National Parks England

National Landscapes Association

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Year 3 Report | 2025

What is Farming in Protected Landscapes?

The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme – or FiPL as it is commonly called - was introduced in June 2021 by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The programme provides grant funding for farmers and land managers in our treasured National Parks and National Landscapes (previously named Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

Our precious National Parks and National Landscapes cover almost a quarter of England, supporting biodiversity and local communities, and have a significant role in helping the government to meet its climate and nature targets. It is crucial that we nurture them. Farming in these areas plays a vital role in doing this. FiPL projects must deliver on at least one of the following themes:

- helping to tackle the impacts of CLIMATE change
- helping NATURE recovery
- providing opportunities for PEOPLE to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage
- protecting or improving the quality and character of a PLACE.

Projects must be part of the solutions needed in local areas so they have to help deliver the priorities identified in the National Park or National Landscape Management Plans - strategic documents that outline policies and actions to conserve, enhance, and sustainably manage the natural, cultural, and recreational values of a designated landscape.

How does FiPL work?

FiPL officers based in National Parks and National Landscapes advise farmers and land managers on developing projects to make sure they deliver on the themes and reflect local interests and needs.

Applications for under £10,000 are assessed by a senior Protected Landscapes Officer. Applications over £10,000 are assessed by an independent Local Assessment Panel made up of local farmers, experts and decision makers.

FiPL achievements up to the end of March 2024

82 new and 107 existing **farm clusters**
supporting farmers to work together

422 ponds
created or restored

£59million
funding spent so far

15 miles
of **stone walling** restored

3,700+ projects
awarded funding

3,400+ educational visits
paid for and over **600** schools engaged

840
projects supported that **reduce flood risk**

95
new permissive paths
(50 miles added)

engaged with over
7,000 farmers and land managers

11,000+
volunteers engaged

150
monuments deemed at risk have been **supported**

204,000
trees planted

184 miles
of new hedgerows planted
(approx 297km)

See FiPL in action

FiPL projects have multiple benefits because they deliver the priorities found in the Management Plans of the Parks and Landscapes. The results that we see help clean up water, tackle flooding, grow local economies, capture carbon and enable nature friendly business to thrive, to name but a few.

We know individual projects are transformative locally but added together FiPL funding makes a huge difference on 25% of the land in England.

CASE STUDY

Lake District National Park

Saving a centuries old Fish House in the Rusland Valley

Grant Value **£7,984**

Edward and Pam Mills were delighted to discover they were the owners of a rare Fish House on their land, which sits on its own on the edge of an ancient woodland, next to Fish House Bridge, which crosses a tidal river, the Rusland Pool. Thought to be more than 200 years old, it is the only known surviving Fish House in South Lakeland and was in danger of becoming a complete ruin.

The building may have been used for a spot to fish from, for storage and possibly to smoke and sell fish. It may also have started life as a toll house, explaining why it is built from stone. Thanks to a FiPL grant, it was repaired in the spring of 2024 using traditional building methods. A new roof was put on the Fish House using existing roof slates, where viable, and local, second-hand slates were found to finish the task. A collapsed wall was rebuilt, repointing was carried out and a new, tamper-proof, door was made and hung.

> ***The work should secure this special building's future for another 200 years. It's particularly vital as another fish house in the area, also found on old maps, hasn't survived, making this the only one in the area.***

As it sits on a popular public right of way some of the grant has been used to produce an information panel, meaning the story of this delightful and special building can now be told and the questions it still raises, shared.

Lake District National Park

CASE STUDY

South Downs National Park

Hampers Green, Petworth – Community Access Project

Grant Value **£49,305**

This brilliant project created an important new 6.66 hectare public recreation site at Hampers Green, Petworth.

The farmer had talked to many local residents who used the area and it became apparent that this was an extremely important resource for them. In particular, one local resident needed to use a mobility tricycle to exercise her dog and struggled with difficult terrain elsewhere. The farmer aimed to manage the site as a community wildlife and recreation area, whilst providing information to residents of the importance of farming and food production and how this has shaped the local landscape.

The farmer, staff and volunteers planted hedgerows and trees, and created new ponds, all to support a beautiful wildlife rich habitat. They also restored fencing and ditches, and created an all-weather, dog-friendly, circular pathway with a viewing spot to take in the stunning countryside, with access for disabled visitors. Information boards about the wildlife, farming and countryside code were also designed and installed.

> ***The project provides a new haven for wildlife and better access to the countryside for local residents***

It creates a place for visitors to connect with and learn about nature to help improve health and wellbeing, and encourage the preservation of this and other landscapes for the future.

South Downs National Park Authority

CASE STUDY

Dorset National Landscape

Restoring the River Axe at Mosterton

Grant Value **£35,205**

Scan the QR code to see how Chris embarked on an inspiring journey to create a woodland and reconnect the river to its floodplain.

Restoring a badly degraded stretch of the river Axe was part of a wider plan by Dorset farmer Chris Banyard to increase biodiversity, capture carbon and slow down the flow of water. He had already successfully restored one stretch of the river Axe on his land with Environment Agency support but knew there was more that could be done to connect the river back to the floodplain in a further stretch upstream.

With funding secured to help with tree planting from the English Woodland Creation Offer, Chris knew he needed more support. To get things going a team was put together made up of George Greenshields of Ecologic Consultants, Catchment Sensitive Farming, the Environment Agency and the Dorset Council Flood Risk Management Team. They agreed a design, got the consents needed and applied to FiPL.

The project resulted in 150m of river being restored, complementing the adjacent 100m restored the year before.

> ***Almost immediately, damselflies were observed egg-laying and endangered water voles moved in. Heavy rainfall over the winter of 2023/24 has shown how the river now functions more naturally in high water scenarios, helping with flood alleviation.***

Chris has also shared his knowledge and experience by hosting a series of site visits, including for other farmers from the Axe Landscape Recovery project, Environment Agency, and Defra staff. This farmer led approach and generous use of the site for demonstration purposes has been extremely successful in influencing others to investigate what changes could be made on their own land. It has also led to another farmer further downstream successfully delivering a similar project using FiPL funds in 2024/25.

Dorset National Landscape

CASE STUDY

Mendip Hills National Landscape

Habitat Management for Mendip Dormice

Grant Value **£37,291**

Somerset Wildlife Trust, in partnership with seven local farmers and land managers, the National Trust, Longleat Estate, the People's Trust for Endangered Species, Mendip Outdoor Pursuits, Heidelberg Materials, Aggregate Industries, and Avon Wildlife Trust, worked together on this ambitious project to stop the decline of hazel dormice.

Dormouse habitat quality was improved with hedgerow planting to connect sites to woodland, and the creation of wildlife corridors through scrubland.

> ***By connecting neighbouring sites in historically important hotspots for dormice, the project has helped to track where the populations of hazel dormice remain.***

It also raised awareness of how important habitat corridors and woodland management are for all manner of wildlife, such as nightingales, pipistrelle bats and bumblebees. This was done by hosting workshops for local farmers, landowners and cluster groups, publishing and distributing an education leaflet and by offering one to one advice to farmers. Not only does the work benefit hazel dormice, it has also enabled participants to discover more about how habitat management can support carbon emission reduction.

The partners are now committed to being part of a follow-on project of surveying and habitat management to help implement these landscape-scale changes and save these tiny, endangered creatures.

Mendip Hills National Landscape

CASE STUDY

Peak District National Park

Standhill Farm: New Tools for New Times in the White Peak

Grant Value **£120,574**

This ambitious FiPL project took place in the heart of the White Peak area of the Peak District National Park. The farmer at Standhill Dairy Farm, Robert Thornhill, wanted to deliver landscape and nature recovery while at the same time maintaining and developing the farm's commercial business.

Standhill Farm spearheaded a groundbreaking collaboration with five landowners to study the mineral and protein content of herbal ley forage—grassland plants known for their benefits to soil health and grazing animals. The project explored innovative approaches to producing high-quality forage, integrating tree planting, and combining these efforts with robust business analysis. The initiative aimed to inspire other farmers to adopt these sustainable practices.

The project also included tree and hedge planting in the fields and at the boundaries of the farm, and the introduction of wildflower seeds at the edges of the fields (these edges are known as grass margins). Much of the tree planting was designed to help limit the impact of 'ash dieback' disease in many of the ash trees in the area. A traditional building, which is home to barn owls, was also restored.

> ***The effect of all this great work was to enhance the beauty and character of the important White Peak landscape, enrich wildlife, build relationship s in the community through the involvement of local village volunteers, and lays the foundation to provide a more diverse and healthy diet for the dairy cows.***

PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK

What has FiPL achieved?

Local issues, local solutions
By using locally based trusted advisers and Local Assessment Panels, projects will always be in tune with what is needed on the ground.

Trusted advice
Farmers and land managers really value the service from reliable local advice teams, helping foster connected landscapes, great working relationships and successful projects.

Faster, more targeted decisions
The efficient nature of the scheme through flexible, expert decision making by Local Assessment Panels means more value for money has been delivered and projects can get going quickly.

Harnessing farmer creativity
Dedicated grant funding helps farmers and land managers to create bespoke, locally appropriate, integrated multi-benefit solutions, and to focus on using their land to restore nature and contribute towards solving environmental problems such as alleviating flood risk, in tandem with running farms as ongoing business concerns.

Boosting local economies
FiPL projects create opportunities and jobs in local businesses, support nature friendly farms to diversify their income streams, and help attract visitors to local areas.

Working together
Bringing farmers together on projects that are bigger in scale, building community, growing in confidence in Environmental Land Management (ELM), increasing wellbeing and helping to test and trial innovative approaches which could be shared in other contexts.

Adding value
FiPL complements and works alongside the delivery of the government's existing agri-environment schemes, which will help nature recovery and climate in the long term.

Learning and growing
FiPL projects provide education opportunities for local people and visitors about farming, cultural heritage and increased access opportunities, rural life, and the benefits of a flourishing natural world around them.

Integrated solutions
Many of the FiPL projects address all four themes at once – Climate, Nature, People, Place – which means that nature and climate can be blended into business planning, building resilience for businesses and ecosystems.

What's next?

It is clear that FiPL has been a highly popular and effective programme that delivers real solutions for nature, climate, people and place, for farmers, land managers and communities.

Recommendations

Extend the FiPL programme beyond March 2025 so it becomes a mainstreamed part of the Defra budget to support delivery of the national targets set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan, in addition to 30by30 and the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

Embed permanent roles for land management advice in all Protected Landscape organisations, which will support farmers and land managers to take up future funding efficiently and with enhanced outcomes.

Implement the learnings from those successful larger scale FiPL projects so that they become models for the delivery of nature-based farming and land management across the UK. You can find out more about FiPL on our websites at www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/FiPL and www.national-landscapes.org.uk/themes/farming-and-land-use

This report was published by National Parks England working with the National Landscapes Association on behalf of all of England's protected landscapes. For more information about applying to FiPL, please contact your local National Park or National Landscape team.

Contact details for all National Parks in England can be found at **Nationalparksengland.org.uk**

Contact details for all National Landscapes in England can be found at **National-landscapes.org.uk**

Details about Farming in Protected Landscapes can also be found at **www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes**

To see the whole range of Defra schemes and grants on offer, search for 'funding for farmers' on GOV.UK

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