



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Project proposal form

Landscape Recovery round two

Date: 2023

Read the [Landscape Recovery guidance on GOV.UK](#) before you complete this form.

Eligibility questions

Project size

1. How many hectares (ha) of land does your Landscape Recovery project involve at this stage? You must have agreement from all the relevant land managers to include this land in the project development phase before you submit your application.

4046 plus 10 unmapped holdings	Ha
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2. If different, roughly how many hectares is your wider project area? This can include land related to your project but that will not be directly covered by the Landscape Recovery agreement and/or land for which you do not yet have agreement from the relevant land managers to enter into Landscape Recovery.

26950	ha
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3. Is at least 500ha of your project in England?

Yes

Public body eligibility

1. Is one (or more) of the landowners in your project a public body?

Yes

2. If yes, have they collaborated with a private land manager?

Yes

Basic information

1. Project overview

- a) What is the name of your project?

White Peak Landscape Recovery Project

- b) Provide a high-level summary of your project (100 words maximum).

The limestone dales are the heart of the White Peak and are among the best wildlife sites in the world. They are critical to nature recovery in the UK and sit within the Peak District National Park which is renowned for its natural beauty created by the complexity of landforms and limestone geology. White Peak farmers produce high quality milk, beef and lamb from this upland landscape. Through the Landscape Recovery Project, we collectively aim to deliver dales thriving with wildlife, spilling out onto the plateau, linking our best wildlife habitats and contributing to net zero and reduced water pollution

2. Have you created the 3 maps of your project outlined in the 'how to create your maps' section of the applicant guidance?

- Yes

Criteria questions

Refer to the criteria and scoring guidance for information on how these questions will be scored. You should use this section to provide your answers to all the criteria questions in the criteria and scoring guidance, except the 'value for money' criterion, which you should answer by completing the project development costs form.

Project readiness

1. Why do you think Landscape Recovery is the right scheme for your project? (300 words maximum)

The Lawton Report 'Making Space for Nature' concluded that the White Peak National Character Area (NCA) has the highest levels of habitat fragmentation within any of England's National Parks as the SSSI/SAC dales are separated by a plateau managed intensively for dairy, beef and sheep farming.

The ambition to bring nature out of the dales onto the dale-tops has been central to a succession of strategies but is hampered by income foregone calculations for the highly productive soils on the plateau out-weighting payment rates for nature's recovery available within agri-environment schemes. LR provides the opportunity to develop bespoke payment rates.

The disparate nature of the dales means only collaboration at a landscape scale will deliver a linked network of sites across such a large number of landholdings. Only by 'aggregating up' the ecosystem services offer from different landholdings at a landscape scale will we create a supply that is likely to be attractive to green finance providers.

Longevity of funding is essential to give confidence to deliver landscape change. LR will provide this and allow the partnership to grow a blended funding model.

A recent report commissioned by Natural England (NE) and National Park Authority (NPA) from the Andersons Centre recommended that LR was pursued as an opportunity to address all 3 of these issues.

Our project builds on initiatives including the White Peak (WP) ELMS test which explored farmer views on management planning at a NCA scale, the WP Trials, the Wye Valley Nature Recovery Project, the Peak District Dales Protected Sites Strategy Pilot (PSSP), CSF focussed work, and the Peak Farmers Group (PFG). These have established need and explored methodologies. Building on these the LR Project can provide a delivery mechanism to address both Nature Recovery and Net Zero alongside the secondary objectives whilst maintaining viable farm businesses.

2. Have you completed the [land manager member support form](#)?

Yes

3. What are the responsibilities of your project members during the development phase? How will they work together? (300 words maximum)

The NPA is hosting the project with the steering group made up of a representative group of farmers, the NPA and NE. Other organisations (including Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) may be invited onto the steering group as the programme develops or in relation to specific issues. A chair will be selected by the farmers and the NPA will provide a secretarial role.

The wider project members include farmers and other landowners with land in the Peak District Dales SAC and extending and linking plateau land. All will be involved from an early stage with an inception meeting to discuss and agree the Vision, the expected project stages, representation on the steering group, project management, and roles and responsibilities. Whilst we would have preferred the project applicant to be a farmer or group of farmers this proved impractical but we are clear that all project members are equal partners.

The NPA will employ the Project Manager and the Administrator, with other roles sitting within organisations with specific skills and experiences. We aim to recruit land management project officer(s) from the farming community.

All project members will be involved in the design of options for habitat creation and nature friendly farming. A representative sub-set will be involved in the discussions to identify appropriate payment rates. This joint working is core to the principles of the project and builds on the work of the WP Trials and the Andersons report (2022). Similarly, solutions for management of the Dales are expected to be developed jointly amongst the relevant farmers and landowners.

The development of this application has involved a group of farmers from the beginning. In addition, the wider farming community has been kept informed by a weekly presence at Bakewell Market in July/August (delivered by farmers) and by a NFU hosted meeting.

4. What are the main risks to the project's success and how do you plan to use the development phase to mitigate them? (300 words maximum)

Recruitment

The FiPL experience suggests that external recruitment will be challenging so we are considering secondments and flexibility over job offers. We are including a contingency to allow us to use consultants

Breakdown in relationship between farmers and conservation focussed organisations

We are working hard at relationship building providing regular updates, encouraging face to face meetings, and ensuring organisations have a single point of contact

Citizen Science volunteer recruitment

Positive discussions are underway with Buxton Field Club & Tideswell Environment Group and opportunities exist within Junior Rangers and local schools. DWT, NE and the NPA have existing pools of volunteers.

Lack of interest from Green Finance providers

Evidence shows sale of ecosystem services will be central to the success of the scheme as the value of the statutory BNG market will be limited. The LR project will be building on work to be commissioned by NE through the Protected Site Strategy Pilot (PSSP). This should identify appropriate delivery models and funders and work towards addressing the challenges. We will also be able to take the learnings from the NPA ELM test focussing on the convenor role.

Design of habitat creation and nature-friendly farming options

The LR project will build on existing work with farmers including:
WP Trials including CSF work with farmers
FiPL funded agro-forestry options

NE funded project looking at the options, finances and environmental sustainability of nature friendly low input dairying.

Uptake of the options amongst farmers

We have identified all dale-brow and hill-top fields as a target for habitat creation and the linking land as delivering a range of options including nature-friendly farming. However, until the payment rates are known farmers aren't prepared to commit. By working collaboratively, we aim to broker a scheme that delivers nature and net zero solutions whilst maintaining viable farm businesses.

5. Do you understand that one of the requirements of the project development phase is to secure private funding to complement Defra's funding for project implementation? You risk being removed from the scheme if you cannot show you have taken steps to achieve this.

Yes

Primary environmental objectives

How will your project deliver against the primary environmental objectives of Landscape Recovery?

(5,000 words maximum)

Background, context and supporting projects

The Peak District National Park Authority and the National Park Management Plan

The project area lies wholly within the Peak District National Park and the NPA is the applicant on behalf of a wide partnership including 53 farmers, NE, the National Trust (NT), DWT, Plantlife, Chatsworth Estate (in collaboration with four of their tenants and with respect to a vacant farm), Nestle and Breedon Cement.

The NPA has Nature Recovery and Net Zero at the heart of both its Authority Plan and the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) which it has produced in collaboration with partners including farmer representatives. This LR proposal is considered to be a core delivery mechanism contributing to all 4 of the NPMP aims, particularly Aims 1 and 2 which relate to Net Zero and Nature Recovery but also with respect to Aims 3 and 4 which relate to enjoyment and involvement with the National Park and the communities (including the farming community) within it.

The Peak District Nature Recovery Plan

The Peak District is covered by six Local Nature Recovery Strategies. To help coordinate action for nature recovery the NPA is leading on the production of the Peak District Nature Recovery Plan which will help inform the six Strategies, and in turn the Strategies will guide the reporting and evolution of the Plan. This process will help show how the Peak District is part of the national Nature Recovery Network. The Nature Recovery Plan is intended to be a partnership blueprint that sets out what we need to do and how we will work together to deliver our ambitions to help wildlife recover in the coming decades. The content has been guided by a series of farmer, land manager and land owner workshops including those associated with the WP ELM Test 2019-2020, in early consultation on the structure of the Plan in 2023, and as part of the Peak District Land Managers' Forum meeting in December 2022. There are 39 aims in the Plan. The White Peak Landscape Recovery project can help take forward 13 (1/3 of total) aims and could contribute to several others.

Our Project Area, Protected Sites and the White Peak Partnership

The White Peak Landscape Recovery project focusses on enhancing, extending and linking 9 of the 13 dales SSSIs which make up the Peak District Dales Special Area of Conservation (Coombs Dale, Cressbrook Dale, Lathkill Dale, Long Dale Hartington, Monk's Dale, The Wye Valley, Long Dale & Gratton dale, Ballidon Dale and Topley Pike & Deep Dale). The aim in the medium term is to extend the nature recovery, net zero and water quality benefits of this proposed project to the whole of the White Peak through successive LR projects or other mechanisms. Our collective experience suggests that the ideas and concepts behind the project will slowly take hold amongst the farming community and we would like all WP farmers to be able to benefit from the expected outputs and outcomes of the programme. We appreciate that our ownership map becomes far from contiguous in the south and are happy to take guidance from the Defra LR team on the final project area. We are also aware of interest from farmers close to the Via Gellia, Dove, Hamps and Manifold SSSIs which are not covered by our landownership map at all. We have an additional 9 consent forms which haven't managed to be mapped in the time available and have included these together with the associated maps.

The SAC comprises thirteen separate dales which dissect an agriculturally improved limestone plateau. The dales support a range of internationally important habitats including a range of species-rich grasslands, some of which are unique to the Peak District and support nationally rare species such as Jacob's Ladder which is found only in the Peak District dales. The SAC supports 16% (876 ha) of the UK's ravine ash woodland and important scrub transitions, including a species-rich hazel scrub also a speciality of the Peak District and supporting many rare plant species. Specialised plant communities are associated with the lead rakes, and spoil heaps resulting from the long history of lead mining, and acid grasslands and heath are found on many of the dale brows. Screes and rock crevices also support SAC habitats and invertebrate assemblages form SSSI features across the dales. Rivers dissect many of the dales and springs support important rare and localised base-rich fens and flushes, both features being susceptible to nutrient enrichment from diffuse agricultural pollution.

Conserving biodiversity associated with areas of high nature value is significantly more effective if the sites are part of an ecological network. Exemplary management of the Protected Sites, which can be achieved through LR, is not sufficient to ensure condition of SSSI features due to the impacts of off-site pressures. While water quality is a secondary objective, reduction of phosphate is also key to achieving good condition of the rivers for SAC species, and while diffuse agricultural

pollution is not the only contributor to current phosphate levels, it is a key one. Productive agricultural land surrounding the dales produces ecological edge effects, influences plant and invertebrate communities directly and indirectly, potentially reduces the extent and condition of SSSI features and prevents species responding to climate change with changes in distribution.

Protected Site Strategies are one of the policies that have stemmed from the 2021 Environment Act. They are designed to play a significant role in the aim to deliver nature recovery bringing together key stakeholders to address on and offsite pressures on protected sites to help restore our most precious habitats, species and geodiversity. The importance of the Peak District Dales SAC, and the complexity of the pressures impacting on it, are reflected in the fact that it is one of only 5 PSS pilots (PSSP) in the country, designed to research and evaluate how to roll out PSS nationally. Each PSS pilot has a focus and for the Dales SAC, it is the role and impact of ELMS and agricultural transition. The Pilot has two main objectives; to increase the resilience of the dales habitats and species to external pressures and to reduce the external pressures of diffuse pollution and fragmentation by supporting land management change. LR provides a mechanism for a collaborative approach which PSS can help deliver.

Our project area also includes scattered sites of conservation importance on the plateau, including Longstone Moor (in probate but expected to join the project), Hurdlow Meadows and Green Lane Pits SSSIs and sites outside the protected sites system (primarily hay meadows and historic lead mining sites) where many of the same pressures exist with fragmentation of particular significance.

The majority of the land that makes up our project area is privately owned and managed, primarily by family farms, but also includes the Peak District Dales National Nature Reserve (NNR) managed by NE and land owned and managed by the NPA, DWT, the NT and Plantlife.

The special qualities of the WP and the uniqueness of many of the challenges led to the creation of the WP Partnership in 2017, with representation from all the major stakeholders. A vision and action plan have been developed aimed at delivering a healthy heritage and wildlife rich landscape. The LR proposal is central to delivering many of the proposed actions.

Farmers and Farming in the White Peak

Whilst 85% of the WP is classed as Severely Disadvantaged, with plateau land rising to over 400 metres above sea level it supports relatively intensive grass-based livestock farming as a result of unique loess-based soils. Our project area is typical with the majority of the land devoted to dairy or intensive beef & sheep farming. Project partners include mainly family farms where farming is central to their business. These include farms restricted to the plateau and others which include land within the dales where daleside grazing contributes to the farm finances. Farmers are typically and justifiably proud of the contribution they are making to conservation of high-quality habitats and many have engaged with agri-environment schemes including schemes where hay meadow restoration on atypically low fertility soils on the plateau has featured. The WP ELMS Test found that there is a high financial dependency on the current support systems, with almost 80% of those that run their farm business for profit dependent on at least BPS and over 50% dependent on environmental scheme funding as well. However, coverage of agri-environment schemes fell

from 80% in 2014/15 to 40% in 2018/19, predominantly due to poor payment rates and restrictive options which do not work for this unique landscape where a lowland style of agriculture is operating in an upland setting. Delivering for nature and net zero at a landscape scale within a contiguous area is always going to be challenging as farms are typically small. In the wider WP 143 are larger than 100 hectares with an estimated 900 being less than 100 hectares

The White Peak ELMS Test

The WP ELMS Test engaged over 70 farmer, land manager and land owner participants. Findings included the following:

- Income foregone plus costs is not enough to incentivise scheme uptake at scale with payment for outcomes a favoured option
- Payments for the maintenance and enhancement of existing high-quality sites must be at the highest rates to support those already delivering for nature.
- Low levels of IT skills and broadband connectivity – at least 2 of our project partners have no mobile phone let alone a computer.
- Low understanding of regulation and contracts
- The complications of tenancies particularly with respect to collaboration, payments and delivery.

The White Peak Trials and follow on action led by Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF)

Beginning in 2019 NE and the NPA worked with 6 key WP farmers on new approaches that could help further nature recovery on the intensively managed WP plateau, particularly adjacent to the Dale-tops. This involved the creation of tussocky, moderately herb rich grassland with scrub and trees on the Dale-edge, “silage margins” as refuge areas around mowing fields, and herbal leys as the potential foundation of a nature friendly farming system. A series of farm walks was also delivered to demonstrate and publicise the approach, securing interest and involvement of further influential white peak farmers. This was funded by the NPA and reported to Defra as part of the WP ELMS Test.

2021 saw an expansion of the herbal ley based trials over a further 50ha of land strategically targeted towards 15 key farms along the Wye valley corridor. This was financed by STW with an emphasis on new methods of establishment to minimise carbon release and perennial weed problems.

More recently, the WP Trials have embedded within the work of CSF in partnership with the farming community. The specific focus is on a low/zero artificial nitrogen farming system underpinned by legume-herb leys and is likely to involve the rotation of herbal leys grown primarily for forage with low input cereal crops, grown for either dry grain, crimping or whole-crop depending upon the season – a very versatile system allowing the production of home grown feed. Diverse break and cover crops are also expected to play a key role. The trials are designed to be farmer-driven, leading to field/farm level observational outcomes and demonstration findings, which are disseminated through monthly farm walks, typically hosting groups of 30-40 farmers from the locality and around the UK.

CSF have developed a contract which is due to be commissioned in Oct 2023 to explore the scope for a dairy system based around zero inorganic nitrogen and low input dairy cows genetically

suited to diverse forage. It is expected that this system would be underpinned by a mixed farming system with herb/legume swards in rotation with cereals, diverse break crops, and inclusion of traditional hay-meadows and small areas of wood pasture or agroforestry immediately adjacent to the dale-brow, which provides the basis for land management change on the plateau outlined in this bid. This will deliver by March 2024 and will assess the suitability of existing funding mechanisms (e.g. SFI, CS) and identify where any gaps or opportunities might be.

The Wye Valley Nature Recovery Project

The Wye Valley was one of the flagship national Nature Recovery Projects (NRP) developed as part of the Government's response to the Environment Act. It aims to use the Lawton Principles to see how landscape scale interventions can work with farmers, land owners, partners, stakeholders and communities to effect positive change for all.

In 2021 Andersons Farm Business Consultants were commissioned to undertake a study of the market for private sector investment in nature recovery payments with a particular emphasis on the approaches being trialled in the WP trials. (This was initially devised as a NEIRF application from the PDNPA but was not successful.) This included income-foregone based payment rate calculations which produced a higher required payment rate than is available within Defra agri-environment schemes and higher than had actually been paid within the trials. This was linked to the intensive nature of farming in the WP leading them to suggest that a bespoke payment scheme was necessary. They also ran the four options through the Biodiversity Metric but concluded that aggregation was necessary at a landscape scale to make this attractive and that BNG may never be a useful tool as development sites are so far away from this very rural area. They suggested that 'stacking' ecosystem services combined with public funds was likely to be the most successful way forward and recommended that the LR scheme was considered owing to the opportunities to develop a blended finance model. The NRP also funded the production of baseline BNG surveys/reports by RSK ADAS looking at the scope to implement nature recovery across 7 farm holdings participating in the WP trials. This dovetailed with the Andersons work by highlighting specific geographical opportunities present on the ground. The NRP has also funded work through DWT looking at BNG.

The NRP is commissioning surveys to identify, survey and map roadside verges in the Wye Valley that have the potential to act as wildlife corridors between priority habitats, building on road verge actions delivered by the NPA in the early 2000s. The aim is to influence the different options available for management by working with local Councils so as to maximise their value as sites per se and as linking habitats. This work has potential benefits for our LR ambitions and programme of work with the potential to deliver linkages between sites.

The Peak Farmers Group

The Peak Farmers Group, funded through FiPL, is a collaborative group run by farmers for farmers with the aim of providing access to knowledge, methods and techniques and so helping farmers make informed decisions to prepare for the changes ahead and deliver benefits for the four FiPL themes of Climate, Nature, People and Place. Approximately 75% of the 250 members are from the White Peak and includes farmers who have signed up to the LR project. The group is administered by the Farming Life Centre which is a charity supporting farmers in the Peak District mainly based around the areas of farm business support and promoting good physical and mental health.

The National Nature Reserve

The NNR sites represent some of the highest quality sites and therefore are core to a nature network. Cressbrook Dale and Lathkill Dale are sites where the ambitions of LR have begun with expansion of nature from the dales onto adjacent but this has had to take place through land purchase. Our LR proposals provide the incentives and collaborative approach, and best opportunity currently, to achieve land management change on adjacent land outside of NNR ownership so buffering the NNR and reducing edge effects.

The NNR also supports significant areas of ravine ash woodlands and the approach to woodland management has been led by the NNR, culminating in the Life in the Ravines (LitR) project. The NNR team are at the forefront of work to develop an approach to achieving condition of woodland in the dales in the light of ash dieback. LR provides a mechanism to build on and continue this work to increase resilience of the woodlands within the NNR and dales as a whole to ash dieback, with access to blended finance to secure long term sustainable management.

PDNPA owned land

The NPA owns daleside and plateau land within the project area of high conservation value which it manages in partnership with farmers. The smaller sites are managed through grazing licence agreements with the 2 larger sites being managed through FBTs. Both of these farmers have signed up to the LR. The NPA also own the Monsal, Tissington and High Peak Trails which pass through our project area. Whilst only the Monsal Trail is shown on the maps they all have a significant role to play in linking high quality nature sites across the plateau. Land either side of the trail is consistently of high conservation value mainly supporting neutral and calcareous priority habitat grasslands and secondary ash woodlands and is actively managed to maintain and enhance this interest. The trails are recognised as important linking sites for mobile species including many butterflies. The NPA manages all of its properties in ways which deliver the NPMP so Nature Recovery and Net Zero are at the heart of the management objectives.

Nature Reserves

DWT owns or manages 122 hectares of land in the project area split between the Wye Valley and at Hartington. They are both integral to DWT's White Peak Living landscape, a strategy which restores wildlife habitats by repairing and joining up damaged and fragmented blocks of woodland, meadows and marshes to reconnect them across the countryside. The current management of the sites aims to restore natural processes and provide ecosystem services to ensure the sites can adapt to climate change effectively.

Plantlife owns part of Deep Dale (32ha) within the Wye valley which supports high quality calcareous grassland priority habitat, alongside areas of scrub woodland and exposed limestone outcrops. These habitats support a wide array of plant species, including several that are scarce within the project area. The reserve is managed to maintain and enhance these habitats, while providing niches for the scarce plant species. This is achieved through working with a local farmer who has a grazing agreement with Plantlife and they are signed up to this project.

Both organisations work in partnership with businesses and individuals to help deliver their aims for nature recovery and the LR project is seen as key to their ambitions in the White Peak.

Land in National Trust ownership

The NT owns property in the Wye Valley and Highfields Farm which includes land in Coombsdale and the plateau land above. The two tenants with FBTs covering the majority of the land have signed up to the project. Highfields Farm is managed within an innovative Higher Tier agreement where the ambition is to bring nature up out of the dale onto the plateau through a combination of capital works and the establishment of a naturalistic grazing regime. The aim within the LR project is to develop this site as a demonstration site for farmers.

Planned Interventions

We will work collaboratively to deliver:

Habitat enhancement and restoration within the Dales and other SSSIs and areas of priority habitat
Habitat creation on the daletops to extend these high-quality habitats up onto the plateau
The creation of habitat linkages and stepping stones across the plateau through field boundary tree planting, the management of silage margins, the integration of herbal leys into farm management and the adoption of nature friendly farming practices.

Many of the planned interventions will also make a significant contribution to Net Zero. Through partnership working with the Peak Farmers Group we aim to deliver enhanced benefits for Net Zero through encouraging additional efficient and sustainable farming practices.

Habitat Enhancement and Restoration within the Dales and on other areas of Priority Habitat

The PSSP will be updating condition assessments across the SSSIs which form part of the LR bid in the 2024 season. This will include Whole Feature Assessments (WFA) of the relevant SSSIs, but also individual unit-based assessment of those units forming part of the bid, prioritising private landowners and managers. The PSSP will use tailored Common Standards Monitoring (CSM) forms to identify the management needed to deliver thriving habitats on the dales which exceed minimum standards for favourable condition. We expect these to include bespoke options to deliver for specialist habitats, scarce plant species, for climate change and for common species so supporting in the long term, wider resilience of species and habitats in land surrounding the dales.

We propose to use the Development phase to identify (collaboratively) the challenges and solutions to the grazing management needed to deliver these recommendations including options for grazing at a bigger, ideally Dale scale and the bespoke options necessary for specialist habitats and species. At a dale-scale this will provide space to allow dynamic transitions to develop between habitats and encourages natural processes. Both will directly deliver habitat enhancement and the Nature Recovery objective. We have identified a need for land agency and legal advice to support the ambition specifically with regard to the possibility for grazing across land ownership boundaries.

On average the ravine woodland canopy is 80% ash and by 2020, 99% of this was infected by ash dieback. The EU funded Life in the Ravines (LiTR) project has provided large scale rapid intervention to increase resilience of the woodland. LiTR ends in 2025 and LR gives us the opportunity to take the lessons learnt from this project to develop a SAC-wide Woodland Management Plan that identifies sustainable solutions to their future management. This is expected in the medium to long term to deliver both the Nature Recovery objective and contribute

to Net Zero as the proposed woodland management will mitigate against the loss of carbon from ash dieback. We have identified a need for a specialist to produce the Management Plan.

Outside the dales there is a thin scatter of existing grassland and heathland SSSIs and areas of priority habitat hay meadows, old mining sites and sand pits. The aim is to deliver enhanced management associated with appropriate payment incentives. As with the dales these are islands of high-quality habitat and our aim is to incorporate them into the network of sites through the creation of linking habitats and nature-friendly farming practices. This habitat enhancement will deliver for Nature Recovery both in-situ and as part of the network of sites and will also deliver for Net Zero through tree planting, scrub development, the reduction in the use of inputs and the development of more diverse grassland swards.

River habitats and species – covered in the section on water pollution

Extending the wildlife interest of the dales up onto the improved grasslands of the Dale-tops

Working as a collaborative group of landowners and managers the aim is to devise a suite of different habitats which will deliver positive benefits for Nature and Net Zero on dalebrow fields. We expect these different options to include structurally rich grasslands with scrub and trees, more conventional low input agro-forestry, and trees and shrubs along field boundaries, in field corners and in some locations scattered across the fields. These fall within the definition of Habitat Creation. This ambition builds on established work within the WP Trials. This habitat creation will deliver for Nature Recovery both in-situ and by buffering the SAC. It will deliver for Net Zero through tree planting, scrub development, the reduction in the use of inputs and the development of more diverse grassland swards with benefits for soil carbon sequestration and storage.

Linking habitats

We will develop proposals and guidelines for enhanced silage margins, woody corridors and field boundary trees as linking habitats which fall within the definition of Habitat Creation.

The WP Trials have looked at the grassland habitat creation opportunities and methodologies along the margins of silage fields along the daletop and as linking habitats. Payments in this pastoral landscape are not available in national schemes and they are unpopular options with farmers. We will work in collaboration to develop acceptable management objectives and methodologies. We will target these margins along green lanes and adjacent to high quality habitats where they will deliver multiple objectives, for nature recovery, net zero and people.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) is supporting the planting of individual trees, hedges and woody corridors against field boundaries where these are considered to have no adverse impact on the cultural landscape. None of these options are available through agri-environment schemes in this landscape. Along land holding boundaries there is an additional benefit of delivering for biosecurity as well as public goods. These options will deliver for Nature Recovery through the increased number of trees and shrubs and the linkages that will be created across the landscape, and for Net Zero through the increased capacity for carbon storage and associated increase in soil health. Encouraging new field boundary trees will also mitigate for the loss of existing trees many of which are ash and are under threat or dying as a result of ash dieback.

Limestone hills and slopes

Within the project area are a number of limestone hills and slopes which support semi-improved grasslands. In collaboration the aim is to develop a suite of proposals including grassland and heathland restoration (calcareous and acid grassland and upland heath) and wood pasture creation. These options haven't been available or acceptable to landowners in the past owing to the location (making them ineligible for wood pasture creation in CS), the payment rates, the short duration of schemes and the challenges of delivering the required interventions and management. This will deliver for Nature Recovery in situ and through extending, buffering and linking the SAC . It will also deliver for Net Zero through tree planting, scrub development, the reduction in the use of inputs and the development of more diverse grassland swards.

Nature friendly farming

The events delivered by the Peak Farmers Group, the WP trials and the work of CSF have all identified the opportunities for delivering enhanced outcomes for Nature and the ambition for Net Zero through the adoption of herbal leys and the development of a mixed farming system. The WP is largely a pastoral landscape dominated by silage fields bounded by drystone walls. Enhancing the grassland swards through the incorporation of herbal leys will bring benefits for Net Zero through the reduction in fertiliser use and enhanced soil carbon and for Nature Recovery through the provision of a nectar and pollen resource and a more diverse sward complement and structure.

Species Recovery

The proposal to use a wide variety of different habitat improvements will positively impact a variety of species. The WP Trials have shown that inclusion of herbal leys as one intervention has an exponential increase in the number of pollinators which in turn has a trophic impact on bird, small mammal and amphibian populations. The LR project will also provide more woodland for local woodland species, and help breeding corn bunting return to the county. A number of specialist butterflies like brown argus and silver washed fritillary will be able to extend their range. And this is in addition to the expected increase in populations of riverine species. We plan on using Citizen Science volunteers to monitor relevant species groups.

The Project Process

Our process can be summarised as follows:

All project partners facilitated by the Land Management Project Officer

Agree the habitat interventions

UKHabs surveys will be carried out at this stage delivered by the Ecologist post. We propose baselining soil carbon and carrying out carbon audits of farm businesses (both delivered by a consultant). We have also identified a need for a consultant to review the literature with respect to soil carbon and the transition from a pastoral to a mixed farming system and potentially to put in place a number of monitoring trials. Using the results from these surveys and analyses we will be able to predict the 'uplift' for both nature and carbon from our planned interventions.

A consultant with a sub-set of project partners

We have planned for the use of a consultant to work in collaboration with farmers to develop bespoke payment rates to support our ambitions. This will build on the work delivered by Andersons in 2022 and the Dairy Project which is about to be commissioned by NE

We expect these rates to reflect both outcomes and calculations based on the 'strike rate' i.e. the difference in cost and profit to identify the investment level needed to maintain viable farm businesses.

All project partners facilitated by the Land Management Project Officer/Farm Liaison Officers

Agree the location of the different options on individual holdings to produce a landscape scale ambition for Nature Recovery and Net Zero.

Developing the Blended Finance Model

The Peak District is a recognised brand and has significant large businesses operating on the periphery of the National Park. We consider there are opportunities to create multiple income streams including biodiversity, carbon and water quality. Andersons used the WP Trials to propose a private finance model to either supplement or replace public funding to deliver Nature Recovery recommending the development of a bespoke scheme and identifying actions required to do so. Building on this, PSSP will be letting a contract, to deliver by March 2025, to develop an Aggregator delivery model best suited to the White Peak and White Peak farming. This will be built on by the LR Green Finance post and consultancy advice in year 2 of the Development Phase. We recognise the need for trusted facilitation throughout this process to retain the confidence of farmers and develop a model that can deliver for all. The role of a Community Interest Company is already being raised within the farming community.

Secondary environmental objectives

How will your project deliver against the secondary environmental objectives of Landscape Recovery?

(2,000 words maximum)

Improved water quality

The EA have an on-going Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP) project for the Peak District Dales SAC which is focussed specifically on returning the water quality of the riverine units of the SSSI in the headwaters of the River Wye to 'favourable condition' for a number of species which are primary and qualifying features of the SAC (white clawed crayfish, bullhead and brook lamprey). They consider reductions in nutrient (phosphate) inputs are needed across all

contributing industries/sectors within the catchment to deliver this ambition. The nature of the geology surrounding the Wye Valley SSSI (and others) means that apparently spatially remote activities in the upper catchments may have an adverse impact on the river due to subsurface flows. (These are complex as a result of faults, cave systems, old mines, mineral veins and igneous intrusions into the limestone.)

The Catchment Sensitive Farming programme is particularly proactive in the White Peak, encouraging farmers to produce food whilst protecting soil, air and water. The LR project will develop a bespoke scheme to support farmers to deliver enhanced water quality through a generalised adoption of best farming practice at a landscape scale either through lowering inputs or making pathway interceptions. NE and the EA have built up considerable knowledge with work continuing to identify high risk areas on the ground, and through dye tracing. The EA have produced a 'Vulnerability' map showing the areas of the White Peak where reductions in inputs are considered to be most significant and Natural England is working with a consultant to try and identify particular hotspots on the plateau where reducing inputs will have the biggest impact. We plan on learning from this work and developing financial incentives to encourage low input farming in the most critical areas. Reducing nutrient levels in the rivers and enhancing populations of riverine species will contribute to Nature Recovery. The reduction in use of fertilisers will contribute to Net Zero.

The dales flow south and south-east to eventually join the Trent, and fall within the remit of the Severn Trent Water (STW) Company. Since 2015 STW have offered a number of schemes and initiatives to encourage and incentivise uptake of better environmental practices on farms 'with the ultimate aim of keeping water clean, so that it requires minimal treatment, thereby reducing customers' bills, whilst helping to protect, enhance and maintain biodiversity and the natural environment' (Margaret Baille pers comm 30/08/23). They consider both pesticide and increasingly phosphate reduction as the primary focus areas for the catchment. Again the adoption of management with lower inputs that is core to our Landscape Recovery ambitions is critical to delivering these water quality ambitions.

Helping threatened species to recover and adapt to climate change

Scarce plant assemblages and individual species form part of the interest of all 13 component SSSIs forming the Peak District Dales SAC. In addition, the dales and sites outside the dales support species at the edge of their southern and northern ranges, sometimes on the same site, which are both very sensitive to climate change, particularly species at the southern edge of their range. Natural England and Plantlife are working together to provide an up to date baseline of component SSSI scarce plant assemblage interest feature species and tailored Common Standards Monitoring forms to ensure specific habitat requirements of each species are accurate and tailored for the Peak District. The aim is to work towards bespoke 'future proofed' habitat management prescriptions and monitoring for situations where, in the future, land managers can be asked to 'over-deliver' for species to ensure they are resilient enough to withstand the pressures of climate change and habitat fragmentation. This project is designed to address the current lack of baseline knowledge of distribution and condition of all notified scarce plant assemblage species and to feed into an assisted colonisation and scarce plant conservation strategy. It aims to provide the

evidence and prescriptions needed to achieve thriving populations through gold standard management.

The LR project will:

- Work with Plantlife to 'share' volunteers to contribute to the necessary species monitoring
- Use the results of the NE/Plantlife project to deliver the necessary gold standard management. In at least some scenarios we expect to have to negotiate bespoke payments to encourage this to happen.

Specialist butterflies and other invertebrates are also at the edge of their ranges. Our ambition to link sites across the plateau provides opportunities for species to move in response to climate change and for other species to move into the White Peak. The Citizen Science element of our proposals will contribute to species monitoring designed to measure how species are responding to climate change. It will build on and extend existing work being carried out in the White Peak. Butterfly Conservation already carry out transect monitoring in several of the dales, and in partnership with the PDNPA, on Longstone edge and in Coombsdale, two areas where the butterfly populations are particularly susceptible to temperature changes.

Improved soil health

Our proposed interventions are all likely to lead to increased soil health through a reduction in artificial inputs, encouraging the establishment of more diverse grassland swards (both through restoration to species rich grassland and a move towards herbal leys as opposed to ryegrass dominated swards) and the establishment of trees and shrubs. As part of the baseline monitoring carried out in the WP Trials detailed soil samples were taken and analysed on all the sites – wood pasture, silage margins and herbal leys. The PDNPA is in the process of repeating these analyses as a way of measuring the expected changes in organic carbon, microbial activity and soil structure. These results will be available to inform the LR programme at its inception. We are including the costs of soil analyses for fields where interventions are proposed in order to create baseline measurements of soil health including soil carbon. This is in addition to work underway instigated by the PDNPA and Peak Farmers Group to encourage all farmers to produce Soil Management Plans funded through SFI.

Increasing resilience to natural hazards, specifically drought

Soils over the limestone of the White Peak are prone to drought as a result of the ability of water to pass freely through the subsoil and limestone rock. More diverse swards have increased resilience at times of drought and low rainfall with the longer rooted species being able to gather water from lower down the soil profile. Every farmer who has established a herbal ley has seen the evidence of this over the last two years when there have been prolonged dry periods.

Much of the WP plateau and many of the dales have a very low existing tree cover putting animals under heat stress at times of hot weather as there is little shade. Proposals for increased field boundary trees will help deliver animal welfare benefits.

Social impact

How will you enable, enhance, or maintain physical access, participation, and engagement with your project to deliver positive cultural and social benefits?

(1,000 words maximum)

Enhancing Access

The White Peak is a very popular area for outdoor recreation, and receives large numbers of visitors. The whole of the project area lies within the NP where engagement, enjoyment and physical access are core to the NPMP. The NPA has an existing access infrastructure audit for areas of Open Access which covers the majority of the Dales. Building on this, the recent funding from Defra for access enhancements and the numerous access focussed FiPL projects we plan on exploring opportunities for enhancing the access network through upgrading access infrastructure or status to increase accessibility and through negotiation of additional access. Two FiPL funded permissive paths exist on a farm where herbal leys are integral to the farm business and another crosses hay meadows undergoing restoration and so usefully demonstrate our ambition for nature recovery and net zero.

Demonstration Sites

A suite of these will be developed to enhance understanding and engagement with the projects ambition with respect to both farmers and the public. The dalebrow Trials site at Beech farm (privately owned), the National Trust owned site at Highfields, and the NE owned hay meadows at Lathkil Dale are our flagship sites. We also plan to build on (not replace) the model of the CSF programme of herbal ley open days on a range of participating privately owned farms.

We anticipate events, activities, open days and interpretation to demonstrate the vision, and the history of land-use in the White Peak with the latter extending our remit to the Cultural Heritage of the area. Farmer focussed events will allow the learnings from the LR project to spill out to others within the WP.

Educational Access

Through FiPL we have established a relationship with both LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) and the Country Trust to support 8 farms in delivering educational visits in the NP. We plan on building on these relationships to create links with urban schools and the LR farms to increase understanding of nature recovery, food production and farming.

Citizen Science

The aim is to complement the UKHabs surveys using Citizen Science. This will allow us to measure outcomes from the various actions with respect to a range of different wildlife including species whose presence and abundance will be useful indicators of the success of our interventions. The development phase will be used to recruit and train the volunteers, deliver the baseline and put in place a monitoring programme. Target species groups include pollinators, bats, amphibians and rare plants (the latter in partnership with the PSSP). We will work with local Recorders and local

groups including The High Peak Naturalists, Buxton Field Club and Tideswell Environmental Group, who have all expressed an interest in being involved.

We are also considering the following:

- Fixed point photography stations monitored by regular volunteers and the passing public. These can be used to assess landscape change.
- Moors for the Future, hosted by the PDNPA, run the Moorland Indicators of Climate Change Initiative which involves secondary school pupils in field work on the moorlands. There is the potential to develop a similar project in the White Peak focussing on landscape change in response to both the Nature Recovery and Climate Change emergencies and our initiatives to address these

Cultural Heritage

The WP within the project area is rich in archaeology, from Neolithic burial mounds to the remains of historic limestone and lead workings. At least 2 of the landholdings include areas of Historic Parkland. There are also distinctive historical landscapes with networks of field boundaries that fossilise medieval field systems around villages.

Integration of the historic environment is considered a positive contributor to our landscape recovery ambitions. In addition, many of our highest value sites incorporate or are dependent on the underlying archaeology. The LR project includes four small-scale Cultural Heritage focussed projects so as to help make decisions on nature recovery as easy as possible, and deliver benefits for both the cultural landscape and historic features.

1. The production of guidance on how to conserve and maintain features on WP grasslands including signposting to historic environment data.
2. A re-assessment of the PD SHINE polygons with respect to the field systems to enable herbal leys and wood pasture to be developed on these sites where the field boundaries are the only interest feature
3. Identification of the opportunities for enhancing nature and cultural heritage on linear features, particularly lead rakes, to deliver connectivity
4. Surveys to enhance understanding where archaeological survey can help inform proposals.

The events and activities associated with the Demonstration sites will also highlight and explore the cultural heritage features.

Food production

Tell us how you have:

- taken account the likely impact your project will have on food production
- considered its contribution to produce food in an environmentally sustainable way

- mitigated any negative impact where it is possible to do so
(1,000 words maximum)

1. With respect to the high productivity land on the White Peak plateau we are targeting just the dalebrow fields for habitat creation so minimising the impact on the core farm business and food production.
2. Whilst we are targeting the limestone hills for habitat creation which is likely to require a decrease in stocking rates, these are already relatively low productivity sites so the impact on food production will be minimal. This is also true for the Dales where we aim to enhance management looking at opportunities for working across holding boundaries to deliver more naturalistic landscapes. This move away from Unit and landholding-based management to management at a larger scale may result in a need for higher stocking rates of native breed cattle in particular.
3. We will be encouraging the creation of habitat corridors through unmown silage margins and field boundary trees. Whilst the nature benefits will be high, the impact on food production will be very small and this will be mitigated by increased animal welfare through the provision of shade and alternative forage.
4. We do aim to encourage a reduction in inputs including artificial fertilisers and bought in feed on all participating farms, either on part of the farm or potentially all of the farm. However, this is in combination with encouraging the use of herbal leys, dual cropping, adopting a mixed farming system with some arable etc to build soil fertility naturally and provide cereals 'in-farm'. Whilst there may be a relatively small drop in food production, profitability may remain the same or increase resulting in greater business resilience. Whilst we are awaiting the detailed results, three farms have participated in the 'Less is More' analysis carried out by Chris Clark and commissioned through a local farmer facilitator (funded through FiPL). We hope to be able to use at least part of the recommendations from this project to guide and support farmers to deliver higher returns for nature whilst maintaining their profitability. Whilst this wont necessarily maintain food production the aim is to produce higher quality and more sustainable food production whilst supporting viable farm businesses.
5. The Peak Farmers Group has been effective at holding events that seek to maintain or increase food production and farm resilience whilst decreasing costs, including inputs and reducing carbon emissions. Events looking at livestock genetics, soil health, more sustainable feeding practices etc have all contributed. The aim is to work in partnership with the group and through collaboration and joint learning maintain food production whilst enhancing delivery of the nature and net zero objectives.