



SHROPSHIRE HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE TEAM WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

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Summary

This paper provides members with an update on recent activity by the National Landscape team.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information provided.

Background

TAKING ACTION - on the ground and in our communities - to conserve and enhance natural beauty and to promote enjoyment and understanding.

Farming in Protected Landscapes

2025 – 26 is the fifth year of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. We have received 196 grant applications to the programme to date and have funded 184 of them.

We have 43 projects 'in progress' to date in 2025/26 (10 of which are continuing from last year) and have allocated 68% of our delivery budget for the current financial year (£680,871). The Local Assessment Panel continues to meet at six week intervals, and we have a healthy pipeline of projects which we anticipate will enable us to fully spend this year's grant allocation of £1,005,614.

Members of the FiPL team attended Burwarton Show during August to promote the programme and have also held a series of events on Defra Capital Grants during the last month or so in different parts of the National Landscape. FiPL advisers are also running and supporting a range of events for farmers including on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

You can read about how FiPL is supporting farmers in the Shropshire Hills in our case studies [Read about the work of local farming families](#) and [read project summaries](#) for the FiPL projects funded in years 1-4 of the programme.

Defra capital funding

The Team has Defra capital funding of £234,181 in 2025-26 for spend on either of two criteria: 'Innovation, invest-to-save and income generating activities' or '30by30 delivery'. We have been focusing on working with partners to develop projects that meet the 30 by 30 delivery aspect of this, therefore centred on habitat restoration and creation projects of different scales in the area.

To date, we have awarded funding to the following partners and projects

- Middle Marches Community Land Trust – Norbury Hill – habitat restoration of upland acid grassland, wet flush and stream; creation of ffridd habitat.
- Severn Rivers Trust - palaeo-channel reconnection and floodplain restoration on the River Kemp at Walcot, in the Clun catchment.

Other projects that are in development and that we would like to support with this funding include:

- Ancient woodland restoration works – practical works on sites as part of our Ancient Woodland Restoration project with the Woodland Trust (improving access for timber extraction & management operations; fencing to protect from livestock grazing; thinning and crown lifting to increase light levels and woodland structure diversity),
- Wetland creation and riparian corridor enhancements on a headwater site,
- Habitat restoration works of niche habitats on ex-mining sites in Snailbeach, The Bog and other nearby sites.

Ancient Woodland Restoration project

The project is supported by the Woodland Trust until March 2027. Since April work has focused on following up on planting and vegetation management for sites worked on between 2023 and March 2025. We have also sought to continue engagement and the gathering of data to inform possible future works at sites. We have a couple of exciting pipeline projects in the offing but are waiting for confirmation as to their viability and owner engagement.

Upper Clun Headwaters (peatlands) project

A new funding Memorandum of Agreement with Natural England was confirmed in July. Under this we are aiming to take forward the recommendations from the extensive ecohydrology study and peatland mapping that was carried out in 2023-25. The project includes:

- a) Delivery of a public-facing summary report and supporting resources on the ecohydrology of the Clun uplands,
- b) Working with landowners to facilitate the implementation of practical measures to restore the natural hydrology and protect peaty soils in the Clun uplands/ headwaters.

The public-facing summary report is aiming to highlight to a broad and diverse audience the importance of healthy, naturally functioning headwater environments in the Clun catchment. We are in ongoing contact with several landowners about the possible implementation of practical measures, helping to enhance the ecosystem services these areas provide.

Access for All

Defra is also providing capital funding to Protected Landscapes to support improvements in both physical and digital infrastructure, enhancing access for people of all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds. Our allocation for this financial year is £114,054. Recently approved projects include:

- Changing Places – investment in the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre to improve toilet facilities for people with disabilities;
- Open Horizons – digital and physical infrastructure improvements, including signage, to promote the 'Top 10' accessible viewpoints in the Shropshire Hills.

Young Rangers

The Young Rangers programme continues to engage a broad audience, especially home-educating families and young people aged 12–16. Several participants have remained involved since the project began in 2021, and those now aged 17+ are taking on mentoring roles to guide and support younger participants. For example, one former Young Ranger is currently co-leading woodland craft training sessions alongside the Engagement Ranger, gaining valuable teaching and coaching experience aligned with his chosen career path.

Recent Young Rangers activities have included:

- Coppice restoration at Snailbeach
- Grassland management at Castle Pulverbatch motte and bailey
- A visit to the Curlew Country project in Pennerley
- Accessibility improvements on the Shropshire Way, at Darnford Brook, Ratlinghope.

Outreach and engagement

As part of his role, the Engagement Ranger is actively working with underserved communities across the Shropshire Hills, helping to make nature, heritage, and outdoor experiences more inclusive and accessible. This work is varied, with a focus on delivering walks, talks, and events through established networks such as Social Prescribing, and funded initiatives like the Social Value Fund and Nature Calling.

Recent engagement activities have included:

- Heritage-themed visits for members of the Ukrainian community, delivered in partnership with Shropshire Supports Refugees;
- A guided visit to Snailbeach Mine for a community group supporting individuals living with Parkinson's disease, offering both educational and sensory experiences;
- A presentation on the special qualities of the Shropshire Hills tailored for people living with dementia, designed to spark connection and memory through landscape and storytelling.

Shropshire Hills Shuttle Buses

Since 10th May the bus has carried 1,345 passengers with an income of £4,378. Income and use has already exceeded last year's excellent season and it is estimated that the service had broken even for this year by the end of July.

Stepping Stones project (led by National Trust, supported by team members)

The Upper Onny Farmers Group (UOFG) are now a legal entity (CIC) and have secured some funding for ongoing support. Eight new farmers have joined the group.

Natural Flood Management continues to be a prominent theme of work with farmers. With FiPL funding, Severn Rivers Trust have completed 12 Farm Water Audits and continue to implement recommendations on several Upper Onny farms.

For public engagement, a guided walk was provided for Bishop's Castle Walking Festival in May from The Bog which included meeting two UOFG members on their farms. A successful 'Meet the Farmer' event for the general public was held on May 31st at Coppice Farm. The event was fully booked, excellent feedback and there is a clear appetite from non-farmers for more of these events. Chris Evans from Myndtown Farm gave a talk to a packed Bishop's Castle Town Hall about his farm and the UOFG for the 'Going Wild in BC' project. Duncan Bennett led a farm walk for Clunbury parishioners to showcase what farmers can do towards local nature recovery. Aimed at other farmers, Will Jones led a farm walk to highlight the changes he has made at Brow Farm and the things he has done with FiPL funding. Ben Cooke and Duncan Bennett hosted a visit by the National Landscapes Association Board in September.

Teme Headwaters project development

Discussions are ongoing with partners about the potential for a collaborative Landscape Recovery Scheme or similar bid, focusing on the headwaters of the Teme catchment. The group has drawn on experience from colleagues in the Environment Agency, Natural England, and other farmer cluster groups, sharing knowledge and lessons learnt on the previous two rounds of Landscape Recovery. Further updates on the scheme are being awaited from Defra, including what the scheme's priorities will be for the next round and when it will open for applications..

With funding secured by Severn Rivers Trust, the work with Chris Clarke from Nethergill Associates to carry out advice visits using his [Maximum Sustainable Output \(MSO\)](#) approach on eight farms (5 from UOFG & 3 from the Upper Teme/Clun Forest Groups) has been completed and an evening event was held on June 11th to present this approach and the results to a wider audience. 45 farmers attended, along with several Councillors. Farming to [MSO is a farming approach based on recent studies](#) showing how farm business profitability can be improved, while delivering a positive environmental impact.

Landscape Connections project development (led by National Trust)

The Expression of Interest to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) submitted in July was successful, with permission given to continue to the full Stage 1 bid for two years of development funding. The target timescale for this bid was initially November but has been put back to the end of February 2026 which is more realistic.

To progress the bid development, working groups have been formed on the following topics with representatives from partner organisations:

- Water
- Centre of Excellence / advice hub
- Pathway of opportunities (engagement, volunteering, training)
- Finance/match funding

- Data, evidence and monitoring
- Farmer engagement

The National Landscape team is providing input to all of these groups.

'Nature Calling' arts project (National Landscapes Association led project)

In the Shropshire Hills, 'Whispers of the Hills' is our community art project bringing together people from diverse backgrounds who face challenges related to neurodiversity, mental health, and social isolation. The project invites people from the Telford and Wrekin area to discover a deeper connection with the National Landscape. Through exploring, observing and listening, participants have immersed themselves into the landscape in ways that activate reflection and presence. Our commissioned artist Roz Donati (Pneuma-affinity) has set up and run nine creative workshops for our project partners who support marginalised members of the Telford community. With support from Joe Penfold, Nigel McDonald and our Student Placement, Knight Sedhain, we have led three field trips and six follow up workshops, to create a finished ceramic installation made of glazed 'ceramic flags.' The participants are from various groups with various special needs who would normally struggle to experience the Shropshire Hills landscape. A celebration event was recently held where the finished pieces are displayed in Telford Town Park. The project webpage and gallery is at [inviting you to enjoy and connect in new ways of experiencing our natural world](#).

INFLUENCING OTHERS - lead and champion the delivery of public benefits from the National Landscape, working strategically and collaboratively from policy to grassroots level.

Management Plan

Feedback was gathered at the Summer Forum in June on the draft Shropshire Hills 5 year plan 'Thriving in balance with Nature', as part of public consultation phase and to raise awareness of the new plan.

Presentations about the draft Plan were also given to the Clun Catchment Partnership in May; High Leasowes group at their AGM in June; CPRE Shropshire's AGM meeting in July, along with a series of online presentations. Across these events and others, we estimate that around 300 people heard the 20 minute presentation during the consultation period. The presentation is also available to view on our website along with a 2-minute audio - [shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/Documents/Thriving in Balance with Nature 2 mins.mp3](https://shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/Documents/Thriving%20in%20Balance%20with%20Nature%202mins.mp3).

A press release was issued along with articles about the draft Plan and public consultation into parish newsletters, CLA magazine and The Farmer. Emails were sent to Councillors, our MP Stuart Anderson, parish and town councils, partnership members, our farmer mailing list and other key stakeholders, encouraging feedback on the new Plan.

A new web-page was developed for the draft Plan's vision - [Shropshire Hills National Landscape Plan, 2025 – 2030](#).

A workshop on Doughnut Economics and regenerative approaches was advertised publicly and held as part of the plan consultation period, with 25 people attending.

The Management Plan public consultation period came to a close in mid-August. We are now working through the consultation responses to make changes to the Plan. The revised draft will then go to Natural England for formal observations before Plan approval.

Planning

We have had no input into planning casework recently. Through the Management Plan consultation we have had some contact with Shropshire Council's planning policy team over plan content and policy.

Strategic tourism work

The team have continued to support the 'In Shropshire' Great Days Out web development work, Shropshire Branding and work to coordinate tourism activity in Telford and Shropshire through the new Local Visitor Economy Partnership. We continue to support the Visit Shropshire Hills committee and Church Stretton Visitor Economy Working Group.

Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust, Conservation Fund and Friends of the Shropshire Hills

Support is ongoing for the 9 projects that have received a Conservation Fund grant this year. Final claims have been processed for the 20 projects to receive a grant in 2024-25, and their project reports are on the website at [read project summaries](#). The next round of funding will be promoted this autumn. Planning is under way for next year's 10th anniversary of the Trust, with a push on encouraging members to Friends and the Business Scheme.

Input into Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The draft strategy and map was launched for public consultation on 6th August and will remain open until 15th October 2025. Rachel has continued to be part of the LNRS steering group. The group have identified and shaped the habitat priorities and actions for the strategy and work has taken place with species experts to include species specific information in the plan.

Steph has produced 12 case studies for the LNRS, highlighting examples of nature recovery work across a number of different habitats in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

For the remainder of the consultation period, further engagement events, drop-ins, talks at farmer and community meetings are planned, alongside press releases and social media activity to promote the strategy.

Other local partnership work has included:

- Support for Bishop's Castle Walking Festival.
- Support to Edgton and Clunbury Parishes with the farmer engagement in relation to their Local Nature Recovery plans.
- Support to Historic England, partners and the local community for planning the future of Clun Castle grounds.

- Guided walks on the Long Mynd for a youth group, part of the Hill Stories Project, and the Craven Arms Ladies Muslim group.
- Support for the 'Celebrating Shropshire Festival' organising four farm visits/workshops during Aug-Oct for children and families to explore farming and the environment using digital media.
- Attendance at the Shropshire Peat Partnership.
- Support for work through Clun Protected Site Strategy.
- Support for the Stiperstones Landscape NNR

[Stiperstones National Nature Reserve: change to name and site area - GOV.UK](#)

Other Communications and public awareness

The Shropshire Hills Summer Forum and Field Visits were held in June. 80+ people attended for the talks, networking and afternoon field trips.

Members of the team attended the Burwarton Show in August.

Regular posts are made on Facebook and Instagram and regular updates are made to the website, and new webpages. Regular news items are added to the website and a newsletter was sent out in September.

MANAGING OUR BUSINESS - develop a robust, effective and financially sustainable National Landscape team and Partnership.

Shropshire Hills National Landscape Partnership

The Partnership met on July 31st and discussed the Management plan review and proposals for modernising partnership working.

National Landscapes Association

The National Association Board visited Shropshire in September for an in person meeting and also undertook two farm visits with members of the team.

National Landscape Team and office

There have been no significant changes regarding the team or office.

Knight Sedhain who is with us for a year as a student placement from the University of Birmingham tourism course won an award from the Tourism Management Institute.

List of Background Papers

None

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
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Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

None