

**2025-2030 Northumberland Coast
National Landscape Management Plan for
the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Consultation Draft

Contents Page

Ministerial/NLA Foreword

Chairs Foreword

Introduction to this Draft Management Plan

This is the Public

Consultation Draft of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape Management Plan for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), covering the period 2025-2030. It has been prepared by the National Landscape's Partnership on behalf of Northumberland County Council, as required by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000.

Northumberland Coast National Landscape is a nationally and internationally important landscape. It was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1958 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, one of only 46 areas to be given this recognition in the UK. It is designated primarily for its natural beauty, with its wildlife, and historic and cultural significance underpinning the beauty of the landscape.

This, the fifth edition of the Management Plan, sets out a collective vision and ambitions for the National Landscape for the next five years. It takes account of the key issues facing the National Landscape, conservation and enhancement of the area's special qualities, the concerns and priorities of local people, as well as the Government's ambitions for England's National Landscapes and National Parks.

This consultation draft is not the finalised plan. Any red text indicates a place holder for more text, maps or tables.

Now we want to know what you think of the Draft Plan.

Between 1st August 2025 and 26th September, we will be collecting your feedback on the Draft Management Plan. We would particularly welcome feedback on the vision for the Northumberland Coast National Landscape and;

The Strategic Aims – where we want to be
The Outcomes – the change needed to meet our aims
And the Measures – what we will collectively do and the position we will take to achieve this

Please submit your comments using the [online questionnaire](#).

If you are unable to complete the online questionnaire, please send an email to info@northumberlandcoast-nl.org.uk or call 07774 715744 to chat to one of the team.

What happens next

A report will be produced outlining the responses received and how these will be addressed, and a revised Management Plan for 2025-2030 will be prepared. Both will be put forward for approval at the National Landscape Partnership meeting in October 2025. The new Plan will be adopted by Northumberland County Council and published in December.

The final plan will be presented as an attractive, accessible document with photographs and illustrations.

Introduction

The Northumberland Coast National Landscape, formerly designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), stretches along 40 miles of the dramatic northeast coastline of England, from just south of Berwick-upon-Tweed to the River Coquet estuary. Renowned for its rugged beauty, sweeping sandy beaches, and distinctive dunes, the area also boasts a rich tapestry of historical and cultural landmarks, including medieval castles, ancient churches, and remnants of early settlements. This coastal strip is not only visually stunning but also ecologically significant, hosting internationally important habitats for wildlife, particularly seabirds and marine life.

The landscape's character is shaped by a powerful interplay of natural and human forces. Harsh North Sea winds have sculpted the dunes and cliffs, while centuries of farming, fishing, and defence have left their imprint in the form of villages and smaller settlements, harbours, and iconic fortresses like Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh castles. These features contribute to the coast's sense of timelessness and isolation, making it a unique and evocative destination for visitors seeking natural beauty and historical intrigue in equal measure.

Managed with care to balance conservation and community needs, the Northumberland Coast National Landscape continues to inspire artists, writers, and nature lovers. Through partnerships with local organisations and regenerative tourism initiatives, preservation of its fragile ecosystems and cultural heritage is ensured.

[Map of the National Landscape]

What is a National Landscape?

National Landscape is the public-facing term adopted in 2023 to describe an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the legal term for the designation. An AONB is an area of beautiful countryside designated by the government to protect its landscape character and the wildlife, natural systems and cultural associations on which it depends; so that people, now and in the future, can enjoy its natural beauty. These components of natural beauty are collectively known as 'special qualities' and are outlined in the Northumberland Coast National Landscape Statement of Significance on [page 13 of this document](#).

AONBs (National Landscapes) are protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act), which sets out the legal purpose of AONB designation as being to “conserve and enhance natural beauty”.

There are 34 National Landscapes in England, a further four wholly in Wales and eight in Northern Ireland. The 46 National Landscapes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland cover approximately 18% of the UK’s land surface.

Together with National Parks, these areas are known as protected landscapes and represent the finest landscapes in the country. Each of these protected landscapes has a set of unique assets, with such distinctive character, geology, biodiversity and beauty that they are recognised internationally, by the IUCN, as part of the global family of protected areas.

In common with UK National Parks, land in National Landscapes is mostly owned and managed privately. National Landscape bodies (Partnerships, Joint Advisory Committees etc) rarely own or control land themselves. Working in partnership with landowners, managers and local communities is the main mechanism to achieving conservation and enhancement requirements.

[Infographic page] The Northumberland Coast National Landscape at a glance

- *133.35 square kilometres of designated area*
- *56.82 square kilometres/ 5682 hectares (42.6% of landscape) of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)*
- *1018 hectares (PHI) of sand dunes*
- *21 miles (34 kilometres) of beaches*
- *10 kilometres of Northumberland Coast Path*
- *10.7 square kilometres of access land in the coastal margin*
- *9 scheduled monuments*
- *280 listed buildings*
- *10 conservation areas*
- *15 Parish Councils*

Northumberland Coast National Landscape Partnership

The Northumberland Coast National Landscape Partnership (formerly known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or AONB Partnership) is a collaborative body that advises on the conservation, enhancement, and sustainable management of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape.

The Northumberland Coast National Landscape Partnership includes:

- Northumberland County Council
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Local parish councils
- Farming, nature, access, business, and community representatives

As well as providing ongoing advice to responsible authorities and others on how they can fulfil their duty to further the purpose of the designation, preparation of the statutory Management Plan is undertaken by the Partnership on behalf of the Local Authority.

About the Plan

The role of the Management Plan

As the relevant local authority, Northumberland County Council has a statutory duty to prepare and publish a Management Plan that sets out a vision for the management of the designated area in pursuance of the purpose, which is the conservation and enhancement of the landscape.

The plan formulates the Council's policy for the management of the Northumberland Coast AONB and for the carrying out of the Council's functions in relation to it. This plan must be reviewed at least every five years.

The Council has a wide range of functions that could or do affect the National Landscape. As the local planning authority, it is responsible for establishing local planning policies through the Local Development Plan and for the determination of planning applications. It is also responsible for highways and parking, waste management and the provision of a range of services to local communities. Considerations relating to wider environmental issues, the economic and social needs of local communities, as well as the demands for recreation, should be dealt with in the context of delivering the core purpose and not for their own sake.

Who is the plan for and how should it be used?

The plan is for the place, the Northumberland Coast National Landscape. It is not solely for the staff unit or Partnership, Northumberland County Council or any other individual organisation; it is relevant to everyone.

The plan, therefore, provides the direction and framework for all those with interests in the National Landscape to work together to achieve the statutory purpose.

It is the single most important document for the National Landscape, and no decision affecting the future of the National Landscape should be taken without reference to it. This includes decisions taking place outside the National Landscape that may affect land within it.

How the Plan is set out

Purpose To Conserve and Enhance Natural Beauty
Vision <i>A sense of remoteness and wildness is maintained, with wide open coastal and sea views, a naturally functioning coastline rich in wildlife, and a clear distinction between settlements and open countryside. The National Landscape is a living, working area with a celebrated history and culture, and a vibrant present in which social and economic wellbeing is successfully integrated with the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the area.</i>
Statement of Significance Sets out the Special Qualities of the National Landscape
Cross-cutting issues and priorities National Direction – Biodiversity loss – Climate – Tourism - Development
Common Principles Common principles that underpin all aims, outcomes and measures in this Management Plan

Themes and Strategic Aims	Outcomes
<p>Place</p> <p>The landscape and settlements that make this place special are conserved and enhanced, and rurality and tranquillity are reinforced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive historical character and beauty is retained in the landscape and in settlements through high quality, landscape-led development and maintenance. • Historical landscape features and heritage assets are protected and enhanced. • Erosion of rural character is halted and reversed to retain the landscape's innate sense of rurality, tranquillity and remoteness. • The quality of the landscape's dark night skies is maintained and enhanced.
<p>People</p> <p>A landscape that people are proud to call home, where all are welcome, and access to the 'Natural Health Service' is equitable and sustainable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities are sustainable and viable, with more younger people living and working here. • The landscape is an inclusive and accessible place for everyone, including culturally diverse communities, people from all socioeconomic backgrounds and people with diverse abilities. • There is a stronger sense of place built on a greater understanding of the landscape, empowering people to care for it • People are healthier and happier through a stronger connection with the landscape, its nature and cultural heritage • Tourism is regenerative, enhancing the landscape, environment and nature, respectful of culture and supportive of viable communities. • Visitors have a high-quality and engaging experience whilst treading lightly on the landscape.

<p>Nature</p> <p>The landscape is a place where nature thrives in a connected network of habitats within and beyond the boundary of the National Landscape</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature is recovered through bigger, better and more joined-up habitats. • Wildlife and their habitats are protected from loss, decline or degradation. • Pollution of land, air and water is halted and reversed, and soil health is improved. • There is greater support for nature recovery from responsible authorities, residents, visitors, farmers, land managers, and businesses. • A resilient landscape, adapting to the consequences of a warming climate, where emissions are reduced, and carbon is sequestered through natural processes
<p>Climate</p> <p>A resilient landscape, adapting to the consequences of a warming climate, where emissions are reduced, and carbon is sequestered through natural processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resilient landscape achieved by adaptation, prioritising the natural processes at work in the landscape and along the coastline to increase natural capital. • There is a better understanding of the impact of climate change on nature. • Habitats emit less greenhouse gases and sequester more carbon • Balanced and informed approach to infrastructure and works designed to mitigate the impact of climate change is taken. • Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced through advocacy and best practice • Residents, visitors, farmers, land managers and businesses are empowered to take climate action
<p>Implementation, monitoring and reporting</p>	

Northumberland Coast National Landscape

Vision for 2050

A sense of remoteness and wildness is maintained, with wide open coastal and sea views, a naturally functioning coastline rich in wildlife, and a clear distinction between settlements and open countryside. The National Landscape is a living, working area with a celebrated history and culture, and a vibrant present in which social and economic wellbeing is successfully integrated with the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the area.

Statement of Significance

The Northumberland Coast National Landscape is a nationally important landscape, officially designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1958. It is the northernmost National Landscape in England. The landscape we see today has been shaped over a long time by both natural processes and human activity. To protect and look after it, we first need to understand and clearly describe what makes it special.

It covers an area of 138 square km along 64km of coastline from just south of Berwick-upon-Tweed to the Coquet Estuary. The National Landscape is rarely wider than 2.5km, and yet this stretch of English countryside contains a tremendous variety of features of natural, historical and cultural value.

The area is best known for its sweeping sandy beaches, rolling dunes, rocky headlands and isolated islands. Amid this striking land and seascape is abundant evidence of human activity, conflict and spiritual pursuit, whilst a host of national and international nature conservation designations attest to the great variety of important habitats and species in the National Landscape.

Ruralness, a feeling of exposure in an open landscape, a sense of tranquillity and dark skies contribute to the perceptual and scenic qualities people enjoy. Highways and walking routes tend to be linear, following the coast with spurs to the foreshore originally established for fishing, agriculture and trade.

Given the long history of human interventions in the landscape, natural beauty can seem a confusing term. After all, how much of the landscape is truly 'natural'? Guidance provided by Natural England¹ states that 'natural beauty is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over centuries. Therefore, the natural beauty of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape is best expressed as the special qualities of the landscape, embracing all these elements.

The plan explains natural beauty using six core character components, based on the overall features of the landscape and seascape. These components reflect how people have shaped the area over time. Each one includes detailed aspects like habitats, special features, and cultural links. Together, they form a unique and recognisable landscape, where the natural beauty is greater than just the individual parts.

¹ Natural England. (2011). *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)*. Natural England.

Each core component of natural beauty is of equal and stand-alone importance in its own right, (i.e., they cannot be ranked) and any policy or action may be considered harmful to the National Landscape if it results in the loss of, or material harm to, any of these components of character. All of the National Landscape is important; any areas perceived as degraded should be seen as opportunities for enhancement of natural beauty contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

Core character components

Landscape and seascape – Underlying geology including the influence of the whin sill, offshore islands, dunes and dune grasslands, backed sandy bays, rocky outcrops, coastal views and inland views over an open agricultural coastal plain.

Nature – Important habitats: sand dunes and coastal slope, offshore islands, estuaries and bays, intertidal mud and sand, rocky shores, whin grasslands and farmland. Important species assemblages: breeding seabirds, passage and wintering wildfowl and waders, rare plants, coastal invertebrates and farmland birds.

Perceptual qualities – Open landscape, exposure to the elements, tranquillity, ruralness and dark skies.

Ecclesiastical – The cradle of English Christianity, Northern Saints, places associated with the Golden Age of Northumbria.

Castles and defence – Infamous Viking attack on Lindisfarne in 793, major seats of power and defence of the realm with castles at Bamburgh, Warkworth, Dunstanburgh and Lindisfarne, World War II and Cold War defences.

People and places – Agricultural landscape characterised by small mixed farms, historic rural and coastal settlements, historic routes, sea trade and smuggling, whinstone quarrying and the lime working, fishing and fish processing, and tourism.

Cross-cutting issues and priorities and forces for change

The interconnected threats of the biodiversity and climate crisis and pressure from tourism and development are priorities for everyone over the next five years. National direction in addressing these threats is crucial and that direction is the first of the cross-cutting issues set-out in this section. To make sure that the Northumberland Coast National Landscape is placed to be able to deal with these threats, they are woven throughout this plan. They are set out here to capture them in one place and identify the forces of change associated with them. The body of the plan sets out the way in which they will be addressed and how resources should be prioritised to target investment.

National direction

In recent years, the Government has set the direction of travel for National Landscapes, both legislating to strengthen the role of National Landscapes in tackling issues faced by the nation and setting targets for National Landscapes to assist meeting commitments to the international community on net zero and biodiversity loss.

To support National Landscapes to meet their potential to deliver more for nature, climate and enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement, Management Plans now must include government targets that have been set to deliver of DEFRA's Environmental Improvement Plan (2023).

A further new requirement for Management Plans is to have a climate adaptation plan embedded within them, or linked with them, by 2028.

Forces for change

Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 includes important amendments to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) affecting protected landscapes. Section 245 (Protected Landscapes) of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) amends the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Landscapes.

Relevant authorities must now 'seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes. This replaces the previous duty on relevant authorities to 'have regard to' their statutory purposes.

Relevant authorities² will need to apply the duty when undertaking any function in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a protected landscape. This requires not just avoiding damage to this special area but actively trying to improve it. Using this Management Plan will help relevant authorities ensure that they are fulfilling their duty.

Relevant authorities should make efforts to understand the Management Plan and relate their functions to it. Dialogue with the National Landscape team can assist the relevant authority.

The legislative framework for National Landscapes is summarised in [Appendix X](#)

Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 and 30x30

Under the umbrella of the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (2018), the work and priorities of the National Landscape, as set out in the Management Plan, are required to contribute to Defra's Environmental Improvement Plan.

This plan sets out the Government's goals for enhancing the natural environment, including the target to protect 30% of our land and sea for nature by 2030, which is a global target to protect 30% of the planet for nature by 2030 (known as 30x30). Countries are expected to contribute to this global goal through domestic action to increase coverage of effectively managed protected areas. More than 100 countries have now signed up to the commitment, including the UK.

² The term relevant authorities is broadly defined and includes a wide range of public bodies and statutory undertakers, including local planning authorities, government departments, and other public bodies.

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

To meet the UK's commitments, Defra has set out an ambition, in a framework, for how National Landscapes can contribute to achieving three goals from the Environmental Improvement Plan:

- Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife.
- Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

In 2024 government published a Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework which sets out 10 targets to achieve positive changes for nature, climate, people and place, and must be embedded into National Landscape Management Plans:

Thriving plants and wildlife targets (5 targets)

***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).

Target 2. Bring 80% of 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.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change targets (3 targets)

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

***Target 7.** Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in protected landscapes by 2050.

*** Target 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 environmental targets (2 targets).

Target 9. Improve and promote accessibility to, and engagement with, protected landscapes for all by using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.

Target 10. Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in protected landscapes.

NB. Asterisked targets (1, 7 and 8) need to be apportioned (shared) to reflect the local circumstances of individual protected landscapes more accurately.

State of the AONB report

A 'state of the AONB' report will be compiled for the first time for the Northumberland Coast National Landscape, to support this Management Plan and the work of staff team and partners. Using the framework of Place, People, Nature and Climate, it presents data from government and other sources on all core character components providing a baseline to track progress against national targets, and actions that flow from the outcomes and measures of this plan.

Biodiversity loss

Protected landscapes are regarded as refuges for wildlife; however, they are not immune to the pressures facing nature. Biodiversity loss is a critical aspect of the broader nature crisis, where ecosystems are increasingly struggling to maintain their health and resilience. Despite being designated as National Landscapes, which should safeguard wildlife and natural habitats, protected landscapes are still vulnerable to a multitude of pressures.

Habitat degradation caused by pollution, invasive species, under-management, agriculture and human encroachment remains a significant threat. The use of agrichemicals, such as pesticides and fertilizers, can harm soil health and disrupt local nutrient

cycles³. The resulting decline in soil fertility further exacerbates the vulnerability of native species, particularly plants, which in turn affects entire food webs. This loss of ecosystem functions, coupled with climate change, is pushing many species to the brink of extinction, even within protected areas.

The decline of invertebrates, such as pollinators, soil organisms, and decomposers, is one of the most alarming indicators of biodiversity loss⁴. These small yet crucial creatures play a fundamental role in maintaining ecosystem services, such as pollination, nutrient cycling, and soil aeration. Their disappearance disrupts these processes, creating a cascading effect that compromises the integrity of entire ecosystems.

The challenge of reversing biodiversity loss requires a holistic approach that includes better land management, habitat restoration, and stronger protection against external threats. This holistic approach is set out in the Nature Recovery Plan for the National Landscape that dovetails with, and adds granularity to, the North of Tyne Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Forces for change

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) are a system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement required by law under the Environment Act 2021⁵. Each strategy must:

- Agree priorities for nature recovery.
- Map the most valuable existing areas for nature.
- Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.

³ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/42415/documents/210844/default/>

⁴ Invertebrates continue to decline in intensively farmed landscapes <https://www.ceh.ac.uk/press/invertebrates-continue-decline-intensively-farmed-landscape>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/part/6/crossheading/local-nature-recovery-strategies>

The main purpose of the strategies is to identify locations to create or improve habitat most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment. The strategies do not force the owners and managers of the land identified to make any changes. Instead, the Government is encouraging action through, for example, opportunities for funding and investment.

The North of Tyne LNRS covers the local authority areas of Newcastle, North Tyneside, and Northumberland. It will be published in the lifetime of this plan. The Nature Recovery Plan for the National Landscape aligns with the North of Tyne LNRS and vice-versa, adding a finer granularity.

Northumberland Coast National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan

In 2019, all National Landscapes made a commitment to restore nature across the network of National Landscapes. Known as the Colchester Declaration⁶, the commitment included the preparation of a Nature Recovery Plan for each landscape, the identification of key species at risk and measures to remove these from the Red List or improve their status.

The Nature Recovery Plan can be found in **Appendix X**. It sets out measures that will be taken to achieve what is required to protect, increase and join-up habitats across the landscape and ensure that vulnerable species thrive. The Nature Recovery Plan sits alongside the Local Nature Recover Strategy and will be adopted alongside this Management Plan. It has informed the nature chapter of this plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a legally mandated approach that requires developers to ensure their projects result in a measurable improvement in biodiversity compared to pre-development. Introduced under the Environment Act 2021 and effective from early 2024, BNG mandates a minimum 10% increase in biodiversity value for most new developments, to be maintained for at least 30

⁶ <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/the-colchester-declaration>

years. This is achieved through the creation or enhancement of habitats either on-site, off-site, or via statutory biodiversity credits if other options are not feasible.

BNG plays a crucial role in nature recovery by transforming development from a driver of habitat loss into a catalyst for ecological restoration. By requiring measurable biodiversity improvements, BNG supports the restoration of vital habitats, accelerates species recovery, and connects people with nature in their daily lives. Additionally, BNG contributes to the UK's legally binding targets to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 and improve habitats by 2042.

30x30

30x30 is a global conservation initiative aiming to protect at least 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030 to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. It was formally adopted at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in 2022. The UK Government has committed to this target as part of its wider environmental agenda, pledging to protect 30% of UK land and sea areas to support nature recovery, mitigate climate change, and enhance ecosystem resilience.

The UK's commitment to 30x30 involves identifying and designating new protected areas while improving the condition of existing areas. In England, National Landscapes and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are central to achieving this goal. However, significant effort is required to ensure that designated areas are genuinely managed for nature and not just protected in name. The 30x30 target drives ambitious policy changes and funding toward restoring habitats, conserving species, and engaging communities in stewardship of their natural environment.

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

In 2024 government published a Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework which sets out 10 targets to achieve positive changes for nature, climate, people and place, which must be embedded into National Landscape Management Plans.

Climate

Climate change brings a suite of challenges as temperatures increase, weather patterns change, and sea level rises. As more greenhouse gases (GHG) are released into the atmosphere, the planet continues to warm. In 2024, Earth experienced temperatures +1.55°C above the preindustrial baseline of 1850-1900 average temperatures⁷. If GHG emissions are not reduced, we are currently on target for +3°C increase⁸. The UK Government is advising to assess the risk of +4°C temperature rise by the end of the century⁹.

For the Northumberland Coast, as for the rest of the UK, climate change means hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters, and the increased frequency of extreme weather. Unless the coastline is allowed to realign and roll-back in response to sea level rise, it means a loss of habitat and wildlife these habitats support. Longer term, on some parts of the coast, it means loss of landscape to the sea and, if not protected by flood defence, loss of significant places, cultural heritage sites, settlement and infrastructure.

Northumberland Coast's carbon footprint

As a place, the Northumberland Coast National Landscape emits 32.8 ktCO₂ equivalent per year (*Data for 2022, DESNZ (2024) NB DESNZ to release data summer 2025 – figure will be updated when available*)¹⁰. The National Landscape has significant natural

⁷ The global average temperature for the **most recent 10-year period**, from 2014 to 2023, is estimated to be the warmest 10-year period on record, at around **1.2°C** above the 1850-1900 average. However, 2024 “was likely the first calendar year to be more than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial era, with a global mean near-surface temperature of 1.55 ± 0.13 °C above the 1850-1900 average. This is the warmest year in the 175-year observational record” (State of the Global Climate report, World Meteorological Organization, March 2025).

⁸ A failure to further cut GHG from current trajectories will put the world on course for a temperature increase of 2.6-3.1°C over the course of this century (Emissions Gap Report, United Nations, October 2024).

⁹ Independent guidance, adopted by the UK government for the Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) and 3rd National Adaptation Plan (NAP3), is to prepare for a 2°C rise in global temperature, whilst assessing the risks for 4°C.

¹⁰ For comparison the carbon footprint of the neighbouring towns of Berwick, Alnwick and Amble are X, X and X ktCO₂ equivalent per year respectively.

capital that sequesters and stores carbon. Known as 'negative emissions', the figure for sequestration is -9 ktCO₂ equivalent ¹¹ per annum. Habitat that sequesters carbon includes woodland, dune grasslands, salt marsh and mudflats.

The carbon footprint of the National Landscape as an organisation will be determined during the life of this Management Plan.

Forces for change

National and local net zero targets

UK Government has legislated to achieve net zero by 2050¹². To meet this target requires continued action at a national level, international cooperation between nations, and massive change across the global economy. It also requires action at a local level, for communities and individuals to reduce for their own carbon footprint, and to adapt to climate change.

Northumberland County Council has pledged to reach net zero by 2040 whereby GHG emissions produced in Northumberland are balanced by the amount of carbon dioxide removed from the atmosphere and sequestered by the county's largely rural environment. It has also pledged to make Northumberland carbon neutral in relation to carbon dioxide emissions by 2030¹³ and to become a carbon neutral organisation by that date. The National Landscape Partnership has adopted and agreed to work towards these targets for the Northumberland Coast National Landscape.

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework and a Climate Adaptation Plan for the Northumberland Coast

In 2024 government published a Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework which sets out 10 targets to achieve positive changes for nature, climate, people and place, which must be embedded into National Landscape Management Plans.

¹¹ DESNZ 2024 (data for 2022)

¹² This means the UK is legally required to have balanced GHG emissions relative to 1990 levels by 2050 by reducing emissions but also increasing absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

¹³ This does not include other GHG such as methane or nitrous oxide.

All protected landscapes are required to risk assess the principal climate change risks and opportunities to feed into the National Adaptation Programme (NAP) for climate. Now in its third cycle (that runs to 2028), NAP3 sets the actions that Government and others will take to adapt to the impacts of climate change in the UK.

The Climate Change Risk Assessment for the National Landscape can be found in Appendix [X] of this Management Plan. It will be updated and reviewed during the life of the plan and will inform the Climate Adaptation Plan that Government has stipulated all National Landscapes must produce by 2028.

Local and regional strategies

Northumberland County Council's strategy to address climate change is set out in its Climate Change Action Plan 2024-2026¹⁴. The Action Plan sets out how the County Council aims to deliver net zero by 2040, looking at its own emissions, and those from industrial, agricultural, domestic, transport sectors, as well as existing land use.

Net Zero North East¹⁵ aims to “decarbonise the North East to create a greener, fairer and more sustainable region”. A collaborative partnership with representation from local and regional government, business, education, the public sector and civil society, it acts as an information hub with support given across all key action areas identified by the UK Government's Climate Change Committee¹⁶.

Local action and initiatives

¹⁴ Climate Change Action Plan 2024-2026 https://www.northumberlandnetzero.uk/_files/ugd/d5a70e_7d3449c7e6274c94b38bd1f4901d7771.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.netzeronortheastengland.co.uk/>

¹⁶ Priority areas are transport; industry; energy and heat; housing and buildings; agriculture, land use and food; water, waste and pollution.

Many communities and organisations within the National Landscape are taking action to tackle climate change by reducing emissions and adapting. The momentum of local action is a force for change as experiences are shared, local expertise and networks grow, and more funding streams become available for these initiatives.

Focus: What's happening locally?

- *The Holy Island of Lindisfarne's Vision and Strategic Framework includes Environment and Sustainability aspirations, including community energy initiatives¹⁷*
- *Installation of solar panels on community buildings in Beadnell and North Sunderland, via Community Action Northumberland*
- *Northumberland County Council EV charging infrastructure installed in most settlements*
- *National Trust's Embleton management of dune grasslands to reduce risk of wildfires*
- *Saltmarsh and wetland creation by Northumberland Estates at Buston Links*

Tourism

Managed well, tourism has the power to transform people and places. It can have a positive impact on host communities, regenerate local economies and connect people to nature, inspiring them to care for our most precious landscapes. Tourism can deliver benefits to the National Landscape and its communities in the future, without compromising its special qualities.

The term regenerative tourism describes activity that contributes more towards the enhancement and regeneration of the places and communities in which it operates. It requires us all to find ways for tourism to generate net-positive impacts in GHG reduction and biodiversity, as well as enhancing the vitality and integrity of host communities, whilst ensuring that the National Landscape is relevant to everyone. Simply put, tourism development needs to move from a position of doing less harm to helping give back more than it takes.

¹⁷ A Vision for the Future: A Strategic Framework developed by the island community for its future sustainability and prosperity, 2022-2050. Holy Island 2050

The increase in the popularity of the National Landscape as a destination for visitors has brought economic prosperity but at a cost to local communities. These places, cherished for their natural beauty and cultural heritage, can become increasingly fragmented as the influx of non-resident owners drives up property prices, making it difficult for local people to afford housing. In many cases, this leads to the displacement of long-term residents, altering the demographic makeup of the community and diminishing local cultural connections. Moreover, second homes can contribute to a rise in seasonal population surges, putting strain on infrastructure and public services during peak holiday periods¹⁸. Local businesses that cater primarily to tourists may experience growth, but this can create an economy overly reliant on transient visitors, leaving fewer opportunities for sustainable employment for year-round residents. Low levels of permanent residents and a predominantly retired, increasingly elderly population has given rise to labour shortages, particularly in the hospitality and care sectors.

Forces for change

Tourism structures

In 2021, Nick De Bois was tasked with surveying tourism structures in England, evaluating its current funding and performance, with a view to making recommendations on whether there may be a more efficient and effective model for supporting English tourism at a local and regional level and delivering the Government's tourism policy agenda¹⁹.

This review led to Government piloting a Development Partnership in 2023²⁰. The first pilot region was North East England. The review also recommended the formation of Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs). In the pilot, the Destination Development Partnership (DDP) is led by the Newcastle-Gateshead Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), on behalf of a wider region and other LVEPs to deliver the government's ambitions for the sector at a regional level. The DDP aims to double the size of the visitor economy over ten years.

Regenerative tourism framework

¹⁸ <https://ww3.rics.org/uk/en/modus/built-environment/homes-and-communities/ghost-town-effect-of-second-homes-on-communities.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-independent-review-of-destination-management-organisations-in-england/government-response-to-the-independent-review-of-destination-management-organisations-in-england>

²⁰ <https://destinationnortheastengland.co.uk/about-us/destination-development-partnership-pilot>

Regenerative tourism, an emerging concept in the industry, presents a proactive approach to leveraging tourism and events as catalysts for addressing environmental, social, and economic challenges within communities. It seeks to revitalise communities holistically, emphasising restoration and rejuvenation over degradation or mere sustainability.

In 2023, the North East England Destination Development Partnership launched its Regenerative Tourism Framework²¹. It was co-created with industry for Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), local authority tourism teams, Protected Landscape bodies and other organisations engaged in destination management, to inform and guide development strategies that will support the visitor economy on its regenerative journey.

²¹ <https://destination-northeast.files.svdcdn.com/production/Destination-North-East-England-Regenerative-Visitor-Economy-Framework.pdf?dm=1725885735>

Development

To meet the housing needs of current and future generations, appropriately located and well-designed development will be required within the National Landscape. In response to the challenges of climate change, both new and existing buildings must incorporate sustainable design approaches. All development must be planned and delivered in a way that conserves and enhances the character of the landscape and its settlements, through high-quality design and sensitive planning.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Great weight to landscape protection

The NPPF (2024)²² recognises National Landscapes as areas of the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Paragraph 189 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in these designated areas. This duty applies to both plan-making and decision-taking, ensuring that any development proposals respect the primary purpose of these landscapes: to conserve and enhance their natural beauty

Major development tests

Paragraph 190 of the NPPF sets out a specific test for major development in National Landscapes. Such proposals should be refused except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. The assessment must consider the need for the development, alternatives, and the impact on the landscape and recreational opportunities. This provides a strong safeguard against inappropriate large-scale development in sensitive areas.

Sustainable and sensitive development

While the NPPF allows for development that supports the social and economic well-being of National Landscape communities, it emphasises that this must be achieved through sustainable, sensitive design. Paragraphs 11 and 20 highlight the importance of aligning Local Plans with national policies, including the protection of designated landscapes. Any development in National Landscapes must be informed by high-quality design, local character, and landscape sensitivity, balancing local needs with environmental stewardship.

²² National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf

Northumberland Local Plan

The **Northumberland Local Plan 2016–2036**²³, adopted in March 2022, provides a comprehensive framework for managing development within the Northumberland Coast National Landscape (AONB). This plan aligns with national policies, notably the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), to ensure that development within the protected landscape is sustainable.

Emphasis on landscape protection

The Local Plan acknowledges the National Landscape as an area of the highest status of protection concerning landscape and scenic beauty. Accordingly, it stipulates that great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty. This directive applies to both plan-making and decision-taking processes, ensuring that any development proposals respect the primary purpose of the landscape designation: to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Development management and design considerations

While the Local Plan supports development that meets the needs of local communities, it emphasises that such development must be sustainable and sensitive to the unique characteristics of the National Landscape. This includes ensuring that new developments are of high quality, reflect local character, and do not compromise the area's special qualities. The plan also highlights the importance of considering the cumulative impact of development on the landscape and encourages the use of design principles that enhance the natural and built environment.

Integration with this Management Plan

The Local Plan integrated with the previous Northumberland Coast AONB Management Plan (2020–2024). That Management Plan, and this one, is a material consideration for Northumberland County Council when determining planning applications. The Council consults the National Landscape team on all planning applications within the area and some beyond its boundary that may have an impact, ensuring that development proposals are assessed for their impact on the statutory purposes of the National Landscape.

²³ Northumberland Local Plan 2016–2036 <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Local%20Plan/Northumberland-Local-Plan-Adopted-March-2022.pdf>

The Northumberland Local Plan, in conjunction with national policies and this Management Plan, provides a robust framework for guiding development within the Northumberland Coast National Landscape. It ensures that while accommodating necessary growth and development, the area's natural beauty and cultural heritage are preserved and enhanced.

Forces for change

Enhanced duty to 'further the purpose'

The Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) places a stronger requirement on partners such as local authorities and public bodies (known as relevant authorities) to conserve and enhance protected landscapes. It amends the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, placing a revised duty on relevant authorities:

"In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in any [protected landscape] in England, a relevant authority must seek to further the specified purposes".

This replaces the existing duty to 'have regard to' the specified purposes.

Section 245 of LURA is significant for the protection of National Landscapes as it strengthens their statutory purpose and management framework. Crucially, s.245 places a stronger duty on public bodies to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of these landscapes when exercising their functions. This elevates the influence of National Landscape Management Plans in decision-making processes, including planning, and reinforces the role of National Landscape bodies in shaping sustainable land use, development, and nature recovery within their areas. Amendments brought about by LURA also grant powers to the Secretary of State to make regulations to:

- Direct a relevant authority in the discharging of the duty.
- Require a protected landscape management plan to contribute to meeting any national environmental target set under the Environment Act 2021.
- Set out how a management plan must further the purposes of the designation.
- Require and set out how a relevant authority must contribute to the preparation, implementation and review of a management plan.

Revised design guidance

A revised Highways and Public Realm Design Guide²⁴ for the National Landscape replaced the previous Highways Design Guide in 2023. The document provides guidance on how the rural road network and other public realm within the National Landscape should be designed and managed, for anyone involved in construction, maintenance, management, including highway authorities, utilities companies, landowners, environmental and voluntary groups. The guidance will be updated with case studies over the lifespan of the plan.

The 'Design Guide for the Built Environment'²⁵ for the National Landscape will be revised in the first year of the Management Plan. This document provides design guidance for new development, alterations to the existing buildings, lighting, placemaking and landscaping. Critically it includes best practice for repair and maintenance of the built environment. The revised Design Guide will have a strong focus on retrofit of existing buildings, including historic buildings, and renewable energy generation. As for the Highways and Public Realm Design Guide, it is targeted at anyone involved the built environment including property owners, businesses and decision-makers, and will include case studies.

²⁴ Highways and Public Realm Design Guide for the Northumberland Coast National Landscape. <https://www.northumberlandcoast-nl.org.uk/>

²⁵ Northumberland Coast AONB Design Guide for the Built Environment
<https://www.northumberlandcoast-nl.org.uk/development-and-planning>

Common principles

There are some common principles that underpin all aims, outcomes and measures in this Management Plan. The acceptance of these principles is a key part of adopting and delivering this plan; they should aid policy formulation and decision-making in relation to the National Landscape across a wide range of organisations, notably local authorities and public bodies with duties in relation to the AONB under S.85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as amended by the s.245 of the Levelling up and Regeneration Act of (2023).

1. The plan articulates natural beauty through the special qualities for which the area was designated - six core character components. These components encompass finer-grained characteristics which include habitats, features of interest and cultural associations, and all combine to create a distinct and recognisable landscape whose natural beauty exceeds the sum of its parts. The core character components are listed in the Statement of Significance.
2. Each core component of natural beauty is of equal and standalone importance in its own right, (i.e., they cannot be ranked). Any policy or action may be considered harmful to the National Landscape if it results in the loss of, or material harm to, any of these components of character. There therefore should be a presumption against the loss or degradation of the core character components set out in the Statement of Significance.
3. All the National Landscape is important; any areas perceived as degraded should be seen as opportunities for enhancement of natural beauty contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.
4. It is not only development within the boundary of the National Landscape that needs to be informed by this plan: planning policy and guidance make it clear that land within the setting of protected landscapes is important and poorly located or designed development here can detract from the designated landscape. For developments within the setting, potential impacts on the core characteristics should be considered.

5. Despite not having a second purpose (as do National Parks) the Sandford Principle²⁶ should still apply: where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment, conservation interest should take priority.
6. The challenge of reversing biodiversity loss requires a holistic approach that includes better land management practices, restoration efforts, and stronger protection against external threats.
7. Climate change – that human-influenced climate change is real. Projects and initiatives should have as small a carbon footprint as possible, and maximise opportunities for carbon sequestration, climate adaptation and the co-benefits climate action can bring.
8. Outcomes, not prescriptions – a focus on outcomes, the results of measures, will deliver more for nature than a one-size-fits-all approach, but extra care must be taken with our most precious natural assets.
9. Working together – that strong and meaningful collaborations between landowners, conservation bodies, local authorities, businesses and local people are the only way to ensure the delivery of this plan
10. The plan won't achieve its aims without a thriving local economy. This underpins efforts to support sustainable livelihoods, strengthen rural communities, and ensure that nature recovery and landscape conservation deliver lasting social and economic benefits.
11. There will be no opportunities for a boundary review in the lifespan of this Management Plan.

²⁶ Environment Act 1995, Section 62(1) – [now Section 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949]

1. Place

Strategic aim

The landscape and settlements that make this place special are conserved and enhanced, and rurality and tranquillity are reinforced.

Underlying geology including the influence of the whin sill has created a landscape of offshore islands, sandy bays backed by single ridged dunes and punctuated by rocky outcrops. Coastal views extend for miles and views inland extend to the Cheviot Hills over an open agricultural coastal plain characterised by small mixed farms.

It is an open landscape with a feeling of exposure to the elements. Tranquillity can easily be found. There remains a feeling of ruralness in settlements and the open countryside. The night sky remains dark, and the stars are visible.

There are small, historic, rural and coastal settlements linked by roads and paths following historic routes. A history of farming, quarrying, sea trade, smuggling, fishing and fish processing, religion, war and conflict is apparent in settlements now dominated by the influx of visitors who come to enjoy the National Landscape.

Top 5 issues

Erosion of rural character

Creeping suburbanisation of countryside and rural settlements from change that does not reinforce local character includes alterations and additions to buildings; use of inappropriate materials and boundary treatments; garden design and landscaping; lighting; and the installation of urban clutter and infrastructure in the public realm and highway.

Development failing to reinforce landscape character

Poor design of new development where response to context is not landscape-led includes tourism developments, new housing schemes and change to the existing built form.

Lack of maintenance of existing built and natural environments

Lack of maintenance of the existing character of the landscape includes alterations to buildings stock to meet latest trends (e.g. picture windows, all-glass gables, roof terraces), insensitive renovation and repair of buildings, use of inappropriate materials. Poor maintenance of the public realm and public buildings detracts from rural settlements and the quality of experience for local people and visitors. In the open countryside, lack of maintenance of field boundaries and farm steads alters the appearance of the landscape and maintenance of Public Rights of Way, which are critical for people being able to access the countryside, have decreased over many years.

Change in traditional livelihoods

Change in landscape character stems from change in how traditional livelihoods of farming and fishing are practiced. This includes the trend to combine farms and fields to create larger units, and the introduction of new infrastructure (new farm buildings, fencing) and subsequent lack of maintenance or change of use of former infrastructure. The traditional fishing industry has long been under threat, evidenced by the declining number of fishing boats working out of formerly busy harbours.

Erosion of tranquillity and pollution of dark skies

Erosion of the tranquillity experienced in the landscape via increased activity, in particular, the impact of high visitor numbers at honeypot sites, and at night, the impact of light pollution from light glare, intrusion and sky glow.

Outcome P1

Distinctive historical character and beauty is retained in the landscape and in settlements through high quality, landscape-led development and maintenance.

Why is this important?

To enhance the quality of buildings and streetscape in the National Landscape and ensure new development in its broadest sense reflects local rural character and sense of place, re-establishing the use of local and traditional materials, along with suitable colour palettes as a means of conserving local distinctiveness.

Measures

P1A Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape should only be permitted where they can be delivered in a way that is compatible with and seeks to further the conservation and enhancement of the landscape character of the location.

P1B In line with national planning policy, permission should be refused for major applications, in the context of paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework, other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

P1C High quality of design and landscaping in new buildings, conversions, alterations and maintenance work will be achieved through advocacy and use of the Built Environment Design Guide.

Outcome P2

Historical landscape features and heritage assets are protected and enhanced

Why is this important?

Protecting and enhancing heritage assets and cultural heritage in the National Landscape is crucial to retain the character and appearance of the designated landscape but also to preserve cultural identity, foster a sense of place and community pride, and ensure current and future generations can appreciate, enjoy and learn from history.

Measures

P2A Important heritage assets including designated and non-designated archaeological sites, the character and appearance of historic buildings, settlements and the built environment will be protected, conserved and well managed.

P2B Heritage skills will be supported by encouraging the use of Built Environment Design Guide. Heritage skills will be fostered via National Landscape projects, the work of the Conservation Team and projects funded by the National Landscape.

P2C Heritage assets – both designated and non-designated – under threat of destruction and / or decay will be monitored. Where and when possible, the National Landscape will work with stakeholders to halt decay and reverse decline, or preserve by record.

P2D The intangible heritage of the Northumberland Coast will be cared for by valuing the stories, traditions, local knowledge and art that connect communities and visitors to the landscape.

Target

Targets relate to those set out in the Targets and Outcomes Framework for Protected Landscapes:

Target 10: Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in protected landscapes.

Outcome P3

Erosion of rural character is halted and reversed to retain the landscape's innate sense of rurality, tranquillity and remoteness

Why is this important?

Preserving the rural character of the open countryside is essential to maintaining distinctiveness, a sense of tranquillity, and remoteness.

Preventing the suburbanisation of land and roads between settlements – through careful control of signage, street furniture, and other visual intrusions – is key to ensuring the National Landscape remains clearly differentiated from more urban and suburban areas of Northumberland and retains its intrinsic rural quality.

Measures

P3A Management and maintenance of highways and the public realm will be in accordance with the Highways and Public Realm Design Guide.

P3B Urbanisation and erosion of tranquillity through the inappropriate placement of signs, bins and other street furniture is halted and reversed through targeted clutter audits. Ornamental planting in roadside verges outside of settlements is avoided.

P3C Where parking of vehicles, in villages or open countryside, detracts from the landscape or diminishes tranquillity, a collaborative approach will be taken to design and implement an appropriate solution that is compatible with and seeks to further the conservation and enhancement of the landscape character of the location.

P3D An understanding of the meaning and value of tranquillity will be increased through advocacy and advice.

Outcome P4

The quality of the landscape's dark night skies is maintained and enhanced

Why is this important?

To maintain and enhance dark night skies within the national Landscape for the benefit of all, including future generations, for our health, wellbeing and enjoyment, to increase our understanding of our place in the universe; and for the benefit of wildlife and to reduce energy consumption.

Measures

P4A The quality of the night sky will be retained by working collaboratively to reduce light pollution from light glare, intrusion and sky glow.

P4B Proposals that are likely to impact on the night sky should be delivered in a way that protect dark skies, by avoiding over lighting and minimising light pollution through good design.

P4C Awareness of the importance of dark skies will be increased through advocacy of best practice.

Outcome P5

Important geological and geomorphological sites are protected, enhanced and celebrated

Why is this important?

Important geological sites are key to understanding how the landscape of the Northumberland Coast was created and more broadly, the Earth's history. Protecting and enhancing these sites safeguards this unique natural heritage that contributes to landscape character and supports specialist plants and animals.

Measures

P5A Geological and geomorphological features, and their associated specialist species, should be conserved and enhanced through effective management.

P5B Actively promote awareness, understanding, and appreciation of geological and geomorphological features through interpretation, education, and community engagement.

P5C Key geological sites under threat from coastal erosion will be monitored. Where and when possible, the National Landscape will work with stakeholders to preserve geological features by recording them.

2. People

Strategic aim

A landscape that people are proud to call home, where all are welcome, and access to the 'Natural Health Service' is equitable and sustainable

Communities on the Northumberland Coast have moved away from an economy based on agriculture and fishing to tourism and the visitor economy and a place that people come to retire. The percentage employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry across Northumberland is 2.7%, down from 3.7% in 2001.

The National Landscape welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and economic activity associated with tourism is important for the coast and wider county. Access to natural and tranquil places is good for our health, but access to these ecosystem services provided by the landscape isn't available to everyone.

Top 5 issues

Community viability

Through the continuing increase in self-catering holiday lets and holiday homes, and lack of economic opportunities, the resident population on the coast is decreasing. Most residents aren't economically active, and the percentage of 20–34-year-olds in the National Landscape being 11.6% compared to 19.4% nationally, of which only 4.4% are female, compared to a national average of 9.8%. Housing affordability and suitability, including lack of properties to rent, for people who make communities viable to live and work, is a big issue.

Access for All

Access to the countryside isn't equitable. Barriers to access may be actual, or perceived, and can affect diverse communities, people with diverse abilities and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Physical access restrictions, lack of supporting facilities and infrastructure, including transport, and financial and cultural barriers should all be considered.²⁷

Managing recreation

Opportunities for recreational visits are concentrated along the narrow coastal strip, particularly at wide, sandy beaches. The same area contains most of the priority habitats and sensitive species. Increased access brings additional pressures on the core character components of the area, including damage to habitats and disturbance to species, increased traffic and pollution, and additional infrastructure such as car parks and signage.

Health, wellbeing and nature connectedness

People are increasingly disconnected from the landscape and nature²⁸ even though the physical and mental health benefits of spending time in nature and tranquil, beautiful, landscapes are increasingly understood and appreciated²⁹. Protected landscapes have been challenged to do more to welcome people and crucially to do a lot more to ensure that people from currently underrepresented groups can enjoy the benefits of accessing them too. However well this is understood, connecting health and social care to the National Landscape and the work of the those who look after it, be it the team, conservation organisations or farmers, remains a challenge.

²⁷ Natural England. Outdoors for All: fair access to a good quality natural environment (May 2015). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/outdoors-for-all-fair-access-to-a-good-quality-natural-environment/outdoors-for-all-fair-access-to-a-good-quality-natural-environment/>

²⁸ Anglia Ruskin University. <https://www.aru.ac.uk/news/study-finds-uk-adults-arent-connected-to-nature>

²⁹ ONS. A million fewer people are gaining health benefits from nature since 2020. (November 2023) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/amillionfewerpeoplearegaininghealthbenefitsfromnaturesince2020/2023-11-27>

Tourism

The National Landscape is an increasingly popular tourism destination³⁰ and receives an estimated four-to-five million visitors each year, with numbers expected to rise because of the increasing popularity of the coast as a destination and promotion by the Destination Development Partnership who have an aim to double the value of the visitor economy in the years.

Managed well, tourism has the power to transform people and places. It can have a positive impact on host communities, generate community wealth and connect people to nature, inspiring them to care for our most precious landscapes. Tourism can deliver benefits to the National Landscape and its communities in the future, without compromising the special qualities.

Outcome PE1

Communities are sustainable and viable, with more younger people living and working here

Why is this important?

Tourism and the hospitality sector are the main economic drivers on the Northumberland Coast with fewer people reliant traditional trades such as agriculture and fishing. Sustainable and viable communities with more younger people living and working in the National Landscape are needed to ensure economic growth, innovation, and a workforce that can meet the needs of business and communities, while fostering long-term social, community and environmental sustainability.

Measures

PE1A The construction of affordable housing within settlements, for permanent occupation, either rented or to buy, will be supported where it can be delivered in a way that conforms with planning policy and the relevant neighbourhood plan.

PE1B Communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans will be supported to ensure that sustainable, viable communities can develop in a way that protects that the core character components.

PE1C Continue to monitor and report the ratio of second homes, furnished homes to let and primary residences in all the settlements within the National Landscape.

³⁰ <https://www.visitnorthumberland.org.uk/resources-insights/market-intelligence/volume-value>

PE1D Support the diversification of the economy to make it more resilient and productive all year round in a way that protects the core character components

Outcome PE2

The landscape is an inclusive and accessible place for everyone, including culturally diverse communities, people from all socioeconomic backgrounds and people with diverse abilities.

Why is this important?

The link between being in nature and wellbeing is well understood, but access to beautiful, wild places isn't equitable. National Landscapes should be inclusive and accessible so that everyone, including those with diverse abilities and from diverse cultural backgrounds, can experience the natural beauty, connect with nature, and benefit from the physical and mental wellbeing that these spaces provide.

Measures

PE2A Improve physical accessibility to the National Landscape for everyone through targeted actions that remove barriers and make beaches, the coastal margin, public rights of way and settlements accessible to all where this can be achieved while protecting the core character components set out in the Statement of Significance.

PE2B Through the provision of better information and engagement, work to address the perceived or actual barriers that prevent people visiting the National Landscape.

PE2C Provide better and affordable public transport to allow people from a wider range of communities to reach the National Landscape. Promote the use of public transport to those communities.

PE2D Support equality, diversity and inclusion training

Target

Work towards the delivery of the relevant target for access and recreation within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

Target 9 - Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with protected landscapes using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.

Outcome PE3

There is a stronger sense of place built on a greater understanding of the landscape, empowering people to care for it

Why is this important?

The landscape of the Northumberland Coast is so familiar to residents that it can be easy to take it for granted, while visitors often appreciate its beauty without understanding its status as a protected landscape and the responsibilities that come with it. People's feelings and behaviours are shaped by their emotional connection to the area – known as 'place attachment' – which influences local culture and community identity³¹. Materials, finishes, and design elements in public spaces contribute significantly to this sense of place, and by fostering greater understanding and pride in the landscape, people are more likely to value, protect, and care for it.

Measures

PE3A Using the National Landscape Interpretation Plan and brand, convey and promote a unified and distinctive identity for the National Landscape.

PE3B Continue to provide opportunities for local people volunteer to conserve and enhance the National Landscape and support the work of the staff team.

PE3C Use the Highways and Public Realm Guide and Built Environment Design Guide to ensure that sense of place is embedded into development.

PE2D Deliver and promote arts and cultural experiences that encourage people to deepen their emotional connection to the landscape and support the engagement of new and existing audiences.

³¹ Connection to nature EIN068. October 2022 (Natural England)

PE2E Deliver targeted advocacy and engagement programmes – particularly with young people – that explore the connections between food production, farming practices, and landscape management, fostering deeper understanding and care for the natural environment.

PE2F Support and deliver activities that help people understand how healthy ecosystems work and why they matter, so they feel more connected to nature and are more likely to speak up for its protection.

Outcome PE4

People are healthier and happier through a stronger connection with the landscape, its nature and cultural heritage

Why is this important?

The Northumberland Coast National Landscape plays a full part in improving the nation's health, benefitting the mental and physical wellbeing of those who experience it. We are connected to the natural world, and it is now widely acknowledged that exposure to nature and natural landscapes provides many benefits to human health for every age, socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity. Many people, particularly young people, do not have opportunities to learn about the environment or to develop an understanding and appreciation of the coast.

A lack of physical activity can be linked to chronic diseases and conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease which, combined with an ageing population, is contributing to a public health crisis. Being in natural, green places is good for mental health.

(When addressing the link between maximising connection with the landscape for health benefits, this needs to be explored in relation to co-existing factors including underlying health conditions, socio-economic background, neurodiversity and cultural background.)

Measures

PE4A Provide opportunities for local people to volunteer, providing the camaraderie and support that can also help combat loneliness whilst actively conserving and enhancing the National Landscape.

PE4B Maintain and improve the Public Rights of Way network and green infrastructure to provide better access to the natural environment for everyone.

PE4C Make greater use of the benefits that the National Landscape provides for the health and wellbeing of local people and visitors.

PE4D Young people residing within and around the National Landscapes, particularly those for whom access isn't easy, should be provided with environmental education opportunities and to have direct contact with the natural environment.

Target

Work towards the delivery of the relevant target for access and recreation within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

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

Focus: Volunteering in the countryside and on the coast is a great way to boost physical and mental wellbeing while giving back to nature. It helps connect people with the landscape, learn new skills, and meet people who care about the environment.

Benefits of volunteering:

- *Improves mental and physical health through outdoor activity*
- *Builds a sense of purpose and community*
- *Promotes camaraderie and tackles social isolation and loneliness*
- *Offers hands-on experience in conservation and land management*
- *Increases knowledge about local wildlife and habitats*
- *Helps protect and enhance natural places for future generations*

Outcome PE5

Tourism is regenerative, enhancing the landscape, environment and nature, respectful of culture and supportive of viable communities

Why is this important?

The National Landscape attracts millions of visitors annually. By adopting and embracing a regenerative approach to tourism, it can positively impact communities, the environment, and local economies that enhance and regenerate the area while reducing harm.

Destination North East England has adopted a Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework. This framework sets out a shared understanding for regenerative tourism in North East England, while sustainability focuses on balancing today's needs without compromising the future, regenerative tourism goes further by creating benefits and shared value for local communities, businesses, the environment and visitors.

Measures

PE5A Increase opportunities for car-free tourism and the number of car-free days taken by providing and promoting better public transport and active travel options. Support initiatives to encourage active travel and travel by bus and rail.

PE5B Ensure visitors get clear and accurate information before they arrive, so they know what to expect and have an authentic experience.

PE5C Establishment and uptake of a voluntary visitor payback scheme that generates funding for projects aimed at conserving and enhancing special qualities.

PE5D The real value of tourism to the local economy is better understood and measures are put in place to ensure that more of the economic benefit of tourism stays in the local economy for longer.

PE5E Support initiatives that move tourism to a low carbon, low waste economy

PE5F Encourage partnership working when delivering communications, joining up with local organisations and stakeholders, for messaging reach and consistency.

Outcome PE6

Visitors have a high-quality and engaging experience whilst treading lightly on the landscape

Why is this important?

A high-quality visitor experience helps people feel more connected to the place, its landscape, and nature. This connection encourages respect for local people and the place's cultural history and motivates visitors to care for the wider environment in the long term. When people enjoy their time in the National Landscape, they are more likely to appreciate its beauty and support efforts to protect it. At the same time, it's important to reduce any damage caused by recreational visits so the coast stays beautiful and wildlife is protected for both today's visitors and future generations.

PE6A Interpretation of the landscape and consistent messaging about what makes it special is provided at gateway and destination sites within the National Landscape.

PE6B Invest in high quality visitor infrastructure and access improvements at key sites.

PE6C Provision of targeted, temporary, signage at locations where visitor impacts on core components is favoured over a blanket approach that causes confusion, weakens the core message and clutters the countryside. Seasonal and temporary signs are promptly removed.

PE6D Mass participation events should only be permitted where they do not impact negatively on communities, farmers and landowners and contribute to furthering the purposes of the designation.

PE6E A strong message of 'take your litter home' will be reinforced in all visitor communication and signage. Bins are not provided in open countryside, roadside lay-bys and only in settlements and main car parks and where they are serviced daily.

PE6F Incorporate this messaging into communications, including social media posts, press releases and newsletters.

3. Nature

Strategic aim

The landscape is a place where nature thrives in a connected network of habitats within and beyond the boundary of the National Landscape

The Northumberland Coast is a stunning and ecologically significant area, known for its rich biodiversity and diverse habitats. The National Landscape is home to a variety of habitats, including sand dunes, salt marshes, mudflats, rocky shores, and sandy bays, all of which support an array of unique species. The area is particularly renowned for its birdlife, with important breeding sites for species such as the Arctic Tern, Eider Duck, and Puffin. Offshore islands and beaches are vital for breeding seabirds, while the mudflats and salt marshes provide feeding grounds for migratory waders and wildfowl. The surrounding waters also harbour a diverse marine life, including a large grey seal population and a variety of fish species.

The area is highly designated for nature conservation, including two National Nature Reserves and a host of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas highlighting its exceptional environmental importance. The preservation of these habitats is crucial for maintaining the delicate balance of the region's ecosystems, ensuring a home for both wildlife and the local community.

A Nature Recovery Plan for the Northumberland Coast National Landscape advises this section of the plan. The Nature Recovery Plan sets out in more detail how habitat and species loss will be halted and reversed within the life of the plan. Species Action Plans have been developed for seven key species:

- Purple Milk Vetch
- Eurasian Curlew
- Common Ringed Plover
- Roseate Tern
- Little Tern
- Maiden Pink

- Dark-green Fritillary

The Nature Recovery Plan for the National Landscape adds granularity to the North of Tyne Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) which identifies and maps nature recovery priorities and measures. The LNRS is a key tool for directing resources towards the recovery of nature, including Biodiversity Net Gain.

Top five issues

Habitat loss and fragmentation

Nature is in trouble, internationally, nationally and locally³². Even in a highly designated landscape that is the Northumberland Coast National Landscape, habitats and species have been lost or continue to decline at alarming rates. Fragmentation of habitats also creates isolated populations, which makes it difficult for some species to migrate or interbreed. The land between protected sites or priority habitats is impoverished of nature, leading to declines of generalist species such as pollinators and creating a barrier to species moving between habitats.

Climate change

Global warming levels have already reached +1.2°C in comparison with the pre-industrial baseline (1850-1900). For Northumberland, this means warmer wetter winters and hotter drier summers³³. Globally, warmer temperatures increase the frequency and intensity of storms, floods, droughts, and heatwaves³⁴ that disrupt ecosystems and the seasonal cycles of plants and animals and can lead to shifts in species ranges, disruption of breeding patterns, and loss of habitat³⁵. It exacerbates other issues like habitat loss and colonisation by invasive species.

³² State of Nature Report 2023 <https://stateofnature.org.uk/>

³³ Met Office / DEFRA Climate Report for Northumberland. <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/506ff7d53c884badb0d8fd36d6280a91>

³⁴ Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Working Group 1 Contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/chapter/summary-for-policymakers/>

³⁵ Climate change and migratory species: a review of impacts, conservation actions, indicators and ecosystem services. JNCC (2023).

<https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/9989a5a2-1745-4532-a9f4-92c0c50ca304>

Invasive species

Non-native species introduced through global trade, tourism, or horticulture can become invasive, outcompeting native species for resources and altering ecosystems. For example, the spread of grey squirrels has displaced native red squirrels, and non-native plant species like Pirr Pirri Burr that out-competes native vegetation and alters the structure and function of grassland ecosystems.

Pollution

Pollution, including air, water, and soil contamination, has a major impact on ecosystems and species. Agricultural runoff containing pesticides, fertilizers, and other chemicals is particularly damaging to aquatic ecosystems, particularly mudflats. Air pollution, including atmospheric nitrogen, harms nature and affects nutrient cycling in grasslands³⁶. Increasing levels of light pollution is known to have an impact on human health and on wildlife, particularly nocturnal creatures like bats and birds and on invertebrates.³⁷

Effective land management and policy

Inadequate or poorly coordinated land management and nature conservation and agricultural policies make it difficult to achieve nature recovery. Policies to protect nature can be weak and support for farmers and land managers is short term and poorly targeted³⁸. Monitoring of the effectiveness of policies and prescriptions is virtually non-existent. Fragmented conservation efforts can limit the success of nature recovery initiatives and therefore, an outcomes-based, rather than prescriptive approach is required.

Outcome N1

Nature is recovered through bigger, better and more joined-up habitats

Why is this important?

Many of the important habitats of the National Landscape are fragmented, declining in value or being lost due to land management practices, invasive species, coastal squeeze and pollution. Sometimes this is due to specialised habitats that are wholly reliant on underlying geology.

³⁶ Evidence of nitrogen deposition impacts on vegetation: implications for country strategies and UK biodiversity commitments. JNCC (2011) <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/2bef3139-5e46-44dc-b6e4-d0881bfea900/JNCC-Report-449-447-ProjectSummary-WEB.pdf>

³⁷ <https://www.buglife.org.uk/campaigns/light-pollution/>

³⁸ <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/new-report-reveals-nature-friendly-farming-budget-inadequate-meet-climate-and-nature-targets>

The Lawton Principles of nature recovery emphasise the importance of large, connected, and well-managed natural habitats in reversing the decline of nature.

These principles highlight the need for creating and maintaining ecological networks that allow species to move and thrive across landscapes. Key aspects include the restoration of damaged ecosystems, the establishment of corridors to link isolated habitats, and the recognition that nature's recovery requires a long-term, holistic approach that integrates ecological, social, and economic factors.

Measures

N1A Bring sand dune, coastal slope and whin grasslands into appropriate management where this is not in place.

N1B Enhance the extent, condition, and connectivity of wet grasslands and important farmland for wintering waders and wildfowl through site identification, protection, and targeted management.

N1C Bring existing wetland habitats (saltmarsh, fens, reedbeds, ponds, and watercourses) into appropriate management, and take opportunities to expand, connect, or create new wetlands to strengthen habitat networks.

N1D Woodlands and areas of tree cover including hedgerows are managed appropriately. Tree cover is increased across the area, following the 'right tree in the right place' principle.

N1E Opportunities to improve and protect important habitat adjacent to the National Landscape boundary will be taken, including the marine environment and upstream catchments.

N1F Farmers and land managers are encouraged, through funding and advocacy, to adopt nature-friendly farming and land management to create a wildlife-rich countryside between protected sites and priority habitats.

Target

Work towards the delivery of the relevant target for access and recreation within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

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).

Outcome N2

Wildlife and their habitats are protected from loss, decline or degradation.

Why is this important?

Coastal habitats such as offshore islands, saltmarshes, mudflats, and dunes provide vital breeding, wintering and feeding areas and a food source for important species, many of which are only found in the coastal margin. Without proper protection, these ecosystems face the risk of degradation or loss due to a lack of, or inappropriate management, pollution, invasive species and climate change, leading to the loss of both ecological and economic benefits, including tourism, fisheries, and the resilience of coastal communities.

Measures

N2A Protect Intertidal habitats including sand and mudflat and saltmarsh from degradation and decline through targeted actions in the upstream catchments that improve water quality

N2B Protect breeding seabird and shorebird colonies through targeted habitat management and effective predator control.

N2C Establish alternative habitats or create refuges to mitigate the impact of recreational disturbance on species reliant on coastal habitats.

N2D Map and assess critical feeding and roosting sites for wintering and passage waders and wildfowl and secure their protection through targeted management and disturbance mitigation.

N2E Control and remove invasive species impacting priority habitats through targeted action and support for land managers, where feasible.

N2F Encourage and enable farmers to participate in agri-environment schemes and regenerative agriculture as a pathway to achieving nature-friendly farming on land between priority habitats.

N2G Implement enhanced and coordinated monitoring programs, including initiatives, to improve data on habitats and species and inform targeted conservation actions.

N2H Provide guidance on minimising the impact of light pollution on sensitive species in broader dark skies guidance and providing advice for householders, businesses, communities and developers.

Targets

Work towards the delivery of the relevant target for access and recreation within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

Target 2

Bring 80% of 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).

Outcome N3

Pollution of land, air and water is halted and reversed, and soil health is improved

Why is this important?

Halting and reversing pollution of land, air, and water is crucial for the health of the National Landscape and all its ecosystems. Pollution directly harms biodiversity, disrupts natural processes, and contaminates the resources that support life, from the oxygen we breathe to the water we drink. Improving soil health is particularly important as healthy soil is fundamental to agriculture, food security, and carbon sequestration, acting as a natural filter for pollutants and nutrients and a vital habitat for many species at the base of the food chain. By addressing pollution and restoring

soil vitality, we not only protect the environment but also ensure the resilience of ecosystems and the well-being of future generations, fostering a sustainable balance between human development and nature.

Measures

N3A Soil health is improved through targeted financial support and advocacy that facilitates the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices by farmers.

N3B Working throughout catchments sources of nutrient pollution are identified and rectified.

N3C Water quality is improved in all water bodies within the National Landscape through monitoring leading to targeted interventions and advocacy to ensure best practice.

N3D Habitats that are sensitive to atmospheric nitrogen and other pollutants are protected from developments that increase air pollution.

N3E Support voluntary groups undertaking citizen science projects to better understand water quality issues and identify sources of pollution.

N3F Continue to support volunteers to remove plastic from beaches and the land and support projects or initiatives which prevent plastic pollution.

Outcome N4

There is greater support for nature recovery from responsible authorities, residents, visitors, farmers, land managers, and businesses

Why is this important?

To achieve the nature recovery outcomes of this Management Plan, support from the entire community – including residents, visitors, farmers, land managers, and businesses – is essential. When people value and enjoy the presence of wildlife, they are more likely to champion the necessary actions and actively contribute to efforts that enhance species abundance and create thriving, wildlife-rich habitats.

Measures

N4A Engage local communities directly with the nature around them through education, citizen science programmes, activities and social media campaigns.

N4B Inspire young people to become nature advocates by partnering with schools and youth groups, and by supporting initiatives such as beach schools and educational farm visits.

N4C Provide compelling evidence of the economic, social, and health benefits of a nature-rich landscape to build and sustain local political support for nature recovery.

N4D Emphasise the importance of sustainable nature-based tourism in supporting the local visitor-economy and embed nature recovery as a core priority within the delivery of the regenerative tourism framework.

N4E Promote and publicise the success stories of farmers and land managers adopting nature-positive approaches, showcasing the measurable benefits to both farm productivity and biodiversity.

N4F Encourage partnership working when delivering communications, joining up with local organisations and stakeholders, for messaging reach and consistency.

4. Climate

Strategic aim

A resilient landscape, adapting to the consequences of a warming climate, where emissions are reduced, and carbon is sequestered through natural processes

The cool temperate climate of the Northumberland coastal plain is a key contributor to the character and appearance of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape. These natural habitats, land use and built form, as well as the livelihoods of communities, have been shaped by climate and will continue to be shaped by it.

Climate change brings a suite of challenges as temperatures increase, weather patterns change, and sea level rises. There will be change to the way the landscape looks – in form, materiality and colour – as its character adapts to a warmer world. A direct impact on wildlife that depend on the Northumberland Coast's habitats for food and shelter, whether they live here or pass through on migration, is to be expected.

Climate change is already happening but by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Northumberland Coast National Landscape, the overall impact of climate change can be reduced. Reducing emissions and sequestering carbon by natural processes will make the landscape more resilient but also bring benefits for the economy, communities and nature.

The Climate Change Risk Assessment and, in due course, a Climate Adaptation Plan – required by Government by 2028, will inform work in this area. This work include dialogue with all stakeholders. It will involve difficult decisions, particularly when considering the inevitable change in sea levels, where we must prepare for the best outcomes for all aspects of the landscape.

Top 5 issues

Hotter, drier summers

Hotter, drier summers may lead to an overall decline in ecological diversity and create a shift in the geographical range of many species, with the arrival of new, possibly invasive species and the loss or decline of many of the plants and animals that traditionally inhabit the coast. Higher temperatures and drought may lead to problems for agriculture, such as animal welfare risks from dehydration and heat stress, and the need for supplementary water supplies for livestock and crops.

As the sea becomes warmer there will be changes in the composition of the plant and animals that live in the marine environment, with the potential to disrupt established food chains. For example, it is likely to become too warm for northerly species such as sand eels, the major food species for Puffin and Tern.

Wetter, warmer winters

Warmer, wetter winters are becoming increasingly likely, and the absence of icy conditions may encourage a variety of harmful pests and diseases which threaten the good health of livestock, crops and woodland. Warmer winters may lead to the loss of habitat or ecological niches for species or the absence of food sources as the species they prey on move further north.

Extreme weather events

The Northumberland Coast National Landscape is familiar with wild weather with much character drawn from stormy days and raging seas. However, the frequency and severity of storms is expected to increase as the climate warms with damage to the shoreline, to habitats and to infrastructure to be expected more regularly. Heat waves and drought will bring the subsequent problems of wildfires, water shortages and risks to public health.

Sea level rise

Sea level rise will risk flooding and coastal inundation on low lying coastal agricultural areas, causing flooded land to become saline and unsuitable for most types of agriculture. Rising sea levels will also increase the likelihood of storm surges and flooding threatening some of the coast's rare and vulnerable habitats. Unless protected, significant places, settlements, infrastructure, and cultural heritage sites on the coastline are at risk of being lost to the sea. Some loss will be inevitable.

Pace of action

The slow pace of action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for climate change at local, national and international level is of concern. Limiting global temperature rise to +1.5°C as per the 2015 Paris Agreement looks less achievable as global emissions continue to rise. The UK Government is now advising preparing for a +2°C rise in temperature and risk assessing for a +4°C rise.

Outcome C1

A resilient landscape achieved by adaptation, prioritising the natural processes at work in the landscape and along the coastline to increase natural capital.

Why is this important?

Climate change is happening. Altered weather patterns from an underlying trajectory of a warming climate are noticeable in day-to-day life. Temperatures year on year are higher than past records. Rainfall patterns have changed, with slightly more rainfall but at greater intensity, and concentrated in the winter months. High spring tides coupled with stormy weather bring greater rates of erosion along the coastline.

Without taking action to make the National Landscape more resilient to climate change, significant habitats, wildlife and cultural heritage will be lost. Maintenance of existing settlement form and infrastructure needs to consider flood risk, and new settlement and infrastructure must avoid areas at risk.

Measures

C1A Risk assess core character components of the National Landscape. Open dialogue regarding future management of components most at risk.

C1B Development that requires the use of new flood defences will be regarded as evidence of the fundamental unsuitability of the location for development.

C1C Natural processes tend to be the most cost-effective and sustainable method of introducing resilience into landscape, particularly along the coastline. The coastline must be allowed to adapt and realign to provide a buffer to productive land, create room for the plants and wildlife that depend on these marginal habitats.

C1D Advocate for land management techniques and schemes that introduce natural processes to make the landscape more resilient to climate change – e.g., re-meandering of watercourses, and wetland and saltmarsh creation so that the landscape retains more water; or planting to provide shade.

Focus: The natural habitats of the National Landscape are already storing large amounts of carbon¹. Year on year these habitats are removing carbon from the atmosphere, assisting in tackling climate change, sequestering approximately 9 kt CO equivalent per annum¹.

Benefits of taking climate action:

- *Improves health and wellbeing.*
- *Assists habitats and wildlife, makes natural eco-systems more resilient.*
- *Improves landscape character.*
- *Increases levels of tranquillity.*
- *Increases economic activity in adapting to change.*
- *Saves money - by reducing consumption of energy, reducing waste, avoiding costly repairs.*

Outcome C2

There is a better understanding of the impact of climate change on nature.

Why is this important?

It is important to understand how climate change affects nature because nature provides essential things like clean air and water and plays a central role the production of our food. Nature also helps to regulate the climate. Climate change disrupts the delicate balance within natural ecosystems as well as impacting on the ecosystems we need to support our way of life.

By understanding the effects of climate change, we can find better ways to protect the environment, adapt to change, and reduce ecological, social and economic damage. Understanding the relationship between climate and nature helps us better predict the impacts of climate change.

Measures

C2A Investigate and understand the impact of climate change on key indicator species and habitat in the National Landscape, to help manage change but also to help communities and visitors connect climate change with impact on species they know and care about.

C2B Investigate and understand the impact of climate change on species and habitats that are crucial to our traditional industries of farming and fishing.

C2C Disseminate and publicise results to better the understanding of the local impact of climate change, and as a call to action for decision makers, communities and visitors.

C2D Develop methodologies to collate data on impact of climate change on nature so that a baseline can be established, and data collected in the future.

Outcome C3

Habitats emit less greenhouse gases and sequester more carbon.

Why is this important?

Different habitats capture and sequester carbon at different rates. The Northumberland Coast National Landscape includes habitats of mudflat, saltmarsh, dune and coastal grassland, trees and hedgerows, and farmland. All these habitats can sequester carbon and can be managed to maximise the amount of carbon they lock away.

Measures

C3A Identify areas of habitat where maximum carbon sequestration and storage gains can be made and share results.

C3B Support local case studies to test condition of habitat, and ground truth storage and sequestration rates per habitat for different habitat types, and habitats under different management regimes.

C3C Whilst recognising the National Landscape is an open and relatively treeless landscape, improve shelter belts, wooded watercourses, field hedges and tree cover in and around settlements and farms for carbon sequestration, and to reduce the impacts of climate change (flooding, biodiversity loss, heat stress etc).

C3D Recognising the National Landscape has no peat, work will focus on restoring other habitats – for example, wetlands, saltmarsh, mudflat, dune grasslands, whin grassland and pasture.

Targets

Work towards the delivery of the relevant target for climate within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

Target 7

Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in protected landscapes by 2050.

Target 8

Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in protected landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

Outcome C4

Balanced and informed approach to infrastructure and works designed to mitigate the impact of climate change is taken

Why is this important?

Climate change, along with the biodiversity crisis, is a significant challenge for the National Landscape, as it is for our nation and the global community. Action needs to be taken urgently and, as with all change, there is inevitable anxiety as features that seem such a permanent fixture of our landscape come under threat.

In reaction to climate change, there is a risk that in well-intentioned solutions to reduce emissions or to protect against sea level rise will harm the core character components of the landscape. Decisions about new infrastructure and methods to tackle climate change need to be fully informed and consider the impact on the protected landscape.

Measures

C4A The impact of infrastructure and works designed to mitigate climate change should be fully assessed to avoid harm to the core character components of the National Landscape. The longevity of the infrastructure, its effectiveness over time and its legacy should be considered. Renewable energy systems should be appropriate in scale to the landscape.

C4B Methods for reducing emissions such as retrofitting of existing buildings and installation of EV infrastructure should take into account the character and appearance of the National Landscape.

C4C Natural features and processes to store and sequester carbon need to be in harmony with protection of landscape character, and conservation and enhancement of habitat and wildlife.

C4D Residents, businesses and visitors' points of view will be sought and information shared to find a balanced way forward.

C4E It is inevitable that there will be loss along the coastline as sea levels rise. Retreat should be managed with e.g., archaeology at risk on the coastline recorded or studied at greater depth.

Outcome C5

Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced through advocacy and best practice

Why is this important?

Whilst structural change is underway in the UK, for example in the shift of use of fossil fuels to sustainable sources of electrical power, given the enormity of the climate crisis, action needs to be taken at a local level, within the landscape, and as well as at a national level. Through advocacy of best practice and partnership working with communities, businesses and landowners, we can make a difference to climate change.

Measures

C5A Support and assist other organisations and communities in tackling climate change, working towards Northumberland's and the National Farming Union's goals of net zero by 2040.

C5B Work towards better understanding of emissions from land use, agriculture, tourism, transport, business and housing.

C5C Communications to include regular updates about our work in this area.

C5D Establish and adopt guidelines to ensure climate impact is considered for all workstreams, including applications for funding, administering funds and in advice provided to others.

C5E Measure the carbon footprint of activities on an annual basis. Act on this information to reduce the carbon footprint of activities.

C5F Reduce transport emissions of by maximising the use of electric vehicles and by lift sharing, and by supporting opportunities for home working and local working.

C5G Support carbon literacy training

Target

Work towards the delivery of the relevant target for climate within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

Target 6

Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in protected landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.

Outcome C6

Residents, visitors, farmers, land managers and businesses are empowered to take climate action

Why is this important?

Climate change will alter the character and appearance of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape. The prospect of +4°C rise in global temperatures, more extreme weather events and rising sea level is daunting. It is easy to turn off and tune out, as the scale of the challenge is vast, particularly as climate change is a global issue with so much out of our control.

But inaction will worsen the situation and so whilst some change is already inevitable, we must strive to minimise its extent so that the outstanding natural beauty of the Northumberland Coast is not diminished.

All those with a stake in the National Landscape need to be empowered to act. This means making choices, e.g., about how to travel in less polluting way, easier and cheaper, so that 'climate action' becomes the norm and the routine. It means having the tools to make changes. It means harnessing the benefits that reducing emissions and capturing and sequestering carbon can have for nature, community, economy and tranquillity.

Measures

C6A Support communities and individuals to take climate action, through established schemes or through their own initiatives.

C6B Foster initiatives for climate action in difference spheres of activity central to the National Landscape: in economic spheres of tourism, farming and fishing, and in social spheres of health and wellbeing, community and education.

C6C Build on established role as advocates for best practice in landscape management, to advise on action to reduce emissions.

C6D Celebrate and communicate successes and what works.

Implementation, monitoring and reporting

General

Implementing this Management Plan to achieve the aims and outcomes is not wholly the responsibility of the National Landscape Partnership or the staff team. All those with an active interest or role in managing the Northumberland Coast National Landscape, and in supporting its communities, share responsibility for implementing the Management Plan. This can be achieved through both individual action and collaborative partnership working and through communication and engagement. This includes parish councils, landowners and managers, voluntary organisations and interest groups, local authorities, statutory agencies and others. When public funding is squeezed, working in partnership becomes more important than ever.

At the time of writing this plan, there is much uncertainty, globally and locally. Therefore, the inclusion of a detailed five-year action plan or a list of priority actions has been intentionally omitted from this plan. Instead of a five-year action plan, an action plan, for the Partnership and staff team as well as all those listed above, will be agreed and reported on annually. The National Landscape Partnership will develop a number of indicators by theme.

A role of the National Landscape Partnership is to monitor and evaluate these indicators and actions and report on the implementation of this plan and where management actions are making a difference on the ground. The monitoring process should not be overly burdensome.

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

PLTOF Target	Management Plan Outcome/Measure	Target indicator	Northumbria Coast Baseline (from 2024 PLTOF release)	Northumbria Coast Target	Notes
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).	Outcome N1 Nature is recovered through bigger, better and more joined-up habitats Measures N1A-F	Extent of wildlife rich habitat created or restored within protected landscapes, outside of protected sites	5044ha	151ha	
Target 2. Bring 80% of SSSIs within protected landscapes into favourable condition by 2042	Outcome N2 Wildlife and their habitats are protected from loss, decline or degradation. N2A,N2B, N2E	Percentage of SSSIs within protected landscapes in favourable condition	45.5%		
Target 3. For 60% of SSSIs within protected landscapes assessed	Outcome N2	Percentage of SSSIs withi	14.3%		

as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.	Wildlife and their habitats are protected from loss, decline or degradation. N2A,N2B, N2E	n protected landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition			
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.	Outcome N2 Wildlife and their habitats are protected from loss, decline or degradation. N2C, N2D, N2F	Extent of priority habitat within protected landscapes, outside of protected sites, in favourable management through agri-environment schemes Percentage of land managers adopting nature-friendly farming on a percentage of their land	Not available		

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.	Outcome N2 Wildlife and their habitats are protected from loss, decline or degradation N2F	Percentage of land managers adopting nature-friendly farming on a percentage of their land	Not available		
Target 6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in protected landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.	Outcome C5 Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced through advocacy and best practice C5A	Level of greenhouse gas emissions within protected landscapes			
*Target 7. Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in protected landscapes by 2050.	N/A	N/A	N/A		
* Target 8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in protected landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).	Outcome 1 Nature is recovered through bigger, better and more joined-up habitats N1D	Extent of tree canopy and woodland cover in protected landscapes The level of greenhouse	254ha	101ha	

	Outcome C3 More carbon is sequestered and stored through natural processes C3C	gas emissions within protected landscapes			
Target 9. Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with protected landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.	<p>Outcome PE4 People are healthier and happier through a stronger connection with the landscape, its nature and cultural heritage</p> <p>PE4B, PE4D</p> <p>Outcome PE6 Visitors have a high-quality and engaging experience whilst treading</p>	Policies in place to ensure protected landscapes are taking positive action to widen the diversity of their staff, boards and volunteers	No reliable baseline		This target was primarily developed for National Parks. Will work with Defra/NLA to establish a suitable baseline

	lightly on the landscape PE6A, PE6B				
Target 10. Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in protected landscapes	Outcome P2 Historical landscape features and heritage assets are protected and enhanced P2A, P2C	Number and percentage of nationally designated heritage assets in protected landscapes to be deemed at risk. To separately cover the categories of: scheduled monuments registered parks and gardens registered battlefields listed buildings (grade I or II*)	3	2/3	

		protected wreck sites			
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Working Groups

Qualitative monitoring of the annual action plan will be undertaken by the staff team and the officer steering group, supported by several themed working groups, which include:

- Nature recovery
- Climate change
- Access, recreation
- Historic environment
- Regenerative tourism and visitor travel
- Information and engagement

Reporting

The National Landscape Partnership will develop a number of indicators by theme and report progress towards these, related to Management Plan outcomes, in an annual review published each spring.

Progress on annual action plans will be reported in a separate technical report appended to the Annual Review.

Definition of terms

Term	Definition
30x30	A global conservation target to protect 30% of the Earth's land and ocean areas by 2030 to safeguard biodiversity and address climate change.
Biodiversity Net Gain	A development approach where biodiversity is measurably improved after development, ensuring natural habitats are left in a better state than before.
Capturing carbon	Process by which carbon dioxide is pulled out of the atmosphere
Carbon storage	Stores held in soil and plant material
Citizen Science	Scientific research carried out by members of the general public, often in collaboration with or under the direction of professional scientists.
Coastal margin	Access Land created by the establishment of the King Charles III England Coast Path, usually the land between the path and mean low water
Coastal roll back	Process by which the coastline adjusts naturally to a higher sea level with for example dune grasslands moving inland as the sea claims land
COP	COP stands for "Conference of the Parties". It is the supreme decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
CRoW Act (2000)	Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) that grants public access to certain types of land in England and Wales and improves rights of way, nature conservation, and wildlife protection.
Destination Management Organisation (DMO)	A Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a body that promotes, develops, and manages tourism in a specific area to boost the local visitor economy.
Environment Improvement Plan	government's strategy for achieving long-term environmental goals, including clean air, water, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
EV	Electric Vehicle
Greenhouse gasses	Greenhouse gases are atmospheric gases that trap heat from the sun, helping warm the Earth's surface, such as carbon dioxide (CO ₂), methane (CH ₄), nitrous oxide (N ₂ O), and water vapor (H ₂ O).
IUCN	the International Union for Conservation of Nature. It's a global organization that focuses on nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

Lawton Principles	The Lawton principles for nature emphasise protecting large, connected, and well-managed habitats to maintain biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategies designed to guide environmental improvements and biodiversity conservation.
Local Development Plan	A local development plan is a document outlining a council's policies and proposals for land use and development in their area.
LURA	Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023)
LVEP	(Local Visitor Economy Partnership) is a collaborative group that supports and develops the local tourism industry to boost visitor experiences and economic growth.
National Character Area	National Character Areas (NCAs) in the UK are distinct natural regions defined by their unique landscape, biodiversity, and cultural heritage.
National Flood Risk Assessment	The National Flood Risk Assessment is a comprehensive evaluation of flood hazards and vulnerabilities across a country to inform risk management and planning.
NPPF	The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the UK government's planning policies to promote sustainable development and guide local planning decisions.
PHI	Priority Habitat Inventory - a comprehensive database identifying key habitats vital for biodiversity conservation and environmental planning.
PLTOF	The Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) guides conservation efforts by setting clear goals and measuring progress in preserving protected natural areas.
Regenerative agriculture	Regenerative agriculture is a farming approach that restores soil health, enhances biodiversity, and improves ecosystem resilience.
Regenerative Tourism	Tourism that gives more back to nature and local communities than it takes.
Sandford Principle	"Where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment, then conservation interest should take priority."
Seascape	seascape refers to a broad, integrated approach to managing marine and coastal areas, considering ecological, social, and economic factors across a large spatial scale.
Sequestering carbon	Process by which carbon is locked into the soil
SSSI	SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) are protected areas designated for their unique wildlife, habitats, or geological features.

UN Convention on Biodiversity	The UN Convention on Biodiversity is an international treaty aimed at conserving biological diversity, promoting sustainable use of its components, and ensuring fair sharing of benefits from genetic resources.
Green Infrastructure	A network of natural and semi-natural features (like parks, wetlands, and green roofs) that provide environmental and societal benefits.
Nature-based solutions	Strategies that protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural ecosystems to address societal challenges like climate change, health, and disaster risk.
Natural capital	The world's stocks of natural assets such as geology, soil, air, water, and all living things, which provide ecosystem services.
Sustainable development	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Evidence and further reading

Appendix X: AONB designation, policy and legal framework

Appendix X: Nature Recovery Plan Summary (underway)

Appendix X: Climate Risk Assessment (underway)

Appendix X: Climate Adaptation Plan (by 2028)

Credits, design and print, photography, etc

