



North Devon Coast National Landscape

PARTNERSHIP

Wednesday 12th June 2024

In-person at Caddsdawn, Bideford and online: 10.00 – 12.30

MINUTES

<p>Attendees Liesje Birchenough (Coastwise ND) Brian Butler (NFU) Kevin Cook (Community Rep) Paul Green (Community Rep) Cllr Steve Harding (TDC) Kate Hind (DCC) Tom Humphreys (Community Rep) Chris Preece (Voluntary Sector - NDAS) Richard Prowse (Vice-Chair, TC Trust) Justin Seedhouse (NT) Eirene Williams (Chair)</p>	<p>Officers Jamie Buxton-Gould (FNF Project Co-Ordinator) Jenny Carey-Wood (Joint Manager) Laura Carolan (Comms & Support) Evie Giblett (FNF Project Assistant) Joe Newberry (NL Officer) Louise Reynolds (Joint Manager)</p> <p>Observer Katie Pagan (DCC comms)</p>
<p>Online Attendees Carli Cocciardi (DWT) Ian Crawford (TTEF) Becky Hughes (NE) Penny Mills (CPRE) Jane Young (Community Rep)</p> <p>16 Voting Members</p>	<p>Apologies Lewis Andrews (Community Rep.) Andy Bell (North Devon Biosphere) Dominic Elson (Exmoor NPA) Sarah Jennings (DCC) Claire Moodie (Community Rep.) Rose Roberts (Community Rep.) John Rous (CLA) Cllr Malcolm Wilkinson (NDC)</p>

1. Welcome and Apologies - Chair Dr Eirene Williams welcomed Partnership members to the in-person and Zoom meeting and reported apologies. **LR** and **JBG** introduced themselves. **JCW** clarified the split of roles between **LR** (leading on Partnership and Operations) and **JCW** (Development (planning and external funds) and Management Plan Review).

2. Minutes of the meeting on 24th January 2024 and matters arising. Minutes agreed.

Matters arising:

- **Shared Planning Officer – JCW** confirmed that this remains unresolved despite it being agreed 2 years ago. DCC are keen and Mel Croll is leading discussions with this to progress.
- **Undergrounding Powerlines at Hartland Quay – JCW** confirmed new bids are not being progressed as North Devon has already had a good share of the funds. The outstanding three schemes are delayed awaiting new staff at National Grid (see Manager’s report). Applications are progressing with Cornwall NL, Exmoor NP and South Devon NL.
- **Young Environment Group - IC** will arrange meeting in collaboration with **JN**.

3. Presentations

- **Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (JCW)**, (slides attached)
Discussion, Q&As:
 - Targets and Outcomes reflect available data, hence they do not cover the range of work and issues addressed by the Team and Partnership members.
 - **BH** from Natural England (NE) explained that canopy cover, peatland restoration and wildlife-rich habitats are national goals, to be apportioned based on each NL's own assessment of their 'environmental potential' to be devised working with LUC, the contractors retained by NE. Important for each NL to take ownership and present their own proposals to set out what feels reasonable. These targets are embedded within the Environmental Improvements Plan (EIP) and are 'stretch' Targets for Protected Landscapes, compared to those for the rest of the country. Data provide the extent and % cover of three types of peat: deep peaty soils (>40cm), shallow peaty soils (10-40cm) and soils with peaty pockets (scattered pockets). The assessment is based on NE's 'Peat Status GHG and C Storage' dataset. **BH** keen to work with NL team to understand how the process works for the NL. Agreement there are gaps in targets for areas of work that NLs do well, so do not feel limited to these PLTOFs.
 - Q: Farmers are expected to do a lot but it's about the whole environment, what about developers? A: BNG has changed laws around this; ND Biosphere's Natural Capital Marketplace, green finance and DCC BNG credit systems are leading on this. Anecdotally, 90% of BNG is expected to be delivered onsite so limited funds for other sites and not retrospective. Should start to see changes in relation to new developments, moving forwards.
 - Q: Nature-friendly farming – **BB** disappointed in targets, how is it defined and how will it be measured? Not adequate to hinge it around bird recovery, no mention of reduced chemicals, nor does it represent FiPL work.
A: NL recognise that nature recovery sits alongside food production. NL team await more guidance around definition and measuring. Recognition that NT and NL team are doing their bit. FiPL is small scale, just 25 grants. These are long-term targets which will not necessarily show immediate change.
A: **BH** confirmed that the Nature friendly farming indicator is still in development. All sorts of farming practices can be viewed as 'nature friendly' but won't be counted under other targets, such as cover crops, pollinator strips, wildflower margins, herbal leys, low input pasture, no harvest cereal headlands, etc. It follows that this is what will count toward that Target. Several actions will be delivered in a layered approach on the same area of land (organic conversion, voluntary farming incentives). Within NL Management Plan, need to set out approach and delivery plan using the target as a headline. PLTOF are to be interpreted and worked forwards together.
 - NE stressed that the Targets and Outcomes are not for the team to deliver but for the whole Partnership to bring stakeholders together deliver ALL TOGETHER. The vision is for the NL Management Plan, the Local Plan and the local Nature Recovery Strategy to have the same goals with a new increased duty to deliver together.

- **BH** recognised that NE have a duty to manage and survey SSSIs and have a lot of work to deliver.
 - Comments that the NL is perhaps not far off some of the targets already with small acreage, low input beef and sheep ‘hobby’ farmers (not necessarily certified organic) so 10%-15% is achievable (with dairy having high impact).
 - **JBG** mentioned the Allerton Project agri-environment scheme, demonstrating that yields remain the same while farming was changed to benefit wildlife. For more information see https://www.gwct.org.uk/media/220991/allerton_20thanniversary_report.pdf
- **State of the AONB - Headlines (JCW)** (slides attached)
 - Discussion, Q&As:**
 - Note there are gaps in local indicators such as Water Quality (not understood why this is not included)
 - Q: how do they measure the cut-off between favourable/unfavourable SSSI condition? A: **BH** explained there are thresholds according to the different pressures on the feature for which the SSSI is designated with the aim of showing consistency across the measures. Acknowledgment it is the statutory duty of NE to monitor and record SSSIs, which hasn’t been happening. “Actions” (remedies) is a formal and established term and NE can recommend these actions (e.g. woodland management, water quality improvements etc). See <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/> to search specific SSSIs and recommendations for actions.
 - A major challenge is to gather data from across stakeholders, cut to the NL area.
 - There are changes to ways of measuring ‘bathing water quality’ nationally making comparisons difficult but status of ‘poor/moderate’ have risen and ‘good’ have dropped. Note only 8/10 sites reported because Hele has been taken off the list and Croyde not recorded.
 - Discussion around catchment pollution because there are many diffuse and point sources: unfiltered road water run-off, numerous sewage discharges published by SWW and farm run-off, while some holiday parks have reed bed filtration systems and regularly test downstream. Call for a co-ordinated approach.
 - The 8/10 excellent bathing beaches “sounds great but” this is not the public’s perception (e.g. Hele is considered to be the worst in the area, receiving various discharges). Caution around interpretation: 2022 figures, measured only during swimming season.
 - Anecdotal references made to several pollution points: sewage treatment works discharging around Hele, 6 properties in Hele without septic tanks discharging directly into river; Westward Ho! discharges which are being challenged. See <https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/waterfitlive> for combined sewage overflow events.
 - World Surfing Reserve are pushing back as much as they can: regular 12 monthly testing to establish sources of pollution, assisting in citizen science at Combesgate working with National Trust’s Riverlands Project, important to get the right data.

- ACTION KC:** BH suggested working with Environment Agency for lab data analysis.
- BH cited Teignmouth Bathing Water study where area pollution impacts were in equal measures: sewage, farm manure, wild birds from the pier, and it stayed in the area for a surprisingly long time.
 - Westcountry Rivers Trust have a citizen-science based monitoring programme for streams but reliant on volunteers and intermittent funding [Westcountry CSI - Westcountry Rivers Trust \(wrt.org.uk\)](https://www.westcountrycsi.org.uk/).

ACTION: Team may need to consider onward support to this scheme.

- **Management Plan Review 2025-2030 - Indicative Timetable and Key Tasks (JCW)**, provided with minutes
 - Important to note Management Plan Review includes the target for wider diversity among Partnership members to better reflect the population. This will be part of the Review process and a need to ensure the appropriate skills and knowledge required for new Targets and Outcomes are reflected among the Partnership.
 - Requested more representatives from Partnership on steering group (to support JCW, KH, EW). **ACTION:** RP and BH agreed to be involved.
 - Significant stage at Partnership meeting in September.
 - Thematic workshops planned for Autumn. **AGREED** on same day as Partnership meetings where possible.

4. National Landscape Managers' Report

1. LR highlighted key points from updates to the Business Plan
2. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme update (JN)
 - There is lots of good work outside of the grant schemes not being monitored.
 - Weather and changing staff have impacted delivery
 - Important to promote SFI (etc) and agri environment schemes too
 - Q: how are NL monitoring that outcomes are being met? A: visits, photographic evidence for longer term measures like reducing hard grazing, to see trees are planted, see collars are on cattle, etc. Claim process in arrears based on evidence of invoices paid/bank statements and evidence.
 - Suggestion to invite members to visit FiPL projects in September alongside the FiPL Assessment Panel members. **AGREED ALL / ACTION LR & JN:** to arrange site visit
3. Communications - LC gave a verbal report
 - 3 press releases since April; lots to shout about
 - Drafting prototype Communications & Engagement Plan to cover next 6-12 months, including targets for a press release once a month
 - E-news is back up and running, go to website to subscribe. **ACTION ALL:** send news items to Laura for inclusion
 - Website – edits continue e.g. making open grants more obvious
 - Social media really busy around FNF with help from EG; will be theming posts moving forward around 'National Days'
4. Planning and Development update by JCW
 - Statistics provided for Year-end 2023-24 and for April/May 2024. Focus has been on pre-application enquiries and those with potential landscape impact

- Still supported by external consultants where there is no conflict of interest
- Interested to see changes as Clause 245 of LURA (duty to “seek to further the purpose” of NL) is more widely adopted
- 90%-95% success rate on planning (significant applications)
- X-Links pipeline at Abbotsham: consultation extended to 11th July. **JCW and EW** attended very uninspiring public consultation. Landscape Architect Pete Leaver is advising TDC on visual and landscape impact which TDC have agreed NL can use as a framework for our response. Liaison with NE around potential mitigation measures.
- White Cross Offshore Wind Farm – as part of their public consultation will have 1:1 with NL. They were asked to withdraw their application but are continuing with it. Longer term impact on NL is minimal. However significant potential consequences for tourism and biodiversity during development phase. NL focusing on landscape elements and leaving others to pick up the other aspects.

PM left meeting at 12:00

Q: Concern raised about small plots being sold off e.g. pockets of woodland marketed for hideaways and perhaps being lived in. Adverts mention what areas are not constrained by (eg NSZ). Can any action be taken? A: some of the actions being taken are permissible for farmland so unless property is Listed or there’s a TPO in place, enforcement may not be a priority given pressure on Planning teams. (Suggestion that planners could feed information to land agents around constraints of the NL).

5. Finding Nature’s Footprints – Bioblitz (presentation attached from **JN**)

- New trial of a community-based approach to a Bioblitz in and around Ilfracombe to celebrate and demonstrate how there are biodiverse pockets in and around a town. Very different to a traditional Bioblitz - “I conceived a weird idea that JBG then delivered”. Thanks to JBG for running with the idea.
- Initial feelings were that we would have hoped for more people but in tallying up: 91 adults and 25 children joined the walks/activities, plus 171 people at the Festival of Nature Hub at the Landmark visiting the eight indoor and five outdoor stands.
- Bicclescombe Park is great for viewing bats!
- 562 observations and 301 species recorded on iNaturalist with more still coming in
- Event was aimed at exploring the “accidental countryside”, in part highlighting the national target of everyone being 15 minutes’ walk to a green or blue space.
- **JCW** extended thanks to **JBG** and **EG** for a huge amount of work. Ilfracombe is a target area given its deprivation indices and sits at the centre of the NL. Attempts at doing something different were challenging, but this is why we have the National Lottery Heritage Fund grant. Recognition of the pressures on the team and they pulled off a great event.
- National Lottery are keen to hear the learnings and Minehead community have been in touch asking for lessons to be shared as they are struggling to drum up numbers.
- Team will do it again next year, considering whether to focus on a traditional Bioblitz or go again with a Community Based approach and try to galvanize local interest.

- **KC** congratulated the team on the superb images. **JN** confirmed more will be posted on social media.
- **LB** reported on feedback from Coastwise (engaged with 2 activities): a good opportunity to branch out to new audiences; such a shame not more people come along generally to these activities (not a reflection on FNF team); suggest talking to other people and share evaluation.
ACTION FNF TEAM: evaluate bioblitz attendance and talk to others / share findings with Lottery and those running similar activities.
- Discussion re publicity and attendance. Locations of activities could not have been more convenient for people, so it's a communication thing. A National Lottery idea has been to offer something (free entry, ice-cream) for those bringing along a Lottery ticket. It showcases that the public are paying for the activity. Some families did stay the whole Sunday and were very engaged, indicating that the activities were appealing.
ACTION FNF TEAM: to consider a freebie for those bringing along a Lottery ticket and try different communication routes.

5. Management Plan Delivery – Partner Updates

- **North Devon Biosphere:** Climate Action Fund – Biosphere Communities: **LR** reported on this new project with £940K from the National Lottery for 4 years' work, ready to begin imminently having taken about 18 months to reach this point. Creating approximately 7 new posts (including Community Animators) and being delivered by 6 different partners across the area. Focused on supporting and empowering community action around sustainable land management, with nature recovery and climate action taking centre stage. Key components aimed at young people to offer them more voice. Targeting 8 community groups which will become 'hubs', four in the first 2 years followed by another four in years 3 and 4. Of relevance to the NL, two of the first 4 community hubs will be Appledore and Bideford. Within the second 4 community groups may be Woolfardisworthy, but that will be determined as the Project progresses.
- **North Devon Archaeological Society - CP** gave a presentation on the findings of the Gallantry Bower survey: Essentially Carbon 14 data analysis showed the charcoal findings were nearer 1950 than 1632, possibly from army manoeuvres, so not contemporary with the Bronze Age barrow
- **Coastwise North Devon - LB** reported back on some training funded through FNF on Surveying Marine Invasives at Plymouth University (e.g. wireweed algae, bindweed and oyster thief) which was very informative
- **Torrige District Council – Cllr SH** reported TDC are involved with a partnership of local interests setting up a Clean Water Working Group to join up with NDC to push OFWAT.
- **Taw and Torrige Estuary Forum - IC** said they are about to launch their new website at end of June with news and events. Monday 15th July is next TTE Forum at the Beechfield Centre, Fremington to which the public are welcome. Katy Lee will be talking about her trip and exhibition "Going on Taw" (running till 6th July at Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon) where she swam, canoe-ed and recorded stories along the length of the River Taw.

- **World Surfing Reserve - KC** updated on actions being taken: ‘surfonomics report’ to establish economic value of surfing to the area; meetings with ‘Save the Waves’ coalition; regular meetings with 11 other WSRs; Bray Leino work on innovation with sustainable development; working with National Trust on coastal streams water quality testing at Combesgate; providing data re White Cross on impacts to wave quality (none long term) based on modelling; choice of landing point has not been satisfactorily explained; essentially their view is to keep disturbance away from the north end of the beach to reduce social disruption.
- **TH** recommended joining activities together more and make use of wider partnerships such as NEED (Network of Environmental Educators in Devon) whose next meeting is 27th June, 0900-1500 at Killerton House, Exeter. Email TH for more information (Tom Humphreys (Skern Lodge) Tom.Humphreys@skernlodge.co.uk)
- **Devon CC** Katie Pagan keen to learn more from others’ Comms teams, please be in touch (katie.pagan@devon.gov.uk); she is focusing on Local nature Recovery Strategy and Local Nature Partnership events but interested to connect through wider comms.

6. Any Other Business – JCW raised the following:

- **AGREED:** all happy for next meeting to be recorded for internal use only
- **AGREED:** all happy for next Minutes and papers to be circulated openly so email addresses are shared with new Joint Manager

7. Date of Next Meeting – WEDNESDAY 25th September 2024 from 10am – 15.00pm, [then Wednesday 29th January 2025].