

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SOUTH DEVON NATIONAL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE AND VIA ZOOM
ON FRIDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2025**

1. INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Those present were:

Cllr Georgina Allen	GA	South Hams District Council
Cllr John McKay	JMc	South Hams District Council
Cllr Louise Wainwright	LW	Devon County Council
Doug Eltham	DE	Devon County Council
Cllr Christine Carter	CC	Torbay Council
Dave Shorten	DS	Environment Agency
Becky Hughes	BH	Natural England
Peter Sandover	Chair	Independent
Richard Snow	RS	National Trust
John Martin	Vice-chair	University of Plymouth
Jane Nichols	JN	Representative: community or voluntary groups
Leah Harris	LH	Representative: landowning and farming
Peter Hinchliffe	PH	Representative: parish and town councils
Laura Campbell	LC	Representative: tourism

National Landscape staff attending:

Roger English	NLM	NL Manager
Vanessa Gray		NL Office Manager (meeting assistance & notes)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Drew Powell	South Hams District Council
Cllr Jacqueline Fry	Devon County Council
Tracy Brooks	Torbay Council
Chris Avent	Plymouth City Council
Matthew Odgers-Brown	Forestry Commission
Pete Moore	Representative: business community
Richard Stones	Representative: coast and marine
Ed Parr Ferris	Representative: environmental organisations (NGOs)

Observers:

Observers were requested to follow the meeting live via YouTube.

2. PUBLIC STATEMENTS

No public statements.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No conflicts of interest declared.

4. MINUTES OF THE 19 SEPTEMBER 2025 PARTNERSHIP MEETING FOR APPROVAL & ANY MATTERS ARISING

4.1. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PARTNERSHIP MEETING HELD 19 SEPTEMBER 2025

Proposed: Doug Eltham

Seconded: Cllr Louise Wainwright

Resolved: No objections, the minutes were approved.

4.2. Matters arising:

- i. The Management Plan Vision Workshop covered the Special Qualities set to some extent.

There is some Special Qualities work with Tracy Brooks, specifically to do with Brixham Urban Fringe, the latest Local Plan and evidence the base for landscape character.

ACTION 1 (NL Manager): Contact Tracy Brooks at Torbay Council.

- ii. Management Plan – The NL Manager has submitted a letter to Defra for a six month extension beyond the 31 December 2025 deadline.

iii. Access for All, Removing Barriers

Accessible picnic benches

- a. Ten sites have taken this up and more can now be made available in this financial year; news of this will be sent round to parish councils.
- b. Work is underway to add accessible picnic bench locations to the SDNL website.
- c. Peter Hinchliffe gave his thanks on behalf of the parishes that have received these benches from the SDNL using Defra's Access for All funding.
- d. The NL Manager requests that Partnership members let him know of any Access for All projects worth pursuing as soon as possible.

ACTION 2 (all): Let the NL Manager know of any suitable A4A projects as soon as possible.

- iv. Plymouth Plan for Nature and People – via EWCO, landowners are incentivised to establish woodland close to settlements and to provide site access. Additional contribution (i.e. above and beyond capital costs and maintenance) available £3,700 per ha.

- a. **ACTION carried forward:** Matthew Odgers-Brown to ask the Woodland Officer to send details of the scheme to Cllr Jacqueline Fry.

v. Undergrounding of Overhead Power Lines

ACTION carried forward: Forward potential locations for undergrounding to the National Landscape Manager.

- vi. National Landscapes Association position statement on housing

ACTION carried forward: Not yet finalised so the action to circulate this is carried forward.

5. PARTNERSHIP CHAIR'S REPORT

Item 5 in the papers provided a summary of activity over the last few months undertaken on behalf of the National Landscape Partnership by the Chair, Peter Sandover.

Partnership members are recommended to note the report and are encouraged to provide brief reports where possible in advance of scheduled meetings to assist with the Partner updates agenda item.

The Chair read out a supplementary report

- i. Last Wednesday I attended a presentation at East Portlemouth parish hall arranged by a local farmer, James Jones of Rickham Farm explaining his sustainable and organic farming strategies working with a range of Defra programmes and most recently wild flower planting with the National Trust and Life on the Edge, Sam and Nicky of LotE and Emma of NT gave good engaging presentations to a large audience of farmers, land owners, parishioners and the local community. A very effective way of engaging the community.
- ii. **Feedback from the National Landscapes Association Chairs and manager's conference:**
 - a. Good presentations, sharing information with other National Landscapes particularly on Dark Sky strategies, nature-based solutions to flooding and Nature Recovery.
 - b. **Nathalie Prosser Chief Executive Officer of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)** which holds government and other public bodies to account on protecting and improving the environment - conclusion not doing well, so lots of scope for improvement. Specifically relating to Protected Landscapes, Place Matters, messages on climate and nature particularly net zero and biodiversity do not at present cut through. 'We spend a lot of time talking to ourselves' rather than engaging with broader audiences.
 - c. **Richard Hebditch** Better Planning Coalition- helping us wade through a plethora of legislation. Clearly ongoing pressures on National Landscapes. The statement from Steve Reed Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to 'Build Baby Build' is reverberating through government departments and creating unresolved tension between deregulation and planners. There is effective lobbying for deregulation. The Protected Landscapes challenge is to respond in a positive way to win public support.
 - d. **Mary-Ann Ochota President of the CPRE** - A prospective and provocation of the National Landscape -10 things to consider:
 - Not enough people know what National Landscapes are (many think it's the National Trust)
 - Terminology confusing to the public
 - Beauty doesn't help, nor does tranquillity -nature looks and feels different for everyone
 - Are we doing a Mick Hucknell? (holding back the years!)
 - Inclusion should be our core business
 - Celebrate cultural diversity
 - More collaboration

- Despite the complexities keep our message simple (elevator pitch)- a hopeful and joyful message
- There are over 100 rural MPs- we need to engage them more effectively
- A change in mindset is needed

e. **Ruth Larby Head of Policy and Advocacy National Landscapes Association** - addressing the challenges leading and shaping a proactive narrative about National Landscapes. Addressing ongoing pressures on National Landscapes, Local Government Reorganisation, Funding Reform, Legislation and Policy Reform, a second Planning and Infrastructure Bill and possible Nature Bill. The need for a governance review was included in the Glover Review. The presentation and discussion led to a resolution at the AGM for the NLA to 'explore options for building increased autonomy and resilience into the NL Operating Model'.

iii. **Succession Planning:** In March I will have completed my 3 year term. I and Vice Chair John Martin are up for reappointment or otherwise. I am happy to put myself forward to continue but cannot commit to a further 3 years, nor do I want to get in the way of others wishing to take up the role. John has been Vice Chair for a number of years and on the Partnership for some 15 years and is stepping aside but his input and our valuable links to Plymouth University are not lost as he will remain the representative of the University on the Partnership. We want to create an opportunity for existing members and others to move into these roles and shortly we will be inviting nominations for both positions. In discussion with John, we realised that the roles and responsibilities are only loosely defined in the SDNL Constitution and we will be giving some thought with The NL Manager to this and add more responsibilities to the Vice Chair Role.

ACTION 3 (NL Manager and Chair): Look at definition of the roles and responsibilities for the Chair and Vice-chair roles prior to inviting nominations.

Matters arising

- i. The Office for Environmental Protection are currently concluding an investigation into designated sites which is due to report shortly. As soon as this is concluded, the review team will shift to a rapid review of Protected Landscapes.
The NL Manager flagged that the OEP tend to only get involved if something is going wrong or where there has been a complaint or something along these lines. There will be an interesting 4-6 month period whilst that work is undertaken and reported on. This is clearly linked to performance against the Environmental Improvement Plan and successive Government commitments to farming, nature and other outcomes.
- ii. Succession planning: The NL Manager stated that as per the Terms of Reference, we initially invite nominations from existing Partnership membership. If that fails to yield sufficient interest the current Chair will stand again, albeit for a shorter period. This does not preclude anyone else stepping forward to express an interest in the role.
Alternatively, depending on how that comes back, this influences whether we go out to the wider community and appoint an independent Chair.

6A UPDATE ON REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The NL Manager gave an update on progress, challenges and next steps.

6a.1 Early phase support has come from Alice Lewthwaite and Alex Scholefield.

Alice is handing on to a couple of colleagues who are helping with policy drafting and wordsmithing: Nathan Nelson, focussing on producing a consultation draft and Deborah McCann, focussing on developing impactful policies. We are also lucky to have Martin Crookston who will also be helping on final stages of wordsmithing.

6a.2 We have requested a six month extension to the 31 December 2025 deadline from Defra and are confident this timescale will work.

6a.3 Next steps:

- i. Further drafting and refinement
- ii. Approval of consultation draft by South Hams District Council moved to 29 January Exec meeting; also working with DCC and Torbay elected officer signoff and Plymouth City Council.
- iii. Public consultation due in the first quarter of 2026/27 financial year.

6a.4 Matters arising

- i. The SDNL Manager confirmed there will not be a gap because the existing Management Plan is extended beyond 31 December 2025. A statement will be added to the SDNL website for clarity.

ACTION 4 (NL Manager): Add a statement to the SDNL website confirming the current plan is extended.

- ii. Responding to the question 'to what extend can you inject something about the failure to conserve biodiversity into the Management Plan?' the National Landscape Manager explained that there has been a seismic change between the last few iterations of the Plan review and now. There is much more solid public support across the board for action for climate and nature. We also have specific requirements handed to the 'place' as opposed to the team or Partnership, in connection with the Targets and Outcomes Framework within the Environmental Improvement Plan. Five of these relate to nature and arguably two relate specifically to climate. A really important component is for Plan to direct, instruct and make an ask of Relevant Authorities and how they should respond to the asks for climate and nature.
- iii. Local Government Reorganisation: The NL Manager said that 72% of National Landscapes in England will be affected by LGR. The NLA have been working on this on our collective behalf with careful approaches to Ministers and their teams. Surrey Hills will be one of the first, so we can view that as a litmus test.

We need to have confidence in the Management Plan review process we are going through and that it defines what the area needs; provided we have it all covered in the Plan it should not really matter what type of Local Authority comes in place of what we have now; the Plan is for the National Landscape as a whole.

The Chair suggested that we inform the NLA that this has come up in our Partnership meeting.

6B PROTECTED LANDSCAPES TARGETS AND OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK: INITIAL APPORTIONMENT AND PHASING

This item provided an update on work to refine the SDNL apportionments for target 1 – restore or create wildlife rich habitat and target 8 – increase tree canopy and woodland cover.

The National Landscape Manager provided an update.

6b.1 Matters arising

- i. PLTOF: Targets continue to be refined however our emerging figures for South Devon continue to be more ambitious than the initial allocations arising from the land use consultants work for NE. Hopefully next time around, when PLTOF is updated, there will be more ambition.
- ii. For this iteration of the Management Plan, the aim is for consistency, common themes to work together and our shared outcomes.
- iii. 30 by 30: When the criteria were first published, only 20.4% of our area would count towards 30 by 30. With the more detailed work we have been doing, looking at projects and management options in context, we believe the on land component should increase to over 40%. Importantly this opens doors to farmers and landowners for any available support.
- iv. There continues to be some confusion with baseline figures for hedges – depending on the dataset used we have 4,000 kilometres (RPA), 2,000 kilometres (UKCEH) and another dataset developed by Exeter University has it somewhere in the middle. Devon hedges are very important in the SDNL hence we need accuracy.

6C DRAFT UPDATE TO THE SDNL PARTNERSHIP'S POSITION STATEMENT ON RENEWABLE ENERGY

The National Landscape Manager provided an update.

- 6c.1 There are strongly held views, but we need to place our Statutory Duty first when setting out the SDNL Partnership position. We have listened to a range of views to date but have not yet been able to speak with Partnership members and partners. We have looked at what Cotswolds NL has produced. Wind and solar are the most challenging at scale but there continue to be lots of opportunities at a smaller scale that would be appropriate in the landscape.
- 6c.2 The NL Manager is seeking Partnership members views, opinions and suggestions between now and Christmas.

6c.3 Matters arising

- i. Cllr Louise Wainwright: There is a common misconception that solar panels can be added on all roofs. 40% of the landscape in the South Hams is in a designated area and it is important to understand how energy flows through these boundaries. We have low voltage grids in our rural landscapes so if we concentrate on roofs and not on producing on the low voltage grid, we would need to call in energy from outside. I am happy to share with Partnership members why we need to sensitively look at opportunities in the low voltage grid in our designated area including community energy projects.

Chair- If you send to me, we are happy to share with Partnership.

Post meeting update: Cllr Wainwright's contribution to the debate on renewable energy projects has been received.

ACTION 5 (Chair/NL Manager): Circulate the document provided by Cllr Wainwright to Partnership.

6D CESSATION OF TORBAY COAST AND COUNTRYSIDE TRUST – IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

6d.1 There are wide impacts from the cessation of Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust including on SDNL projects, in particular Life on the Edge and the Berry Head area. The biggest and most significant concern is to ensure investments made to date are safeguarded including from deterioration, even in short term. The Life on the Edge project manager Rob Skinner is in conversation with Torbay councillors, liquidators and SWISCo.

6d.2 Matters arising

- i. Chair: We extend our thanks to TCCT staff and volunteers for their work on keeping those sites going.
- ii. Torbay Council are unable to do anything until liquidators have been called in.
Post meeting update: The Trust appointed liquidators are P K F Francis Clark¹.
- iii. One of the Life on the Edge hotspots is affected with ongoing LotE project activities; some activity could not go ahead as we were unable to obtain permissions for the site. LotE have offered to assist with the preparation of a Management Plan for that area and continue to work with the parties involved.

6E INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES

The SDNL Manager provided an update.

6e.1 The NL Manager highlighted some of the issues posed by invasive non-native species and also provided detail on Floating Pennywort, the issues this has caused in Stokely pond, the potential threat to Slapton Ley and the measures taken to remove immediate threat and the potential use of biological control to keep it in check going forwards.

6e.2 Matters arising

- i. Floating pennywort weevil² - The weevil has been brought in from overseas hence CABI are running this trial. A very careful approach has been adopted and this has been tried and tested on canals and river sites successfully. This has now moved on to a series of sites where ecology is at high risk. Conversations with and support from CABI Bioscience has been great. Matt Hawes from the Field Studies Council is leading on putting a proposal together. We have met the criteria for the project which is a negotiated £15,000. We have £10,000 to date - £5k from the SDNL and £5k from South West Water (invasive pot) so a further £5,000 is required to secure a slot on next years release. We ask that people raise awareness and request vigilance, particularly anyone with a pond or who regularly walks by ponds, to keep a lookout for floating pennywort.

ACTION 6 (NL Manager): Provide a press release for Jane Nicholls to circulate

- ii. Cllr Louise Wainwright: Blueprint for Rivers³, with money from the Water Restoration fund through South West Water fines, is bringing together Catchment Plans for the Gara

¹ [TCCT website – statement](#)

² [CABI \[.ORG\]](#)

³ [Blueprint for Rivers \[.ORG\]](#)

including Slapton Ley, the Avon and the Kingsbridge-Salcombe estuary over this winter. Avon River Champions⁴ are speaking with CABI.

7. PARTNER UPDATES

This item provides an opportunity for Partners to update Partnership on their contributions to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the South Devon National Landscape and delivering on area of outstanding natural beauty Management Plan priorities.

Partners are encouraged to provide written reports prior to the meeting and are requested to keep verbal reports reasonably brief, allowing more time for other items on the agenda.

7.1. Doug Eltham, Devon County Council

- i. Local Nature Recovery Strategy is due to submitted to Defra on 17 December.
- ii. South Hams Landscape Character Assessment is being updated.

7.2. Cllr John McKay, South Hams District Council

- i. South Hams District Council has joined UK100⁵, a network of local authorities that have particular climate and biodiversity ambitions. They are especially interested in Local Government Reorganisation and to ensure climate and biodiversity ambitions continue beyond LGR.

7.3. Tracy Brooks, Torbay Council (update on the Draft Torbay Local Plan provided by email)

- i. The Draft Torbay Local Plan 2025–2045 (Regulation 18 Version) has been published for public consultation starting Friday 28th November 2025 and closing at 11:59pm on Monday 26th January 2026. We are inviting residents, businesses, developers, landowners, statutory consultees, and community groups to “have your say” on the draft plan. The consultation is for eight weeks to allow for the Christmas period.
- ii. We will be running a drop-in events on the Local Plan in January 2026 with the following provisional dates. We will confirm on our website at: [Local Plan Update \(2025 to 2045\) - Torbay Council](#):
 - Thursday 8th January 4pm-8pm: Banking Hall, Torquay Town Hall, Castle Circus Torquay TQ1 3DR.
 - Tuesday 13th January, 10am-2pm: Paignton Library, Great Western Road, Paignton TQ4 5AG.
 - Thursday 15th January Scala Hall: Bolton Cross, Brixham TQ5 8TA.

iii. How to Make Comments

The best way to comment on the Local Plan is via our Consultation Portal: [Torbay Council - Consultations](#). Please note that this is being hosted by Opusconsult (JDI Solutions). A link can also be found on the council’s consultations webpage at [Consultations - Torbay Council](#). To participate:

Visit [Torbay Council - Consultations](#) or [Torbay Council - Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan 2025](#)

Register/login, review sections of interest, and submit comments on policies, site proposals etc.

Comments can be made on multiple sections; the system allows text comments.

Please include your name, contact details, any organization you represent, and structure your comments clearly. Submissions will be publicly published and shared with the

⁴ [Avon River Champions \[.ORG\]](#)

⁵ [UK100 \[.ORG\]](#)

Planning Inspectorate and appointed Programme Officer. Data protection and privacy provisions are explained on the site.

- iv. There is a PDF of the Local Plan Written Statement and background information available on the Local Plan Update website at [Local Plan Update \(2025 to 2045\) - Torbay Council](#)
- v. It really does help if comments are made on the consultation platform. However, if you are unable to do so, you can email us at Future.Planning@Torbay.gov.uk

7.4. Dave Shorten, Environment Agency

- i. River Basin Management Plans are currently up for review. The new Plans will be published towards the end of 2027.
- ii. Working on programme of measures: within the River Basin Management Plan, at a water body level, the EA has been asked to produce measures for each reason the water body might be failing (RNAGS). Data currently being reviewed then going to catchment partnerships to present some data and gain their input.
- iii. Attending South Devon Catchment Partnership meeting next Wednesday.
- iv. Bathing Water results have come out: South Devon stayed same apart from one on the Dart that dropped from sufficient to bad - investigations will continue.
- v. River Bathing Waters at poor - continue investigations on understanding the catchments and where interventions can take place.
- vi. Continuing projects within the SDNL with partners such as the National Trust, Dart Harbour and Navigation Authority and WRT.

7.5. Becky Highes, Natural England

- i. A new Strategy was published by NE a couple of weeks ago⁶. Represents a shift in direction, driving more towards nature recovery and partnership working. There is a highlighted point within the Strategy that confirms NE will continue to work with National Landscapes to define clear pathways to nature recovery. I am interested in Partnership views once they have seen it.

ACTION 7 (all): Review new NE strategy and feedback views to Becky Hughes

7.6. Richard Snow, National Trust

- i. There have been major changes at the National Trust. Over the last five months the NT has been consulting with its staff around a restructure. We are now coming to the end of that consultation period. The NT is now settling down into new structures both with people and areas that we look after. There are two core reasons for this, money savings (reduced staff) and reshaping the business to be in a better position to deliver the NT national strategy.
- ii. I have a new role: Restoration of Nature Manager. My previous role of Countryside Manager no longer exists. We used to operate as two teams, South Devon and English Riviera, now brought together as one team. This means we have lost some rangers from those two teams. New roles start January 2026.

7.7. Jane Nichols, community or voluntary groups representative

- i. Sustainable South Hams is working on a campaign called Rally for Nature. We hope this will be backed by South Hams District Council – we find out next week.

Post meeting update: South Hams Executive meeting, Thursday 4 December resolved to work with Sustainable South Hams CIC to develop a proposal for a "Rally for Nature" to be

⁶ [NE Strategy \[GOV.UK\]](#) and [NE vision for nature and growth \[GOV.UK\]](#)

the subject of a report to a future meeting of the Executive for further consideration; and that authority be delegated to the Director of Strategy and Governance, in consultation with the lead Executive Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity, to utilise up to £20,000 of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Budget to support the further development of the proposal (as outlined in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of the presented agenda report).

- ii. The concept is a nature orientated campaign that we hope will run over five years. The objective is to amplify and support existing nature based activities in communities. Part of the campaign includes a festival element, a celebration of place, to engage wider audiences. Keen to weave together existing significant campaigns like Dartmoor Dynamic Landscapes, Life on the Edge and Connecting People and Landscapes. In terms of measurement, we would like to discuss PLTOF with the SDNL team. We want to put 30by30 at the centre of the campaign, as people understand this message.
- iii. Support requests for Rally for Nature
 - Would like someone from the LotE project on the core team to help guide and steer this.
 - Would like meetings with Partnership representatives:
 - Leah Harris for farming engagement.
 - Peter Hinchliffe for parish councils
 - Richard Snow for the overlap with the National Trust ambitions in South Devon
 - Becky Hughes for the overlap with NE ambitions.

From the meeting chat: Please do contact me via email becky.hughes@naturalengland.org.uk and we can have a chat
- iv. Funding: We are full of ambition but needing funds. We hopefully have seed funding from South Hams District Council which we are applying for match funding. Also going to National Lottery Heritage Fund.

7.8. Leah Harris, landowning and farming representative

- i. It is a very difficult time for farming. There are moments of enthusiasm and working together such as FiPL. Neighbours are talking and coming forward to apply for FiPL funding so word of mouth is working. We hope the scheme continues.
- ii. I will highlight one project that has received some funding that has just gone live: Mount Folly farm vending machine and mobile dairy. This is a great farm to fork story.
- iii. Roger and I will get together to look at the equestrian community and land management.
- iv. Chair:
 - At the National Landscapes Association Chairs conference held last week we had Martin Lyons, CEO of the Nature Friendly Farming Network.
 - At the presentation I had with East Portlemouth, Emma Reece (NT) mentioned about engaging with the horse riding community, so it is worth getting in touch with Emma.
- v. Cllr John McKay: It is also worth contacting the Food and Agriculture Officer Rebecca McKee at SHDC.

7.9. Peter Hinchliffe, parish and town councils representative

- i. Newton and Noss:
 - Revising the Neighbourhood Plan. Held an open event last weekend; consultation ends January.

- There is a focus group in the village that will apply for bathing water status on the Yealm (apply to Defra).
- Work is now underway on remediation work - digging out sediment contaminated with high levels TBT. We wait with interest to see if this causes more problems...

ii. A number of councils have asked me about attending these meetings – I have directed them to YouTube.

8. NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MATTERS

As the meeting was overrunning, the Chair suggested that items 8a to 8c on the agenda are sent out in a roundup email post meeting.

ACTION 8 (NL Manager): Send out updates on items:

- 8a) National Landscapes Association vision of thriving landscapes in 2050.
- 8b) Nature South West
- 8c) Your Natural Partner
- Send conference slides

Post meeting update: Slides circulated to Partnership post meeting, on 28 November, along with the Torbay Council update, provided by Tracy Brooks.

9. FUTURE MEETINGS

Meetings in 2026:

- 13 March at 10am
- 17 July at 10am
- 27 November at 10am

MEETING CLOSED

These minutes remain as draft until approved at the next meeting of the South Devon National Landscape Partnership.