

# The Landscape Enhancement Initiative

Restoring beauty to our countryside

August 2022



nationalgrid

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## Foreword by Chris Baines



**Chris Baines,**  
Independent  
Chair, Stakeholder  
Advisory Group,  
Visual Impact  
Provision project

**I am immensely proud of the achievements of the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI).**

Through its work, we have provided vital funding to enhance the natural beauty of a significant number of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and National Parks in England and Wales.

It is also very gratifying to see it succeed as the whole concept was conceived by the Stakeholder Advisory Group to National Grid's Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project which I have chaired over the last decade.

The aim of VIP more broadly is to restore natural beauty by reducing the impact of National Grid's existing network of overhead wires and pylons as well as contributing towards preserving and enhancing the natural beauty, cultural heritage, biodiversity and improving accessibility within our most precious landscapes.

As such, it makes use of a provision from Ofgem, the energy industry regulator, to carry out major landscape transformations through major engineering works to bury the existing infrastructure underground.

LEI makes use of the same provision but focuses on smaller visual improvement projects. Thanks to LEI, miles of dry stone walls and hedgerows have been restored, biodiversity has been enhanced and paths improved, all making their own small but significant contribution to the restoration of beauty in our countryside.

Please take a look at some of the wonderful projects featured in this brochure. I hope they will inspire many of you to apply for LEI funding and take advantage of this opportunity to enhance your own landscape.





# What is LEI?

**The Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) is an important part of the VIP programme. Championed by our stakeholders, the initiative aims to use up to £12m of the current Ofgem provision for smaller visual improvement projects in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks impacted by existing National Grid lines.**

## Who can apply?

Applications must be submitted by AONB Partnerships or National Park Authorities. However, many of the successful LEI projects to date have been developed by groups outside those organisations including local Wildlife Trusts, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), parish councils and landowner groups, to name but a few.

Contact the AONB or National Park Authority in your area of interest in the first instance, to discuss any ideas you may have for a project that could be funded by the Landscape Enhancement Initiative.

Each AONB or National Park can have a maximum of £600,000 worth of live grants at any one time, to ensure that all organisations have a fair chance to benefit from an award.

Applications are assessed according to the following primary criteria:

- How effective is the project likely to be in reducing the impact of existing electricity transmission infrastructure on publicly accessible viewpoints, and the general visual resource experienced by local communities and/or by visitors to the area?
- How effective is the project likely to be in enhancing the landscape in the affected area (not related to specific groups of people or viewpoints) in ways that may reduce or compensate for the impact of relevant electricity transmission infrastructure?
- Is the project in keeping with the character of the landscape? Does it help to foster regional and local landscape diversity and distinctiveness (informed by Natural England's National Character Area profiles, LANDMAP information in Wales and any local landscape character assessments that may be available)?

- Does the project support objectives set out in the AONB or National Park management plan for the area?

This is in addition to other environmental, social, economic and practical project criteria.

For more detail on selection criteria visit [nationalgrid.com/lei](https://nationalgrid.com/lei)

## Eligible projects

The following list contains examples of the types of project we would typically deem eligible for LEI funding. Please note that this is an indicative list, not an exhaustive one.

- Localised tree planting and/or woodland creation
- Management, re-planting and/or planting of new hedgerows
- Changes to trails, footpaths, cycleways and riding routes
- Projects that enhance the special qualities of landscape and may also benefit biodiversity
- Projects that enhance the special qualities of landscape and may also benefit cultural heritage

# Our successes

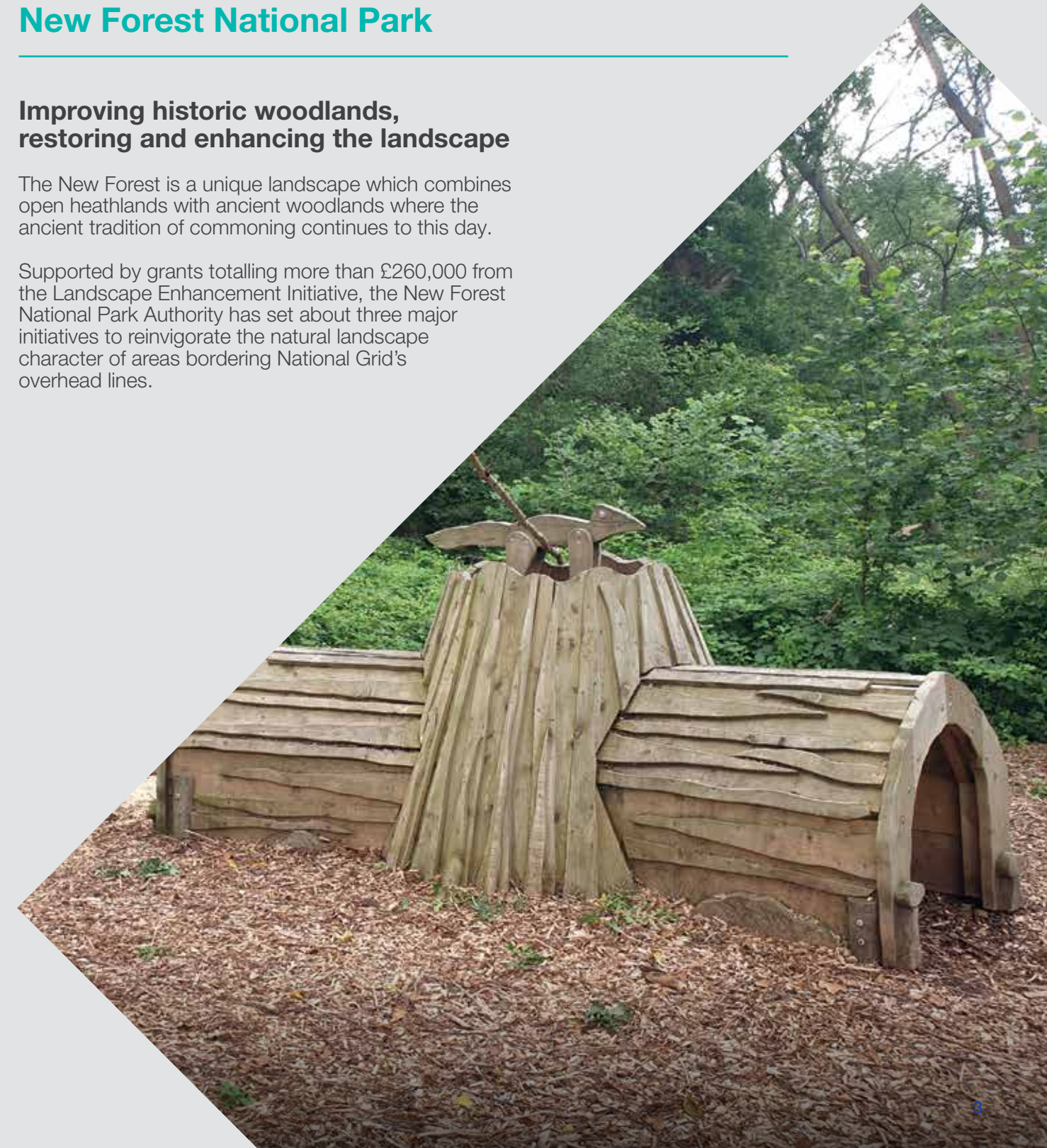
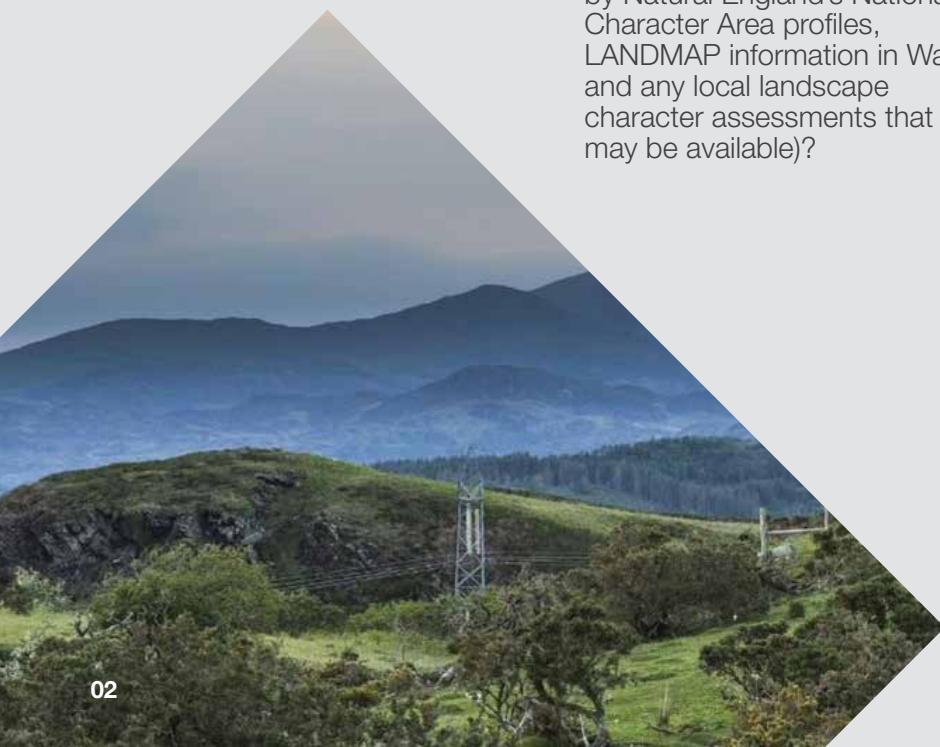
**Between 2015 and 2021, the LEI provided almost £4m for localised visual improvement projects. It has already made a positive contribution to natural beauty, wildlife and biodiversity, cultural heritage and public enjoyment. Here are just a few examples of our successes so far.**

## New Forest National Park

### Improving historic woodlands, restoring and enhancing the landscape

The New Forest is a unique landscape which combines open heathlands with ancient woodlands where the ancient tradition of commoning continues to this day.

Supported by grants totalling more than £260,000 from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative, the New Forest National Park Authority has set about three major initiatives to reinvigorate the natural landscape character of areas bordering National Grid's overhead lines.





## New Forest National Park (continued)

### Making woodland improvements

Volunteers have been working hard to restore active management to Warren Copse, including coppicing hazel woodland. Public access has been improved through targeted footpath development, laying gravel in place of the muddiest paths for greater stability, while an exciting new wild play site within the wood has been created for local schools and children to enjoy.

These enhancements are inspiring the community to re-engage with the local area by improving the natural landscape and providing a focus for family activity within the woodland.

### Enhancing Landford Bog Nature Reserve

The beauty of Landford Bog Nature Reserve is being enhanced by diverting attention from the nearby pylons through improvements to visitor access and the landscape character of this internationally important habitat.

New fencing has been erected to enable grazing to be managed safely and securely, an important element of effective management of the bog. Further enhancements have included carrying out critical habitat restoration by clearing invasive vegetation such as cotoneaster and managing native birch and gorse scrub.

### Reconnecting the landscape – Franchises Lodge

The landscape and habitats of Franchises Lodge are being restored, enhanced and reconnected to benefit all those using the area for recreation.

Work here includes removing over 60 hectares of rhododendron as part of a programme to manage invasive non-native species, renovating three Bronze Age tumuli which are registered Scheduled Ancient Monuments, reinstating a walking track for visitors, opening up a new lime avenue route and removing 120 square metres of abandoned building rubble to improve the landscape quality.

**“These extensive works have already started to enhance our beautiful landscape and local habitats, breathing new life into the area.**

**We’re grateful that LEI funding has helped us unlock these opportunities, which will go such a long way to keeping visitors coming back and re-engaging with this wonderful place.”**

Sarah Kelly,  
New Forest National Park  
Landscape Officer

## Blackdown Hills AONB

### Enhancing the Hills

The Blackdown Hills is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the border between Devon and Somerset, consisting of forest, farmland and steep valleys.

Epitomising the English countryside, with hedgerows and copses, small farms with intricate field patterns, deep valleys and narrow, winding lanes, the AONB is popular for cycling, riding and walking. With a grant from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative of almost £50,000, the Enhancing the Hills project focuses on a 6km corridor where National Grid’s electricity infrastructure cuts across a valley, ridge and plateau landscape.

The project has aimed to reduce the visual impact of the overhead line through targeted conservation initiatives to restore and enhance hedgerows and hedgerow trees, small woodlands and orchards, and meadows close to the power lines.

### Expanding hedgerows

To filter views between irregular medieval fields and the more regular field patterns on higher land, through an investment of over £25,000 the AONB team has so far installed 225m of brand new hedgerow, and restored 410 metres of old hedgerows. The new hedgerow strengthens the natural character of the landscape and crucially means there is now a clear physical boundary for the AONB in this location.

### Restoring prominent spaces

Additionally, over one hectare of derelict and previously neglected historic orchard is being restored with new trees of native varieties.

Scrub control, tree and ride maintenance are being carried out across 1.6 hectares of semi-natural woodland on the landscape close to Honiton.

### Enhancing grassland

To build on the work to date, five hectares of grassland is being enhanced and resown using a combination of seeds and green hay, which will benefit natural regeneration for the long term.

An ongoing annual monitoring programme will ensure the success of the programme and measure progress.

**“The funding from National Grid’s Landscape Enhancement Initiative has enabled us to breathe new life into our management and reignite the visual appeal of this beautiful setting.**

**These crucial initiatives will enrich views from across the flat-topped plateau, and re-emphasise the rich mosaic of diverse and interconnected habitats in the AONB.**

**The changes mean we can continue to maintain and grow the Blackdown Hills’ offering as a wonderful destination for visitors to enjoy.”**

Lisa Turner,  
Blackdown Hills AONB  
Planning Officer



## Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB

### Lost Landscapes project

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley form a dramatic upland frontier in North Wales, comprising scenic landscapes, dramatic summits and historic towns and villages.

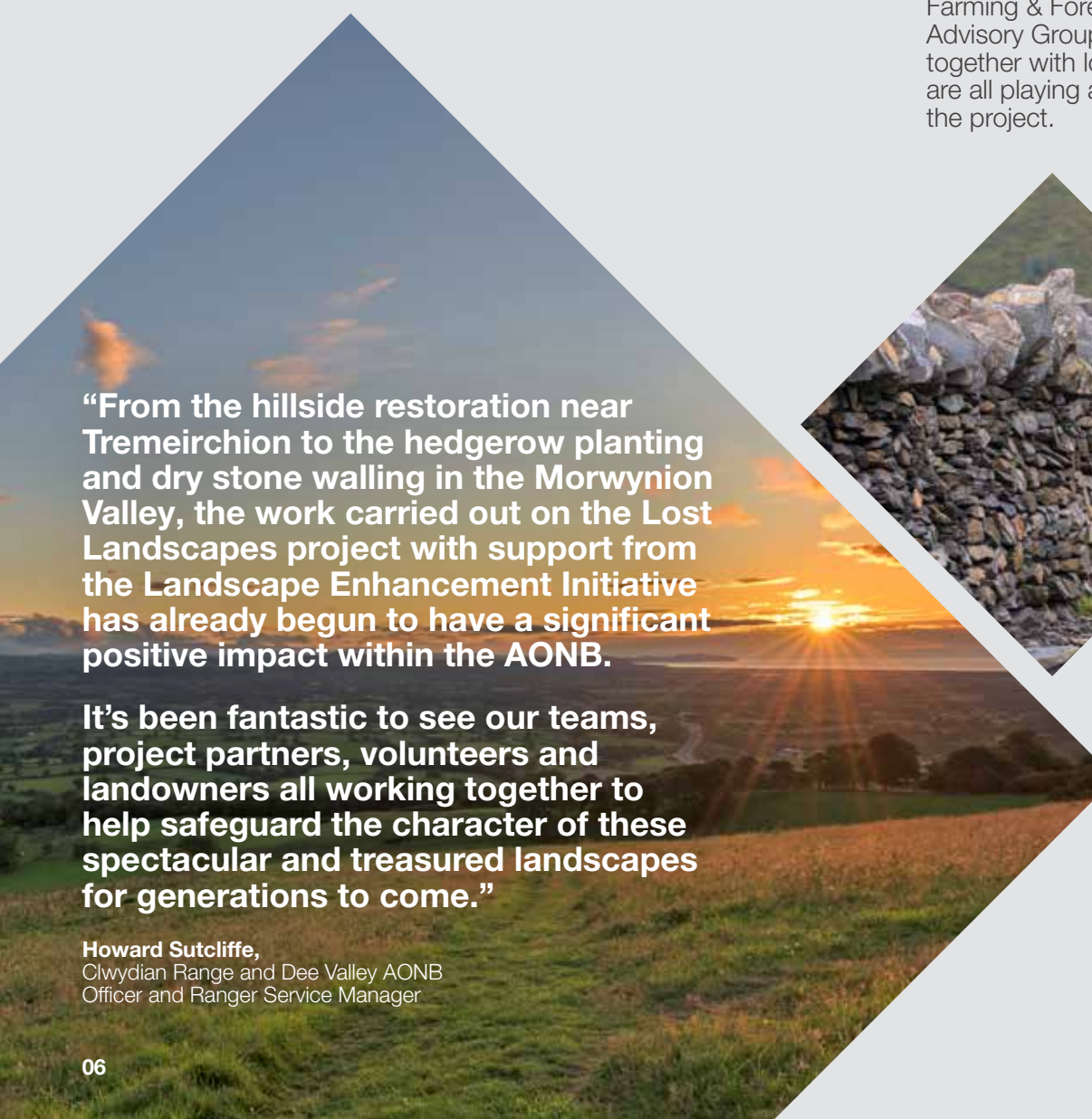
The 'Lost Landscapes' project has been supported by the Landscape Enhancement Initiative to restore some key features of the AONB within 3km of two sets of overhead transmission lines that cross the area.

Beginning in March 2018, the four-year project has already started to improve the character of the landscape through hedge and tree planting, the establishment of new ponds, and drystone wall restoration.

Improvements to roadside nature reserves together with work to restore fire damaged moorland are helping to sustain important habitats, including those for black grouse and other local wildlife.

The removal of gorse and scrub from five acres of hillside has additionally improved the hallmark views for trail users along the Offa's Dyke Path above Tremeirchion. The project will also carry out works at Plas yn Ial Historic Park and Garden, a key landmark in the Morwynion Valley.

Partners Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council, Natural Resources Wales, the RSPB, North Wales Wildlife Trust and Farming & Forestry Wildlife Advisory Group (FFWAG) together with local landowners are all playing a crucial role in the project.



**“From the hillside restoration near Tremeirchion to the hedgerow planting and dry stone walling in the Morwynion Valley, the work carried out on the Lost Landscapes project with support from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative has already begun to have a significant positive impact within the AONB.**

**It's been fantastic to see our teams, project partners, volunteers and landowners all working together to help safeguard the character of these spectacular and treasured landscapes for generations to come.”**

**Howard Sutcliffe,**  
Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB  
Officer and Ranger Service Manager



## North York Moors National Park

### Public Bridleway Improvement

Beloved by walkers and cyclists alike, the North York Moors National Park is renowned for its heather moorland, undulating dales and stunning views.

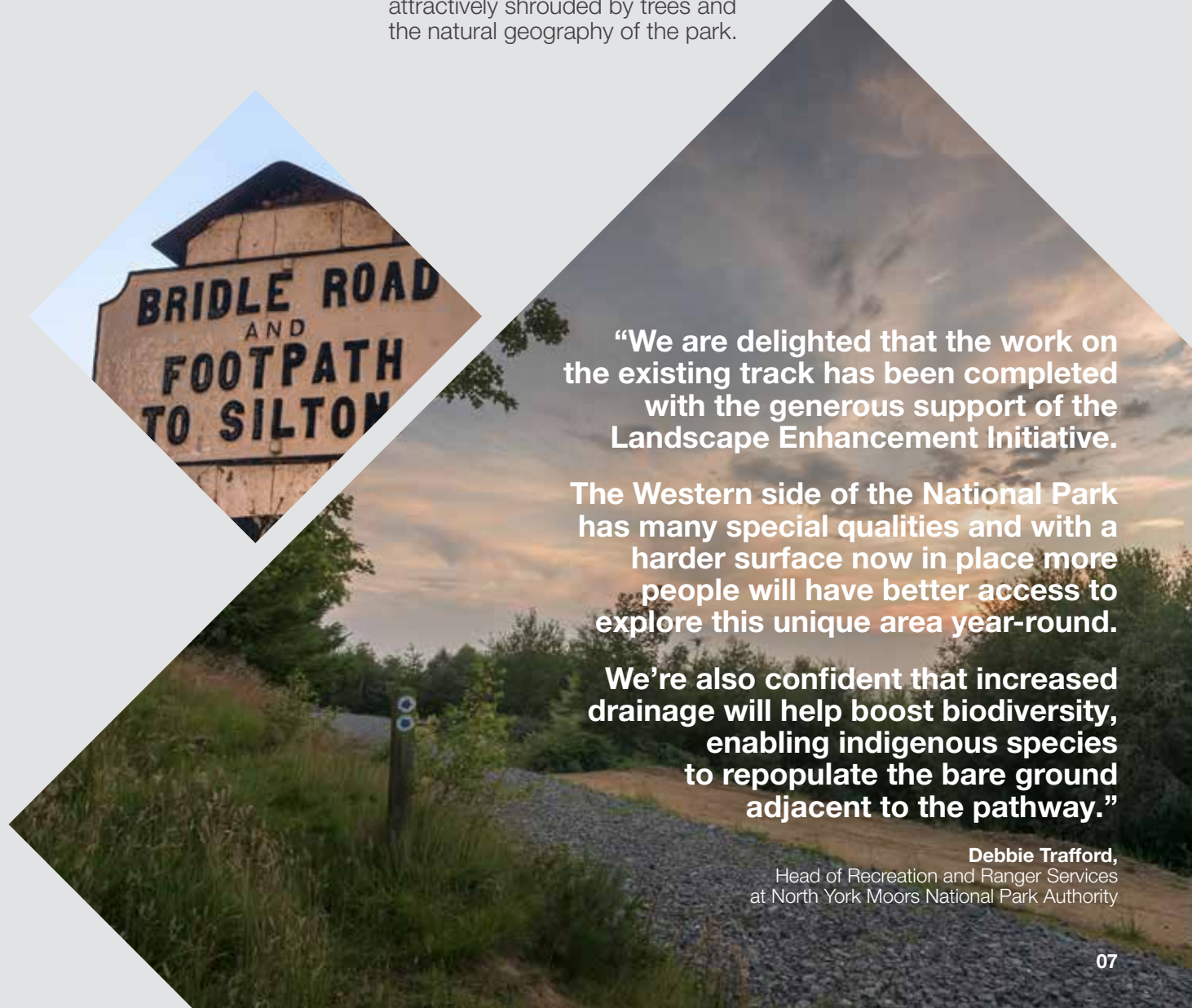
Supported by a grant of £29,843 from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative, and partnered by the North York Moors National Park Authority, Forestry England has provided a new all-weather surface for the public bridleway between the villages of Over Silton and Thimbleby near Northallerton.

The three-and-a-half-year project has delivered a safe and attractive bridleway between existing good networks of quiet minor roads on the western and northern sides of the park. By providing an alternative cycling-friendly route to the A19 trunk road, the project promotes the tranquil atmosphere of the park.

Enhancing the experience of those who visit the park, cyclists no longer need cross underneath the transmission line. Instead, the upgraded route is 1km away, attractively shrouded by trees and the natural geography of the park.

Replacing the clay surface with a firmer, well-drained route means that both walkers and cyclists are able to use the bridleway all year round.

The improved route has also created the opportunity for the re-vegetation of adjacent bare ground. This in turn will lead to enhanced biodiversity and a significantly improved aesthetic within the landscape for all to enjoy.

**“We are delighted that the work on the existing track has been completed with the generous support of the Landscape Enhancement Initiative.**

**The Western side of the National Park has many special qualities and with a harder surface now in place more people will have better access to explore this unique area year-round.**

**We're also confident that increased drainage will help boost biodiversity, enabling indigenous species to repopulate the bare ground adjacent to the pathway.”**

**Debbie Trafford,**  
Head of Recreation and Ranger Services  
at North York Moors National Park Authority



## High Weald AONB

### Beautiful Boundaries

The historically rich landscape of the High Weald AONB is defined by its mosaic of patchwork fields, small copses, shaws and hedges.

Supported by the Landscape Enhancement Initiative, the AONB Partnership has worked to enhance this internationally important setting through its 'Beautiful Boundaries' project.

The three-year project has focused on locations where pylons are visible from the area's popular footpaths and promoted trails including the 1066 Walk and the Sussex Border Path.

A range of measures such as tree planting to screen the overhead line from key viewpoints have been used to create a sense of timelessness.

Lost and overgrazed hedges are being restored to strengthen the landscape's distinctive boundary features and enhance wildlife habitats.

To promote long-term sustainability, education sessions on good hedge management have also been made available for landowners at nearby Scotney Castle.



**"The LEI has offered our farmers a rare opportunity to work together to improve the scenery and wildlife around the transmission line.**

**Walkers from near and far have appreciated the new hedges in blossom in spring and seeing their autumn colour."**

**Gerry Sherwin,**  
Business Manager  
at the High Weald AONB Partnership

## Eryri (Snowdonia) National Park

### Dyffryn Maentwrog Woodland Restoration and Landscape Improvement

The Landscape Enhancement Initiative has been supporting three projects in Snowdonia to enhance the National Park's special qualities.

Two woodland restoration and improvement schemes are encouraging biodiversity and protecting natural beauty near to overhead lines.

New forestry planting is creating wildlife corridors through species-rich habitats, with more than 8 hectares of native woodland planted and 871m of hedgerow already restored at Maentwrog.

A programme to control invasive plant species such as rhododendron has been helping to conserve and revitalise the landscape's ancient woodland at several sites, including at Llan Ffestiniog.

The third project, 'Snowdonia Traditional Boundaries', recognises the importance of historic features including hedgerows and dry-stone walls, not only visually but as hallmarks of local culture and sense of place.

Natural Resources Wales, the National Trust, the Woodland Trust, North Wales Wildlife Trust and both Welsh farming unions, as well as nearly 100 individual landowners, are all important partners in the delivery of the three projects.

**"Snowdonia has benefitted greatly from the LEI. The initiative has been successful in bringing together different organisations – including charitable and voluntary organisations – to make landscape and biodiversity enhancements on a meaningful scale.**

**These improvements will be of great benefit to walkers and other users who wish to enjoy the National Park."**

**Jonathan Cawley,**  
Director of Planning and Land Management  
at the Snowdonia National Park Authority





# All LEI projects

For further examples of our successes so far, visit [nationalgrid.com/lei](https://nationalgrid.com/lei)  
Below is a full list of all our live and completed LEI projects to date.

## Progress to date

### Window 1 projects

#### Ofgem funding received June 2017:

- **High Weald AONB Partnership:**  
Beautiful Boundaries
- **Peak District National Park Authority:**  
Central Longdendale Trails
- **North York Moors National Park Authority:**  
Over Silton to Thimbleby Bridleway

### Window 2 projects

#### Ofgem funding received February 2018:

- **Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB Partnership:**  
Lost Landscapes
- **Dorset AONB Partnership:**  
Magical Marshwood Vale
- **New Forest National Park Authority:**  
Woodland Improvements and Wild Play at Holbury Manor / Warren Copse
- **Peak District National Park Authority:**  
Longdendale Landscape Restoration
- **Snowdonia National Park Authority:**  
Snowdonia Traditional Boundaries
- **Snowdonia National Park Authority:**  
Dyffryn Maentwrog Woodland Restoration and Landscape Improvement
- **Snowdonia National Park Authority:**  
Dyffryn Ffestiniog (East) Woodland Restoration and Landscape Improvement

### Window 3 projects

#### Ofgem funding received January 2019:

- **Kent Downs AONB:**  
High Downs
- **Kent Downs AONB:**  
North Downs Living Grid project
- **Cannock Chase AONB:**  
Gentleshaw Common into the Future
- **North York Moors National Park:**  
Arncliffe Wood and Scarth Wood Moor Restoration

### Window 4 projects

#### Ofgem funding received June 2019:

- **Blackdown Hills AONB:**  
Enhancing the Hills
- **Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB:**  
Lost Landscapes Continued
- **New Forest National Park Authority:**  
Landford Bog Nature Reserve
- **High Weald AONB:**  
Wonderful Woodlands
- **High Weald AONB:**  
Beautiful Boundaries 2

### Window 5 projects

#### Ofgem funding received January 2020:

- **Tamar Valley AONB:**  
South Hooe Restoring & Enhancing Watery Landscapes
- **North York Moors National Park:**  
Kepwick Landscape Restoration

### Window 6 projects

#### Ofgem funding received January 2021:

- **New Forest National Park:**  
Restoration and Enhancement of Franchises Lodge
- **Blackdown Hills AONB:**  
Hillforts of the Hills
- **Cotswolds National Landscape:**  
Restoring Cheltenham's Escarpment Grasslands
- **Cotswolds National Landscape:**  
West of Winchcombe Landscape Enhancements - Nottingham Hill
- **Forest of Bowland AONB:**  
Quernmore & Conder Valley Landscape Enhancement Initiative
- **Lake District National Park:**  
Healing Valley Mires
- **Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB:**  
Views of Minsmere
- **Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB:**  
Scenic sights and watery wilderness

### Window 7 projects

#### Ofgem funding received May 2021:

- **Lake District National Park:**  
Highlighting History at Lowther
- **Cotswold National Landscape:**  
Hampnett to Chedworth Boundary Restorations
- **Northumberland National Park:**  
Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail Enhancement
- **Snowdonia National Park:**  
Carneddau Connectivity

Window 8 projects

Eight applications received and approved by the approvals panel. Ofgem approval received July 2021.

- **Lake District National Park:** Breast High Road Bretherdale Restoration
- **Lake District National Park:** Breast High Road Borrowdale Restoration
- **Clywdian Range & Dee Valley AONB:** Hidden From View
- **South Downs National Park:** Revealing Grandfather's Bottom Chalk Grassland Restoration
- **South Downs National Park:** Historic Boundaries of Woolbeding Estate
- **Kent Downs AONB:** Empowering the Natural Network
- **New Forest National Park:** New Forest access and landscape enhancements
- **Dorset AONB:** Linking Chalk, River & Vale

Window 9 projects - opened in March 2021

Seven applications received and approved by the approvals panel. Ofgem approval received March 2022.

- **Clywdian Range & Dee Valley AONB:** Caring for Caer Drewyn
- **Snowdonia National Park:** Carneddau Access and Landscape Improvements
- **Snowdonia National Park:** Mind the Gap
- **Cotswolds National Landscape:** Lodge Park Bridgeman Restoration Project
- **Dedham Vale AONB:** Conserving Constable Country
- **Brecon Beacons National Park Authority:** Clydach Ironworks Conservation and Improvement Works
- **Kent Downs AONB:** Empowering the Natural Network

## How to apply

Applications must be submitted by AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities although they can be developed, led and delivered by third party organisations. We're looking for projects that can deliver reduced visual impacts and landscape enhancements within these protected landscapes where there is existing National Grid infrastructure present.

Applications should be completed online and the process is simple and streamlined, with expert help available to all applicants.

When you click on the 'Apply' link you will be directed to some eligibility questions, which will identify if your project is eligible for consideration. You will then be able to complete the 'Expression of Interest', which is a short form to fill in outlining the scope of your project.

You are encouraged to submit your Expression of Interest as soon as possible, as we may need to close the application window early if we receive high levels of interest.

### How the process works

There are two application windows per year.

Expressions of Interest are considered by the expert approvals panel and if a project is deemed eligible, the applicants are invited to submit a more detailed application.

An application can consist of more than one project (developed by communities or other organisations and groups) into potential funding packages. It should demonstrate the active involvement of wider stakeholders and/or the local community.

Once submitted, the full application is considered by the same approvals panel and, if successful in meeting the assessment criteria, is recommended for funding.

The application form can be found by visiting [nationalgrid.com/lei](https://nationalgrid.com/lei).

### The Approvals Panel

Chaired by Lee Sue Slijvic, Chair of the Landscape Institute North West Branch, the expert panel comprises representatives from Cadw, Historic England, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales with input from landscape architects at consultancies Gillespies and LUC.





**If you need any help or support, please get in touch with us.**

Website: [nationalgrid.com/lei](https://nationalgrid.com/lei)

Phone: **01285 841912**

Available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding Bank and Public Holidays)

Email: [nationalgrid@trustcsr.com](mailto:nationalgrid@trustcsr.com)

**Landscape Enhancement Initiative**

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