



Department  
for Environment,  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

## Progress Report

July 2025

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# Introduction

This is the first report on progress towards the targets set in the [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework](#) (PLTOF). Protected Landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes together) along with their dedicated teams, play a leading role in nature's recovery, climate adaptation and mitigation, increasing access to nature and conserving our heritage.

Historically it has been difficult to measure and relate actions and progress made in Protected Landscapes against national targets. The PLTOF sought to address the gap and this report begins to provide a picture of how these iconic landscapes are collectively achieving their potential for delivering on the [Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP\) 2023](#).

Later in 2025 we will publish a revision of the EIP (EIP25) to protect and restore our natural environment.

## Context

In January 2024 we set Protected Landscapes 10 ambitious targets designed to help them meet their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place. These targets are for Protected Landscapes as places rather than tied to the Protected Landscape organisations themselves and achieving them is a shared responsibility of a range of stakeholders across all sectors. The targets will contribute to the EIP goals and cover those that:

- are most relevant to National Park and National Landscapes' statutory purposes (outlined in the published [guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes](#))
- have data available at the right spatial level
- Protected Landscape organisations can influence the progress of, by mobilising partners, including through their statutory management plans

All Protected Landscapes were required to incorporate or link these targets to their statutory Management Plans by July 2025. The delivery of these targets will increase the contribution that Protected Landscapes can make to our international commitment to protect 30% of land in England for nature by 2030 (30by30), particularly through targets 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7. We intend to provide more detail in the 30by30 Action Plan later this year.

Additional background information about the development of the PLTOF, along with how the targets are incorporated into National Park and National Landscapes' management plans and how progress will be monitored can be found in the [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework](#).

## Understanding the data

Evidencing how Protected Landscapes are delivering against the PLTOF targets is dependent on having robust target data gathering at a national level and for this national data to be cut to Protected Landscapes boundaries. For some of the targets this process is still in development, including to ensure there is no risk of double counting.

It is intended that over time, more data will become available, and it will be possible to see clear trends in how Protected Landscapes are contributing to our national goals.

Alongside the data presented in this report are case studies detailing projects contributing to the PLTOF targets.

This report introduces the available data and explores how they can be used to report against the PLTOF targets.

As there is limited data available, conclusions of progress towards targets cannot be drawn from the presented data, however it can be used to indicate trends.

The statistics report on the most recent data available and so the time periods vary for each indicator. The years represented are clarified in each indicator section.

The direct target indicator data measures directly against the targets, whereas related indicator data gives additional context that can support understanding of wider progress relating to the targets. Further information is given in the relevant target section where direct target indicator data is in development.

The way we monitor progress against PLTOF targets may change in future to align with how we monitor progress of EIP 2025 targets.

Data for the PLTOF targets and related indicators can be found here: [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Headline Statistics 2025](#)

## EIP Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife

**PLTOF target 1:** Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042

- Direct indicator data: In development
- Related indicator data: Extent of priority habitats within Protected Landscapes

**PLTOF target 2:** Bring 80% of Special Scientific Interests (SSSIs) within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042

- Direct indicator data: Percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes in favourable condition

- Related indicator data: Percentage of geological and geomorphological heritage features in SSSIs within Protected Landscapes in favourable condition

**PLTOF target 3:** For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.

- Direct indicator data: Percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition
- Related indicator data: Not applicable

**PLTOF target 4:** Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs, within Protected Landscapes (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.

- Direct indicator data: In development
- Related indicator data: Not applicable

**PLTOF target 5:** Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers within Protected Landscapes adopt nature friendly farming (defined in the targets 4 and 5 section) on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

- Direct indicator data: In development
- Related indicator data: Not applicable

## EIP Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change

**PLTOF target 6:** Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.

- Direct indicator data: [The level of greenhouse gas emissions within Protected Landscapes](#)
- Related indicator data: Not applicable

**PLTOF target 7:** Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050. Note: This target also contributes to EIP Goal 1.

- Direct indicator data: Extent of peat committed for restoration in Protected Landscapes
- Related indicator data: Area, depth and percentage cover of peatland within Protected Landscapes

**PLTOF target 8:** Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline). Note: This target also contributes to EIP Goal 1.

- Direct indicator data: Extent of tree canopy and woodland cover in Protected Landscapes

- Related indicator data: Not applicable

## EIP Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

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

- Direct indicator data: Evidenced in the upcoming Access for All evaluation report
- Related indicator data: Length of National Trails within Protected Landscapes

**PLTOF target 10:** Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

- Direct indicator data: Number and percentage of nationally designated heritage assets in Protected Landscapes to be deemed at risk.
- Related indicator data: Number of nationally designated heritage assets in Protected Landscapes

Unless otherwise indicated, all statistics are based on national datasets cut to England using the Ordnance Survey Boundary-Line dataset, removing Welsh parts of the Wye Valley National Landscape, as the PLTOF only applies to England. The figures and charts are rounded to the nearest whole number. In some instances, where individual rounded values have been presented in charts along with their sum total, the total may be slightly different to the sum of these individual rounded values because it has been calculated using the original unrounded values.

Areas of some Protected Landscapes also overlap. The significant areas of overlap are:

- The Norfolk Coast National Landscape/The Broads National Park (728ha)
- The Arnside Silverdale National Landscape/Lake District National Park (54ha).

Where necessary the Protected Landscape total figures take account of these overlapping areas.

When discussing progress against PLTOF targets, we will consider:

- **monitoring progress update:** more detailed information on monitoring evidence linked to that target
- **what the data show:** the latest available data and a brief description of what this tells us about progress towards achieving the target
- **understanding this metric:** more context around how that target is monitored, describing any reporting challenges and explaining why data may not be available annually or there is apparent reporting delay

# Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife

## Target 1

**Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).**

### Monitoring progress update

Defra and Natural England published a Habitat Target [evidence report](#) in May 2025 setting out analysis undertaken in March 2025 to produce a metric to inform reporting of progress towards the Environment Act Habitat Target at a national level. Protected Landscapes cuts of the national indicator data are in development, which include the Farming and Countryside Programme, the Environment Agency, the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, and Woodland creation and restoration data compiled by the Forestry Commission and Forestry England. These delivery areas were prioritised for inclusion in analysis due to their relative expected contributions to the target, and the compatibility of associated data with that required in the data model for reporting. Other data sources may be used in future reporting, as outlined in the Habitat Target evidence report.

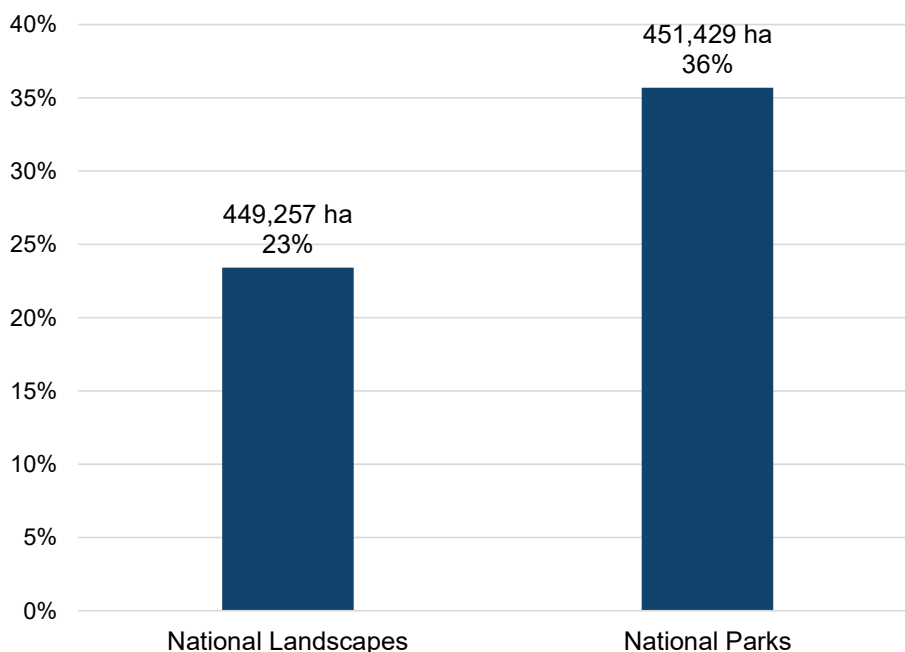
Relevant related data on the extent of priority habitats within Protected Landscapes are shown to support understanding of the potential to make progress towards this target within Protected Landscapes, by creating new or expanding existing areas of priority habitat.



## Indicator: Extent of priority habitats within Protected Landscapes

### What the data show

**Figure 1: Percentage of Protected Landscapes that is priority habitats in 2024**



Data source: Priority Habitats Inventory.

As of July 2024, Priority habitats make up 23% of National Landscapes (449,257 hectares) and 36% of National Parks (451,429 hectares). This illustrates the contribution that Protected Landscapes already make to supporting wildlife-rich habitats.

### Understanding this metric

The statistics for the coverage of priority habitats in Protected Landscapes are based on the [Priority Habitats Inventory \(PHI\)](#) and include only those 27 priority habitats currently in the PHI. They therefore omit river habitats. Further detail of the types of habitats nationally is available to view on [an interactive map](#). Natural England has published [a definition of wildlife-rich habitats](#).

Only action to increase the extent of wildlife-rich habitat can count towards the habitat target, not action on existing wildlife-rich habitat to improve condition. However, management of existing priority habitat will be key for delivering species outcomes.

Information on the extent of existing priority habitats in Protected Landscapes provides context about the potential types of wildlife-rich habitats that could be further created to meet Target 1. It also provides insight into the scale of habitat that could be managed to support species outcomes.

## Case Study – Glorious Cotswold Grasslands

[Glorious Cotswold Grasslands \(GCG\)](#) is run by the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) with the aim of creating and restoring wildflower grasslands throughout the Cotswolds. This directly supports the first PLTOF target to restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042.

GCG uses brush harvesters to collect wildflower seed from donor sites during the summer months and then works with landowners to identify, survey and prepare suitable recipient sites and spread the wildflower seed each autumn. This method of working is the gold standard for preserving the local genetics of Cotswold wildflower meadows and increases the chances of success of restoration, as donor seed is carefully matched to recipient sites with similar soil types, aspect and geographical location (within the broad grassland types of calcareous, neutral and floodplain).

The programme has steadily grown to restore over 400 hectares of wildflower grassland since it started in 2019. There is now a team of three paid officers supported by over 30 regular volunteers. They run two brush harvesters (with a third in reserve) and have restored 187 hectares since 2023, with another 100 hectares predicted to be restored in the autumn of 2025. Every grassland restored improves the ecological connectivity of the Cotswolds nature recovery network, supporting the CNL Nature Recovery and Management Plans.

### Target 2 and Target 3

**Target 2: Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.**

**Target 3: For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.**

### Monitoring progress update

These targets are presented together as they are linked, and target 3 drives the successful completion of target 2.

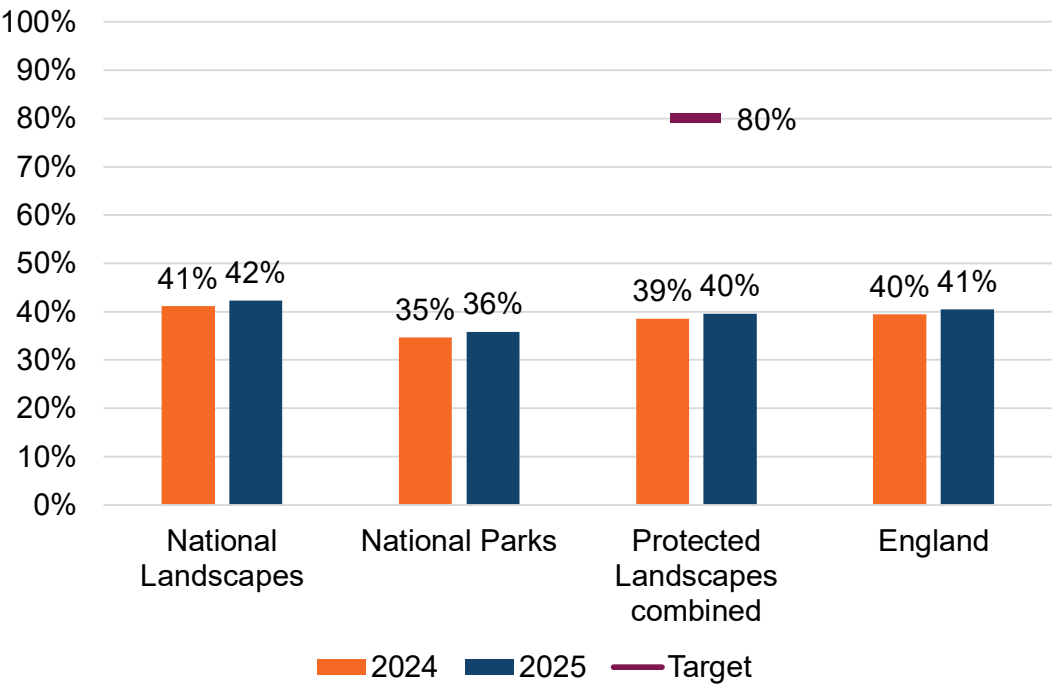
A [Technical Information Note](#) outlining Natural England's approach and methods to assessing SSSI feature conditions was published in February 2024.

Relevant related data on the percentage of geological and geomorphological heritage features in SSSIs (within Protected Landscapes) in favourable condition are shown to support understanding of the potential to make progress towards this target within Protected Landscapes.

# Indicator: Percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes in favourable condition

## What the data show

Figure 2: Percentage of SSSI features in favourable condition in 2024 and 2025



Data source: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England); Designated Sites View: SSSI Overall Feature Conditions.

In National Landscapes, the percentage of SSSI features in favourable condition increased from 41% in 2024 to 42% in 2025. National Parks showed a similar trend, rising from 35% to 36% over the same period. When combined, Protected Landscapes overall increased from 39% in 2024 to 40% in 2025.

For comparison, the percentage of SSSI features in favourable condition for England rose from 40% to 41%.

Despite these incremental gains, all categories remain below the 80% target set for 2042. However, recovery of nature is slow for some features so significant changes would not be expected in this figure for the first few years.

## Understanding this metric

Data for the monitored features in each qualifying SSSI were obtained from Natural England's designated site records. This included the latest condition assessment for each feature as of 28 February 2025.

Only SSSIs with 30% or more of their area within a Protected Landscape are included, to ensure the Protected Landscape organisation has meaningful influence over them. This

threshold replaced a previous 10% rule to improve relevance and accuracy, and the baseline figures have been amended to include this change.

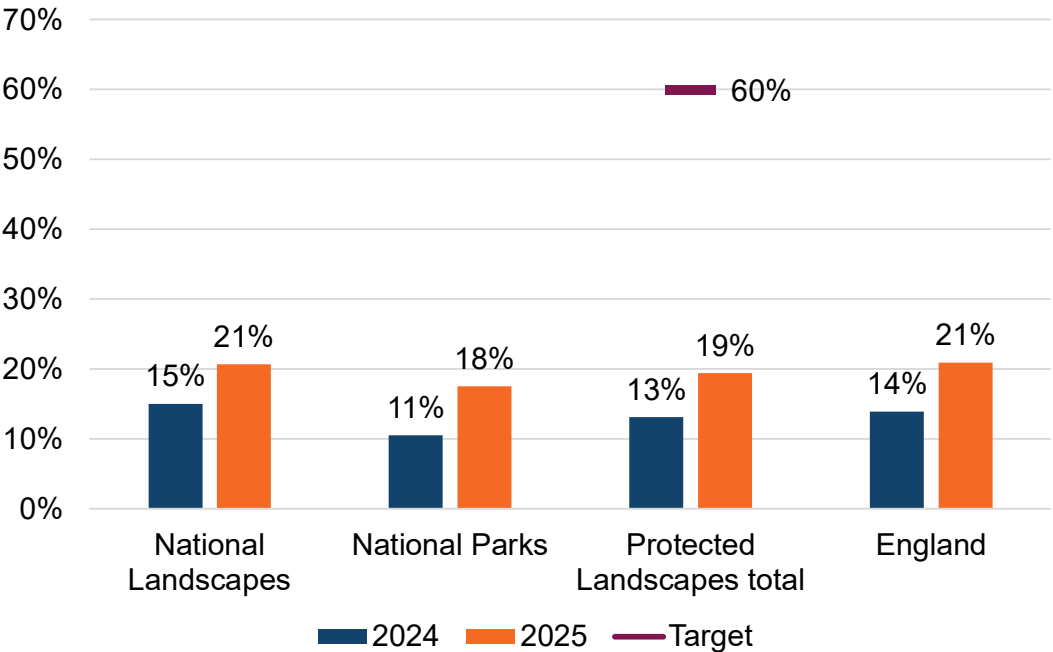
Assigning SSSIs to Protected Landscapes is done as follows:

- if 30% or more of a SSSI lies within a Protected Landscape, all its monitored features are attributed to that landscape
- if a SSSI overlaps multiple Protected Landscapes, it is assigned to the one containing the largest share of its area to avoid double counting
- SSSIs with less than 30% of their total area in a Protected Landscape are excluded.

**Indicator: Percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition**

**What the data show**

**Figure 3: Percentage of SSSIs with actions on track in 2024 and 2025**



Data source: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England); Designated Sites View: SSSI Overall Feature Conditions; Designated Sites View: SSSI Pressures (includes features).

In National Landscapes, the percentage of SSSIs with actions on track increased from 15% in 2024 to 21% in 2025. National Parks also showed improvement, rising from 11% to 18% over the same period. When combined, the total for Protected Landscapes rose from 13% in 2024 to 19% in 2025. The percentage of SSSIs with actions on track across England increased from 14% to 21%.

Despite these gains, the figures remain below the 60% target set for January 2028. This may indicate that while progress is being made, the current pace of improvement will need

to accelerate significantly over the next 3 years to meet the target. Strategic planning and effective delivery of conservation actions will be essential to meet the target.

### **Understanding this metric**

Data for the monitored features in each qualifying SSSI were obtained from Natural England's designated site records. This included the latest condition assessment for each feature as of 28 February 2025.

Only SSSIs with 30% or more of their area within a Protected Landscape are included, to ensure the Protected Landscape organisation has meaningful influence. This threshold replaced a previous 10% rule to improve relevance and accuracy, and the baseline figures have been amended to include this change.

The assessment of SSSIs to have "actions on track" to achieve favourable conditions is based on:

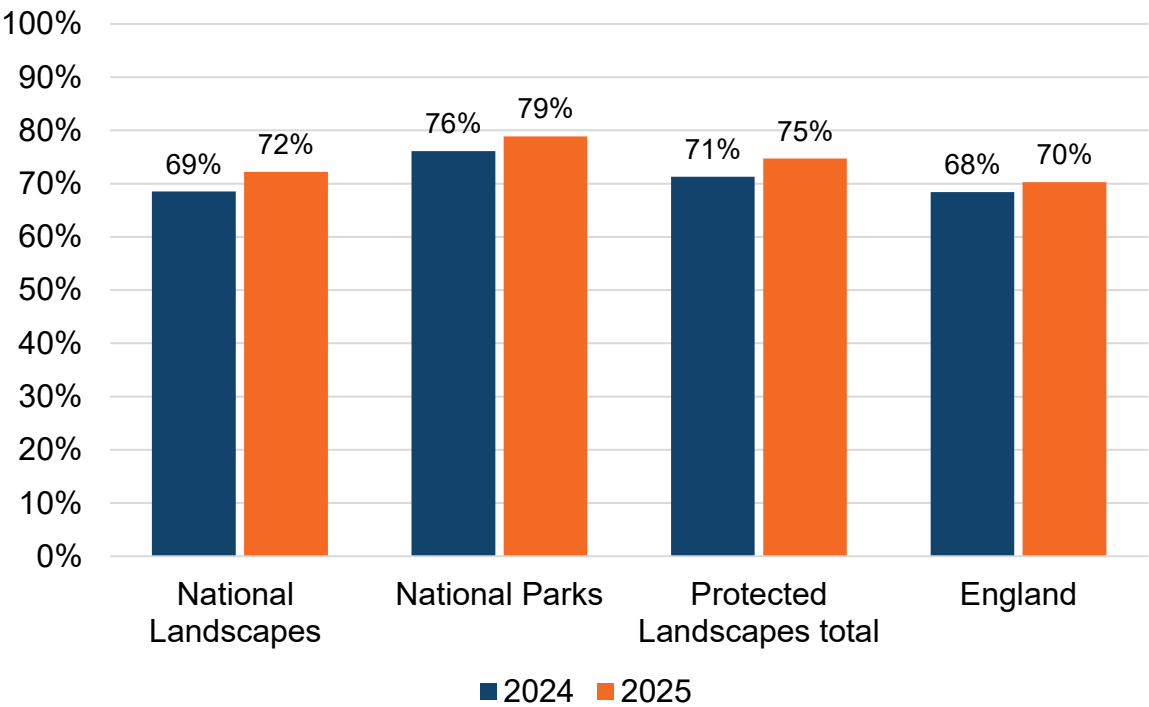
- the feature's current condition
- the status and timing of associated management actions
- whether the condition assessment is up to date

Features are classified as having 'Actions on track' if they meet the criteria above (for example, favourable condition or active, timely management). Features not meeting these criteria are classified as 'Actions not on track', and actions marked 'Archived' or 'Not Applicable' are excluded.

**Indicator: Percentage of geological and geomorphological heritage features in SSSIs (within Protected Landscapes) in favourable condition**

**What the data show**

**Figure 4: Percentage of geological and geomorphological heritage features in SSSIs (within Protected Landscapes) in favourable condition in 2024 and 2025**



Data source: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England); Designated Sites View: SSSI Overall Feature Conditions.

Across National Landscapes, National Parks, Protected Landscapes, and England as a whole there is a consistent year-on-year improvement of the condition of geological and geomorphological heritage features in SSSIs. In National Landscapes, the percentage of features in favourable condition rose from 69% in 2024 to 72% in 2025. National Parks also increased from 76% to 79%. The overall figure for Protected Landscapes improved from 71% to 75%, while the national average for England increased from 68% to 70%.

There may be significant changes in future data as geological features can show rapid improvements in condition following targeted management interventions, such as those supported through the Conservation and Enhancement Scheme.

**Understanding this metric**

Data for the monitored features in each qualifying SSSI were obtained from Natural England’s designated site records. This included the latest condition assessment for each feature as of 28 February 2025.

Similarly to the other SSSI datasets, only SSSIs with 30% or more of their area within a Protected Landscape are included in the figures. Where a SSSI overlaps multiple Protected Landscapes, it is assigned to the one containing the largest proportion of its area to avoid double counting. In this analysis, no geological SSSIs met the criteria for overlapping more than one Protected Landscape.

Features were classified by type - either geological or one of 21 biological categories - and only geological features were included in this analysis.

Some geological features are currently listed as 'not recorded' due to incomplete assessments. These will be updated as more whole-feature assessments are completed.

## **Case Study – Bringing Teffont Evias SSSI back into favourable condition**

Geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are selected for their importance to the understanding of Britain's geology and for the understanding of geological principles more broadly. All geological SSSI are of national importance, some are also recognised internationally.

For these geological SSSIs to achieve or maintain favourable condition they need to be managed so that scientists can re-examine their important geological features (this may mean taking measurements at rock exposures or through collecting rocks, fossils or minerals for analysis).

Teffont Evias Quarry and Lane Cutting SSSI, within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, is a disused quarry and lane cutting which expose a sequence of soft, buff coloured, clayey marls, calcareous mudstones, and shelly limestones. These rocks were laid down during Jurassic and Cretaceous times, about 152 to 139 million years ago, when this part of southern England was at subtropical latitudes (between 30° to 40° north of the equator) and was covered by shallow, warm, coastal lagoons and lakes. These ancient environments were home to numerous animals, notably fish, crocodilians and insects, the fossilised remains of which are found in the limestones and marls here today.

The SSSI was assessed in 2021 and found to be in unfavourable condition because the full sequence of rocks was not visible due to slumped sediment and much of the exposure was covered by scrub. Excavations and scrub clearance were recommended to bring the SSSI back into favourable condition.

The excavations took place in March 2025. These were funded by Natural England's Conservation and Enhancement Scheme. The excavations helped to carefully remove overgrown scrub and slumped sediment which was obscuring the geological features and to successfully re-expose the fossiliferous limestone and the marly layers for which this SSSI is designated.

## **Targets 4 and 5**

**Target 4: Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.**

**Target 5: Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.**

### **Monitoring progress update**

These targets are presented together as they are linked through relevant indicators. Indicators directly related to targets 4 and 5 are currently in development and it is not currently possible to make a direct robust assessment of the condition of land and its management outside our Protected Sites monitoring framework. A Protected Landscapes cut of relevant indicators will be published once available.

## **Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change**

### **Target 6**

**Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.**

### **Monitoring progress update**

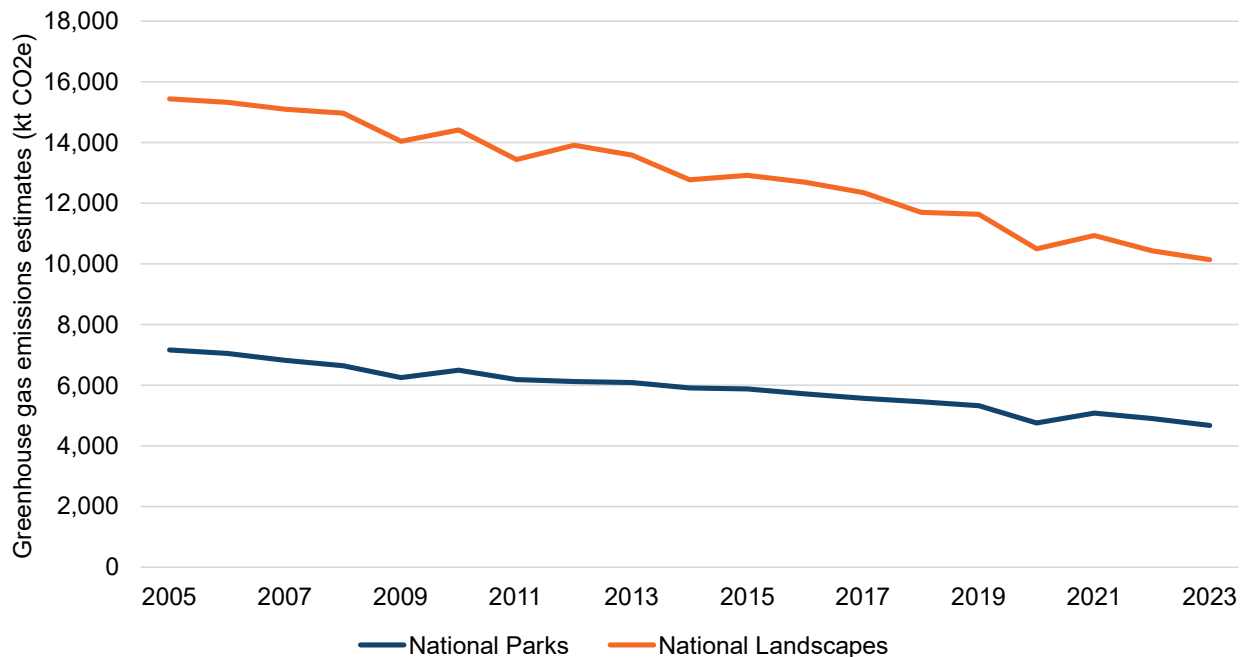
The regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics are published annually by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). The first release of Protected Landscapes data was released in June 2024 and covers the time period 2005 to 2023.



## Indicator: The level of greenhouse gas emissions within Protected Landscapes.

### What the data show

**Figure 5: National Park and National Landscape greenhouse gas emissions estimates 2005-2023 (kt CO<sub>2</sub>e) from the UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory 2024**



Data source: UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, 2005 to 2023.

Total greenhouse gas emissions in National Landscapes have decreased from an estimated 15,438 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e to 10,139 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e. Estimates of greenhouse gas emissions in National Parks have decreased from 7,150 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e to 4,671 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e. This is likely to be due to changes in land management practises, to more climate friendly practises.

### Understanding this metric

The main data sources are the UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory (NAEI) and the DESNZ Official Statistics on energy consumption for local authority areas. The 2005 to 2023 statistics are the most recent data available at time of publication. The time series going back to 2005 is revised each year to take account of methodological improvements, so the estimates presented here may be different to those available in the future.

The greenhouse gases covered by these statistics are carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide.

## Target 7

**Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.**

### Monitoring progress update

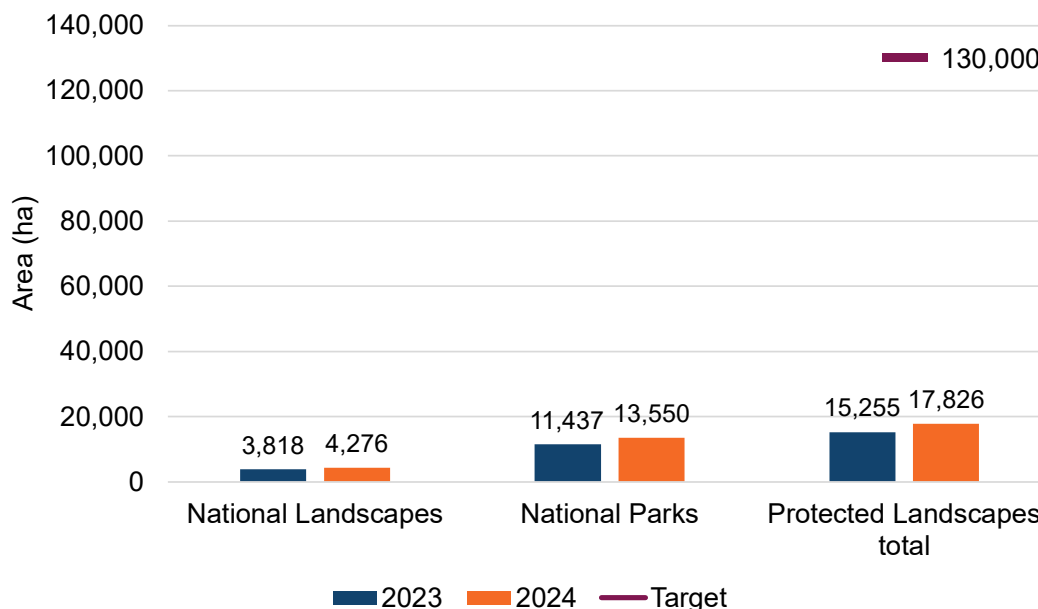
Any work carried out after autumn 2021, when the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (NCPGS) awarded its first grants, contributes towards this target. Other peat restoration work is carried out through alternative funding mechanisms (for example, Countryside Stewardship and Landscape Recovery), but this is not currently monitored and so is not reported against this target. There are plans to ensure these data are collected in future.

Only peat over 30cm deep under restoration management is assessed against this target. Deep peat (over 40 cm) should be prioritised, but peat that is over 30cm deep may be considered.

### Indicator: Extent of peat committed for restoration in Protected Landscapes

#### What the data show

**Figure 6: Area of peat committed for restoration in 2023 and 2024**



Data source: England Peat Map.

In 2023, a total area of 3,818 hectares of peat in National Landscapes was committed for restoration under the NCPGS. This figure rose to 4,276 hectares in 2024, representing an increase of 458 hectares. There was a more substantial commitment within National Parks, with 11,437 hectares in 2023 increasing to 13,550 hectares in 2024 - an annual rise of 2,113 hectares.

Combined, the total area of peatland committed for restoration across all Protected Landscapes under the Scheme reached 15,255 hectares in 2023 and increased to 17,826 hectares in 2024. This represents an overall increase of 2,571 hectares over the one-year period.

### **Understanding this metric**

The data come from the NCPGS which funds peatland restoration projects across England from 2021 to 2026. The data were collected in December 2023 and December 2024. Grant recipients report the location (central grid reference) and area (hectarage) of sites committed for restoration by end March 2026.

If a site's central grid reference falls within a Protected Landscape, the entire site is assumed to be within that landscape. This method may over- or under-estimate the actual area committed for restoration within Protected Landscapes, especially for sites that cross boundaries.

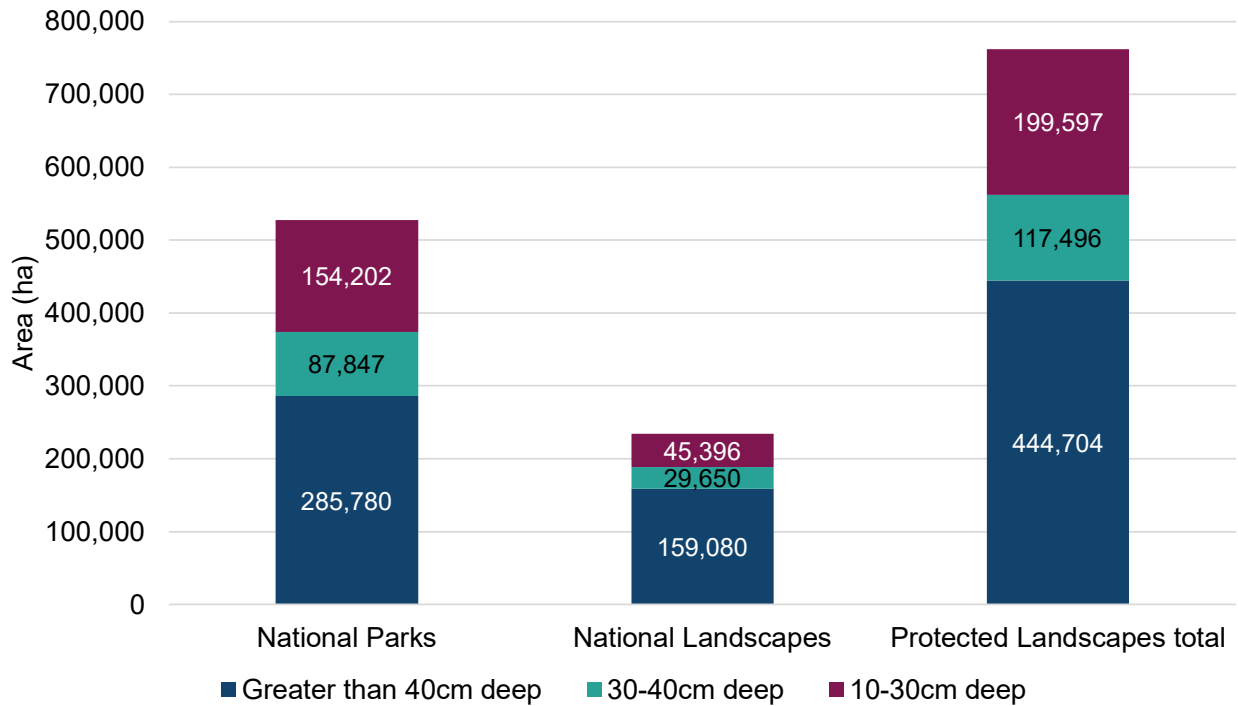
Restoration figures are cumulative (not annual) and reflect commitments, not completed work. Final, confirmed data will be available after project reports are submitted in June 2026. Figures may change as projects can amend their plans during the grant period.

Environmental Land Management schemes, in particular Landscape Recovery, will take over from the NCPGS as the primary funding mechanism for peatland restoration once the NCPGS ends. Defra is developing a peatland restoration register which will provide a dynamic record of all government funded peatland restoration in England, and which will feed into future reporting on the extent of peat committed for restoration in Protected Landscapes.

# Indicator: Area, depth and percentage cover of peatland within Protected Landscapes

## What the data show

Figure 7: Area of peaty soil in Protected Landscapes in 2025



Data source: England Peat Map.

The extent of peatland within England’s Protected Landscapes has been assessed according to peaty soil depth and landscape designation. Peaty soil is categorised into 3 depth classes:

- 10–30cm
- 30–40cm
- greater than 40cm

As of 2025, National Parks contain the largest area of peatland, with 285,780 hectares of deep peaty soil (greater than 40cm), 87,847 hectares of peaty soil between 30 and 40cm deep, and 154,202 hectares of moderately shallow peaty soil (10 to 30cm). This highlights the significant role National Parks play in conserving deep peat resources.

National Landscapes, while also important, contain comparatively less peatland. They include 159,080 hectares of deep peaty soil, 29,650 hectares of 30 to 40cm peaty soil, and 45,396 hectares of 10 to 30cm peaty soil.

When combined, Protected Landscapes encompass a total of 444,704 hectares of deep peaty soil, 117,496 hectares of 30 to 40cm peaty soil, and 199,597 hectares of 10 to 30cm peaty soil.

## Understanding this metric

The data come from the England Peat Map (EPM), developed by Natural England, replacing earlier data from the Peaty Soils Location layer used in 2024. The EPM defines peaty soils as those with an organic content of 20% or more.

Full methodology and accuracy details are available in the [England Peat Map final report](#).

In developing a Protected Landscapes cut of the national data, National Parks and National Landscapes were combined into a single Protected Landscapes layer, with overlaps removed to avoid double counting.

The EPM maps the depth of peaty soils on a continuous scale. However, depth is categorised here into three classes (0-30cm, 30-40cm, and greater than 40cm deep) for the purpose of reporting their extent and percentage cover within Protected Landscapes.

## Case Study - Peatland restoration through the North Pennines National Landscape team

The North Pennines National Landscape team's peatland restoration work is entering its 20<sup>th</sup> year. Working with willing land managers and a group of specialist contractors, the purpose of the work is to restore all the North Pennines blanket bog to a functioning wetland ecosystem and bring all bare and eroding peatlands under a programme of restoration and revegetation. The National Landscape team surveys the sites, devises the restoration programmes, lets and oversees the contracts, establishes the monitoring schemes and either raises the necessary funding or works through agri-environment schemes. This work directly supports the PLTOF target to restore 130,000 hectares of peatland by 2050.

The work itself is multi-stranded. Much of the task of blocking the area's 9800km of drainage ditches ('grips') is now complete and they can heal within just a few years. There is still much to do on bare and eroding peat, with the aim of stabilising it, revegetating it and ultimately bringing back sphagnum as the building block of healthy peatlands. This is a blend of high-tech assessments and monitoring, allied to physical work on the ground. Understanding how water moves across the landscape is important in making the right interventions in the right places. These interventions range from dam creation with coir rolls, stone or wood, spreading seed rich heather brash, plug planting of cotton grass, and sphagnum inoculation. The sheer scale of work and the remote locations means that helicopters are often used to bring in the necessary materials.

Healthy peatland locks-up and sequesters carbon from the atmosphere. The restoration work also enables peatlands to hold more water, and 'roughens' the landscape to help further slow the flow. This brings flood amelioration benefits but also benefits in terms of water colour and water quality. Revegetated and rewetted peatlands can benefit grazing and game management, as well as support some of most charismatic wildlife such as curlew, golden plover and lapwing.

Within the North Pennines National Landscape team, 12 people currently work on peatland restoration, devising planning and monitoring in the spring and summer and supporting the restoration effort in the autumn and winter.

Since 2005, the team has led the work to bring over 50,000 hectares of peatland under restoration – an area over four times the size of Newcastle. The carbon savings associated with this work equates to 25 million tonnes.

In recent years, the North Pennines National Landscape team has been collaborating with others delivering peatland restoration across the North, coming together as part of the [Great North Bog \(GNB\) coalition](#). The GNB coalition includes National Park, National Landscape and Wildlife Trust peatland teams, and works with partners such as the National Trust and water companies.

## Target 8

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

### Monitoring progress update

This target contributes to both EIP Goal 1: Thriving Plants and Wildlife, and Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change, in the context of contributions within Protected Landscapes, and has been categorised within Goal 7 within the PLTOF.

The statutory target, to which this Protected Landscape target contributes, is to increase tree canopy and woodland cover to 16.5% of land area in England. The next full update, including reconciliation of all relevant datasets will be published in 2031. However, an indication of progress will be available annually, with a new commitment to an annual indicative update to the Trees Outside Woodland map, alongside annual updates to the National Forest Inventory woodland map.

The explanation of how woodland (including integral open space and stands felled prior to restocking) and trees outside woodland contribute to the target is detailed in [The Environmental Targets \(Woodland and Trees Outside Woodland\) \(England\) Regulations 2023](#) and the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum.

The baseline tree canopy and woodland cover for each protected landscape has been established based on the same underlying maps used to establish the revised baseline for the (national) statutory target established under the powers of the Environment Act 2021.

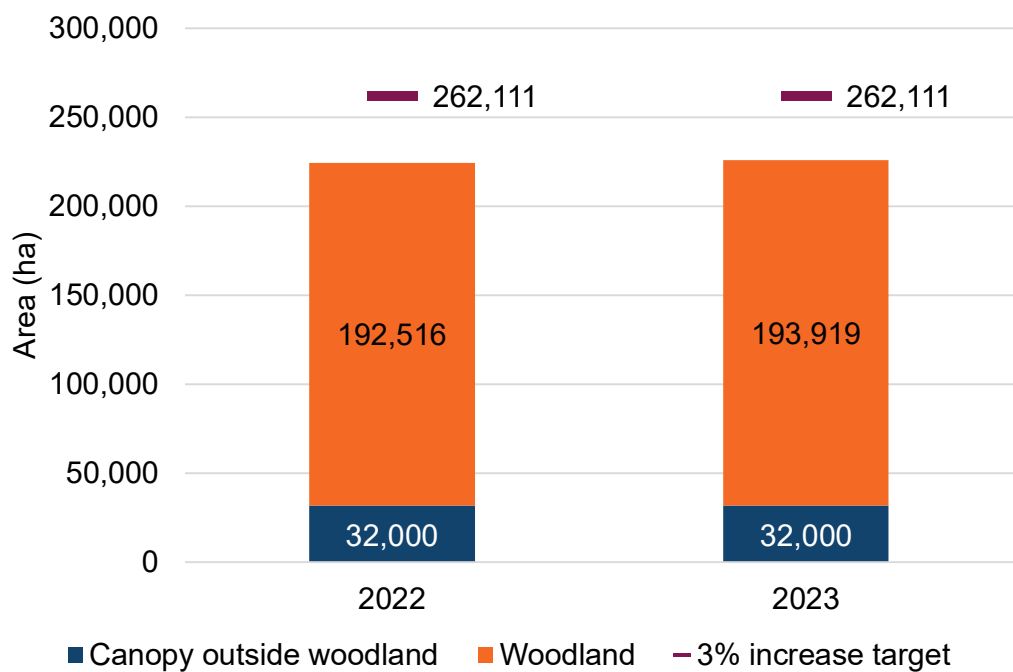
# Indicator: Extent of tree canopy and woodland cover in Protected Landscapes

## What the data show

As discussed further in the ‘understanding this metric’ section, of the 2 datasets in this composite metric, only one (woodland cover) has been updated for 2023, so overall progress cannot be shown.

The areas for tree canopy and woodland cover for National Parks is shown in figure 9, and for National Landscapes in figure 10.

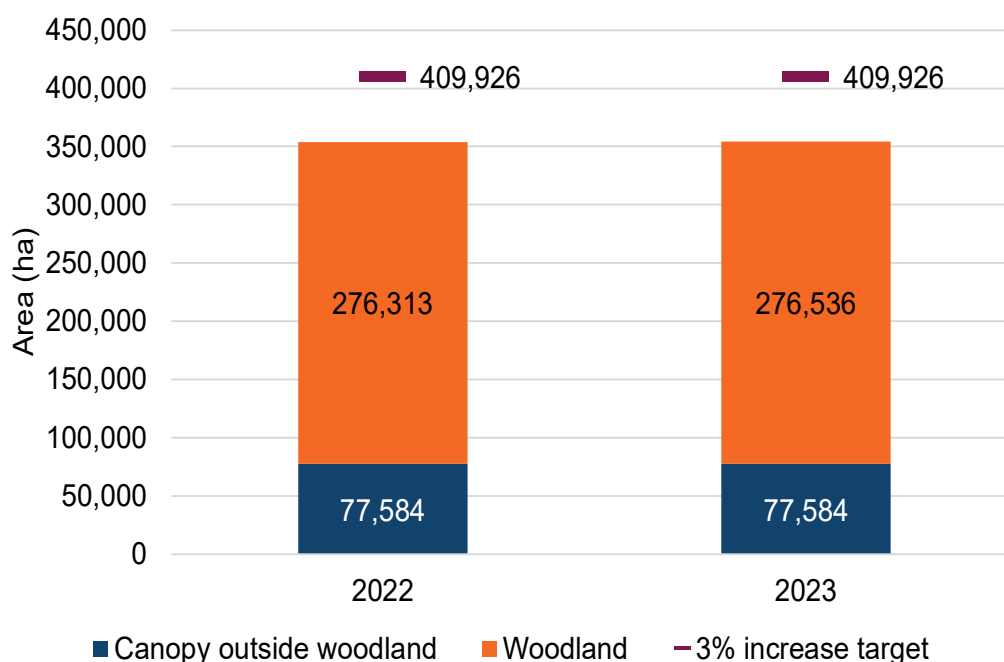
**Figure 8: Area of woodland and canopy outside woodland cover in National Parks in 2022 and 2023**



Data source: Forestry Commission National Forest Inventory (NFI).

The area of tree canopy cover outside woodland in National Parks in 2022 (not updated for 2023) is 32,000 hectares. In 2022 there was 192,516 hectares of woodland cover, increasing to 193,919 hectares in 2023. The overall target for tree canopy and woodland cover across National Parks is 261,111 hectares.

**Figure 9: Area of woodland and tree canopy cover outside woodland in National Landscapes in 2022 and 2023**



Data source: Forestry Commission National Forest Inventory (NFI).

The area of tree canopy cover outside woodland in National Landscapes in 2022 (not updated for 2023) is 77,584 hectares. In 2022 there was 276,313 hectares of woodland cover, increasing to 276,536 hectares in 2023. The overall target for tree canopy and woodland cover across National Landscapes is 409,926 hectares by 2050.

### Understanding this metric

The baseline woodland cover data, produced by the Forestry Commission, are gathered from the National Forest Inventory (NFI) England for woodland data (2022). The estimated tree canopy cover (outside existing woodlands) is based on the Trees Outside Woodland (ToW) 2022 map produced by Forest Research under the Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment programme, together with traditional orchards (which are not included in the NFI or ToW map) data from Natural England's PHI.

The 2023 statistics use the latest NFI data, but the ToW dataset remains unchanged from 2022. Woodland area is calculated using NFI data and is categorised by woodland type.

### Case Study – Dales Woodland Restoration

Woodland covers just over 4% of the Yorkshire Dales National Park – compared to the national average for England of around 10%. Through the Dales Woodland Strategy, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and its local partners have set an ambition to plant 6,000 hectares of native and mixed woodland over 10 years.



In the past three years, the partners – which include the White Rose Forest, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, National Trust; Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust - have collectively funded and planted over 1,000 hectares of new woodland in the National Park.

This includes one of the largest new native woodlands in England at Snaizeholme, which is owned by the Woodland Trust. The site is a flagship woodland creation project for the White Rose Forest (the Community Forest for North and West Yorkshire) and the Northern Forest (a partnership between the Woodland Trust and some of the Community Forests in the north of England). The planting, maintenance and infrastructure has been funded by the White Rose Forest through its 'Trees for Climate Fund' – part of Defra's national 'Nature for Climate Fund'

Now at the end of its third planting season, this complex habitat restoration and nature recovery project has seen the planting of native tree saplings across almost 300 hectares. The planting sits alongside works to restore significant areas of upland peat bog, limestone pavement, and upland hay meadows, and to re-naturalise Snaizeholme Beck.

Different densities of trees planted across the site will create groves, glades and open woodlands that gently transition into and connect with the other habitats, all delivered without the use of plastic tree guards or herbicides.

This variety of woodland should benefit endangered species like the black grouse, as well as slowing the flow of water on the hillsides, giving space for otters and kingfishers to thrive, and reducing the threat of flooding. In time, the newly created woodland will also provide a huge area of new habitat for red squirrels currently present in a small adjacent area of woodland.

Video footage of progress on the site can be found [here](#).

## Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

### Target 9

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

#### Monitoring progress update

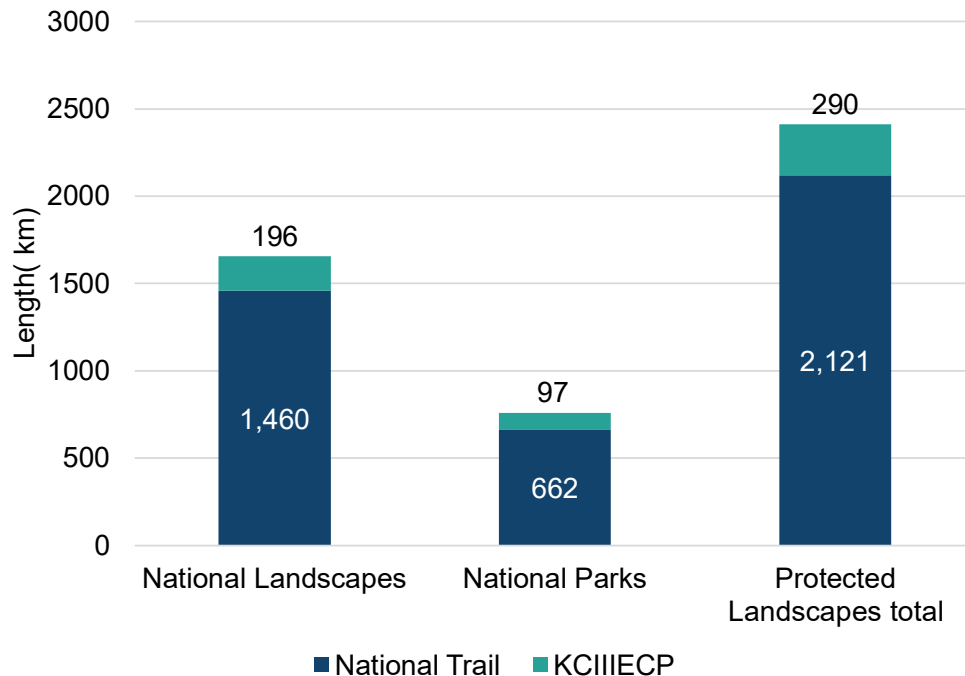
Data to report against Target 9 are gathered and monitored through Defra's Access for All Programme reporting and are shared directly with Protected Landscape organisations.

Relevant related data on the Length of National Trails within Protected Landscapes are shown to support understanding of the progress towards this target

## Indicator: Length of National Trails within Protected Landscapes

### What the data show

Figure 10: Length of National Trails in Protected Landscapes in 2025



Data source: Natural England Open Data Geoportal.

In National Landscapes, National Trails account for a total of 1,460 km, while the King Charles III England Coast Path (KC III ECP) trails contribute a further 196 km. Within National Parks, the length of National Trails is recorded at 662 km, with the KC III ECP trails extending an additional 97 km. When these figures are combined to represent the total for all Protected Landscapes, the cumulative length of National Trails reaches 2,121 kilometres, and KC III ECP trails total 290 km. The latter figure takes account of where a stretch of the KC III ECP falls into both the Norfolk Coast National Landscape and the Broads National Park, to avoid duplication.

### Understanding this metric

The length of National Trails statistics comes from the Natural England datasets for National Trails and for the KC III ECP - a new National Trail in development.

Only the 2025 statistic is shown in Figure 9, as the methodology to collect these data has changed since the 2024 data collection.

Where a National Trail and the KC III ECP is identical, National Trails were removed from the data to prevent double counting. Shared segments between different National Trails were also removed to avoid double counting.

## Case Study - Enhancing Accessibility on the North Downs Way

The Putting Down Routes project began in June 2024 with the aim of making the North Downs Way National Trail a safe, inclusive and accessible destination where all are welcome, by removing barriers which certain people face when accessing the trail.

Collaborating with Gini Mitchell, North Downs Way Ambassador, and founder of Wild with Wheels CIC, The Kent Downs National Landscape team focused on improving physical accessibility for people with mobility challenges along the North Downs Way. Through a series of “Lived Experience” events with Cinque Ports Mobility, various sections of the trail were explored using mobility aids to firsthand experience the challenges faced by users with limited mobility.

A cohort of accessibility auditors were trained to assess the trail’s accessibility, and an accessibility toolkit was developed, aimed at helping others make similar improvements in countryside access.

One of the key outcomes was a successful intervention on a particularly eroded and slippery section of the North Downs Way Bridleway near Wye. With input from project partners, KCC Public Rights of Way, and contractors, this section was transformed into a safe and accessible route for walkers, cyclists, riders, and wheelchair users. This enhancement ensures year-round accessibility for all user groups.

Whilst improving physical access to the North Downs Way is a key element of the Putting Down Routes project, removing perceptual, societal and financial barriers is also important. This is necessary to increase diversity and make the trail a safer, more welcoming, and inclusive space for under-represented groups. Introducing new audiences to the Kent Downs National Landscape and helping them to connect with nature will result in better engagement with the natural environment and more of a willingness to help conserve and protect it.

Partnering with Black Girls Hike has introduced the North Downs Way and the Kent Downs to such an audience. To date, Black Girls Hike have run ten walks for Putting Down Routes, attracting nearly 200 people, many of whom have become repeat visitors.

Relationships have been built with many community groups including local refugee communities in Sevenoaks and Ashford, the Sikh community in Gravesend and have attracted a younger demographic by reaching out to Overground, a diverse London based walking group, who brought 350 people onto the trail in January with a second visit planned for the summer. Since the start of the project, 42 events have been run, involving a total of 954 people from diverse communities.

Most of the walks are led by North Downs Way ambassadors, knowledgeable, trained individuals, who volunteer their time to guide groups along the trail. Since the start of the project, new ambassadors have been recruited, many of whom come from minority backgrounds. These new ambassadors have recently begun to lead their own walks and have inspired others to also sign up to volunteer. Their training now encompasses an EDI

element, which has also been delivered to Putting Down Routes staff as well as to local businesses and attractions.

Further information regarding the Putting Down Routes project can be found on the [Kent Downs website](#)

## **Target 10**

### **Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes**

#### **Monitoring progress update**

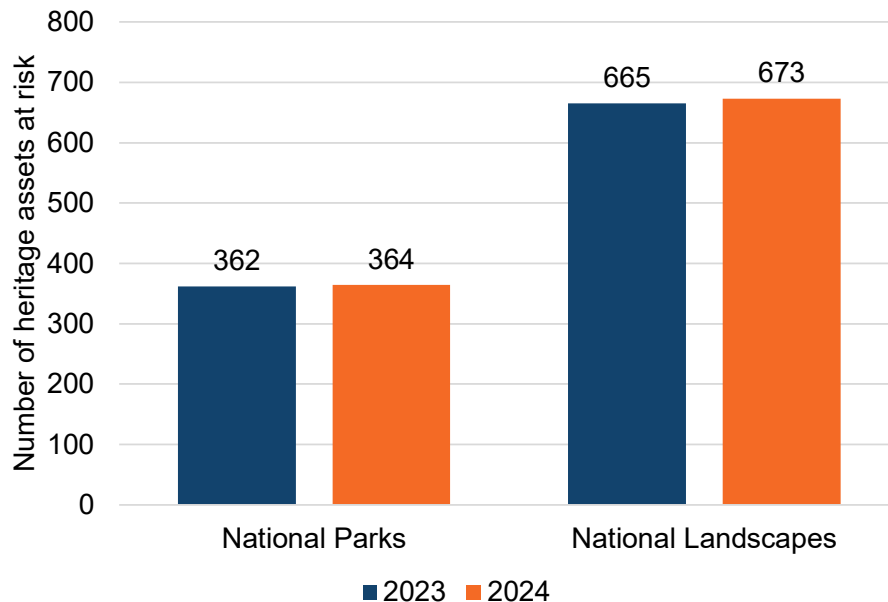
The datasets currently available for reporting against Target 10 do not include Grade II listed buildings. As Protected Landscape organisations are actively engaged in the conservation of Grade II listed buildings, the exclusion of these means that a portion of their conservation efforts is not reflected in the reported data.

The Outcome Indicator Framework for the 25 Year Environment Plan (OIF) reports only on scheduled monuments when showing heritage assets, rather than the wider definition of heritage assets (detailed in the 'understanding this metric' section). The wider definition is used for Protected Landscapes monitoring as it is more reflective of the special qualities of Protected Landscapes and the statutory purposes of designation. It is also a more comprehensive indicator of heritage assets at risk, and better reflects the efforts and improvements made by those conserving heritage assets within Protected Landscapes.

## Indicator: Number of nationally designated heritage assets in Protected Landscapes to be deemed at risk.

### What the data show

Figure 11: Number of heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes in 2023 and 2024



Data source: Historic England Open Data Hub.

In 2023, there were 362 heritage assets at risk in National Parks, increasing marginally to 364 in 2024. National Landscapes saw a slight increase from 665 assets at risk in 2023 to 673 in 2024.

### Understanding this metric

The initial spatial source was Historic England's National Heritage List for England (NHLE) database. The database was intersected against Natural England's National Landscapes and National Parks spatial data to show the number of heritage sites within, or partially within, the 34 National Landscapes and 10 National Parks. Conservation Areas were removed from the final dataset as they are non-NHLE due to being supplied by respective Local Planning Authorities.

The heritage assets at risk (HAR) data comes from Historic England's NHLE database and its HAR register. Only Grade I and Grade II\* listed buildings, and certain other heritage asset types (i.e. scheduled monuments at risk, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and registered wrecks) are included on the register. Conservation Areas and most Grade II buildings (apart from those in London) are excluded. Only assets listed in the NHLE and assessed as being 'at risk' are included in this dataset.

Historic England assesses the risk status of heritage assets using several methodologies depending on the asset type. The HAR register is updated annually and reflects changes such as additions, removals, and regrading.

The 2024 data exclude Grade II listed buildings, which were originally included in the 2023 data. This is because 'at risk' data isn't available nationally for all Grade II buildings. Information is only available for Grade II listed buildings that are also places of worship, so their inclusion would distort the results. The 2023 data have been reprocessed using the updated method to provide a consistent baseline for the Framework.

## **Case Study – Restoration of Ecton Copper Mine**

This multi-disciplinary project secured the conservation of one of the most important copper mine sites in England – enabling the site to be removed from the UK's Heritage at Risk register.

The unique Ecton Mine balance cone is a complex structure, both above and below ground. A scheduled monument, falling within 2 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ecton was once the deepest mine in England, using cutting edge 18th century technology to extract copper ore from up to 300m below the River Manifold.

The balance cone housed a counterbalance to support some of the weight of the winding rope and reduce the load on the Boulton and Watt steam-powered winding engine which, in 1788, was only the sixth ever commissioned in the world. The cone retains a shaft that goes about 60m deep into the solid rock of the hillside.

A large bulge had appeared in the retaining stonework of the cone. In addition, the impact of the sometimes extreme winter weather, and harmful vegetation growth on the structure meant that it was at risk of collapse.

The project was made possible thanks to grants of £145,000 through the Defra-funded Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, administered by the Peak District National Park Authority. Funding allowed a multi-disciplinary feasibility study to understand the structural integrity of the Ecton balance cone, its archaeological complexity and its importance for wildlife.

Archaeologists from the Peak District National Park Authority worked alongside the Ecton Mine Educational Trust, Ecton Hill Field Studies Association, Historic England, National Trust and Natural England to guide the conservation work.

The initial works consisted of ecological and archaeological surveys; vegetation clearance; and structural survey, using laser scanning and 3D modelling and photography. Sections of the exterior cone walls were then re-built, taking care to retain the straight joints which were important evidence of several phases of building, and replacement of split and damaged stones. A new bespoke safety grille was fitted on the top of the shaft, leaving access for bats.

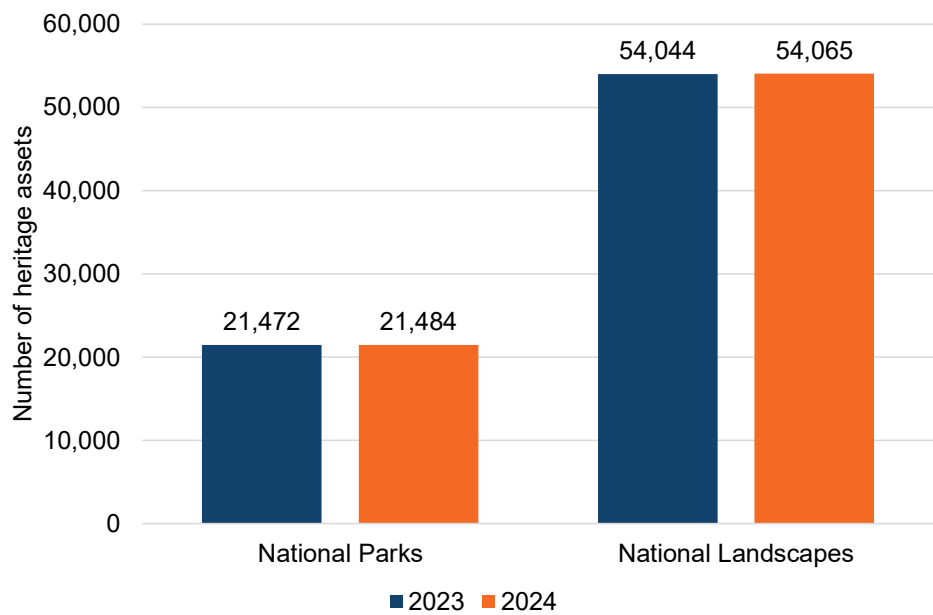
New interpretation at the Geoff Cox Centre on Ecton Hill and at nearby Hulme End – at the start and finish of the Manifold track – will improve people’s understanding of the history of lead and copper mining here and elsewhere in the Peak District.

An animated model of the finished cone is shown on the [Ecton Mine project’s website](#).

**Indicator: Number of nationally designated heritage assets in Protected Landscapes.**

**What the data show**

**Figure 12: Number of heritage assets in Protected Landscapes in 2023 and 2024**



Data source: Historic England Open Data Hub.

In National Parks, the number of heritage assets shows a slight increase from 21,472 in 2023 to 21,484 in 2024. In the same period, National Landscapes also showed an increase, rising from 54,044 in 2023 to 54,065 in 2024.

**Understanding this metric**

The initial spatial source was Historic England's NHLE database as of 1 December 2023 and 1 December 2024. The database was intersected against Natural England's National Landscapes and National Parks spatial data to show the number of heritage sites within, or partially within, the Protected Landscapes. Conservation Areas were removed from the final dataset, as detailed in the previous indicator. Unlike figure 12 for the number of heritage assets at risk, figure 13 does include Grade II listed buildings.