

# **Fitter for the Future Conference**

## **Our evolving landscape in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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*University of Sheffield  
20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024*



**EUROPARC**  
Atlantic Isles

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**The Conference was supported by: Nature Scot, Natural England, National Parks and Wildlife Services, Eire and the Ernest Cook Trust**

### Introduction

**The objective of the conference was to take some steps to look at how can we do things differently now and, in the future, to ensure that our protected landscapes, and potential future designations, are special multifunctional places that meet the needs of nature, climate, people and place and make vibrant dynamic and relevant landscapes?**

**We asked the question “if we want to do things differently, how radical should we be and who will be the people and voices that will bring about change and how do we listen, engage, and support these communities and individuals?”**

We want to find practical ways of achieving this, by taking a look at the challenges and different ways that protected landscapes and others have started to address these issues.

To achieve the goals of 30:30, Nature recovery, impacts of climate change, health and wellbeing challenges and new designation etc we need to get a broader support for the relevance and benefits of protected landscapes from different stakeholders and more of the wider population.

The Themes proposed.

1. How can we create conditions for dynamic communities in protected landscapes where a diverse community can live and work?
2. How do we engage with the main decision makers who manage most of the land in protected landscapes i.e. farmers. And how do we work together to find the best outcomes for nature and climate alongside profitable farm businesses?
3. How do we make new designations relevant and valued by those within and beyond the designated area. What is the value of designation?
4. How do we engender greater support for protected landscape from the wider population (recognising that protected landscapes are often perceived to be irrelevant to the lives of a significant section of the population)

Through a series of site visits and webinars that set the scene in looking at the challenges and seeing steps that are being taken to address these challenges set in the four themes. The face-to-face event then focused on what we need to do and the actions the protected landscapes will need to take.

Throughout the process we were keen to provide opportunities and involvement of young people especially in the planning process and provide bursaries for young people to attend the site visits and conference events.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OUTCOMES FOR CONFERENCE SUMMARISED

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### LEARNING AND SHARING

- Inside protected landscapes we need to create opportunities for sharing good practice and success stories but also things that didn't go so well
- Create a more coherent approach to apprenticeships
- Communicate and engage with people at events, include all career levels

**“ASK QUESTIONS AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK - WHAT DIDN'T WORK?”**

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### NOT TALKING TO OURSELVES

- We must extend our voices beyond protected landscape boundaries
- Establish common ground with others but invite challenge
- Empower each other to inspire change and talk to new audiences - decision makers, politicians, non conservation organisations
- Be aware of the language we use and be accessible and prepared to talk

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### YOUTH

Through out this conference there is an overriding message of the importance of youth engagement. *'The Youth of today will be the ones to solve the problems of our current crisis.'*

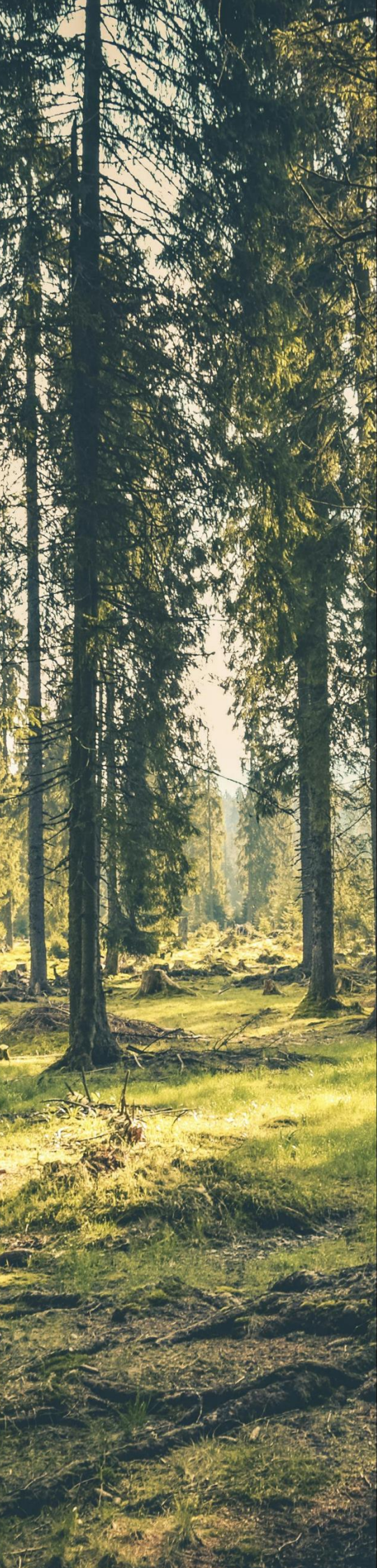
- Create Youth Voice Teams across our National Parks and Landscapes
- A solution MUST be found for low-cost housing for young people and low income earners in our Protected Landscapes

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### DIVERSITY

- We MUST amplify the voices of all diverse groups of people. A priority is to ensure that there are a variety of voices heard at all levels from National Park Authorities to Parish Councils, National Governance and Youth networks.
  - Those with personal experience and field knowledge need to be decision-makers and engaged
  - We want to embrace diversity and different people in the room and break the status quo.
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## COMMUNITIES AND LISTENING

- We need to put the community first and integrate the feedback we receive from them
- Empower communities and support them, put more emphasis on outreach
- Rather than telling people what we do - ask what do you want from us and your protected landscapes?

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## COMMUNICATION AND INFLUENCE

- We want new ways to influence and educate those around us to aid the protected and future of nature and our communities
- Networking and personal connections are more important now more than ever
- Be more mindful in our approach and recognise the importance of story telling

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## NON DESIGNATED SITES

- At various points in the conference we have been reminded that all landscapes matter.
- Local Nature Reserves, Urban Parks, Green Corridors, back gardens

**URBAN AND WILD – BOTH MATTER**

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## FINALLY...

- Keep listening, keep asking and keep going.  
Together, we can make a difference and  
make change.
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# Outcomes of Conference Summarised

### *Learning and Sharing*

- Inside protected landscapes we need to create opportunities for sharing good practice and success stories, as well as perhaps times when things that didn't go so well. This needs to be for all members of the community right down to the youngest people, in order to support them to develop skills and experience rapidly and also highlight the importance and benefits the EAI and Europarc network brings.
- Create a more coherent approach to apprenticeships
- Communicating and engaging with people at events like this one between practitioners and sharing this learned from case studies and cooperating across projects.

### *Not talking to ourselves*

- A recurring theme during the conference has been the question of: 'are we just talking to ourselves?' It is really important that we extend our voices beyond protected landscapes boundaries and protected landscape communities. By convening with wider audiences we will invite challenge and establish common ground, influence and inspire a wide group of people and ultimately develop solutions to deliver landscapes to people which are robust and inclusive.
- We need to be proactive and get out of our echo chamber and make conservationists, decision-makers or politicians advocates for conservation in non-conservation areas i.e more Green Heads
- We also want to listen to the people in those non conservation areas and understand why they are not engaging. Can something be done differently and what is the shared story between us and them.
- We need to be aware of our language and we need to listen more.
- So, we've highlighted the importance of relationships. Partnerships and relationships within and outside the organisations where we work, between landowners and land managers, and also outside of protected area boundaries for land and seascape scale issues.

### *Youth*

- An overriding message from this conference has been the importance of youth engagement. The youth of today will solve the problems of our current crises and an important action point is to create Youth Voice Teams in our National Parks and national landscape areas. Sustainability in our National Park.
- We need to build a youth voice into the structure in all our organisations and celebrate what's being done by the pioneers to inspire others.
- We want diverse entry-level opportunities and promote green careers as a whole.
- A solution needs to be found for low-cost housing for young people and low-income earners in our National Parks and Protected landscapes. We also need to keep setting our vision of Nature and people moving together looking upwards and outwards beyond our boundaries

### *Diversity*

- We want to amplify the voice of all diverse groups of people. A variety of voices need to be heard on all levels, from National Park Authorities, to Parish Councils, national governance and youth voice networks.



## Fitter for the Future 2030

- We want to encourage those with personal experience and field knowledge to become decision-makers and to be engaged. Our plan is to raise the voice of diverse individuals to speak up and help care for protected landscapes.
- We want to embrace diversity and different people in the room in these conversations with strong and common goals. We want to break through this status quo, this cyclic nature of conservation in practice, actual real delivery that focuses on inspiring, visible examples and in that way, we will attract different people, private investors, and public blended finance into nature recovery.

### *Communities and Listening*

- We need to put community's 1<sup>st</sup> and be able to integrate the feedback we get from them. Build the capacity in our sector towards community led processes to ensure there is a widespread support of our protected landscapes.
- Let protected landscapes become a glue to bind communities together and as a sector spend more time looking outwards.
- Supporting communities to feel empowered and knowledgeable about nature, and educating and involving the public in countering misinformation and put more emphasis on outreach and understanding communities that aren't engaging in protected areas
- Rather than telling people what to do we simply want to burst the bubble by asking: what do you want?

### *Communication and influence*

- We want to look at new ways to influence and educate those around us to aid the protection and future of our nature and our communities to include positive messaging, what protected areas are delivering, and what can be delivered. It's not all gloom and doom.
- The need for networking and personal connections to help move projects and thinking on. A huge amount of work is done through building relationships often on the side of projects and meetings
- We need to remember the green heads and to have influence we need more green heads in the decision making and political process
- We need to be more mindful in our approach. We need to ask more questions and tell We need to recognise the importance of storytelling and understanding. If the future has no story the past will determine what happens. Make the environment and backbone and core message

### *Non designated sites*

- At various points in the conference, we have been reminded that all landscapes matter. Wouldn't it be great if protected landscapes developed relationships with green belts and urban areas so that all landscapes are fit for the future.
- We also need to not undervalue the importance of non-designated areas and their contributions to biodiversity in their own context, for example Local Nature Reserves.

### *Finally*

- Keep listening, keep asking, and keep going!

### Feedback from Site visits

#### Cumbria - Creating opportunities to train a workforce within a National Park

**Hosted by Ernest Cook Trust learn about how they run it as a base for green skills and**

**land based learning and plans for nature farming**

##### What we did

1. Met with Ernest Cook Trust to learn about their role investing in future managers of protected areas
2. Learned from Apprentices about their experiences entering the sector and discussed training and skills development
3. Explored Low Beckside Farm
4. Had a brainstorming session

##### What did we learn



##### Recruitment & Employment



- Social media
- National Apprenticeship Service  
<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices#>
- Careers Fairs,
- Word of mouth
- Land & Nature Skills Service, hosted by Uni of Cumbria
- Youth groups, young farmers
- Countryside Jobs Service etc
- School visits
- Your own pathway – eg young rangers



## Overcoming barriers for Apprentices

- Bursaries to support learning & transport
- Wheels to work, taxis for college days, tutor comes to workplace
- Split time week to week rather than blocks
- Carousel of placements with different organisations/partners
- Decent wage, especially for those taking a career change
- Good funding for PPE
- Offer mentoring and employability support (portfolio, interview practice etc)
- Accredited training is essential
- Correct college course for the placement
- Offer progression in house or with partners
- Good supervision
- Having a peer group, opportunity to meet others in same role
- Good pastoral support
- Consideration of living arrangements (e.g. single, or dual income, at home)

- **What did we learn**
- Most apprenticeships are linked up to a college or university
- In many organisations people are in post for a long time – apprenticeships provide an entry level to bridge between traineeships and officer type roles
- Making it easy to travel to work and a liveable wage help overcome initial employment barriers

Invest in the organisation to meaningfully integrate apprenticeships into a range of roles across different team

### Key Messages

- Sustainable apprenticeships require:
  - Learning partnerships
  - Motivating and rewarding placements
  - Collaborative and inclusive work culture
  - Employability support and liveable wages
  - Investment in resources and capability

## Overcoming barriers for Hosts/Employers

- Easiest if you own your own land!
- Under 18s need special support, needs experienced employer or host
- Sharing the responsibility between host and employer
- Longer term apprenticeships need to benefit from learning & skills development
- Work with colleges to improve the timing of additional training needed for roles
- Plan how to deal with absences, sickness etc
- Make sure you have the capacity for support, invest in the staff doing this too
- Secure longer-term funds to support apprenticeship schemes
- Ability to pay a fair wage
- Ensure local course availability
- 18 mths-2 years is ideal, but can vary dependent on apprentice & host/employer
- Always try to offer job opportunities within org or locally
- Encourage apprentices to network locally, find out what is going on, opportunities available and upcoming
- Look to increase collaboration with others
- Look to increase diversity of applicants by making it relevant and promoting the environment as a viable professional career – offer role models/case studies
- Consider other models, not just apprenticeships but entry level and

### Ireland Rhododendron Management – supporting community-based training and incomes.

Hosted by staff the Connemara National Park

Some of the findings from the workshop were:

- Rhododendron (and other invasive species) will remain a problem on the western seaboard of Ireland for at least the next 100 years.
- The budget required for the management of Rhododendron in the Irish landscape is in the 10s if not 100s of millions of euros annually. There is the potential for jobs and careers in invasive species control in these rural areas e.g. western seaboard of Ireland, which will support local communities, and keep people living in these rural areas. The management of Rhododendron in the landscape could create real opportunities for sustainable fulltime employment in these relatively remote and disadvantaged areas.
- There is a lot of resources presently being invested in Rhododendron management e.g. training and invasive species management/control projects. This investment needs to continue, and the expertise being developed should not be lost and should be kept locally. There is funding available from multiple sources, e.g. Wild Atlantic Nature LIFE IP, NPWS - Peatlands and Natura Community Engagement Scheme.
- There is potentially significant manpower resources available locally, e.g. farmers, FRS (1,000 operatives), community development companies (Forum Connemara, Mayo Northeast), local contractors.
- Capacity is being built through the work of NPWS, Wild Atlantic Nature – Dúlra Project, Conservation Measures Unit (NPWS), etc. Capacity needs to continue to be built.
- These projects have led to employment opportunities in the local area, e.g. 4 people who worked with FRS on a Rhododendron contract at Connemara National Park, secured fulltime positions with the NPWS.
- What is needed is **fulltime, well-paying jobs**. People in remote and rural communities are entitled to a good and sustainable standard of living.
- The money/incomes from the Rhododendron management is being spent in the local communities.
- This works is a catalyst for new technologies, e.g. surveying for invasive species using GPS and aerial technology.
- This work has also been the catalyst for new innovations, e.g. using Rhododendron for biochar, peatland restoration (using wool fleeces), glyphosate research.
- These projects (e.g. Dúlra Project) are based on a community and co-operation approach. They have provided training and employment opportunities in the local communities. They have added to community resilience.

### Netherlands

To foster peer learning and encourage international exchange, PWN and the EUROPARC Federation organised a field trip to the National Park Zuid-Kennemerland in the Netherlands. An innovative workshop on the Eurostar, supported by Europarc Atlantic Isles section, served as a bridge, connecting this to the conference in Sheffield

#### **Dreaming big at Zuid-Kennemerland National Park**

Demands on the limited natural spaces in the Netherlands are immense, especially in National Park Zuid-Kennemerland, a 30-minute train ride from Amsterdam. Balancing hikers, bikers, industrial sites, and tourism, the park's dunes might not seem like the ideal habitat for European bison. Yet, in 2007, a group of visionaries – the "Dreamers" – initiated the groundbreaking reintroduction of European bison to these Dutch dunes.

#### **An encounter with gentle giants**



Although the area where bison roam overlaps slightly with public hiking trails, participants of the field trip were granted rare access to a restricted part of the park. There, under the warm sun, we spotted a small group of bison lounging peacefully.

Head of the bison reintroduction program, Esther Rodriguez, debunked a common misconception: bison are not inherently forest animals.

Urbanization and increasing land-use pressures have pushed them into forests, but historically, they thrived in diverse landscapes, including dune areas. This reintroduction project set out to challenge perceptions and proved that bison, when given the opportunity, adapt well to habitats beyond forests.

The bison are not fed artificially but are closely monitored. Esther explained that the herd is thriving, with calves born naturally every other year. Research shows that supplemental feeding or access to crops can lead to more frequent births but also significantly higher mortality rates among calves. The herd in Zuid-Kennemerland, however, follows a healthy, natural rhythm, demonstrating the resilience of these gentle giants when given the space to coexist with us.

#### **Improving the ecological value of the Dutch dunes**

Apart from bison, highland cattle and konik horses were also introduced into the area. Together, these grazers maintain the health of the dune area and prevent vegetation overgrowth.

#### **Opening the dune row: A bold conservation initiative**



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In addition to reintroducing bison, Zuid-Kennemerland adopted another daring conservation measure: carving multiple large notches into the dune line. Given that the Dutch dunes play a critical role in coastal defence, this initiative naturally raised concerns. For decades, dunes in the Netherlands had been ‘fixed,’ a practice that prevented wind, sand, and salt from shaping the landscape through natural, dynamic processes. Over time, this led to degradation of the dunes and a significant decline in biodiversity.



During the field trip, participants visited an area where five substantial openings were created in the first row of dunes. These gaps allowed wind to transport sand further inland, restoring the natural movement and vitality of the dunes. Although the project initially faced resistance and underwent extensive discussions, the results have been overwhelmingly positive. The dunes have transformed into healthy, climate resilient, and dynamic ecosystems where biodiversity now thrives and coastal safety is enhanced.

Reintroducing these natural processes has also provided an extra benefit: combating nitrogen deposition, one of the greatest environmental threats in the Netherlands. Inspired by Zuid-Kennemerland’s success, other dune areas across the country have begun implementing similar measures to rejuvenate their landscapes, adapt to climate change and address biodiversity loss.

### Creating a ‘fitter future’?

The visit to Zuid-Kennemerland revealed an essential truth: building a fitter future requires bold, visionary thinking. The idea of reintroducing bison to a densely populated dune landscape may have seemed daring, even improbable, as was opening the first dune row. Yet, the projects’ success has proven that such leaps of faith can yield extraordinary results.

When asked about her dream for the future, ‘bison manager’ Esther shared an inspiring vision: being late for work because a bison blocked her driveway. Her words encapsulate a larger idea – sharing our spaces not just with other humans, but with all living beings. It’s about creating room for those pushed to the margins and recognizing that coexistence enriches our world.

This inspiring story sets the stage for Sheffield, reminding participants that daring to dream big can lead to transformative change.

The journey to Sheffield was bridged by the Sustainability Express, on the Eurostar – a climate change game, taking learning from the field trip where participants were invited to step into a new role as they discovered ‘EUROPARCland’...

## EUROPARC Sustainability Express Climate game

On Tuesday 19th November participants took the Eurostar to London. They stepped on the train not as themselves, but as residents of EUROPARClan!

### What's the story?

The residents of EUROPARClan are worried. The future of their area is uncertain. The consequences of climate change become increasingly noticeable. All they want is to sustain the beauty, safety and economic value of their area. And preferably make it even better! But interests differ and the solution is complex. Until now all attempts to make their area fitter for the future have failed. Therefore the mayors want to try a different approach. They will lead an integral planning session with the most important roles in their area. Where there is room for understanding, discussion, negotiation. And most importantly, where you can only leave once a full fitter for the future plan is

### How does it work? Play the game!

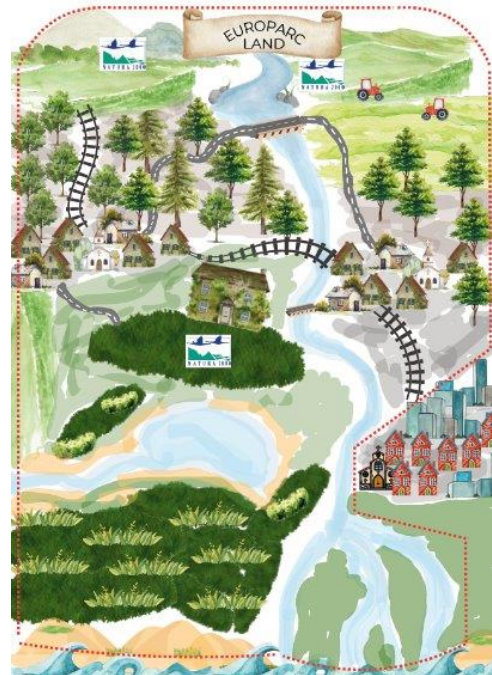
Goal: to deliver a fitter for the future plan for your area

Step 1: define vulnerabilities and opportunities for your role and area

Step 2: Define adaptation measures and a 'fitter for the future plan'

### Where?

In EUROPARClan! EUROPARClan is made up of farmers, foresters, water managers and many other citizens. There is an upland and a lowland village, that each have their own mayor.



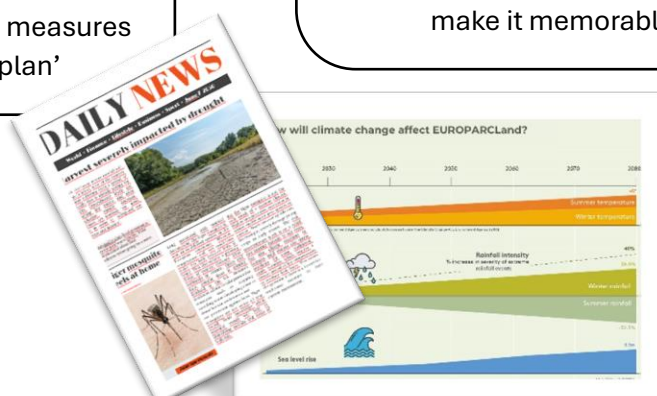
### Rules and tools

- Role play cards
- Climate change information
- EUROPARClan map
- Adaptation measures cards
- Budget (10 euros) to spend



### Why?

- To encourage out of the box thinking ('step in other shoes')
- To learn more about dealing with complex challenges
- To promote sustainable travel and make it memorable



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They concluded from the EUROPARC Sustainability Express climate game, that:

- We are part of a bigger system

*Measures taken by one team were influencing the other team. Also, some innovative ideas were exchanged that needed support from different roles. By cooperating the teams were achieving their goals with lower costs and mutual benefits.*

- Dare to step in each other's shoes

*Participants brought their roles alive on the train from Brussel to London. This gained more insight and empathy for other interests. Participants found out it was fruitful to search for and start from a common ground.*

- Build innovative business cases with respect for local social values

*Adaptation to climate change often costs money and the participants only had limited budget. By proposing innovative business cases they were tempting the bank for additional funding. Having respect for local values contributed to support from the other roles in the area.*

- Timescale is important

*When it comes to climate change effects timescale matters. Sometimes immediate action is needed and sometimes there is still time to adapt. The tip was to integrate this time puzzle in an updated, more elaborated version of the game.*





# Feedback from Webinars

## Working Landscapes

### What we heard

- **Blanaid Denmen RSPB** set the framework. National Food Strategy 20% of land delivers 3% of calories. Small farms making a loss
- **Andrew Parry-Norton – New Forest Commoner** -Talked about Pannage pork branding helped through the National Park strategy and issues with encouraging graziers and public understanding of grazing horses.
- **Naomi Oakley** – Embraced farming with nature and a diverse mix of enterprises makes farm viable

### Key take aways

- Cultural heritage, traditions of small family farms underpin and are part of the fabric of the national park
- FIPL has made a difference highlighting a broader set of opportunities for farm business. Good facilitation and one to one support is key
- Policy – for it to work to achieve outcomes for nature and people and secure farm businesses needs to be strong/good direction and supportive
- Are we talking to ourselves? How is this relevant to a wider population of people who engage with National Parks?

## Flourishing Communities

### ‘A playground for the rich – enabling living working landscapes to be affordable and relevant to resident populations’

“I was very proud to see this webinar on our conference agenda – when the average salary for a young person is around £17,000 and the average house price in national parks is £356,000, we, as protected areas must be doing all we can to ensure that everyone can live and thrive in our landscapes. It’s such an important subject and these projects and presenters are brilliant examples of how we can continue to build inclusive landscapes for everyone”.

### What we heard

**Dr Margaret Flaherty from LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature.** A 9-year project ending in 2029 led by the department of housing and local government and heritage. This projects primary focus is on 35 natura 2000 sites to conserve and improve the quality of habitats in the northwest of Ireland - particularly the blanket bog.

There was a need to restore blanket bogs – but with a lack of resources, who was going to do this? A results based agri-environment payment scheme was introduced, linked to the quality of the habitat on farmer’s land. The habitat is given a score, directly links to the amount paid. The higher the score, the higher the payment.

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The scheme gives farmers the skills and resources to restore the habitat on their site. And empower local people to care for local sites. It's also about ensuring that they are resourced to do so and are also paid for their time. Farmers then take control of the ongoing management of the restoration by organising their own local volunteer groups to carry out the ongoing restoration work. They lead their own outreach by engaging with local schools and teaching local children about this habitat. This ongoing project management is also paid for by the scheme. 2 million investments with 40 jobs and a hope to roll out to all blanket bog sites,

**Leslie Silverlock representing Exmoor Young Voices** - Made a point that he was not one of the young people involved with EYV because this was an afternoon webinar and young people are working.



EYV is a voluntary group of young people from across Exmoor tackling issues that young people face on the moor – including housing, transport, unemployment and local wages.

Biggest campaigns/projects is around housing. Exmoor has 940 people aged 18-30 760 of them still live at home and it has one of the higher rates of unemployment across the UK national parks.

Of 5,500 homes on Exmoor, 1000 of them are empty – due to the rise in popularity from air b and bs, second homes, and simply not having the people that can sustain a life there. New project in the local area building new builds 93sq2 homes, but these aren't suitable for the lifestyle you need to live and thrive in Exmoor. No porch for wet weather gear/no space to store chainsaw equipment/push chairs/grow your own vegetables – not suitable for a young working family.

EYV set up a self-build project initiative providing free advice and support for individuals and families interested in building their own homes. They got the support of local estate agents, lawyers and planners to create and designate 23 self-build sites for young families within the park boundary.

Some key advice:

- Evening meetings at 5:30 instead of 7:30/8pm
- Moved childcare up the agenda, created a safe environment so young parents can bring children to meetings

They currently work in partnership across industries and are the perfect example of how effective partnership working can be and have on their side Somerset Council, Stags estate agents, Comic relief, and they're also sponsored by a pub where they hold their AGM's. That's the way to do it!

**Brian Taylor – the Head of Planning for the peak district**, gave a thorough overview of the planning landscape in the Peaks. They're in a very different landscape to Exmoor but still going through some of the same issues. Air b and b popularity growing, the cost-of-living crisis and

## Fitter for the Future 2030

housing all reasons why they are working hard to create affordable living and working landscapes for their residents.

The

Peaks have "thriving communities" as part of the Peaks Partnership plan, assessing the holistic needs of local people in the peaks. To achieve this, they are looking at:

- reconsolidate housing partnerships by getting everyone round the table again –from housing associations, local groups, parish councils and having those conversations on how they can help.
- use of language when advertising housing – not everyone understands the connotations around 'starter homes' and are addressing the fact that building design required to fit in with the local landscape can add costs and price young people out of the local housing market.
- improving local facilities, we all know how important public transport is, as some of you know from taking the sustainability express – but that's not always an option in many of our rural landscapes. So transport is a real priority for the Peaks.



### Key take aways

Include everyone in the conversation and at every level. Co-creation is a very important way of working in our sector.

- If we are to truly create affordable, living working landscapes need everyone on board and everyone to feel that their voice is heard. What works for one person doesn't work for another. We must be talking to young people about how we can help and not just assume we know what's best. They/us are a huge resource. Support your youth voice groups not just at the ground level but throughout your organisations.
- Try things, pilot projects, don't worry if they don't work. Something Leslie made a huge point about was to make sure we are trying new things, working in different ways. Just because we've done something one way forever doesn't mean it's the right way to do things now.
- Put our communities at the heart of what we do. Combatting climate change is a team effort – we need everyone on board and everyone involved. If we are to do that then we



need to make our protected landscapes truly accessible places for people not to just to visit but take care of in the long term too and that comes by listening to them and working collaboratively.

These were all very different projects but all with that key theme of local places for local people. Just brilliant examples of what the different parts of our sector can do to make living and working landscapes affordable and not just a playground for the rich.

### Making the case

#### What we heard:

- Different approaches to managing designated and non-designated protected areas
- Strengths and weaknesses of each

#### Santtu Kareksela- Metsahallitus

- Detailed data and evidence-led analysis of protected areas
  - Identification of cost-efficient areas for nature restoration
  - Private & public lands
  - Negotiation and compensation for private owners
- PriodiversityLIFE

#### Mike McClure - Landscapes Northern Ireland

- Network of 16 landscape organisations, with dedicated lead officer
- Representing landscapes at government level
- Little or no core funding, largely project-based
- Designated vs. non-designated
- *'Manifesto for Landscapes in Northern Ireland'*
- Legislative change needed to strengthen protected areas

#### Catherine Mealing-Jones Bannau Brycheiniog NP

- National Park designated in 1957
- Different landscape partnerships and designations within the Park
- Management Planning using 'Doughnut Economics' model
- Government expectation to be exemplars in tackling the nature and climate emergencies
- What are National Parks for? ...becoming more politicised
- Issues to be addressed takes NP beyond the boundary – housing, energy, transport

### Keynote Speaker Erika

Erika outlined and wondered at how she came to be standing talking to the conference in Sheffield as somebody from Romania talking to a UK group that had a long history of protected areas. Erika outlined the route she had taken to answer why this was the case through her varied experiences in Romania and Europe and using the lesson learnt and mistakes made that we all might share and utilise, mainly using her experiences from Romania.

Erika identified 5 key points about Central Europe

- Lots to conserve and very few human and other resources
- Only 25 years of protected area management
- Huge need for conservation management
- No political will
- Very low public awareness

In Romania, Pro park a Romanian NGOs identified training and building capacity of the Scientific and Consultative councils that were formed under protected area law, but people were just not interested in being involved in training.

To address this, they did three things

- Built platform for a centre of excellence for Nature through protected areas for all groups including scientific and consultative councils
- Organised events to enable people to network and meet thus providing informal learning
- Started Future leaders for Conservation and started youth Scientific and Consultative councils. Not working yet but has started to inspire young people to gain further education.

Pro park tried to promote a philosophy of working together and developing strategic planning in different sectors but no real take up but again still working on it

A big challenge is how to get nature thinking into government and political thinking. Erika used the example of when in 2016 they had to have a technical government and Erika was asked to be Minister of Environment. She thought hard and decided that the NGOs and environmental sector were always criticising government and using phrases such “they should have done” and here was a chance to do something different. So, she took on the role which was the biggest and hardest challenge of her life.

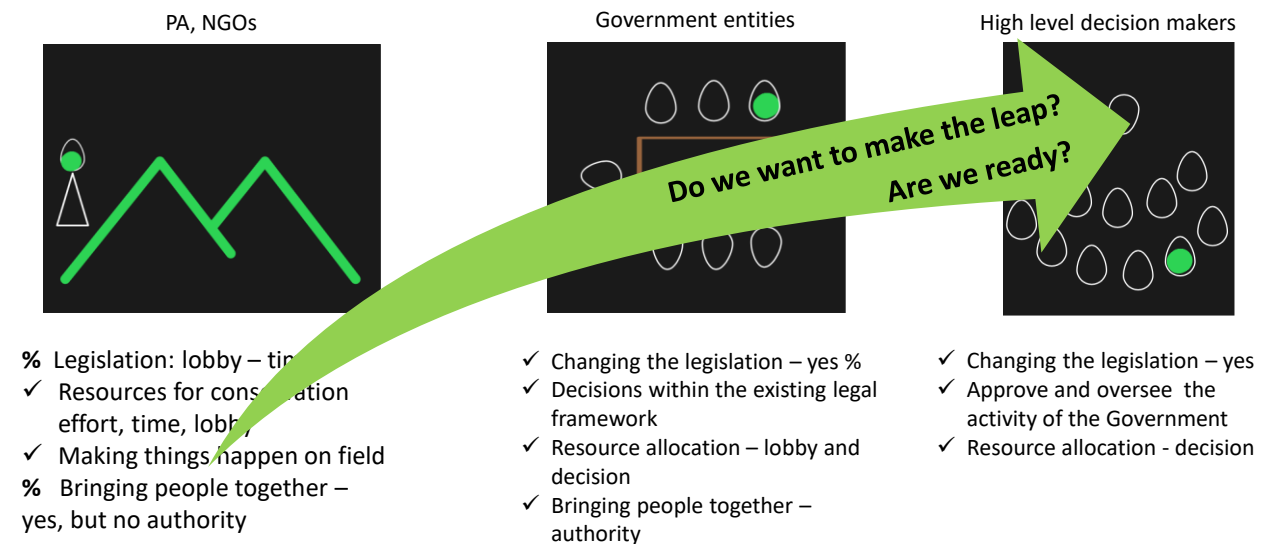
Erika outlined one example on virgin forest, were in Romania there was a ministerial order to protect the primeval forest, but nobody cared and some ignored and cut down the forest as owners new that at some time in future the law would be fully enacted

They tried to find way to prevent this happening further and in partnership with others developed and used the Virgin Forest Catalogue as a tool that successfully protected the forest. They also managed to enact EUC compensation payments for conservation and environmental services

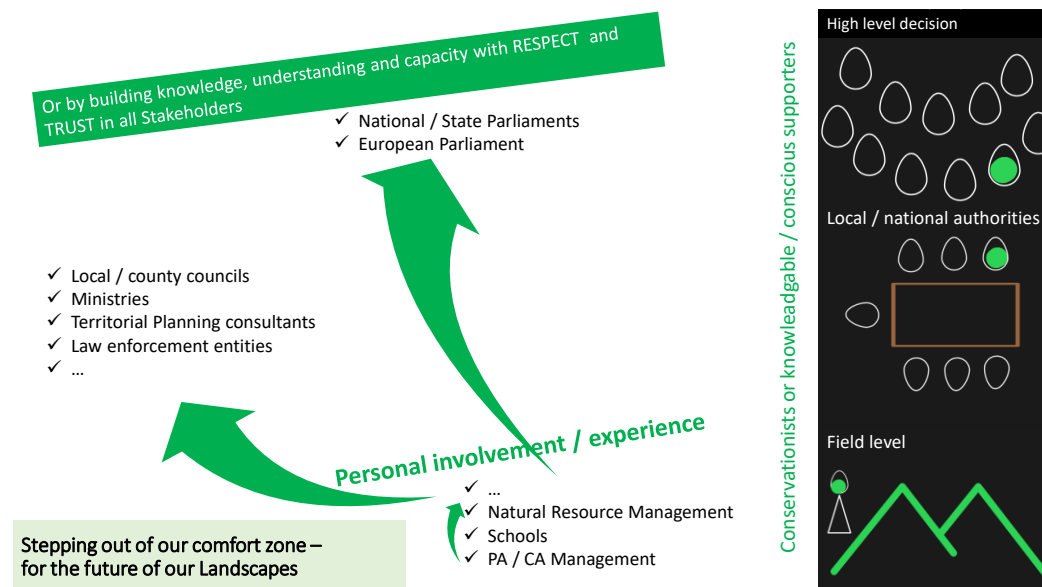


by the very fact that there were more “green heads” around the table in government.

### From civil efforts to decision making



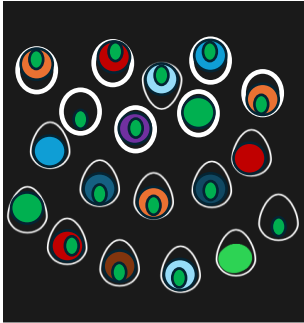
**Lesson learnt** is that we need to be more proactive with all the stakeholders and work together with more green heads. Erika asked the question are we green heads ready to go into politic wonderful to sit around the tables that make decisions. It’s scary but we should get involved at different levels



What should we do about protected areas, the world is changing, should we keep them as they are. They are model areas and show how we can work with nature



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But for the future we should not just have the green heads but many different heads around the table all who have a little bit of green as well to keep our protected areas relevant

We need to find a balanced

### Can we find the balance

Between "old" ways and new technologies?  
To provide continuity, to build!

Virtual world  
Bringing Nature to People, not necessarily People to Nature  
AI  
New technologies

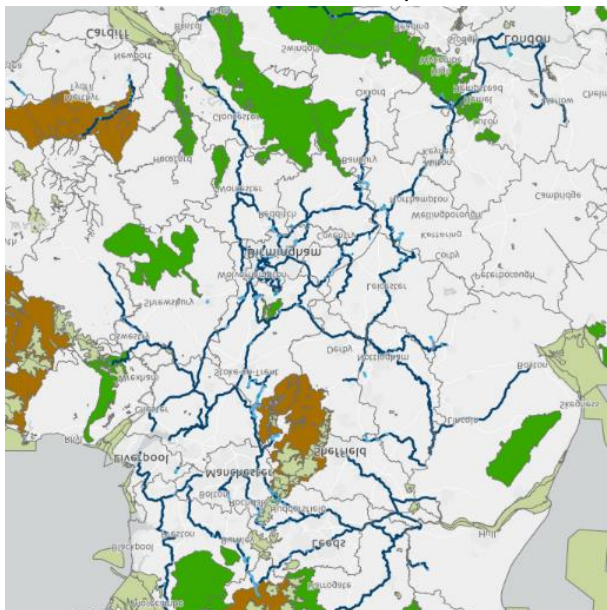


### Pecha Kucha 15 Mins presentations on a different idea.

#### Canals and Rivers Trust (CRT) –

We have a 2000-mile, multifunctional network of rivers, canals, docks and reservoirs across England & Wales. We've been on a continuing journey, as custodians of this network, to maintain and improve them, engage communities, and demonstrate their value.

In 1997- Adrian Colston then at Beds, Cambs & Northants WT- engaged with Dartmoor National Park- wrote a paper 'Conserving Wildlife in a Black Hole' for the journal ECOS. It showed an area with no Protected Landscapes, National Parks and less than half the national average of



SSSI's. The map showed a large part of lowland England- Its old- and much has happened since- but in the current context of 30\*30 commitments etc- the data can be looked at differently.

Overlay this black hole, on our network of canals and rivers: with Protected Areas- Nat Parks, Protected Landscapes, Special Areas of Conservation are the colours are around the edge- and in the black hole space- most of the canal and navigable river network. That's no accident- human history, geology and economy shaped it- they were transport routes linking towns, cities, agricultural/mineral production to markets.

State of Nature Report shows that – in urban or rural areas, nature isn't doing well. And the challenge for Nature Recovery is everywhere- not just current Protected Areas/Sites

The canal and river sides are semi-natural habitat features, ribbons of multiple habitats, close together, accessible freshwater, grassland, woodland and scrub; and post-industrial structures- running through nature-poor urban and rural contexts. These features now provide ecological connectivity and connection to nature poor urban and rural areas. These marginal spaces are where nature can recover *from*- into the wider (semi-natural) landscape

We have begun discussions (Canal & River Trust, National Highways, National Trails and Network Rail) called the 'Linear Nature Network'. So- what are doing here? What are the challenges? What have we learnt to do- that can help you?

The location of this network impacts millions of people: 9m people living within 10-15mins walk; 8m people in urban areas. Overwhelmingly- those people acknowledge their importance to their areas. As a charity- having those people value and actively contributing to their canals- not just passively enjoying, is essential. These mini-landscapes pass through urban areas- with diverse groups, who could benefit from access to green/blue space.

Here are some of the ways we've done it...

## Fitter for the Future 2030

- Encouraging access is more than physical- you need to work on the reasons (for example) why black women tend not to do water-based activities? Find out what these barriers are, tackle them, and change the narrative. That's what we've done in with Sport England support in Nottingham creating "Swim Sistas". . Unlocks these spaces for people who otherwise are marginalised, but now able to get the wellbeing benefits of being by water and blue/green space.
- Wellbeing Programmes in many urban areas- Food growing- reconnecting and maintaining those marginal spaces at the edge of the towpath. New groups are actively helping maintain these spaces.
- With Postcode Lottery support- many urban areas have had Community Roots programmes and officers- engaging with local communities who might not value their
- Young people- though our Explorers schools programme - including paddling- has helped enjoy the benefits of being by water, while helping tackle litter and plastic pollution.



- Businesses- these 'floating ecosystems' in urban Nottingham, offices nearby, and employees voted for this use of their annual charitable funds to pay for it- softening the hard grey urban landscape. Many other 'corporates' enjoy activities and contribute in various ways to these spaces (examples this year in Nottingham)

Volunteers- helping survey for signs of the endangered water vole : as part of our Vole Patrol (Unlocking Biodiversity Project- funded by GCRF , STW). Volunteers helping establish the marginal habitats so important for water vole, and many other species. This is part of the essential maintenance work needed to keep these landscapes alive.

Finally- Contact with nature- the *experience* not necessarily the rarity of the plant or animal itself- the 'Unexpected in the Everyday'. Canals provide easily accessible places for these experiences- Nature Recovery is – and starts with personal change- people actually being affected by nature. The canal network can then be the gateway to further environmental concern and action elsewhere.



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### Dales and North York Moors youth voices on Flourishing Communities

The whole presentation has been recorded and to fully appreciate the quality and meaning of the group watch the 13 min presentation [here](#)

National Parks should be places where everyone can thrive—but for many young people, enjoying these landscapes feels out of reach.

Only 6% of visitors to National Parks in England are under the age of 25. Children and teenagers today are growing up less connected to nature than any previous generation.



Beyond that, rural communities are struggling with a lack of local jobs, training opportunities, and affordable housing. How can young people stay in their communities when they can't afford to live there? And how does heritage live on if young people are being pushed out of the villages and towns they were born into.

And with no consistent way for youth to have a voice in shaping the future of these spaces, why



don't all National Parks have something like **Youth Voice** or a **Youth Council**? And why are barriers still so apparent for young people?

The heritage and culture of our protected landscapes is so important, but how can we as a generation protect this if we are being forced away from the

places we know? Who will pass on rural skills and knowledge if we can't grow up surrounded by it.

From those who have grown up in National Parks, to those who've never even visited, we need to ensure National Parks are accessible to all young people—so we can help protect, inspire, and enhance these places for generations to come.

We are the future of National Parks. It's time to make sure our voices are heard are barriers are broken.

Together, we can make changes, so the future of National Parks can flourish.

## Fitter for the Future 2030

We need to make our landscapes more accessible for all young people, so we can flourish to inspire, protect and enhance our National Parks for years to come. We are the future of National

Parks.

- A transition to sustainable travel to and from National Parks
- Combined and local authorities and others to use their powers and investment in the infrastructure and services needed for net zero transport and energy.
- implement some form of reward scheme for certain miles travelled via public transport for tourists
- increase bus times for commuters

Here are a few of the solutions suggested

We are talking about some big barriers to flourishing communities, particularly of young people, in National Parks. We know these are not easy fixes, and you might be sat thinking ‘well

National Parks don’t control house prices, can’t increase council tax on second homes, and don’t even set our own budgets’.

There are things National Parks, can look to change as employers, in the short term, to help alleviate the symptoms of these big barriers, while we work on addressing the causes in the long term.

- Many young people want to work for National Parks, but this can be really hard to do if you don’t already live within the area. We know National Parks have stretched budgets, reflected in salaries, and try to offer attractive benefits instead. But are these benefits equitable? Are they enough to bring young people into the area and into these roles? Some benefits, particularly salary sacrifice schemes, are often inaccessible for entry level roles, which are already disadvantaged in having a lower salary. Does your mileage claim policy disadvantage those who already live further away from the office and already incur higher commuting costs? Do you have diverse perspectives in the team which decides those benefits, or might you need to consult with young people?
- Can we be bold? This presentation is outlining how much of a barrier housing is - can National Park look to secure housing, perhaps from existing holiday homes, to run as HMOs available for young employees who would otherwise struggle to move into the area? This could be a more accessible alternative to the relocation packages offered for permanent, higher-level roles.



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- Apprenticeships are amazing opportunities that give hands-on experience and the opportunity to gain a qualification all the while working and earning. They are great for young people to be able to set foot into the working world as jobs down the line can often be difficult without years of experience.
- However, there are many barriers young people face when accessing green apprenticeships.



- One of the biggest barriers to being able to take on an apprenticeship is the pay. Despite being in full time education and taking on generally the lowest pay apprentices still need to pay council tax unlike college or university students. This makes moving from home to take on an apprenticeship really difficult let alone trying to support dependents.
- Because of the low pay, many apprentices will need to live further away from work in more affordable areas often outside the national park. If public transport was reliable this would be an option but often times the timetables don't line up with the working day if there is a bus or train at all! This puts more added costs on to be able to buy and run a car. If a young person doesn't have a car or is too young to be able to drive they will have to rely on other people to get to work.
- This limits the diversity of individuals that are able to apply, often to people who are privileged enough to already live within National Parks and have access to a car.
- Whilst ultimately National Parks set their pay for employers, they're are faced with massive pressures due to the funding from DEFRA. Especially the lack of budget increase in line with inflation. This makes funding for apprenticeships often rely on external funding which is unstable and not long term.
- National Parks have no future without young people and without more support funding apprentices there will come a time where there is a massive gap in our workforce.



## Fitter for the Future 2030

### Housing

- Housing in protected areas is often out of a young person price range
- Those within range often a distance away from park
- Lack of rental properties

#### How is this issue being tackled by the Yorkshire Dales National Park?

- Plans to develop affordable housing in Threshfield/Grassington
- Target of 50 houses per year between 2025-2040 - which sets out policies to guide what development can and can't take place within the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

### Schools

- Lack of young people and families in the NYMNP means that schools are already seeing a decline in pupil numbers
- 7 schools have less than 30 students on roll - will they be at risk of closure?
- More schools that risk closure will lead to the area being less attractive and appealing to young people wanting to settle down and start a family in the NYM.
- Helmsley has seen a development of 45 new homes between 2020 and 2022 - you can see the positive impact this has had on the capacity of Helmsley CP school. If small plots of affordable housing can be built across the NP, this has the scope to positively impact our small, rural primary schools by enrolling more students and therefor securing jobs and futures.

## Monitoring to Deliver Healthy Ecosystems (DHE)

In Scotland there are 1800 protected areas hosting about 5500 designated features, in total about 18% of terrestrial Scotland

Given the current nature and climate crisis and NaturScot's ambitious targets to halt the loss of nature by 2030 and to restore it by 2045, including our 30x30 commitment, we have an opportunity to review how we do things – can we do things better?

And we've come to the conclusion that, yes. We can.

- Currently a quarter of our features are in unfavourable condition after more than 20 years of our current approach.
- Analysis of pressures and threats in protected areas show that often they operate at scales beyond the site boundary such as invasive species and over grazing, which will require landscape scale action – this is often missed when we apply our monitoring to only the site scale.
- We are struggling to cover the 18% currently protected, a recent statistic shows that 44% of our features have not been fully assessed in 10 years.
- With climate change and the need to monitor increasingly dynamic habitats just compounds to the problem.

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With all of that in mind – it's clear to us that something has change as at the moment, our current approach is a featured based approach.

- Site – Features – Attributes – targets (pass/fail) = Condition
- Each of our 5500 features are monitored independently and often in isolation of each other

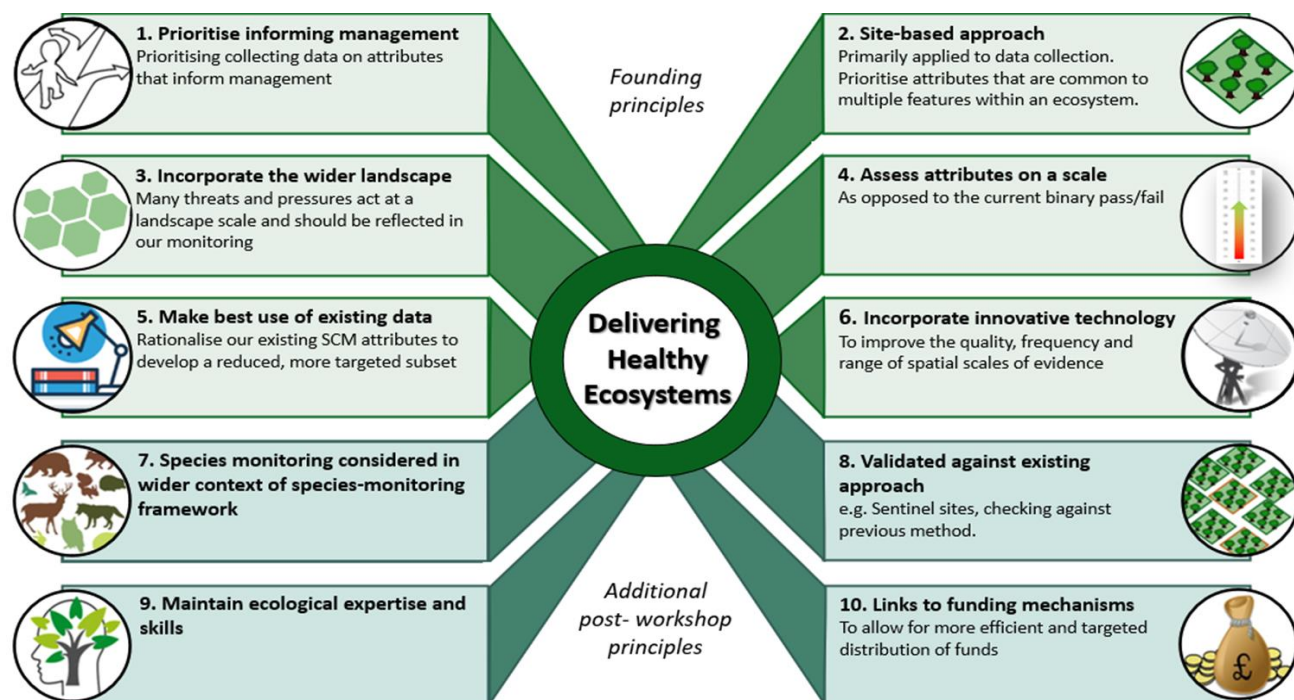
Looking towards reform.

- It needs to be affordable and well managed, but it's clear that we need to reshape our monitoring approach giving a more consistent coverage across Scotland to see the bigger picture across the land/sea scape
- To enable the restoration of our ecosystems at pace and scale enabling us to meet our ambitious targets for nature by more directly informing practical conservation, while being applicable to OECMS and compatible with future reporting requirements.

Which leads us to DHE – Monitoring to Deliver Healthy Ecosystem – the program of work to deliver protected area monitoring reform in Scotland

2 years ago we went through an 8 month consultation which resulted in 10 guiding principles for reform.

To summarise the principles:



- The ambition with DHE, is to move to a site level assessment that prioritises informing management by emphasising and focusing on the pressures that drive change.
- We want to incorporate evidence from the wider landscape into our site level assessments to look pressures at more appropriate scales - and also look at species

monitoring at more appropriate scales. What we mean by that is we want to start asking the question is the protected area scale the best way to monitor this species, for some it will be, for others a wider species monitoring framework would be more appropriate

- It's important that we have a clear link with the various management and funding levers, to really tighten up the links with monitoring outcomes and restoration outcomes.
- We want to harness new and emerging technology and take advantage of third-party data, while reaffirming our ecological expertise and relationships with land managers.
- To take our guiding principles and turn them into a coherent national monitoring program, we decided to develop a high-level delivery framework.

The framework we've been working with is a cycle made up of 4 'loops'. We've struggled in other versions to get the terminology right, but here we've named each loop after the main question it's asking.

### Management priorities Loop

- Starting at the top left, The first loop is asking 'What are the management priorities?'
- This is where we review what is already known about a site. I.e. what is its current state, what are the priority pressures and threats, what does prior monitoring tell us?
- But also, an opportunity to look towards the future, and build a consensus of what we want the area to achieve both long and short term.

Then looking at the second loop - 'Is positive management happening?'

- When we speak to colleagues and partners, what we often hear that required management for one reason or another hasn't happened.
- This is where we want to establish if positive management is or isn't in place, but also to take it a step further and identify the barriers to that management being in place, which we feel will become a really powerful reporting tool.





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Then, say we have evidence that management has taken place, the next step is to see its effective

- Are the known pressures that we outlined earlier in the process, reducing?
- We also want some kind of mechanism that identifies new or emerging pressures that need to be addressed.

Then finally – Say we have evidence positive management is in place, and we have evidence that the pressures have reduced, the next step is to assess whether that is having the intended impact and see if nature is responding. Is the site moving towards its overall objectives, with more state focused metrics.

Some of the key takeaways

- By breaking up the monitoring into these four loops, it means we can prioritise and focus our monitoring on a case-by-case basis. We've made re-evaluating conservation objectives a key part of this approach.
- While we've depicted it in a cycle – it's not necessarily a linear process. One of the areas we're working on as a team is to develop a decision tree, which is working through each loop, step by step and highlighting what decisions and scenarios you might come across and what might raise a red flag for re-evaluation – which may in turn affect what you decide to do next.
- Another key aspect of this framework is how it tilt out current approach on its head a bit by putting management first and then having the monitoring be responsive to that. We haven't necessarily got it all figured out – One critical area that needs more consideration is species monitoring. While this approach is emphasising wholesale site restoration, and focusing on the big drivers of change, there is room for this kind of monitoring in theory

We haven't got it all figured out yet – we're taking an iterative approach, with continuous development – hoping to test some of it out in various pilots next year.

Examples

- If the conservation priorities aren't clear, maybe there's conflicting features, we should focus on loop 1
- If we know what needs doing – have they already implemented that, if not why. It would be best to focus on chipping away at barriers
- If we know what needs doing and we know positive management is in place, but the pressures aren't reducing then maybe the best use of our resources is to focus on tweaking management rather than continue to monitor the state of an area that continues to be under pressure

### Workshops

#### Sustainability express

The Sustainability Express game findings were shared with the workshop.

We asked workshop participants what is needed for protected landscapes to be fitter for the future, focusing on four key questions and participants agreed that:

- What do you want to leave behind from now and not experience in the future?
  - Intensive land use, polarisation of views
- What do you want to preserve now and take to the future
  - Heritage and community, biodiversity and wild spaces
- What is it you want but don't have now, what dreams do you have that inspire the future?
  - Inclusive communities, living and working in a National Park, holistic and balanced management of the place, collaboration, more youth involvement and a nature rich landscape
- What is stopping your dreams becoming reality?
  - Lack of power for change and resources to make a difference

#### A solution focussed approach to navigating consenting and licensing challenges during delivering of 30x30

The context of the workshop was set with the following:

1. Lots of folk have been working really hard for a long time, but nature is still in decline
2. The rate of decline won't be fixed by incremental gains
3. We need to act at Scale and Pace to tackle nature's decline
4. Systems / Organisations create challenges, not the individuals whose role it is to uphold them



#### The workshop looked at the following



Examples of where challenges have been met or overcome

What are the challenges we face delivering work in these areas

Next steps – network mapping and deep dive workshops on 4 broad themes in December and January

Coastal/ intertidal  
Peatland restoration  
Priority Terrestrial habitat  
Freshwater systems

### International designations - UNESCO designations – add-ons, or alternatives or just another approach to protected landscapes?

The workshop looked at the similarities and differences as well as the pro's and cons of the two designation followed by looking at how the two can work together and what we can do differently to maximise the benefits of the two designations

#### Similarities and Differences between a BR and a NP?

##### **Biosphere Reserve**

- International
- Non-statutory
- Short-term funding
- Regional policy footprint
- Bottom-up (and top down)?
- Enabling role (no powers and function)
- Charity
- Weaker brand?

##### **National Park**

- National and international
- Statutory
- Longer-term funding
- National policy footprint
- Top down (and bottom up)?
- Enabling and regulatory powers and functions
- Visitor management
- Public body
- Stronger brand?

Key designations among protected landscapes – what does this say about us?

#### Key outcomes from discussion

- Very low awareness of operational detail of UNESCO
- Scope for learning from UNESCO approach e.g. zoning to deliver sustainable development; regular and international review and sharing of good practice; community-based organisations etc
- Why are international protected landscape “lite” approaches proving popular (at least in Scotland) compared to traditional national protected landscape approaches?
- Should we be doing more to bring together the UNESCO and protected landscapes within the EAI/EF family?

### Panel Discussion

#### The Panel

- Nick Halfhide (NH) – Naturescott
- David Drake (DD)–Natural England
- Neil McIntosh (NM)EUROPARC Federation
- Hermione Pocock (HP)Yorkshire Dales National Park

#### Question 1

##### **Anything that's happened today that you think is a great idea?**

NH – The need to have people living and working on the land where there is huge opportunities and some well-paid jobs, but unless you have communities that are functioning and places to live, we will not have a living landscape

NM – Totally agreed with NH and the youth voices blew me away. The issues they raised are common across Europe and if we are going to have a more sustainable and fitter for the future, we cannot do that without the energy, vision and input of young people. Don't give up.

Really enjoyed the opening exercise on psychology of tribes. At a European level our work involves mobilising people, and we should think about different aspects of ourselves

HP – National Park branding of products and this helps bring protected landscapes to people and helps promote nature friendly farming

Waterways wellbeing from CRT and growing food along towpath and bringing nature to people in urban area

DD – Giving young people a voice and ensuring it's a voice that is influential and that drives change is what we really need to achieve

Upskilling and apprenticeships, we can all support, but it's how can we help them to be leaders quickly whilst they are young to achieve the first point. Would be great if our boards all had young people on them, because their perspective and ability to act as a critical friend is well developed and well understood

Presentation from CRT and access to nature and linking and governments desire to have nine river trails and how we could compliment that with existing blue network to make better inroads into urban centres to connect people out



### Question 2

#### **What do you think would be most difficult to move on, change or influence**

NF – starting big - and it is around the question of who decides what happens on a piece of land? This comes up regularly when talking with farmers, local authorities and landowners. On the international stage you hear a lot about indigenous communities and then when translated to Europe we mostly think we don't have them except possibly the Samis, but there is an interesting concept there on who does the land belong to. In UK it belongs to the landowner but one of the things we have to grapple with is bringing in local communities with the governance of land in protected areas or not, and we need to do that more and quicker as the need is going to be more urgent as climate change hits home. We need our land to be delivering greater resilience, and I don't think we really go there. Scottish government has tried through its land reform programme. We have a lot of community buy out of land and new legislation that large owners of land need to produce a plan that has public consultation, but these are only touching on really difficult but important areas which we will all have to look at in the future.

Take inspiration from indigenous communities who are fighting to have some communal control or say over the natural resources which they rely on directly for income or for land management such as flood alleviation etc.

Big subject in which we as a community need to show more leadership in.

NM – supported all NH had said. Something we do a lot in Europarc and that we are all guilty of in talking to ourselves. Yes, we are. Has been said for so long and why this is and why are we not doing do it. We have to be more proactive and just do it.

The youth Voices listed a whole tranche of social issues that I felt we need to be more enabling to help them and enable them to participate by thinking how and when we do things. Young people are regularly saying we are here we can do things, hear us, listen to us we are committed and passionate with good ideas. If we cannot get the young people who are passionate about where they live and engaged, enabled and empowered to work for those areas we are going nowhere. It's not unsolvable or irreversible and we should be the ones to make it happen

HP – It took a lot of effort of the young people to get the presentation together and be present as everybody has different lives and schedules but we did it and great to collaborate with two Yorkshire National Parks. They have the drive.

Also thought that Erika's suggestion of conservationists as politicians. It's really needed but a big barrier. Maybe need training for conservationist to do public speaking and influencing

NM – totally agree but as conservationist we cannot think in a silo or "fortress protection" we will never be able to achieve what we want by thinking in the box and we need to put ourselves out there and working with local and national politicians.

DD – Complex regulation and misaligned remits of regulatory bodies making and undermining multi outcome projects and causing projects to become single outcome and losing cost effectiveness because regulatory system does not recognise a multi outcome world. You would think in a world where we had a land use framework and local nature recovery strategies that might help. But a long way to go and a lot of regulatory reform

### Question 3

#### What will you personally take away and do differently

NH – what this event has reinforced in me and that I have been doing but need to do much more of is to get invited to speak to the MSP's. Several years ago, I was asked to talk to MSPs about Nature Conservation. One of the biggest barriers to Nature conservation in Scotland is housing because there are really good jobs in Nature conservation advertised. People apply then turn them down as they cannot get housing. That is going to be even harder as we have fantastic jobs in offshore renewables with great salaries, so nature people get less money. We need people and the single biggest restriction is housing.

NM – Europarc already committed to courses on competency to enable people to do their jobs better such as communication, stakeholder engagement which can be learned. We need to think about we can broaden scope of capacity building relating to the social dynamics that can tackle such issue and building a training course to do this.

HP – Related to her job and thinking about nature related places on people's doorsteps increase that engagement and to improve her skills in advocating for young people in protected areas.

DD – Job title is Director for Connecting people with nature and thinks it should be connecting Nature with people, and it fundamentally shifts the dynamic of who you are trying to shift and who your audience is. NE is undergoing strategy review and there is something quite strong about empowering Community lead, shaping and delivering nature recovery which is not new. Thing he really wants to do is what does that really mean and what are we and the partners we work with really going to do. What is the balance of enabling, empowering, letting go. What does that really mean. A fundamental shift and achieving something in many more place and want to be part of this and spear head. Going to change job wording.

#### Comments from Audience

Supported housing needs to be wider and look at many types of living accommodation and there is much resistance in protected areas to alternative housing.

In Yorkshire Dales 3500 houses are second homes and its the politicians that have caused problems. Selling off council houses to second homes and holiday lets which causes loss of transport and shops. This will take a major force to change the mentality. YD 2017 came in with policy that they want to increase council takes and planning constraints on second homes because cannot have situation where building 50 houses per year and 200 disappearing to second homes. The councils and communities pushed back to the extent that many of the second homeowners who were influential resisted the change.

It will be a mega fight. It will be complicated, and we need to know what we are doing.

NH gave examples where interventions helped to reverse more affordable housing built in 2 national parks than outside them. NP are forces for good. Huge movement of communities there that buy land of private estates in the Western isles and 60% of the land is now owned by communities and taken control and enabled by legislation such as Harris so is possible if legislation and funding in place.

**Erika** pointed out the difference of rights and obligations of ownership and we need recognise if we own land, we have obligations

#### Who decides is quite a fundamental thing

### Keynote Speaker Julian Glover

Julian introduced himself and the background to being there today including that he was the Chair of the National Landscapes review in 2019. There was an overwhelming response to the review, and although there was some fantastic work done, we should still not be satisfied with what we have at the moment. It falls far short of what can be achieved and what the people of our country want.

The feedback from the original review should that people felt that the original drive and founding mission for landscape protection had been eroded and now with a lack of ambition, in a changing world, has led to the decline in diversity of the natural environment

The job of Protected areas including National Parks has grown since the 1940s, as well as that of the need of nature alongside those of people. I'm not saying the review I helped lead had all the answers, but it had some, and they matter now just as much as when we reported a few years back. I'm not going to go through all the review findings, which some of you may have read and might or might not agree with it. It's online if you want to look but I think lots of the broad principles still stand.

I want to touch on something deeper that connects all we try to do and suggest this is the route to getting things done. It's thinking in the way we didn't start with, which is just to draw 2 overlapping circles nature and people and focus on the joining up and always stick to that idea. Don't have a nature section and then a human engagement section there maybe times that conflicts exist but we must constantly think of how we can bring the two together because we don't face a choice between more nature or more better human life and economic success. We need to work for both if we lose sight of one in the end, we will lose both. The future of nature depends on people understanding protecting it just as people can't survive without a healthy natural environment to support our long-time life. That is the unique dual job of protected landscapes and something they are best placed to do than anyone else in our country to make it happen. It's an opportunity, it's the job and mission of national parks in law to work for people and for nature.

Now we shouldn't be ground down by the list of woes I set out to earlier, we just need to keep setting out the absolute importance of the cause and the **subtraility** of protected landscapes in achieving it. Being really clear of the job they are there to do in serving the nation, not just the local area, not just specifics, not just local sites, individual cases but the big cause that they are there to do, Protected Landscapes are national bodies their tasks are national and if we get that right we can be confident that we'll get change rather than stasis and decline.

Now I'm sure it's true around the world, that the tasks are the same and not just England. It also means that the cause of protected landscapes is more vital than ever, and they have the potential to get more public backing than ever and be more successful than ever too. We can only really take that opportunity if there is change in the way landscapes work and describe themselves and talk to people and communicate to justify their special place. They do need to step up to be a national cause as well as a local one

Because of this, the sorts of places protected landscapes need to cover has to change too. In the report I mentioned earlier Dower focused on what he called the wilder areas particularly the

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uplands of the North and West in places like the Peak District and many more, but that isn't where people are always, and we need to better connect with people and make this cause part of many more people's lives so we do need a wider shared cause that can embrace national parks and national landscapes which is the centre of the Landscapes review but also wild green belts, urban landscape, the East of England as well as the West. The places where all people and all backgrounds and nature can come together.

Responding to a society that has changed deeply since 1950s when Sheffield first got a National Park at the top of the Abbeydale and Ecclesall roads. If we get this right and it can be part of healing divisions in our country, and I've cared deeply about the risk that nature in the environment rather in the place that brings people together landscape countryside can be a thing that divides people we get conflict rather than a sense of shared ambition. In many places were in the middle of that he debates about land, nature farming and people as we saw on the streets of London earlier this week. I think people who care about nature in the countryside could risk-taking sides and almost exaggerating their internal divisions the wild and dreamers of artistic natural idols facing the muddy boot is realistic to try to make a living on the land. Both complain about being misunderstood by the other, farmers say environmentalists don't understand them, and environmentalists quite often worry at that the consequences of farming.

I was just thinking about the slide there thinking there's lots of sense in what we were just seeing but how do you explain that to a farmer who's living on a small wage and trying to get going and the task is to get that theory into practical action and not make a resentment. Certainly, environmentalism can often lapse into acronyms and graphics and they matter but they may be considered it strange to farmers. Really both groups can complain about being misunderstood and complain about protected landscapes in the middle all the while failure to spot the much more profound threat to the countryside to nature to access that comes from those who don't care about what happens there at all which includes parts of government and parts of business. Not all of government and not all of business but that tension is there and the threat is real. Crude economic interest pushing nature and the countryside aside.

I've been involved in a conference run called "Future countryside" that are trying to bring together different points of view different groups, young people, businesses, farmers and NGOs to realise what we have in common and how we can learn from each other rather than fall apart within our shared cause and I think national landscapes can be one of the places where he can heal the division. The opportunity is there, now the solution you won't be surprised to hear me say is some of what we called for in a review. A protected landscape movement that looks upwards and outwards and joints things up looking beyond the boundaries of each park and each special site and beyond the focus on planning thinking about improvement in biodiversity, beauty and landscape,

Natural capital all the things that we know matter. All the thing we ended up in 2019 with the review -there's been a bit of progress inside government but not enough it's quite good progress inside protected landscapes trying to do things despite does government, but probably more could be done there too, and I know resources are tough. It's what needs to happen and it's got to be the future if these bodies and if these organisations are going to really play the job we need. Dower found out in the 1940s t these things take time, it took him 5 or 6 years to get



National Park set up, it took 20 years to get 4 of the AONBs set up, it was 30 years to get formalisation and national parks to become bigger authorities these things don't happen fast but he kept fighting for his cause and it did pay off in the end that I think it's what we have to do now so thank you very much a good luck with the rest of the conference I'm sure we can get the change we need but we need to explain it to people outside the movement we need to show what we can do for everybody and most of all I think they need to show that we could bring nature and people together and not end up in a few times battle between the 2 which isn't going to help either side thank you.

## 60 seconds of Fame – Outcomes of Conference Summarised

### *Learning and Sharing*

- Inside protected landscapes we need to create opportunities for sharing good practice and success stories, as well as perhaps times when things that didn't go so well. This needs to be for all members of the community right down to the youngest people, in order to support them to develop skills and experience rapidly, and also highlight the importance and benefits the EAI and Europarc network brings.
- Create a more coherent approach to apprenticeships
- Communicating and engaging with people at events like this one between practitioners and sharing this learned from case studies and cooperating across projects.

### *Not talking to ourselves*

- A recurring theme during the conference has been the question of: 'are we just talking to ourselves?' It is really important that we extend our voices beyond protected landscapes boundaries and protected landscape communities. By convening with wider audiences we will invite challenge and establish common ground, influence and inspire a wide group of people and ultimately develop solutions to deliver landscapes to people which are robust and inclusive.
- We need to be proactive and get out of our echo chamber and make conservationists, decision-makers or politicians advocates for conservation in non-conservation areas i.e more Green Heads
- We also want to listen to the people in those non conservation areas and understand why they are not engaging. Can something be done differently and what is the shared story between us and them.
- We need to be aware of our language and we need to listen more.
- So, we've highlighted the importance of relationships. Partnerships and relationships within and outside the organisations where we work, between landowners and land managers, and also outside of protected area boundaries for land and seascape scale issues.

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## Youth

- An overriding message from this conference has been the importance of youth engagement. The youth of today will solve the problems of our current crises and an important action point is to create Youth Voice Teams in our National Parks and national landscape areas. Sustainability in our National Park.
- We need to build a youth voice into the structure in all our organisations and celebrate what's being done by the pioneers to inspire others.
- We want diverse entry-level opportunities and promote green careers as a whole.
- A solution needs to be found for low-cost housing for young people and low-income earners in our National Parks and Protected landscapes. We also need to keep setting our vision of Nature and people moving together looking upwards and outwards beyond our boundaries

## Diversity

- We want to amplify the voice of all diverse groups of people. A variety of voices need to be heard on all levels, from National Park Authorities, to Parish Councils, national governance and youth voice networks.
- We want to encourage those with personal experience and field knowledge to become decision-makers and to be engaged. Our plan is to raise the voice of diverse individuals to speak up and help care for protected landscapes.
- We want to embrace diversity and different people in the room in these conversations with strong and common goals. We want to break through this status quo, this cyclic nature of conservation in practice, actual real delivery that focuses on inspiring, visible examples and in that way, we will attract different people, private investors, and public blended finance into nature recovery.

## Communities and Listening

- We need to put community's 1<sup>st</sup> and be able to integrate the feedback we get from them. Build the capacity in our sector towards community led processes to ensure there is a widespread support of our protected landscapes.
- Let protected landscapes become a glue to bind communities together and as a sector spend more time looking outwards.
- Supporting communities to feel empowered and knowledgeable about nature, and educating and involving the public in countering misinformation and put more emphasis on outreach and understanding communities that aren't engaging in protected areas
- Rather than telling people what to do we simply want to burst the bubble by asking: what do you want?

## Communication and influence

- We want to look at new ways to influence and educate those around us to aid the protection and future of our nature and our communities to include positive messaging, what protected areas are delivering, and what can be delivered. It's not all gloom and doom.

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- The need for networking and personal connections to help move projects and thinking on. A huge amount of work is done through building relationships often on the side of projects and meetings
- We need to remember the green heads and to have influence we need more green heads in the decision making and political process
- We need to be more mindful in our approach. We need to ask more questions and tell We need to recognise the importance of storytelling and understanding. If the future has no story the past will determine what happens. Make the environment and backbone and core message

### *Non designated sites*

- At various points in the conference, we have been reminded that all landscapes matter. Wouldn't it be great if protected landscapes developed relationships with green belts and urban areas so that all landscapes are fit for the future.
- We also need to not undervalue the importance of non-designated areas and their contributions to biodiversity in their own context, for example Local Nature Reserves.

### *Finally*

- Keep listening, keep asking, and keep going!

## Appendix 1

### Current apprentice and traineeships offered

Organisation	course	level	length	college	information
YDMT	Countryside Worker	2	18 months	Craven, Skipton	Run cohorts, find employers to take on, additional funds to subsidise employment & training (eg Lantra tickets), funded by grant support
ECT	Livestock Technician Countryside Ranger	3 4	18 months 18 months	Kendal/Myersco' Bristol	Hosted at Low Becks Rotation placements with partners through Cumbria Connect
LDNPA Fell Futures	Apprentice Project Manager Environmental Cons Countryside Worker	? 2/3 2	4 years  18 mths – 3 years	Uni of Cumbria  Askham Bryan	Full time job, hosted by LDNPA
National Trust	Placements from Uni	Undergrads	4 months	Various?	Support dissertation research
Wyre Rivers Trust	Traineeship	?		Some training at Edgehill	Offered 'on the job'
Lancs W T	Traineeship	?	Av 1 year		Entry level project officer roles, funded via project grants, role specific training eg quad bike, OFA, wildlife ID, chainsaw
YDNPA	Apprenticeships?  Traineeships	?	?  1 year		With YDMT & Park's own apprentices – wildlife, planning, admin & communications NLHF New to Nature, have £800 training



# Appendix 2

## Pecha Cucha

### Canals and River Trust

We have a 2000 mile, multifunctional network of rivers, canals, docks and reservoirs across England & Wales. We've been on a continuing journey, as custodians of this network, to maintain and improve them, engage communities, and demonstrate their value. I'll show you some of these-and opportunities to learn and collaborate- but FIRST, to set the scene on this network in the context of landscape and nature recovery.

In 1997- Adrian Colston then at Beds,Cambs & Northants WT- now Exeter University engaged with Dartmoor National Park- wrote a paper 'Conserving Wildlife in a Black Hole' for the journal ECOS. It showed the area with no Protected Landscapes, National Parks and less than half the national average of SSSI's. The map showed a large part of lowland England- most of you here represent areas outside this hole I guess?. Its old- but it helped (then) justify the start of large-scale habitat re-creation- eg Wicken Fen for the WT. This is where enclosure led to modernised agriculture, and industrial growth led to urban expansion. Much has happened since- but in the current context of 30\*30 commitments etc- the data can be looked at differently.

Overlay this black hole, on our network of canals and rivers: The Protected Areas- Nat Parks, Protected Landscapes, Special Areas of Conservation are the colours are around the edge- and in the black hole space- most of the canal and navigable river network. That's no accident- human history, geology and economy shaped it- they were transport routes linking towns, cities, agricultural/mineral production to markets.

More clearly here. The 'black hole is crossed. They reach into the uplands- providing diversity there- but mostly spreading from the lowland Midlands .

Now- while you can play with data, the recent State of Nature Report shows that – in urban or rural areas, nature isn't doing well. And the challenge for Nature Recovery is everywhere- not just current Protected Areas/Sites

Zoom in- this is what those lines are- Mostly- note water- but semi-natural habitat features, themselves industrial relics, colonised and refuges for nature in a more barren landscape. ribbons of multiple habitats, close together, accessible freshwater, grassland, woodland and scrub; and post-industrial structures- running through nature-poor urban and rural contexts. Hedgerows- planted to protect stock 250 years ago- but immune to the pressures of farmed land, or urban construction. Scrub and woodland- shelter and refuge to species. Scrub – woodland edge- is known now to be very important for many species- growing on the 'embankments and cuttings' of these artificial structures. These features now provide ecological connectivity and connection nature poor urban and rural areas. These marginal spaces are where nature can recover *from*- into the wider (semi-natural) landscape

Filling in the gaps of the map- we called the black hole earlier- by improving, joining up from these margins. In your wider Protected Landscapes- think how these can and to contribute...

We have begun discussions (Canal & River Trust, National Highways, National Trails and Network Rail) called the 'Linear Nature Network' .

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SO- what are doing here? What are the challenges? What have we learnt to do- that can help you?

The location of this network means it does impact millions of people: 9m people living within 10-15mins walk; 8m people in urban areas. And overwhelmingly- those people acknowledge their importance to their areas. As a charity- having those people value and actively contributing to their canals- not just passively enjoying, is essential. Here are some of the ways we've done it....

These mini-landscapes pass through urban areas- with diverse groups, who could benefit from access to green/blue space.

The location of this network means it does impact millions of people: 9m people living within 10-15mins walk; 8m people in urban areas. And overwhelmingly- those people acknowledge their importance to their areas. As a charity- having those people value and actively contributing to their canals- not just passively enjoying, is essential. Here are some of the ways we've done it....

Encouraging access is more than physical- you need to work on the reasons (for example) why black women tend not to do water-based activities? Find out what these barriers are, tackle them, and change the narrative. That's what we've done in with Sport England support in Nottingham

Last years first cohort- of 'Swim Sistas'- now confident to be able to enjoy our water-based and waterside activities. Unlocks these spaces for people who otherwise are marginalised, but now able to get the wellbeing benefits of being by water and blue/green space.

Another example - but similar initiatives from our Wellbeing Programmes in many urban areas- Food growing- reconnecting and maintaining those marginal spaces at the edge of the towpath. New groups are actively helping maintain these spaces.

With Postcode Lottery support- many urban areas have had Community Roots programmes and officers- engaging with local communities who might not value their waterway In Leicester- the canal and river run right through the City. South Asian groups- through schools, and Diwali 'festival of light' celebrations- are creating new cultural connections with that waterspace .

Young people- through our Explorers schools programme- are reconnecting in new ways with their canal spaces. Our programmes of Wellbeing activities- including paddling- has helped (in this case a local football team) enjoy the benefits of being by water, while helping tackle litter and plastic pollution.

Businesses- these 'floating ecosystems' in urban Nottingham, and other urban sites and been funded by businesses- Coca Cola European Partners, Severn Trent Water, and also the Transforming Cities Fund, and (next year) Species Survival Fund

They've an office nearby, and employees voted for this use of their annual charitable funds to pay for it- softening the hard grey urban landscape. Many other 'corporates' enjoy activities and contribute in various ways to these spaces (examples this year in Nottingham)

41 and Red list species. Pic inc heathland restoration- Purple Horizons

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Nature is under threat and a sharp focus on conservation action and habitat enhancements connecting our landscape is integral to stabilise these declining populations and move towards species recovery.

One of our challenges is the spread of invasive species- like Hydrocotyle- Floating Pennywort. We have regular groups of volunteers all over the network- Towpath Taskforces who do all kinds of jobs and are absolutely critical. Here they're helping with paddle clubs (working with Paddle UK and other partners) and are absolutely key to control and eradication. Working with landscape partners on Mink; and a 4 year year project funded by severn trent in the Midlands to deliver invasive reduction and eradication inc biological control.

Partnership with CABI (formerly Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux) to introduce biocontrol of the North American Weevil to control Azolla (an invasive water fern) and the South American weevil to tackle Pennywort on our network

Volunteers- helping survey for signs of the endangered water vole : as part of our Vole Patrol (Unlocking Biodiversity Project- funded by GCRF , STW)

An example as part of the same project- volunteers helping establish the marginal habitats so important for water vole, and many other species. This is part of the essential maintenance work needed to keep these landscapes alive.

Hedgerows- here maintained and renewed by volunteers – trained in the traditional craft of hedgelaying- managing 100's of metres each year. The classic semi-natural landscape feature: key to canals (to prevent stock drowning when the canals were built)-and we have 100's of miles of them have been protected from the longer term threat of agricultural intensification. The benefits of this habitat extends out into the adjacent countryside...

Finally- Contact with nature- the *experience* not necessarily the rarity of the plant or animal itself- the 'Unexpected in the Everyday'. Canals provide easily accessible places for these experiences- Nature Recovery is – and starts with personal change- people actually being affected by nature. The canal network can then be the gateway to further environmental concern and action elsewhere.

So- you've seen some of what we've learnt to do in that 'Black Hole'- BACK TO THE MAP. The network does actually extend into some Protected Landscapes- around the edges- Do you work in these places?

So- you've seen some of what we've learnt to do in that 'Black Hole'- BACK TO THE MAP. The network does actually extend into some National Landscapes and Nat Parks- around the edges- Do you work in these places?- We'd like to discuss partnership opportunities

### Dales and North York Moors youth voices on Flourishing Communities

The whole presentation has been recorded and to fully appreciate the quality and meaning of the group watch the 13 min presentation [here](#)

National Parks should be places where everyone can thrive—but for many young people, enjoying these landscapes feels out of reach.

Only 6% of visitors to National Parks in England are under the age of 25. Children and teenagers today are growing up less connected to nature than any previous generation.

Beyond that, rural communities are struggling with a lack of local jobs, training opportunities, and affordable housing. How can young people stay in their communities when they can't afford to live there? And how does heritage live on if young people are being pushed out of the villages and towns they were born into.

And with no consistent way for youth to have a voice in shaping the future of these spaces, why don't all National Parks have something like Youth Voice or a Youth Council? And why are barriers still so apparent for young people?

The heritage and culture of our protected landscapes is so important, but how can we as a generation protect this if we are being forced away from the places we know. Who will pass on rural skills and knowledge if we can't grow up surrounded by it.

From those who have grown up in National Parks, to those who've never even visited, we need to ensure National Parks are accessible to all young people—so we can help protect, inspire, and enhance these places for generations to come.

We are the future of National Parks. It's time to make sure our voices are heard and barriers are broken.

Together, we can make changes, so the future of National Parks can flourish.

We need to make our landscapes more accessible for all young people, so we can flourish to inspire, protect and enhance our National Parks for years to come. We are the future of National Parks.

- A transition to sustainable travel to and from National Parks, reducing visitor travel emissions to near zero by 2050.
- Combined and local authorities and others to use their powers and investment in the infrastructure and services needed for net zero transport and energy.
- Tourists visiting the National Park are unaware or have no incentive to use public transport. We think it may be beneficial to implement some form of reward scheme for certain miles travelled via public transport. (Points system, reward at the end).
- Our current buses operate on limited services, mainly travelling to hotspot routes. If we are to increase industry and opportunity to work within the park boundaries, we should



supplement that with the ability to commute via public transport, slowing down potential congestion during rush hours.

- Young employees who are unable to live within the National Parks have no choice but to commute long distances. The average commute across our parks combined is around 40 miles. Only after our commute are we able to claim back mileage.
- We are talking about here some big barriers to flourishing communities, particularly of young people, in National Parks. We know these are not easy fixes, and you might be sat thinking 'well National Parks don't control house prices, can't increase council tax on second homes, and don't even set our own budgets'. But there are things National Parks, can look to change as employers, in the short term, to help alleviate the symptoms of these big barriers, while we work on addressing the causes in the long term.
- Many young people want to work for National Parks, but this can be really hard to do if you don't already live within the area. We know National Parks have stretched budgets, reflected in salaries, and try to offer attractive benefits instead. But are these benefits equitable? Are they enough to bring young people into the area and into these roles? Some benefits, particularly salary sacrifice schemes, are often inaccessible for entry level roles, which are already disadvantaged in having a lower salary. Does your mileage claim policy disadvantage those who already live further away from the office and already incur higher commuting costs? Do you have diverse perspectives in the team which decides those benefits, or might you need to consult with young people?
- Can we be bold? This presentation is outlining how much of a barrier housing is - can National Park look to secure housing, perhaps from existing holiday homes, to run as HMOs available for young employees who would otherwise struggle to move into the area? This could be a more accessible alternative to the relocation packages offered for permanent, higher level roles.
- Apprenticeships are amazing opportunities that give hands-on experience and the opportunity to gain a qualification all while working and earning. They are great for young people to be able to set foot into the working world as jobs down the line can often be difficult without years of experience.
- However there are many barriers young people face when accessing green apprenticeships.
- One of the biggest barriers to being able to take on an apprenticeship is the pay. All apprentices regardless of their age or circumstance, for the first year, can get the apprentice wage. This is currently just £6.40 per hour. Despite being in full time education and taking on generally the lowest pay apprentices still need to pay council tax unlike college or university students. This makes moving from home to take on an apprenticeship really difficult let alone trying to support dependents.
- Because of the low pay, many apprentices will need to live further away from work in more affordable areas often outside the national park. If public transport was reliable this would be an option but often times the timetables don't line up with the working day if there is a bus or train at all! This puts more added costs on to be able to buy and run a

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car. If a young person doesn't have a car or is too young to be able to drive they will have to rely on other people to get to work.

- This limits the diversity of individuals that are able to apply, often to people who are privileged enough to already live within National Parks and have access to a car.
- Whilst ultimately National Parks set their pay for employers they're faced with massive pressures due to the funding from DEFRA. Especially the lack of budget increase in line with inflation. This makes funding for apprenticeships often rely on external funding which is unstable and not long term.
- National Parks have no future without young people and without more support funding apprentices there will come a time where there is a massive gap in our workforce.

Housing in the Yorkshire Dales and the surrounding areas is often out of a young person's price range (include average house prices).

- Houses within price range are often a significant distance away from the park, making it difficult for those who wish to live and work there.
- Lack of rental properties is also a challenge for young people who may not be in a position to buy (stats on rental properties in the NP).
- Young people struggle to compete with those buying second homes and cash buyers.

### **How is this issue being tackled by the Yorkshire Dales National Park?**

Plans to develop affordable housing in Threshfield/Grassington.

More plans - can someone who works for YDNP please inform??

- Target of 50 houses per year between 2025-2040 - which sets out policies to guide what development can and can't take place within the Yorkshire Dales National Park.
- Lack of young people and families in the NYMNP means that schools are already seeing a decline in pupil numbers - there's been a drop of 457 students in the last 7 years.
- With 12 schools seeing a drop in students since 2017 and 7 of these schools have less than 30 students on roll - will they be at risk of closure?
- More schools that risk closure will lead to the area being less attractive and appealing to young people wanting to settle down and start a family in the NYM.
- Helmsley has seen a development of 45 new homes between 2020 and 2022 - you can see the positive impact this has had on the capacity of Helmsley CP school. If small plots of affordable housing can be built across the NP, this has the scope to positively impact our small, rural primary schools by enrolling more students and therefore securing jobs and futures.

### Suggestions for the Future

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## Monitoring to Deliver Healthy Ecosystems (DHE)

In Scotland we have 1800 protected areas hosting about 5500 designated features.

In total that makes up about 18% of terrestrial Scotland

Given the current nature and climate crisis and our ambitious targets to halt the loss of nature by 2030 and to restore it by 2045, which includes our 30x30 commitment, we have an opportunity to review how we do things – can we do things better?

And we've come to the conclusion that, yes. We can.

- Currently a quarter of our features are in unfavourable condition after more than 20 years of our current approach.
- Analysis of the pressures and threats in our protected areas show that often they operate at scales beyond the site boundary such as invasive species and Over grazing, which will require landscape scale action – which is often missed when we apply our monitoring to only the site scale.
- We are struggling to cover the 18% currently protected, a recent statistic show that 44% of our features have not been fully assessed in 10 years.
- With climate change and the need to monitor increasingly dynamic habitats just compounds to the problem.

So with all of that in mind – its clear to us that somethings gotta change.

So, at the moment, our current approach is a featured based approach.

- Site – Features – Attributes – targets (pass/fail) = Condition
- Each of our 5500 features are monitored independently and often in isolation of each other

And looking towards reform.

- Yes it needs to be affordable and well managed, that's a given, but its clear to us that we need to reshape our monitoring approach that it enables more consistent coverage across Scotland to let us see the bigger picture across the land/sea scape

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- And to enable the restoration of our ecosystems at pace and scale so that we can meet our ambitious targets for nature by more directly informing practical conservation, while being applicable to OECMS and compatible with future reporting requirements.

We are struggling to monitor the 18% we have effectively – a recent stat showed that 44% of our features have not been fully assessed in the last 10 years

Which takes us to DHE – Monitoring to Deliver Healthy Ecosystem – the program of work to deliver protected area monitoring reform in Scotland

I'm not going to go through them in detail, given the time constraint. About 2 years ago we went through an 8 month consultation which resulted in these 10 guiding principles for reform.

To summarise the principles though:

The ambition with DHE, is to move to a site level assessment that prioritises informing management by emphasising and focusing on the pressures that drive change.

We want to incorporate evidence from the wider landscape into our site level assessments to look pressures at more appropriate scales - and also look at species monitoring at more appropriate scales. What we mean by that is we want to start asking the question is the protected area scale the best way to monitor this species, for some it will be, for others a wider species monitoring framework would be more appropriate

Its really important to us that we have a clear link with the various management and funding levers, to really tighten up the links with monitoring outcomes and restoration outcomes.

We also want to harness new and emerging technology and take advantage of third-party data, while reaffirming our ecological expertise and relationships with land managers.

So in order to take our guiding principles and turn them into a coherent national monitoring program, we decided to develop a high-level delivery framework.

So heres the framework. We've been working on this since about August, on its second iteration, having gone through an internal process for feedback. The framework is a cycle made up of 4 'loops'. We've struggled in other versions to get the terminology right, but here we've named each loop after the main question its asking.

### Management priorities Loop

- Starting at the top left, The first loop is asking 'What are the management priorities?'.
  - This is where we review what is already known about a site. I.e. what is its current state, what are the priority pressures and threats, what does prior monitoring tell us?
  - But also an opportunity to look towards the future, and build a consensus of what we want the area to achieve both long and short term.

Then looking at the second loop - 'Is positive management happening?'.

- When we speak to colleagues and partners, what we often hear that required management for one reason or another hasn't happened.



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- So this is where we want to establish if positive management is or isn't in place, but also to take it a step further and identify the barriers to that management being in place, which we feel will become a really powerful reporting tool.

Then, Say we have evidence that management has taken place, the next step is to see its effective

- Are the known pressures that we outlined earlier in the process, reducing?
- We also want some kind of mechanism that identifies new or emerging pressures that need to be addressed.

Then finally – Say we have evidence positive management is in place, and we have evidence that the pressures have reduced, the next step is to assess whether that is having the intended impact and see if nature is responding. Is the site moving towards the its overall objectives, with more state focused metrics.

Some of the key takeaways

- By breaking up the monitoring into these four loops, it means we can prioritise and focus our monitoring on a case by case basis. We've made re-evaluating conservation objectives a key part of this approach.
- While we've depicted it in a cycle – its not necessarily a linear process. One of the areas we're working on as a team is to develop a decision tree, which is working through each loop, step by step and highlighting what decisions and scenarios you might come across and what might raise a red flag for re-evaluation – which may in turn affect what you decide to do next. For example if you know what needs to be done and theres no management in place, do we want to go out and monitor state in an area we know is still under pressure. We are suggesting that maybe we want to instead, go back to loop 2 for example and really hone in on adjusting that management.
- Another key aspect of this framework is how it tilt out current approach on its head a bit by putting management first and then having the monitoring be responsive to that. We haven't necessarily got it all figured out – One critical areas that needs more consideration is species monitoring. We recently went out to speak to Scottish Environment Link and one of the questions was, what about Twin flowers – They need additional interventions beyond habitat restoration, they need translocations to help out with the genetic bottleneck. How do species like that fit into this approach? Well what we've been thinking is that, it would be identified in the conservation objectives in loop 1 as a site specific intervention, the rest of the information we collect in the other loops would just adjust to that. So while this approach is emphasising whole sale site restoration, and focusing on the big drivers of change, there is room for this kind of monitoring in theory

We haven't got it all figured out yet – we're taking an iterative approach, with continuous development – hoping to test some of it out in various pilots next year.

Examples

## Fitter for the Future 2030

- If the conservation priorities aren't clear, maybe there are conflicting features, we should focus on loop 1
- If we know what needs doing – have they already implemented that, if not why not. It would be best to focus on chipping away at barriers
- If we know what needs doing and we know positive management is in place but the pressures aren't reducing then maybe the best use of our resources is to focus on tweaking management rather than continue to monitor the state of an area that continues to be under pressure

### Further reading:

- Ross, B. and Genney, D. (2024) *Protected Areas Monitoring Reform* (SAC/2024/03/03). Scientific Advisory Committee meeting – 18th March 2024 – 67th Meeting.  
<https://www.nature.scot/doc/scientific-advisory-committee-meeting-18-march-2024-67th-meeting>
- Davidson, L., Genney, D. and McGrory, S. (in press) *Monitoring to Deliver Healthy Ecosystems in Scotland's Protected Areas, Workshop Feedback Report 2023*. NatureScot Research Report 1351.
- The team's webpage where project progress will be posted:  
<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/site-condition-monitoring/looking-future>
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## Thanks

### To our Funders

Nature Scot  
Natural England  
National Parks and Wildlife Services  
Earnest Cook Trust

### Site visit Organisers

Cathy Hopley  
William Cormacan  
Tim Duckmanton  
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### Support Team

Hermione Pocock  
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Cathy Hopley  
Phoebe Smith  
Tim Duckmanton

### Conference Organiser

Anita Prosser

To Peter Rawlings for starting the initial idea



