

# Resourcing the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework



Protected  
Landscapes  
Partnership

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## Executive Summary

This paper models the financial resources required to deliver the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) across England's protected landscapes. The PLTOF, published in January 2024, translates the legally binding targets of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP, 2023, updated 2025) into specific, measurable commitments within each of the 10 National Parks and 34 National Landscapes, which together cover 24.5% of England. The framework sets out ten targets spanning nature recovery, climate, access and cultural heritage. This paper focuses on the seven nature-focused targets, which collectively require the restoration, creation and sustained management of habitat at a scale that makes the protected landscapes central to England's nature recovery ambitions.

The paper begins with the policy background to the PLTOF, including its relationship to the EIP, to the 30by30 commitment, and to the Convention on Biological Diversity. It explains why very little of the PLTOF can be delivered by the protected landscape bodies acting alone: the targets apply to the whole protected landscape area, and achieving them depends on partners (including Defra agencies), land managers, funders and relevant authorities working in concert. Three targets, Target 1 (habitat restoration and creation), Target 7 (peat restoration) and Target 8 (canopy cover), are particularly significant because they have been apportioned through a bottom-up process. Each protected landscape body made an explicit offer of what their area could deliver given sufficient resourcing and support. The aggregated national totals from those offers form the foundation of the model.

The methodology section describes the two-part model used to estimate resourcing needs. The first part calculates the areas of habitat to be restored, created or brought under appropriate management under each target accounting for existing baselines. There are also important overlaps between targets. The second part estimates the financial cost of that work using two independent methods: a bottom-up approach based on unit costs from on-the-ground delivery projects across the protected landscape family, and a top-down approach using published government figures. Both methods use the same area inputs. The difference between them lies almost entirely in the cost of habitat creation and restoration.

The results estimate the total cost of delivering the seven nature-focused PLTOF targets at between approximately £4.4 billion (Government figures) and £12.6 billion (project delivery costs) in 2025 prices, or @£500m a year over 25-years. The largest single cost driver is Target 1 (habitat creation and restoration outside protected sites), which accounts for the majority of the difference between the two methods. Peat restoration and woodland creation together add approximately £2.9 billion to the project delivery estimate, though these are largely associated with existing or foreseeable government programmes. Project development costs represent approximately 30% of the project delivery total and are a critical component that must be funded.

The discussion argues that the project delivery figures are the realistic planning estimate, and that £12.6 billion spread over a 25-year delivery window is achievable if existing funding programmes are continued, adequately resourced, include revenue funding and targeted towards protected landscapes. Private finance has a role, particularly for woodland and peat where established market mechanisms exist, but government funding must remain the primary driver, especially in the near term. Financial resources alone are not sufficient: achieving the targets also depends on building professional capacity across the protected landscape bodies, ensuring funding is flexible enough to reflect the diversity of individual landscapes, using the strengthened duty under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 to secure the engagement of relevant authorities, and establishing a clear and sustained commitment from Defra that protected landscapes, through their Management Plans, are the primary mechanism for delivering nature recovery in England's most ecologically important areas.

## Background

England's protected landscapes of 10 National Parks and 34 National Landscapes cover 25% of England's total land area. They contain a disproportionately high share of England's Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), priority habitats, woodland and deep peat, and are the backbone for national nature recovery efforts, such as 30by30<sup>1</sup>.

The principal policy framework driving that recovery effort is Defra's national Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP, 2023, updated in 2025), which sets out a suite of legally binding targets for nature recovery in England. Translating those national targets into specific, measurable commitments within each protected landscape is the purpose of the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF), which was published in January 2024<sup>2</sup>. The PLTOF embeds ten specific targets within the statutory Management Plans produced for each protected landscape, providing a coherent, locally-differentiated landscape-scale delivery mechanism for achieving them. The framework is also explicitly linked to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to protecting and effectively managing at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine areas for nature by 2030 (30by30).

Very little land is directly under the control of the protected landscape bodies themselves. The PLTOF was created with the explicit intention that it would drive the work – and the funding decisions – of many other bodies. This includes Government departments, the national environmental agencies (Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission), local authorities, and statutory undertakers (collectively referred to as 'relevant authorities') as well as environmental charities, like the National Trust. The targets that have been set by Defra are for the *place* – and will be unachievable without the support of this wide range of different bodies.

The ten PLTOF targets span nature recovery, climate, access and cultural heritage. This paper focuses on the seven targets with a direct nature focus, and in particular those that require quantifiable on-the-ground habitat action: Targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 (Table 1). Targets 6 (Net Zero), 9 (Access) and 10 (Heritage at Risk) are excluded from the resource modelling presented here because they are difficult to quantify.

Of the seven nature targets, Targets 1, 7 and 8 are particularly significant for this modelling exercise because they have been apportioned through a 'bottom-up' approach. Each individual protected landscape body made an explicit offer in or alongside their Management Plans of what could be achieved within their area against each of these targets, if sufficient resourcing and support was made available. These individual offers have been aggregated to derive the national totals used in this model (see Appendix V). This approach grounds the model in the capacity and opportunity within each individual landscapes, rather than in a 'top-down' allocation. The aggregated figures are:

- *Target 1* (habitat restoration and creation): 300,280ha by 2042
- *Target 7* (peat restoration): 135,859ha by 2050
- *Target 8* (increase in canopy cover): 103,711ha by 2050

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criteria-for-30by30-on-land-in-england/30by30-on-land-in-england-confirmed-criteria-and-next-steps>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework>

Target	Description	Area / Metric modelled	Notes on inclusion in model
Target 1	Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites	300,280ha	Apportioned target. Deadline 2042. A portion of Targets 7 and 8 can count towards this target
Target 2	Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition	4,854 features	Deadline 2042
Target 3	For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028	3,640 features	Deadline 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	287,473ha	Deadline 2042. Assumed to be met through ELM uptake. Other mechanisms such as BNG will be involved but there is no robust data available so the model uses ELM
Target 5	Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land	248,347ha	Deadline 2030. Likely to be via specific ELM options?
Target 7	Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes	135,859ha	Deadline 2050. Peat restoration outside SSSIs counts towards Target 1. Peat restoration inside SSSIs counts towards Targets 2 and 3
Target 8	Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes	103,711ha	Deadline 2050. Assumes 90% of woodland planting is native deciduous and so counts in full towards Target 1

**Table 1.** PLTOF targets included in the resource model, with areas and notes on their treatment in the model.

There are important interactions between these three targets that affect how they are used in the model. Target 7 (peat restoration) can contribute towards Target 1 (habitat) where the restored peat lies outside SSSIs. Similarly, Target 8 (canopy cover) counts in full towards Target 1, under the assumption that approximately 90% of new planting will be native deciduous woodland. These overlaps are significant. The overall resource requirement for Target 1 is partially, but not fully, met by the delivery of Targets 7 and 8.

Target 7 also has a relationship with Targets 2 (SSSI condition) and 3 (SSSI actions on track by 2028) that is worth noting. Many SSSI features are based on peat and where peat restoration work takes place inside SSSIs, it can count as 'actions on track' for those SSSI features, contributing to the Target 3 milestone ahead of its 2028 deadline. The model accounts for this by allocating the proportion of Target 7 work falling inside SSSIs as a contribution to Targets 2 and 3 cost calculation.

The three targets also operate on different timelines: Target 1 has a deadline of 2042, while Targets 7 and 8 run to 2050. In the model, costs have been calculated on the basis of a linear trajectory of delivery from the present day (assumed to be a 1 January 2025 start for most targets) towards each respective deadline.

## Methodology

The resource modelling presented in this paper estimates the financial cost of delivering the seven nature-focused PLTOF targets. The model has two parts: an area calculation that quantifies what needs to be done, and a cost calculation that estimates what that work will cost. Both are described below (and see Appendix I for assumptions).

### Areas

The starting point for the area calculations is the set of PLTOF targets as described above, together with a set of baseline data on the current state of habitats within protected landscapes. The key baseline figures used in the model are set out in Table 1, along with the role each target plays in the model.

The model calculates the area of work needed (or number of features for the SSSI targets) under each target, taking into account what has already been done or is currently being managed appropriately. The interactions between targets described above are explicitly included:

- *Target 1.* The area required is the total target from the apportioned offers (300,280ha) minus the contribution from Targets 7 and 8 (41,280ha and 62,476ha respectively). The baseline as of 2022 is assumed to be 0 and as there is no current estimate of the habitat created since then, the model starts with a baseline of 0 in 2025.
- *Target 2.* The number of SSSI features requiring improvement is calculated as the 80% of the total number of features in protected landscapes (4,854) less those already in Favourable condition (2,402)<sup>3</sup>. An estimate of the number of peat features inside SSSIs (449) that could be achieved through Target 7 is also removed from the total.
- *Target 3.* The number of features required is 60% of the total number of features (3,640) minus the number of features currently with actions on track (795)<sup>4</sup>.
- *Target 4.* The area required is the area of non-woodland Priority Habitat Inventory (outside SSSIs) that is in current Agri-environment Schemes (74,392ha)<sup>5</sup> plus the area for Target 1. The area of Target 8 contributing by 2042 is then removed from the total.
- *Target 5.* The area required is target area (248,437ha; the mean of the Target 5 range) minus the current area of non-woodland Priority Habitat Inventory (outside SSSIs) that is in current Agri-environment Schemes (74,392ha).
- *Target 7.* The required area is the total area from the apportioned offers (135,859ha). This is split between peat inside and outside SSSIs 50:50. The proportion outside SSSIs counts towards Target 1. A baseline figure of approximately 14,447ha of peat restoration already completed or committed as of early 2025 is applied.
- *Target 8.* The required area is from the apportioned offers (103,711ha), A baseline of approximately 1,626 ha of woodland created in 2022-23 is applied<sup>6</sup>. The full 103,711ha is assumed to count towards Target 1, based on the assumption that 90% of new planting will be native deciduous.

### Financial costs

The financial cost of delivering the PLTOF targets is estimated using two independent costing methods, which together provide a range of estimates. These methods are:

- *Government figures (top-down):* Unit costs derived from published UK Government and publicly available sources, including ELM scheme rates and published peatland restoration and tree planting cost estimates (Appendix III).

<sup>3</sup> Data from May 2025 PLTOF Statistics Release

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> As calculated through a previous piece of work estimating the resource requirements for 30by30 in protected landscapes (<https://national-landscapes.org.uk/resourcing-30by30-in-the-protected-landscapes>)

<sup>6</sup> Data from May 2025 PLTOF Statistics Release

- *Project delivery costs* (bottom-up): Unit costs derived from a range of on-the-ground projects across the protected landscapes by a variety of different bodies, covering habitat creation, restoration and maintenance for each broad habitat type, as well as peat restoration and woodland creation. These reflect the actual costs experienced by practitioners in developing and delivering projects, including project development costs (Appendix [IV]).

Both methods use the same area inputs from the area calculations described above. The costs are broken down into the following categories for each target:

- *Project development*. The cost of developing projects to the point of delivery, including staff time, feasibility work, engagement with land managers, and regulatory processes. For the approach using government figures, the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme is used as a proxy, given its proven track record as a project development mechanism across the protected landscape family.
- *Bring into management or maintain management*. The annual cost of maintaining habitat under appropriate management or bringing degraded or unmanaged habitat into suitable management. For all targets, Environmental Land Management (ELM) rates are used for non-woodland habitats, and government woodland management grants are used for woodland. These rates are consistent across both costing methods.
- *Restore or create habitat*. The cost of active restoration or habitat creation works. This is the category where the two methods diverge most significantly, particularly for coastal and freshwater habitats, where project delivery costs are substantially higher than government unit rates.
- *SSSI condition survey (Targets 2 and 3)*. The cost of resurveying SSSI features with assessments more than five years old, to enable resources to be directed efficiently to features most in need of intervention.

Costs for each target are calculated on the basis of a linear delivery trajectory from the assumed start year (2025 for Targets 1, 2, 3 and 4; 2021 for Targets 7 and 8) to the respective target deadline. Maintenance costs are calculated from the point at which habitat is first brought into management or created, through to the respective target deadline. Costs beyond the target deadline are not included in this model.

The two costing methods are combined in a single Excel model, which contains separate worksheets for the area calculations and for each costing approach (see Appendix V). The grand totals from each method are presented in the Results section, along with a breakdown by target and cost category. All costs are presented in 2025 prices.

## What is not included

This model focuses on the direct, quantifiable costs of delivering the seven nature-focused PLTOF targets. It does not include:

- Target 6 (Net Zero), Target 9 (Access) or Target 10 (Heritage at Risk), which require different analytical frameworks and data sources.
- Monitoring and long-term assurance costs beyond the target deadlines, which will be necessary to demonstrate that habitats remain in appropriate condition over time.

## Results

The total estimated cost of delivering the seven nature-focused PLTOF targets across all English protected landscapes at between approximately £4.4 billion (government unit rates) and £12.6 billion (project delivery costs). These figures represent the funding required over the period from 2025 to the respective target deadlines and include: project development, SSSI condition surveys, bringing habitat into management and maintaining management, and restoring or creating habitat. The two methods use identical area inputs; the difference between them is driven almost entirely by the cost of habitat creation and restoration where real project costs are substantially higher than government unit rates.

Results by target and by cost category are set out in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 presents the totals by target for each costing method. Table 3 breaks costs down by cost category.

Target	Description	Project delivery costs	Government figures
Target 1 (Habitat)	Habitat creation and restoration	£7,782m	£1,065m
Target 2 (SSSI condition)	SSSI management (bring into favourable condition)	£964m	£964m
Target 3 (Actions on track)	SSSI condition survey and early management actions	£32m	£32m
Target 4 (AES on PHI)	Agri-environment coverage of priority habitat outside SSSIs	£594m	£57m
Target 5 (Nature-friendly farming)	ELM uptake across farmed land	£370m	£370m
Target 7 (Peat)	Peat restoration	£1,326m	£344m
Target 8 (Trees)	Woodland creation and maintenance	£1,547m	£1,554m
<b>Total</b>	<b>All targets</b>	<b>£12,615m</b>	<b>£4,386m</b>

**Table 2.** Estimated cost of delivering each PLTOF target, using project delivery costs and government figures. All figures in 2025 prices.

Using the project delivery costs approach, Target 1 is the most significant cost at £7.8 billion compared to £1.1 billion under government figures, a sevenfold difference. This contrast reflects the substantially higher real-world costs of creating coastal and freshwater habitats compared to the ELM-derived unit rates used in the government method. Targets 7 and 8 together represent significant but more consistent costs across both methods, totalling approximately £2.9 billion (project delivery) and £1.9 billion (government figures). These targets are largely funded through dedicated government programmes (e.g. the England Woodland Creation Offer; Nature for Climate Fund peatland grant) and so the distinction between methods is less material for them.

The SSSI Targets 2 and 3 produce identical costs under both methods, since the same ELM-based management rates apply. Together they would cost approximately £1.0 billion, most of which is the cost of bringing SSSI features into or towards favourable condition through sustained management between now and 2042. The cost of the SSSI condition survey (resurveying features with assessments more than five years old) is included within Target 2 at £9.7 million - a relatively modest but time-critical spend that must be prioritised early to ensure subsequent management resources are directed efficiently.

Table 3 breaks down the total costs by cost category. This illustrates the relative weight of habitat creation and restoration (the most expensive and most method-sensitive component) versus ongoing management and project development costs. Project development costs are a factor of 10 greater with the project cost model than the government figures, again down to the expenses involved in coastal and riparian projects.

Cost category	Project delivery costs	Government figures
Bring into management / maintain management	£2,507m	£1,969m
Restore or create habitat	£6,414m	£2,007m
Project development	£3,685m	£399m
SSSI condition survey	£9.7m	£9.7m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£12,615m</b>	<b>£4,386m</b>

**Table 3.** Estimated costs broken down by cost category, comparing project delivery costs and government figures. All figures in 2025 prices.

Habitat creation and restoration accounts for 51% of total costs under the project delivery method and 45% under government figures. Bringing habitat into management and maintaining it represents approximately 20% and 46% of total costs respectively. Project development is substantial at 29% for the project costs model, whereas it only accounts for approximately 9% using government figures. The SSSI condition survey, at less than 0.1% of total costs, is the single clearest example of a targeted, time-critical spend: the £9.7 million allocation should be made ahead of Natural England’s 2028 assessment cycle<sup>7</sup> to ensure that management resources are subsequently directed to the most critical features.

The divergence between costing methods is most acute for Target 1 and reflects a genuine uncertainty in the cost of habitat creation at scale. Government figures are based on ELM payment rates. Project delivery figures, drawn from actual on-the-ground schemes across the protected landscape family, capture the full costs of design, contracting, materials and project management. Costs are particularly high for technically demanding coastal and freshwater work, which also have extensive regulatory needs<sup>8</sup>. For planning purposes, the project delivery figures should be treated as the more realistic estimate of what full delivery will require.

## Discussion

The two methods produce a wide range of estimates - from £4.4 billion to £12.6 billion for the seven nature targets. The government figures method, while useful as a lower-bound reference, systematically underestimates the true cost of habitat creation and restoration because it is derived from ELM payment rates. These rates were designed as incentive payments to land managers, not as full cost-recovery mechanisms for ambitious restoration projects. They do not capture the true costs of project design, contractor procurement, ecological consultancy, regulatory compliance<sup>9</sup> or the management of complex, multi-partner delivery. The project delivery cost method, by contrast, is grounded in what practitioners have actually spent to deliver comparable work across protected landscapes. For the purposes of planning, advocacy and funding discussions, the project delivery figures, approximately £12.6 billion in 2025 prices, should be treated as the realistic estimate of what achieving the Governments nature targets for protected landscapes will cost.

<sup>7</sup> Although that deadline has moved to 2030 with the revised EIP, putting it out of line with the PLTOF.

<sup>8</sup> Johnstone: ‘The opportunities and challenges created by regulation in delivering Nature Recovery across the English Protected Landscapes’

<sup>9</sup> Regulatory compliance costs could be reduced through ‘earned autonomy’ for protected landscape bodies.

It is also worth highlighting that project development costs, at approximately 30% of the project delivery total, are not a peripheral overhead. They represent the essential investment in people, relationships, feasibility work and regulatory navigation without which no restoration or creation project can be successfully initiated. The high project development figure in the project delivery model (compared to the £400 million in the Government figures model) reflects the reality of what it costs to develop ambitious, technically complex projects in practice, particularly for coastal and riparian habitats. This cost deserves explicit recognition and ring-fenced funding in any future settlement.

Viewed in isolation, £12.6 billion is a large figure. In context, it is more manageable. The costs are spread across timelines running from 2025 to 2050. Expressed as an annual average, the project delivery cost estimate implies roughly £500 million per year to achieve all seven targets. For context, the total public expenditure on agri-environment schemes in England is around £1.8 - 2 billion per year, and the Nature for Climate Fund alone committed over £750 million over five years<sup>10</sup>. The question, therefore, is not whether £12.6 billion is theoretically affordable, but whether existing and future funding streams can be structured, sequenced and sustained in a way that delivers it effectively against the national nature recovery targets.

It is important to note that these costs are not wholly additional to current public spending. Woodland creation and maintenance costs (£1.6 billion) and peat restoration costs (£1.3 billion) could in large part be channelled through existing programmes such as the England Woodland Creation Offer, Woodland Management Grant and Nature for Climate Fund, provided those programmes are continued and adequately resourced. Similarly, the costs for habitat management (Targets 2, 4 and 5) are deliverable through ELM schemes. Water environment restoration costs (included within Target 1 and Target 7 freshwater figures) align with the duties and funding streams associated with the Water Industry Natural Environment Programme and Catchment Sensitive Farming. If these existing programmes are continued, adequately resourced, and structured so that farmers and land managers in protected areas can access them efficiently, they would collectively address a large share of the total cost. The question is not only how much funding is needed but whether the funding is structured, targeted and accessible in a way that enables the local knowledge of the protected landscape bodies to be used to direct it strategically against the nature recovery targets.

The remaining and most significant cost is the habitat creation and restoration element of Target 1 (£7.8 billion on the project delivery estimate, net of peat and woodland contributions). The recent uplift in capital funding for protected landscape bodies to support projects with a 30by30 or wildlife-rich habitat focus is a meaningful start<sup>11</sup>. This is where ELM, supported by FiPL, will need to play a significant role through the Countryside Stewardship and Landscape Recovery Scheme tiers. To be effective, ELM funding directed at protected landscapes must be genuinely strategic: aligned with protected landscape Management Plans (and Local Nature Recovery Strategies), focused on the national nature recovery targets, and accessible at the scale and pace the targets require. Landscape Recovery has the potential to fund large-scale habitat creation in protected landscapes in a way that Sustainable Farming Incentive and Countryside Stewardship, as farm-level instruments, cannot. Maximising uptake within protected landscapes will be essential - to deliver nature recovery at the scale required, and to engage landowners to deliver it, sufficient ELM funding needs to be available, easy to apply for and reliably available over decades whatever tier it is supplied through.

Through biodiversity net gain, natural capital markets, carbon credits, water quality payments and similar mechanisms, private finance has an important role to play in nature recovery, and protected landscapes are well placed to attract it. Several targets, particularly woodland creation (which generates verified carbon credits through the Woodland Carbon Code) and peatland restoration (Peatland Code), have established private finance pathways that are already being used in some protected landscapes. For these, a blended approach combining public grant with private finance is feasible in the near term and should be actively pursued.

However, private finance is unlikely to be available at sufficient scale or speed to substitute for public resourcing in delivering the PLTOF, particularly in the short to medium term. Natural capital markets remain immature and the transaction costs of accessing them are high relative to project size for many of the smaller-scale interventions that will make up a large proportion of PLTOF delivery. There is also a sequencing problem: private finance requires credible, independently verified project pipelines and de-risked delivery structures, which in turn require prior public

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-nature-for-climate-fund/>

<sup>11</sup> @£65m as of 26/27, with an indication that the uplift will continue through to March 2029.

funding of project development capacity. In this sense, early public resourcing is not an alternative to private finance but a prerequisite for it. This has been recognised with a 'Green Finance Accelerator' funding track for protected landscapes in 2026/27, with the aim to steer private finance into protected landscapes.

The practical implication is that government funding must be treated as the primary driver of PLTOF delivery, particularly in the period to 2030, with private finance playing a supplementary and growing role thereafter as markets mature, project pipelines are established, and the track record of delivery in protected landscapes is demonstrated. A blended finance approach, rather than an either/or choice between public and private, is a feasible model.

Financial resources, while necessary, are not sufficient. The experience of existing programmes shows that the rate-limiting factor is not money alone but the capacity to develop and deliver projects: the ecologists, land advisors, project managers, consenting specialists and land manager relationships that turn funding into on-the-ground action. This model captures that through its project development cost category, but the resource implications extend beyond finance. Building and sustaining that professional capacity across 44 protected landscapes, especially when so many of protected landscape bodies themselves are currently operating with constrained core budgets, is itself a significant challenge that requires attention in parallel with funding. Add in to that a need for a sufficient supply chain of materials such as locally sourced seed and tree whips and there is an important opportunity to grow the green economy in some of the most rural parts of the country.

Funding also needs to be flexible. The diversity of England's protected landscape, from upland peat-dominated landscapes to lowland farmed landscapes with fragmented priority habitat, means that a funding mechanism focussed on specific policy outcomes will not work everywhere. The protected landscape bodies need the ability to direct available funding strategically to meet locally identified priorities, rather than being constrained by universal scheme rules designed for generic national application. This points to the value of a programmatic approach, analogous to FiPL but at greater scale and with longer-term certainty, that gives individual protected landscape bodies genuine flexibility to deploy funding in the way that is most effective in their area through their statutory Management Plans.

Regulation and guidance also matter, particularly in relation to the strengthened duty on relevant authorities under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (2023) to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes. This duty provides a legal basis for requiring public bodies operating within or affecting protected landscapes to align their activities with protected landscape Management Plans. Realising this potential requires clear, robust guidance and regulation from Defra and Natural England on what the duty means in practice for each category of relevant authority, and active enforcement where it is not being met. Without that, the duty risks remaining aspirational rather than driving the collaborative action on which the PLTOF targets were specifically predicated.

Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, protected landscapes need a clear and sustained commitment from Defra that they are recognised as critical national infrastructure and the primary delivery vehicle for nature recovery in England's most ecologically important landscapes. The PLTOF provides the framework. What is now needed is the institutional backing to make it effective. This means Defra actively directing relevant funding programmes towards PLTOF delivery in protected landscapes, working with Natural England and the protected landscape bodies to ensure that contributions to national targets are tracked, reported and used to drive continuous improvement and being explicit that the resourcing the PLTOF requires is a public good that the government is committed to supporting over the long term. A strong 'contract' between Defra and the protected landscape family is the essential foundation on which everything else rests.

## About this Briefing

National Landscapes Briefings offer a summary of key findings and recommendations arising from National Landscapes' action and insight. This Briefing is a piece of work for the Protected Landscapes Partnership, with input from people across the partnership. It was informed by the PLTOF, including the individual apportionment offers from each of England's 44 protected landscapes. The drafting of the paper was done with the aid of Claude.ai.



## About the National Landscapes Association

We are a registered charity that supports the mission to conserve and enhance natural beauty in National Landscapes and other protected areas. National Landscape teams across the UK work to achieve a sustainable balance of priorities at the landscape scale. One of our key aims is to support and develop a network of ambitious National Landscape teams and partnerships that have a strong collective voice and a positive impact on the places for which they care.



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## Appendix I – Assumptions and data

### General assumptions:

- The whole of the Wye Valley is included and the 784ha overlap in 4 of the Protected Landscapes is accounted for.
- For Target 1 (Habitat):
  - Habitat will be restored or created in a linear trajectory to 2042.
    - Once restored or created, it will be managed until 2042.
  - 50% of the peat target will be outside SSSIs and a proportion of that (41,280ha) will count towards Target 1.
  - 90% of tree planting will be native so all efforts by 2042 will count towards Target 1 (62,476ha).
  - Habitat will be created in proportion to the ratios of the broad categories (Appendix II) apart from coastal habitat.
  - 60% of the coastal habitat potential (based on Natural England figures) is included. This represents the percentage of opportunities that will be converted into projects.
- For Targets 2 and 3 (SSSIs):
  - 2,452 SSSI features will need to be brought into management (to meet Target 2).
  - 50% of the peat target will be inside SSSIs and a proportion of that will count towards Targets 2 (449 features) and 3 (79 features).
- For Target 4 (AES on PHI):
  - The target is the current PHI under agri-environment schemes (as of November 2024) plus non-woodland component of Target 1.
- For Target 5 (Nature Friendly Farming):
  - There is no current definition so the model makes some assumptions that are likely to change over time.
  - The target is the average of the PLTOF Target minus the current PHI under agri-environment schemes (as of November 2024).
  - To cost, assumed it is a matter of bringing the area into management and then maintaining it, which could be achieved through relevant ELM schemes.
- For Target 7 (Peat):
  - 50% of peat restoration will be outside SSSIs.
  - A portion will count towards Targets 1, 2 and 3.
  - Once restored, the habitats and re-wetted condition will be maintained through appropriate management.
- For Target 8 (Woodland):
  - 90% of planting will be native.
  - A proportion will also count towards Target 1.

Numbers used:

	Ha/features	Notes
<b>PLTOF Tgt 1 (Habitat)</b>	300,280	Target date 2042
<b>PLTOF Tgt 2 (SSSI condition), features</b>	4,854	Target date 2042
<b>PLTOF Tgt 3 (actions on track), features</b>	3,640	Target date 2028
<b>PLTOF Tgt 4 (AES on PHI)</b>	287,473	Target date 2042
<b>PLTOF Tgt 5 (Nature friendly farming)</b>	248,437	Target date 2030; Average of target; Only farmland (CEH)
<b>PLTOF Tgt 6 (Net Zero)</b>		Target date 2050
<b>PLTOF Tgt 7 (Peat)</b>	135,859	Target date 2050
<b>PLTOF Tgt 8 (Trees)</b>	103,711	Target date 2050
<b>PLTOF Tgt 9 (Access)</b>		
<b>PLTOF Tgt 10 (Heritage at risk)</b>		
<b>SSSIs in protected landscapes</b>	557,592	Cut directly to PL boundary
<b>SSSI features in protected landscapes</b>	6,067	From annual PLTOF statistics (some extend outside PLs)
<b>SSSIs features with old condition assessment</b>	4,849	
<b>SSSIs features with actions on track</b>	795	13% of SSSI features; From annual PLTOF statistics
<b>Average area per SSSI feature</b>	92	
<b>Deep Peat inside SSSIs</b>	186,615	
<b>Deep Peat outside SSSIs</b>	123,687	
<b>Peat restoration as of March 2025</b>	14,447	
<b>Managed Woodland outside SSSIs</b>	257,161	64% Woodland; includes conifers
<b>Non-wood/peat PHI outside SSSIs</b>	260,879	
<b>Non-wood/Peat PHI (outside SSSIs) in AES</b>	74,392	29% PHI in Agri-Environment Schemes
<b>Coastal habitat network potential (from NE)</b>	35,246	
<b>Total farmed area</b>	2,685,800	
<b>Protected landscape area</b>	3,196,476	Includes whole of Wye Valley

## Appendix II – Priority Habitats Inventory and broad habitats in the protected landscapes

Priority Habitat	Total area (ha)
Calaminarian grassland	187.9
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	39,391.9
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh,Coastal saltmarsh	271.9
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh,Lowland meadows	31.1
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh,Maritime cliff and slope	3.0
Coastal saltmarsh	10,172.5
Coastal saltmarsh,Saline lagoons	6.4
Coastal sand dunes	3,915.8
Coastal sand dunes,Coastal vegetated shingle	15.7
Coastal sand dunes,Deciduous woodland	23.1
Coastal sand dunes,Lowland calcareous grassland	34.5
Coastal sand dunes,Lowland fens	30.6
Coastal sand dunes,Lowland heathland	61.3
Coastal sand dunes,Maritime cliff and slope	20.5
Coastal sand dunes,Reedbeds	1.0
Coastal vegetated shingle	952.9
Coastal vegetated shingle,Lowland heathland	0.0
Coastal vegetated shingle,Saline lagoons	2.8
Deciduous woodland,Limestone pavement	87.3
Deciduous woodland,Maritime cliff and slope	1,374.4
Fragmented heath	6,391.6
Good quality semi improved grassland	44,026.4
Good quality semi improved grassland,Traditional orchard	2.6
Grass moorland	130,521.0
Lakes	1,512.6
Lakes,Lowland fens	9.0
Lakes,Lowland fens,Reedbeds	1.4
Lakes,Reedbeds	0.4
Limestone pavement	1,007.3
Limestone pavement,Upland calcareous grassland	52.7
Lowland calcareous grassland	33,249.9
Lowland calcareous grassland,Limestone pavement	5.4
Lowland calcareous grassland,Maritime cliff and slope	95.2
Lowland dry acid grassland	9,716.8
Lowland dry acid grassland,Limestone pavement	1.5
Lowland dry acid grassland,Lowland heathland	313.7
Lowland dry acid grassland,Maritime cliff and slope	139.8
Lowland fens	7,302.7
Lowland fens,Maritime cliff and slope	10.0
Lowland fens,Reedbeds	235.5
Lowland heathland	35,046.1

Lowland heathland,Maritime cliff and slope	274.5
Lowland meadows	8,641.1
Lowland meadows,Maritime cliff and slope	113.0
Maritime cliff and slope	8,686.5
Maritime cliff and slope,Coastal saltmarsh	3.1
Maritime cliff and slope,Purple moor grass and rush pastures	0.3
Maritime cliff and slope,Reedbeds	0.6
Mountain heaths and willow scrub	1,495.2
Mudflats	17,108.4
No main habitat but additional habitats present	57,796.8
Ponds	349.8
Ponds,Reedbeds	0.2
Purple moor grass and rush pastures	8,139.3
Reedbeds	1,520.2
Reedbeds,Coastal saltmarsh	263.0
Reedbeds,Upland flushes fens and swamps	0.2
Saline lagoons	289.1
Upland calcareous grassland	8,991.9
Upland flushes fens and swamps	16,250.6
Upland hay meadow	2,168.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>458,319.0</b>

Broad habitat	Ha	Notes
Coastal	81,023	
Freshwater	35,595	Includes Ponds
Grassland/heathland	281,435	
Other	60,266	

## Appendix III – Costings from Government data

Habitat	Intervention	Cost per Ha per Year	Source
Peat	Restore	£1,878	<a href="https://sefari.scot/sites/default/files/documents/The%20costs%20of%20peatland%20restoration%20March%202021.pdf">https://sefari.scot/sites/default/files/documents/The%20costs%20of%20peatland%20restoration%20March%202021.pdf</a>
Wood	Plant	£9,664	<a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/641c370732a8e0000cfa92a2/WMB_100ha_Financial_study_Mar_23.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/641c370732a8e0000cfa92a2/WMB_100ha_Financial_study_Mar_23.pdf</a>
	Maintain	£400	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table</a>
ELM	Create	£604	Based on ELM Habitat creation options, 2026
	Maintain	£127	Based on CS 5 and 10 year in 6 National Landscapes (total ELM for NL, weighted for 1 year divided by area PHI under AES)
FiPL	Proxy development costs	£320	<a href="https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/28/farming-in-protected-landscapes-interim-evaluation-findings/">https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/28/farming-in-protected-landscapes-interim-evaluation-findings/</a> ; £100m over 4 years, 3,176,412ha; assume effective cover 5%. Intervention rate 50%
Coastal	Create/restore	£600	Based on ELM Habitat creation options, 2026
	Maintain	£127	Based on ELM Maintenance estimate
Freshwater	Create/restore	£667	Based on ELM Habitat creation options, 2026
	Maintain	£127	Based on ELM Maintenance estimate, 2026
Grass/heath	Create/restore	£617	Based on ELM Habitat creation options, 2026
	Maintain	£127	Based on ELM Maintenance estimate
Other	Create/restore	£534	Based on ELM Habitat creation options, 2026
	Maintain	£127	Based on ELM Maintenance estimate
Surface water	Restore	£23,555	Based on ELM Habitat creation options
SSSI Condition	Survey	£2,000	Estimated cost per feature (through NE) 2 days field work, 2 days desk-based (data and QA)

## Appendix IV – Costings from projects

Habitat	Intervention	Cost per Ha per Year	Source
Peat	Restore	£10,000	North Pennines (£5-20k depending on helicopter use)
Wood	Plant	£9,664	<a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/641c370732a8e000cfa92a2/WMB_100ha_Financial_study_Mar_23.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/641c370732a8e000cfa92a2/WMB_100ha_Financial_study_Mar_23.pdf</a>
	Maintain	£400	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table</a>
ELM	Create	£604	Based on ELM Habitat creation options
	Maintain	£127	Based on CS 5 and 10 year in 6 National Landscapes (total ELM for NL, weighted for 1 year divided by area PHI under AES)
FiPL	Proxy development costs	£320	<a href="https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/28/farming-in-protected-landscapes-interim-evaluation-findings/">https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/28/farming-in-protected-landscapes-interim-evaluation-findings/</a> ; £100m over 4 years, 3,176,412ha (PL area); assume effective cover 5%; Intervention rate 50%
Coastal	Create/restore	£48,000	S. Devon (WEIF, £20k), Tamar Valley (informed estimates: £33k, £75k, 67k)
	Maintain	£6,500	S. Devon (WEIF, £625?), Tamar Valley (informed estimates: £11k, £3.4k, 11k)
Freshwater	Create/restore	£16,000	Chilterns - £160/m (for wider restoration, rewiggle, scrapes, wetlands, includes development costs)
	Maintain	£633	No data - used same as grass/heath as proxy
Grass/heath	Create/restore	£2,500	Cotswolds (minus overheads)
	Maintain	£633	Cotswolds (minus overheads is £760); South Downs (£500 - heath but doesn't involve contractors)
Other	Create/restore	£2,500	No data - used same as grass/heath as proxy
	Maintain	£633	No data - used same as grass/heath as proxy
Surface water	Restore	£10,000	Blackdown Hills (WEIF 1.5km, say 100m wide, £146,441)
	Restore	£16,000	Evenlode (7ha, 1km river NFM, £22k develop, £300k contract costs)
	Restore	£16,000	Chilterns - £160/m (for wider restoration, rewiggle, scrapes, wetlands, includes development costs). £154/m from Herts Chalk Streams SSF.
SSSI Condition	Survey	£2,000	Estimated cost per feature (through NE) 2 days field work, 2 days desk-based (data and QA)
Development costs	Grassland	£253	Cotswolds - £350 grassland; South Downs - £156 heath
	Intertidal	£32,000	Tamar Valley (informed estimates: £20k, £42k, 34k)

## Appendix V – Excel Model

Separate attachment