

Glossary

Term used	Definition / Explanation
Agri- environment schemes (AES)	A range of schemes operated by DEFRA designed to encourage environmentally friendly farming and public enjoyment of the countryside. Schemes include; Countryside Stewardship, Sustainable Farming Incentive, Environmental Stewardship and Landscape Recovery – may change with Government priorities.
Ancient Semi- Natural Woodland (ASNW)	An ancient woodland site, believed to have had continuous woodland cover since 1600 AD, composed principally of native tree species that have not obviously been planted.
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Area designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, with the primary purpose of designation being to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.
Biodiversity net. gain (BNG)	A mechanism intended to ensure that development operations result in more or better-quality natural habitats than before. Under the Environment Act 2021, since 2024 all new developments (with certain exceptions) have been required to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity units measured by the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Local planning authorities may set a higher percentage requirement where they can show evidence of need. Criticised by the Natural Capital Committee for failing to account for the complexities of environmental goods and services provided by natural capital (see 'Natural Capital') assets.
Byway	A Byway open to all traffic (BOAT) is a Public Right of Way open to all users, including vehicular and all other kinds of traffic. Defined in 66(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS)	CAMS is a process used by the Environment Agency (EA) to provide both a consistent approach to local water resource management and greater public involvement in water management. The EA uses CAMS to determine its approach to catchment abstraction licensing within a given catchment. This is set out in a Catchment Abstraction Licensing Strategy for the catchment.
Catchment Partnership	A Catchment Partnership brings together a wide range of interests with local expertise to undertake integrated management of land and water, addressing each Water Framework Directive (see Water Framework Directive') river catchment as a whole and delivering cross-cutting practical interventions on the ground. These aim to provide multiple benefits to water quality, wildlife, flood risk, resilience to climate change and more resource efficiency. Catchment Partnerships are active across England.
Catchment- Sensitive Farming (CSF)	A partnership between DEFRA, the Environment Agency and Natural England. It works with farmers and a range of other partners to improve water and air quality in high priority areas. CSF offers farmers free training, advice and support for grant applications. Also used to refer to the general approach advocated by CSF.
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)	European Union-wide policy that supports agriculture through price support, market management and measures to improve the agriculture industry. Since 2016, under DEFRA's Agricultural Transition Plan, the UK has been moving away from the CAP model and area-based payments. This process is due to be completed by 2027.
Common Land	Defined in section 22 of the Commons Registration Act 1965 as land subject to rights of common (as defined in this Act) whether those rights are exercisable at all times or only during limited periods.
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	A planning charge, established by the Planning Act 2008 and implemented through the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, enables local authorities to fund infrastructure to support development in their area. Development may be liable for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) if the local planning authority has set a charge for its area.

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Conservation Area	Defined by section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.
Coppice	Woodland which has normally been regenerated from shoots formed at the cut stumps of the previous crop of trees, root suckers, or both, i.e. by vegetative means. Coppice is normally grown on a short rotation, e.g. 5–25 years, to yield small diameter material.
Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 (as amended)	<p>Contains measures to improve public access to the open countryside and registered common land while recognising the legitimate interests of those who own and manage the land concerned. The Act also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● amends the law relating to rights of way; ● amends the law relating to nature conservation by strengthening protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest, including tougher penalties and by providing extra powers for the prosecution of wildlife crime; ● provides a basis for the conservation of biological diversity; ● provides for better management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including the requirement for local authorities to produce AONB management plans every five years; and ● places a duty on relevant authorities to seek to the further the purposes of AONB designation.
Countryside Stewardship (CS)	An agri-environment scheme (see 'Agri-environment schemes') introduced by DEFRA in 2014 to support nature-friendly farming. Offered at mid-tier and higher-level, depending on complexity and delivery of environmental actions.
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	The central government department with responsibility for protected landscapes, wildlife, food and farming, natural resources etc.
Ecosystem goods and services	<p>The assets and services, especially those of benefit to humans, provided by the functioning of an ecosystem or environment. Often categorised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● supporting e.g. soil formation, nutrient cycling, pollination; ● provisioning e.g. food, timber, water; ● regulating e.g. carbon sequestration, floodwater storage, air and water purification, climate regulation; ● cultural e.g. landscapes, wildlife etc. of aesthetic, cultural, historical, recreational or spiritual value to people.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A process under which developers are required to provide, in addition to a planning application, an environmental statement evaluating the likely environmental impact of the development, together with an assessment of how this may be mitigated. EIA is intended to ensure that, when deciding whether to grant planning permission for a project which is likely to have significant effects on the environment, a local planning authority does so in full knowledge of the likely effects, and takes this into account in the decision-making process. Governed by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.
Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS)	Encompassing term for UK Government initiatives to support farmers to deliver environmental benefits alongside food production. Includes Countryside Stewardship and the Sustainable Farming Incentive.

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Farmer-led group / farm cluster	Groups of farmers, predominantly with adjoining land or within a specific area, coming together to undertake coordinated action to support nature and the environment, alongside food production. Usually supported by a facilitator.
Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)	DEFRA-funded environmental grant programme for farmers and landowners in England, delivered through National Landscapes and National Parks with four themes of Nature, Climate, People and Place. Supports projects for the environment, heritage and public access in accordance with the protected landscape's statutory Management Plan.
Highway Authority	The Highways Act 1980 defines a Highway Authority as the body responsible for maintaining all highways maintainable at public expense and keeping them free of obstruction, including responsibility for public rights of way.
Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)	A method used to define and map the historic and archaeological dimensions of the present-day landscape. HLC is an extremely useful tool for enabling better decision-making about future land use management and change. By properly understanding the historic landscape context we can assess the likely effects of changes and make better-informed decisions.
Historic Parks and Gardens	Parks and gardens containing historic features dating from 1939 or earlier and registered by Historic England in three grades as with historic buildings.
Landscape	An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)	A process for identifying the effects of proposed changes (e.g. new development) on views and on the landscape itself. A depth of analysis and understanding of these two interrelated aspects is required to produce a successful LVIA. The Landscape Institute publishes guidelines for carrying out LVIA. LVIA may be required for significant planning applications within the National Landscape or its setting (see 'Setting').
Landscape Character Area (LCA)	A unique geographic area with a consistent character and identity, which forms part of a landscape character type (see 'Landscape Character Type').
Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)	A method for identifying, understanding and expressing the different patterns and features i.e. woodland, hedges, building styles and historic artefacts which give an area or place its distinctive character.
Landscape Character Type (LCT)	A generic term for landscape with a consistent, homogeneous character. Landscape character types may occur in different parts of the county, but wherever they occur, they will share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation, or human influences.
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale, a European Union rural development initiative for assisting rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity of their area through the distribution of grant funding. The NWDNL benefitted from two successive LEADER programmes.
Local Access Forum (LAF)	Set up under CRoW Act (see 'Countryside and Rights of Way Act') to represent a balance of local interests and views, providing independent guidance to the relevant local authorities and the Countryside Agency on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation in ways that address social, economic and environmental interests. Each county has one covering their respective areas of the North Wessex Downs.
Local Planning Authority (LPA)	The local authority, normally a unitary or local borough or district council, which is empowered by law to exercise planning functions.
Major development	According to the NPPF (see 'National Planning Policy Framework'), whether a proposal is major development is a matter for the local planning authority (see 'Local Planning Authority') as the decision maker. They should take into account a development's nature, scale and local context, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated.
National Landscape	Term used to refer to a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In 2023, following a recommendation by the Glover Review (2019), the AONB Partnerships in England rebranded themselves as National Landscapes. The formal designation is unchanged.

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National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Designated by the Government under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to protect and conserve nationally important areas of wildlife habitat and geological formations and to promote scientific research.
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)	National Government guidance (only available online), that supplements the National Planning Policy Framework (see 'National Planning Policy Framework') and provides a basis for plan-making and decision taking by local planning authorities.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	The principal document that sets out national Government's town and country planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, e.g. by local planning authorities (see 'Local Planning Authority').
National Trail	Routes based on Public Rights of Way through the nation's finest and most characteristic countryside, allowing an extensive journey on foot, horseback or by bicycle and capable of attracting tourist use from home and abroad. Designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
Natural beauty	Legislation and associated guidance define natural beauty as including the physical elements of flora, fauna, geology and physiographic or geomorphological, the cultural and heritage elements, together with less tangible values such as intactness, rarity, wildness, remoteness, tranquillity and the appeal to the physical senses.
Natural capital	The elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value to people, including ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions. Natural capital is described in terms of assets: it is simply those assets provided by nature which have the capacity to generate goods and services. Natural capital can be regarded as the source of all other types of capital - manufactured, financial, human or social, underlining the importance of a healthy environment for human prosperity.
Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006	Legislation that extended the biodiversity duty in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (see 'Countryside and Rights of Way Act') to public bodies and statutory undertakers to ensure due regard to the conservation of biodiversity. The Act also refined the definition of 'natural beauty'.
Nature-based Solutions (NbS)	Actions to address societal challenges by protecting, sustainably managing and restoring natural and modified ecosystems, thereby benefiting people and nature at the same time. They can be used to target major challenges like climate change, flood risk, soil erosion, water quality, biodiversity loss and threats to human health.
Nature recovery	A term used to refer to restoring the extent, integrity and health of wildlife habitats and the diversity and abundance of species. It reflects the need not just to stop but to reverse the historic and continuing loss of biodiversity. It can include a range of actions and scales from small-scale site management to efforts to restore or establish functioning ecosystems on a very large scale. Nature recovery networks are the spatial expression of this, following the Lawton principles of more, bigger, better and joined up: sites, corridors, stepping-stones and whole landscapes that help wildlife populations to recover, grow, move and be resilient in the face of climate change.
Neighbourhood Plan	A document that a community may choose to prepare to set out a vision for how it wants an area to develop over the next 10-20 years. Once approved by an inspector and endorsed in a local referendum the plan becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area. Established by the Localism Act 2011.
Nitrate – Vulnerable Zone (NVZ)	Areas designated at risk of agricultural nitrate pollution in the watercourse, from fertiliser or manures. Farmers must follow regulations to reduce nitrate run-off.
Parkland	A large piece of ground usually comprising woodland, scattered mature trees, pasture and/or semi-formal gardens, often created to a specific landscape design and currently or once attached to a country house or mansion.
Pasture	An area of land dominated by grass which is used only or principally for grazing, as distinct from a meadow that is mown. Pasture may be enclosed fields or unenclosed common land.
Permanent grassland	Any grassland, whether pasture or meadow, composed of perennial or self-seeding annual plants kept indefinitely and not sown or ploughed.
Permissive access	Public access to a route or area granted by the landowner, usually for foot access but occasionally for (horse) riders, which is not dedicated as a public right of way.

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Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)	Ancient Woodland Sites in which the former tree cover has been replaced, often with non-native trees. PAWS often retain important ancient woodland features including characteristic flora, fauna and archaeology.
Pollard	A tree which has had its top and/or upper branches cut some height above the ground to promote new and multiple growth, to avoid the reach of browsing animals or to create aesthetically pleasing forms, extend the life of the tree and/or maintain wildlife habitat. This is called pollarding.
Quiet Lane	Section 208 of the Transport Act 2000 makes provision for local traffic authorities to designate roads for which they are responsible as Quiet Lanes, enjoying voluntary speed restrictions and promotion for non-motorised traffic.
Regional walking routes	Longer named paths, promoted on the initiative of local authorities or other bodies, signed and fully waymarked, and based on public rights of way, offering more than a day's travelling, perhaps following a theme or feature that offer tourism potential, such as the Wayfarer's Walk and the White Horse Trail.
Regenerative farming	Farming that aims to 'regenerate' the soil, focussing on improving soil health by reducing soil disturbance, increasing plant cover and integrating livestock into farming practices.
Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)	Sections 60 to 62 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 require local highway authorities to prepare and publish Rights of Way Improvement Plans for improving rights of way in their areas, taking into account the needs of the public including people with disabilities.
River Basin Management Plan	A River Basin Management Plan (RBMP), produced in compliance with the Water Framework Directive (q.v.), provides a framework for protecting and enhancing the benefits provided by the water environment. It also informs decisions on land-use planning. It consists of a number of different documents, maps and datasets. Overseen by the Environment Agency, there is one for each of the seven River Basin Districts in England.
Scheduled Monument (SAM)	A structure identified by Historic England for protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
Section 106 agreement	A binding agreement between a local planning authority and a developer associated with a grant of planning permission and regarding matters linked to the proposed development.
Semi-improved grassland	Grassland in a category between improved and unimproved grassland that has undergone some modification through the use of, for example, fertilisers, herbicides and grazing. Likely to have a reduced range of plant species compared with unimproved grassland, but potential for restoration to greater diversity.
Sense of place	A person's perception of a location's indigenous characteristics, based on the mix of uses, appearance and context that makes a place memorable.
Setting (of the National Landscape)	The setting of the North Wessex Downs does not have a defined geographical boundary. It should be addressed as the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design can be considered to have an impact, either positive or negative on the natural beauty (see 'natural beauty') and valued qualities (see 'valued qualities') of the National Landscape.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Area identified by Natural England under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest.
Sites & Monument Record (SMR)	A database of sites of archaeological interest and potential within a particular area, usually a county.

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Soil health	General term covering the condition of soil including levels of organic matter, nutrient cycling, water infiltration and microfauna biodiversity.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora.
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	Documents prepared to support and amplify policies in the Local Development Plan. Such guidance must be consistent with national and local planning policy
Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)	SuDS are intended to reduce flooding downstream of development by enabling surface water run-off to be controlled as near to the source as possible. National planning policy encourages use of SuDS and seeks to ensure that flood risk is considered on a catchment scale.
Tranquillity	Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating for example to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting.
Unimproved grassland	Grassland consisting of native grasses and herbs which have not been significantly affected by treatment with mineral fertilisers, pesticides, intensive grazing or drainage.
Valued landscape	The relative value that is attached to different landscapes. In a policy context the usual basis for recognising certain highly valued landscapes is through the application of a local or national landscape designation. Yet a landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests; or the existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally.
Valued qualities	Positive features and characteristics that are important to landscape character and that, if lost or altered, would result in adverse change to the landscape. The valued qualities of the NWDNL are those aspects of the landscape for which it is considered important, and on which the priorities for its management are based. The interaction between natural and cultural factors can create a significance which is not recognised by looking at one aspect in isolation.
Veteran tree	Tree which by virtue of its great age, size and/or condition, is of exceptional value whether in cultural terms, for its landscape contribution or for the benefit of wildlife.
Water Framework Directive	EU Directive 2000/60/EC. Aim to achieve good qualitative and quantitative status of all surface and groundwater bodies.
Wetland	Transitional area between wet and dry environments; wetlands range from permanently or intermittently wet land to shallow water and water margins.
Whole Farm / Estate (Conservation) Plan	A plan that considers an individual farm or estate as a whole, producing a bespoke conservation plan considering farm type, location and any particular landscape or wildlife value, identifying adjustments to management practices that can significantly benefit the landscape and wildlife.
World Heritage Site (WHS)	A cultural or natural heritage site inscribed under the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage for its Outstanding Universal Value.

