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National Landscapes in 2050

Our vision for the future

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National Landscapes in 2050: our vision for the future

A recognition back in 2025 that conserving nature is an investment, not a cost, means that as we enter the National Landscape in 2050, the boundary marker only serves as a confirmation that this is a special place – you can already sense it all around.

Bees and other pollinators buzz in wildflower meadows and the air smells fresh and clean. The sound of birdsong rings out and wetlands teem with life. Species we'd feared would be lost forever from the UK have been brought back from the brink with careful habitat restoration.

While the climate has changed, average global temperature rises have been kept under 1.9 degrees. Some species have migrated north, but the shared skills and knowledge in the collaborative National Landscapes network have helped habitats to adapt.

The 2030 deadline for 30% of land and sea to be protected for nature committed to under the [UN Leaders' Pledge](#) was narrowly achieved due to a ramp up of action in the last few years of the pledge, and the National Landscapes' vision of 'no blank space for nature' throughout the whole of the UK has just been realised in 2050. Wildlife corridors have made it possible for species to spread from their existing strongholds through rural and urban green and blue spaces, and well-maintained public rights of way and affordable green public transport means people can easily access National Landscapes too.

A first-time visitor to a National Landscape will be able to easily orient themselves using carefully placed visitor interpretation and through conversations with welcoming shop owners. While each National Landscape is unique, familiar branding and a consistent offer means visitors know what to expect. That is information on regular, affordable, green public transport; activities including self-guided routes selected according to terrain and distance; wilder spaces to explore independently; sites of interest; and encouragement and opportunity for visitors to make memories on their own terms. Toilets, food outlets and picnic sites are present, signposted, open and well maintained. History, culture and nature are celebrated and shared.

The local community is thriving and welcoming. Brownfield sites have been prioritised for development. The National Landscapes team and the local community have been consistently engaged early in planning processes to ensure the best planning decisions are made, balancing the needs of nature, climate, people and business. Affordable, sustainable homes are prioritised so young people and families can live in the area, part of a thriving, caring network of businesses and people. Rooftop solar is the norm for both old and new buildings and there are community-owned renewable energy projects keeping fuel supply robust and green, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and imported supplies.

Farmers feel valued, and speak about their profitable, regenerative farming businesses, feeding the nation while restoring nature and improving access. Hedgerows and field edges are full of life. Access is good with paths and community spaces well maintained. Landowners speak highly of the advice and support they have received from the National Landscape team which has enabled them to connect with neighbours across the landscape to maximise their impact, and to be more ambitious with their access and nature-friendly farming projects, taking them into higher Environmental Land Management payment tiers and rewarding them fairly for the range of public goods they take pride in providing.

Upland peatland restoration, tree planting and restoration work across the river catchment has sequestered carbon and reduced the cycle of extreme flooding and drought by reconnecting watercourses to floodplains. Towns and villages downstream experience fewer flooding events due to restoration of the uplands, saving Treasury billions each year. Natural solutions provide filtration for plentiful pure, clean drinking water.

The investment in the 2020s in large scale projects like Big Chalk, the Great North Bog and Super NNRs has been more than returned to society. The benefits of a joined-up approach to nature restoration have proved an attractive

proposition for investors, and the resulting nature-based solutions have delivered for nature, climate, people and place.

A bold designation programme means that everyone in the UK lives within half an hour's journey of their closest National Landscape. All children spend time in these places from an early age, throughout their education as part of the curriculum, creating a new generation for whom it is normal to seek solace in, and who understand nature and their active role in caring for it. The next generation of landscape and environmental stewards have been fallen in love with nature, and high-quality training and well-paid jobs mean they are part of a world-leading workforce on green innovation. Citizen science activities and social prescribing enable local people and those from nearby urban areas to be engaged in natural surroundings, reaping wellbeing benefits and feeling knowledgeable and informed, able to contribute to decision making.

The democratically derived Management Plan is the five-year vision for the area, the shared endeavour of local authorities, national agencies, eNGOs, utility companies and the local community, taking inspiration and direction from agile and expert National Landscape teams under the leadership of knowledgeable and diverse partnership boards. Partnership organisations are clear on their role in actively contributing to the conservation and enhancement of the area. Communities have a real stake in their landscape, through shared ownership and active stewardship of places.

The UK's approach to landscape conservation is recognised as a world-leading example of how to work with the past and the future, drawing in visitors from across the globe.

There is a real pride for residents and visitors alike in these places that give back so much to the nation which has invested in them, from carbon sinks to places to feel rooted, globally recognised nature restoration work, clean air and water.

The natural beauty of a place is what makes it unique: characteristics derived from the geology, landform, nature and cultural heritage. The interplay between these factors dictates the species that thrive, the industries that grow, and the heritage, culture and language of the area – all shaped and influenced by waves and generations of people. National Landscapes are places we all have a stake in, and we can all feel invested in. These places have always changed and developed, but in 2050, their distinctiveness remains and is valued and protected for the nation.

National Landscapes Association Working Papers

National Landscapes Association Working Papers explore current thinking around a landscape theme, presenting early research and ideas to generate feedback and discussion.

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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