the Malvern Hills Nature Recovery Plan and the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

NA1.3 Measures to conserve and restore biodiversity including the outcomes, priorities, targets and measures within the Malvern Hills Nature Recovery Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be delivered in a way that embraces the latest conservation practice and is compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Malvern Hills National Landscape.

NA1.4 National and local guidance – including guidance from Government Agencies and the Non-Native Species Secretariat – on invasive non-native species, pests and diseases should be followed and appropriate biosecurity measures promoted.

- The population of grey squirrel and deer in the National Landscape should continue to be controlled and managed. This should be undertaken and coordinated at a landscape scale.
- National guidance on Ash Dieback should be followed to ensure any measures implemented will conserve and enhance the qualities of the landscape.

NA1.5 A mitigation hierarchy should be applied to development proposals whereby adverse impacts on biodiversity are: (i) avoided; (ii) mitigated; and (iii) compensated for. Development

proposals should provide a net gain in biodiversity of at least 20% particularly regarding the species and habitats listed in the Malvern Hills Nature Recovery Plan.

### National targets – nature recovery

NA1.5 Stakeholders should work towards the delivery of the relevant targets for nature recovery within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. The apportioned targets for the Malvern Hills National Landscape to be achieved are as set by Defra. At the time of publication, the targets are:

- Target 1. Restore or create more than X hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).
- Target 2. 80% Percent of SSSIs in favourable condition by 2042
- Target 3. 60% Percent of SSSIs assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
- Target 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.
- Target 5. 65% to 80% of land managers adopting nature-friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 20230.
- Target 8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

**Note: awaiting apportionment, changes to targets will be shown in the on-line version of this plan.**

### Background

- 4.3. Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet. There are many distinct habitat types within the National Landscape, which support a rich and varied diversity of flora and fauna. Biodiversity is important in its own right, as well as for the wider well-being of the human population. The variety and condition of nature is an indicator of the health of the environment.
- 4.4. The story of our loss of wildlife is well documented and understood. Climate change is a well-recognised driver combining with habitat destruction to threaten the loss of our already diminished wildlife at an even greater scale and pace. The need for action is urgent if we are to avoid further decline and significant extinctions.
- 4.5. We know what we must do to allow our wildlife to flourish and adapt to climate change. We need to create a robust and resilient nature recovery network – a landscape rich in joined up and well managed habitats. The Malvern Hills Nature Recovery Plan was adopted by the National Landscape Partnership in March 2022. It represents a detailed look at the species and habitats of the Malvern Hills and what should be done to enable their recovery and adaptation to climate change.

### Special features

Key National Landscape habitats	Key National Landscape species
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Black Poplar
Lowland dry acid grassland	Noble Chafer
Lowland calcareous grassland	High Brown Fritillary Butterfly
Lowland meadows	Grayling Butterfly
Traditional orchards	Bullfinch
Wood pasture and parkland	Skylark
Veteran trees	Song Thrush
Rivers and streams	Barn Owl
Hedgerows and hedgerow trees	Peregrine Falcon
Ponds	Adder
Wet woodland	Great Crested Newt
	Dormouse
	Polecat
	Bats - Lesser Horseshoe Barbastelle Soprano Pipistrelle Bechstein's

### Protected sites

- There are 16 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) lying partly or wholly within the National Landscape, the majority of which are designated to protect biodiversity. These represent 10.9% of its total area (11.45 square kms).
- In 2023, 51.4% of the SSSI features were in 'favourable' condition. This is a new metric and not comparable to the data used in 2018.
- There is one Local Nature Reserve within the National Landscape at St Wulstan's (Malvern Wells).

4.6. Non-statutory designation is provided by Local Wildlife Sites. These are identified and reviewed by the respective Local Wildlife Sites Partnerships. In the Worcestershire part of the National Landscape, there are 23 such sites covering 501 ha. Gloucestershire has 4

Local Wildlife Sites in the National Landscape, covering 25 ha. Whilst in the Herefordshire part, there are 40 sites covering 1,773 ha. These local sites provide a suite founded on local biodiversity conservation priorities. They have a vital role to play in helping to fulfil local and national conservation targets. In Herefordshire, much has been done to help increase the proportion of local sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented

## Key issues

- 4.7. Conservation practice is continuously evolving as our ecological understanding of species and habitats improves. There is a need to embrace and promote the latest conservation practice where appropriate. Examples include physical interventions for early successional species and the development of mosaic habitat, particularly new large areas where both wooded and open ecological networks require strengthening.
- 4.8. We are entering a new era of collective and resourced action on delivering nature recovery. Now is the time to raise our ambition for what can be achieved. The international obligation that the government has signed up to of 30% of land and sea managed for nature by 2030 is an indication of this ambition and the Malvern Hills National Landscape, like other protected areas, will contribute to meeting this target.
- 4.9. New statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) have been developed that identify and map nature recovery priorities and measures. They are a key tool for driving and directing resources towards the recovery of nature. Biodiversity Net Gain already uses them for targeting and other funders have indicated a willingness to do the same. There are three of these strategies coincident with the Malvern Hills. They should be followed as a means of delivering the Malvern Hills National Recovery Plan.
- 4.10. Supporting LNRS delivery is one of the ways that public authorities can demonstrate their compliance with the biodiversity duty<sup>16</sup> that the Environment Act 2021 introduced. Under this duty they “*must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.*”
- 4.11. Ensuring that the LNRS is compatible with the National Landscape Management Plan and guidance (including the Malvern Hills Nature Recovery Plan) is one of the ways that the accountable bodies responsible for the plans can demonstrate compliance with their duty to seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes<sup>17</sup>.
- 4.12. Some species of plant and animals exist within the National Landscape that harm the native biodiversity of the area. In the absence of natural predators, deer and grey squirrel populations can have devastating impacts on woodland regeneration and tree growth. The Government introduced the Signal crayfish and Narrow-clawed crayfish (also known as Turkish crayfish) into the UK in the 1970’s, intended to be farmed for food. They escaped the fisheries and began to out-compete the native white-clawed crayfish for both food resources and habitat. Both are in the National Landscape.
- 4.13. The national statutory Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (Appendix 6) includes seven targets directly relevant to the recovery of nature in the Malvern Hills. These are targets for the place (the National Landscape) and are owned by all

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty>

<sup>17</sup> [Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/1/section/10)

stakeholders. When combined with the duties on public bodies to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to further the purposes of designation of protected landscapes they will help drive resources to the recovery of nature across the National Landscape. Contributing towards the delivery of the area targets within the national framework will also support the national ‘30by30’ target (**subject to national clarification of criteria**).

- 4.14. In the wider countryside, agri-environmental programmes are the most important single mechanism for developing a nature recovery network and Environmental Land Management schemes will play a critically important role. It is essential that they include the measures recommended in the Malvern Hills Nature Recovery Plan.
- 4.15. Additional funding mechanisms are starting to play an increasingly significant role in supporting the recovery of nature particularly Biodiversity Net Gain as mitigation from development and Payments for Ecosystem Services. Water and carbon collection and storage are becoming increasingly valued as ecosystem services and their importance will continue to grow.
- 4.16. Although Policy NA1 focuses on the National Landscape and its setting, consideration will also need to be given to ecological networks in the wider environment, for example, water course corridor ecological networks where the water courses may start outside of the National Landscape but then flow through it.
- 4.17. One of the ways wildlife adapts to climate change is to move northwards to a new ‘climate space’. This means that we need to think about the National Landscape’s future wildlife in addition to that currently present.

## Geodiversity

### Outcome 2 – Geodiversity

**All the locally and nationally designated geological and geomorphological sites are protected and mechanisms are in place to secure their long-term management.**

### Policy NA2 – Geodiversity

NA2.1 The geological and geomorphological features of the National Landscape should be conserved and enhanced through effective management:

- Conservation of the geodiversity resource should be in line with published Geodiversity Action Plans;
- Develop a regular programme of geological SSSI and Local Geological Site condition monitoring;
- Create new geodiversity resources through the retention of features exposed during road improvements and site development; and

- Landowners should refer to site management plans before undertaking work on Local Geological Sites.

NA2.2 Understanding of the geological value of the National Landscape should be promoted, its links with the historic environment and the need for its protection and management. This should be supported by continuing exploration and research into the geology and geomorphology of the area.

## Background

- 4.18. Geology underpins the area's natural beauty. For such a small area, the National Landscape has a notable geodiversity resource including classic geological formations and sites. This is recognised nationally with the designation of some geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and locally with the creation of the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark by a partnership including local geo-conservation groups, and development of the Geopark Way by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust. The interplay between humans and geology is much more complex than many people realise – geology underpins many of the everyday things that we take for granted. Building with locally available materials reflects local custom and tradition. Such vernacular buildings are a conspicuous and much-loved component of the landscape. The varied geology gives rise to a diversity of soil types that, in turn, underlie a range of wildlife habitats.
- 4.19. The Malvern Hills, and hills to the north and south, lie along a line of weakness in the Earth's crust, the Malvern Axis or Malvern Line. The Malvern Line was the margin between two tectonic plates of the Earth's crust. For many hundreds of millions of years, earth movements continued along the boundary of the tectonic plates. This, together with changes in sea level and wide changes in climatic environment due to continental drift, has given us the interesting variety of geology seen today which has produced such a wealth of scenery. The Malvern Hills themselves are formed from the oldest rocks of the area, Precambrian in age. These were of molten material intruded deep in the Earth's crust and since pushed up by earth movements and uncovered by erosion. To the west of the hills, there are layers of sedimentary Cambrian, Ordovician and Silurian rocks, which have been tilted by the same forces that pushed up the Malvern Hills. This produced a topography of ridges of stronger sandstone and limestone separated by more easily eroded clay vales. In contrast, to the east of the hills is a rift valley in the Severn valley floored with red Triassic sandstones and mudstones.
- 4.20. As elsewhere in England, the importance of managing Geodiversity in the National Landscape is recognised in the National Policy Planning Framework (2023) and the Geodiversity Charter for England (2014). In terms of geo-conservation, most of the practical work within the National Landscape is centred on designated Local Geological Sites (LGSs), and guided by Geodiversity Action Plans (GAPs) that provide a framework for identifying, conserving, and monitoring the geodiversity resource. Current GAPs exist for Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. A local GAP exists for Castlemorton Common, produced by the National Landscape Partnership.

## Special features

- Very hard igneous and metamorphic rocks that form the high ground of the Malvern Hills ridge, the oldest rocks dating to nearly 700 million years ago, with a small area of

volcanic rocks on the lower hills east of the Herefordshire Beacon dated as 566 million years old.

- Cambrian and Ordovician sedimentary rocks, as seen in the ridge and vale area of the southern hills and in fault-bounded slices within the Precambrian ridge area. Ordovician intrusive igneous rocks are a special feature found in the National Landscape, their hard nature producing hummocky topography on the western slopes.
- Silurian rocks, formed in a marine environment, which underpin the ridge and vale scenery to the west (these include the Wenlock and Aymestry Limestones and the Ludlow Shales).
- Head deposits, which may conceal and preserve earlier land surfaces and may contain unstratified/reworked artefactual remains.
- Gravels eroded from the Malvern Hills by frost shattering in the Ice Age underlying the commons resulting in very thin soils.
- A complex and diverse range of soil types, giving rise to the varied habitats of the National Landscape.
- Distinctive landforms and river types, including Castlemorton Common, Silurian scarps and the Ledbury Ridge; and the Leigh Brook, the Leadon and the brook at Gullet Quarry.
- An extensive spread of ice age deposits including the Malvern gravels and lacustrine deposits around Mathon.
- Geological structures such as fault lines running across and along the Malvern Hills including the East Malvern Fault with the Malvern Hills forming the western margin of a rift valley.
- Historic quarries, revealing rock exposures and providing access to them.

## Key issues

- 4.21. As well as shaping the landscape, geodiversity contributes to local distinctiveness and a sense of place. Its influence is seen in the local Malvern building stone, the limekilns of the area, and in springs and wells. There is often poor understanding of the direct links between geology and landscape; and between the natural and built environments.
- 4.22. Climate change may have significant effects on geodiversity in the National Landscape. It may lead to the permanent loss of geological features or exposures that are subject to frost action, erosion and deposition. With a warmer climate, there may be more vigorous and intrusive plant growth. Other natural hazards such as landslips and rock falls may become more frequent.
- 4.23. Some sites of geological interest are under pressure from visitor use. However, the main degradation is along the Malvern ridge. Promoting Local Geological Sites (LGS) and other sites within the National Landscape (e.g. Whitman's Hill Quarry) can draw visitors away from honeypot sites. These sites can be developed for geological exploration provided they are safe to visit.
- 4.24. Action without thought can lead to the loss of, or damage to, geodiversity. This is through the loss of designated sites or exposures. With care, temporary, or even permanent, exposures and features can be created. At present, there is little data available on the level

of loss or damage, other than for the designated sites. Lost sites include part of Tank Quarry at the north end of the Malvern Hills (which has been used for landfill), and Brays Pit and Mathon Pit to the west of the hills.

- 4.25. Around a quarter of the SSSIs in the National Landscape are designated in part for their geological importance. Each site has a management plan and regular monitoring. There are 60 Local Geological Sites (LGS) within the area. LGS and other sites can reflect the direct link between geology, wildlife and people. They provide opportunities for schools and groups as outdoor classrooms and yet are underused.



## 5. Climate

- 5.1. Since the industrial revolution we have seen an increase in the amounts of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) we release into the atmosphere. CO<sub>2</sub> is a greenhouse gas (a gas that traps heat). As a result, the earth's temperature is rising at a much faster rate than naturally occurs. This means the earth heats and this causes long terms changes to the climate.
- 5.2. There is now more CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere than at any time in the last two million years. Over the last two centuries it has risen by 40 per cent. Earth temperature has increased by 1 degree centigrade since the mid-1800s<sup>18</sup>.
- 5.3. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on climate change. Their most recent assessment shows that human activity is the cause of climate change. We are already seeing the impacts of climate change across the globe, with observed increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Even with global targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is still necessary to adapt structures and systems to reduce the impacts of climate change. This includes critical infrastructure, the built and natural environments, water use and food production. In July 2023 the UK government published its third National Adaptation Programme, setting out a commitment to take clear and decisive action over the next 5 years to maintain our country's resilience to the impacts of climate change.

### Climate topics

- Climate change mitigation
- Climate change adaption
- Water

## Climate change mitigation

### Outcome 3 – Climate change mitigation

**Action is taken to lessen the severity of climate change effects by reducing or preventing the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.**

### Policy CL1 - Climate change mitigation

CL1.1 Greenhouse gas emissions should be minimised through a range of measures, including:

- Reducing energy demand in existing and new buildings and infrastructure
- Reducing energy demand through transport and travel

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<sup>18</sup> IPCC, 2023: Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 1-34, doi: 10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647.001

- Generating energy from low carbon sources in a manner consistent with the purpose of National Landscape designation
- Supporting the development of community food networks, linking farmers and businesses to each other and consumers; promoting the purchase of locally produced food products and services and encouraging small-scale vegetable growing in gardens and allotments.

CL1.2 Climate change mitigation including the sequestration of carbon should be a key component of land management practices and rural development support mechanisms in the National Landscape.

CL1.3 Climate action should be undertaken in a way that seeks to further, and is compatible with, the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

### National targets – Climate change mitigation

CL1.4 Stakeholders should work towards the delivery of the relevant targets for climate change within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. The apportioned targets for the Malvern Hills to be achieved are:

Target 6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.

Target 8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

## Climate change adaption

### Outcome 4 – Climate change adaption

**Systems, behaviours and ways of life in the National Landscape are adjusting to help people and the environment withstand the current and future effects of climate change.**

### Policy CL2 - Climate change adaption

CL2.1 Climate change adaptation should be a significant driver in all new development, infrastructure and transport provision.

CL2.2 Climate change adaptation should be a key component of land management practices and agri-environment/rural development support mechanisms, in the National Landscape

CL2.3 By 2028, the National Landscape Partnership will adopt a Climate Change Adaptation Plan that:

- i. Identifies the key assets and features of the landscape.
- ii. Assesses the vulnerability of these assets and features to the impacts of Climate Change.
- iii. Considers sectoral impacts for principal land uses such as farming and forestry, as well as the natural, built and historic environment.
- iv. Assesses the impacts based upon current climate change projections.
- v. Scores these risks and opportunities based on their likelihood, impact and risk over the short, medium and long term.
- vi. Identifies possible high-level mitigation actions.
- vii. Identifies existing policy responses and identify any gaps.
- viii. Identifies relevant local stakeholders that can support or lead the action.
- ix. Assesses the acceptability of these options, their interdependencies, and potential barriers to delivery.
- x. Sets out planned actions for the short, medium and long term.

On adoption, the Climate Change Adaptation Plan will be embedded within the Malvern Hills National Landscape Management Plan.

## Background

- 5.4. Climate change mitigation and adaptation are two different but complementary approaches to addressing climate change:
- Mitigation aims to reduce or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to slow or stop the rise in global temperatures. This can help make the impacts of climate change less severe. Mitigation strategies include growing trees and reducing fossil fuel emissions.
  - Adaptation involves adjusting to the current and future effects of climate change by altering systems, behaviours, and ways of life. This can help people and governments protect themselves, their economies, and the environment from the negative effects of climate change, while also taking advantage of any opportunities that arise.
- 5.5. In the Malvern Hills area, a long-running local weather station provides good data about the nature and pace of change. The wettest year since recording began in 1889 is 1924 (1,083 mm) and the driest is 1921 (469 mm). Despite recent concerns over a possible trend to more extreme rainfall, the data does not confirm this. Temperatures have shown trends that are more definite. The average annual temperature is now about 1.3<sup>o</sup> C higher than a hundred years ago. However, the warming has not been gradual. There was a warming trend from 1921 to 1937, cooling from 1938 to 1965, warming from 1966 to 2006. After another cooling period, there has been a notably warm spell in recent years, reaching a peak in 2022. This year set new records in all parts of the UK. In Malvern, a temperature of 37.1C was reached in July, (1.3C above the previous record set in August 1990), and the mean temperature for the whole year was 12.02C (0.36C above the previous record, also set in 1990). 2023 was almost as warm.
- 5.6. The potential change in habitat that comes from changes in climate is significant for the future of many species. This may affect not only their distribution but, for some, their very

existence within the National Landscape. Many native tree species cannot germinate, or fruit, without a bout of cold weather. Changes in climate may restrict the distribution of important habitats and keep wildlife populations apart. This will limit their chance to breed. In addition, some species may die if climatic conditions are unfavourable at critical stages in their life cycles. Drier conditions may lead to water shortages, a vital commodity for all wildlife. Changes in climate may allow new species and diseases to colonise the UK. This will sometimes be to the detriment of existing biodiversity, especially if species are under stress due to changes. Some species may thrive as the climate changes, either due to conditions that are more favourable or because the stress of change makes them more resilient.

- 5.7. There is a need to develop a landscape that is resilient and adaptable to change. Creating a network of wildlife corridors is crucial. As is diversity in future planting schemes for new woodlands, orchards and hedgerows. Our knowledge of climate change is evolving and land management practices must adapt as new information emerges. There are opportunities to create habitats in key areas to buffer or offset potential losses.

### Key climate change issues

- 5.8. There is a need to maximise nature's ability to store carbon. Nature plays a major role in regulating the climate by storing carbon dioxide. By conserving woodlands and wetlands, adding regenerative practices to agriculture and planting trees, we can unleash nature's full potential to stabilise the climate.
- 5.9. Despite some improvements, the area has a much larger carbon footprint than other areas. For example, data from 2006 showed that residents of Malvern Hills District emit more carbon dioxide per dwelling than almost any other part of Britain (it was sixth out of a list of 386 local authority areas). Figures suggest it has also had the largest ecological footprint (the land needed to sustain our current lifestyle) in the West Midlands.<sup>19</sup>
- 5.10. By growing food in ways that support nature, we can greatly reduce carbon emissions. For instance, healthy soils have enormous potential to store carbon. We need a move towards planet-friendly food systems.
- 5.11. Bolstering resilience for habitats and communities can help communities adapt to climate change by restoring habitats that reduce the impact of severe storms. There is a national need to reduce our contribution to climate change through a clearly defined pathway to net zero whilst also adapting to the consequences of climate change.
- 5.12. The average annual temperature is now about 1.3<sup>o</sup> C higher than a hundred years ago<sup>20</sup>. This may lead to short term landscape effects such as those arising from fires as well as changes in vegetation patterns and agricultural land use that may affect the visual appearance and character of the National Landscape. With a warmer climate, habitats may change. New species may enter the area, some bringing disease or pests that will harm 'native' species or competing with the 'native' species for food and shelter.

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<sup>19</sup> Vision 21 - The Malvern Hills Partnership Our Future Together: A sustainable community strategy for Malvern Hills District 2006 - 2021, Malvern Hills District Council, (2006)

<sup>20</sup> Ian Duncan, Peter Garner and Peter Creed (2018), Nature of the Malverns, an ancient landscape steeped in wildlife, Nature Bureau, Newbury - ISBN: 978-1-874357-83-4

- 5.13. It is the Government’s ambition to reduce the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050<sup>21</sup>. It plans to do this by moving to a more energy efficient, low-carbon economy. Power generation from renewable sources of energy is an important element in the development of a low-carbon economy. There is a range of technologies available producing electricity, heat or both. Without good design, their use in the National Landscape may harm the special character of the area, for example through their scale and through the introduction of extraneous elements in the landscape. Some technologies, such as large-scale wind turbines, are not appropriate in the National Landscape.
- 5.14. The development of appropriate scale schemes that use core elements of the National Landscape, such as its woodland, can be beneficial to the landscape. Many types of woodland are either under-managed or not managed at all. The demand for wood fuel should bring more woodland into active management. Conversely, the conversion of grassland into biomass crops may be less desirable if they add extraneous elements to the landscape that have significant effects.
- 5.15. The NPPF expects the planning system to support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. encourages the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings<sup>22</sup>.

## Water

### Outcome 5 – Water

**The water flowing within the National Landscape is clean and safe, helping to restore nature, improve people’s health and well-being, and contribute to the local economy; flooding is managed in harmony with nature.**

### Policy CL3 - Water

CL3.1 Water resources should be carefully and legally managed and conserved to:

- improve water quality;
- ensure adequate aquifer recharge;
- ensure adequate flows; and
- contribute to natural flood management systems.

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<sup>21</sup> Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, HMSO October 2021

<sup>22</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2023: Paragraph 157

CL3.2 Development (new and existing sites) should assess and minimise flood risk and implement sustainable drainage schemes, adopt high water efficiency standards in line with RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge targets, and water conservation measures, for example rainwater harvesting and/or water recycling and grey water systems.

CL3.3 Sewage pollution from storm overflows and continuous outfalls should be minimised and be at least within legal and regulatory requirements.

CL3.4 Practical measures to improve water quality should be implemented including:

- i. The restoration of water courses and wetland habitats. New wetland habitats could be sited to intercept runoff from roads and reedbeds can be created to filter potentially polluted water from settlements before it is discharged to rivers.
- ii. Minimising soil erosion and run off by implementing soil conservation measures.
- iii. Minimising pesticide and artificial fertiliser use and implementing measures to reduce pollution from agriculture.
- iv. Promote individual measures and behaviours in the home and workplace that protect water volume and quality in rivers.
- v. Citizen science programmes to monitor water quality.

## Background

- 5.16. The Water Framework Directive<sup>23</sup> require the preparation and publication of river basin management plans; the setting of environmental objectives for groundwater and surface waters and the devising and implementing of programmes of measures to meet those objectives. Under the WFD Regulations, a river basin management plan must be developed for each river basin district and reviewed and updated every six years<sup>24</sup>. The river basin management plans also tackle the climate and biodiversity crises to ensure a sustainable water supply and mitigate the effects of natural hazards such as floods and drought.
- 5.17. Part of the National Landscape lies within the catchment of the River Teme and part in the Severn Catchment. No rivers flow within the area, but there are three significant brooks - the Cradley, Leigh and Suckley.
- 5.18. The Malvern Spa Association<sup>25</sup> remind us that the Malvern Hills are famed for their waters. Spring water emerges from fissures and faults that characterise the very hard rocks of the Malvern Hills. These are amongst the oldest in England, solidified from molten material lying deep in the earth during the Precambrian period some 680 million years ago, and later dramatically thrust up to the surface. Some say that the water's taste and 'essence' are determined by the rock through which it flows: Hayslad rises in granite and is a firm

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<sup>23</sup> The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 (referred to as WFD Regulations) provides a framework for managing the water environment in England.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/severn-river-basin-district-river-basin-management-plan-updated-2022>

<sup>25</sup> [www.malvern-hills.co.uk/malvernspa](http://www.malvern-hills.co.uk/malvernspa)

favourite with many, but others swear that Evendine spring, which flows through limestone, is the ‘Champagne of springs.’

- 5.19. The spring water of Malvern has long been famous for its healing properties, purity and abundance. Since at least the 17th century this has attracted people to visit the public springs on the Malvern Hills or to buy the bottled water. Throughout the following three hundred years as Malvern grew there were increasing demands on this precious resource, until inevitably the supply proved inadequate. In the 19th century these sources were first contained, tanked, channelled and piped for public use, but in the 20th century, as these limited supplies were replaced with water from elsewhere, the neglected springs often ran ‘to waste’ into road drains.
- 5.20. The Association was founded in 1998 “to work with the community to conserve, protect and restore the Springs, Spouts, Fountains and Wells of the Malvern Hills”, and “to promote the study, conservation, development and awareness of these water sources and of Great Malvern as a Spa Town”. The Association organises the annual Well Dressing Event in early May each year.
- 5.21. A spring is the overflow point of groundwater out of an aquifer. In the case of the Malvern Hills, the brittle and fractured Pre-Cambrian Malvernian rock itself makes up the aquifers with impervious (water-resistant) Silurian sedimentary mudstones to the west and Keuper marlstones on the eastern flanks of the Malverns. The ground water is held in the fissures and fractures of the Malvernian granite rock and the impervious rocks prevent its outflow to the sides. Most of the springs then rise and overflow the tops of the Marls and Mudstones.
- 5.22. The ultimate source of all spring water is the rain that falls on the aquifer surface. The total amount of rain that has fallen, and more critically its timing and intensity, controls the volume of water which eventually permeates down into the aquifer to appear later at any spring outflow. The speed of water flow through the fissures and fractures is dependent on the size of the fractures and on the difference in height between the point where the water enters the rock and the point of the spring outflow. Given the large variability in these factors there will be differing time lags between water input into the aquifer and outflow for each spring. Longer time lags smooth out short-term variations in rainfall and improve the reliability of any spring.

### Special features

- Clear water
- Springs and Spouts
- A network of streams, ponds and wetland areas

### Key issues

- 5.23. The Environment Agency reports on the ecological status of watercourses and water bodies within the National Landscape<sup>26</sup>. Its water courses flow over 25.5 km through the National Landscape; no sections have a high or good ecological status. In contrast, 67% of groundwater is of high or good water body status.

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<sup>26</sup> Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - Additional statistic 5: Ecological status of watercourses and water bodies within Protected Landscapes © Environment Agency copyright and database rights 2024.



- 5.24. The proportion of pollutants from wastewater and sewage, agriculture, and towns villages and roads vary across and within the different river catchments. A significant issue caused by a combination of new development and lack of investment in waste water treatment is sewage treatment works operating beyond their designed capacity. The issue is exacerbated by ground and surface water ingress. The result is storm overflow discharges releasing untreated sewage into the rivers.
- 5.25. There are also issues around urban creep from new developments leading to less permeable surfaces and more surface water running into the sewers. Reduction in storm overflows is complex, but sustainable urban drainage has a part to play to reduce overflows.
- 5.26. Storm overflows may run for a few hours or days but phosphorous from sewage treatment works, even during normal operation, is a constant. The technically achievable limit of Phosphorous removal at sewage treatment works is 0.25 mg/litre and whilst a good target to aim for may not be required at all sites to achieve good status. Typically, good status for a waterbody is between 0.05 mg/l – 0.075 mg/l depending on waterbody characteristics such as altitude and alkalinity.
- 5.27. Diffuse pollution from towns, villages and roads comes from run-off, commerce e.g. car washes, drainage misconnections e.g. domestic appliances connected to the surface water network and inappropriate disposal of domestic materials.
- 5.28. Sewage and diffuse pollution contain nutrients, chemicals including heavy metals, pathogens, microplastics and sediment resulting in eutrophication, loss of biodiversity, risks to human health, increased cost of water treatment and harm to tourism and recreation.
- 5.29. Often driven by rainfall and how land is managed, agricultural diffuse pollution occurs when nutrients, pesticides, faecal bacteria, chemicals and fine sediments are lost from the land into local water courses and groundwater. Risks occur when:
- fertilisers and pesticides are spread at the wrong time or too close to a water course;
  - cultivation takes place too close to a watercourse and/or there is no adequate buffer strip so increasing the risk of soil loss or field runoff getting straight into watercourses;
  - soil loss occurs around water courses and sedimentation covers gravels and surfaces that may be used, by example, for invertebrates and fish; and
  - slurry or dung enters water bodies or courses, these risks creating polluting runoff, wastes valuable nutrients, and cost money.
- 5.30. The water courses in the National Landscape are important for water supply, recreation and biodiversity. They provide a range of habitats that rely on specific water flow and levels. However, some stretches of the area's water courses are already prone to low flows, resulting in damage to riverine habitat, concentration of pollutants and less water for abstraction. Over-abstraction can have a detrimental impact on these factors. Summers are predicted to become drier, which would exacerbate this problem even further.
- 5.31. The National Landscape is not, at present, an area widely prone to flooding. However, in extreme rainfall events, such as that of July 2007, some towns and villages have been affected by flooding from rivers or because of limited drainage. Climate change is likely to increase the risk of flooding and the frequency of such extreme rainfall events. It will also give rise to sustained hot and dry periods which can devastate aquatic life.



- 5.32. The water courses that flow downstream through the National Landscape can play a key role in helping to reduce flood risk downstream. Natural flood management works with natural processes to ‘slow the flow’ of flood waters. This helps to reduce the maximum water height of a flood (the ‘flood peak’) and/or delay the arrival of the flood peak downstream, increasing the time available to prepare for floods. Sustainable drainage systems, and ecological river restoration projects are important components of natural flood management.
- 5.33. Large water bodies are not a characteristic feature of the National Landscape. With the anticipated drier summers and wetter winters, there is likely to be an increased demand for rainwater harvesting and storage. The need for reliable sources of water for agriculture may grow and it is recognised that winter storage of water can benefit local wildlife, not least by reducing the need for abstraction from water courses. There may be the creation of bodies of water for irrigation. Care in the scale, siting and design of such features is essential if they are to fit well into the landscape and make a valuable overall contribution to the National Landscape.

## 6. People

- 6.1. The character of the Malvern Hills National Landscape is as much about the communities who live there, as it is the physical form of its landscape. Interaction between people and the land over thousands of years has made the National Landscape what it is today. Conserving and enhancing the National Landscape involves meeting the social and economic needs of its people, not just the physical management of the land.
- 6.2. Many local people derive their livelihoods from the National Landscape, or they commute to centres of employment nearby. There are also many retired people living in the National Landscape who depend on local services. High house prices are a clear indicator that people want to live here, attracted by the beautiful landscapes, tranquil villages and the gentle rural ambience of the area.
- 6.3. The local economy has a broad base. Agriculture helps to support some communities, though the number of paid permanent agricultural workers continues to decline and some farmers are moving into tourism and recreation to maintain their incomes. There are businesses and high-tech industries in the National Landscape and nearby that employ local people and attract others to live there. Tourism is a growing sector, with the landscape and the picturesque towns and villages being key attractions.
- 6.4. An active social and economic climate is vital to maintain income. However, it can also lead to a demand for more development. This in turn can bring higher traffic loads and greater visitor impact on a landscape that can be sensitive to change. Local communities need local services but some shops are closing; and many rural areas have minimal or no public transport. These changes can make life harder in communities. Increased car use can affect the local environment.
- 6.5. The challenge is to find solutions that boost the social and economic well-being of communities while maintaining the quality of the environment.

### People topics

- Health and wellbeing
- Volunteering
- Living and working
- Regenerative tourism
- Transport and accessibility
- Recreation and access
- Information and interpretation

## Health and wellbeing

### Outcome 6 – Health and wellbeing

**Everyone within and around the National Landscape can realise the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing its natural beauty.**

## Policy PE1 - Health and wellbeing

PE1.1 Opportunities for improving health and wellbeing in the National Landscape should be created, improved and promoted, including, where appropriate, the provision of: green and blue spaces within easy reach of communities; walking, cycling and riding routes, including routes for disabled people; opportunities to access and interact with nature; and volunteering and personal development opportunities.

PE1.2 Children and young people resident within and around the National Landscape should be provided with environmental education opportunities to experience the area through direct contact with the natural environment thereby supporting confidence building by overcoming challenges, building social skills through teamwork, improving mental well-being by reducing stress and anxiety, and improving mood, and reinforcing learning and improving memory retention by involving multiple senses, such as touch, sight, and hearing.

PE1.3 The health sector should make greater use of the benefits that the National Landscape provides for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors, for example, by prescribing exercise and activities in the area's countryside.

## Background

- 6.6. Health and well-being are essential aspects of life that can contribute to a person's happiness and quality of life. Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or infirmity. Well-being is a positive state that can be experienced by individuals and societies, and is determined by social, economic, and environmental conditions.
- 6.7. It is well known that the natural environment plays a positive role in people's health and wellbeing. In the UK, there are major opportunities to ensure the environment plays a greater role in preventing and treating ill health, as well as promoting wellness. Further action will deliver benefits for people, organisations responsible for health and local economies.
- 6.8. Green prescribing is the use of nature-based activities for improving physical and mental health. This practice is part of social prescribing that allows healthcare providers to refer patients to local, non-clinical services. Common activities used in green prescribing include walking and cycling in nature, conservation activities, horticulture and meditation.
- 6.9. Many providers of outdoor spaces are seeking to collaborate with healthcare and public health organisations to deliver safe, cost-effective outcomes for patients. Local natural outdoor spaces close to where people live provide huge untapped opportunities for improving health and wellbeing
- 6.10. Doing activities in green spaces or simply spending time in nature is beneficial in different ways. For example, going for a walk at their local park can help patients manage their weight and prevent chronic non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and

hypertension. Green spaces also promote a feeling of being connected to nature as well as encouraging social connections with others. These connections are good for our mental health and wellbeing, helping reduce stress, fatigue and anxiety levels, among other benefits.

- 6.11. Interacting with green spaces is particularly beneficial for vulnerable populations. Those with greater access to green space experience lower levels of health inequalities linked to income deprivation.

### Key issues

- 6.12. A lack of physical activity can lead to a variety of chronic diseases and conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease which, combined with an ageing population, is contributing to a public health crisis. A lack of access to scenic, wildlife-rich green space and other open spaces can also adversely affect mental health. Many people, particularly children and young people, do not readily have opportunities to learn about the environment or to develop an understanding and appreciation of the Malvern Hills.
- 6.13. The health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering in the countryside cannot be underestimated. Volunteering can help to improve physical health, and working and walking in the outdoors can also help with a variety of mental health challenges such as social isolation, bereavement and low confidence and self-esteem. The variety of opportunities available across the National Landscape and wider partnership of organisations needs to be expanded and more clearly signposted.
- 6.14. There is a need to implement and develop a variety of approaches to address these issues, including the provision of outdoor activities and experiences. There is also a need to promote the link between physical and mental health and enjoying and understanding the special qualities of the National Landscape. This should include encouraging more partnership working between health professionals and other stakeholders to implement measures such as 'green' prescriptions (for example, prescribing walks in the National Landscape). Where appropriate, links should be developed between these health and wellbeing aspirations and the enhancement of ecological networks and the provision of green infrastructure.

## Volunteering

### Outcome 7 – Volunteering

**A wide range of regular voluntary activities is in place, conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape while improving people's mental and physical health.**

### Policy PE2 - Volunteering

PE2.1 Support and encourage effective voluntary activity, in all its shapes and forms, that helps deliver the National Landscape Management Plan.

- Develop and support networks of volunteers able to assist in specialist activities.

- Encourage and support Parish Councils to achieve high standards in working closely with voluntary and community groups and meeting local needs and aspirations within the National Landscape.

## Background

- 6.15. There are many opportunities for people to give their time to help look after the National Landscape and to make it a better place for themselves and others. This includes 'traditional volunteering' and a growing interest in what some people call 'investment volunteering', where people give their time and energy in return for dividends later. Volunteering can provide a way of developing people's interests, personal skills and social networks. It can also develop a sense of belonging and respect. The Localism Act was introduced in November 2011. The intent is to devolve more decision-making powers from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils. One aim is to encourage volunteering. Government wants local social enterprises, volunteers and community groups with a bright idea for improving local services to get a chance to change how things are done .
- 6.16. There are 22 town and parish councils in the National Landscape. Their elected members give their time freely for their community. Every parish also contains people who care for the natural beauty and heritage of the area. Much of this work is unrecognised and unrecorded.
- 6.17. There are some very good examples of organised volunteering in the National Landscape. These include:
- The Malvern Hills Trust who run a Conservation Volunteer team to help manage over 1,200 hectares of land. The team comprises 95 registered volunteers who provide approximately 600 people days of work per year. Volunteer effort is given to practical conservation tasks and to warden and site warden duties.
  - Colwall Orchard Group promotes, celebrates and restores traditional orchards, to connect people with nature, in the parish of Colwall. The group has over 200 official members with around 80 active volunteers. It helps manage over 30 local traditional orchards, as well as 2 community orchards and is involved in educating local school children.
  - Residents in Little Malvern and Welland parishes are engaged in many ways to support the local community and its relationship with this precious landscape; volunteering for work in the field with conservation charities and researching and reviving cultural and folk traditions. Notable among those groups are those who create and improve local habitats for wildlife and provide new opportunities for local people to connect with nature. The Parish Council also has a successful and well attended regular litter picking group which meets every month to clear polluting and unsightly rubbish from the parishes; Purser's Orchard Group in Welland has an active membership, looking after and restoring a traditional orchard and celebrating the local traditions of the area; and volunteers can train to become leaders for the popular Welland Walkers group, who meet weekly to enjoy beautiful walks in and around the Malvern Hills national landscape.
  - Malvern Community Forest is a small but active volunteer organisation that invites communities, groups and individuals to be involved in creating and managing woodlands, hedgerows, orchards and meadows for the enjoyment and benefit of

residents, wildlife and the wider environment. They develop and pass on the manual skills and crafts associated with these habitats and their products. It has 60 members and runs a small number of projects that generate over 50 people days of work per year.

- The maintenance of many important geological sites in the area is carried out by a busy volunteer group organised by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust (EHT). The key purpose is to make or keep sites visible and accessible to the public as well as to educational bodies including local schools and colleges. The volunteer group tackles up to 8 sites each year as part of a systematic long-term rolling programme. Each site maintenance visit requires about 10-15 individuals, drawn from a larger pool of c.45 made up of members of EHT and the local U3A geology group. The programme has now been running for well over a decade and receives support for equipment and volunteer expenses from the National Landscape and the Malvern Hills Conservators.

### Special features

- A regular programme of Volunteer Conservation days
- Active Civic Societies in Malvern and Ledbury
- Colwall Orchard Group
- Colwell Greener
- Cradley Wild
- Earth Heritage Trust volunteers
- Opportunities to survey wildlife and support nature
- Parish Path and Tree Warden schemes
- Transition Malvern Hills
- Voluntary warden services

### Key Issues

- 6.18. People who regularly give their time are very valuable. If they have essential skills, they are more so. Everyone wants to use them. Without supervision and careful planning, there can be an over reliance on a small number of key people. In addition, volunteer effort can be quite narrowly focussed on certain geographical areas, such as a particular parish or the Malvern Hills Trust land. This can leave parts of the National Landscape with very little volunteer support, especially those areas with small, widely-spread populations. There is a need to support volunteers and coordinate their use.
- 6.19. Sometimes, people lack the confidence or knowledge needed to get them started as volunteers. Communities need information, support and guidance to enable them to embrace the challenges and opportunities afforded by localism. There is a need to work closely with voluntary and community groups and express local needs and wishes effectively.
- 6.20. Volunteers with specialist and local knowledge can play a very important role. They can build up an understanding of the Malvern Hills area and help in monitoring change in their local area. However, time given voluntarily is not always used to best effect. There is a need

to develop work programmes with a variety of agencies to provide opportunities for volunteering in the National Landscape that helps deliver the management plan.

- 6.21. Managing and supporting volunteers takes time and money. Finding the resources to do this is likely to become increasingly difficult in the conservation sector as public funding is cut further. Those businesses that benefit from the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage should support the conservation partnerships and volunteers.
- 6.22. Most people care about their local community. Many would do more to help their neighbours if they could. In rural areas, there is a long history of people acting in their community, from the volunteer management committees to good neighbour schemes and parish plans. This effort is often overlooked by policy makers, funding for community initiatives is piecemeal and the age of volunteers is generally getting older.

## Living and working

### Outcome 8 - Living and working

**Ensuring vibrant communities by stimulating diverse and sustainable economic prosperity that conserves and enhances the distinctive character of the National Landscape.**

### Policy PE3. Living and working

PE3.1 Support the production of community-led plans, strategies and statements (such as Neighbourhood Plans) that conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape and encourage and maintain the vitality and diversity of rural community life.

PE3.2 Support community initiatives that promote the creation and management of key habitats, appropriate renewable energy schemes, energy efficiency, recycling, community transport and community housing.

PE3.3 Seek new, inventive and sensitive solutions to the retention of local shops and provision of viable local services, for example, through the integration of local service delivery and through the delivery of universal high-speed broadband.

PE3.4 Support the provision of a variety of housing that is appropriate to the character of the area and meets local community needs. The priority is to meet meeting affordable housing requirements, particularly housing that is affordable in perpetuity, such as social rented housing. In doing so, they should be compatible with the National Landscape Partnership's Position Statement 2 – Housing development in the Malvern Hills National Landscape and its setting<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.malvern-hills-nl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-MHNL-Position-Statement-Housing-FINAL.pdf>



### PE3.5 Reduce energy demand through transport and travel by:

- Reducing car use through increasing green and active travel including public transport and increasing shared mobility through car sharing schemes;
- Reducing the need to travel by encouraging home working and affordable housing provision close to sources of employment, services and facilities; and
- Improving the sustainability of travel through public transport hub promotion/integration and information, and prioritising the provision of walking, cycling and public transport use, including adequate cycle parking.

## Background

- 6.23. The National Landscape is home to around 11,400 people.<sup>28</sup> They live in the villages, isolated farms and houses and in communities around the Malvern Hills and on the edge of Ledbury. Over the years, local people have looked after the landscape we now cherish.
- 6.24. People wish to live and work here because it is a beautiful area. The area is also an attractive place in which to retire. The tourism sector benefits from the high quality of the landscape. Many businesses gain value by being associated with it and by being careful with the ecosystem services it provides. Most know the risks to their brand image, security of resources and their bottom line if they do not.
- 6.25. Twenty-two parishes lie wholly or partly in the National Landscape. Xxx [Need UpToDate data from each planning authority] parishes have produced Parish Plans, some of them in partnership with each other. These plans identify key issues and actions relating to rural services. They also help to focus local minds on issues that are important to the community. They are a source of information for the sustainable community strategies and local authority policies. Given that these plans grow out of a community consultation exercise, they give a good indication of the key issues.
- 6.26. Currently, there is an emphasis on planning at the local level. The Localism Act gives local people a very strong voice by allowing them to shape the future of their area through Neighbourhood Development Plans (which are statutory documents) and other initiatives such as Community Right to Buy.
- 6.27. Several parishes in the National Landscape have now prepared or are preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans; some are renewing adopted plans. Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Parishes and neighbourhood forums can use neighbourhood planning to:
- allocate land for housing;
  - set planning policies through neighbourhood plans to determine decisions on planning applications; and
  - grant planning permission through Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order.

## Special features

- An attractive environment for low impact industries and a skilled workforce.

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<sup>28</sup> Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - Additional statistic 17: Population estimates for Protected Landscapes based on allocation of Output Areas, Census 2021.



- A desirable place in which to live and work.
- Malvern is the home of some of Britain’s best cyber experts.
- A relatively high proportion of home workers.
- Several highly engaged communities within the National Landscape who are actively influencing their environment, for example through Village Design Statements and Community Plans.
- Malvern Hills Car Clubs
- Local groups (e.g., Colwall Greener) working towards greener futures for their areas

## Key issues

- 6.28. Communities change when they lose shops, services, facilities and public transport. Young people often leave rural communities to seek work and affordable homes in towns. The number of retired people resident in the National Landscape is relatively high, and this trend is likely to increase.
- 6.29. People living in rural areas should have access to a wide range of jobs that allow them to reach their potential. Diversifying the economy, harnessing the possibilities of digital connectivity and supporting the creation of local enterprises can create better employment opportunities.
- 6.30. The limited provision of public transport - and limited integration of this provision – restricts the scope for people without a car to explore the National Landscape resulting in a heavy reliance on car usage. Transport providers should be supported to increase and promote integrated travel initiatives to encourage a car-free visitor experience.
- 6.31. Without affordable housing, rural communities are at risk of losing people who live and work there, who sustain local services, and who may volunteer their time to help others. Eventually, this will lead to a countryside characterised by exclusive, ageing, and lifeless settlements.
- 6.32. New homes must also strike a balance between retaining the unique character of rural places whilst being fit for the future. With enormous environmental challenges ahead, these homes must be well insulated and make the most of low carbon technologies wherever possible to contribute to carbon net zero efforts. Retrofitting older houses is also important.
- 6.33. The cost of homes is an important issue in rural areas. People on low wages cannot afford to pay the high prices professional and retired people are willing to pay. Local authorities complete ‘need assessments’ for affordable housing and reflect the findings in their local plan. However, when evidence is developed at the county level the needs of each parish are not always identified. There is a risk that too few affordable houses suited to local needs will be built in the National Landscape without proactive intervention. The National Landscape Partnership has published a position statement on housing development in the Malvern Hills National Landscape and its setting.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Position Statement 2: Housing Development in the Malvern Hills National Landscape and its Setting  
<https://www.malvern-hills-nl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-MHNL-Position-Statement-Housing-FINAL.pdf>

## Regenerative tourism

### Outcome 9 – Regenerative tourism

**Businesses and visitors have a shared commitment to enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape and the well-being of its communities.**

### Policy PE3. Regenerative tourism

PE3.1 Stimulate and support regenerative tourism practices\* in the National Landscape that sustain its natural beauty, support nature recovery and enhance the well-being of local communities. This will include:

- i. Ensuring that the tourism sector recognises the benefits of conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the National Landscape and minimising the emission of greenhouse gases, reflecting this in policy and practice.
- ii. Visitors, residents, local businesses and communities should be provided with opportunities to directly contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape and improve access to the area through local individual, community and employee volunteering opportunities.
- iii. Developing collaborative and joined-up working between public, private and voluntary sector tourism organisations across the National Landscape, enabling greater overall efficiency and use of resources.
- iv. Visitors should be provided with a variety of accommodation options over a range of prices. The siting and design of visitor accommodation should be compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape, including its special qualities

*\* visitors have a positive impact on their destination, leaving it in a better condition than how they found it*

PE3.2 Provide a quality public realm with good access and accessibility to facilities and features that attract tourists. Existing sustainable and integrated transport initiatives should be supported and new initiatives developed to help facilitate the car free visitor experience.

PE3.3 Work in partnership to develop the Malvern Hills as an area for show-casing new tourism technologies including:

- Near frequency communication technology
- Travel Apps to help tourists easily navigate the area
- Travel chatbots to enable visitors to seek help and ask questions
- Immersive travel films to allow people to ‘try before they buy’

PE3.4 Explore opportunities to spread visitor pressure away from busy and sensitive areas to those that can sustainably accommodate benefit from this use.

## Background

- 6.34. Sustainable tourism is leaving something as it is so that it stays the same; that is, not causing any extra damage. Regenerative tourism, by contrast, is for visitors to have a positive impact on their destination, meaning that they leave it in a better condition than how they found it.
- 6.35. Tourism and recreation are often confused. They are not the same. The Office of National Statistics defines tourism as "A movement of people to places outside their usual place of residence, pleasure being the usual motivation ". Recreation is an activity carried out in spare time. It may form a component of a tourist experience but does not require an overnight stay.
- 6.36. The area now known as the Malvern Hills National Landscape has attracted visitors for many years. The Victorians promoted the local springs in the Malvern Hills area for their purity and healing properties. This transformed Malvern and its surrounds into a fashionable spa resort. The popularity of Great Malvern grew again when Barry Jackson brought music and theatre festivals into the area, with George Bernard Shaw and Edward Elgar amongst the performers. Each year, some 1.25 million visitors come to the National Landscape to enjoy its natural and cultural heritage . Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy.
- 6.37. The nature and intensity of tourism varies across the National Landscape. Certain locations can be very busy. These include the Three Counties Showground, the northern and central Hills near Malvern and Eastnor Castle. In other areas, visitor pressure can be very light. The greatest range and pressure of visitor use is largely restricted to the 12 square kilometres of the northern and central Malvern Hills, reflecting the dramatic beauty and accessibility of this area. The most pronounced impacts of tourism are concentrated within a relatively small area of what is a small National Landscape.
- 6.38. The 2018 Malvern Hills and Commons Visitor Survey found that 49% of the visitors interviewed came from Worcestershire, 8% from Herefordshire, 7% from Gloucestershire and 10% came from the West Midlands. Visitors from the South-East region of the country supply the largest share of domestic overnight visitors to the area (12%). A third (33%) of all visitors to the Malvern Hills and Commons came from within a 3-mile radius and were classified as a resident<sup>30</sup>.
- 6.39. The National Landscapes Association has signed a sustainable tourism accord with Defra and Visit England. The accord acknowledges the importance of National Landscapes as being at the centre of the development of sustainable rural tourism. Local authorities in Herefordshire and Worcestershire support tourism strategies that recognise the importance of National Landscapes as special landscapes and as important destinations for people seeking the natural environment. The strategies also recognise the need to preserve these assets, to enhance the quality of the environment and to support visitor management and

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<sup>30</sup> The Research Solution (2019): Malvern Hills & Commons Visitor Survey 2018 prepared for the Malvern Hills National Landscape and the Malvern Hills Trust

regulation initiatives that help to deliver sustainability in the tourism sector. The Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership has also agreed a Tourism Position Statement.

### Special features

- Visitor attractions such as The Three Counties showground and historic buildings such as Eastnor Castle.
- Villages and market towns such as Ledbury (partly within the National Landscape boundary).
- Established trails and routes, such as the Elgar route, the Cider Trail, the Geopark Way, Literary Guide and Discovery Walks.
- A range of cultural features and attractions including art, theatre, music, literature and gastronomy.

### Key issues

- 6.40. The Malvern Hills and Commons Visitor Survey 2018 shows that 81% of visitors to the area are day-trippers. Day visitors put far less income into the local economy (28.5% of visitor economy) than those who stay overnight. Generating greater overnight stays is a key aim of tourism strategies for the area.
- 6.41. Many people have heard of Malvern, Malvern Water and/or the Malvern Hills. However, awareness of the National Landscape and of the tourism offer in the wider area is less well known. This may be in part because of historical marketing activities that have focussed on specific attractions and on counties rather than the wider area. In recent years, more effort has been made to market the Malvern Hills as the destination, but cross-boundary promotion of the National Landscape including, for example, the towns of Malvern and Ledbury is more limited. One exception is the Map and Guide produced by the National Landscape Partnership. Effective cross boundary promotion, and providing tourists with the information to build quality experiences will help to turn days into stays.
- 6.42. Links between farming and forestry management and the tourism industry in the National Landscape are sometimes poorly developed. There is a small range of locally distinct and locally sourced produce available. It is not extensive and there is scope to expand the range (see Farming and Forestry). Innovative tourism businesses are likely to want to promote local produce. Effective marketing for tourism will also have spin-off benefits for other sectors by building a positive image of area.
- 6.43. The quality of the public realm – the streets, public buildings, car parks, and public toilets – should all reflect and live up to the quality of the natural environment. These things might not make someone visit the Malvern Hills but they are likely to detract from the experience and reflect badly on the area if they are not up to scratch. Public realm is as important to residents as it is to visitors and it needs to be right, both within and adjacent to the National Landscape.

## Transport and accessibility

### Outcome 10 – Transport and accessibility

**People can reach and explore the National Landscape in ways that minimise the impact on the environment whilst promoting access for all.**

### Policy PE4. Transport and accessibility

PE4.1 Highway management and design should be in accordance with the National Landscape Guidance on Highway Design:

- Unless there is an overriding safety issue, do as little as possible
- Highway improvements should take account of the traffic flow and character of the road to ensure that proposals are not over specified
- Reuse and refurbish locally appropriate highway furniture and fittings to strengthen the special character of the National Landscape.
- Unless there is an overriding reason to do otherwise, copy the style and materials that have been used over time
- Consult with the National Landscape Partnership before schemes are confirmed

PE4.2 Develop and promote sustainable transport options to:

- enhance tranquillity and minimise the impact of traffic on the National Landscape;
- provide sufficient infrastructure for the charging of electric vehicles, scooters and bikes;
- reduce car movements in the National Landscape, particularly during major events and at peak times:
- encourage a safer and more attractive environment for walking, cycling and horse riding;
- coordinate the planning of integrated passenger transport to, from and within the National Landscape; and
- meet local accessibility requirements.

PE4.3 Ensure that new developments on the periphery of the National Landscape do not give rise to significant traffic increases and associated effects on tranquillity and enjoyment. Seek compensation for such effects where relevant.

### Background

6.44. The Malvern Hills National Landscape benefits from good accessibility by a wide range of modes of transport. This includes the M5 and M50 motorways, which bring the populations of the South West and West Midlands close to the National Landscape. Several main roads

cut through or skirt the Malvern Hills. There is a significant network of rural lanes, which can sometimes be heavily used by visitor traffic. Several car parks and informal verge parking contribute to easy access of the National Landscape, especially around the northern and central Malvern Hills.

- 6.45. There are four rail stations within or close to the National Landscape. These stations all benefit from regular and direct services between London, Birmingham and Hereford. A fifth, Worcestershire Parkway Interchange, opened February 2020, lies just to the east of the National Landscape, close to the M5 Junction 7). It has improved rail connectivity by linking the local rail network to the cross-country network (Bristol-Birmingham-North West/North East). Long distance express coaches serve the National Landscape. There are direct connections to London, Birmingham, Cardiff and several other major national destinations.
- 6.46. With reductions in the availability of public funding, many local bus services have been rationalised or cut altogether. The frequency and reach of the local bus network are in decline, particularly in more sparsely populated rural areas.
- 6.47. As bus services have declined, the provision of Community Transport services has increased significantly to meet local demand. Many communities in and around the Malvern Hills National Landscape are now covered by Community Transport services in the form of Community Buses and Voluntary Car schemes. These are demand-responsive and are available to both residents and visitors for whom there is no suitable bus service for their journey. The National Landscape Partnership has helped to support the establishment of car share schemes and electric bike hire in the area. The Malvern Hills Car Clubs now offer 16 vehicles for hire across Ledbury, Malvern and the National Landscape. Therefore, accessibility by passenger transport has been maintained across the area.
- 6.48. Malvern, Ledbury and Newent have several registered taxi services, which provide door-to-door journeys across the area. Local fares are reasonably priced, although higher than bus services.
- 6.49. Travel Concession Authorities (the three county councils) are required to implement the mandatory travel concession as set out in the Transport Act 2000 and amended by the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007. This gives national free travel for older people and those with certain disabilities. The authorities are required to always offer free travel on any local bus service in England on Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays and between 0930 and 2300 on any other day.
- 6.50. Worcestershire County Council is piloting the use of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) in locations across the county. The first two locations are in the districts of Bromsgrove and Malvern Hills. ‘Worcestershire on Demand’ offers an alternative transport option to fixed route public transport services. DRT helps people make essential local journeys and offers residents and visitors transport within a zoned area and to specific ‘Points of Interest’ outside of the zone. DRT can also provide journeys to connecting transport services such as other local buses or to local train stations. Services operate Monday to Saturday between 0700 to 1900, and each journey costs £2.50. In addition, there are several Community Transport schemes that operate in the area which can be used for hospital and doctors’ appointments and for social activities. Some operators have specialist vehicles equipped with tail lifts or they offer suitable space for wheelchairs for passengers with mobility limitations. There is a need to register with each operator before passengers can access the services.

- 6.51. Freight traffic in the National Landscape is relatively light. However, the number of HGVs and other light freight vehicles is growing, in line with national trends and local growth is also apparent. There are unlikely to be opportunities to transfer freight from road to rail soon. However, such schemes would be likely to win support where they benefit tranquillity.
- 6.52. There are no designated Air Quality Management Areas in the National Landscape area, which suggests that air quality in the area remains broadly good.
- 6.53. Cycling is a very popular activity in the Malvern Hills National Landscape. There are plans to connect the National Landscape with the National Cycle Network through the development of NCN 46 (Worcester to Abergavenny via Malvern). With the national growth experienced in touring cycling, the Malvern Hills National Landscape is ideally suited to attracting short and long-stay visitors by bicycle.
- 6.54. There are a few walking and cycling guides available (some of which have been part-funded by the Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership). They provide extensive information for walkers and cyclists intending to access the variety of landscapes. The Malvern Hills National Landscape is fortunate in having a dense network of well-maintained and attractive walking, cycling and horse-riding routes that are either traffic free or low traffic.
- 6.55. The accessibility requirements and demands on the National Landscape are managed through the policies and programmes in the three Local Transport Authorities' Local Transport Plans. Each local authority has recently adopted its latest round of plans (LTP4). These documents aim to:
- improve access to key services;
  - integrate transport provision and infrastructure improvements; and
  - promote sustainable forms of transport.

### Special features

- Good rail and express coach access and regular services to and from the West Midlands, South Wales and the South West.
- Good access by car throughout the Malvern Hills National Landscape, supported by significant car parking provision on the high hills and ridges of the northern and central Malvern Hills.
- A comprehensive network of rights of way.
- Rural character of minor roads defined by locally distinctive features such as hedgerows, cast iron road signs and milestones.
- Quiet rural lanes providing good opportunities for cycling and horse riding.
- 'Miles Without Stiles' footpaths and tracks with no barriers to access.

### Key issues

- 6.56. A growth in motor traffic is one of the main threats to the tranquillity of the Malvern Hills National Landscape. High levels of car use can also be associated with public safety concerns, damage to wildlife and inconvenience for local people, as well as contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. The use of motor vehicles as a recreational activity within the National Landscape is also a concern. Without good management, car rallies and motorcross events can cause congestion on rural lanes and add significant levels of noise and greenhouse gas emissions into the area.



- 6.57. The quality of road access to the National Landscape, and the existence of extensive car parking opportunities (many of them free), means access to the Malvern Hills National Landscape is generally by car. At peak times, the National Landscape can experience high levels of car traffic and a high demand for parking. This can be particularly acute around the hills at weekends and bank holidays as well as at popular locations such as the Three Counties Showground. During these times, there are public concerns around congestion, verge damage and disturbance to wildlife, local communities and other road users. There is also more noise and visual intrusion. Exhaust emissions may affect air quality. Most of these impacts have not been measured but could be significant.
- 6.58. There are few electric vehicle (for cars, scooters and bicycles) charge points within or close to the National Landscape. Charge-point technologies are developing quickly, increasing in power and reducing in cost. Rapid charge-points will be needed where vehicles do not stay long whereas slower trickle charging is more appropriate for residential areas. The Government has amended permitted development rights to allow the installation of charge-points in some situations. There is a need to develop easily accessible rapid charge-point hubs associated with community facilities within the National Landscape.
- 6.59. Residential roadside parking can cause traffic flow bottlenecks and affect the character of local areas. This is exaggerated by the introduction of unplanned on-street electric car charging.
- 6.60. An area of concern is the growth of car traffic associated with significant new house building in the towns that adjoin the National Landscape. As well as a larger population wanting to access the National Landscape for leisure purposes it is feared that a growth in congestion in and around urban roads may also lead to an increase in people choosing to use the more minor roads of the National Landscape to travel to and from work.
- 6.61. Freight traffic in the National Landscape is relatively light but developments in and close to the edge of the National Landscape bring additional HGV movements to the area. Demand for such growth may increase, especially associated with new employment/industrial land at the edge of urban areas. Here, more HGV movements are likely to compound the effects of a growth in car-based traffic associated with a growing residential population. In the areas to the south of Malvern, future growth must also be seen in conjunction with high levels of traffic generated by activities at the Three Counties Showground. As with a growth in car traffic, effects are likely to include an erosion of tranquillity in the National Landscape and its setting and a potential reduction in the quality of the visitor experience. Vehicle movements at night can be particularly intrusive, disturbing residents and wildlife alike.
- 6.62. There is a shortage of targeted provision for walkers and cyclists, especially in and around built-up areas, within and outside the National Landscape. People need safer walking and cycling routes; and integrated public transport services. Shared use routes may also benefit horse riders.
- 6.63. The National Landscape has enjoyed a relatively good public transport system but bus services are in decline, especially in the evenings and at weekends. Some community transport services exist to help registered users. Unfortunately, due to lack of awareness of the existence of alternatives, some residents (particularly the old and the young) either rely heavily on private car use or may be left feeling isolated. One result is significant isolation for people who do not have access to a car.



- 6.64. The most significant impacts of the costs of travel are on young people and low-income households. Many cannot afford to travel to work or education. However, in the Malvern Hills National Landscape, almost all low-income households are located within either Malvern or Ledbury, which have a range of transport services, health, employment, education, leisure and retail opportunities within reasonable walking or cycling distances.
- 6.65. People with disabilities may also suffer when faced with higher costs, though all those with registered mobility issues benefit from a range of measures including free or reduced-price bus/community transport travel and the opportunity to have specially modified cars to deliver mobility. This is due to limited transport choices. Fuel prices are rising.

## Recreation and access

### Outcome 11 – Recreation and access

**The National Landscape is recognised as a welcoming place for quiet, informal recreation; a place where there are no barriers to access and everyone feels connected to the landscape.**

### Policy PE5. Recreation and access

PE5.1 A safe, pleasant, accessible, clearly waymarked and well-connected path and track network should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the National Landscape.

- There should be a consistent approach to the development and delivery of access across the area through Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plans.
- Rights of way infrastructure (signs, gates, etc) should not detract from the special qualities of the National Landscape.
- Improvements to rights of way should be undertaken in a way that is compatible with, and seeks to further, the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
- Opportunities should be taken to spread recreational use to those areas that can sustain it, and that will benefit from it, ensuring the provision of suitable infrastructure.

PE5.2 Opportunities should be developed to engage and support individuals who are not currently enjoying the benefits of the National Landscape, including people from areas of high deprivation.

- Visitor facilities and routes should be accessible to those of all abilities.
- Guided walks and activities should be offered to those who are not confident walking or riding in the countryside to increase confidence and share knowledge of the National Landscape and its special qualities.
- There should be the effective use of a range accessible communication formats to support inclusivity.

PE5.3 Developments that are likely to lead to an increase in negative recreational effects in an area should contribute to the costs of mitigating and managing these effects.

### National targets – accessibility and engagement

PE5.4 Stakeholders should work towards the delivery of the relevant target for access and recreation within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. The apportioned target for the Malvern Hills to be achieved are:

Target 9	Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.
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### Background

- 6.66. The Landscapes Review published by Julian Glover in 2019 challenged Protected Landscapes to do more to welcome people, and to do a lot more to ensure that people from currently underrepresented groups can enjoy the benefits of accessing them too. An outdoor experience can benefit people's health, enable them to get closer to nature, be used as an educational opportunity or help with building community partnerships. Each year, an estimated 1.25 million visits are made to the National Landscape by people enjoying its natural and cultural heritage <sup>[need current data and the reference]</sup>. Many of those are local people enjoying their leisure time.
- 6.67. The nature and intensity of leisure use varies across the National Landscape. Most people visit the 12 square kilometres of the northern and central Malvern Hills, reflecting the dramatic beauty and accessibility of this area. There are plans for many new homes in South Worcestershire (in and around Malvern and the City of Worcester) as well as around Ledbury. As one of the iconic landscapes of the West Midlands, it is expected that there will be a higher level of demand for recreational activity on the Malvern Hills and in other parts of the National Landscape because of this growth.
- 6.68. Herefordshire Council, and Worcestershire and Gloucestershire County Councils, all produce Improvement Plans for their rights of way networks. These plans assess the adequacy of the network to meet current and future demands for walking, cycling and riding. They also provide aims and objectives for managing the network in the future.
- 6.69. Walking for health and recreation is a popular pastime and an excellent way to appreciate the countryside. There are several local initiatives to support access for all. For example, local authorities promote health walks and the Malvern Access Group publishes a guide for people who want to check the accessibility of shops and businesses before they visit them. It includes some countryside access.
- 6.70. 'Miles Without Stiles' are promoted footpaths and tracks which are suitable for use by those who do not want to clamber over barriers when out enjoying the countryside. The National Landscape Partnership provides links to ideas and resources through the website.<sup>31</sup> Leaflets are available for routes in the parishes of Colwall, Cradley and Mathon.

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<sup>31</sup> See <https://www.malvernhills-nl.org.uk/explore/> or the link to Mobile Walking App - <https://www.visitthomalverns.org/things-to-do/walking/mobile-walking-app/>

Herefordshire Council created these routes, in conjunction with Natural England and the Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership.

### Special features

- Quiet rural lanes for walking, cycling and horse riding.
- Open access on foot and horseback across a large part of the Malvern Hills and Commons.
- Miles without Stiles routes across large parts of the National Landscape in Herefordshire
- The proximity to centres of population, principally Malvern and Ledbury.
- Opportunities to engage in a wide range of recreational activities, including angling, equestrian activities, hang gliding, kite flying, model gliding, sledging, cycling, abseiling, fossil hunting and walking.
- Opportunities to participate in well managed and appropriately scaled field sports.

### Key Issues

- 6.71. Young people like the green outdoors either for the sense of peace and freedom induced, or for the potential for activities and sports they afford. The countryside is a place to spend quality time with friends doing activities as a group. Young people may prefer urban activities, such as clubbing, shopping, eating at fast food outlets, socialising with friends. However, they can also be motivated by a sense of adventure, risk and excitement, free from parental control and peer pressure.<sup>32</sup>
- 6.72. The most common motivation for countryside visits by older people is meeting people, making new friends and having someone to walk with, and the preferences are linked to walking the dog or simply taking exercise<sup>33</sup>. Some say that they spend their leisure time pursuing goal orientated pursuits, such as salsa dancing or computer courses. They do not see outdoor recreation offering the same element of challenge, nor sense of reward<sup>34</sup>. Older people may not consider themselves disabled but can experience many of the same barriers through reduced stamina, mobility, sight and hearing.
- 6.73. There is a desire for people with disabilities to visit the countryside, usually to improve individual quality of life, promote social contact or promote individual health. The countryside can also be the source of very specific experiences, such as a visually-impaired person seeing stars for the first time because urban skies were never sufficiently dark at night to allow the contrast with the brightness of the stars<sup>35</sup>. Activity levels amongst children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition are the same as for those without one<sup>36</sup>.
- 6.74. Service providers find it relatively straightforward to recognise the physical needs of disabled groups, compared to other under-represented groups. They often assume that

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<sup>32</sup> Uzzell D, Kelay T & Leach R (2005): "WHAT ABOUT US?" Diversity Review evidence – part one Challenging perceptions: under-represented visitor needs. University of Surrey for Countryside Agency

<sup>33</sup> Ward Thompson C, Hamilton V, Montarzino A, Zuin A, Rothnie H and Tiplady P (2008): Review of Evidence – Participation in Outdoor Recreation by WAG Priority Groups by the OPENspace Research Centre for the Countryside Council for Wales

<sup>34</sup> Henley Centre (2005): Paper 2 – Demand for outdoor recreation, a report for Natural England's outdoor recreation strategy

<sup>35</sup> Uzzell et al 2005

<sup>36</sup> Sport England (2021): Active Lives Children and Young People Survey, Academic year 2019/20 Report

improving access for disabled people simply means providing for wheelchair users but only about 5 per cent of disabled people are permanent wheelchair users. Their needs are important but other types of disability also need consideration.

- 6.75. Ethnic minority groups embrace a wide range of communities, all with different aspirations and needs. Many are urban dwellers and are not familiar with what goes on beyond the urban boundary. Some have never been into the countryside whilst others may be regular visitors. Many minority peoples have no connection to nature in the UK because their parents and their grandparents did not feel safe enough to take them or had other survival preoccupations. This breaks down the oral traditions for learning.
- 6.76. Time in the natural world is associated with leisure and recreation for many people in the west. But for some people with a recent history or lived experience of subsistence within the family, having come from rural areas in developing countries, nature can be associated with hardship and struggle in having to work the land.
- 6.77. While most white English users value the solitude and contemplative activities which the countryside affords, the tendency for ethnic minority people is to prefer social company (family, friends, schools). There is also a preference for more managed and developed sites with opportunities for structured recreational activities over naturalistic landscapes. Indians and Pakistanis emphasise the importance of food on outings; picnics and barbeques are very popular. In Hindu culture, there is a significant attachment to trees for the spiritual benefits<sup>37</sup>.
- 6.78. There is a very good rights of way network in the National Landscape that includes both public footpaths and bridleways. On the Malvern Hills, this network is underpinned by a system of open access for walkers and horse riders on land controlled by the Malvern Hills Trust. These arrangements can lead to confusion over access rights in the transition zone between statutory rights of way and open access land. A map and guide produced by the Malvern Hills Trust helps to reduce this confusion by showing the position of bridleways and pedestrian routes. It is important that people understand access rights.
- 6.79. Mountain biking is popular on the Malvern Hills. There are no dedicated routes for use only by mountain bikes but the Malvern Hills Trust has promoted and waymarked certain routes for cycling. Open access rights on Malvern Hills Trust land do not extend to cyclists but cyclists do have rights to use designated bridleways on the Hills. Some riders use paths and tracks that they have no legal right to use. There are claims of conflict between mountain bikers and other users of the hills, although only a few accidents are reported. There is a shortage of hard data about recreational conflict and damage to the landscape.
- 6.80. Motorcross is a thrilling and challenging experience that requires varied and rough terrain. Track events in or close to the National Landscape raise concerns about the impact on landscape character, wildlife and tranquillity.
- 6.81. Walking is one of the most popular activities on a leisure visit away from home (alongside seeing friends and eating and drinking out) [need current data and the reference]. As the local population rises, there may be more people and dogs on the hills and commons. This can lead to a range of impacts on the land and the wildlife it supports, for example, erosion of paths, creation of new paths/'desire lines' and disturbance to ground-nesting birds. Better

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<sup>37</sup> Collier, B. (2019): Black Absence in Green Spaces. <http://www.bethcollier.co.uk/black-absence-in-green-spaces> and Uzzell et al 2005

data on levels of use and impacts is essential to help manage this change and to maintain the special qualities of the area.

- 6.82. Many of the National Landscape's small rural roads are used for walking, cycling and horse riding. These are some of the most tranquil parts of the National Landscape. New development, or changes to the highway network, could result in increasing volumes of traffic on these rural roads, which could compromise the tranquillity of the network and discourage their use for quiet recreational enjoyment. At the same time, many rural businesses and farms rely on road transport.
- 6.83. Car parking around the northern and central Malvern Hills provides easy access to the ridge and other walks. There are only limited parking spaces elsewhere in the National Landscape. This is especially true in the villages where visitors could help to support the local economy. There is scope to manage visitors to reduce their impact on the ridge and 'spread the load' to other paths and areas within the National Landscape. This needs to be balanced with the wish to maintain areas of tranquillity.
- 6.84. Good way-marking and signage of the rights of way network can serve many valuable purposes. It prevents people from getting lost and ensures that they do not inadvertently stray and interfere with land management practices. However, an excess of signs detracts from the enjoyment of the open countryside. The use of different types of sign and signs made from different materials can cause a sense of disharmony in the landscape. Information technology and mobile phone apps offer an ever-expanding opportunity to inform the visitor and interpret the heritage.

## Information and interpretation

### Outcome 12 – Information and interpretation

**Residents and visitors value the special qualities of the National Landscape and support investment in their management.**

### Policy PE6. Information and interpretation

PE6.1 Visitors, residents and local communities should be provided with opportunities to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Landscape:

- Develop a co-ordinated approach to information, interpretation and marketing activity to promote the special qualities of the Malvern Hills area and appropriate behaviour within it.
- Provide easily accessible online, downloadable and onsite resources to help promote access to the National Landscape and understanding and appreciation of its special qualities.
- Raise awareness of 'being in the Malvern Hills National Landscape' and the significance of the designation.
- Promote the Countryside Code to educate visitors and communities to act appropriately in the countryside and to improve understanding between visitors and those living and working in the area.
- Promote products and services that support the special qualities of the Malvern Hills.

- Provide arts and cultural experiences to encourage people to deepen their emotional connection to the landscape and support the engagement of new and existing audiences.

PE6.2 Work in partnerships with the technology and science sectors to develop innovative ways of accessing and using information.

## Background

- 6.85. Information has a central role to play in enhancing people's enjoyment of the National Landscape and ensuring that they do not make decisions that inadvertently affect the protected landscape. It is also key to supporting sustainable economic growth through tourism and assisting those who manage land.
- 6.86. Giving out information in an informal way is known as interpretation. Interpretation is the telling of a story. It is a way of communicating something significant about a place, a thing or a person, so that visitors can appreciate and understand it more and take something new away with them when they leave. Effective interpretation will provoke and connect with audiences, leaving them moved and inspired. It can stimulate their inquisitiveness, feed their imagination and encourage specific behaviour and ways of thinking.
- 6.87. The growth of the internet and other electronic media provide new and exciting ways for presenting information. The use of audio trails, podcasts and social media can help to reach new and younger audiences. Some people may prefer hard copy, such as books like the 'Nature of the Malverns'. Guided walks and events remain a popular way of engaging visitors. The choice of media for presenting information will depend on several criteria, including the resources available.
- 6.88. The Malvern Hills have long provided inspiration for artists, writers and musicians, many of whom have made, and continue to make, the area their home. More recently, the area has become a centre of hi-tech innovation with a growing expertise in the field of technology and tourism. There is a story to tell and the means to tell it. The Route to the Hills project promotes Malvern's rich historic and cultural offer to people of all ages, with a new walking route linking the town to the hills. The accessibility and variety of the National Landscape's landscape provides many educational opportunities for schools and young people to learn more about the special qualities of the area.

## Special features

- A centre of technical innovation and expertise
- Popular Tourist Information/Visitor Centres
- A diverse and growing resource of information

## Key Issues

- 6.89. There are many sources of information about the area. These include leaflets, on-site panels and web pages relating to different parts of the National Landscape, supplied by many different bodies and individuals. There is relatively little coordination of this provision. There are gaps in the provision with some areas and subjects having no coverage. Declining budgets have led to the closure of information centres and the loss of trained staff. It is not surprising that people only have a partial understanding of the National



Landscape. There is a need for the strategic planning of interpretation. This should bring together all who have a story to tell about the area.

6.90. Not all information is presented in formats accessible to all. There is a need to write in plain language, be concise and to take care in design. Communications may need to be specifically targeted at people with impairments. Some formats suit one type of impairment more than another<sup>38</sup>:

- visual impairments – audio, audio description, Braille, Moon, telephone
- learning disabilities and literacy difficulties – audio, audio description, easy read, easy access, Makaton, subtitles
- hearing – British Sign Language, Makaton, subtitling, textphone, SMS
- co-ordination difficulties – large print, audio, audio description, telephone

6.91. Greater use could be made of creative arts to support engagement in and understanding of the environment. This would promote the emotional connections to the area and support the local economy.

6.92. Although there is a high awareness of the Malvern Hills, many people in the community are unaware of the National Landscape and its special qualities, or their impact on its features. There is also a perception that the designation prevents growth and holds back the economy. There is a need to raise awareness of its value and its potential for conserving, protecting and enhancing the area.

6.93. Good waymarking and signage of the rights of way network can serve many valuable purposes. It prevents people from getting lost and ensures that they do not inadvertently stray and interfere with land management practices. However, an excess of signs detracts from the enjoyment of the open countryside. The use of different types of sign and signs made from different materials can cause a sense of disharmony in the landscape.

6.94. To make the best of the natural environment there is a need for good orientation and information for visitors. They need waymarking for walking and cycling routes. People want information and interpretation in appropriate places. They also want a tranquil place, free from clutter. IT Apps can better inform the visitor without degrading the scenery. Poor mobile phone coverage hinders the development of this approach.

6.95. Individual life style choices can have a profound influence on the character and quality of the National Landscape. There is a need to develop a common understanding of the key threats that face the area. These include the implications of climate change and land management practices; and car, energy and resource usage on the character and quality of the National Landscape. The need is to encourage more sustainable lifestyles in tune with the ambitions of this Management Plan. Energy and resource use should be reduced. People should be encouraged to support activities that help sustain the landscape fabric of the National Landscape, such as the purchase of local goods and services.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>

## 7. Place

- 7.1. The National Landscape is of international importance, recognised as a ‘Category V Protected Landscape’ by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) . In 2013, the IUCN UK Committee reaffirmed the Category V status of all National Landscapes, confirming the significant impact they have on conserving the UK’s biodiversity. The IUCN define a Category V Protected Landscape as “An area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity”.
- 7.2. Landscape sets a context for peoples’ lives. It is a meeting-ground between the past and the present as well as between both natural and cultural influences. The Malvern Hills National Landscape is a landscape of great physical, ecological and historical diversity. From the open grasslands of the northern Malvern Hills with their magnificent views, to the mosaics of pasture, woodland and scattered settlements. This diversity of form, habitats and built heritage has a very special quality.
- 7.3. The historic environment of the National Landscape is an essential part of its distinctive character. It is the legacy of thousands of years of human activity and culture in complex layers, and the rich and diverse historical record, that contributes significantly to the area’s landscape, sense of place and identity.
- 7.4. Farming, forestry and hunting for game are the most important uses of the land over thousands of years; these have shaped and influenced the unique character of the Malvern Hills National Landscape. Traditionally, these activities have been the economic bedrock of the rural communities. They still support livelihoods and provide local foods and products. In recent centuries, quarrying has reshaped the landscape and, associated with taking the waters, tourism and recreation activities have evolved.
- 7.5. These components of the National Landscape and the forces that have moulded and changed their form over thousands of years, have a strong inter-dependence. Many of the elements of the landscape are determined by their geology and have an inherent wildlife importance and/or historic significance.
- 7.6. For example, nutrient-poor soils derived from gravels eroded from the Malvern Hills underpin the unenclosed commons in the east of the National Landscape. The poor soils helped to ensure that the commons escaped agricultural enclosure. As a result, these areas have been managed in the same way for hundreds of years. They are largely unimproved and are therefore of great value for wildlife. They are also important historical features of the landscape – a living testament to traditional agricultural practices and a distinctive way of life.
- 7.7. It is commonly recognised that land management and the solutions to problems on the ground must be integrated. The European Landscape Convention encourages a joined-up approach in all areas of land use, development and management. Similarly, Natural England’s National Character Area profile for the area (NCA 103) identifies opportunities for positive and broad-based environmental change. Many of the policies identified in this management plan follow a common approach. They recognise the importance of the distinctive character of the National Landscape while accepting change. They pursue land management practices that protect and enhance the environment while supporting the



socio-economic needs of local people and the role and importance of ecosystem services. Landscapes have undergone, often dramatic, change in the past. Yet they continue to provide a wide range of ecosystem services.

### Place topics

- Landscape
- Tranquillity and dark skies
- Historic environment
- Farming and forestry
- Built development

## Landscape

### Outcome 13 - Landscape

**The distinctive landscapes of the National Landscape and its setting are conserved and enhanced (particularly those that are the most sensitive to or have little capacity for change) for future generations to enjoy, and the benefits and services provided by the natural environment are understood and accurately valued by decision-makers at all levels.**

### Policy PL1 - Landscape

PL1.1 Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the National Landscape should seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape with reference to key documents such as the Malvern Hills Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, local authority Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisations and National Landscape Partnership guidance documents.

- There should be a presumption against the loss of key characteristics identified in the landscape character assessment.
- Degraded distinctive landscapes and landscape features should be restored.
- Positive landscape change should be promoted to landowners, managers, government and all those with an influence over land.

PL1.2 Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the National Landscape, should seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the scenic quality of the location and its setting, views (including those into and out of the designated area) and visual amenity.

PL1.3 Conserving and enhancing landscape character should be a key objective of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the National Landscape.

## Policy PL2 - Natural and cultural capital

PL2.1 The natural and cultural capital\* of the National Landscape, and the services they provide, should continue to be assessed and evaluated by the responsible authorities:

- The use of natural and cultural capital accounting should inform investment, development and management decisions.
- The financial and non-financial benefits of natural and cultural capital and the services they provide should be promoted.

\* *the stock of natural and cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) assets*

PL2.2 Proposals affecting the National Landscape should seek to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural capital of the National Landscape and the services they provide.

PL2.3 Natural and cultural capital and the services they provide should be key components of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the National Landscape.

## Background

- 7.8. Landscapes are dynamic and change in them is inevitable. The key landscape characteristics of each part of the National Landscape are well documented. The Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership has produced a Landscape Strategy and Guidelines specific to the ten landscape character types within the National Landscape. Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) have been prepared for each of the three counties of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. These provide an objective and comprehensive description of the landscape [need to add source references?].
- 7.9. Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) assessments have been prepared for each of the three counties. These assessments provide a framework for describing and understanding how successive cultures have left their mark on today's landscape. The HLCs form a basis for further studies, such as detailed assessments of settlement patterns. They also give recognition in the planning system and in other land management processes to those distinctive landscape areas and features that are not statutorily protected.
- 7.10. LCAs and HLCs play a critical role in helping to inform policy making and land management activities. They also guide the development control process so that it reflects and strengthens the essential landscape character of the National Landscape. Achieving greater integration between these two tools will promote even better understanding. The Partnership's Landscape Strategy draws from many different subject areas. It will help decision makers to deliver a more cohesive approach to land management within the area.
- 7.11. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) encourages governments to identify and assess landscape types, with the active participation of communities, and to draw up programmes for their protection and management. The ELC defines landscape as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. It encourages a joined-up approach in all areas of land use, development and management, including the recognition of landscape in law.

- 7.12. Similarly, Natural England's National Character Area profile for the area (NCA 103) identifies opportunities for positive and broad-based environmental change. Many of the policies identified in this management plan follow a common approach. They recognise the importance of the distinctive character of the National Landscape while accepting change. They pursue land management practices that protect and enhance the environment while supporting the socio-economic needs of local people and the role and importance of ecosystem services. Landscapes have undergone, often dramatic, change in the past. Yet they continue to provide a wide range of natural and cultural capital (the stock of natural and cultural heritage assets).
- 7.13. The National Landscape has a wealth of natural and cultural capital that provide goods and services, often called ecosystem services, that benefit wider society. These assets – and the services that they provide – are of local, national and, for some services, international importance. However, they are not fully understood or valued.

### Special features

- The prominent steeply sloping principal ridge contrasting with flatter land to the east and south and the gently undulating hills to the west and north.
- Extensive areas of acid grassland and heath on the hill tops, with rough grazing.
- Mixed broadleaved woodland often of ancient origin and relatively small in size, on the lower hills and valleys in the north and west.
- Orchards, including traditional orchards in parishes such as Colwall, Alfrick and Suckley.
- Fields bordered by hedgerows and often containing hedgerow trees.
- Fields of pasture, especially those that are unimproved and semi-improved.
- Mature and veteran trees in arable and pastoral fields and in hedgerows
- Unenclosed commons to the south east with a strong sense of wildness.
- Scattered settlements and small wayside cottages, particularly by the commons.

### Key issues

- 7.14. Data published by Natural England in 2006 found that the essentially strong character of the area was maintained between 1999 and 2003. In 2017, the National Landscape Partnership published a review of landscape change between 2006 and 2016 based on an analysis of photographs taken from fixed points: [Ten years of landscape change \(malvern-hills-nl.org.uk\)](https://www.malvern-hills-nl.org.uk/ten-years-of-landscape-change). In 2024 the Partnership reviewed change between 2018 and 2023 based on an analysis of 31 fixed points. Major positive change was found to have occurred in just 3.2% of the sample, minor positive change in 25.8% and no change in 51.6%. Minor negative change was apparent in 12.9% of the sample and major negative change in 6.5%. These findings show clearly that there is work to be done. The county-based LCAs identify the forces for change affecting the different landscapes within the National Landscape but some of the key issues are described below. The National Landscape Partnership has published guidance on how to manage the different landscapes of the National Landscape.
- 7.15. Seemingly small changes such as a gradual deterioration in hedgerow condition and the loss, without replacement, of trees in fields and hedgerows are a cumulative threat to the health of the landscape. They need to be regarded against the historical backdrop of larger scale changes that were precipitated by Government policy many decades ago. Small-scale

changes may result from shifts in land use, for example hedgerow boundaries becoming gappy where they no longer serve a functional purpose and hedgerow trees being regarded as a nuisance because they cast shade on arable crops or are perceived as a danger to a highway. It is important to find ways of creatively retaining and replacing, in good condition, elements and features that are characteristic of the local landscape. For example, mature trees in pastoral fields serve a valuable function providing shade and cover to stock – a function that will become more important in an era of climate change.

- 7.16. Market forces and subsidies are the key drivers of change in the farmed landscape (see Farming and Forestry). Such drivers may exert a positive or negative force on the landscape. For example, a growth in the demand for cider some years ago led to an increase in the planting of bush orchards whilst a more recent commercial decision by Heineken not to renew contracts with growers of apples in the region has led to the grubbing out of traditional orchards. Orchards are an established and valued feature of the landscape.
- 7.17. The quality and quantity of grazing activity on the High Hills and Slopes and Unenclosed Commons landscapes is generally improving. This is mainly due to active management by the Malvern Hills Trust. However, reduced interest in grazing by those with commoners' rights (a key cultural activity practiced over centuries) and a decline in the profitability of livestock, together with pressures from recreational demands made by the public means that more effort is still required. Grazing on the hills and commons is regarded as necessary to maintain the health of the Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- 7.18. There has been an increase in the use of polythene to support the production of certain crops. There has also been an increase in polytunnels, especially to the south and west. It is possible that the use of plastic to support the growth of higher value crops will increase in the future. Such developments can be highly visible, potentially affecting landscape character and people's enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape .
- 7.19. Horses and ponies are now quite common in certain parts of the National Landscape. They can be important and beneficial to conserving landscape character as grazing livestock but they can also be associated with a growth in built development, paddocks and equine infrastructure. Under poor management, grazing activity can contribute to the degradation of field patterns, hedgerows, grassland and orchards. The sub-division of fields with white tape can be visually intrusive.
- 7.20. Changing agricultural practices, such as growing soft fruit under polytunnels, and hotter drier summers will lead to an increase in the demand for surface water storage and other supporting infrastructure. There is more recent evidence of this in the parish of Colwall. Large areas of standing water are not a characteristic feature of the National Landscape and high levels of visibility mean that such developments need to be handled sensitively.
- 7.21. In some areas, the strong regular enclosure pattern has broken down because of historical changes with hedgerows and hedgerow trees lost or replaced by fencing. It is important to replant and regenerate hedgerows and hedgerow trees to replace the mature trees lost and to better connect the landscape for wildlife.
- 7.22. Historically, woodland clearance and the gradual loss of trees along some hedgerows and streams have damaged the visual links between areas historically cleared and those still wooded. This affect may get worse with the spread of tree diseases, such as Chalara dieback of ash (see Agriculture and Forestry).

- 7.23. Data shows a gradual increase in the number of farm holdings in the National Landscape from 113 in 2010 to 128 in 2021. Small farms continue to dominate the National Landscape with 57% being under 20 ha. Farms over 50 ha have increased from 20% of holdings in 2010 to 26% in 2021.<sup>39</sup> This can lead to development because of the need for new buildings and facilities. Existing properties may be enlarged or new structures built.
- 7.24. There will be a growth in the size of settlements in and around the National Landscape to meet demands for housing. This is likely to affect views in and out of the area. The growth of farm shops and the conversion of farm buildings for non-agricultural businesses have changed the traditional setting of some holdings.
- 7.25. These issues can all affect the landscape. There may be increased built development in both settlements and rural areas; a loss of local vernacular design and distinctiveness; and ‘higher’ standards of highway management and road signing that may be out character with the area. There is a call for increased house building and the proposed expansion of onshore wind farms and solar energy may degrade the scenic and/or character value of the landscape.
- 7.26. The topography of the Malvern Hills means that all the main landscape types are visible from the summit ridge, which also offers extensive views to the countryside forming the setting of the National Landscape. Similarly, the hills themselves provide a very visible and prominent focus. Views play an important part in shaping our appreciation and understanding of the landscape. The existence of such views, often containing well-known landmarks and cherished landscapes, enriches our daily life, attracts visitors and helps our communities prosper. Without careful management, views within, from and to the National Landscape may be lost or degraded as vegetation grows or structures are built. The National Landscape Partnership has produced guidance on identifying and grading views and viewpoints

## Tranquillity and dark skies

### Outcome 14 – Tranquillity and dark skies:

**People can experience calmness and spiritual refreshment within the National Landscape, free from unnecessary noise, light and human induced disturbance.**

### Policy PL3 - Tranquillity

PL3.1 Measures should be taken to remove and, where removal is not possible, minimise existing sources of noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance to enhance the tranquillity of the National Landscape.

PL3.2 Proposals that are likely to impact on the tranquillity of the area should have regard to its recreational and amenity value by mitigating and reducing to a minimum the potential adverse impacts on a quiet, calm and peaceful experience. In considering any proposal, there is a need to:

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<sup>39</sup> Taken from Defra June Survey of Agriculture <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june>

- Identify the positive indicators of tranquillity present around the proposal
- Determine what effect the proposal will have on these positive indicators of tranquillity
- Determine if the proposal introduces any new negative indicators of tranquillity
- Consider how proposals may protect existing tranquillity

## Policy PL4 - Dark skies

PL4.1 Measures should be taken to increase the area of dark skies in the National Landscape by removing and, where removal is not possible, minimising existing sources of light pollution.

PL4.2 Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies and tranquillity of the National Landscape should have regard to and be compatible with best practice standards and guidance, in particular, the National Landscape Guidance on Lighting as well as that published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals and the Commission for Dark Skies. Lighting schemes should be kept to a minimum and only installed where it is imperative.

## Background

7.27. In its purest form, tranquillity is a state of mind rather than a specific feature of a place, so it can be affected by many factors. There is no universally accepted definition of tranquillity, but the definitions used generally include words such as calm, peaceful, without noise. The Campaign to Protect Rural England defines tranquillity by relating the sense of calmness to experiencing the sights and sounds of nature<sup>40</sup>:

‘The quality of calm experienced in places with mainly natural features and activities, free from disturbance from manmade ones.’

7.28. Tranquillity is a natural resource, and an essential quality of the Malvern Hills. It is a much-valued aspect of human experience. With its long views, the sounds of nature, and massive skies, the National Landscape offers many opportunities to experience deep tranquillity. It enables people to appreciate the beauty and harmony of the natural world. Tranquillity is a central part of why the area matters deeply to so many people and the reason many want to spend time there.

7.29. Noise is a complex subject<sup>41</sup>. Sound can be measured but there is no such thing as a noise meter. Noise is unwanted sound. It can have an adverse effect on the person hearing it. Primarily that adverse effect is annoyance, which is a subjective experience. Consequently, that means a sound that one person finds enjoyable can be intensely annoying to another person.

7.30. A person’s reaction to a sound depends on many factors. These include the type of source (e.g. transport, construction, industry, music); the level of sound that is heard; the frequency

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<sup>40</sup> Campaign to Protect Rural England (2006) Saving Tranquil Places: How to protect and promote a vital asset. Available at: <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places/item/1855-saving-tranquil-places>

<sup>41</sup> Environmental Scientist, the search for tranquillity, Journal of the Institution of Environmental Sciences October 2019.



content of the sound (broadband, high pitch, low pitch or tonal); its duration; whether it is continuous; and the time of day it occurs. It also depends on what the person is trying to do when they hear the sound. A quiet area in open countryside is one that is undisturbed by noise from traffic, industry or recreational activities<sup>42</sup>.

- 7.31. Being able to take a peaceful walk, cycle or ramble in tranquil countryside adds immeasurably to many people's quality of life. Tranquillity is not just a valued pleasure: there is evidence it has important benefits. Exposure to nature is good for our health and wellbeing. It reduces stress levels, improves mood and makes people feel good about themselves. Areas that are tranquil offer the chance to get away from the pressures of modern life and recharge our batteries.
- 7.32. Plans for new infrastructure and other development can shrink and fragment the remaining reserves of tranquillity in the area. While developments are often talked up in terms of benefits to jobs and the economy, the impact on unspoilt countryside and the value it has for people locally, regionally, and nationally and their quality of life, receives too little thought.
- 7.33. Tranquillity needs to be properly valued in making decisions on housing, transport or energy infrastructure, so new developments do not unnecessarily damage and deplete it further. In the best of cases, tranquillity cannot only be maintained but made better.

### Special features

- Expansive dark night skies with the stars clearly visible
- The sounds and scents of nature predominate
- Attractive resting places with minimal disturbance from human-causes
- Visually attractive views natural features and characteristics

### Key issues

- 7.34. Tranquillity is important for mental and physical well-being. It improves the quality of life. Power lines, masts, cars, roads, light pollution and building developments can erode tranquillity. The effects of new development on tranquillity, and the cumulative effects of such developments, need to be carefully assessed and considered.
- 7.35. People search for calmness and spiritual refreshment in the Malvern Hills. The area can feel remote and tranquil; the night sky is inherently dark with research suggesting that these nights skies meet the International Dark Sky Reserves standard.<sup>43</sup> This is a special quality of this landscape. But the landscape is slowly changing. New activities and developments within the National Landscape and its setting are adding noise, light and movement into the landscape. As this quality of the National Landscape declines, then the appreciation and enjoyment of the area is likely to diminish. The National Planning Policy Framework<sup>44</sup> expects:

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<sup>42</sup> European Parliament (2002) Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 June 2002 relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise

<sup>43</sup> This designation comes from the International Dark Sky Association to support those seeking to improve the quality of the night skies. Silver means the Milky Way must be visible in summer and winter. <http://darksky.org/idsp/reserves/>

<sup>44</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2023, paragraph 191.

- The reduction of noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;
- The protection of tranquil areas for their recreational and amenity value; and
- A reduction of the impact of light pollution on intrinsically dark landscapes.

7.36. Light pollution occurs when artificial light shines where it is neither wanted nor needed. In broad terms, there are three types of light pollution:

- skyglow – the pink or orange glow we see for miles around towns and cities, spreading deep into the countryside, caused by a scattering of artificial light by airborne dust and water droplets
- glare – the uncomfortable brightness of a light source
- light intrusion – light spilling beyond the boundary of the property on which a light is located, sometimes shining through windows and curtains.

7.37. There is no legal requirement to provide public lighting but some people feel that street lighting within rural settlements is an important safety feature. Poorly designed and placed lampposts can be visually intrusive in daylight. Highly reflective signs are less visually intrusive than illuminated signs. Street lighting affects wildlife. For example, bats exploit low light levels and bright light disorients them<sup>45</sup>. Local highway authorities should identify areas with severe light pollution and target action to reduce it, such as investing in dimming technology, running part-night lighting schemes (in consultation with the local community) or replacing street lighting with less light polluting types. There are good examples of this approach in Herefordshire and in Worcestershire.

## Historic environment

### Outcome 15 – Historic environment

**The historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape is conserved and valued, helping to deliver long-term benefits to the people, economy and environment of the area.**

### Policy PL5 - Historic environment

PL5.1 Proposals that are likely to impact on the historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape should be compatible with, and seek to further, the conservation and enhancement of these heritage assets and their setting. This should include:

- respecting the historical elements of landscape character including features such as; buildings, sites, layout and context, including the relationship between the existing feature or settlement and the landscape.
- ensuring the sustainable use of historic buildings and other heritage assets, particularly those identified as being at risk.

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<sup>45</sup> Alison Fure, Bats and lighting in The London Naturalist, No. 85, 2006



PL5.2 Opportunities should be sought to promote the awareness, understanding and use of Historic Environment Records, Conservation Area Appraisals, Historic Landscape Characterisation and Heritage Strategies and Action Plans. These should be used to influence decisions regarding the management of the National Landscape’s historic environment and cultural heritage.

PL5.3 Historic environment and cultural heritage should be a key component of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the National Landscape.

PL5.4 Promote greater public understanding of, and engagement with, the historic environment of the National Landscape and celebrate it in arts, cultural, and social activities across the area.

### National target – historic environment

PL5.5 Stakeholders should work towards the delivery of the relevant targets for heritage assets within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. The apportioned targets for the Malvern Hills to be achieved are:

Target 10 Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

**Note:** at the time of publication there were no nationally designated heritage assets at risk in The Malvern Hills National Landscape. Stakeholders should ensure that this remains the case

## Background

7.38. The Malvern Hills National Landscape contains a large variety of heritage assets that include iconic hill forts, historic farmsteads, listed and non-listed buildings and the designed landscapes of country houses. These assets are set within a landscape of rich historic diversity with its distinctive field patterns, ancient woodlands and commons; and the locally distinctive settlements with their local vernacular and buildings of special architectural or historic interest. These are a vital element of the National Landscape’s character and an important resource for leisure and study.

7.39. There are several ways to protect heritage assets. Statutory protection through national designation is one mechanism that achieves this. Buildings and structures may be “listed” under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Archaeological remains may be “scheduled” under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. These different designated assets are on the National Heritage List for England<sup>46</sup>, a record of all nationally designated heritage assets (including Registered Parks and Gardens and Registered Battlefields). Planning authorities can also designate areas as conservation areas, which aim to preserve areas of special architectural or historic interest.

7.40. In addition, local listing allows for the management of local heritage through the planning system and provides an opportunity to engage with local communities. The conservation

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<sup>46</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

and contribution of locally listed heritage assets is a material consideration in planning decisions that directly affect them or their setting. Local heritage assets can range from buildings and other structures to historic designed landscapes and archaeology.

- 7.41. Not all heritage assets are designated or benefit from other mechanisms of protection. These undesignated heritage assets still make an important contribution to the local character of the National Landscape and information on these and designated heritage assets are recorded on the Historic Environment Records (HERs) maintained by the Gloucestershire and Worcestershire county councils, and Herefordshire Unitary Council (the councils). These records are an essential source of information for our understanding of the character and management of the historic environment. The information is used for planning and development control, for conservation of the historic environment and to inform public benefit and educational use.
- 7.42. Studies by English Heritage (now Historic England) and the councils have significantly improved our understanding of the historic environment of the National Landscape (for example, Historic Farmsteads, Historic Landscape Characterisation and the National Mapping Programme work that was summarised in the English Heritage publication ‘The Malvern Hills, An Ancient Landscape’). These publications highlight areas for further research and this, combined with new discoveries, will continue to add to our understanding.

### Special features

- Iron Age hill forts at British Camp and Midsummer Hill.
- The shire ditch – a ridge-top boundary interpreted as having prehistoric origins.
- King’s Thirds ditches enclosing Royal Forests land c1628.
- Bronze Age burial grounds, for example at Colwall and Mathon.
- Moated sites representing medieval settlements.
- Industrial architecture such as limekilns, tunnels and quarry cottages.
- Listed buildings, including Eastnor Castle, Bromesberrow Place and Little Malvern Priory, as well as listed headstones and chest tombs; and gas lamps.
- Conservation areas – including Malvern Wells, Eastnor, Colwall and part of Cradley.
- Victorian villas of Malvern (Malvern stone and render).
- Half-timbered buildings, especially in the west of the National Landscape.
- Historic designed landscapes of national significance, including their trees and woodlands, at Eastnor and Hope end.
- Historic designed landscapes of local significance, such as Old Colwall and Bromesberrow.
- The unenclosed landscape and designed elements of the Malvern Hills ridge.
- Victorian tree plantings, for example lime boulevards in Colwall, and veteran trees.
- Springs, wells and well-dressing.
- Artistic associations with poets (Elizabeth Barrett Browning), architects (C.F.A. Voysey) and composers (Edward Elgar).

## Key issues

- 7.43. Designated heritage assets are subject to statutory protection. This is by inclusion on the National Heritage List or by conservation area designation. Non-designated prominent features are not as well protected and receive no statutory protection as heritage assets, though they may be a material consideration in the planning system. Other regulatory systems (such as the Hedgerow Regulations) may offer indirect protection. However, whilst this protection can help to prevent deliberate damage, it will not ensure good management. Additional measures may be needed to protect features from neglect and to bring them into good condition. Many features in the National Landscape are locally important and may be at risk. Yet they receive no statutory protection. The county HERs provide a record of locally distinct heritage assets.
- 7.44. Good, regularly maintained data is essential for the management of sites and the protection of heritage assets. Information now exists on the condition of Scheduled Monuments, Grade I and II\* Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens in the National Landscape. This is through national level data coordinated by Historic England. However, much research still needs to be done. There is a need to ensure that data exists also for undesignated heritage assets. HERs hold a diverse range of records for all areas including the National Landscape. However, a more comprehensive record of the condition of the historic environment is needed so that this can help guide the priorities for its conservation and enhancement.
- 7.45. There is poor awareness about the historic environment among some members of the public and some land and property owners. People may not know that heritage assets exist or appreciate their place in the wider landscape. They may not understand the effects of change and development on the assets, or the consequences of neglect. Raising public awareness, particularly by encouraging a stronger 'pride of place' for the historic environment and an appreciation of its economic value, will greatly aid its conservation and establish it more firmly as an essential asset.
- 7.46. It has been predicted that climate change will result in more extremes in weather conditions. This could cause issues for heritage assets, for example, erosion, damage through tree fall or failure of structures through increased extremes of wetting and drying.
- 7.47. There is no single building style, type of material or pattern of development in the National Landscape. There are a range of styles that give character and distinctiveness to different parts of the area. Lack of attention to details can harm the special qualities of the National Landscape and diminish the distinctiveness of its built heritage.
- 7.48. Farming and forestry practices can adversely affect heritage assets, particularly archaeological remains. Quite often, this is because their presence is unknown or their value understated. The remains of heritage assets can be damaged by cultivation and drainage. The removal of boundaries can break a link with the landscapes of the past. A change from permanent grassland to seasonal cropping increases the chance of damage to buried heritage assets by cultivation. New, more vigorous crops, such as energy crops, may have invasive roots that can break into a structure. Farm diversification and the division of properties may intensify these effects. There is evidence that recreational pressure (from walkers, mountain and trail bikes) can be detrimental to heritage assets. A survey of the Shire Ditch in 2006, for example, found that this Scheduled Monument was suffering erosion because of informal recreational use. Defra is suggesting that in future, public

money will be for conservation and environmental gains rather than commercial activities. Such an approach may help conserve heritage assets.

- 7.49. Lighting schemes can have a negative effect upon the character of the rural landscape, both in day time (by the introduction of intrusive structures) and night time (by ‘light pollution’). Traditional light fittings add much to the local character of an area and reinforce the sense of local distinctiveness.

## Farming and forestry

### Outcome 16 – Farming and forestry

**Land management in the National Landscape integrates productive commercial activity with the conservation of cultural, natural and social heritage.**

### Policy PL6 – Farming and forestry

PL6.1 Farming and forestry/woodland management practices in the National Landscape and its setting should be compatible with and seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area. Farmers and land managers should have:

- access to clear and consistent sources of advice, guidance and support (including on regenerative and nature-friendly practices);
- fair access to markets including the promotion of local and seasonal produce and the development of local services and markets; and
- payments for environmental services that benefit the distinctive natural and historic environment of the National Landscape.

PL6.2 Opportunities should be sought to bring woodlands, orchards and other characteristic habitats into favourable conservation condition including through encouraging and supporting sustainable and appropriate management regimes that provide an economic return. Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) are a particular priority for restoration to diverse, broadleaved cover in accordance with the Nature Recovery Plan for the area.

PL6.3 Woodland creation and tree planting proposals (including natural regeneration) should seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape. They should:

- i. Consider their impacts on the landscape character of their setting and their effects on the open views that people may enjoy from viewpoints, roads and public rights of way.
- ii. Be located where they best meet the objectives of the nature recovery network, improving the connectivity of woodland habitats whilst avoiding damaging other habitats and their potential to be better connected.

PL6.4 National and local guidance, including guidance from Government Agencies and the Non-Native Species Secretariat, on invasive non-native species, pests and diseases should be followed and appropriate biosecurity measures promoted to protect food production and biodiversity resources.

PL6.5 Soil degradation should be halted and reversed by managing soils in a way that:

- (i) increases organic content, water retention and carbon sequestration; and
- (ii) minimises erosion, water pollution and compaction.

## Background

7.50. Farming and forestry still represent the significant forms of land management in the National Landscape, representing 11% of all registered businesses in the area<sup>47</sup>. They continue to provide local jobs and income. There are different scales and forms of activity in farming, ranging from small-holders who consume their own produce to those who operate commercially with a strong profit motive. Equally, forestry generally refers to larger scale commercial management operations whilst woodland management has a very long tradition of yielding valuable products for local use.

7.51. Farming is undergoing a period of significant change and disruption, largely driven by changes to policy that have altered the way farmers can access public funding to support their businesses. This has involved a shift from an approach largely based on subsidising the cost of agricultural activities, to one that pays farmers for environmental goods and services (or ‘public goods’). Managing this transition and maintaining a viable farm business can be very challenging. A range of schemes exist to support landowners and managers. Defra group the grants under the following headings:

- Managing land to benefit the environment
- Investing in equipment, technology and infrastructure to increase productivity
- Improving water and air quality
- Reducing flood risk
- Protecting species and habitats and supporting biodiversity
- Farming in protected landscapes
- Improving animal health and welfare
- Creating or improving woodland and protecting tree health
- Attracting private investment in nature projects
- Funding for research and innovation
- Delinked payments and lump sum payments

7.52. Before Brexit, farming was supported through the European Union Common Agricultural Policy and the main payment was the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). England is creating its own schemes but has introduced a transition period. The 2023 scheme year was the last year of BPS and from 2024, transitional delinked payments are replacing BPS payments.

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<sup>47</sup> From the Defra Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework 2024 Additional statistic 22: Registered businesses by size and type in Protected Landscapes (based on ONS Inter-Departmental Business Register 2021/22)

Delinked payments will be made each year from 2024 until 2027, with the value decreasing each year through progressive reductions.

- 7.53. The new grants of particular interest in the National Landscape are:
- the Environmental Land Management scheme that helps farming to be productive in a way that benefits the environment;
  - the England Woodland Grant schemes.
- 7.54. There are three Environmental Land Management schemes.
- The Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme pays farmers and land managers to take up or maintain sustainable farming and land management practices that:
    - protect and benefit the environment
    - support food production
    - improve productivity
  - The Countryside Stewardship scheme provides financial incentives for farmers, foresters and land managers to protect and enhance the natural environment by:
    - increasing biodiversity
    - improving habitat
    - expanding woodland areas
    - improving water quality
    - improving air quality
    - improving natural flood management
  - The Landscape Recovery scheme (the current round has closed) pays groups of farmers and land managers to do long-term, large-scale projects together. Land must be in England and consist of at least 500 connected hectares. The scheme supports:
    - net zero carbon emissions
    - protected sites
    - wildlife-rich habitat
- 7.55. The England Woodland Grant schemes are:
- The England Woodland Creation Grant that provides funding to create new woodland on areas that are at least 1 hectare
  - The Woodland Creation Planning Grant that provides funding to prepare a Woodland Creation Design Plan that complies with the UK Forestry Standard.
  - Protecting tree health seeks to test different ways of slowing the spread of pests and diseases affecting trees in England. Grants are available for ash with ash dieback; diseased larch, spruce and sweet chestnut; and oak with oak processionary moth.
- 7.56. There are sometimes tensions between the need to improve farm profitability, which may involve more intensive and less traditional forms of land management, and the aspiration to conserve and enhance natural beauty, which has its own costs. Most landowners recognise the need to maintain the quality of the landscape. However, retaining natural beauty needs resources and, with reducing exchequer support, there will be also be a need for other sources of income generation such as green finance.
- 7.57. Trees have a huge significance in the National Landscape, contributing to the heritage and rural economy. Trees provide major ecosystem services to society, as well as a direct

economic value and social amenity<sup>48</sup>. Trees can also help mitigate climate change by capturing and storing carbon. Woodland covers around 20% of the total National Landscape area. This consists mainly of small broadleaved woodlands on banks, ridges and hilltops, and hedgerows. There are larger woodlands covering more than 100 ha at Eastnor, Storrige/Alfrick and Bromesberrow. Alongside global trading and modifications to climate, new diseases and pests are affecting trees in the National Landscape. Defra has recently published its tree health resilience strategy. This explains how the government will work with others to protect England's tree population from these threats .

### Key facts<sup>49</sup>

- Agriculture is the dominant land use within the National Landscape, occupying around 70% of the area.
- Permanent grassland accounts for 47.8% of the farmed area, cropped and fallow land 30% and rough grazing (not including Malvern Hills Trust land) 3.9%. Woodland on agricultural holdings covers 12.2% of the utilised agricultural area.
- There are 128 farm holdings in the National Landscape
- 48% of all farms in the National Landscape are devoted wholly to livestock, 12.5% are horticultural, and cereals and general cropping together account for 26.5% of all holdings.
- 37.5% of farms are between 5 and 20 ha in size, 19.5% of farms are smaller than 5 ha in size, 12.5% are over 100 ha.
- 79.2% of all livestock in the National Landscape are sheep with cattle accounting for approximately 11.8%.
- Woodland covers around 23% of the total National Landscape area.

### Special features

- Ancient semi-natural woodlands, often small-scale and found on banks, ridges and hill tops.
- Unimproved and semi-improved grasslands and commons, providing valuable grazing land and important wildlife habitats.
- Apple, pear and cherry orchards.
- Hedges and hedgerow trees, forming boundaries to old pastures and arable land.
- Large wooded estates and parklands with a mosaic of grassland, woodland and cultivated land.
- Veteran trees in hedgerows, woodlands and fields

### Key issues

#### Farmland

- 7.58. The continued development and implementation of more sustainable and regenerative farming practices, which may span conventional and organic systems, has an important role

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<sup>48</sup> UK National Ecosystem Assessment: <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/> and <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/uknea/>.

<sup>49</sup> From Defra annual June Agricultural Survey 2021



to play in delivering multiple social and environmental objectives whilst simultaneously producing food. A focus on improving landscape function can help inform any approach and lead to more holistically optimal outcomes. Landscape function considers underpinning resources and process such as:

- Actions to minimise the use of artificial inputs and improve the natural fertility of agricultural soils, increasing the nutritional value of food produced from them.
- Actions to increase soil infiltration rates, slowing the flow of water through farmed and managed land, improving drought resilience and reducing diffuse pollution.
- Actions to increase the amount of solar energy being captured by plants and trees (including crops), sequestering more atmospheric carbon and driving food chains for people and wildlife.
- Actions to increase the diversity and abundance of plants and wildlife on farmland, supporting greater natural resilience to pests, disease and other environmental stresses.

7.59. Farmers are under increasing pressure to respond to many factors that are influencing the way they use and manage land. For example, the climate crisis requires farmers to not only identify how they can reach net zero within their farm businesses and supply chains, but additionally find ways of sequestering and storing carbon in the landscape for the rest of society. They also must achieve this without compromising food security by taking too much land out of production or failing to develop farming systems that are climate resilient. Additionally farming also has an essential role to play in nature recovery, as many of the local habitats are a result of farming activity, and farming operations such as grazing are necessary to manage and restore them.

7.60. A good supply of high-quality soil and water is essential to support profitable agriculture as well as the wildlife and landscapes of the National Landscape. Protecting soil and water leads to cleaner drinking water, safer bathing water, healthier fisheries, thriving wildlife and a lower flood risk. Programmes such as Catchment Sensitive Farming help farmers to protect water bodies and the environment.

7.61. Growth in global demand for food is leading to worries about food security. There is pressure to intensify food production in the UK. Such intensification can happen without detriment to the natural environment but this needs careful planning and management. Rising costs of inputs, such as fertilisers and energy, together with high environmental standards, may also drive sustainable improvements in productivity. Defra's new environmental land management system should encourage sustainability and strengthen links to enhancing landscape and nature.

7.62. Brexit has led to the imposition of tariffs and driven up the cost of food and reduced access to migrant labour. Raising the level of the minimum wage and improving pensions will push up labour costs. The competition from imported goods may well increase. There may be increased volatility in the price of fuel and animal feedstuffs, coupled with higher standards of animal welfare. There may be less money in the rural economy and fewer jobs in agriculture (2021 data from Defra suggests that there are now just 82 full-time farmers in the National Landscape). Collectively, such threats could have a major impact on key land uses that underpin the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

7.63. In difficult times, farmers must find either additional or new sources of income. They may grow new crops and/or move into other sectors, such as tourism and recreation. They may



use their land for energy or communication structures. This can help to maintain a viable business and improve the products and services on offer to the community and visitors.

- 7.64. While good for the rural economy, certain forms of diversification have the potential to degrade the special qualities of the area. For example, an expansion of renewable energy installations may impact on the visual amenity of the area whilst equestrian activities could alter the condition of fields and field boundaries. Good practice guidance is available to support many forms of diversification.

## Woodland

- 7.65. Many woodlands in the area are small, fragmented and difficult to access. There is often no infrastructure to make sustainable woodland management viable. Consequently, they have not been actively managed for many years. Bringing woodlands back into management is a priority and can be more important than planting new woodlands. Actively managing woodland in a sustainable way helps the woodland become more resilient to climate change and disease, benefits biodiversity and supports the rural economy. Lack of management is due to many factors, but especially the lack of appropriate markets for woodland products. Ash dieback has prompted many woodland owners to bring woodland back into management but 46% of woodland, 1,147 ha, in the National Landscape is still classed as unmanaged<sup>50</sup>.
- 7.66. Woodland creation and tree planting should consider its impacts on the landscape setting and its effects on the views that people enjoy from viewpoints, roads and Public Rights of Way. In some instances, tree planting that is proposed to mitigate the visual impact of new development can also adversely affect landscape character. Planting design and use of open ground can help but it may not be appropriate for a particular site to be planted because of the value of the existing habitat, potential to create and link other priority habitats or landscape character.
- 7.67. The creation of new woodland should occur where it best meets the objectives of the National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and the formal Nature Recovery Strategies (on their publication) and it should be appropriately managed. Opportunities for natural regeneration should be looked for in concert with opportunities for planting to assist this process.
- 7.68. Ancient woodland is a unique and irreplaceable habitat. Plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) would have started life as ancient semi-natural woodland but native broadleaved trees have been felled and non-native trees planted in their place. This has damaged the character of the National Landscape and its biodiversity. These sites need restoration.
- 7.69. ‘Right Tree, Right Place, Right Reason’ principles should be applied when planting trees. For example, the planting of ‘privacy belts’ around property can have a detrimental impact on landscape character and views, particularly from roads. Woodland creation and tree planting, including restocking after felling, should seek to retain the character of the woodlands and treescapes outside of woodlands whilst promoting resilience through considering species diversity, genetic diversity (provenance and origin) and mitigation of climate change and pests and diseases.

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<sup>50</sup> From Defra’s Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework 2024

## Horticulture

- 7.70. There are changing tastes leading to new varieties, partly influenced by health issues, like the sugar tax. There is currently an over-supply in cider apples and decisions have been made to end contracts with certain growers. Commercially viable bush orchards and hop fields can be intensive forms of land use but environmental benefits can arise from such activities, for example, through organic approaches and the planting and management of wildlife rich habitats around fields that shelter crops and attract pollinators and natural predators (see below). A lack of management in most traditional orchards is hastening the demise of these very valuable wildlife habitats.

## Pollination

- 7.71. There are many ways of achieving pollination but a large proportion of plants rely on insects to pollinate their flowers. In the UK, bees (wild solitary bees and bumblebees, as well as domesticated honeybees), flies (including hoverflies and bee-flies), butterflies, moths, wasps and beetles carry out most of the pollination. The economic value of this service has been estimated at £400 million. The numbers of insect pollinators have declined due in part to changes to agricultural practices, the loss of natural or semi-natural habitats and the use of pesticides.
- 7.72. Bees have received particular attention. Honeybees contribute directly to local food production and make an important contribution, through pollination, to crop production. Defra is responsible for the bee health policy, and particularly the implementation of the Healthy Bees Plan . The National Bee Unit delivers the bee health programme. The aim of the programme is to control the spread of endemic notifiable diseases of honeybees and to identify and manage the risk associated with new exotic pests and diseases that may be introduced.
- 7.73. American foulbrood and European foulbrood are notifiable diseases prevalent in the UK. Small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps mite are notifiable pests but not thought to be present in the UK. Import regulations are the main defence against its introduction. *Vespa velutina*, known as the Asian hornet or yellow legged hornet, is a predator of honey bees. Locally, beekeeping associations operate disease control and self-help schemes and provide practical advice to members on disease recognition, varroa control and good husbandry.

## Pests and pathogens

- 7.74. Tree cover in the National Landscape has been depleted in the past, for example, through Dutch Elm disease. In recent years, several new tree and plant pests and pathogens have emerged as significant risks. Chalara dieback of ash, acute oak decline and horse chestnut bleeding canker are but three examples. Tree diseases have the potential to affect dramatically the landscape character of the National Landscape.
- 7.75. Threats to tree health have increased with changes in weather patterns and the increase in the volume and diversity of plants and plant products entering the UK. This has increased the likelihood of plant pests and pathogens spreading through gardens and woodlands and potentially causing serious damage to either our native flora or commercial crops.
- 7.76. Bovine TB is one of the most significant problems affecting animal health and sustainable livestock farming in England. The government is committed to delivering the 25-year strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free status for England. Controlling the disease in badgers where TB is widespread is an important part of that strategy. The

current threat of TB can be a deterrent to those who might otherwise keep cattle in the National Landscape as part of sustainable and traditional land management.

- 7.77. Populations of wild deer in England (particularly muntjac) and grey squirrels have been increasing rapidly in recent years. Deer and squirrels can have devastating impacts on woodland regeneration and tree growth. Deer can also cause damage to crops and vegetables. They also can cause road traffic accidents and infection with diseases that can affect farm livestock and in some cases humans.
- 7.78. There is feral boar in the nearby Forest of Dean. They are spreading out into the wider countryside as their numbers increase. They are likely to be in the Malvern Hills National Landscape soon. These animals are not true wild boar but the descendants of wild boar and domesticated pigs. Whilst they can be regarded as a part of nature, they can be damaging to farming interests, for example, by uprooting crops and disturbing soil. They are also likely to be injurious to below ground archaeology and native wildlife, for example grubbing up wildflower meadows and eating ground nesting birds, small mammals and reptiles. If a significant population establishes in the area it will need to be controlled.

### Climate change

- 7.79. Climate change is likely to result in an increase in crop and grass yields, but with a greater variability in quantity and quality, including crop failure. New management methods and new varieties are likely to be adopted in response to warmer, drier conditions. The area of energy crops and novel crops is likely to increase. The overall area of grassland is not expected to change significantly, but management may become more extensive. With regards to forestry, increased timber and biomass production can be expected, but with a reduction in quality. Some species, such as oak, are expected to fare better than others such as beech. Land management practices, together with Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms, will need to encompass and deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation measures appropriate to the National Landscape. Relevant measures to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, in relation to rural land management, are outlined elsewhere in this Management Plan.

## Built development and local distinctiveness

### Outcome 17 – Built development

**The distinctive character and natural beauty of the National Landscape is fully reflected in the development and implementation of consistent statutory land use planning policy and guidance across the National Landscape, and in decision-making on all planning applications for development, enriching local distinctiveness and playing a key role in facilitating the economic and social wellbeing of local and rural communities.**

### Policy PL7 – Built development

PL7.1 All development proposals in the National Landscape and its setting should seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area. Justification for development

proposals and plan making within the area should either have regard to or be based on convincing evidence of local need arising from within the national landscape. In doing so, they should be compatible with the National Landscape Management Plan and guidance produced by the National Landscape Partnership, including the:

- i. Adopted Landscape Character Assessments
- ii. Malvern Hills Landscape Strategy and Guidelines
- iii. Malvern Hills Nature Recovery Plan
- iv. Climate Change Adaption Plan (*when published*)
- v. Partnership position statements including that on Housing and landscape-led development
- vi. Malvern Hills National Landscape Guidance on Identifying and Grading Views and Viewpoints;
- vii. Malvern Hills National Landscape Guidance on How Development can respect Landscape in Views and Viewpoints;
- viii. Malvern Hills National Landscape Building Design Guide;
- ix. Malvern Hills National Landscape Guidance on the Selection and Use of Colour;
- x. Malvern Hills National Landscape Guidance on Lighting and
- xi. Other Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership Position Statements.

PL7.2 The purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities should be identified as strategic priorities in Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, Local Transport Plans and other relevant plans and strategies. These plans and strategies should explicitly identify the Malvern Hills National Landscape (AONB) Management Plan as a material consideration and recognise National Landscape guidance documents and position statements as appropriate.

PL7.3 A landscape-led approach should be applied to development proposals in the National Landscape and its setting, proportionate to the type and scale of development being proposed, whereby proposals:

- a. address the natural beauty of the National Landscape as primary consideration at all stages of the development process (including design), from initial conception through to implementation
- b. address all the factors that contribute to the natural beauty of the area
- c. protect and/or enhance key views to and from the National Landscape
- d. address access to natural beauty, including the character of the public rights of way network and its role within wider green infrastructure
- e. reflect and enhance the character of the local area

- f. avoid adverse effects where possible and, if adverse effects cannot be avoided, minimise them
- g. seek opportunities to enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape
- h. deliver substantially more beneficial effects than adverse effects for the natural beauty of the National Landscape and
- i. be compatible with the National Landscape Partnership's Landscape Led Position Statement and its relevant position statements or guidance

This landscape-led approach is particularly important for major development.<sup>51</sup>

PL7.4 The cumulative impacts of development proposals on the natural beauty of the National Landscape should be fully assessed and addressed in accordance with the National Landscape's Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and any relevant position statement or guidance published by the Partnership.

### **Policy PL8 – Local distinctiveness**

PL8.1 Proposals that are likely to impact on the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape should be compatible with, and seek to further, the conservation and enhancement of this local distinctiveness. This should include:

- being informed by the National Landscape's Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and any relevant position statement or guidance published by the Partnership (such as 'Guidance on building design' and the 'Selection and use of colour in development').
- being designed and, where relevant, landscaped to respect local settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials and in accordance with design guidance adopted by local planning authorities.

Innovative designs, compatible with the conservation of natural beauty that are informed by local distinctiveness, character and scale should be welcomed.

The reuse and redevelopment of existing buildings should be supported where this helps retain the distinctive character of the National Landscape.

There should be a presumption against the loss of distinctive features and qualities.

PL8.2 Encourage the development of design guidance that is supported by a robust evidence base and that reflects relevant guidance published by the National Landscape Partnership

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<sup>51</sup> 'Major development', in this context, equates to the definition provided in Footnote 64 of the NPPF 2023

PL8.3 Where there is robust evidence of need to help retain local distinctiveness in the built environment, the recycling, re-use and limited and appropriate extraction of small quantities of locally distinctive building materials, such as Malvern stone, should be supported.

## Background

- 7.80. Development is inevitable and necessary to the National Landscape. It maintains economic viability, sustains the population and supports those who manage the land. To maintain the area's special qualities, it is vital that a framework exists to manage this change effectively and sympathetically. The principal elements of this are the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>52</sup> and the Local Development Plans. Applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the Local Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.81. The National Planning Policy Framework does not change the legal status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Local planning authorities are also tasked to take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and to plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries. The NPPF requires that great weight be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. Care must be taken to minimise the adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make. Designated heritage assets are also required to have strong protection .
- 7.82. Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Parishes and neighbourhood forums can use neighbourhood planning to:
- set planning policies through neighbourhood plans to determine decisions on planning applications; and
  - grant planning permission through Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order.
- 7.83. Several parish councils in the National Landscape have either prepared or are preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans.<sup>53</sup> The National Landscape Unit often works closely with councils in the preparation of these plans to ensure that they help to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
- 7.84. The National Landscape management plan does not form part of the statutory development plan. It helps to set out the strategic context for development. It provides evidence of the value and Special Qualities of the area, provides a basis for cross-organisational work to support the purpose of designation and shows how management activities contribute to

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<sup>52</sup> The National Planning Policy Framework, HMSO, 2023.

<sup>53</sup> Localism Act 2011 and Para 29, National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018)

their protection, enhancement, and enjoyment. It may contain information that is relevant when preparing development plan policies, or which is a material consideration when assessing planning applications.<sup>54</sup>

- 7.85. Relevant authorities have a legal duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Malvern Hills National Landscape<sup>55</sup>. In addition, national planning policy continues to give great weight to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important factors. The policy direction is to refuse planning permission for major developments in National Landscapes unless there is a prime public interest. Being such a valuable landscape, the environmental effects of new proposals will be a major concern. But people must be able to live and work in the area; their social and economic needs are also a factor.
- 7.86. There should not have to be a binary choice between conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Malvern Hills National Landscape, and planning for and permitting new development. The aspiration should be to deliver new development in a way that is compatible with – and positively contributes to – the purpose of National Landscape designation.
- 7.87. Not all land use and management activities come under the planning system. Many agricultural and forestry actions do not need planning permission. Nevertheless, this management plan seeks to influence such activities for the good of the National Landscape on behalf of the nation. The National Landscape Partnership has published a suite of guidance, for example, on how to conserve and enhance the landscape and how to ensure that the impacts of keeping horses are positive<sup>56</sup>.

### Special features

- Rural character and scale of settlements contribute to local distinctiveness, landscape character and sense of tranquillity.
- High-quality built environment characterised by numerous distinctive features, such as settlement patterns, landmark buildings, garden layouts, boundary elements and planting traditions.
- Interested and active local communities engaged in community planning initiatives in the National Landscape.

### Key issues

- 7.88. The National Landscape covers several administrative areas. There is a need to coordinate policy to make sure that it is consistent across the area. This is best achieved through the National Landscape Management Plan. All relevant Local Development Plans now recognise the need for development proposals to be informed by this document. The approach to major developments that could affect the National Landscape and its setting needs to be consistent. Cross boundary developments also need to be coordinated. Examples include green infrastructure and transport projects.

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<sup>54</sup> Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 8-040-20190721 Revision date: 21 07 2019

<sup>55</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Section 85 as amended by Section 245 of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023

<sup>56</sup> Guidance on Keeping Horses in the Landscape, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership 2010



7.89. The allocation of land for new development within and adjacent to the National Landscape has not always been preceded by a proper consideration of its effects on landscape character and visual amenity. This can lead to developments that compromise the integrity of the National Landscape and people's enjoyment of this nationally designated landscape. In dealing with applications for development, local planning authorities must consider the landscape and historic character of the area and the identified threats to it.

7.90. The Government proposes to boost housing supply by restoring mandatory housing targets and strengthening planning obligations to ensure new developments provide more affordable homes. Social and affordable housing needs are sometimes addressed through the exceptions policies in key local planning documents. This allows for development on sites that would not otherwise be available for housing. The management plan supports this approach. However, all new housing should be sensitively located and designed. Affordable housing for local people needs additional protection to maintain that use in the future.

7.91. One of the biggest threats to the National Landscape comes from the cumulative impact of numbers of small developments. Every change of appearance or use of property in the National Landscape has the potential to have either a positive or negative effect. For example:

- Unless there is an agricultural purpose, the use of land for keeping horses requires planning permission. The effect of each individual request for planning permission or change of use may be limited but the cumulative effect can lead to the loss of landscape character through new buildings, tracks, field sub-divisions, shelters and lighting.
- the replacement of a locally distinctive property boundary with ubiquitous close board fencing may not have a big impact but several such actions will erode local character over time.

Planning policy and development control decision-making must address these effects. Some minor building works do not require an application for planning permission but proceed as 'permitted development'. It is much harder to control such changes but the local planning authority can remove some of these consents through Article 4 Directives if it perceives a particular harm.

7.92. The NPPF encourages the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings<sup>57</sup>. The diversification and re-use of redundant rural buildings for economic activities that sustain the local economy and benefits the communities of the National Landscape is to be welcomed provided it conserves and enhances natural beauty. However, some farm diversification proposals risk industrialisation of the countryside and a loss of tranquillity. Due to the scale and nature of their effects, some development activities are likely to be better located outside of the National Landscape and its setting.

7.93. It is Government policy to increase the amount of energy from renewable and low carbon technologies. There will be pressure to deliver new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in the National Landscape if it is deemed that the local environmental impact is acceptable.

## Setting

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<sup>57</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2023: Paragraph 157

7.94. The Malvern Hills are very visible in the wider landscape and the higher ground of the National Landscape often affords good views out. Views are commonly reported to be what people like most about the area. The contribution of setting to the significance of the National Landscape is often expressed by reference to views. Development or change such as the construction of poorly oriented and coloured structures may harm people's enjoyment of the area. In addition, inappropriate development adjacent to the National Landscape can influence landscape character within the designation, for example through associated noise and disturbance. Planning policy and decisions on planning applications should take account of the importance of the setting of the National Landscape, including views (both short and long distance) to and from the National Landscape. The National Landscape Partnership has produced guidance on identifying and grading views and viewpoints, on development and land use change in the setting of the national landscape, and on development visible in views.

7.95. The Malvern Hills provide a very visible and prominent focus. Views play an important part in shaping our appreciation and understanding of the landscape. The existence of such views, often containing well-known landmarks and cherished landscapes, enriches our daily life, attracts visitors and helps our communities prosper. Without careful management, views within, from and to the AONB may be lost or degraded as vegetation grows or structures are built. The National Landscape Partnership has produced [guidance on identifying and grading views and viewpoints www.malvern-hills-nl.org.uk/](http://www.malvern-hills-nl.org.uk/guidance-on-identifying-and-grading-views-and-viewpoints)

### Local distinctiveness

7.96. There are many different styles of building that give character and distinctiveness to different parts of the area. Lack of attention to issues such as local design, layout, scale, materials and colour can harm the special qualities of the National Landscape and diminish the distinctiveness of the built environment. The loss of specimen trees, stone walls, hedgerows and other landscape elements associated with development can also degrade local character and distinctiveness. The National Landscape Partnership has produced guidance on building design to show how new development can make a positive contribution to the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

7.97. Currently, mineral extraction in the National Landscape is largely prohibited by mineral plan policies, other than in exceptional circumstances. A lack of local building materials can make it difficult to restore characteristic features, such as walls and buildings and to impart character to new development. Materials brought in can be costly to transport and can increase the carbon cost of development. Systems to recycle and re-use local materials need to be initiated or expanded. The use of loose material in former quarries and the limited winning of new materials should be considered where this helps to meet conservation objectives, does not impact on special features and is subject to all relevant consenting procedures. This does not apply to 'naturally occurring' loose materials, for example those derived from erosion that is not the result of human activity, which should not be used. Control is through the Minerals Local Plans being developed by the County Councils.

7.98. General planning policy favours building on previously developed sites and filling gaps in settlements. Such development needs to respect local character, design and the pattern and grain of settlements. Whilst increases in density can help to conserve land resources this will not always be appropriate or acceptable.

- 7.99. Traditional orchards within settlements and at the settlement edge are often at risk from development. Traditional orchards are priority wildlife habitats and significant cultural heritage features. They may also contribute positively to meeting current community needs and aspirations. Permission for development should usually be refused on these sites in the National Landscape.

### **Agricultural buildings and infrastructure**

- 7.100. Planning rules that govern the need for permission for agricultural buildings are complex. There is a limited range of exemptions and various works can proceed using a 'prior notification' system, rather than the full planning application process.
- 7.101. Agricultural buildings are often located in areas of open countryside, where permission for other buildings is hard to obtain. Their construction and refurbishment can influence the rural landscape and on people's enjoyment of it. There is a need to make sure that such buildings and any associated access are appropriately sited, scaled and designed in accordance with local guidance.
- 7.102. A key issue in the local area is the use of plastic and fleece to expedite the growth of vegetables and polytunnels for soft fruit, due to their visual impacts and/or effects on the landscape character of the National Landscape. The landscape and visual effects of such materials used as a mulch to warm the soil or protect early crops may be reduced if it is visible for a short period. However, there is some evidence of some fields being covered with fleece in November and December, giving rise to visual effects for many months of the year, including over the winter when the landscape is at its most exposed and when the mitigating effects of mature vegetation is likely to be very limited.
- 7.103. Polytunnels are a form of development and their effects are spread over a long period. Very few locations within the National Landscape are likely to be able to accommodate polytunnel developments of any significant scale without detrimental effects on landscape character and/or visual amenity. Any proposed polytunnel development in or affecting the National Landscape (including those in the National Landscape setting and those particularly visible from high ground) should be scrutinised very closely. The Herefordshire Council Polytunnels Planning Guide (2018)<sup>58</sup> makes it clear that where polytunnel development is proposed and economic benefits are being weighed against landscape impact, priority will be afforded to protecting the natural beauty of the National Landscape. A coordinated approach on this issue should be sought between the three local planning authorities.

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<sup>58</sup> See Herefordshire Council's guidance at [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14577/polytunnels\\_planning\\_guide\\_2018.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14577/polytunnels_planning_guide_2018.pdf)

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Natural beauty

The concept of natural beauty is one of the cornerstones of legislation to protect landscapes in the UK. It has been the basis for the designation of national landscapes (AONBs) and National Parks since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.

Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. It encompasses everything that makes an area distinctive: geology, climate, soil, plants, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it<sup>59</sup>. It is widely accepted that natural beauty is, in part, due to human intervention, such as agriculture<sup>60</sup>.

Natural England has developed a list of natural beauty criteria<sup>61</sup> to be used when assessing landscapes for designation as AONBs or National Parks, as outlined in the table below. It is Natural England's view that the practical application of the natural beauty criteria is identical for National Park and AONB designations, despite there being differences in the degree to which the criterion is clarified in the legislation<sup>62</sup>. So, for example, the extent to which wildlife and cultural heritage are factored into natural beauty assessments by Natural England is the same for both AONBs and National Parks. It is also the Government's formal position that the natural beauty required of an AONB and a National Park are the same<sup>63</sup>.

The list is not intended to be exhaustive and other factors may be relevant in some circumstances. Not all factors will be relevant in every case.

#### Table of factors related to natural beauty<sup>64</sup>

**Landscape quality** - This is a measure of the physical state or condition of the landscape.

**Scenic quality** - The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, the visual senses).

**Relative wildness** - The degree to which relatively wild character can be perceived in the landscape makes a particular contribution to sense of place.

**Relative tranquillity** - The degree to which relative tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape.

**Natural heritage features** - The influence of natural heritage on the perception of the natural beauty of the area. Natural heritage includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features.

**Cultural heritage** - The influence of cultural heritage on the perception of natural beauty of the area and the degree to which associations with particular people, artists, writers or events in history contribute to such perception.

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<sup>59</sup> Countryside Agency (2001) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans*. A guide. Countryside Agency Publications. West Yorkshire

<sup>60</sup> Natural England (2011) [Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England](#).

<sup>61</sup> Natural England (2011) [Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England](#) (see Table 3 and Appendix 1).

<sup>62</sup> Natural England (2011) [Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England](#).

<sup>63</sup> See Lords Hansard 20 Mar 2006 (Col 51) and Commons Hansard 13 June 2000 (Col 556W).

<sup>64</sup> Table extracted from the Natural England guidance [Natural England \(2011\) Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England](#).

## Appendix 2: The “seek to further” duty.

Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration (LUR) Act 2023<sup>65</sup> places a duty on relevant authorities<sup>66</sup> to seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes<sup>67</sup> (the ‘seek to further’ duty). With regards to national landscapes, this requirement has been incorporated into Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act, which now states:

‘In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty’.<sup>68</sup>

This replaces the previous version of Section 85 of the CROW Act, which required relevant authorities to have regard to the statutory purpose of national landscape designations.

The ‘seek to further’ duty is intended to ensure that the natural beauty of protected landscapes (including national landscapes) will be enhanced (i.e., left in a better state) because of relevant authorities exercising or performing their functions.

The LUR Act confers powers on the Secretary of State to make provisions for how a relevant authority is to comply with the ‘seek to further’ duty, including what the authority may, must or must not do to comply with the duty. It is also anticipated that the Government will provide guidance on how the duty should be applied in due course. However, the duty is not dependent on these provisions or on this guidance – it is in force now, and must be complied with as part of any decision or course of action that has implications for these protected areas.<sup>69</sup>

Natural England states that:<sup>70</sup>

- The duty to ‘seek to further’ is an active duty, not a passive one. Any relevant authority must take all reasonable steps to explore how the statutory purposes of the protected landscape (A National Park, the Broads, or an AONB) can be furthered.
- The new duty underlines the importance of avoiding harm to the statutory purposes of protected landscapes but also to seek to further the conservation and enhancement of a protected landscape. That goes beyond mitigation and like for like measures and replacement. A relevant authority must be able to demonstrate with reasoned evidence what measures can be taken to further the statutory purpose. If it is not practicable or feasible to take those measures the relevant authority should provide evidence to show why it is not practicable or feasible.
- The proposed measures to further the statutory purposes of a protected landscape, should explore what is possible in addition to avoiding and mitigating the effects of the development, and should be appropriate, proportionate to the type and scale of the development and its implications for the area and effectively secured. Natural England’s view is that the proposed

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<sup>65</sup> Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 ([link](#)).

<sup>66</sup> ‘Relevant authority’, in this context, includes any Minister of the Crown, public body, statutory undertaker or person holding public office.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Protected landscapes’ means national parks, the Broads and national landscapes.

<sup>68</sup> Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ([link](#)).

<sup>69</sup> Landmark Chambers (2024) *Re: section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023*. Instructed by the Campaign for National Parks. ([Link](#)). Paragraph 2a.

<sup>70</sup> This advice ([link](#) – Annex 2) was submitted, in December 2023, by Natural England, as a statutory consultee, to the Examining Authority for the examination of the Lower Thames Crossing, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

measures should align with and help to deliver the aims and objectives of the designated landscape's statutory management plan. The relevant protected landscape team/body should be consulted.

## Appendix 3: Stakeholder delivery – priority actions

**Consultees are encouraged to record here the actions they anticipate delivering in 2025/26.**



## Appendix 4: Monitoring indicators

(Further text after consultation)

### Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

The Government’s Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework identifies 10 targets, specifically for protected landscapes:<sup>71</sup>

#### Thriving plants and wildlife

TI 1	Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042
TI 2	Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.
TI 3	For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
TI 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.
TI 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

TI 6	Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
TI 7	Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050. (Not applicable to the Malvern Hills National Landscape)
TI 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

TI 9	Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.
TI 9a	Metres of accessible path as a % of total path
TI 9b	Number of accessible toilets and rest stops
TI 9c	Number of disability accessible parking spaces
TI 9d	Number of accessible gates and gaps
TI 9e	Number of visits and volunteer days facilitated by new equipment
TI 9f	Number of schools engaged (primary and secondary) both inside and outside the Protected Landscape boundary

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework>

TI 9g	Number of volunteer days
TI 9h	Number of accessible or easy access routes for which wayfinding has been created or improved
TI 9i	Policies in place to ensure Protected Landscapes are taking positive action to widen the diversity of their staff, boards and volunteers
TI 10	Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

## Appendix 5: Why biodiversity is an important consideration in the Malvern Hills National Landscape

### Introduction

This appendix sets out why biodiversity is an important consideration in the Malvern Hills National Landscape (including why a higher biodiversity net gain requirement would be appropriate in the National Landscape, compared to neighbouring, non-designated areas).

**Statutory purposes, duties and powers** The Malvern Hills National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of these areas.<sup>72</sup> Local authorities and other ‘relevant authorities’ have a statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs.<sup>73</sup> Local authorities also have the statutory power to take action to accomplish this purpose.<sup>74</sup>

Public authorities also have a statutory biodiversity duty<sup>75</sup> that the Environment Act 2021 introduced. Under this duty they “*must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.*”

### Link between natural beauty and biodiversity

Natural heritage (including biodiversity) is one of the factors that contributes to the natural beauty of AONBs.<sup>76</sup> As such, the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is an important consideration when seeking to further the purpose of AONB designation.

Paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that “*the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in [AONBs].*”<sup>77</sup>

### Biodiversity Net Gain and the Seek to Further Duty

Research by the Kent Nature Partnership (KNP) has identified that increasing biodiversity net gain (BNG) delivery from 10% to 20% doesn’t significantly affect viability.<sup>78</sup>

A recent Wildlife and Countryside Link report on BNG refers to that KNP research.<sup>79</sup> It also states that Defra’s own research<sup>80</sup> has shown that 10% BNG is the minimum that is required to ensure no net loss. So, it could be argued that in order to actually deliver a genuine gain in biodiversity, you need to have a BNG figure higher than 10%.

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<sup>72</sup> Section 82 of the [Countryside and Rights of Way \(CROW\) Act 2000](#).

<sup>73</sup> Section 85 of the [CROW ACT 2000](#). Further information on the ‘duty of regard’ is provided in Appendix 4 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2025-2030.

<sup>74</sup> Section 84 of the [CROW Act 2000](#).

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty>

<sup>76</sup> Natural England (2011) [Guidance for assessing landscapes for designations as National Park or AONB in England](#). Table 3, page 13, and Appendix 1, page 25.

<sup>77</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) [National Planning Policy Framework](#). Paragraph 176, page 50.

<sup>78</sup> <https://cieem.net/kent-assesses-20-biodiversity-net-gain-requirement/>

<sup>79</sup> Wildlife and Countryside Link (2024) *Biodiversity Net Gain: more than a fancy offset?* ([link](#)).

<sup>80</sup> [https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/net-gain/supporting\\_documents/181121%20%20Biodiversity%20Net%20Gain%20Consultation%20IA%20FINAL%20for%20publication.pdf](https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/net-gain/supporting_documents/181121%20%20Biodiversity%20Net%20Gain%20Consultation%20IA%20FINAL%20for%20publication.pdf). The relevant section is 5.1.1, page 18.

The University of Kent’s research into BNG outcomes for early adopter councils shows that certain loss of biodiversity is being traded for the promise of unverifiable gains at some point in the future.<sup>81</sup>

This is relevant to the new statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of protected landscapes designation (i.e. for national landscapes, to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the protected landscape). As outlined above, natural heritage / biodiversity is one of the factors that contributes to the natural beauty of a national landscape. If 10% BNG is the minimum that is required to ensure no net loss, then 10% BNG isn’t necessarily enhancing the natural beauty of the area, in this regard, it is just ensuring no net loss. For actual enhancement of natural beauty (in relation to biodiversity), it could be argued that a BNG figure of more than 10% is necessary.

### **Landscapes Review, Government response and ‘30 by 30’**

The Government-commissioned Landscapes Review Final Report<sup>82</sup> proposes that:

- national landscapes<sup>83</sup> should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries;<sup>84</sup>
- national landscapes should have a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature;<sup>85</sup>
- there should be stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes, including ‘recover, conserve and enhance... biodiversity’;
- strengthened [AONB] Management Plans should set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery.<sup>86</sup>

The [Government’s response to the Landscapes Review](#) Final Report states that:

- Working with... AONBs in the coming years, we will ensure our protected landscapes boost biodiversity.<sup>87</sup>
- Our vision for protected landscapes is a coherent national network of... nature-rich spaces... Protected landscapes will drive forward nature recovery.<sup>88</sup>
- The Prime Minister has committed to protect 30% of UK land for nature by 2030 (30 by 30)<sup>89</sup>...Achieving 30 by 30 will rely on improvements in how these areas are protected and managed for nature recovery.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> zu Ermgassen, S.O.S.E., Marsh, S., Ryland, K., Church, E., Marsh, R., Bull, J. W. (2021). *Exploring the ecological outcomes of mandatory biodiversity net gain using evidence from early-adopter jurisdictions in England*. Conservation Letters. 14: e12820. <https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12820>

<sup>82</sup> Defra (2019) [Landscapes Review Final Report](#).

<sup>83</sup> The phrase ‘national landscapes’ relates to AONBs and national parks.

<sup>84</sup> Proposal 4, page 52.

<sup>85</sup> Proposal 1, page 36.

<sup>86</sup> Proposal 3, page 43.

<sup>87</sup> [Landscapes review: government response](#). Foreword.

<sup>88</sup> [Landscapes review: government response](#). Introduction.

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-commits-to-protect-30-of-uk-land-in-boost-for-biodiversity>. This press release implies that the 30% figure includes the entirety of AONBs: ‘Existing National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other protected areas already comprise approximately 26% of land in England. An additional 4%... will be protected to support the recovery of nature’. However, the Government’s response to the Landscapes Review states that ‘at present, under their current statutory purposes, level of protection and management, protected landscapes cannot be said to contribute towards 30 by 30 in their entirety’.

<sup>90</sup> [Landscapes review: government response](#). Since the publication of the review - nature and climate.

- We will put our protected landscapes at the heart of delivering our nature recovery... policies.<sup>91</sup>
- Given their spatial scale, and track records in planning and delivering landscape-scale restoration projects, protected landscapes could play a particularly important role in the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network.<sup>92</sup>
- We will explore ways for protected landscapes to support responsible authorities in preparing [Local Nature Recovery Strategies].<sup>93</sup>
- By strengthening the first purpose [of protected landscape designation] for nature... we will ensure these areas can contribute to this ambitious commitment for biodiversity and our wider nature recovery ambitions.<sup>94</sup>
- We will strengthen this purpose [to ‘conserve and enhance’], making it clear that we need to actively recover nature in these areas, rather than simply conserve what remains.<sup>95</sup>
- A core function of protected landscapes should be to drive nature recovery.<sup>96</sup>

The Government report ‘Delivering 30by30 on land in England’<sup>97</sup> states that ‘30by30’ will be delivered across three themes:

1. Strengthening.
2. Extending and creating.
3. Investing.

Measures identified under the ‘strengthening’ theme that relate specifically to protected landscapes include:

- Action through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act to enhance Protected Landscape management plans and place a stronger requirement on partners such as local authorities and public bodies to contribute to their delivery.
- The creation of a new partnership between the National Landscapes Association (formerly the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), National Parks England, National Trails UK and Natural England to deliver a range of exciting projects and programmes on nature recovery and widening access to nature. The partnership will also boost opportunities for private sector investment in our Protected Landscapes.
- A new outcomes framework for Protected Landscapes, which will set targets for their contributions to national environment and climate commitments, to be embedded in their management plans. We are also updating Protected Landscape management plan guidance to ensure consistency.
- Our response to the consultation on implementing the Landscapes Review, which sets out our action plan for Protected Landscapes.

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<sup>91</sup> [Landscapes review: government response](#). Chapter 2: Nature and climate.

<sup>92</sup> [Landscapes review: government response](#). The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.

<sup>93</sup> [Landscapes review: government response](#). The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.

<sup>94</sup> [Landscapes review: government response](#). The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.

<sup>95</sup> [Landscapes review: government response](#). A stronger mission for nature recovery.

<sup>96</sup> [Landscapes review: government response](#). A stronger mission for nature recovery.

<sup>97</sup> Department of Farming, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) (2024) *Delivering 30by30 on land in England* ([link](#)).

Measures identified under the ‘investing’ theme that relate specifically to protected landscapes include:

- Committing to invest £100 million in thriving farming businesses through our successful Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme. More than 5,000 farmers and land 8 of 15 managers have engaged with the programme, delivering projects that achieve outcomes for climate, nature, people and place.
- Investing in National Parks Partnerships and the National Landscapes Association to build the capacity to create a pipeline of projects to generate more private finance in Protected Landscapes.
- Pledging a further £15 million to support our existing National Parks and National Landscapes, helping to support our most iconic landscapes.

The report also states that protected landscapes will be at the heart of 30by30.

As such, protected landscapes (including national landscapes) are clearly a vital component of delivering the 30by30 commitment (i.e., ensuring that 30% of land in England is managed for nature).

### **Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework**

The Government’s Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework identifies several biodiversity-related targets, specifically for protected landscapes, that are relevant to the National Landscape:<sup>98</sup>

- **Target 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).<sup>99</sup>
- **Target 2:** Bring 80% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.
- **Target 3:** For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
- **Target 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.
- **Target 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.
- **Target 8:** Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

It is important to note that the Target 1 figure of 250,000 hectares is half of the Government’s target of creating or restoring 500,000 hectares in England by 2042<sup>100</sup>. So, protected landscapes are

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<sup>98</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework>

<sup>99</sup> This is half of the national target (including areas outside protected landscapes) of restoring or creating 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat, outside protected sites, by 2042 ([link](#)), even though protected landscapes only cover 25% of England.

<sup>100</sup> The Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan, in 2018, introduced a target to create or restore 500,000ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected landscapes network ([link](#) – page 26). This target was reiterated in the Government’s

expected to deliver 50% of the national (England) target for habitat restoration / creation even though they only cover 25% of England. In other words, protected landscapes will be expected to restore / create three times as much wildlife-rich habitat, per unit area, as land outside protected landscapes.

### **Colchester Declaration**

The 'Colchester Declaration', launched in 2019, is a formal commitment by the family of AONBs, under the umbrella of the National Association of AONBs (NAAONB), to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

The commitments include that, by 2030:

- At least 200,000ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in AONBs will be in favourable condition.
- At least 100,000ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/restored in AONBs.
- At least 36,000ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place.

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Environmental Improvement Plan, in 2023, which specified that this target would be met by 2042 ([link](#) – page 31). This target became legally binding in the Environmental Targets (Biodiversity) (England) Regulations 2023 ([link](#)). This target is also reiterated in the Government's '30by30' policy paper ([link](#) – page 7).



## Glossary

### **Access land**

Any land that is shown as open country on a map issued by Natural England for the purposes of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; is shown on such a map as registered common land; is registered common land in any area outside Inner London for which no such map relating to registered common land has been issued; is situated more than 600 metres above sea level in any area for which no such map relating to open country has been issued; or is dedicated as access land under the Act.

### **Accessible Natural Environment**

Natural England define it as all Green Infrastructure (GI) (see below) assets identified as accessible green spaces for the development of the England GI Mapping database. It includes places that are available for the public to use free of charge and without time restrictions and includes:

- a) Play space provision
- b) Millennium or Doorstep Green
- c) Cemeteries and religious grounds
- d) Playing fields
- e) Local Nature Reserve
- f) Public park – general
- g) Country Park
- h) Access Land

### **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

(Also known as a National Landscape) An area of landscape that is of such outstanding natural beauty that it merits designation under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. Together, National Landscapes represent 18% of the finest countryside in England and Wales. The designation helps to protect their special character, for example, through enhanced planning regulations.

### **Abiotic factors**

All of the non-living things, such as sunlight, materials (e.g. nitrogen or sulphur dioxide), or processes (such as hydrolysis or photosynthesis), which can affect living or non-living constituents of an ecosystem.

### **Agri-environment schemes**

Provided by Natural England, these schemes offer payment to farmers who give an undertaking, or enter into an agreement, to manage their land for biodiversity, landscape, the historic environment, public access or amenity objectives.

### **Authenticity**

Those characteristics that most truthfully reflect and embody the cultural heritage interests of a heritage asset.

### **Biodiversity**

The term given to the variety of life and the natural processes of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur.

### **Built heritage**

A collective term for heritage assets of local, regional or international significance because of their heritage value(s).

### **Carbon stock**

The amount of carbon contained within soils or biomass at a given time described in terms of mass per standardised unit area (tonnes per hectare) (see LULUCF).

### **Category V Protected Landscape**

Defined by the IUCN as an area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity.

### **Climate change**

Change in global climate patterns apparent from the mid- to late 20th century onwards, attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced using fossil fuels.

### **Common land**

Areas where people who do not own the land have rights to use it for livestock grazing or other purposes. See also registered common land.

### **Community**

A group of interacting people living in a common location.

### **Community Strategy**

The Local Government Act 2000 places a duty on local authorities to prepare a community strategy in partnership with the community to improve the local quality of life and promote well-being. A Community strategy links the work of key stakeholders in a local authority area across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. A Local Strategic Partnership (see below) usually prepares them

### **Conservation**

The process of managing change to an asset in its setting in ways that will best sustain its values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations.

### **Conservation Area**

Designated by the local planning authority as an area which they consider has special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which they consider is desirable to preserve or enhance.

### **Context**

Any relationship between an asset and its setting, including other places and its past, relevant to the values of that asset.

### **Cultural capital**

The stock of tangible (e.g., buildings, collections or works of art), intangible (e.g., songs or traditions) and digital (i.e., resources that were born-digital or digitised) heritage assets that hold a universal value for individuals, communities and societies.

### **Cultural heritage**

Inherited assets that people identify and value as a reflection and expression of their evolving knowledge, beliefs and traditions, and of their understanding of the beliefs and traditions of others

### **Designation**

The recognition of particular interest(s) of an asset by giving it formal status under legislation or policy intended to sustain its significance.

### **Designated heritage asset**

A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Registered Battlefield, Registered Historic Landscape, Registered Park and Garden, Listed Building, Conservation Area, Area of Townscape/Village Character, Local Landscape Policy Area or Protected Wreck Site.

### **Distinctive Characteristics**

The unique components that give an area its sense of place.

### **Earth heritage**

The rocks, soils and landforms that reveal our geological history, determine the diverse habitats in which wildlife can thrive and create the rich landscapes that we all enjoy.

### **Earth heritage site**

See Sites of Special Scientific Interest

### **Ecosystem**

Natural unit consisting of all plants, animals and micro-organisms (biotic factors) in an area functioning together with all the non-living physical (abiotic) factors of the environment.

### **Ecosystem services**

Ecosystem services (sometimes called environmental services) are the essential services and benefits that are derived from a fully functioning natural environment, including the management of basic resources such as water, and the sequestration of carbon.

### **Enhancement**

Increase the quality, value or attractiveness of an area or asset.

### **Environmental capital**

Environmental capital is the environmental assets, such as soils, from which beneficial services flow supplying resources to the economy. Four basic categories of environmental capital are generally recognised: air, water (fresh, groundwater and marine), land (including soil, space and landscape) and habitats (including the ecosystems, flora and fauna which they both comprise and support).

### **Environmental services**

See ecosystem services.

### **European Landscape Convention (ELC)**

The ELC promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. Its emphasis is on local distinctiveness and relevance to people within the landscape. It is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with all dimensions of European landscape.

### **European sites**

An ecological infrastructure for the protection of sites that are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species. These sites, known as European sites, consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Offshore Marine Sites. It is common practice to treat RAMSAR sites (Internationally Important Wetlands) as if they were European sites. (See also UK national site network of European sites).

### **Geodiversity**

The term geodiversity incorporates the variety of rocks, minerals and landforms, and the processes that have formed them through geological time. The breadth of geodiversity gives insight to past climates, earlier environments and life on earth.

### **Geopark**

Geoparks are areas of outstanding geological importance identified to promote their heritage for the benefit of local people. Although their interest is primarily geological they are usually also of important archaeological, ecological, cultural and aesthetic interest.

### **(European) Geopark Network**

A network of European Geoparks (established in 2000), with which any geopark must work in order to be formally recognised as such. The Network owns the “European Geopark” trademark. The members of the European Geoparks Network are members of the Global Geoparks Network assisted by UNESCO.

### **Greenhouse gas**

Greenhouse gases are gases in the Earth's atmosphere that trap heat and cause the greenhouse effect, which raises the planet's surface temperature. The principal gases are carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. Each of these gases is weighted by its global warming potential (GWP), so that total greenhouse gas emissions can be reported on a consistent basis. The GWP for each gas is defined as its warming influence relative to that of carbon dioxide. Reporting is in kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (kt CO<sub>2</sub>e)

### **Green infrastructure**

Strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high-quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality-of-life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability.

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

HRA is a statutory requirement to ensure that the protection of the integrity of the UK national site network of European sites is a part of the planning process at a regional and local level. The guidance recommends taking into consideration European sites within a plan area and within 15 km of its boundary.

### **Heritage**

All inherited resources that people value for reasons beyond mere utility.

### **Heritage Asset**

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having cultural significance. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

### **Historic environment**

All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed flora.

### **Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)**

An HLC documents the ways in which the present countryside reflects how people have exploited, changed and adapted to their physical environment through time, with respect to different social, economic, technological and cultural aspects of life.

### **Integrity**

A measure of the wholeness and intactness of an asset and the survival and condition of those elements that contribute to its significance.

### **Intervention**

Any action that has a physical effect on the fabric or appreciation of a place or feature.

### **Invasive species**

Plants, animals and microbes not native to a region which, when introduced either accidentally or intentionally, are harmful to the environment by out-competing native species for available resources, reproducing prolifically or dominating regions and ecosystems.

### **Joint Advisory Committee**

This is a formally constituted body made up of representatives from a wide range of public, private and voluntary groups. Its main roles are to coordinate management of the National Landscape and implementation of the National Landscape management plan.

### **Key Features**

The landmarks, locations or landscape features that are regionally distinctive.

### **Landscape**

An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

### **Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)**

The LCA is a method for identifying, understanding and expressing the different patterns and elements of the landscape. These elements include the woodlands, hedgerows, building styles and historic artefacts that give a place a distinctive character.

### **Listed building**

Listed buildings are structures considered to be of high architectural or historic interest that are placed on a statutory list to help protect their important features. The list is compiled by the secretary of state for Culture, Media and sport on advice from Historic England.

## **List of locally important features**

Each local authority produces an informal list of locally important features, recommended by the draft Heritage Protection Bill. These represent assets of local special interest as defined by councils.

### **Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)**

Since 2004, LDFs are part of the new two-tier structure of the planning system (the higher tier is the regional spatial strategy – see below). The LDF replaces the structure Plan and the Local Plan. It consists of several Local Development Documents (LDDs) including a Core strategy, site-specific Allocations of Land, and a Proposals Map. It may also contain additional optional development documents such as Area Action Plans. Production of the LDF must be accompanied by a statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

### **Local Enterprise Partnerships**

Partnerships led by local authorities and businesses across natural economic areas. They aim to provide the vision, knowledge and strategic leadership needed to drive sustainable private sector growth and job creation in their area.

### **Local Geological Sites**

Previously known as Regionally Important Geological Sites, sites that are selected by voluntary geo-conservation groups, according to nationally agreed criteria.

### **Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs)**

LNPs are partnerships of a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people who aim to help bring about improvements in their local natural environment. They work strategically to help their local area manage the natural environment.

### **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

Sets priorities for nature recovery and proposes actions in the locations where it would make a particular contribution to achieving those priorities. There are 48 strategy areas that cover the whole of England with no gaps or overlaps. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has appointed 'responsible authorities' to lead the preparation of the strategy for each area.

### **Local Sites**

Local Sites are non-statutory areas of local importance for conservation that complement nationally and internationally designated geological and wildlife sites.

### **Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)**

LSPs are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships that match local authority boundaries. They are a crucial part of the participation process in local development planning and implementation, bringing together public, private, community and voluntary sectors. They help to deliver joint working at the local level to improve public services and meet the needs of local communities.

### **Local Transport Plans (LTPs)**

LTPs are documents produced by local authorities that set out local transport strategies and policies and an implementation programme.

### **Local Wildlife Sites**

There are several different terms in use to describe Local Wildlife Sites, including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Sites of Nature Conservation Importance and County Wildlife

Sites. National advice is to use the term, Local Wildlife Sites. Local Wildlife Sites are usually selected within a local authority area through Local Nature Partnerships. They support both locally and nationally threatened wildlife, and many sites will contain English priority habitats and species.

### **LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry)**

Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change any process, activity or mechanism that removes a greenhouse gas from the atmosphere is referred to as a "sink". Human activities impact terrestrial sinks, through land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF). These alter the exchange of CO<sub>2</sub> between the terrestrial biosphere and the atmosphere.

### **Maintenance**

Routine works necessary to keep the fabric of a place, feature or asset, including its setting, in good order.

### **Monitoring environmental outcomes in protected landscapes (MEOPL)**

A national framework for monitoring environmental outcomes in National Parks and National Landscapes. Natural England leads in this work, in close partnership with Defra, the English National Park Authorities Association, Historic England and the National Landscapes Association (see also Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework)

### **National Heritage List**

The National Heritage List for England is the only official and up to date database of all nationally designated heritage assets including: Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, World Heritage Sites, applications for Certificates of Immunity, current Building Preservation Notices.

### **National Landscapes**

The new name for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (see Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

### **Natural Capital**

Those elements of the natural environment that provide valuable goods and services to people, such as the stock of forests, water, land, minerals and oceans.

### **Natural Character Areas (NCAs)**

Areas defined at the national level, which describe the geographical, ecological and historical variations in landscape character that make one area different from another. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

### **Natural Character Area (NCA) profiles**

Total of 159 distinct profiles produced by Natural England to make environmental evidence and information easily available to a wider audience.

### **National Cycle Network (NCN)**



The National Cycle Network is a UK-wide network of signed paths and routes for walking, wheeling, cycling and exploring outdoors. Ideally, the route will be traffic-free. If it is not, it should either be on a quiet-way section of road or be fully separated from the adjacent carriageway.

### **Natural beauty**

A combination of distinctive characteristics and key features. The National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 states that natural beauty includes 'flora, fauna, and geological and physiographical features. Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 confirms that land can be of natural beauty because of human intervention.

### **Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs)**

NIAs operate over large areas within which significant enhancements of ecological networks are achieved, by enhancing existing wildlife sites, improving ecological connections and restoring ecological processes. A consortium of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and voluntary conservation organisations, supported by national agencies, manages them. Following a national competition, England's first NIAs started work on the 1 April 2012. Government can designate additional NIAs on the recommendation of Local Nature Partnerships.

### **Nature recovery**

Local Nature Recovery is the successor to the Countryside Stewardship scheme in England. It will pay for locally-targeted actions to make space for nature in the farmed landscape and the wider countryside, alongside food production.

### **Nature Recovery Network (NRN)**

A national network of wildlife-rich places intended to expand, improve and connect these places across our cities, towns, countryside and coast.

### **Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)**

Parish and town councils and neighbourhood forums can write a NDP for their area. Subject to conforming to national policies, as well as local plan policies for the area, and gaining support through a referendum of the local area, this plan will be adopted as a formal part of the local development plan.

### **Precambrian**

Period of geological time, dating from the consolidation of the Earth's crust around 4,600 million years ago to about 545 million years ago.

### **Preserve**

To keep safe from harm.

### **Proportionality**

The quality of being appropriately related to something else in size, degree, or other measurable characteristics.

### **Protected landscape area**

Defined by the IUCN as a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF)

The Targets and Outcomes Framework establishes a core, shared set of indicators for National Parks and National Landscapes (replaces MEOPL). Natural England leads in this work, in close partnership with Defra, supplying data on these indicators (see also Monitoring environmental outcomes in protected landscapes)

### **Public**

Of or concerning the people.

### **Regenerative tourism**

Regenerative tourism ensures visitors have a positive impact on the environment and local culture, while generating income, employment and the conservation of local ecosystem services. Visitors leave an area in a better condition than how they found it (see also sustainable tourism).

### **Regional Forestry Framework (RFF)**

The regional Forestry Framework is a strategy produced by the Forestry Commission which describes the forestry resource of a region and presents a vision and a set of objectives for the future of forestry in that area. The frameworks are set within a broader strategy, 'A strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests', which was produced by Defra in June 2007.

### **Renewable energy**

Natural energy that can be used repeatedly and will not run out. Sources of renewable energy include wind, water and solar power.

### **Restoration**

To return an asset to a known earlier state, based on compelling evidence, without conjecture.

### **Scheduled Monument**

A Scheduled Monument is defined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the National Heritage Act 1983 as a protected archaeological site or historic building of national importance. Nationally, they range from prehistoric standing stones and burial mounds to more recent structures such as collieries and wartime pill-boxes. The scheduling of a monument means that permission is required for works affecting that monument.

### **Setting**

The immediate and extended environment that is part of – and contributes to – the significance and distinctive character of an asset, and through which an asset is understood, seen, experienced and enjoyed.

### **Significance**

The value of an asset to past, present and future generations because of the sum of its embodied interests. Significance also derives from its setting.

### **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)**

SSSIs are the best examples of our natural heritage of wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms. An SSSI is an area that has been notified as being of special interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

### **Social capital**

Social capital describes the pattern and intensity of networks among people and the shared values that arise from those networks. While definitions of social capital vary, the main aspects are citizenship, neighbourliness, trust and shared values, community involvement, volunteering, social networks and civic participation.

### **Special Characteristics**

The unique components that give the area its sense of place.

### **Special Features**

The physical elements in the landscape that are regionally distinctive.

### **Special Qualities**

The combination of distinctive characteristics and key features that make an area important and valued (see Distinctive Characteristics and Special Features).

### **Stakeholder**

Anyone affected by or who can affect the outcome of a decision.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

SEA is a European directive that requires authorities to prepare a formal assessment of environment impact for certain plans and programmes that are likely to have an effect on the environment. National Landscape management plans are subject to SEA.

### **Sustain**

Maintain, treasure and affirm significance.

### **Sustainable**

Capable of meeting present needs without compromising ability to meet future needs.

### **Sustainable development**

Sustainable development means meeting four objectives at the same time: social progress that meets the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; and maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

### **Sustainable communities**

Places where people want to live and work, now and in the future, that meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life.

### **Sustainable tourism**

Sustainable tourism leaves something as it is so that it stays the same; that is, not causing any extra damage. It attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment and the conservation of local ecosystem services (see also regenerative tourism).

### **Topography**

Set of physical features such as mountains, valleys and the shapes of landforms that characterise a given landscape.

### **Transparent**

Open to public scrutiny.

### **UK national site network of European sites**

An ecological infrastructure for the protection of sites that are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species. These sites, known as European sites, consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Offshore Marine Sites. It is common practice to treat RAMSAR sites (Internationally Important Wetlands) as if they were European sites.

### **Value-based judgement**

An assessment that reflects the values of the person or group making the assessment.

### **Viewshed**

An area of land, water or other environmental element that is visible to the human eye from a fixed vantage point.

### **Village Design Statements (VDSs)**

VDSs are produced by communities to identify local character and set out design guidance to help guide new development.