

Natural England News

Autumn Issue

November 2019

NATURAL
ENGLAND

The twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change mean Natural England's work is more important than ever and we are therefore making changes to what we do and how we do it. We have recently defined a new vision and mission that will frame our work over the coming years.



Our vision is of **“Thriving Nature for People and Planet”**. Our ambition is not just to improve nature, but to see it thriving everywhere, because we recognise that a healthy natural environment is fundamental to everyone's health, wealth and happiness. Our definition of nature encompasses natural beauty, wildlife, the geology that underpins natural character and habitats and our cultural connections with nature. We include the whole natural world on earth and at sea, in towns and cities as well as the countryside. We believe this is necessary for people, with the benefits of contact with nature being more and more accepted and evidenced, and for our planet, with nature based solutions being a win-win in contributing to net zero and restoring resilient ecosystems.

Our mission is therefore all about **“Building partnerships for nature's recovery”**, reflecting the need for us to work with and through a wide range of people and the need for rapid action to re-build sustainable ecosystems thereby protecting and restoring habitats, species and landscapes to allow nature to thrive everywhere.

Our work over the next few years will reflect the priorities set out in Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and will be focused around four goals:

- Resilient Landscapes and Seas – a resilient network of land, water and sea that is rich in plants, wildlife and character and provides wide benefits for people
- Sustainable Development - achieve thriving nature and beautiful land & seascapes through our engagement in the planning and licensing systems to enable society to prosper
- Greener Farming and Fisheries - supporting farming and fisheries to operate in harmony with the environment
- Connecting People with Nature - to secure health, wellbeing and enjoyment benefits for individuals and society

Over the next few months we are making changes in the way we work, for example how we use science and evidence to drive strategy and operations. In parallel we are working up a new five year plan for Natural England. This will define how we deliver and measure these four goals, ensure we are an active member of the Defra Group and also shape how we work across government. It will make clear how we operate as a statutory conservation body with unique powers to designate, regulate and fund nature and how we will build our capacity to be an effective partner to support and enable action by the private, third sectors and by individuals.

I very much hope you will want to work with us as we make these changes and as we begin to work towards this new vision for nature and people. We are committed to involving our stakeholders more closely in our work, designing and delivering what we do in partnership.

But of course as well as making changes we are also busy and active now in working towards our new vision. I hope you find a few moments to dip into this edition of *Natural England News* and enjoy some of the articles that we have shared to illustrate what we are doing, and doing with our partners, to achieve **thriving nature for people and planet**.

In this issue

Greener farming and fisheries

- [Agri-Environment Outcomes](#)
- [Future Farming and Environment Evidence Compendium](#)
- [Improving Water Quality from farm land](#)
- [Evaluating environmental outcomes from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund](#)
- [Farm and Land Management Advice](#)

Sustainable development

- [Biodiversity Net Gain](#)
- [Creating and restoring habitat for great crested newts through district level licensing](#)

Resilient landscapes and seas

- [Dynamic Dunes](#)
- [Landscapes Review published](#)
- [Linking our marine conservation advice to habitat maps](#)
- [Defining Favourable Conservation Status](#)
- [London City Park](#)
- [A Refreshed Natural England Historic Environment Strategy for the 21st Century](#)

Connecting people with nature

- [Bringing our wonderful underwater world to life](#)
- [Voices from the coast](#)
- [England Coast Path](#)
- [Boosting the benefits of Green Infrastructure](#)
- [Children and Nature](#)
- [Acknowledging our volunteers](#)

Greener farming and fisheries: *Supporting farming and fisheries to operate in harmony with the environment*

Natural England's Evidence Team invests £2.7m for 19/20 to further develop the Agri-environment evidence base

Natural England Research Report NERR019

Agri-Environment Monitoring and Evaluation Programme Annual Report 2017/18

A summary of findings from recently published projects



The Agri-environment Evidence Programme for 19/20 covers a suite of projects which aim to either assess the impact and effectiveness of existing Agri-environment schemes (AES) or carry out research for future scheme development.

This work is underway and is being carried out through external contracts, in conjunction with Specialist project leads from across Chief Scientist Directorate, working closely with Defra, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and Historic England.

The programme aims to consider a balanced range of themes and provide evidence to assist with priority policy and delivery questions. This year's monitoring programme supports projects across themes including biodiversity, landscape character, historic environment, social sciences and climate change. The research element funds projects which develop and review methodologies that will allow us to assess the impact of the future Environmental Land Management scheme more effectively.

Findings from previous years' work are summarised in the latest [Agri-Environment Monitoring and Evaluation Annual Report](#), which was published in August 2019.

To find out more contact [Ruth Oatway](#)

The Future Farming and Environment Evidence compendium

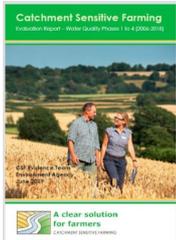


The September 2019 edition of the Future Farming and Environment Evidence [Compendium](#) brings together existing statistics on agriculture to summarise the current state of the agricultural industry in the United Kingdom.

To find out more contact [Lorna Wilamowski](#)

Greener farming and fisheries

Improving Water Quality



A [new report published in October](#) has shown eight in ten farmers seeing an improvement in water quality on their land or other financial benefits.

Nearly 20,000 farms have received advice from Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers since the partnership between Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England began in 2006 with a drive to tackle water pollution from agriculture.

For the last 12 years, the network of [CSF officers](#) have helped farmers across the country carry out more than 75,000 actions to reduce water pollution on their land, including changing the way they apply pesticides and building new infrastructure which has led to reductions in several agricultural pollutants.

For more information contact [Bob Middleton](#)



Greener farming and fisheries

Evaluating environmental outcomes from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

Natural England and Defra have commissioned an evaluation of the environmental outcomes that have been delivered through the [European Maritime and Fisheries Fund](#). The EMFF is currently one of the primary tools available to incentivise innovation to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits within the marine environment.

When the UK leaves the EU, we will also be leaving the Common Fisheries Policy and will no longer have access to the associated EMFF. For the 2014 – 2020 period, £77 million pounds were allocated to England through this fund with nearly 1200 projects being supported to date.

A replacement scheme was discussed in the Fisheries White Paper '*sustainable fisheries for future generations*' and provision was made for appropriate grant making powers in the Fisheries Bill which is hoped to progress in the future. It is anticipated that this work will enable any future fund to support practical action and report under government policy drivers such as the [25 Year Environment Plan](#) and Carbon Net Zero. The lessons learnt from the evaluation will benefit the design of any future replacement domestic scheme.

To find out more contact [Duncan Vaughan](#)

Farm and Land Management Advice

In July 2019 Natural England launched its new framework for delivering specialist Farm and Land Management Advice - FaLMA for short.



The framework's objective is to: "Provide advice and training on and to raise awareness and understanding of environmentally sustainable land management and associated farm infrastructure, improving the level of skills to allow farmers and land managers to deploy measures to improve sustainability and efficiency."

We have 10 suppliers who are divided into geographic "Lots" and are a mix of large and small, national and local organisations.

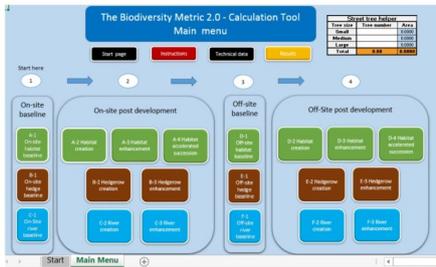
The framework is funded by RDPE (until December 2020), Grant in Aid and also Commercial monies. The inclusion of Commercial monies is a fantastic opportunity for us to work with major land owners, water companies and other commercial businesses who wish to influence land management decisions. For example we have provided support to a water company where Natural England used the framework to procure Catchment Sensitive Farming advice to farmers in the catchment. The advice was funded from the water company, and Natural England managed the delivery using our framework suppliers.

Natural England, other members of the Defra family and of course any Commercial businesses can access this Framework through our local Natural England Lot Managers.

To find out more contact [Katherine Ryder](#) – Farm Advice Project Manager.

Sustainable development: *Creating great places for people to live and work*

Biodiversity Net Gain



Natural England has overseen the development of [Biodiversity metric 2.0](#) a tool for measuring and accounting for biodiversity losses and gains resulting from development or land management change. This new metric can be used by developers, land owners and planning authorities to calculate biodiversity net gain outcomes.

The Metric comes with a free and easy to use calculation tool alongside user and technical guidance. This is another example of Natural England bringing together and working collaboratively with stakeholders from across a variety of sectors to develop an approach and embed it into practice and policy. By applying our own knowledge and expertise whilst learning from the experience of others, we have co-created an innovative tool that will help mainstream biodiversity net gain and, in doing so, will deliver benefits for nature and people.

The Metric tool enables developers and land managers to better understand and quantify the current value of a place for nature and how proposed changes to that site, either from development or land management practice, will impact on that value. It provides a way of calculating biodiversity gains and losses, enabling change that can increase the value of a place to nature over time.

It is important that we get the Metric right and that users are able to understand how it can be applied. Natural England is encouraging developers, NGOs, planning authorities and land owners to test the published beta version and provide feedback via an online survey on [Citizen Space](#). The survey is accompanied by a series of targeted nationwide 'surgeries' specifically for planning authorities to help them test and understand the Metric.

To find out more contact [Nick White](#)



Creating and restoring habitat for great crested newts through district level licensing



In the July issue of Natural England News we described our district level licensing for the great crested newts project. This is part of four new policies created to smooth the process for businesses who require a wildlife licence, saving them time and sometimes money whilst channelling investment into bigger, better, more joined-up habitat for wildlife. The Government's 'A Green Future: Our [25 Year Environment Plan](#) to Improve the Environment' cites district level licensing as an important forerunner to net gain and sets the scene to extend the approach to other protected species such as dormice and bats.

Under the traditional licensing approach, developers who want to build on land which is home to great crested newts need to trap and relocate the species before starting work. Seasonal restrictions, where these are not effectively planned for, can lead to delays and create uncertainty over the costs and scheduling of planned development. Under district level licensing, developers no longer need to do this. Instead developers can make a conservation payment which will cover creation or restoration of ponds in areas away from the development. These areas, mapped by Natural England, represent the best places for newts to thrive. Habitat created will be maintained and monitored for 25 years, all funded by developers. This new licensing system is hoped to substantially replace the traditional licensing regime for great crested newts.

So what is happening right now?

District level licensing has already gone live in [Kent](#) and Cheshire. Natural England and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have invested over £500,000 in delivering ponds across both counties. Most ponds are sited within the wider landscape rather than clustered on reserves. Staff within Habitat Delivery Bodies (HDBs) are responsible for signing-up willing landowners and overseeing the subsequent capital works. In Kent, our HDB partners comprise a series of Countryside Management Partnerships, whereas in Cheshire we are working with Cheshire Wildlife Trust, as well as with the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

As we prepare schemes for launch across more areas Natural England will be investing an additional £1.9 million in pond delivery across England before the end of March 2020. Currently we are evaluating tenders from potential partners to create and/or restore 100's more ponds by March 2020. All such ponds will be strategically placed to bolster and extend existing great crested newt populations. Watch this space!

In other news

District Level Licensing was longlisted for the **Policy & Evidence Award** and the **Innovation & Science Award** in the Civil Service Awards 2019. The judges said "*The quality of this year's nominations has been higher than ever, and our panels have had a difficult summer choosing the finalists in each category from over 1,250 nominations!*" You can see the deserving shortlisted nominees that beat us to it on the Civil Service Awards [website](#). We are really pleased to be finalists: given the huge competition, it is a fantastic achievement!

To find out more contact [Jen Almond](#)

Resilient landscapes and seas: *Protecting and restoring wildlife and natural beauty for future generations*

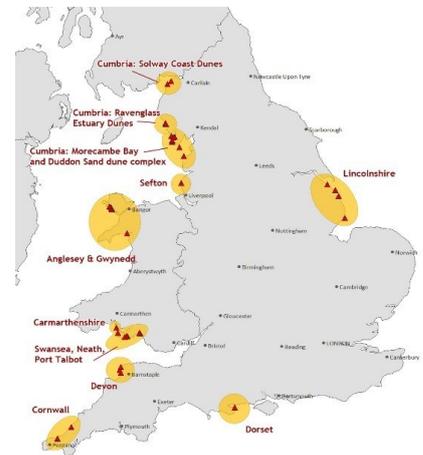
Dynamic Dunes

Natural England is working in close partnership with Plantlife, National Trust, Natural Resources Wales and the Wildlife Trusts to deliver an ambitious and innovative project to restore sand dunes for the benefit of people, communities and wildlife. This £10 million project has received funding from the EU LIFE programme and the National Lottery Heritage Fund and will target some of the most important sand dune systems across England and Wales.

Sand dunes are one of the most threatened habitats in Europe. The greatest threat to our dunes is over-stabilisation. Other threats include invasion by native and alien invasive species, loss of species, disturbance, hydrological problems, nutrient enrichment and the need for improved communication between managers, local communities and visitors to share and explore quite complex messages. These threats reflect those identified across Europe and the project will be sharing best practice through a network of European sand dune managers.

The project will concentrate on improving the condition of nine identified dune cluster sites. The nine key project areas are Lincolnshire Sand Hills, Studland Dunes, North Cornwall Dunes, Braunton Burrows, Swansea Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthen, Anglesey - Gwynedd, Sefton Coast and Cumbria which together cover 34 individual sites.

To find out more contact [Verity Pitts](mailto:Verity.Pitts@naturalengland.org.uk), visit dynamicdunes.co.uk or twitter [@dynamicdunes](https://twitter.com/dynamicdunes)



Landscapes Review published

Natural England welcomed the Landscapes Review led by Julian Glover.

[The Glover Review](#) published on 21 September calls for the biggest shakeup of the running of England's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty since they were founded 70 years ago. It calls for bold action to "reignite the spirit" of the movement which led to the creation of this country's first national parks following the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949.

Welcoming the report, Natural England Chair Tony Juniper said: "We very much welcome the Glover Review and its core message that our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) should be the very backbone of the new Nature Recovery Network that we are working to build. These are the places that often spring to mind when people think about enjoying the natural world, and by making them richer in wildlife as well as more accessible, we can help people from all walks of life experience their inspirational beauty."



Landscapes Review

We want our national landscapes to work together with big ambitions so they are happier, healthier, greener, more beautiful and open to everyone.

The opportunities for Nature recovery presented by our National Parks and AONBs are huge - (not to mention other brilliant approaches such as National Park Cities, which the report also welcomes). Protected landscapes account for a quarter of England's land area and are pivotal in the protection of our nation's cultural and natural capital. The Glover Review highlights that these are places where people come to strengthen their bonds with the natural world, but they could achieve so much more with the right kinds of approaches and investments.

The Glover Review is a key commitment in the government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) and was launched by former Secretary of State Michael Gove in May 2018. As government's statutory advisor on landscape matters, Natural England made a detailed submission to the review. We now look forward to working with the review team, DEFRA, the National Parks, the AONB family and all those who care about these special places to identify the ways in which Natural England can play its part in delivering the exciting new National Landscapes Service envisaged in the Review.

To find out more contact [Alison Chapman](#)

Tony Juniper's Natural England Blog - National Parks and AONBs can be the backbone of Nature's recovery. [Read on](#)

[Natural England - .Gov Blogs](#) - subscribe and stay in touch

Resilient landscapes and seas

Linking our marine conservation advice to habitat maps

[Marine Protected Area](#) networks on their own will not be enough to deliver healthy, resilient seas and achieve 'Good Environmental Status' throughout English and UK waters.

To help policy makers, regulators, and stakeholders, manage wider seas issues Natural England is developing habitat sensitivity maps. The maps combine our existing Advice on Operations information with habitat maps and detailed sensitivity information.



Linking these datasets furthers our understanding of the sensitivity of the wider seas to those pressures exerted by marine activities and will help ensure MPAs deliver.

Natural England hosted Alice Harvey-Fishenden, a Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) intern, for three months during which she incorporated her knowledge of natural capital and ecosystem services into the marine habitat maps.

This work was presented at the recent International Council for the Exploration of the Sea Conference by Natural England's Duncan Vaughan and Philip Haupt. To find out more contact [Duncan Vaughan](#)

Defining Favourable Conservation Status project

Natural England's Defining Favourable Conservation Status (DFCS) project is using our expertise and evidence to define the threshold for thriving habitats and species in England. We are doing this so we can say what 'good' looks like across the wider countryside and recommend actions to get there.



Our DFCS definitions will set out our aspirations for these species and habitats in England. DFCS strategies will then guide and improve our nature recovery work. We plan to publish these tools so that our partners and other decision-makers can use them to improve outcomes.

Last month the project brought together stakeholders to better understand the project and consider how we can work together to deliver thriving nature for people and planet. These included Defra Group organisations, Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, Non-Governmental Organisations and the private sector.

Julie Erian, Project Manager said; "We heard really positive feedback on the approach we are taking to write our Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) definitions from organisations who understand the importance of evidence based ambitions for nature recovery. They were enthusiastic about the potential for defining FCS to be a game-changer in the work they do with us."

To find out more contact [Julie Erian](#)

Resilient landscapes and seas

London City Park

On Monday 22 July the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, officially launched London as the World's First [National Park City](#) to widespread acclaim to the evident delight of those gathered in City Hall. Natural England Chair, Tony Juniper, chose to play a recording of a tawny owl he had made in London's Green Park to illustrate the evident power of nature and its impact on millions of people amidst their busy city lives.



Tony said: "It is vital that urban environments promote health and wellbeing, not least because that is where most people live. Making London a National Park City will, I hope, lead our capital to exemplify the opportunities at hand. "This announcement sets the scene for policymakers, businesses and the public to join together in conserving and enhancing London's wildlife, green spaces and cultural heritage — helping to make our capital greener, healthier and a better place to live and work."

The ambition to make London over 50% green and blue is a key aim and helping that is Natural England's designation of the [new South London Downs NNR](#)

To find out more contact [Louise Crothall](#)

A Refreshed Historic Environment Strategy for the 21st Century

Natural England has recently refreshed its Historic Environment Strategy to enable it to fully meet its ambitions to deliver the Government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) for nature and people. This Strategy explains how the historic environment is integral to Natural England's landscape and nature recovery ambitions and it describes what can be achieved when historic and natural environment work is properly integrated.



The Strategy was endorsed by Natural England's Senior Leadership Team in August, and will shape our approach to the cultural aspects of our landscapes and habitats.

If you would like a copy of the new Natural England Historic Environment Strategy please contact [Helen Trapp](#)

Connecting people with nature: *Promoting health and wellbeing through the great outdoors*

Bringing our wonderful underwater world to life



Over the summer, Natural England have developed the Hidden Seas project to address a problem that is unique to the marine environment.

It's not easy to see the wonderful habitats and species found underwater around our coast!

This can result in our partners, stakeholders and the wider public not fully being able to understand how fantastic these undersea landscapes are.

Research into people's connections to nature demonstrates the importance of being aware of what is out there in building empathy for nature and the sense of responsibility for it. The Hidden Seas project, working in partnership, aims to tell the stories of our seas using visual media including video, photographs, infographics and GI systems.

If you are interested in hearing more about the project, especially if you are involved in similar and would like to discuss how we can work together please contact [Louisa Knights](#)

Voices From The Coast

Engaging with the natural environment is good for us and doing so at the coast can bring even greater benefits. Yet people living in close proximity are often not regular visitors. Building on Natural England's report [Visits to Coastal England](#) we wanted to hear from coastal communities with high levels of economic and environmental deprivation about how they value and use their coastline and the barriers to enjoying these places.

This short film describes [how the research was done](#). Community Voice films were created for the [Durham Coast & Portsmouth](#). The [Community Voice project report](#) confirms that understanding the importance of the sea and coast to people involves recognising a diversity of values, meanings and experiences. This new evidence is helping shape a National Heritage Lottery Fund bid for a 'Seascapes' partnership project on the Durham coast.

In Cumbria we used a bespoke method to talk to young people in Barrow in Furness. The [Youth Voice report](#) highlights the coast as an important space for young peoples' intergenerational connections and connection with nature. Complex barriers can prevent positive experiences and local projects are using this understanding to encourage opportunities to connect young people with their coast.

We hope that you enjoy the films and that the illustration of views and issues faced by these coastal communities is valuable for shaping your own projects at the coast.

To find out more contact [Sarah Manning](#)

Connecting people with nature

England Coast Path

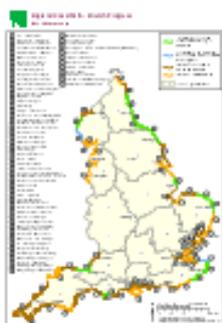
The opportunity to walk round the glorious English coastline on the newly created England Coast Path has recently been recognised by [Lonely Planet](#) as one of the main reasons they have named England as the 2nd best destination in the world to visit in 2020.



The newly opened Newport Bridge to North Gare stretch of the England Coast Path in the North East packs a big punch. This stretch links the towns of Billingham, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool to key tourist attractions at the Transporter Bridge, the visitor centre at RSPB Saltholme and the Teesmouth NNR. It joins up with previously opened sections of the England Coast Path creating 156 miles of continuous National Trail from Filey in North Yorkshire to Amble in Northumberland.

We couldn't have done it by ourselves! Andrew Best, Natural England's Delivery Lead for the stretch explains: 'We worked with a wide range of other organisations to ensure a joined up approach. The partnership ('North Tees Natural Network') members included Stockton Borough Council, Hartlepool Borough Council, RSPB, INCA (Industry Nature Conservation Association), the Environment Agency, Natural England, Teesmouth Field Centre, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Tees Rivers Trust and Teesside Environmental Trust. Improving access to and between key sites in the area, including establishing the North Tees Trail, was a 'must do'. There were so many route options to consider but we got there in the end by all pulling together.'

The East Saltholme Causeway - essential new access infrastructure - was funded through the River Tees Rediscovered Landscape Partnership National Lottery Heritage Fund. Over several years the partnership secured funding from both Stockton and Hartlepool Borough Councils, the Teesside Environmental Trust, the NLHF, the European Union Rural Development Programme for England and Natural England. The Rediscovering Skills team 'Galvanise' - a team of 6 apprentices managed by Groundwork - delivered sections of the work gaining new skills and increasing their future job prospects.



The importance of the area to conservation cannot be overstated. The presence of an RSPB reserve, a National Nature Reserve, a recently enlarged European Special Protection Area and Sites of Special Scientific Interest add to the attractions and interest of the stretch.

Neil Coles, ECP Senior Specialist, who worked closely with Andrew and the team on the stretch reflects: 'It's one of the most satisfying places I've worked. The recreational and wildlife value of industrial landscapes are amazing and it highlights the wide range of socio-economic benefits the ECP can bring. Oh and the RSPB cafe's pie is legendary!'

Read more about all areas of [England Coast Path](#) or contact [Chris Pope](#)

Boosting the benefits of Green Infrastructure



The aims of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) include connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing through greening our towns and cities. These aims bring a focus on areas where there is poor quality and/or low quantity of accessible green infrastructure (GI). There is also an ambition for new developments to include accessible green spaces.

Natural England is leading the delivery of a 25YEP commitment to draw up a National Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards in recognition of the vital role that good GI can play in our urban and rural environments. GI can deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. In the coming months, we will trial the emerging National Framework of GI Standards to refine guidance, benchmarks and maps ready for launch in autumn / winter next year.

GI provides the green and blue spaces in which people meet, socialise, relax, exercise and connect. It includes wildlife areas and woodlands, natural and man-made rock outcrops, road verges and rights of way, parks and gardens, canals, rivers, wetlands, coastlines, green bridges and green walls/roofs, natural flood management and sustainable drainage.

The emerging National Framework of GI Standards sets out an approach that encourages GI stakeholders to work together in partnerships to apply 10 Principles of Good GI for GI planning and delivery, whatever the scale or context. The 10 principles are based on the themes of partnership and policy, stewardship and funding, planning and design, and delivery of multiple services and benefits to meet the needs of people and the environment. Stakeholders can also use other existing GI standards alongside the National Framework, to suit their local circumstances.



For a summary of the draft National Framework of GI Standards and further information please contact [Jane Houghton](#)

Children and Nature

Natural England, Defra and the Department for Education have been working together to design and commission the three large-scale delivery projects within the £10m Children and Nature Programme 2019-2023 to help more children and young people from communities experiencing disadvantage to benefit from nature.



The Nature Friendly Schools Project led by [The Wildlife Trusts](#)

(working with Young Minds, Groundwork, The Sensory Trust and the Field Studies Council)

A project to deliver greener grounds and pupil visits to green spaces for schools with the highest proportion of disadvantaged pupils. The aim is to demonstrate and understand how an increase in supported delivery of high quality activities in natural environments, for pupils in schools with the highest proportion of disadvantaged pupils, contributes to improved mental health & wellbeing.

To find out more contact [Martin Gilchrist](#)

The Growing Care Farming Project led by [Social Farms and Gardens](#) (working with Thrive)

A project to achieve a transformational change in the scale, scope and uptake of care farming services in England for children and adults facing disadvantage or social exclusion, to benefit their health and wellbeing, and their social and educational development.

To find out more contact [Sarah Preston](#)

Community Forest and Woodland Outreach (CFWO) Projects -

A project to achieve a sustainable increase in the scale of community forest and woodland outreach activities delivered to school children, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, to benefit their mental health & wellbeing, engagement with school.

Natural England have awarded five grants to

Trees for Cities, a one year pilot in 10 schools across Islington and Reading in partnership with **Sensory Trust**.

- **Nature Nurture Community Interest Company**, The Garden Classroom, Green Schools Project, and Intelligent Health. The Greater London Authority and Forestry Commission will be providing strategic support.
- The following four projects will be delivered over three years.
- **National Forest Company** in partnership with Leicester City Football Community Trust and The Forest School Association, working with c30 schools in Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire.
- **The Community Forest Trust** on behalf of the Mersey Forest Partnership, working with c30 schools in Merseyside and North Cheshire.
- **Get Out More Community Interest Company** working with c25 schools in Bradford.
- **The Conservation Volunteers** working in partnership with The Land Trust in 12 schools in Doncaster, Rotherham and Barnsley.

To find out more contact [Caroline Emmerson](#)

Acknowledging the commitment of our Volunteers



The Graftas are Natural England's 'Green awards for terrific achievers'. They recognise, thank and celebrate the hard work of our staff and volunteers.

Thursday 10 October saw a very special event take place in the West Midlands at the Wyre Forest Discovery Centre in Worcestershire to celebrate the achievements of Natural England's 2,100 regular volunteers.

Natural England Board member Henry Robinson along with staff from across the country, the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and Forestry England gathered to learn who had won the fourteen volunteer awards. Emma Johnson, the West Midlands Area Team Manager welcomed everyone and introduced Natural England's Chief Operating Officer Richard Cornish who reflected on the huge range of important roles volunteers carry out.

The top individual Grafta award was posthumously presented to Dave Clarke, a volunteer at Rostherne Mere NNR for almost 40 years, the award highlighted amongst other achievement his efforts in bird recording. Richard Cornish presented Dave's widow Joan Clarke and Dave's friend Phil Dell with the award. Richard explained how truly indebted to Dave, the Reserve and its visitors are; there are not many people who switch bird recording to practical conservation volunteering at 80!



The team Grafta volunteer category followed, with the winners announced as Heather and Tony Marshall for their efforts recording and protecting dormice at Roudsea Woods and Mosses NNR. Longest serving volunteer award went to John Dawson who was recognised for contributions spanning over 45 years; whilst Tom Bindoff's determination and effort to improve disabled access at Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve received the award for 'Making nature more accessible for everyone'.

To find out more contact [David Fanaroff](#)

Resilient
Landscapes
and Seas



Sustainable
Development



Greener
Farming and
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Connecting
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We welcome your feedback and suggestions for future issues.

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