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NATURAL ENGLAND

Nature recovery and the historic environment

Contents

This guide is aimed at all Natural England advisers delivering nature recovery projects, regardless of the scheme or delivery mechanism you are using. It sets the standard of best-practice for considering and integrating the historic environment into nature recovery. This user-friendly document is framed around frequently asked questions, you can jump straight to a section by using the links below or read cover-to-cover for the full story.

Opposite/top/left: Wood pasture and ancient trees, Donnington Park ©Hannah Rigden/Natural England
Opposite/top/right: Ecton enginehouse ©Elaine Willett/Natural England
Opposite/bottom/left: Boxgrove Church, Sussex ©Rosie Cummings/Natural England
Opposite/bottom/right: Royal border bridge Berwick upon tweed ©Hannah Rigden
Below/top/left: Ridge and furrow earthworks ©Elaine Willett/Natural England
Below/top/right: Rifle Range Marker, Hartington, Peak District ©Elaine Willett/Natural England
Below/bottom/left: Halnaker Hill windmill and WWII High Frequency Direction Finding stations ©Rosie Cummings
Below/bottom/right: Prehistoric rock art on Ilkley Moor, West Yorkshire ©Louise Brown

Give us your feedback!
We want this document to work for you, please send any feedback to historicenvironment@naturalengland.org.uk

Introduction

Human activity has shaped our nature and landscapes for milennia. From woodlands to the sea, and chalk grassland to river valleys, each landscape and habitat has been influenced and shaped by human activity. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment is an integral part of protecting, managing and planning for nature and landscapes in order to deliver sustainable nature recovery. This document is designed to help you fully integrate the historic environment into your plans and projects.

The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 commits us to being the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. This ambition recognises the importance of long-term protection and enhancement of our historic environment, as set out in the Beauty, Heritage and Engagement objective. The Nature Recovery Network is a major commitment of the plan and Government is clear that establishing the NRN will reinforce the natural, geological and cultural diversity of our landscapes, and **protect our historic natural environment**. Natural England has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance the landscape, which includes conserving monuments, buildings and sub-surface archaeological features that contribute to the landscape, and undertaking landscape conservation for aesthetic, cultural and historic purposes.

Core principles

This guidance is designed to help you understand what the historic environment is, why it is important and how you can fully integrate it into your plans for nature recovery. You can find further details, links and case-studies in the following pages but these four core principles should be followed to ensure the historic environment is embedded in your projects.

Sustainable nature recovery projects will:

1. **Consider the historic environment from the outset**
2. **Maximise environmental benefits including for the historic environment**
3. **Abide by legal, policy and guidance requirements for the protection and management of the historic environment**
4. **Avoid damage to the historic environment wherever possible, minimise harm where necessary and mitigate appropriately**

Birkrigg Stone Circle, Birkrigg Common, Cumbria ©Louise Martin

Known locally as the 'Druid's Circle', this prehistoric monument was removed from the Heritage at Risk Register in 2017. Bracken clearance undertaken by Morcambe Bay Landscape Partnership and Historic England has created new access for visitors and reconnected the site with its landscape.

The challenge

It's well understood that the climate and biodiversity crises are an immediate existential threat, risking the widespread loss and degradation of habitats across England. But perhaps less well known is that our historic environment, which underpins and shapes our habitats and landscapes, is equally vulnerable to these threats. Modern land management change, often as a result of post-war agricultural intensification, is responsible for the dereliction and loss of heritage features well beyond sustainable levels. Climate change continues to drive more widespread and catastrophic change, raising the very real possibility that we might so deplete our heritage resource there is little left to pass on to future generations.

Our historic environment is non-renewable, it cannot heal and once lost is lost forever. The scientific evidence it provides of our past is not ours to use up, so an environmentally sustainable approach demands that we consider heritage impacts and take appropriate steps to manage this resource. If we are to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it we must take action now, before the evidence of our past is irrevocably lost.

Our rural landscapes are particularly rich in cultural heritage: 78% of Scheduled Monuments, 100% of Registered Battlefields and 67% of Registered Parks and Gardens are located on agricultural land. These protected sites represent only a tiny proportion of the nation's cultural heritage, with many hundreds of thousands of other features recorded across Britain's countryside. What threatens habitats also threatens heritage. If done sensitively, recovering nature will tackle the heritage crisis, and nature recovery projects can and must deliver for heritage alongside habitats.

Madmarston hillfort in Oxfordshire, a prominent earthwork visible in a 1947 RAF photo has now been reduced to a soil mark after years under cultivation. Images courtesy of Historic England.

Medieval salterns in Marshchapel, Lincolnshire visible as earthworks in this 1947 RAF aerial photo have now been ploughed flat and survive only as soil marks.

Statistics and figures taken from Heritage Counts/Historic England

75% of Scheduled Monuments, 100% of Registered Battlefields and about 68,000 more heritage assets are located on farmland

84% of Scheduled Monuments at Risk are on farmland; for 81% of these the main risk comes from agriculture or natural processes

In the last half of the 20th century, it is estimated that nearly **80%** of our wetland archaeology has been altered or lost, and this is ongoing.

In the East Midlands **94%** of the ridge and furrow earthworks have been lost, largely as a result of intensive agriculture.

Between 1950 and 2001 the area of permanent grassland in England fell by 637,000 ha. This land contained an estimated **14,000** archaeological sites

4919 heritage assets on the Heritage at Risk Register

4 in 5 sites on the National Heritage List for England will face high levels of risk from climate change impacts by the mid-21st century.

80% of our chalk grasslands have been lost since WW2. These important habitats preserve nationally significant archaeology.

What is the historic environment?

The historic environment is all around us, in every place in England from the centre of towns to the bottom of our seas. It includes archaeological sites above and below ground, designed landscapes, planted or managed flora, parks and gardens, historic buildings, field patterns, battlefields, ancient and veteran trees, shipwrecks and much more.

Archaeological sites and monuments

From upstanding sites to below-ground archaeology our landscapes are rich in historic and archaeological features. Some are designated as nationally significant sites but thousands more are non-designated and there are many more yet to be identified. Read more about the scope and variety of heritage assets from Historic England.

Designed landscapes

Landscapes have been consciously designed and laid out for centuries. Today our urban greenspaces, country parks, gardens and commons are important records of the past and are often rich in cultural and natural heritage. Read more about the history of landscape design and types of designed landscape.

Routeways, field patterns and boundaries

Our ancient paths mark the footsteps of people through time while ancient hedgerows, dry-stone walls, medieval strip-fields or enclosed field systems tell the story of farming and settlement from the prehistoric to the present day. Read more about field systems.

Buildings and structures

From traditional farm buildings to grand cathedrals, from post boxes to bridges our rural and urban landscapes play host to a range of important historic buildings and structures. Read more about the types and significance of historic structures.

Historic landscape characterisation

Understanding how an area has changed over time and the processes that have contributed to the present landscape helps us manage the historical identity of a place and guides decision making. HLC identifies and interprets the historic character of an area, looking beyond individual sites. Read more about HLC.

Trees, hedgerows and woodland

From hunting forests to pagan yews, these are living historic assets in their own right but they also contribute to the character of our landscapes and our collective story. Read more.

Coastal defences, wrecks and features

The extensive range of coastal heritage features reflects our history as an island nation, from tanks traps to lidos, forts to beach huts. Read more.

Historic battlefields and military landscapes

Battlefields, historic training grounds, trench systems, defensive sites and forts of all ages, pill boxes and old airfields, barrack blocks and coastal radar stations. Read more.

Palaeoenvironmental and submerged features

From the epic submerged landscape of Doggerland to terrestrial waterlogged peat, these sites preserve extraordinary remains and reveal centuries of environmental context and change. Read more.

Urban public spaces and town design

Our towns and urban spaces are where most people in England live and work. These places tell their own stories, from medieval origins to rapid industrial development. Read more.

Traditional breeds

Carefully selected and bred to thrive, the farming practices of our past have much to offer our present. The right breed in the right place for the right reasons can be key to recovering nature. Read more.

Intangible cultural heritage

Imagine the Lake District without Wordsworth or Melton Mowbray without pork pies. Our traditional farming methods, rural skills, art, literature and folklore are integral to our cultural heritage and historic landscapes. Read more.

Industrial heritage and infrastructure

Industry has transformed our landscapes for centuries, from mining to railways and dockyards to factories these sites are numerous, internationally important and often survive at a landscape scale. Read more.

Why is it important?

Our historic environment inspires and engages people and makes a real and tangible contribution to our collective wellbeing. It provides scientific evidence of our past, gives the places in which we live and work their sense of place and cultural identity, and helps us understand how our most precious natural sites have developed.

The historic environment underpins the natural beauty and diversity of our landscapes but ultimately our heritage assets are a finite and non-renewable resource, once lost they are lost forever. Sustainable growth demands that we manage these resources carefully, ensuring that future generations have their chance to benefit from our shared heritage as much as we do, and to maximise the full range of benefits they offer.

People

Heritage is at the heart of our local communities, connecting us to the places in which we live and work and acting as a catalyst for comunity cohesion. It contributes powerfully to our physical and mental wellbeing, encourages access to the countryside and offers opportunities for volunteering and social interaction. Read more about the historic environment and it's value for people from Historic England's Heritage and Society. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has a wealth of case-studies demonstrating the positive benefits for people that come from engaging with heritage. Heritage sites are a key driver for people getting out and connecting with nature. These benefits are captured through Natural England's People and Nature Survey.

Art installation at Birkrigg Common, Cumbria installed as part of the Morcambe Bay Landscape Partnership ©Louise Martin

Places

The historic environment gives our urban and rural landscapes their unique character and sense of place. From traditional building materials, placenames and field patterns to buildings, street-plans and public parks, our historic, built and natural environments are inseparable. Our places are the product of thousands of years of human activity, this has shaped our local and regional identities and cannot be separated from how we manage these places today. Read more about the value of heritage to our shared places in Historic England's Heritage and the Environment. Natural England's Historic Environment Strategy sets out our committment to an integrated approach to the management of places.

Pounds

The economic value of heritage in England is substantial and wide-ranging; it is a major driver for tourism and engagement, spurs and inspires regeneration, attracts investment and delivers jobs and volunteer oppotunities across the country. Identifying and delivering positive outcomes for heritage can unlock additional funding opportunities within wider projects. Read more about the economic value of heritage in Historic England's Heritage and the Economy. The government's Cultural and Heritage Capital portal brings together research and guidance that helps make the case for investment in cultural and heritage assets.

£36.6bn
added to the economy annually by the heritage sector

Visiting heritage sites is estimated to save the NHS
£193.2m
from a reduction in GP visits and mental health services.

1.25m
school visits to heritage sites every year

75%
of Scheduled Monuments and about 68,000 more heritage assets are located on farmland

400,000+
designated heritage assets in England and many thousand more non-designated buildings, sites and landscapes. There are almost 5000 sites on the Heritage at Risk register.

Heritage is one of the UK's unique selling points.

£18.4bn
was spent on heritage related visits and trips in 2019

72.7%
of adults participate in the historic environment according to the Taking Part Survey.

Statistics and figures taken from Heritage Counts/Historic England

How do I integrate the historic environment into plans for nature recovery?

Following these four principles will ensure the historic environment is appropriately identified and managed, securing additional positive outcomes and delivering integrated and sustainable nature recovery projects.

Prehistoric rock art on Ilkley Moor, West Yorkshire ©Louise Brown

Principle 1: Consider the historic environment from the outset

Factor the historic environment into your project planning from the beginning. Find out what historic features or 'heritage assets' are located in your project area, consider their significance, associated risks and management needs and the historic landscape character. The Natural England Historic Environment Expert Network uses a single key document 'Knowing the Past to Understand the Present and Plan for the Future' to structure its advice across all work areas. 'Knowing the Past' identifies a six-stage process for understanding the historic environment. You can also refer to the 'Where to get help' section at the end of this guide.

Principle 2: Maximise environmental benefits

Factoring in historic environment considerations isn't always about doing something extra or onerous; it's about integrating the way we think about and deliver for nature so that we can achieve more with the same resource. By integrating our approach, we can preserve heritage features, habitats and landscapes by making them more resilient to change, engage and enthuse new audiences, boost value for public money, contribute to a circular low-carbon economy, reinforce cultural identity and connect people with nature. Read our case-studies in this guidance for more information.

Principle 3: Abide by legal requirements, policy and guidance

Law, policy and guidance already exists to protect our historic areas, sites, buildings and monuments in England. Nature recovery projects must abide by these legal protections as well as the frameworks of policy and guidance that have been developed for specific delivery mechanisms. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment falls within Natural England's statutory duties under the NERC Act, and we have an adopted Heritage Strategy. Read our guidance on existing heritage protections in this document, refer to our 'Where to get help section' and check any requirements for specific schemes.

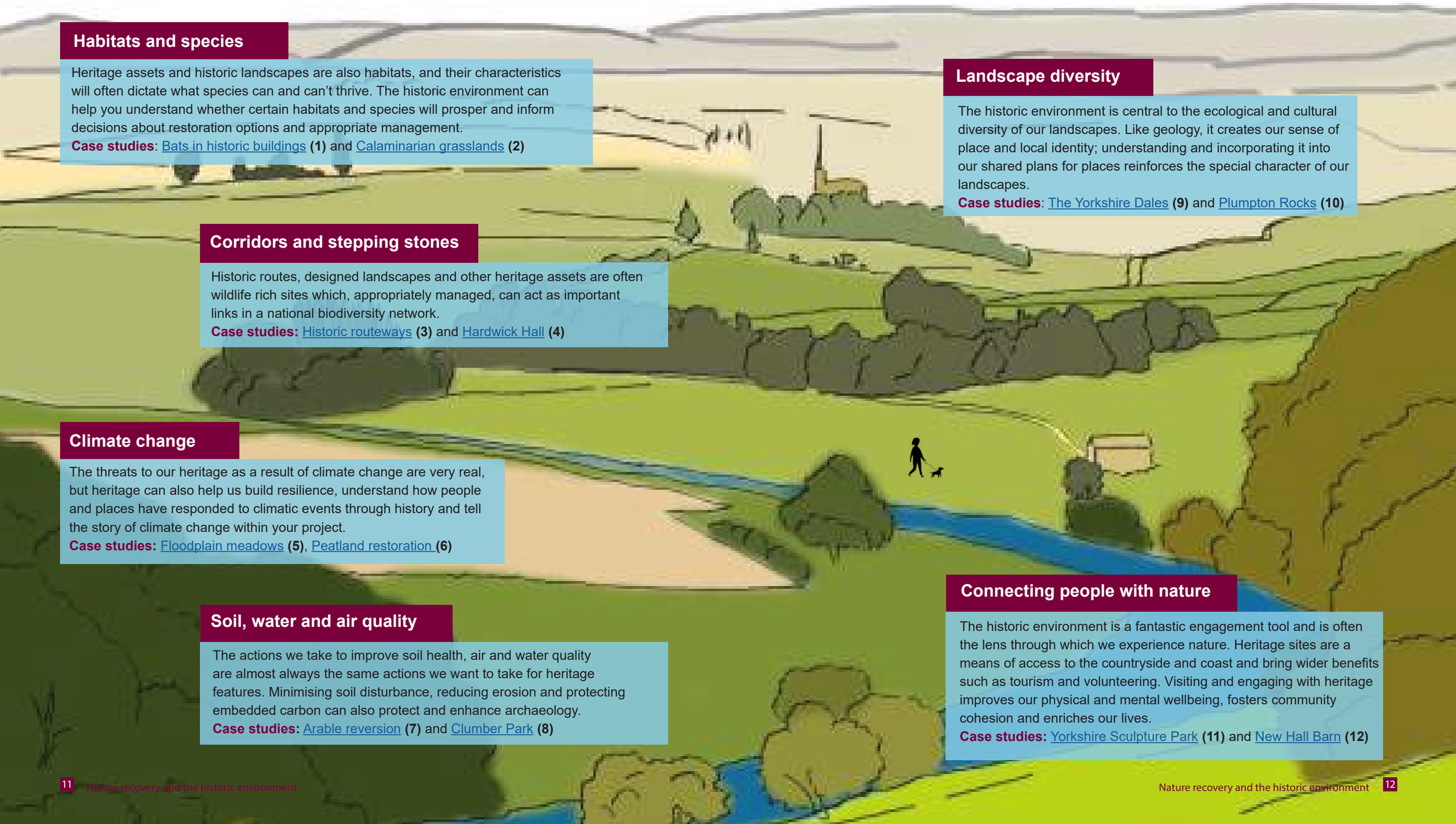
Principle 4: Avoid harm, minimise impacts and mitigate

Projects should always aim to avoid damage or destruction of historic environment features. The significance of a heritage asset can be damaged in a number of ways; by physically damaging it, by changing the environment or local conditions in a way that will result in harm, by changing the setting or interrupting legibility or visibility in a landscape. On occasion, damage may be unavoidable in which case it should always be minimised, and a scheme of mitigation should be implemented. This could include for example, undertaking a programme of controlled excavation or recording in advance of unavoidable damage.

How can the historic environment help me?

The historic environment has a lot to offer our nature recovery ambitions. All nature recovery projects will have an element of the historic environment – it is everywhere; inseparable from our landscapes and nature. Following our four principles will ensure the historic environment is appropriately integrated, but to get the most out of your heritage you should consider the full range of opportunities it provides:

Protecting our historic environment is a defined outcome of the Nature Recovery Network, but it can also help us realise our ambition across the full suite of NRN objectives. Read our highlights below and follow the links to more detailed case-studies illustrating the benefits of integrating the historic environment.



Habitats and species

Heritage assets and historic landscapes are also habitats, and their characteristics will often dictate what species can and can't thrive. The historic environment can help you understand whether certain habitats and species will prosper and inform decisions about restoration options and appropriate management.
Case studies: Bats in historic buildings **(1)** and Calaminarian grasslands **(2)**

Corridors and stepping stones

Historic routes, designed landscapes and other heritage assets are often wildlife rich sites which, appropriately managed, can act as important links in a national biodiversity network.
Case studies: Historic routeways **(3)** and Hardwick Hall **(4)**

Climate change

The threats to our heritage as a result of climate change are very real, but heritage can also help us build resilience, understand how people and places have responded to climatic events through history and tell the story of climate change within your project.
Case studies: Floodplain meadows **(5)**, Peatland restoration **(6)**

Soil, water and air quality

The actions we take to improve soil health, air and water quality are almost always the same actions we want to take for heritage features. Minimising soil disturbance, reducing erosion and protecting embedded carbon can also protect and enhance archaeology.
Case studies: Arable reversion **(7)** and Clumber Park **(8)**

Landscape diversity

The historic environment is central to the ecological and cultural diversity of our landscapes. Like geology, it creates our sense of place and local identity; understanding and incorporating it into our shared plans for places reinforces the special character of our landscapes.
Case studies: The Yorkshire Dales **(9)** and Plumpton Rocks **(10)**

Connecting people with nature

The historic environment is a fantastic engagement tool and is often the lens through which we experience nature. Heritage sites are a means of access to the countryside and coast and bring wider benefits such as tourism and volunteering. Visiting and engaging with heritage improves our physical and mental wellbeing, fosters community cohesion and enriches our lives.
Case studies: Yorkshire Sculpture Park **(11)** and New Hall Barn **(12)**

What does integration look like?

A integrated approach to environmental management is vital for the delivery of our nature recovery ambitions and is at the heart of Natural England's conservation strategy. Integrated management delivers multiple environmental outcomes and public benefits for every action or intervention we take, delivering more for nature and landscape, benefitting people, society and the economy. The extraordinary landscape of Bradgate Park, which first inspired Sir David Attenborough's love of nature, provides a case-study in environmental integration.

Bradgate Park
A case study in integration

Extending over 830 acres Bradgate Park attracts a footfall of more than 500,000 visitors every year. Competing needs and pressures at Bradgate Park required a truly integrated approach. Its unique geology, rich archaeological record, important deer population, outstanding collection of ancient and veteran trees and SSSI units all demanded specific and sometimes contradictory management. As an invaluable area of free and accessible open green space close to Leicester City Centre, decisions had to be managed against the needs of visitors and the charitable trust that manages the estate.

Little Matlock
A picturesque slope characterised by a mix of veteran native and exotic trees planted during the 19th century. This area contains one of the park's key geological assets 'Little Matlock Gorge'. Ancient parkland habitat of high ecological interest, significant erosion was caused by heavy footfall. Ongoing management was required for the trees and the existing fencing was visually intrusive.

Upper, Middle and Low Park
Large visitor numbers and prohibited activities were causing erosion, disturbance to wildlife and threatening the security of internationally significant geological sites. Remnant wet heathland was declining in condition with evidence of deer poaching. Tree management was needed across the area, a deadwood strategy and densities required adjusting where newer planting was causing shading.

Deer Sanctuary & Meadow
A refuge for the large deer population, this area is an exceptional example of wood pasture and parkland habitat including the highest concentration of veteran trees in the park. Large expanses of bracken required management. Ongoing management of the historic water meadow and associated structures was also required.

Estate Manager
Bradgate is an invaluable free resource for the people of Leicestershire and beyond. We need to balance vistor pressure with the demands of estate management to make sure we can conserve what makes Bradgate special. Sympathetic infrastructure, interpretation and defined walks now connect features of interest that are less well-known while alleviating pressure elsewhere.

Historic Environment Specialist
The ongoing erosion from visitor pressures and weathering on the important Stone Age site was becoming catastrophic. In an ideal world we'd have preserved the remains in situ but this just wasn't compatible with the needs of visitors and the wider park. By fully excavating the site we've preserved it by record and now the Estate can share this ancient story with their visitors.

Geomorphologist
The extraordinary geology of Bradgate drives the special character of its landscape. This was recognised and integrated from the outset. A programme of protection works were implemented for the preservation of the Memorial Crags and ongoing monitoring in partnership with the Leicestershire Geological Officer will avoid future impacts elsewhere from visitors, deer and scrub.

Ecology and Trees Specialist
A detailed tree survey was integrated into the parkland plan from the very beginning. This allowed us to identify key management needs and implement plans for long-term monitoring. Events, routes and infrastructure were planned to avoid root protection areas and prevent compaction. A new deadwood strategy will deliver benefits for this habitat while considering the needs of visitors.

How can I retrofit an existing project?

Our four principles encourage you to consider the historic environment from the outset, and to take an integrated approach throughout development and delivery. However, if you are working on an existing project, identifying next steps in a longer programme of nature recovery work or picking up where someone else has left off, there are almost certainly additional benefits to be had by retrofitting the historic environment, even at a later stage.

Don’t avoid heritage assets

The majority of rural sites at risk can be restored to good condition with relatively simple and inexpensive habitat improvements. The biggest threat to heritage is the wrong habitat in the wrong place. Don’t create islands of unmanaged land or divert your project boundaries to avoid heritage assets. You will need to consider impacts to their setting anyway, so bring them in and identify some simple actions to improve their condition, maximising your project benefits.

Tell the story

Struggling to engage the local community in your project? Heritage is a great way to tell stories and engage people in the local area. Are there heritage projects or narratives that could help? This could open up volunteering opportunities and deliver health and wellbeing benefits too. If you’re not sure where to start, try looking at what historic environment features fall within your area or talk to local people who know the area well.

Identify more benefits

Have you accounted for historic environment benefits you’re already delivering? Peatlands and wetland sites have unique cultural heritage conditions ideal for preservation. Maintaining and restoring these habitats isn’t just good for wildlife and carbon capture, it’s also enhancing the historic environment. The heritage assets present in your site aren’t simply a constraint to be managed, they are an opportunity to deliver more positive outcomes. Make sure you’re taking the credit for benefits you’re already delivering!

Know your site

Knowing what historic environment features are present will ensure changes are made in the right place, for the right reason. Are you looking to remove modern planting or find sites for new woodland? Historic maps could help identify sites of lost woodland and the presence of a heritage feature might guide location and design. Account for the full range of benefits you’re delivering, including those for the historic environment.

Explore your options

Are you seeking additional funding? If your project is or can deliver for heritage there may be additional sources of funding available. Find out more in ‘Where to get help’ at the end of this guidance.

Plan for people

Historic routes from holloways to redundant railways provide wildlife-rich linear networks across the landscape. How does this help your plans for access and nature connectivity? Can you use heritage qualities to tempt visitors into using new access?

Heritage Protections: a short guide

This section sets out the key statutory, policy and guidance of which you should be aware. For more detailed guidance see Historic England's Heritage Protection Guide and Caring for Rural Heritage. Use the links within the sections below or refer to 'Where to get help' at the end of this guidance.

Designations

Heritage assets can be recognised for their heritage value (be that historical, archaeological, aesthetic or communal) by being designated under the relevant legal or policy regime. Designation reflects an asset's significance and will afford it some degree of protection or consideration in decision making. The National Heritage List for England is a database of designated heritage assets. It holds the official record of listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and protected wrecks. The list also includes England's World Heritage Sites as designated by UNESCO. Buildings, archaeological monuments and sites included in the List are of national significance. Conservation areas and locally listed buildings are designated at a local authority level and are subject to legal and policy protections.

Heritage at Risk

Administered by Historic England, the heritage at risk register identifies sites that are most at risk of being lost due to neglect, decay or inappropriate development. As part of the programme, Historic England undertake surveys and management to understand and address issues, identify trends and administer limited funding. Understanding a monument's principal vulnerabilities will guide management decisions and prioritise actions.

Other heritage assets

Only a small proportion of heritage assets (about 5%) in England are designated. Many thousands more are recorded and have varying degrees of significance, some will be of equivalent significance to designated assets. Historic Environment Records (HER) contain details on local archaeological sites, finds, historic buildings and landscapes; they are maintained by local authorities or national parks and there are more than 80 operating in England (see ALGAO: Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers).

The level of protection afforded to non-designated heritage assets varies across schemes and programmes. The Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE) is a subset of HER data made up of heritage assets that are suitable for management through agri-environment schemes. The data is licenced purely for use in these schemes. The presence of a SHINE feature within an agreement area will help guide land management choices and prevent inappropriate or damaging actions. Other frameworks such as planning, woodland creation schemes and protected landscapes will also consider non-designated heritage assets in decision-making.

Consents, consultation, law and policy

When a project includes or will affect a heritage asset, designated or not, you must ensure you undertake the appropriate consultation and have the necessary consents in place. In some circumstances, such as works that affect a Scheduled Monument, it is a criminal offence to carry out the activity without consent. Other regulatory schemes including planning permission, EIA, Marine Licensing and the UK Forestry Standard all consider the historic environment within their decision-making frameworks. Statutory undertakers such as the Environment Agency, water companies and drainage boards also have legal responsibilities for protection of the historic environment. AONBs and National Parks have agreed joint statements committing them to promoting conservation, understanding and enjoyment of heritage in their areas, while Natural England's Management Standard for NNRs requires exemplary management of historic environment features.

World Heritage Sites

Inscribed by UNESCO for their Outstanding Universal Value; no additional consent is required but projects may require a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and should consult WHS coordinators.

Scheduled Monuments

Consent (via Historic England) is required for any works that will repair, alter, destroy or damage a scheduled monument, it is a criminal offence to undertake these works without consent.

Listed Buildings

Consent is required for demolition, alteration or extension managed by Local Planning Authorities and Historic England. It is a criminal offence to carry out works without the appropriate consent.

Registered Parks and Gardens

Designed landscapes, gardens and other land of special historic interest. There is no additional statutory protection but inclusion on the register is a consideration in decision making.

Registered Battlefields

Historic England also maintain the register of historic battlefields; inclusion on the register does not trigger any additional statutory protection but is a consideration in decision making.

Protected Wrecks

Restricted areas around a wreck of historical, archaeological or artistic importance can be designated to prevent uncontrolled interference. A licence is required to visit or undertake projects.

Conservation Areas

Local planning authorities are required to identify areas with special historic or architectural interest. Designation triggers certain planning controls, and is considered in wider decision making.

Other heritage assets

Local lists and HERs record known non-designated assets and there are many more yet to be discovered. Consultation with local planning authorities and NE HE specialists should be undertaken.

Where can I get help?

The following links and contacts have been compiled to help you find the right information when you need it. If your project includes or is likely to affect a heritage asset you should seek the appropriate expertise and support to ensure the best possible outcome. If you're not sure or just want some general advice, we're here to help!

Accessing advice in Natural England

To access internal advice and guidance from Natural England's historic environment experts:

- Contact the historic environment mailbox: historicenvironment@naturalengland.org.uk. Some works areas will have alternative contacts; you can find full details of the Historic Environment Expert Networks (HEEN) on our SharePoint site.
- Join the Historic Environment Delivery Support (HEDS) Network to access our dedicated Teams channel and join our three-weekly support calls. The network is open to everyone with an interest in the historic environment across Natural England.
- Access advice and guidance on our SharePoint site. The site includes general historic environment guidance and more tailored information relating to agriculture, historic buildings, industrial heritage, marine and coastal, military, parkland, peatland and trees and woodland.
- Visit the resources section to find our more detailed Guidance Notes, Technical Notes and Bitesize Learning, as well as links to recorded webinars and external content.

Sandford Heath light anti-aircraft tower ©Steve Hall/Natural England

Accessing external advice

Key external contacts for historic environment advice and guidance:

- Historic England: if your project includes or is likely to affect a designated heritage asset you will need to consult with Historic England. Contact details for national and regional offices, general queries and enquiries relating to the National Heritage List for England or the Heritage at Risk Register can be found on the contacts page.
- Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO): representing professional archaeologists employed by local authorities to provide advice on archaeological conservation and management. Contact your local ALGAO member to discuss historic environment features, potential opportunities and impacts.
- Historic Environment Records (HER): hold information on all known non-designated heritage assets in their areas. You should consult the relevant HER directly for full details on historic environment features in your project area. Contacts details can be found via the Heritage Gateway.
- Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency: a team of historic environment experts are based in both the Forestry Commission and EA providing advice relating to their work areas.

Legislation, policy and consents

For a general overview of the legal and policy frameworks relating to historic environment protection see Historic England's Heritage Protection Guide.

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC): must be made to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport via Historic England for any works which might affect a monument either above or below ground. It is a criminal offence to undertake works without the appropriate consent in place, and cannot be sought retrospectively.
- Listed Building Consent: applications are made to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and carrying out unauthorised works to a listed building is a criminal offence. Historic England are consulted on applications for Grade II* and Grade I buildings, Grade II applications are managed by the LPA.
- A licence is required to excavate human remains for archaeological purposes in England and Wales. The licence is required for removal of buried human remains in the ground and the examination of human remains in the ground.
- In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, all finders of gold and silver objects, and groups of coins from the same finds, over 300 years old, have a legal obligation to report such items under the Treasure Act 1996. From July 2023 'treasure' will also include objects of outstanding historic, cultural or archaeological importance, a definition which considers where the object was found, it's rarity and historical connections.

- All military aircraft crash sites in the United Kingdom, its territorial waters, or British aircraft in international waters, are controlled sites under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986. It is an offence under this act to tamper with, damage, move or unearth any items at such sites, unless the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has issued a licence authorising such activity.
- National Planning Policy Framework: sets out the government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied, planning permission may be required for a range of projects, not limited to new buildings.
- Local Authority policies and designations: local planning policy, strategies and other schemes including local heritage lists can be accessed via the relevant local authority websites or by contacting local Historic Environment Records. Some authorities will maintain lists of archaeologically significant areas, sometimes called Archaeological Notification Areas or Archaeological Priority Areas. To identify the right authority, search via the Planning Portal.
- UK Forestry Standard (UKFS): sets out the government's approach to sustainable forestry, including legal and good practice requirements for the historic environment.
- Environmental Impact Assessment: regulations to ensure appropriate consideration of the effects of certain works on the environment, including the historic environment. Regulations are in place to consider the impacts of development, forestry and agriculture.
- Marine historic environment: the marine planning system is set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and includes a system of licencing which considers the effects of a proposed operation on sites of historic or archaeological interest.
- Additional legal requirements set out under the Water Industry Act 1991, The Land Drainage Act 1991 and the Environment Act may apply when working with partner organisations such as the Environment Agency, private water companies and drainage boards. For a useful overview see guidance from the Association of Drainage Authorities.

Accessing historic environment data

These are the main sources for historic environment data relating to known designated and non-designated assets. You should always talk directly to the relevant local Historic Environment Record who will hold information not always available in the public domain:

- The following layers can be accessed via WebMap2 and/or MAGIC:
  - Designated heritage assets (Listed Buildings, Registered Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites, Protected Wrecks).
  - Heritage at Risk
  - Historic Parkland: this layer is an incomplete guide to non-designated historic parkland as shown on historic mapping, it should be used as a guide but is not authoritative and is currently under review.
- Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE): this layer contains a subset of non-designated heritage assets recorded by Historic Environment Records that are suitable for management in agri-environment schemes. The data is not licenced for use in other projects and is not a complete record of historic environment features across the country.
- National Heritage List for England: maintained by Historic England, the official and up to date register of all nationally protected (designated) heritage assets in England. Our WebMap2 layers use the same data provided by Historic England, but you can access more detailed information by reviewing individual list entries.
- Heritage Gateway: Historic Environment Records (HERs) record information on all known undesignated heritage assets in their areas, most publish a selection of their records for public access via the Heritage Gateway. It is not comprehensive and should never replace a full consultation directly with the HER. Some HERs have their own dedicated on-line portals, contact details and links to other sites are published on the Heritage Gateway.
- Historic Landscape Characterisation data will be held by the relevant HER but some is also available via the Archaeology Data Service. Similarly, HERs and Local Planning Authorities hold the authoritative datasets for Conservation Areas, many are accessible via the relevant LPA websites but you can also download a national (but not necessarily complete) mapping layer from the Historic England Open Data page.
- Heritage at Risk: every year Historic England updates the Heritage at Risk Register identifying those designated sites most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. List entries will outline the condition and principal vulnerabilities of assets which can help prioritise actions and identify new opportunities to enhance the historic environment.
- Historic England Aerial Mapping Explorer: an interactive map showing historic and archaeological features identified from aerial imagery; each record links to the relevant Historic Environment Record description.
- National Marine Heritage Record: in development but worth watching, Historic England are developing a new dynamic dataset to allow access to records on marine heritage. In the meantime, marine records can be accessed via Heritage Gateway under the sub-heading non-statutory national data Historic England research records.

Greenhead Mine Glenridding, Lake District National Park ©Louise Martin/Natural England

Mapping and imagery

These are the main, open-access resources for historic maps, aerial photos and LiDAR imagery:

- Historic England's photographic archive is available as an online database of photographs held in the Historic England archive. They date from the 1850's and document England's social, industrial, architectural and archaeological history.
- Historic England's Aerial Photo Collection contains over 4 million aerial photographs covering the whole of England and dating from the early 20thcentury to the present day.
- National Library of Scotland Maps provides a wide range of UK wide mapping and imagery including historic Ordnance Survey maps dating from c. 1885 onwards. You can access side-by-side mapping directly from WebMap (inside Natural England) by selecting 'I want to' and 'View historic maps'.
- Britain from Above is a large collection of aerial photographs dating from 1919 to 2006 available to view online.
- Cambridge Air Photos: the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (CUCAP) is a collection of almost 500,000 images dating from 1947 onwards, many are available to view online.
- LiDAR imagery is available to access via WebMap and National Library of Scotland mapping, or to download from the Environment Agency National LiDAR Programme. The detailed and accurate models of the land surface allows us to identify and record archaeological features. For general guidance on the use of LiDAR for the historic environment, see Historic England's guidance on airborne and remote sensing.

Former medieval fishponds, Selborne Priory, Hampshire ©Rosie Cummings/Natural England

Heritage funding

If your project has a heritage component, you may be able to access additional sources of funding from the heritage sector. The following links are the main sources of information for navigating heritage based funding:

- The Heritage Funding Directory: managed by The Heritage Alliance and the Architectural Heritage Fund, the directory is a free guide to financial support for heritage related projects in the UK.
- National Lottery Heritage Fund: the largest dedicated grant funder of the UK's heritage distributing grants from £3000 to £5 million and above for projects that sustain and transform the UK's heritage.
- Historic England grant schemes: a number of grant schemes are available to support the cost of caring for buildings, monuments and landscapes, or projects that help people understand and champion their heritage.

General guidance and further reading

There is a wealth of information available to help you explore and understand the historic environment and its value. A selection of resources has been listed below by theme, but you should always seek the appropriate expert advice when developing and delivering projects:

General

- Introductions to heritage assets from Historic England covering a wide range of sites, structures and landscapes.
- Search Historic England's current guidance and advice for information on everything from 3D laser scanning to waterlogged wood.
- The Heritage Alliance is a membership body representing the independent heritage movement in England. Events, publications and newsletter are available via their website.
- Historic England's The Setting of Heritage Assets: a project may not affect the historic environment physically, but it could still have an impact on the setting of archaeological remains, historic buildings, sites, areas and landscapes.
- Access advice and guidance on our Natural England Historic Environment SharePoint site. The site includes general historic environment guidance and more tailored information relating to agriculture, historic buildings, industrial heritage, marine and coastal, military, parkland, peatland and trees and woodland. The site is a work in progress and we are adding to it all the time; if there is a topic or piece of guidance you think we should include please let us know by emailing our mailbox: historicenvironment@naturalengland.org.uk.

Landscape and seascape

- Landscape and seascape character assessments: advice and guidance on gov.uk about the process of identifying and describing variation in character of the landscape. Natural England's publications on Landscape Assessment and Seascape Assessment are also available online.
- National character area profiles: available from gov.uk, the NCA profile documents explain how to access and use environmental evidence and information about places. Each of the 159 areas includes information about landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, cultural and economic activity.
- Understanding the archaeology of landscapes: guidance from Historic England providing practical advice on the recording, analysis and understanding of earthworks and other historic landscape features.
- Landscape Recovery resources from Natural England: includes a short video introducing the resources, a summary document about the benefits and synergies of a landscape approach, project case-studies and analysis, top tips and four fictional before and after scenarios.

World Heritage Sites

- World Heritage UK: an organisation set up in 2015 to undertake networking, advocacy and promotion for the UK's 33 outstanding World Heritage Sites, and the Tentative List Sites progressing towards WHS status.
- UNESCO World Heritage Convention and World Heritage List: access to the full list of WHS and associated guidance and information.
- ICOMOS Guidance and Toolkits for World Heritage Site Impact Assessments: guidance for assessing impacts from projects that might affect WHSs and their Outstanding Univeral Value (OUV).
- UNESCO Global Geoparks:unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.

Ecton enginehouse, Peak District ©Elaine Willett/Natural England

Parks, gardens and designed landscapes

- Registered Parks and Gardens: Historic England guidance: a general introduction to the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England, including how and why they are protected.
- Parks and Gardens selection guides: Historic England guidance: four thematically-arranged selection guides covering Rural Landscapes, Urban Landscapes, Landscape of Remembrance and Institutional Landscapes. The guides provide an overview of the type, history, development and examples.
- The Gardens Trust: the UK charity dedicated to protecting and conserving designed landscapes. The Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee within the English Planning system for proposals that affect Registered sites. Their website includes numerous resources, including guidance on community engagement and conservation management plans.
- Parks and Gardens UK: an online archive containing records of almost 10,000 historic designed landscapes and associated information. Records are not limited to Registered sites and can be a useful resource for historic, non-registered parkland.

Built heritage: historic and listed structures and buildings

- Listed Buildings: general guidance from Historic England: a general introduction to Listed Buildings in England including how and why they are protected.
- Looking after historic buildings: a range of resources including technical advice, materials and methods of conservation.
- Listing Selection Guides from Historic England: twenty thematically-arranged selection guides covering different types of buildings and structures, their history, development and survival.
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB): the UK's oldest building conservation body, SPAB works to protect historic buildings through the provision of advice, training, awards and campaigning. Their website contains a wealth of guidance on caring for historic buildings and structures.
- Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC): the professional body for building conservation practictioners and historic environment experts. Their website has a wide range of accessible resources.

Registered Battlefields and military sites

- Registered Battlefields: a general introduction to Registered Battlefields from Historic England, including how and why there are protected.
- Battlefield Selection Guide from Historic England, discussing designation criteria, the changing nature of warfare in England between the late Saxon period and the seventeenth century and signposts to further reading.
- The Battlefields Trust: a charity dedicated to the protection, promotion and interpretation of Britain's battlefields. The Resource Centre and Battlefields Hub are accessible from the website, providing information about individual sites, military history and management.

Scheduled Monuments and archaeology

For sources of data and mapping relating to known archaeological sites and Scheduled Monuments, please refer to 'Accessing historic environment data' above.

- Scheduled Monuments: general guidance from Historic England on Scheduled Monuments, including how and why they are protected.
- Scheduling Selection Guides from Historic England. Eighteen thematic guides providing detailed guidance about different types of archaeological sites and monuments, history, development and survival.
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA): the leading professional body representing archaeologists working in the UK and overseas. CIfA also provide standards and guidance for archaeological practice, a professional register of accredited archaeological contractors for those seeking to commission archaeological work, and learning resources.

Protected wrecks and coastal heritage

- Protected Wrecks: general guidance from Historic England on Protected Wrecks, including how and why they are protected.
- Ships and Boats Selection Guides from Historic England. Detailed guidance on eligibility for designation, types of vessel and forms of recognition and protection.
- CITiZAN: The Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network. A community-led project managed by Museum of London Archaeology and funded through the National Lottery, Historic England and National Trust. Highlighting the threat of coastal erosion to foreshore and intertidal archaeological sites, CITiZAN promote a standardised survey and methodology, and deliver events, training and mapping.
- Coastal Change: general guidance from Historic England on managing the impacts of coastal change on the historic environment, with numerous links to additional resources.
- Heritage Coasts: guidance on GOV.uk on the definition and purpose of Heritages Coasts, and Natural England's role.

Conservation Areas and local designations

- Local Designation: general guidance from Historic England on identifying and managing those parts of the historic environment valued by local communities.
- You can also refer to Local Authority websites to find further information about local heritage lists and conservation areas, sites may also host information about local history groups, local studies centres and additional resources.

Peatlands

- Peatlands: a general introduction to unique archaeological and palaeoecological records preserved in peatlands, with guidance on management, understanding and recording.
- Peatland Restoration and the Historic Environment: standards for delivering environmentally sustainable peatland restoration projects, developed by Historic England and Natural England.

The value of heritage

The following resources will help you understand the broader economic, social and environmental value of our historic environment:

- Heritage Counts: research published by Historic England on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum (HEF), providing evidence for the value of heritage to our economy, society and environment; includes regional case-studies and statistics.
- Heritage, Health and Wellbeing: report published by the Heritage Alliance demonstrating the potential of heritage to deliver tangible benefits to our mental and physical wellbeing.

Case Study Library

We are developing a case study library to illustrate the opportunities that the historic environment can provide to nature recovery. We will be adding new case studies and welcome examples from projects you are delivering. The full case study library can be accessed here, or use the links below to explore by theme.

Habitats and species

- Bats in historic buildings and structures
- Gang Mine calaminarian grassland

Corridors and stepping stones

- Corridors and connectivity: historic routes
- Connectivity in the landscape: Hardwick Hall

Climate change

- Floodplain meadows and the historic environment
- Peatland restoration

Soil, water and air quality

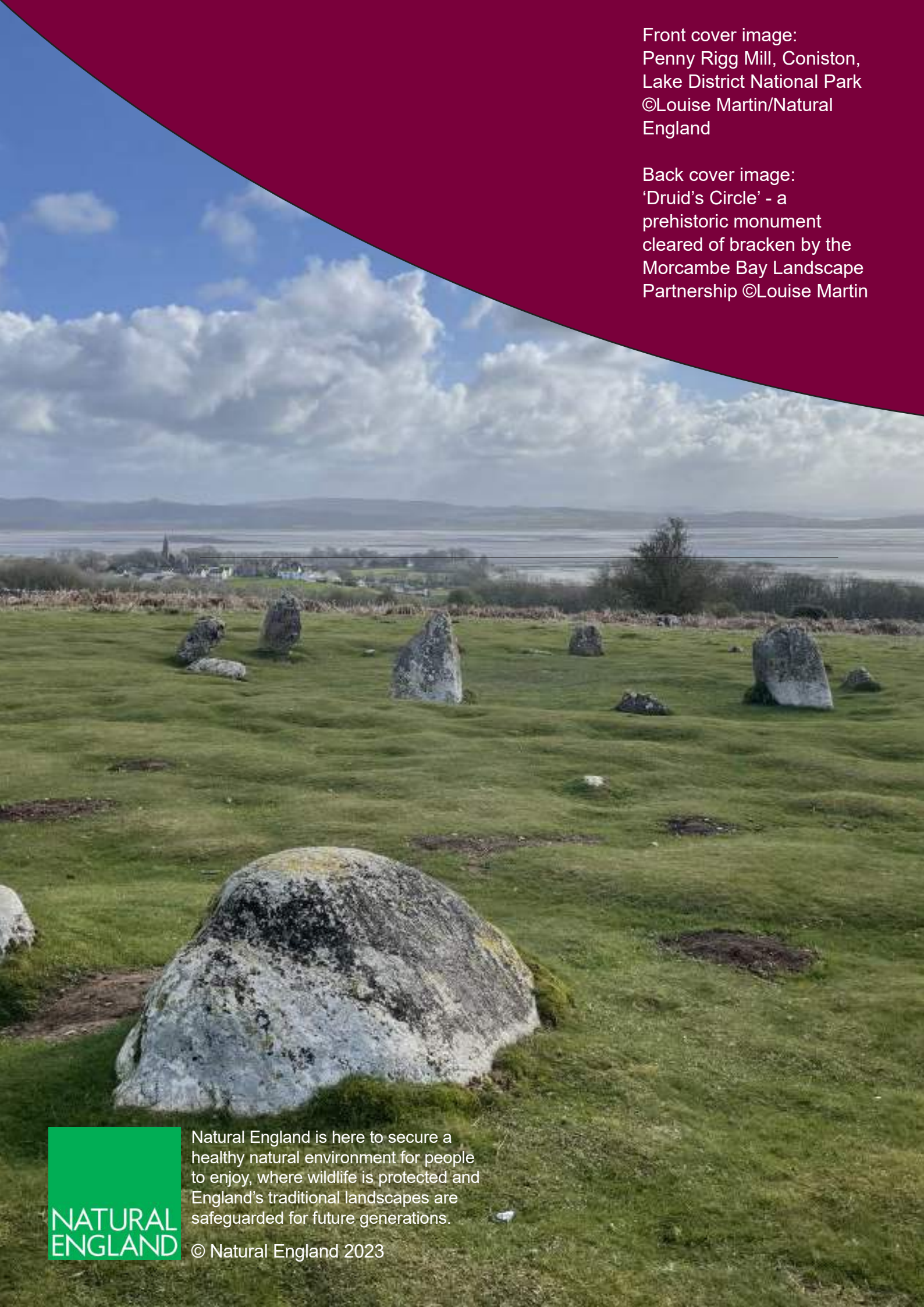
- Arable reversion: Barham Downs and Upton Pyne
- Clumber Park and the River Poulter

Landscape diversity

- Barns and walls in the Yorkshire Dales
- Plumpton Rocks

Connecting people with nature

- The Yorkshire Sculpture Park
- New Hall Barn



Front cover image:
Penny Rigg Mill, Coniston, Lake District National Park ©Louise Martin/Natural England

Back cover image:
'Druid's Circle' - a prehistoric monument cleared of bracken by the Morcambe Bay Landscape Partnership ©Louise Martin

NATURAL ENGLAND

Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Blackstone Edge Common Roman Road

Summary
Funded through a Natural England agri-environment scheme and delivered by Moors for the Future Partnership and DTMS group, this project tackled the problem of historic damage and on-going erosion of peat and the scheduled Roman road that cuts across the Common. A case-study in peatland restoration and the historic environment.

Blackstone Edge Roman Road © Simon Wheatley-CC BY-SA 2.0

Peatland landscapes contain some of our most significant historic environment features, providing valuable environmental, social and economic public goods and services, yet peat degradation means we are losing these sites at an unsustainable rate.

The Roman Road runs across the former Lancashire and Yorkshire boundary, between Butterworth Common and Blackstone Edge Common on the South Pennine Moors and cutting through the varying thicknesses of the extensive peat blanket. Over hundreds of years of industrial, agricultural and recreational activities, the vegetation has been damaged causing the peat to erode and making the road appear significantly wider.

To stop further erosion and maintain the cut appearance of the road without reprofiling, DTMS Group were contracted by Moors For the Future to construct a retaining wall out of natural materials. The technique was adapted from one used on chalk grassland and designed to hold the steep eroding peat bank. Hessian sacks were filled with a compost and seed mixture, and laid flat along the front of the peat bank like building bricks to the height of the bank. Hazel spars were then driven through the sacks into the peat below to stop them moving. Plug plants of Bilberry, Crowberry and Cloud Berry were then planted into the new hessian wall. The seeds quickly germinated and stabilised the wall before the hessian sacks decompose, giving the plug plants chance to establish. After just six months, the hessian sacks were no longer visible and vegetation had established along the formerly eroded edge of the monument.

Habitats and species

Corridors

Climate change

Soil, air and water

Landscapes and geology

Connecting with nature

Historic environment

South Pennines ©Louise Brown/Natural England

The interventions at Blackstone Edge Roman Road have halted erosion and protected the monument from further degradation, establishing better quality habitat, contributing to the wider re-wetting of the peatland and ensuring the road remains a visible and legible feature in the landscape.

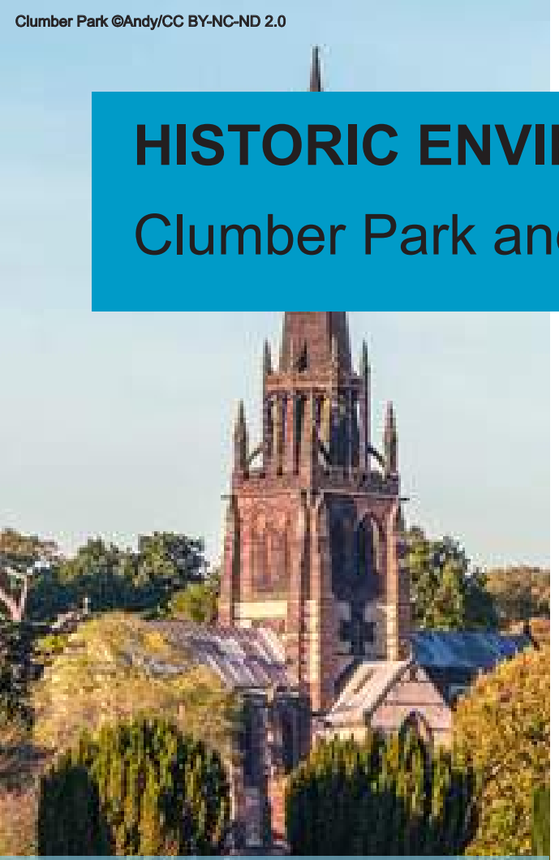
In 2023, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Peatland Code was updated, for the first time embedding heritage protection within the funding mechanisms for peatland restoration. To read more about the extraordinary cultural value of our peatlands and the role of heritage within peatland restoration, read the joint guidance published by Natural England and Historic England.

Newtondale and Leversham nature reserve, North York Moors ©Elaine Willett/Natural England

Read more about peatland restortation and the historic environment from Natural England and Historic England.

NATURAL ENGLAND

Kat Hopwood-Lewis (Natural England), David Hargreaves (Moors for the Future Partnership) and DTMS Group
https://www.dtmsgroup.co.uk/case-studies/blackstone-edge-revetment/



HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Clumber Park and the River Poulter

Summary

Clumber Park is a Grade I Registered Park and Garden in Nottinghamshire owned and managed by the National Trust. Once the country estate of the Dukes of Newcastle, Clumber comprises 1500ha of parkland, heath, lakes and woodland of which 526ha is designated as SSSI. An ambitious programme of restoration has addressed major water-quality issues in the lakes and River Poulter, while delivering a range of other benefits.

Restoration of historic parkland to wood-pasture has delivered dramatic improvements in water quality at the River Poulter, contributing to the long-term enhancement of 526ha of SSSI.

In 2014 a Parkland Management Plan was produced through funding secured through a Higher Level Stewardship Agreement, which identified a range of issues and priorities. Significant among them was the condition of Clumber Lake where excessive nutrient run-off from adjacent arable fields had resulted in algal blooms and poor water quality in the lake, River Poulter and underlying aquifer. A major factor was 190ha of arable cultivation, under long-term tenancy from the National Trust, farmed intensively for carrots, potatoes and maize. Problems were compounded by encroachment of bracken and rhododendron and increasing erosion of the lake edges through visitor pressure.

Working in partnership with the tenant farmer, the Trust and Natural England, HLS funding has secured the reversion of all 190ha to wood pasture. Reducing nutrient inputs and creating wide fenced uncultivated margins along the lake and river to prevent stock access, has dramatically reduced run off and improved water quality. These actions are also restoring the historic character of Clumber Park, creating new habitats and protecting buried archaeological features. Traditional cattle breeds have been reintroduced for regenerative grazing and parkland treescapes have been reinstated.

Actions taken on the arable farmland within Clumber have already had dramatic effects for the water quality in the lake and River, forming part of a much wider scheme of parkland restoration across the estate. In 2021 the National Trust began works to reinstate the lost Duke's Orchard, planting 100 trees surrounded by wildflower meadow and hedgerow. In 2022 works to restore a Grade II* Listed Ornamental Bridge were also completed. Today, the historic landscape of Clumber Park is a wildlife-rich mosaic of habitats, welcoming thousands of visitors every year to enjoy the beauty and history of a restored parkland.

Credits: Hannah Rigden, Natural England

https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/nottinghamshire-lincolnshire/clumber-park

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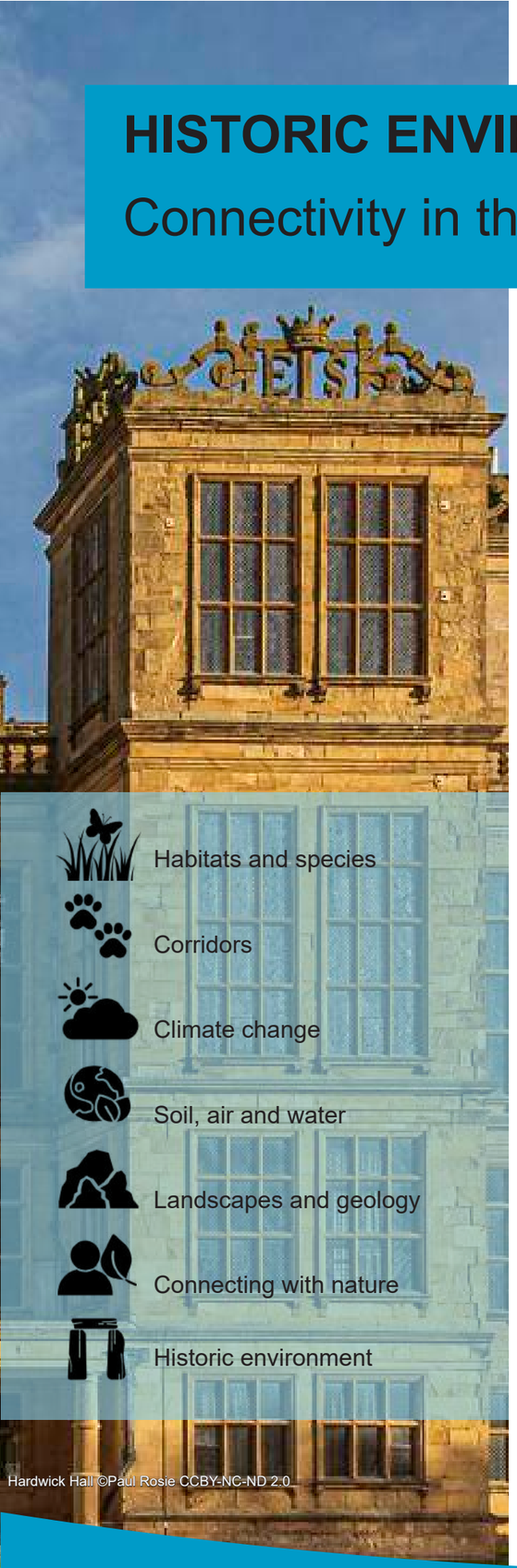
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Connectivity in the landscape: Hardwick Hall



Hardwick Hall ©Paul Rosie CCBY-NC-ND 2.0

Summary
Designed landscapes and historic parklands are the products of centuries of human management, design and fashion resulting in layers of history and archaeology. Today they also support a mosaic of high-quality habitats, shape landscape character and offer opportunities for access, recreation and engagement. Integrated restoration and management of historic parkland delivers a suite of environmental gains and supports habitat connectivity at a landscape scale.

A historic landscape of mixed farming and historic parkland bisected by a modern motorway is reconnected, delivering an integrated scheme for landscape, heritage and biodiversity.

Hardwick Hall is a Grade I Registered Park and Garden in Derbyshire, comprising 440ha of land laid out in the 16th century by the formidable Bess of Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury. The parkland is thought to have medieval origins and was repeatedly extended and remodelled over the years. Today it is owned and managed by the National Trust and the estate extends over some 1000ha of mixed habitat including parkland, woodland, wetland and farmland. The house sits on the eastern side of a sweeping valley and historically it was set within a landscape of ornamented mixed arable farming occupying the western valley sides. Today this landscape is bisected by the M1 motorway which follows the valley bottom and effectively cuts the parkland and its setting in half.

Working in partnership with the National Trust and a network of tenant farmers, agri-environment scheme agreements are being used to reconnect Hardwick with its historic landscape, delivering habitat creation, improving water quality and enhancing historic landscape features. Over 1000 trees have been planted as part of the restoration of wood pasture and the reconstruction of historic field systems. Rare-breed Longhorn cattle and a variety of traditional breed sheep have been introduced, and the sensitively restored historic duck-decoy is now a haven for wildlife.


Hardwick Hall wood pasture and parkland ©HannahRigden/NaturalEngland

Informed by the Parkland Management Plan, landscape and the historic environment were fundamental to and fully integrated within the proposals from the outset. Carefully designed screening of the M1, targeted arable reversion, sensitive changes to farming systems and replanting of orchard trees alongside a host of other measures has reconnected and enhanced the Hardwick landscape, creating stepping-stones and corridors for nature and reinforcing its special character.


Hardwick Hall ©PaulR1800 CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

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Credits: Hannah Rigden, Natural England
https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/peak-district-derbyshire/hardwick

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Connecting people with nature at New Hall Barn

New Hall Barn interior before restoration ©Margaret Nieke/Natural England

Summary

Funded through a Natural England agri-environment scheme and the Country House Foundation, this project secured restoration of a Grade II Listed 16th century cruck-framed barn in South Yorkshire. A rare structure in urgent need of repair, the barn is now used to support the farm's thriving educational tours, connecting children with nature, farming and landscape.

Modern farming has left many traditional farm buildings redundant and expensive to repair. Re-using buildings enhances the historic environment and landscape character and offers opportunities for public access and engagement.

Very few cruck-framed structures now survive in unconverted form across South Yorkshire. This example also survived within a small area of the Dearne Valley still readable as a historic landscape; a very unusual survival in an area much changed by post-medieval coal working and recent reclamation. The owners run a highly successful educational access programme, introducing very many local children to their farming regime, the history and ecology of the site. The traditional repairs proposed on the barn would allow it to be used as the base for their educational visits.

The Country Houses Foundation, recognising the importance of the site and the opportunities presented, provided additional grant funding to secure the project.

Careful professional assessment and recording of the structure confirmed the importance of the building. Originally dated to the early 17th century, dendrochronology indicated that the timbers were felled in the winter of 1529. Their position within the building confirmed that they were in original, rather than re-used, positions. Further work on the roof structure showed that the barn was thatched for some 200 years before being strengthened and given a stone slate covering.

New Hall Barn, cruck frame rood before replacement ©Margaret Nieke/Natural England

Works were completed in 2010 and the barn is now at the heart of the educational access programme at New Hall Farm. The farm offers individually tailored curriculum-based visits covering a range of topics from sustainability and climate to farming practices, ecology and the mathematics of farming.

New Hall Barn, rear-view after restoration ©Margaret Nieke/Natural England

Credits: Margaret Nieke, Natural England
https://www.newhallfarmardsley.co.uk/

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Gang Mine ©Paul Mortimer//Natural England

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Gang Mine Calaminarian Grassland

- Habitats and species
- Corridors
- Climate change
- Soil, air and water
- Landscapes and geology
- Connecting with nature
- Historic environment

Summary

Located on the south-eastern margin of the White Peak in Derbyshire, Gang Mine is a Derbyshire Wildlife Trust nature reserve designated as both a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Specialist Scientific Interest (SSSI). Gang Mine is an important example of anthropogenic (man-made) Calaminarian grassland, the result of historic lead-mining dating from at least the 16th century.

Gang Mine ©Peter Wakely/Natural England 1995

An anthropogenic habitat resulting from centuries of lead-mining in Derbyshire, historic waste and spoil heaps now support a unique assemblage of plants designated as SSSI and SAC.

Described as ancient in 1652, records of lead-mining at Gang Mine go back at least as far as the 16th century. Archaeological investigation has recorded the remains of historic lead-mining, including a series of dry-stone lined climbing shafts with the remains of wooden stakes or ‘stemples’ used for scaling. Numerous earthworks mark the sites of spoil and waste heaps which give the site its name, deriving from ‘gangue’ or waste.

Today the site includes a series of lead spoil heaps, hummocks and hollows with the heavy metal content of soil varying across the site. The result is a mosaic of plant communities reflecting the variations in slope, aspect and soil toxicity. Open spoil areas support large populations of the rare alpine penny-cress and spring sandwort, while more closed areas support mountain pansy and the highest known density of moonwort on mineral spoil in the country. Kidney vetch, small scabious and fairy flax are among the species thriving in the grassland, with nationally rare limestone bedstraw and uncommon dyer’s greenweed also present. Beyond the spoil heaps, unimproved neutral grassland supports abundant red fescue and crested dog’s tail alongside herbs such as yarrow, bush vetch and pignut.

A Higher Level Stewardship scheme supported the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust’s management of the site from 2009; including management of the archaeological features and restoration and maintenance of species rich grassland. A dew pond, a traditional feature used by livestock for drinking water, has since been restored and now provides habitat for amphibians including great crested newt.

Kidney Vetch ©Rosie Cummings/Natural England 2022

Read more about Gang Mine:
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
Derbyshire Historic Environment Record (HER)

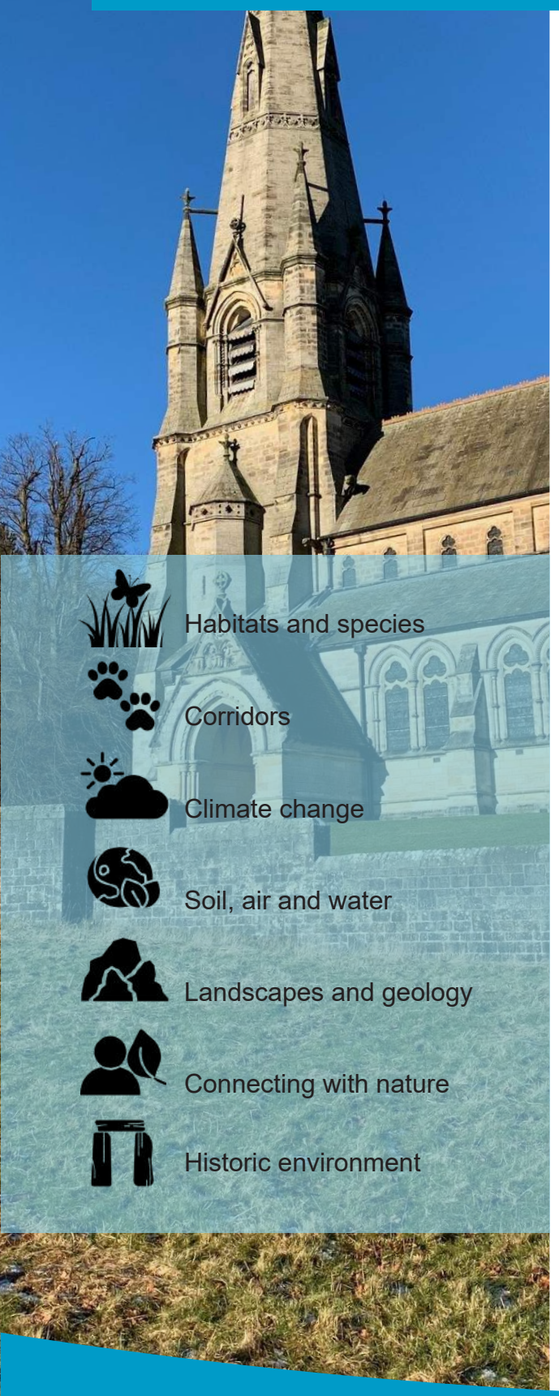
NATURAL ENGLAND

Credits: Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
https://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/gang-mine

St Mary's Church, Studley Royal ©Kat Hopwood-Lewis/Natural England

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Bats in historic buildings and structures



Summary
Changing agricultural practices and the increase in urban development have dramatically reduced the availability of natural bat roost sites in England. Historic buildings and structures provide a significant number of roost sites for bats; conserving the buildings and their surrounding habitats also benefits these elusive protected species.

Historic buildings and structures are important habitats; conserving one also conserves the other. Many traditional buildings are important roost sites for England's bat species.

Since 2018, Bats in Churches has delivered over 100 projects across England, with further works planned to the end of 2023. Delivered in partnership between Natural England, Church of England, the Bat Conservation Trust and the Churches Conservation Trust, a host of volunteers and communities are actively working to find bespoke and sustainable solutions for managing bat populations and the historic churches they call home. Between 60-90% of historic churches have protected bat roosts; roost sites are found in voids and crevices, insects are abundant in the adjacent churchyards and large internal spaces provide areas for safe flight. Amongst its many achievements, the project has delivered major capital works, two citizen science initiatives to map bat distribution in churches, published a children's book and delivered a programme of professional and volunteer training. The project has acted as a catalyst for community cohesion, protected and enhanced nationally important historic buildings, and delivered long-term protection for bats and their habitats.

Wressle Castle in the Lower Derwent Valley of Yorkshire was constructed towards the end of the 14th century. Its magnificent history includes a stay in


Wressle Castle ©Margaret Nieke/Natural England

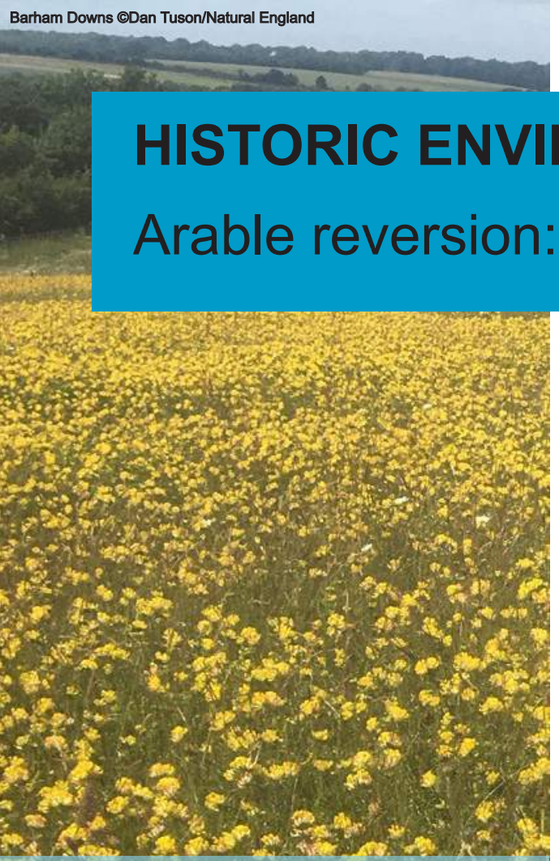
1541 by Henry VIII with his then-wife Catherine Howard. By the late 1990's, as a result of historic neglect, periods of demolition and a devastating fire the castle was in ruins. Designated as both a Grade I Listed building and Scheduled Monument, the site was placed on the Heritage at Risk Register. Ecological surveys undertaken in advance of a Higher Level Stewardship agreement in 2012 identified 20 bat roosting locations with four different species present, including important maternity colonies. The HLS agreement allowed for a comprehensive scheme of repairs carefully timed to avoid adverse impacts on the bats. Suitable cracks and crevices were left during repairs to ensure the bats retained their high-status homes.


Natterers bat in St Lawrence's Church, Radstone ©Chris Damant

Read more:
Bats in Churches Project
Wressle Castle
Buildings, Bats and the Law (Historic England)

NATURAL ENGLAND

Credits: Margaret Nieke, Natural England
https://batsinchurches.org.uk/



HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Arable reversion: Barham Downs and Upton Pyne

Summary
The reversion of arable land to permanent grassland can have a wide range of environmental benefits: ecological, landscape, resource protection and archaeological. Opportunities include reducing the destructive impacts of cultivation on archaeological features and enhancing their setting, delivering important habitat creation, acting as a buffer, reinforcing landscape character, reducing soil erosion and protecting embedded carbon.


Barham Downs ©Dan Tuson/Natural England

Taking archaeological features out of cultivation doesn't just deliver good management for the historic environment, it creates habitats, strengthens landscape character, protects embedded carbon, reduces soil erosion and contributes to water quality and flood mitigation.

Barham Downs in East Kent is rich in archaeological remains dating back to the prehistoric. The area is an important ritual landscape with burial features of Neolithic and Anglo-Saxon date alongside important features of Roman, Medieval and more recent origin. As is so often the case across formerly wildlife-rich archaeological landscapes, intensive agriculture from the Second World War onwards has severely depleted the resource.

However, since the mid-2000s an ambitious scheme supported through Stewardship agreements has seen the reversion of nearly 200ha of former arable across 10 farms to wild-flower rich grassland. The scheme has ensured the protection of a host of important archaeological features including Neolithic barrows, prehistoric lynchets, sections of Roman Road and Anglo-Saxon burials. Large colonies of small-blue butterfly are now abundant and alongside them grey partridge and corn bunting have established new breeding grounds.

The site of a significant early-mid Bronze Age barrow cemetery at Upton Pyne, Devon was placed on the Heritage at Risk register in 2009 due to the cumulative and ongoing damage of arable cultivation. Funded through an agri-environment scheme, 19 ha of former arable land has been reverted to pasture halting the negative impacts of cultivation and delivering positive management for 14 individual barrows, 8 of which are designated as Scheduled Monuments. This heritage-led scheme is also delivering 19 tonnes per annum of carbon capture, reducing alluvial run off into adjacent streams and rivers and contributing to flood risk mitigation in the local area.


Milton Mausoleum, Nottinghamshire, Grade I Listed church surrounded by arable fields ©Elaine Willett/Natural England

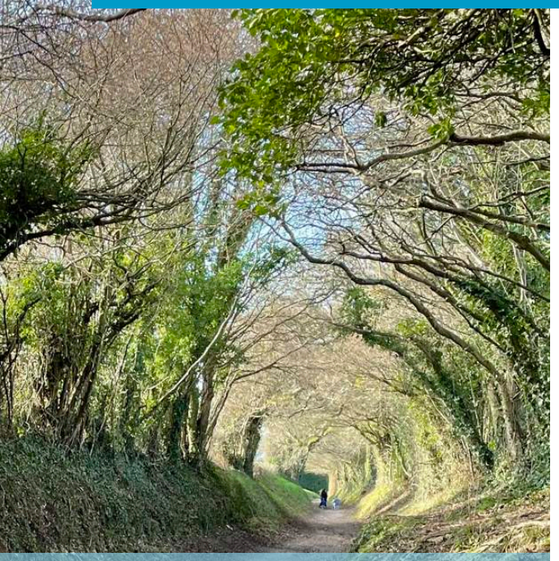
Credits: Dan Tuson, Natural England (Barham Downs)
Historic England and the Historic Environment Forum: Heritage Responds

NATURAL ENGLAND


Halnaker tree tunnel, West Sussex ©Rosie Cummings/Natural England

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Corridors and connectivity: Historic routeways



Summary

From prehistoric paths to Victorian railways, people have been moving through our landscapes on foot, wheel or track for millennia. Rarely mapped and quantified, historic routeways are often wildlife rich, lined with ancient hedgerows and offer havens and refuge for a variety of species; a network of linear corridors connecting habitats at a landscape scale.


Ulverston Canal, Cumbria ©Louise Martin/Natural England

For thousands of years people have moved across the English landscape, creating networks of sunken paths, earthworks, railways and waterways. Today, these features offer significant opportunities as natural corridors, connecting habitats at a landscape scale.

The Canal and River Trust care for a 2000 mile long, 200-year old network of historic canals, rivers and associated infrastructure. The waterways are a significant natural corridor, linking urban and rural places and fragmented habitats. The network includes 65 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and over 1000 local wildlife sites, supporting a diverse array of habitats from the waterways themselves to the adjacent banks, scrub, hedgerows, grasslands, buildings and structures. From the installation of floating ecosystems in canals and rivers to hibernacula in adjacent pill-box structures, the Trust work actively to manage, protect and restore the historic network and the nature it supports.

Historic sites of settlement, industry and worship are abundant in the British landscape, but of equal significance are the routeways between them. A vast number of these survive in today's landscape, some are adopted into our modern networks of roads, but many others survive as functioning landscape features.

Holloways are one such example, wildlife rich and maintaining unusually stable environmental conditions, England's network of holloways is a hidden and overlooked asset of significant biodiversity value. Carved up to 10m below the surrounding ground level, holloways are incredible products of human impact, topology, geology and climate. Today, networks of ecologically rich holloways criss-cross our landscapes, acting as havens for wildlife, offering glimpses at exposed geological deposits and playing a significant and yet overlooked role in hydrological networks. A small Natural England pilot project funded by the All Staff Ideas Fund (ASIF) was launched to consider the overall value of holloways as environmental assets. Targeted surveying of historic routes in Dorset is collating evidence for the valuable role these routes play as ecological corridors.


Longshaw Estate historic routeway, Peak District ©Elaine Willett/Natural England

Habitats and species

Corridors

Climate change

Soil, air and water

Landscapes and geology

Connecting with nature

Historic environment

Read more:
Canal and River Trust
National Cycle Network
Ancient Paths and Highways (Historic England)

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Credits: Canal and River Trust
All Staff Ideas Fund (ASIF) Rosie Cummings and Andy Jefferies, Natural England

Yorkshire Dales ©Jenny Wheeldon/Natural England

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Barns and walls in the Yorkshire Dales

Summary

The Yorkshire Dales National Park covers an area of over 2000 square kilometres, is home to 24,000 people and sees visitors in excess of 3 million every year. It was designated in 1954 in recognition of its natural beauty and is managed for its wildlife diversity, cultural heritage and landscape. The traditional buildings and dry-stone walls of the Yorkshire Dales are characteristic of the area, integral to the landscape and its sense of place.

Yorkshire Dales ©Paul Glendell/Natural England

Historic fields systems, their associated land-use, boundaries and buildings are highly visible in the landscape. Their restoration protects and reinforces landscape character, restores habitats and contributes significantly to local economies.

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Between 1998 and 2004, grants delivered through agri-environment schemes secured the restoration of 517 farm buildings and 191km of drystone walls. A study carried out by ADAS on behalf of Defra examined the range of public benefits that flowed as a result of this investment. The study concluded that the schemes had resulted in a total injection of between £7 million and £9 million into the local economy. Restoration works carried out by local firms created 74 jobs and resulted in 95% of restored buildings returning to productive use. The barns and walls landscape is a significant tourist attraction and the repair of these heritage features has restored this landscape's special qualities, contributing to the important tourism economy.

Traditional hay meadows, also the subject of long-running restoration programmes, would not be there without the network of walls and barns and these features are important habitats in themselves. They support a range of species including bats, birds, small mammals, lichens and snails and are an important means of habitat and refuge across the landscape.

Restoration of these significant heritage features has delivered across a range of environmental objectives – enhancing the character of the protected landscape, protecting habitats, delivering skilled jobs and economic gain to local communities.

Read the full report "Building Value: Public benefits of historic farm building and drystone wall repairs in the Yorkshire Dales National Park" from Historic England.

Yorkshire Dales ©Margaret Nieke/Natural England

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Credits: Historic England, DEFRA
Yorkshire Dales National Park

Yorkshire Sculpture Park ©Louise Brown/Natural England

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

The Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Summary

Historic sites are an important means of accessing and engaging with the countryside and coast, delivering a range of additional benefits for health and wellbeing, local economies, education and enrichment. Welcoming over 350,000 visitors annually, the Yorkshire Sculpture Park demonstrates the value of historic sites in connecting people with nature.

Yorkshire Sculpture Park ©Margaret Nieke/Natural England

A historic parkland restored through stewardship schemes is now a landscape of art, welcoming 350,000 visitors a year and adding over £10 million annually to the local economy.

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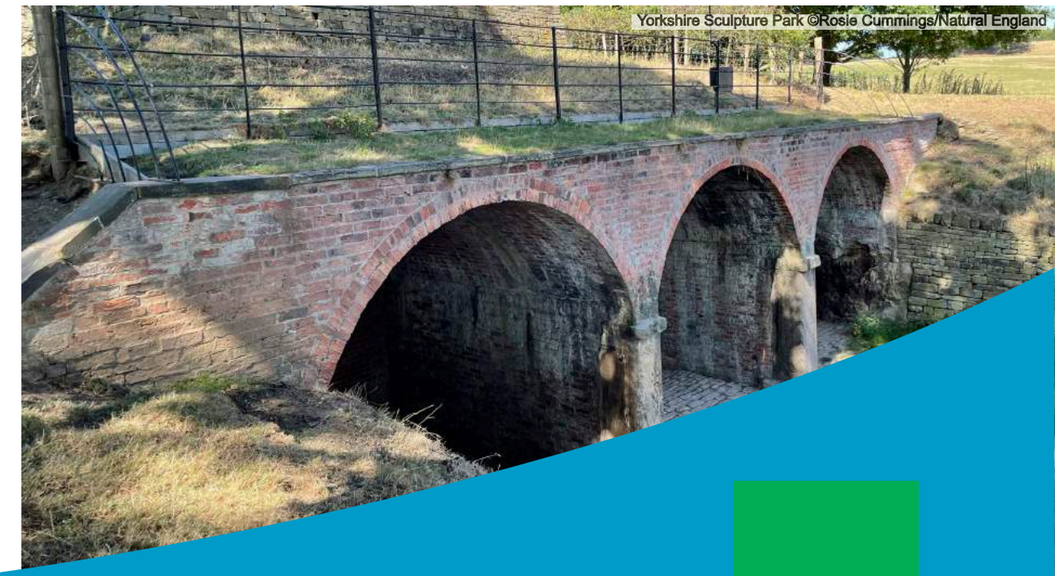
Set within the Grade II registered 18th century parkland of Bretton Hall, the Yorkshire Sculpture Park is the leading international centre for modern and contemporary sculpture. Bretton Hall was home to the wealthy Wentworth and Beaumont families until the mid-20th century when it was acquired by the West Riding Council. The sculpture park was established on part of the site in 1977, but split-ownership and lack of coherent management across the remaining parkland led to its decline and inclusion on the Heritage at Risk Register. In 2007, management of the whole 500 acre parkland was passed to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Working in partnership with Natural England and Historic England, a new Higher Level Stewardship Scheme seized the opportunity to support the restoration of the parkland, reopening in 2011 and allowing visitors access to the park, woodland and designed lakes.

A comprehensive Parkland Management Plan was produced to inform restoration. The scheme delivered over £500,000 worth of targeted conservation repairs and facilitated visitor access. On-going management through the scheme funds sheep grazing across large areas of grassland, highland cattle within lakeside woodland, management of wood pasture and woodland restoration.

The success of the site owes much to its parkland setting which provides a fabulous ‘gallery without walls’ hosting sculptures and site specific works from some of the 20th Century’s leading artists. The core purpose of the YSP is to provide ‘Great Art for Everyone’ and their team work tirelessly to manage and promote the historic parkland and its ecological resources, driven by a firm ‘access for all’ mentality. The parkland held a Green Flag award and regularly runs heritage and nature-led walks and activities in partnership with community groups and national charities.



Yorkshire Sculpture Park ©Rosie Cummings/Natural England

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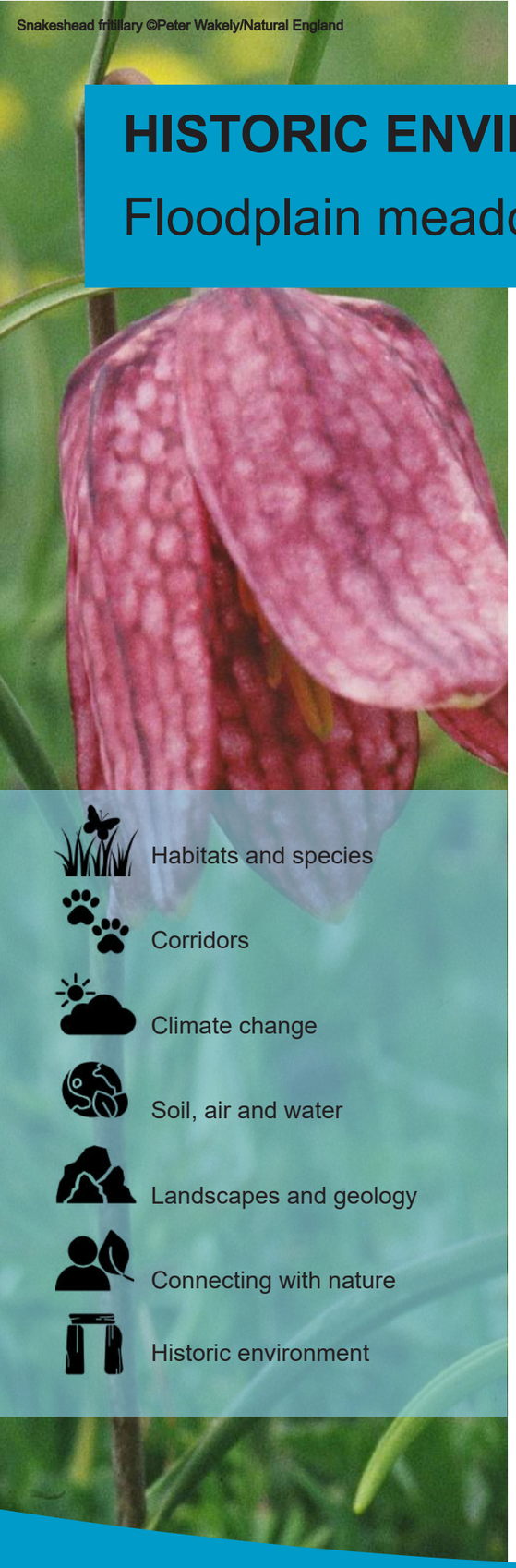
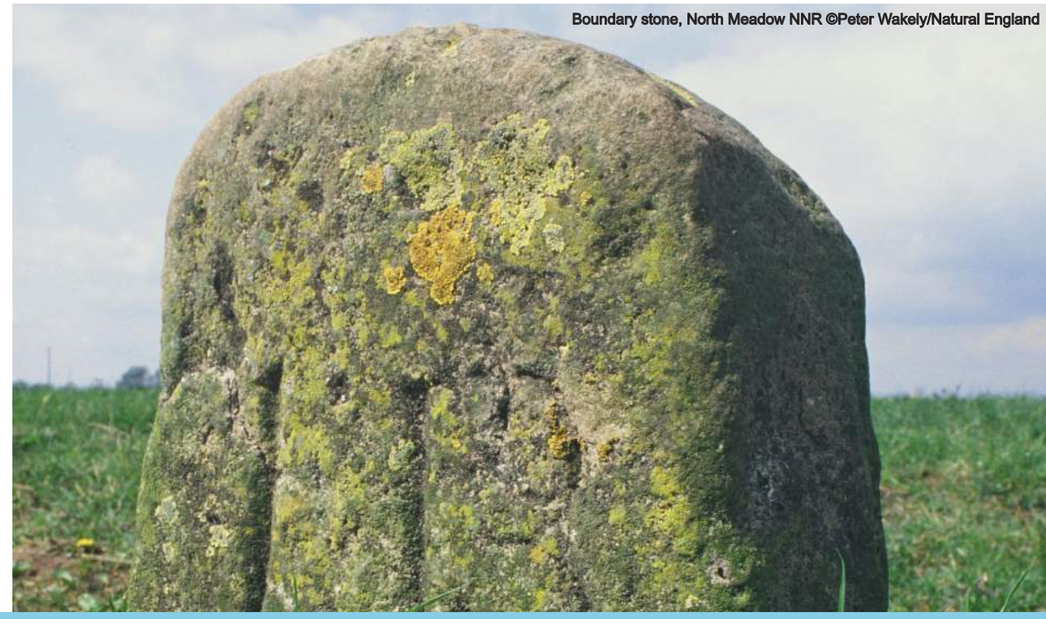
Credits: Margaret Nieke (Natural England)
The Yorkshire Sculpture Park: https://ysp.org.uk/



HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Floodplain meadows and the historic environment

Summary
Floodplain meadows are wildlife rich habitats once thought to be common across England. Agricultural intensification from the mid 20th century has seen the rapid loss of this habitat and today just 2980ha survive, making it one of the rarest grassland types in the UK. Their distinctive character and special significance are a direct product of their long history of human management.


Boundary stone, North Meadow NNR ©Peter Wakely/Natural England

Over 800 years of traditional management on a floodplain meadow delivers for climate, biodiversity and a host of additional benefits.

North Meadow is an old, flower-rich hay meadow on the northern edge of Cricklade on the flood plain of the River Thames and the River Churn. As one of the finest examples of lowland meadow in Europe it is protected as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), managed by Natural England as a National Nature Reserve (NNR).

North Meadow has been traditionally managed as Lammas land since the early-medieval period and is documented as far back as 1588. This form of management is governed by the Court Leet which administers the rights of the Hundred and Borough of Cricklade. Traditionally the meadow is divided into lots for hay-making, then grazed as common land from Lammas Day (August) to Candelmas (February). Early-19th century boundary stones marking the different 'hay lots' survive today and are protected as Grade II Listed structures. Today the hay crop grown in spring and early summer is sold to local farms, cut from early July when the wildflowers have set seed and removed in August for grazing. During the winter the meadows are frequently flooded by the Thames and Churn. It is this regime of cultural land management practices, maintained for over 800 years, that is responsible for the rich grassland flora that exists today. North Meadow supports the largest British population of snakeshead fritillary, which thrives alongside marsh marigold, cuckoo flower and adder's tongue fern. It is a haven for wildlife and an important community focus.

Crucial for our ongoing mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, these meadows sequester and store carbon, store floodwater and recharge aquifers, reduce pollution and deliver for biodiversity, genetic diversity, landscape and the historic environment. They provide nutritious forage for livestock including rare breeds, maintain our agricultural heritage, provide important habitat for valued species and deliver a range of additional benefits including education, access, recreation, health and wellbeing.


North Meadow NNR ©Peter Wakely/Natural England

Read more:
North Meadow NNR
Boundary stones (Historic England)
Cricklade Court Leet

Credits: The Floodplain Meadows Partnership
https://floodplainmeadows.org.uk/

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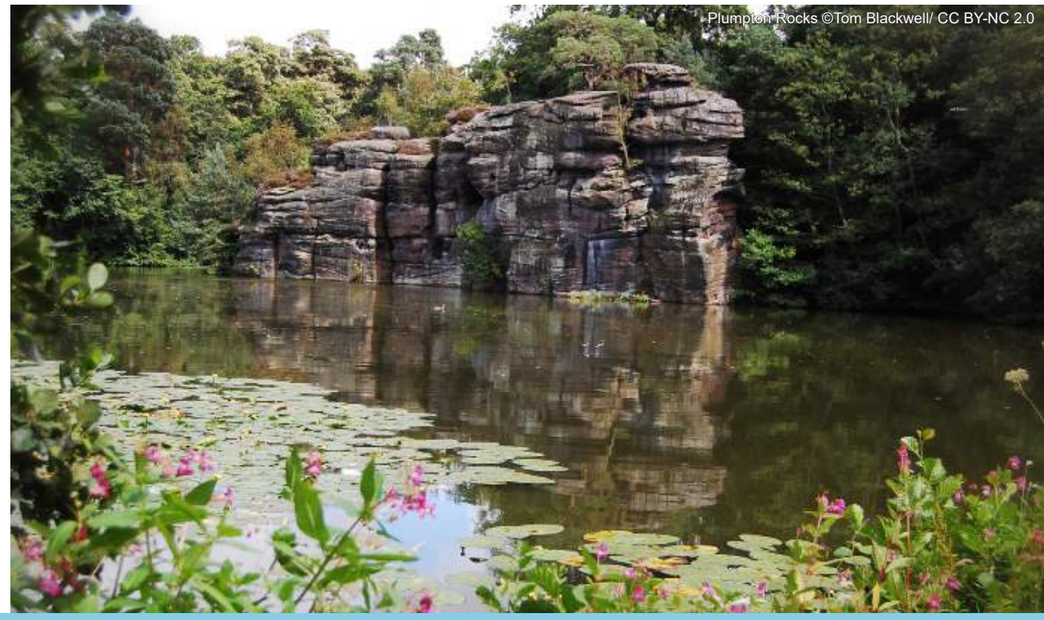
Plumpton Rocks ©Tom Blackwell CC BY-NC 2.0

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDIES

Plumpton Rocks, Harrogate

Summary
Plumpton Rocks is a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden in Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The special character of Plumpton is driven by its geological significance, a designed landscape created around a dramatic outcrop of millstone grit. Following years of decline a programme of restoration has enhanced the landscape and delivered a range of additional environmental outcomes.



Driven by its geological formations of millstone grit, Plumpton Rocks is a designed landscape of special character restored for landscape, nature and heritage.

Against a towering backdrop of wind-eroded millstone grit, the pleasure gardens at Plumpton Rock were designed in the 18th century by Daniel Lascelles, within an earlier parkland dating back to the 16th century. Part natural and part-quarried, the rock formations were transformed into a landscaped garden, offering visitors an experience of romance, horror, nature and art combined. Paths and chasms snake through the rock formations and niches were carved for the placement of seats at the most spectacular viewpoints. A 3ha lake sits some 12m below the rock walls, created in the 1750's from an existing fishpond, enlarged by construction of a substantial arched and rusticated masonry dam.

From the early 20th century Plumpton entered a period of decline, with much of the estate parcelled off and sold, severing the garden's connection with its wider landscape. Parkland to the east was ploughed, the lake and creek suffered significant silting up and rhododendron infested the adjacent woodland. In 2012, Plumpton was placed on the Heritage at Risk Register. A Higher-Level Stewardship agreement combined with additional funds from English Heritage and the Country Houses Foundation has since transformed and restored the declining landscape. Between 2015-16 the lake was dredged and invasive trees removed, cultivated land was reverted to grassland following evidence from historic plans and substantial areas of rhododendron were cleared from woodland. New benches were installed to respect the historic design and the impressive damn was cleared and restored re-using original stone.

Described by Queen Mary in 1920's as "heaven on earth", Plumpton Rocks is now open to visitors. The special character of Plumpton is driven by its geology and history, now offering 30ha of publicly accessible wildlife rich and varied habitats within a sustainably restored landscape.

Read more:
Plumpton Rocks (Historic England)
Country Life: Plumpton Rocks

NATURAL ENGLAND

Credits: Margaret Nieke and Historic England
https://www.plumptonrocks.com/