



Annual Review 2024

Northumberlandcoast-nl.org.uk

Chair's introduction



It has been a great pleasure to chair the Northumberland Coast National Landscape Partnership this year. The nature, heritage and culture of this protected landscape continue to enrich the lives of local communities and the millions of visitors arriving each year. The work of the National Landscape team ensures that the Northumberland Coast remains a special place – now, and for future generations – as well as a haven for the wildlife making a home here or passing through.

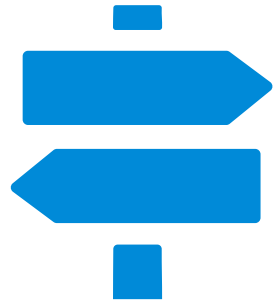
This report demonstrates that by forming closer collaborations and working together, we can deliver so much more for the place, people and nature, whilst mitigating the effects of climate change. The very ethos of the team is partnership.

I am always inspired by the work of our Conservation Team volunteers, who turn out in all weathers to undertake varied tasks in the National Landscape. From practical habitat management and beach cleans to engaging with visitors and carrying out surveys, this vital work is a force for good. Volunteers gave 9,680 hours of their time this year, equating to a £129,922 contribution.

I've had the pleasure of attending National Landscapes Association conferences this year. It has been wonderful to see the collective strength of these teams, particularly following the rebrand in 2023 which sees all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty now being known as National Landscapes. Across the UK, National Landscape teams are united in restoring nature to these places and ensuring they are welcoming to all.

Patrick Norris
Chair, Northumberland Coast National Landscape Partnership

At a glance...



Overview

- **Total Area: 133.35 km²**
- **SSSI Coverage: 56.82 km² / 5,682 ha (42.6% of the National Landscape)**
- **Sand Dunes: 1,018 ha**
- **Parish Councils: 16**



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Access and recreation

- **Beaches: 34 km**
- **Northumberland Coast Path: 105 km**
- **Visitors: about 5 million a year**
- **Access Land in Coastal Margin: 10.7 km²**



Cultural and heritage assets

- **Scheduled Monuments: 9**
- **Listed Buildings: 280**
- **Conservation Areas: 10**

Community and engagement

- **Instagram Followers: 3,900**
- **Facebook Followers: 9,400**
- **Conservation Team volunteers: 200**



New website



The new Northumberland Coast website was launched in January. With a focus on being visually rich and easy to navigate, the website is illustrated with new photography and videos. The site highlights the work of the staff team and the importance of conserving this protected landscape for everyone to enjoy. It features information about the area, Conservation Team volunteers, key projects and partnerships, and has a regularly updated latest news section.

Discover the Northumberland Coast National Landscape

Northumberlandcoast-nl.org.uk

Delivering for: Place

Highways and Public Realm Design Guide

Completed in 2023, the Highways and Public Realm Design Guide for the National Landscape has been revised to reflect the name change to National Landscape. The document provides guidance to the Highway Authority, statutory undertakers and other responsible bodies when planning or undertaking work on the rural road network and in villages. Further case studies will be added to the document.

FiPL Historic Building Restoration Grant Scheme at Fenham Granary

A large-scale restoration and repair project at Fenham farm was awarded £149,000 from DEFRA's Farming in Protected Landscapes one-off grant fund for repairing historic farm buildings. Fenham Granary sits to the north of the Fenham Farm close to the edge of the mudflats and with breathtaking views to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. Built in 1731 by Yorkshire businessman Nathaniel Payler as a granary to store grain before export, the building has been used since the early 20th century as a field hemmel (a field barn).



Repair works have included removing cement mortar and a thick layer of modern paint and repointing with softer, breathable lime mortar, replacing the concrete floor with a limecrete floor, reinstating some of the openings, and replacing the asbestos roof with steel sheeting. The works were carried out by Historic Property Restoration Ltd and local traders. The Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme was used for improving the hedging along the field boundaries near the hemmel.

The building will continue in use as a hemmel and will also remain the mess hall for the Fenham Christian Camp that has taken place every August since the 1960s. Situated alongside the King Charles III Coast Path, subtly-placed interpretation has been installed so people can find out more about the building and its history.

The total repair scheme had a value of c £240,000 with c £149,000 coming from the FiPL historic building restoration grant and the remainder from Fenham Farm. £10,000 was given by the Christian Camp.



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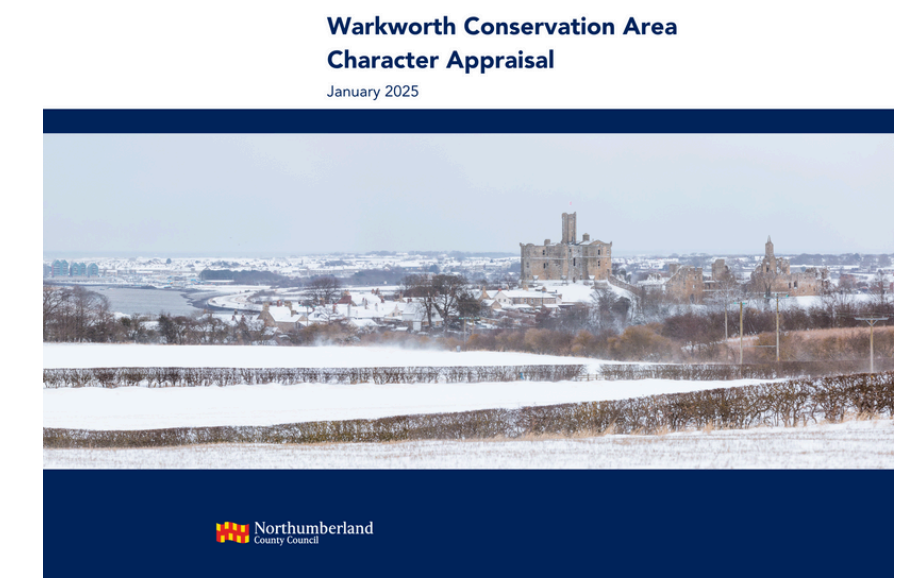
Character Appraisals for six Conservation Areas adopted

Following consultation with parish councils and Northumberland County Council, six new Character Appraisal have now been adopted by NCC and replace the former appraisals, some of which were approaching 30 years old.

The new Character Appraisals are for the Conservation Areas of Warkworth, Lesbury, Alnmouth, Embleton, Seahouses and North Sunderland. The appraisals are available at Northumberland.gov.uk.

The National Landscape has led on this important work, that also included review of other historic settlements in the National Landscape. A Character Appraisal for the Holy Island of Lindisfarne has been completed. Holy Island was designated as a Conservation Area in 1972 and to date has no supporting Character Appraisal.

Boulmer, Craster and Longhoughton were assessed for Conservation Area designation. A Character Appraisal was carried out for Craster and Dunstan to further the understanding of the special architectural and historic interest of these two villages.



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Conservation Team volunteers go digging on Holy Island

A dozen Conservation Team volunteers and Holy Island residents took part in Durham University and DigVentures' archaeological investigations looking at the early monastic site founded by St Aidan. A new trench was opened in the Green Lane overflow car park because of the chance discovery of human remains a few years ago during the installation of the water connection for the new Coastguard building.

Jointly funded by DigVentures and the National Landscape, the week-long dig exposed the northern edge of what may be a larger charnel pit with jumbled human remains radiocarbon dated to the 8th – 9th centuries AD. Some signs of trauma were visible on the remains however it is not yet clear when the bones were interred in the pit in Green Lane.

Volunteer Tracy Ward, whose mother has lived on the island for 45 years, shared her feedback. Tracy said: "The finding of old human remains was an exciting but humble experience. It is only whilst digging round the skulls, teeth and bones with great care, treating them with the respect they deserve... that you start to think deeply about them and you wish to know more of their story, their age, diet, sex, how did they die? How long have they been here? A multitude of questions which hopefully modern technology can answer..."



Planning casework - development management consultations for the Local Planning Authority

The National Landscape team assess every planning application received by the Local Planning Authority at Northumberland County Council for impact on the National Landscape in line with our Management Plan, the Northumberland Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Most applications are made by householders and relate to changes to dwellings. About 40% of all applications relate to the tourism economy (e.g. holiday accommodation, visitor attractions) or redeveloping second homes. Consultations this year have included:

- Eight proposals for one house or smaller scale housing developments
- One large scale housing scheme for 108 new houses
- Six consultations for new holiday accommodation or infrastructure associated with visiting the National Landscape

Over the year, 118 planning consultations have been responded to. Of these, approximately 45% of cases were supported without further comment, 22% were supported with comments made to improve the application, and an objection raised for 22%. No comment was made on 14% of these cases. In most cases, both planning officers and applicants are receptive to changes suggested by the National Landscape.



Shoreston Hall

Proposed site aerial view from the south (c)
Ida Homes / Elliot Architects



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Holy Island Sustainable Transport and Travel Strategy

A Sustainable Transport and Travel Strategy and Action Plan for Holy Island has been prepared by independent consultants commissioned by Northumberland Coast National Landscape working in partnership with Holy Island 2050. The aim is for a more sustainable and community-centred approach to transport to and from Holy Island for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors. This is to address the challenges of increasing visitor numbers seen in recent years and the impact that visitor travel has on the island and mainland.



Following extensive stakeholder engagement and primary research, the report concludes that addressing Holy Island’s travel and transport challenges, given the cultural and ecological significance of the island and its unique spatial context, will require delivery of a suite of interventions over coming years.

There is no single intervention that will ensure success, but rather a diverse range of flexible, interconnected measures which should be delivered alongside recommendations set out in the recent visitor management strategy developed by Holy Island 2050.

Proposed measures are set out as an action plan with immediate, short, medium and long-term recommendations and a monitoring framework is proposed to allow for continued understanding and measurement of progress and impact. Implementation of the strategy will require development of a strong governance arrangement enabling collaboration between partners and significant investment.

(The Holy Island Travel Strategy was funded by the Rural Asset Multiplier Programme, part funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the North East Combined Authority Investment Fund with the North East Combined Authority as the Lead Authority.)



Interpretation Plan

A new Interpretation Plan has been developed for the Northumberland Coast National Landscape. This document sets out key themes, messages and design information to help engage residents, visitors and businesses with the conservation and management of the protected landscape.

The plan offers guidance to anyone involved in planning or commissioning interpretation projects. It has the overarching aim of developing more consistent and high-quality interpretation around a central theme: we must work together to protect and conserve the tranquillity of this ever-changing landscape.

Five case studies based on the new Interpretation Plan have been produced, including a selection of short form films and new signage and interpretation panels at locations in Warkworth, Alnmouth, Beadnell and Newton Links.



(The project was funded by the Rural Asset Multiplier Programme, part funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the North East Combined Authority Investment Fund with the North East Combined Authority as the Lead Authority.)

Delivering for: People

Northumberland Coast Conservation Team

The Northumberland Coast Conservation Team, a volunteer group of over 170 people, undertake a huge range of tasks throughout the year in the National Landscape.

In 2024 /25 volunteers contributed a staggering 9,680 hours, an increase of over 4,000 hours on the year before.



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Winter projects included pond restoration for Great Crested Newts at RAF Boulmer, and at ponds at Buston and Alnmouth pond to coppice willow and create dead hedges. Volunteers laid another 200 metres of hedge at Buston.

Beach cleans continue were carried out weekly across the National Landscape. In 2024/25 4.3 tonnes of measurable waste was taken off the beach by volunteers at 82 events across 27 beaches.



Partnership working

The Conservation Team volunteers help partners on the coast to deliver a range of projects. Conservation Team volunteers helped RSPB staff to build 20 metres of dry-stone wall on Coquet Island, creating a terrace to improve nesting habitat used by the rare Roseate Tern.

The team also supported the National Trust Rangers on Inner Farne with tern nesting site preparation, and on the mainland, with the installation of 500 metres of nest protection fencing at the Long Nanny bird sanctuary. A new collaboration with English Heritage has seen volunteers working at Lindisfarne Priory, Warkworth Castle and Hermitage and on a meadow creation project within the grounds of Dunstanburgh Castle.

An exceptional working relationship with Space for Shorebirds continues to flourish. Volunteers support rangers to carry out Ringed Plover surveys, followed by nest monitoring which includes public liaison and raising awareness.



Generation Green

The Northumberland Coast team provided 700 local schoolchildren with experiences including beach school, a farm visit and a residential trip during the one-year Generation Green 2 project delivery timescale. Beach school provider Bridie Melkerts said: "Many of the children had never visited this stretch of coastline before and for some this was their first time ever at the beach."

Feedback received by the children included that it was "the best school day ever."

Between March 2024 and March 2025, the National Landscapes Association, YHA, National Park England and other Access Unlimited partners helped more than 25,000 young people living in England's most socially disadvantaged areas to connect with nature. Of all the experiences delivered, over 3,300 were provided by National Landscapes.





Coastal Class Names

The National Landscape funded an art and wildlife project for Amble Links Primary School as it transitioned from a first school to a primary school.

Working with artist Katherine Renton, the school chose new class names that reflected the wildlife of Amble and the National Landscape for all eight year groups. The following animals were chosen, beginning with Nursery and running to Year 6: Starfish, Lobsters, Jellyfish, Puffins, Seals, Terns, Herons and Curlews.



Katherine worked with each year group studying their class animal, as well as other local wildlife.

The RSPB, which looks after Coquet Island, came into school to talk to the children about its work as part of the project.

To finish the project, Katherine has created logos of each class animal that will be mounted on each classroom door.





Access for All projects

Warkworth Dunes Picnic Site is a gateway to the National Landscape, a setting-off point for the beach, further exploration of the coast or a longer hike along the Northumberland Coast Path. In total, 700 metres of path has been created or improved, including the removal of six physical barriers to access. The project has created a low-incline step-free path to the dunes and saltmarsh. Additionally, 164 metres of accessible path was created at Newton-by-the-Sea.

The Access for All programme invested in a new All Terrain Wheelchair. The Terrainhopper will initially be used by volunteers to assess path accessibility and identify barriers. It will then be available for use a suitable location or transported by trailer.



Delivering for: Nature

Farming in Protected Landscapes

The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme had another successful year and 18 projects were delivered. Farmers were supported on a range of projects from pond restoration and silvopasture planting to innovative farming methods such as drone technology and fermenting farmyard manure. Many of the projects helped to protect and restore nature within the National Landscape. You can read about a few below...



Beacon Hill Farm Wildflower Meadow Creation

Conversion of an arable field just outside the National Landscape into 6.5 hectares of new wildflower meadow with small wetland scrapes, which will improve botanical diversity in the area, act as a summer long nectar source for insects and provide habitat for breeding and wintering birds.

North Farm Pond Restoration

Restoration of a farm pond silted up with reedmace which was significantly reducing the pond's value for wildlife. Removal of the mace and coppicing of trees created more open water habitat and greatly increased the pond's benefit for nature.



Buston Links Wetland

A significant habitat creation scheme, creating and restoring around 8 hectares of saltmarsh, fresh water and brackish habitat, through the removal of an old culvert to allow tidal inundation, and diversion of an incoming ditch.

Brunton Orchard restoration and woodland trail creation

This project supported the restoration of the original kitchen garden walls and replanting with a mixture of native orchard fruit trees and wildflowers. The farmer has also repaired an old bridge which has allowed a circular public access trail to be created through adjoining woodland.

Howick Heugh Grassland Restoration

Fencing an area of about 7 hectares to allow grazing will encourage whin grassland flora to develop, enhance conditions for biodiversity, ensure an ancient hill fort is not lost to scrub encroachment and provide additional grazing land for the farmer.

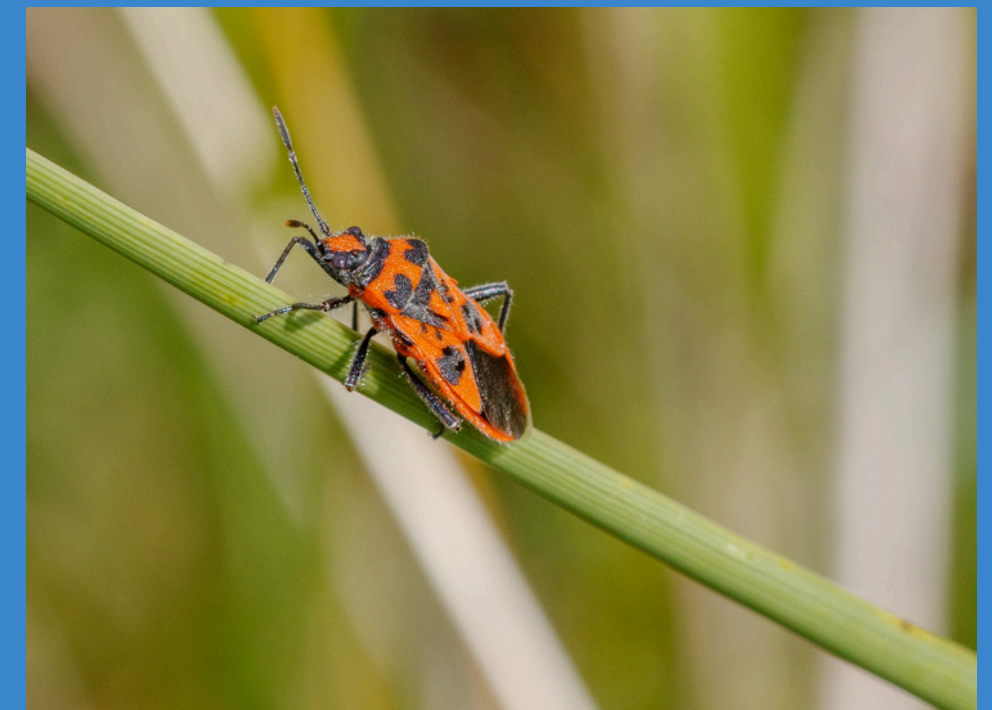


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Bioblitz

The Bioblitz event in June was a great success, with a range of experts, volunteers and members of the public taking part across a 24-hour period of wildlife surveying at Warkworth Dunes and Saltmarsh. Sessions included a bird walk along the estuary, sea watch, an invertebrate hunt and a dusk bat walk.



During the 24 hours, there were 328 separate sightings and 289 species recorded in total.

Climate

Farming in Protected Landscapes has funded a multi-year farm project researching the benefits of bokashi and sharing the results with the farming community.

Bokashi is an innovative composting method that uses anaerobic fermentation to process farmyard manure. Covered manure heaps have lower methane emissions, and the method improves the quality of the compost, creating healthier soils with higher nutrient levels and water retention ability. This allows famers to decrease their reliance on chemical inputs which are a major source of carbon emissions.



The National Landscape has invested in a Renault Kangoo E-Tech electric van. With a range of 180 miles, the van is perfect for getting around the coast.

Delivered at the end of 24/25, one month's use by the Conservation Team volunteer leads and other staff members has already clocked up 800 miles, which represents a saving of a fifth of a ton of CO2 equivalent.



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Expenditure	
STAFF AND CORE COSTS	£187,750
SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERING*	£73,500
VISITOR ACCESS AND INTERPRETATION PLAN	£137,000
OTHER PROJECTS	£104,000
CAPITAL PROJECTS AND EQUIPMENT	£50,000
FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES	£569,560
ACCESS FOR ALL PROJECTS	£36,000
TOTAL CASH	£1,157,810
VOLUNTEER TIME	£129,922
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£1,287,732

Income	
DEFRA CORE	£214,000
DEFRA CAPITAL	£86,000
DEFRA FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES	£569,560
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL	£60,600
RURAL ASSET MULTIPLIER PROGRAMME	£197,000
GEN GREEN 2	£36,660
DIGVENTURES	£2,300
LIFEWADER	£16,800
DONATIONS*	£6,600
SALES OF PUBLICATIONS	£5,435
TOTAL INCOME	£1,134,355

*Includes income and expenditure from the Northumberland Coast Conservation Trust

The Partnership

Governance review

A governance review of the National Landscape Partnership began in 2023/24 when a consultant, Nick Perks, was contracted to undertake an independent review of the Partnership structure and governance.

This work was completed in 2024, and a revised Terms of Reference was adopted at the June Meeting of the Partnership. The revised structure moves away from a 'representative' model to an 'open membership' model.

The implementation of the review created new seats 'open' seats on the Partnership which are currently being filled.

Patrick Norris	Recreation	(Chair)
Charles Baker-Cresswell	Farming and land Management	(Vice-chair)
Cllr Les Bowman	Northumberland County Council	
Cllr Colin Hardy	Northumberland County Council	
Cllr Glen Sanderson	Northumberland County Council	Part -year
Cllr Wendy Patterson	Northumberland County Council	
Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson	Northumberland County Council	Part-year
Cllr Jen Hall	Representing parish councils in the north	
Cllr Adrian Hinchcliffe	Representing parish councils in the south	
Lydia Speakman	Natural England	
Heather Harrison	Environment Agency	
Sarah Tunnicliffe	Historic England	
Colin Barnes	Local business and tourism	
Jude Leitch	Local business and tourism	
Andrew Poad	Heritage	
David Robertson	Farming and land Management	
Vic Brown	Access for All	Part-year
Vacant	Nature	
Vacant	Climate Change	
Vacant	Local Community	



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The staff team is hosted by Northumberland County Council to deliver the work of the National Landscape Partnership. The staff team during 2024/25 were:

Iain Robson, National Landscape Manager
Sarah Winlow, National Landscape Officer*
Helen Wilson-Beevers, Communications Lead*
Mark Middleton, Nature Recovery and Farm Adviser
Emma Wilson, Volunteering and Access Officer
Elanor Johnson, Project Officer (from September)
Ellie Saunders, Countryside Worker Apprentice
Fiona MacLeod, Farming in Protected Landscapes Assistant*
Theresa Glynn, Finance and Administration*
Robbie Simms, Data and GIS Graduate Trainee (from October)

*Part-time

Get in touch with the team by emailing info@northumberlandcoast-nl.org.uk
Follow @northumberlandcoastnl on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) or search Northumberland Coast National Landscape on LinkedIn for regular news and updates.
Visit [Northumberlandcoast-nl.org.uk](https://northumberlandcoast-nl.org.uk) to sign up to the Northumberland Coast newsletter.