



Management Plan Amendments Report

Comparison of the 2019-2024 and 2026-2031 Management Plans

Purpose

To identify and explain material amendments in statutory context, structure, priorities, outcomes, measures, responsibilities and monitoring.

Executive Summary

The Forest of Bowland National Landscape 2026-2031 Management Plan is a substantial strategic refresh rather than a simple roll-forward. It retains the core purpose of the partnership as conserving and enhancing natural beauty, but changes the terminology, statutory framing, policy architecture, evidence base and delivery model. The earlier three-theme action plan has been replaced by four themes, 13 desired outcomes and a measures matrix linked to national targets and local indicators.

- National identity: “Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty” is retained as the legal designation of the protected landscape, but “National Landscape” is now the principal public-facing term.
- Stronger statutory duty: the former duty for relevant authorities to “have regard” is replaced by the active duty to “seek to further” the purpose of designation following the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- Outcome-led format: detailed project-style actions and named partner lists are replaced by broad measures and sectoral responsibility columns.
- Nature recovery is expanded into separate habitat outcomes for peatlands, woodlands/trees/hedgerows, grasslands, rivers/water and Champion Species.
- Climate adaptation is embedded throughout and linked to a formal adaptation plan, nature-based solutions and resilience measures.
- Monitoring is strengthened by alignment with the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, quantified long-term targets and a larger suite of local indicators.
- People and place remain central, with stronger emphasis on equitable access, all-terrain mobility, cultural and social barriers, learning pathways, green social prescribing and regenerative tourism.
- The new plan is explicitly strategic. It states that it does not allocate resources, provide a project list, create new legal thresholds or prescribe lawful land-management techniques.



1. Scope and Method

This report compares the approved 2026-2031 Management Plan with the 2019-2024 Management Plan. The comparison focuses on material amendments rather than minor drafting, design or pagination changes. It reviews statutory context, terminology, evidence, vision, themes, outcomes, delivery measures, responsibilities and monitoring. Page references relate to the printed page numbers in the PDF versions of each plan.

2. Principal Amendments

Area	2019-2024 position	2026-2031 position	Amendment	Significance
Designation and terminology	AONB terminology throughout.	National Landscape used throughout except where the legal title is required.	Rebranding and clearer distinction between legal designation and public identity.	High
Statutory duty	Relevant authorities described as having a duty to "have regard."	LURA 2023 duty requires relevant authorities to "seek to further" the designation purpose and evidence positive action.	Material strengthening of expectations on public bodies and utilities.	High
Plan status	Positive management framework with objectives, actions and named partners.	Explicit explanation of what the plan is and is not; advisory, strategic and not a delivery plan or new regulatory regime.	Clarifies legal and operational boundaries.	High
Plan structure	Three themes and 12 objective areas.	Four themes and 13 numbered desired outcomes.	Reorganises the plan around measurable outcomes.	High
Delivery framework	Action tables identify individual actions, named key partners and AONB Unit role.	Measures are assigned to broad sectors: government, arm's-length bodies, land managers, NGOs, communities and businesses.	Broadens ownership and reduces dependency on named projects or organisations.	High
Nature recovery	Habitats and species grouped mainly under one objective, with natural capital separate.	Five dedicated nature outcomes: peatlands; trees/woodlands/hedgerows; grasslands; rivers/water; Champion Species.	Much greater ecological specificity and visibility.	High
Targets	Selected short-term outputs, for example 250 ha peat, 200 ha woodland and 15 ha grassland.	PLTOF allocations and 2040/2042/2050 targets, including 8,000 ha peat restoration and 750 ha additional tree/woodland cover.	Moves from plan-period projects to long-term national outcome accountability.	High



Tourism	Sustainable tourism and business network support.	Regenerative tourism, local retention of benefits, active travel and visitor/economic evidence.	Expands from reducing impacts to creating net local benefit.	Medium-High
Access and inclusion	Access for diverse users, easy-access and dementia-friendly activity.	Explicit treatment of physical, social, cultural and economic barriers, all-terrain wheelchairs and least-restrictive infrastructure.	Stronger equity and inclusion standard.	High
Monitoring	Performance and condition monitoring, annual report and State of AONB reporting.	National PLTOF monitoring, annual Partners Forum monitoring, local indicators and planned evaluation framework.	More systematic and target-linked.	High

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 8-9, 32-56; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 5, 10-12, 29-36, 41-82.

3. Statutory, Policy and Governance Changes

3.1 Protected Landscapes duty

The most consequential legal amendment is the change from a duty to “have regard” to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, described in the 2019 plan, to a duty on relevant authorities to “seek to further” that purpose. The 2026 plan presents this as an active duty requiring positive action and evidence. The outcomes and measures are intended to help define what compliance may look like in the Forest of Bowland context.

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 8-11; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 5 and 11-12.

3.2 Updated policy context

- NPPF reference updated from the 2018 framework and paragraph 172 to the 2024 framework and paragraphs 189-190.
- New policy mechanisms include 30x30, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, nutrient neutrality, the 2024 UK Forestry Standard, the Third National Adaptation Programme and the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.
- Local context now includes AMP8, strategic preparation for AMP9, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, and anticipated local government reorganisation and devolution.
- Brexit uncertainty and proposed Environmental Land Management arrangements in the earlier plan are replaced by assessment of operational ELM strands, Farming in Protected Landscapes and the continuing need for locally tailored, outcome-based farm support.

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 27-30, 33-34, 42; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 10-18 and 29-31.

3.3 Governance

The Joint Advisory Committee remains the central partnership body and retains its three core objectives. Membership is updated to reflect North Yorkshire Council replacing North Yorkshire County Council and Craven District Council, and Lancashire Wildlife Trust is listed as a member.



Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 21-22; 2026-2031 plan, p. 4.

4. Structural and Thematic Reorganisation

2019-2024 theme	Objective areas	2026-2031 destination	Effect
Theme 1: Outstanding Landscape of Natural and Cultural Heritage	Landscape; Habitats and Species; Historic Environment; Natural Capital	Landscape: Outcome 1; Nature Recovery: Outcomes 2-6; Place: Outcome 11	The former theme is divided across Landscape, Nature Recovery and Place.
Theme 2: Resilient and Sustainable Communities	Farming and Land Management; Sustainable Tourism; Local Economy and Rural Services; Community Engagement	Nature measures throughout; Place: Outcomes 12-13; Ways of Working	Farming becomes a cross-cutting delivery principle rather than a standalone outcome.
Theme 3: Strong Connection between People and Landscape	Countryside Access; Visitor Management; Discovering and Learning; Health and Well-being	People: Outcomes 7-10	The content is retained but separated into clearer outcome areas.
No equivalent fourth theme	Not applicable	Place	Creates a distinct home for heritage, tourism and community outcomes.

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 32-55; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 35-36 and 37-80.

5. Detailed Thematic Amendments

5.1 Landscape

- The planned “refresh” of the 2009 Landscape Character Assessment has been completed, and the 2026 plan relies on the updated 2025 assessment with 13 Landscape Character Types and 73 Landscape Character Areas.
- Landscape measures are more directive on preserving skylines, local materials, tranquility and dark skies, appropriate renewable energy, highway design, parkland, landmark trees and avoiding poorly sited large-scale planting.
- Traditional boundaries remain important, now supported by a 2040 target of 200 km restored, enhanced or created.

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 30 and 35-36; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 19-21, 37-42 and 82.

5.2 Nature recovery and climate

- Peatland is elevated from one action within a broad habitats objective to its own outcome. The target increases from at least 250 ha restored during 2019-2024 to 8,000 ha in restoration by 2050, with an indicative 300 ha per year during 2025-2030.



- Woodland policy shifts from creating at least 200 ha and developing a woodland strategy to a whole-treescape approach covering ancient and Atlantic woodland, hedgerows, veteran trees, scrub, parkland, agroforestry, resilience, aftercare and removal of plastic guards.
- Grassland policy expands from at least 15 ha of species-rich grassland restoration to protection, extension, connectivity, mapping of floodplain and CHEGD grasslands, regenerative farming, soil health and a 34,500 ha permanent pasture target by 2040.
- Rivers and water become a standalone outcome, including regulatory action, natural processes, floodplain reconnection, ponds and scrapes, climate resilience and specific water quality and river biodiversity targets.
- Species action is formalised around 14 Champion Species, replacing the earlier shorter illustrative list and broad species recovery action.
- Climate adaptation changes from a core principle to a plan-wide operating requirement with asset-specific risks and measures and a formal adaptation plan appendix.

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 25, 37-41; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 13-15, 43-61 and 82.

5.3 People, access, learning and wellbeing

- Access policy retains rights-of-way maintenance, promoted routes, permissive links and responsible access, but adds climate-resilient route construction, Drone Code and Tick Code messaging, digital mapping and explicit Access for All metrics.
- Inclusion is broadened beyond mobility. The new plan identifies cost, transport, confidence, culture, experience and health as barriers and supports targeted programmes and supported visits.
- Learning develops from events and outdoor learning projects into a skills pipeline covering school engagement, teacher support, travel costs, lifelong learning, citizen science, peer learning, apprenticeships and placements.
- Health and wellbeing moves from general partnership development and research to targeted support, cross-sector delivery and measurable participation indicators.

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 49-55; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 62-72 and 81-82.

5.4 Place, heritage, tourism and communities

- Historic environment measures are broadened to cover planning and non-planning impacts, adaptive reuse, local building-material supply, community archaeology, local traditions and climate-resilient repairs.
- The evidence position changes from no assets on the Heritage at Risk Register in the earlier plan to four Heritage at Risk sites in the new plan, creating a clearer restoration priority.
- Sustainable tourism is reframed as regenerative tourism, requiring benefits to remain locally, community-led initiatives, stronger public transport and active travel links, and improved visitor and economic data.



- Community measures are simplified around retaining services, supporting local projects, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving transport and active travel, and expanding volunteering.

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 17, 40, 42-48; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 73-80.

6. Changes to Delivery Responsibilities

The earlier plan allocated each action to named organisations and separately described the role of the AONB Unit as lead, support, advise or encourage. The new plan normally allocates each measure to broad delivery sectors. This is a deliberate shift from a partnership work programme to a place-based framework for collective action. It should make the plan more resilient to organisational change.

Delivery feature	2019-2024	2026-2031	Practical implication
Accountability	Named key partners plus AONB Unit role	Sector-level	Greater flexibility.
Projects	Named initiatives frequently included	Projects generally excluded from the core measures	Separate delivery plans become more important.
Time horizon	Mostly five-year outputs	Plan-period measures plus 2030, 2040, 2042 and 2050 targets	Requires staged milestones and long-term data continuity.
Legal positioning	Framework supporting partnership delivery	Explicitly advisory and non-regulatory	Reduces risk of the plan being misread as creating new rules.
Evidence	State of AONB reports and partner data	State of National Landscape, PLTOF, LNRS, local indicators and evaluation framework	Stronger evidence architecture and reporting burden.

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 32 and 35-55; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 10, 35-36, 41-80.

7. Monitoring and Performance Amendments

- The new plan embeds the ten PLTOF targets and maps them to the 13 management outcomes.
- Forest of Bowland allocations include 4,700 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites by 2042, 8,000 ha of peatland restoration by 2050 and 750 ha of increased tree canopy and woodland cover by 2040.
- National targets also cover SSSI condition, nature-friendly farming, net zero, accessibility and heritage at risk.



- Local indicators now cover landscape, habitats, farming, water, species, access, inclusion, events, learning, wellbeing, heritage, tourism, communities and volunteering.
- Annual monitoring through a Partners Forum and development of an evaluation framework are new governance mechanisms.

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, p. 56; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 29-31 and 81-82.

8. Actions Removed, Completed or Recast

2019-2024 action or approach	Treatment in 2026-2031
Refresh Landscape Character Assessment	Completed through the 2025 assessment and now used as evidence.
Develop AONB Woodland Strategy	Replaced by reference to the existing Trees and Woodland Strategy and outcome-based measures.
Pilot nature recovery area	Superseded by the 2023 Nature Recovery Plan, LNRS alignment and landscape-scale recovery programmes.
Test proposed ELM system	Recast around operational ELM, FiPL, Countryside Stewardship and outcome-focused support.
Specific Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership actions	Largely recorded as achievements or absorbed into broader continuing approaches.
Annual Discovery Guide and specific leaflet outputs	Recast as outcome-based year-round communications, interpretation and events.
Estate-wide housing masterplan pilot	Not retained as a specific measure; housing, services and community vitality are treated more generally.
Natural capital as standalone objective	Mainstreamed through ecosystem services, green finance, climate adaptation and nature recovery measures.
AONB Unit lead/support labels	Removed from the statutory matrix and replaced by sectoral responsibility.

Sources: 2019-2024 plan, pp. 35, 38, 41, 44, 47 and 53; 2026-2031 plan, pp. 7-9, 16-18, 33-36, 37 and 43-82.

9. Conclusion

The 2026-2031 plan represents a clear move toward a stronger statutory, outcome-led and evidence-based framework. Its principal policy direction is continuity in conserving and enhancing natural beauty, combined with materially greater ambition for nature recovery, climate resilience, inclusive access and collaborative delivery.

Forest of Bowland Management Plan Amendments

Full comparison table: 2019–2024 and 2026–2031

Subject area	2019–2024 Management Plan position	2026–2031 Management Plan position	Amendment made	Significance
Designation and terminology	AONB terminology used throughout.	National Landscape used throughout except where legal designation requires AONB.	New public-facing identity while retaining statutory designation.	High
Statutory duty	Relevant authorities required to “have regard” to AONB purposes.	Relevant authorities must now “seek to further” the purpose of designation under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.	Significant strengthening of duties on public bodies and utilities.	High
Plan status	Positive management framework with objectives, actions and named partners.	Explicitly described as strategic, advisory and non-regulatory, setting outcomes rather than projects.	Clearer legal and operational boundaries.	High
Plan architecture	Three themes and 12 objective areas.	Four themes and 13 desired outcomes.	Major structural reorganisation around outcomes.	High
Delivery model	Detailed action plans with named partners and AONB Unit lead/support roles.	Measures allocated to sectors: government, land managers, NGOs, communities and businesses.	Broader shared ownership and flexibility.	High
Landscape Character Assessment	Refresh of 2009 Landscape Character Assessment proposed.	2025 Landscape Character Assessment completed and adopted as core evidence.	Evidence base updated and expanded.	High
Nature recovery structure	Habitats and species largely combined under one objective.	Separate outcomes for Peatlands, Woodlands/Trees/Hedgerows, Grasslands, Rivers and Water, and Champion Species.	Greater ecological focus and visibility.	High
Peatland restoration target	Restore at least 250 ha during the plan period.	Restore 8,000 ha by 2050, with an indicative 300 ha per year during 2025–2030.	Significant increase in ambition and timescale.	High
Woodland policy	Create 200 ha woodland and develop a woodland strategy.	Whole-treescape approach including woodland expansion, hedgerows, scrub, agroforestry, veteran trees and resilience.	Far broader ecological scope.	High
Grassland policy	Restore 15 ha of species-rich grassland.	Focus on protection, connectivity, restoration, regenerative farming and a 34,500 ha permanent pasture target by 2040.	Major expansion in scale and ambition.	High



Subject area	2019-2024 Management Plan position	2026-2031 Management Plan position	Amendment made	Significance
Rivers and water	Addressed within the habitat's objective.	Standalone outcome including water quality, floodplain reconnection, wetlands and climate resilience.	Considerably enhanced prominence.	High
Species conservation	Broad recovery approach for priority species.	Formal Champion Species programme covering 14 flagship species.	More targeted and measurable delivery.	High
Climate change	A core principle throughout the plan.	Dedicated adaptation approach with a Climate Adaptation Plan and nature-based solutions.	Climate resilience embedded throughout.	High
Natural capital	Standalone objective.	Integrated through all themes, especially nature recovery and green finance.	Mainstreamed into the delivery framework.	Medium-High
Tourism	Sustainable tourism focus.	Regenerative tourism focused on local benefit, public transport and active travel.	Shift from impact reduction to net community benefit.	Medium-High
Access	Rights of way, promoted routes, easy-access and dementia-friendly activities.	Access for All, all-terrain wheelchairs, least-restrictive access, digital mapping, Tick Code and Drone Code.	Stronger accessibility and inclusion agenda.	High
Inclusion	Primarily physical accessibility.	Explicit consideration of social, cultural, economic, health and confidence barriers.	More comprehensive inclusion approach.	High
Learning	Outdoor learning projects and events.	Skills pipeline including schools, lifelong learning, citizen science, teacher support, apprenticeships and placements.	Expanded educational role.	High
Health and wellbeing	Partnership development and research.	Targeted programmes, green social prescribing and measurable participation outcomes.	More outcome-focused approach.	High
Heritage	Historic environment objective.	Broader cultural heritage outcome including traditions, archaeology, adaptive reuse and climate impacts.	Expanded scope.	Medium-High
Heritage at Risk	No assets on the Heritage at Risk Register.	Four Heritage at Risk sites identified.	Increased restoration priority.	Medium



Subject area	2019-2024 Management Plan position	2026-2031 Management Plan position	Amendment made	Significance
Governance	North Yorkshire County Council and Craven District Council represented.	North Yorkshire Council replaces the former authorities; Lancashire Wildlife Trust is added.	Updated partnership structure.	Medium
AONB Unit role	Lead, Support, Advise and Encourage roles shown against actions.	Removed from the statutory framework.	Delivery responsibility devolved to sectors.	High
Targets	Predominantly five-year outputs.	Long-term 2030, 2040, 2042 and 2050 targets linked to the national framework.	Major shift in monitoring horizon.	High
Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework	Not applicable.	Full alignment with the national PLTOF monitoring framework.	Significant monitoring reform.	High
Monitoring arrangements	Annual reports and State of AONB reporting.	Partners Forum, evaluation framework, local indicators and national reporting.	Enhanced accountability.	High
Planning framework references	NPPF 2018, paragraph 172.	NPPF 2024, paragraphs 189-190.	Updated policy context.	Medium
Environmental Land Management	Future ELM system under development and testing.	Operational ELM, Countryside Stewardship and Farming in Protected Landscapes integrated into delivery.	Policy matured from pilot stage.	High
Local Nature Recovery Strategies	Not present.	LNRS fully integrated into the management approach.	Significant policy addition.	High
Biodiversity Net Gain	Not referenced.	Mandatory BNG incorporated into the plan context.	Important new planning consideration.	High
Nature-friendly farming	Promoted through a high nature value farming approach.	Explicit links to PLTOF targets and regenerative farming approaches.	More measurable outcomes.	High
Community outcomes	Local economy, services, engagement and volunteering objectives.	Single community outcome covering services, climate action, transport and volunteering.	Simplified and consolidated.	Medium



Subject area	2019-2024 Management Plan position	2026-2031 Management Plan position	Amendment made	Significance
Theme structure	1. Natural and Cultural Heritage; 2. Resilient Communities; 3. People and Landscape.	1. Landscape; 2. Nature Recovery; 3. People; 4. Place.	Entire plan reorganised around outcomes.	High

Overall assessment:

The 2026-2031 plan represents a significant strategic shift toward outcome-led delivery, stronger statutory duties, enhanced nature recovery ambitions, long-term target-based monitoring, climate adaptation, inclusive access and regenerative tourism. The core purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty remains unchanged, but the structure, delivery model and accountability framework have been substantially modernised.