

**COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE****Responding to the open consultation on the Forest of Bowland National Landscape Draft Management Plan****19 February 2026****Report of Chief Officer - Planning and Climate Change****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To advise Members of the publication of the consultation on the draft Forest of Bowland National Landscape Management Plan and to provide an opportunity to consider a proposed consultation response submission.

This report is public.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the report be noted and that the responses to the consultation questions as proposed in Appendix 1 are considered and submitted as the Council's corporate response to the consultation.

**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Council has a duty as set out in Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and review Management Plans for the two National Landscapes in our area (Arnsdale and Silverdale National Landscape and the Forest of Bowland National Landscape). This work is delivered on the council's behalf by the relevant National Landscape staff units. The Management Plan for the Forest of Bowland National Landscape has recently been reviewed and a draft produced to guide the management of these protected landscapes for the period 2026 – 2031. Once the consultation is complete and the Management Plan finalised, the council will need to formally adopt the Management Plan to continue to meet its statutory duties.
- 1.2 The Forest of Bowland was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1964, and spans 803 square kilometers across Lancashire and North Yorkshire. It is internationally recognised for its heather moorland, blanket bog, and rare upland bird species, including the hen harrier and curlew. The landscape comprises dramatic upland fells, wooded valleys, and undulating farmland, and offers a sense of tranquility and dark skies.
- 1.3 Despite its rural character, over one million people live within a 30-minute drive, making it a vital recreational resource. The area supports a working landscape of

farming, forestry, water supply, and tourism, contributing significantly to local and national economies. Governance is provided by a partnership of local councils, agencies, landowners, and community groups. The plan acknowledges Bowland's role in delivering ecosystem services such as carbon storage, flood mitigation, and biodiversity conservation, while addressing challenges like climate change, development pressures, and inequalities in access to nature. Its strategic position near major urban centres like Manchester enhances its importance for health, wellbeing, and sustainable tourism.

- 1.4 The previous Management Plan for the Forest of Bowland National Landscape covered the period 2019 - 2025. This new draft Management Plan for the period 2026-2031 sets out 5-year strategy for how the landscape should be conserved, enhanced and managed, and how public bodies must now actively further the purpose of designation under the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- 1.5 Council officers have been involved in the review and preparation of the draft Management Plan through attendance of the Forest of Bowland Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). The draft Management Plan takes account of a focused JAC workshop session in August 2025 where members of the JAC were involved in reviewing and preparing the details of the plan.
- 1.6 This is the first draft Management Plan to be produced since legislative changes in 2023 as a result of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) which amended the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Parks, National Landscapes, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads (collectively referred to as Protected Landscapes) in England. Relevant authorities must now 'seek to further' the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes. This replaces the previous duty on relevant authorities to 'have regard to' their statutory purposes.
- 1.7 As set out by Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)<sup>1</sup>, *"the duty is intended to facilitate better outcomes for England's Protected Landscapes, which are in line with their statutory purposes. The duty is intended to... [ensure] that the purposes for which Protected Landscapes are designated for are recognised in reaching decisions and undertaking activities that impact these areas"*.
- 1.8 National Landscape Management Plans are meant to be taken as a guide for all partners and stakeholders to refer to when planning their own work within the National Landscape. They set out a range of objectives, desired outcomes and requirements for land management and project delivery within the National Landscape to achieve these outcomes. Some of these required actions and behaviours would be led by the National Landscape partnership unit, whilst many of the actions and behaviours would be led by other partners and stakeholders, with support from the National Landscape team where required.

## 2.0 Content details

- 2.1 The draft Management Plan for Forest of Bowland National Landscape is split into four themes for delivery. Each theme represents an aspect of delivering the primary purpose.

---

<sup>1</sup> DEFRA Guidance for Relevant Authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes (December 2024)

Theme 1: Landscape  
 Theme 2: Nature Recovery  
 Theme 3: People  
 Theme 4: Place

- 2.2 For each of these themes the 'Forces for Change', which represent the current issues and opportunities in play have been described. There are then 'Outcomes', 'Measures' and 'Targets' that have been drawn up in response to these predicted changes.
- 2.3 The management plan is also underpinned by 17 core principles that guide policy and practice. These are as follows:
1. Farming and sustainable land management
  2. Focus on outcomes, not prescriptions
  3. Collaboration and partnerships
  4. Reversing declines in upland nature through landscape-scale ecological networks
  5. Adapting to a changing climate
  6. Ecosystem services and benefits
  7. Managing landscape change
  8. Economy and Environment
  9. Integrated Nature and Heritage Conservation
  10. Balancing benefits
  11. Using and valuing regulation
  12. Access for everyone
  13. Engagement and Inclusion
  14. Learning and sharing
  15. Arts and creativity
  16. Gathering and sharing data and evidence
  17. Sustainable funding and resource allocation
- 2.4 These principles collectively aim to deliver a resilient, inclusive, and economically viable future for Bowland.
- 2.5 Appendix 1 sets out all the responses that LCC are proposing to make to the National Landscape team through this consultation. There are not a significant number of these as LCC officers were given opportunity to propose amendments to the National Landscape Management Plan as it was being written. To give a flavour of the type of proposed changes being suggested to the National Landscape Partnership however, some of these are highlighted in paragraph 2.6 onwards (below).
- 2.6 Areas of the Management Plan that have been highlighted in the proposed response by LCC relate to how the draft Management Plan provides overall direction but lacks spatial detail and specific guidance needed for effective implementation. It is considered that including mapped features, such as nature recovery opportunity areas, tranquillity and dark-sky zones, landscape sensitivity areas, and potential woodland-creation sites, the inclusion of which would help Lancaster City Council align the plan with Local Plan policies.
- 2.7 While the plan identifies issues like congestion, parking pressures, and conflicts on rural lanes, it does not propose practical transport solutions such as on-demand shuttle services for example. Similarly, guidance on small-scale renewable energy and "sympathetic design" is limited, with no clear criteria on viability, infrastructure impacts, materials, building conversions, scale, or lighting. More detailed principles, similar to

those found in National Landscape Management Plans from other areas, would strengthen the plan's usefulness and policy alignment.

- 2.8 The Climate Adaptation Plan (CAP) for the Forest of Bowland is also available for comment alongside the Management Plan. LCC have made a number of observations on the CAP, which are set in response to question 18 of the consultation response which is included in Appendix 1 of this report. These comments relate to issues such as the requirement to clarify where data has been derived, as well as concerns over the accuracy of this data, and the need to ensure that moorland management, habitats and soils practices are considered from now, rather than only beginning to look at these in 30 years from now, when it is considered that the situation will be significant worse.

### 3.0 Consultation arrangements and next step timescales

- 3.1 The Draft Management Plan is being consulted on between 19th January until 2nd March 2026. Full details can all be found on the consultation website. Accompanying the Management Plan is the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening (and Screening report), Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening report, the Equalities Impact Assessment Screening report, Climate Change Adaptation Plan and a Summary of the Landscape Character Assessment.
- 3.2 The consultation aims to collect views on the content of the plan and is open to anyone who lives or works in the area or anyone who visits it. This particularly includes residents, farmers, land managers, schools, businesses, local clubs, partner organisations and Parish Councils. If Members have comments on the Management Plan that they wish to raise, please could these be provided to the Chair of PPCAG.
- 3.3 As a relevant authority, Lancaster City Council will create a consolidated officer consultation response, which will be provided and submitted to the National Landscape team by the Planning Policy & Housing Strategy Team. The Chief Officer for Planning & Climate Change has been provided with delegated authority to formally submit the Council's response following consideration at the Planning Policy Cabinet Advisory Group (PPCAG) on 17th February, and at Council Business Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> February.

### 4.0 Details of the Consultation and the Suggested Response

- 4.1 A copy of the response to the consultation is set out in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 4.2 Members of the Planning Policy Cabinet Advisory Group (PPCAG) received a similar report early this week on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2026 highlighting the consultation.

### 5.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	<b>Option 1: To respond to the consultation questions</b>	<b>Option 2: To respond to the consultation with other comments</b>	<b>Option 3: To not submit a response to this consultation</b>
Advantages	The views of the Council will be considered by the	The views of the Council will be considered by the	None

	National Landscape Partnership team when deciding how to proceed to the final version of the Management Plan.	National Landscape Partnership team when deciding how to proceed to the final version of the Management Plan.	
Disadvantages	None	Dependent upon the extent of any additional considerations, there is very limited time to submit the consultation response.	The formal opinion of Lancaster City Council would not be provided, and an opportunity to contribute to the consultation would be lost.
Risks	None.	None.	None.

## 6.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

6.1 The preferred option is Option 1, to respond to the consultation as drafted at Appendix 1.

## 7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The consultation closes on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026. Once all responses have been received, the National Landscape Partnership team will produce a consultation report reflecting feedback that will be published online at the end of March 2026. Production of the final Management Plan will take place by April 2026 and formal approval will be sought from the National Landscape Partnership/Joint Committee which will meet to endorse the revised plan. Final approval will need to be sought from the relevant authorities<sup>2</sup> (including Lancaster City Council) prior to formal adoption of the Management Plan, which is currently anticipated for May 2026, at which stage the Secretary of State (for Environment) is notified

7.2 As previously stated, the new Management Plan is for the period 2026-2031 and is used by all partners so that all can work together to enhance and connect people to the National Landscape to ensure it remains a beautiful place where people and nature thrive together.

### **CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):**

The report and its recommendation to submit the consultation response to the draft Management Plan consultation has positive implications for sustainability and rural issues,

<sup>2</sup> Relevant Authorities are comprised of the following: Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council, North Yorkshire County Council, Pendle Borough Council, Preston City Council, Ribble Valley Borough Council, and Wyre Council.

given that prominence is given to these issues in plans. There are no equality issues arising from this report. The National Landscape Draft Management Plan includes actions that seek to address equality issues, increasing access opportunities for disabled people and those with additional needs. The support of activities for outdoor recreation and education/community participation all of which promote good health. Managing the rural economy through change and conservation is an effective way of ensuring that rural communities can become sustainable and that traditional skills can be retained for the benefit of those who live there, and those who visit for tourism and recreation.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Consultation responses should be considered in accordance with statutory requirements.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications at this stage.

**OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces**

There are no resource implications at this stage.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER’S COMMENTS**

The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

**MONITORING OFFICER’S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Forest of Bowland National Landscape draft Management Plan 2026-2031 consultation documents. Available at <https://www.forestofbowland.com/management-plan-2026>.
2. DEFRA Guidance for Relevant Authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes (December 2024) [Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes - GOV.UK](#)

**Contact Officer:** Diane Neville  
**Telephone:** 01524 582335  
**Email:** dneville@lancaster.gov.uk  
**Ref:** N/A

**Appendix 1:**

Lancaster City Council's response to the Forest of Bowland National Landscape Draft Management Plan consultation.

[Lancaster City Council formal response \(draft version\)](#)



**Forest of  
Bowland**  
National  
Landscape

Forest of Bowland National Landscape Management Plan 2026-2031 Public Consultation

\* Required

⋮

1. Are you responding personally, or on behalf of an organisation? \*

- Personally
- On behalf of an organisation

2. Which of the following **best** describes your point of view? \*

- Business
- Conservation body  
or NGO
- Land  
manager/farmer
- Local  
government
- Local resident
- Member of a  
community group
- Statutory body
- Visitor to the area (live outside the National Landscape)

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed **vision** for Forest of Bowland National Landscape? (see p.29 of the plan)

Strongly

agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly

disagree

4. Additional comments on the vision:

The Vision that the Forest of Bowland Management Plan provides is considered to be strong, clearly set out, and with detail included to be able to identify areas that will need docs for this to be achieved.

5. This Management Plan is built on a set of **core principles** which provide a framework to guide policy and practice in Bowland. Accepting these principles is essential to adopting and delivering the plan. Do you think we have identified all the relevant principles? (see p.29 of the plan) \*

Yes

No

6. If you answered "No", please list any principles you think are missing, or provide suggestions for improving or clarifying the principles?

N/A

**Please provide input to the Outcomes and Measures parts of the plan:**

7. To what extent do you agree with the **outcomes** for **Landscape** (see p.33):

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

8. Please add any further comments about the **outcomes** for **Landscape**:

The Landscape theme focuses on conserving and enhancing Bowland's distinctive character, including its moorland fells, wooded valleys, and traditional farmed areas. Measures include restoring dry stone walls, hedgerows, and parklands; protecting skylines and dark skies; and ensuring new development respects local vernacular styles. Lancaster

City Council are particularly pleased to see the focus on preserving dark skies. Lancaster has adopted specific local guidance its other National Landscape (Arnsdale & Silverdale National Landscape) in the form of the [Cumbria Good Lighting Technical Advice note](#), and Lancaster aims to have a similar level of guidance for the Forest of Bowland National Landscape through its Local Plan Review, which will also be in line with the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) ['Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night Guidance note](#) (August, 2023).

9. To what extent do you agree with the **outcomes** for **Nature Recovery** (see p.39):

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. Please add any further comments about the **outcomes** for **Nature Recovery**:

Lancaster City Council considers that Nature Recovery is central to the plan and is therefore pleased to see that it is identified as one of the four central themes. The Management Plan addresses the urgent need to restore habitats and reverse species decline. Key outcomes of the Management Plan include bringing all remaining unrestored peatlands under restoration, expanding woodland and tree cover by 750 hectares by 2040, and safeguarding species-rich grasslands. Rivers and wetlands will be reconnected to floodplains and managed to improve ecological health. Champion species such as hen harrier, curlew, and black grouse will benefit from targeted conservation measures. Actions integrate climate adaptation strategies, such as enhancing hydrological function in peatlands and promoting resilient tree species. Collaboration with farmers and landowners is critical, supported by agri-environment schemes and green finance opportunities. These efforts contribute to national targets under the Protected Landscapes Framework and the global 30x30 commitment, which sees the UK having committed to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030.

11. To what extent do you agree with the **outcomes** for **People** (see p.57):

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. Please add any further comments about the **outcomes** for **People**:

Lancaster City Council is supportive of the 'People' theme's direction as it emphasises inclusive access, learning, and wellbeing, improves rights of way and creates accessible routes, supported by infrastructure such as all-terrain wheelchairs. The Council is supportive that the MP also sets out that educational initiatives will be used to engage schools, colleges, and lifelong learners, fostering skills in conservation and rural crafts. The Management Plan states that health and wellbeing programmes will assist in highlighting nature's therapeutic benefits, addressing barriers such as transport and cultural perceptions. Community engagement is integral to the plan, ensuring that diverse audiences can explore and appreciate Bowland's special qualities. These measures all collectively aim to strengthen the social contract between people and nature, promoting stewardship and resilience.

13. To what extent do you agree with the **outcomes** for **Place** (see p.68):

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14. Please add any further comments about the **outcomes** for **Place**:

Lancaster City Council is pleased to see that the Place theme addresses cultural heritage, regenerative tourism, and community vitality. Conservation of historic assets, ranging from prehistoric sites to vernacular architecture, is prioritised alongside adaptive reuse of redundant structures. The Management Plan sets out how regenerative tourism initiatives will reinvest economic benefits locally, promote experiences that are authentic to the Forest of Bowland area, and reduce environmental impacts through sustainable transport and visitor management. Community-focused actions include maintaining essential services, supporting volunteer networks, and fostering local enterprise. These strategies aim to create a resilient rural economy that complements environmental goals, to ensure that the Forest of Bowland National Landscape remains a living, working landscape with strong cultural identity.

15. Please use this final text box to share anything else you feel has not been covered or addressed in the plan:

The plan provides direction but is not spatial in its presentation. Some degree of spatial mapping may be beneficial to help to visually demonstrate the implications of the Management Plan. This could for example include mapping of the potential nature recovery opportunity areas, mapped tranquility zones, mapped dark-sky zones, mapped landscape sensitivity areas, or mapped areas of potential woodland creation. A more specific spatial element to this would make it easier for Lancaster City Council to integrate the Management Plans aims into local policy through the Local Plan Review.

The draft Management Plan recognises issues such as congestion, parking overflow at honeypots and conflict on rural lanes, but doesn't give specific transport based solutions to these issues which could include 'on-demand' shuttle buses (such as 'dial-a-ride'/ app-based approaches).

The Management Plan recognised the opportunity to installation of small-scale renewables in the National Landscape however beyond referring how this could be tackled via community led section there is no other guiding principles and criteria for how this could be approached, including issues such as the need to assess viability, the impacts on grid infrastructure and also if there is potential for small-scale farm-based renewables which the City Council could look to incorporate into its Local Plan (evidence permitting).

The Management Plan also calls for ‘sympathetic design’ but offers no specifics around this. It is accepted that this will vary by site but further information around issues such as acceptable materials or guidance on conversions of rural building etc, as well as scale/massing threshold and lighting design criteria would be useful and could help feed into Local Plan policy. There are other National Landscape Management Plans in the UK such as the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan, Nidderdale National Landscape Management Plan, Arnside & Silverdale National Landscape Management Plan) which do provide more robust guidance around these issues.

In relation to visitor management the Management Plan acknowledges that the Forest of Bowland experiences stresses but doesn’t offer ideas around solutions such as potential parking strategies, or visitor behaviour management (in relation to dogs, fires, wild camping for example) or any specific detail around the sustainable tourism transport network. More information round this would assist with Lancaster’s ability to manage hotspots like the Trough of Bowland.

16. Would you like to comment on the **Climate Adaptation Plan**?

- Yes
- No

17. If yes, how far do you agree that the **Climate Adaptation Plan** covers the key issues and sets out the required measures to adapt to climate change?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

18. Please add any further comments about the **Climate Adaptation Plan**:

Page No.	Comments
4	Local climate bullet points omit heatwaves  °c should be °C with a capitalised C (this goes for the whole document)

	<p>“In Lancashire the hottest summer day so far on record was 30.1°C in 2023” - LCC is not clear where this figure is from but disputes its accuracy. Hazelrigg weather station near Lancaster recorded a peak of 35.2°C on July 19, 2022 and the temperatures in 2022 in general were the highest throughout the country.</p> <p>“Winter months in Lancashire usually see 16 days of rain and this is projected to remain the same in the 2 and 4°C scenario” – the Met Office offer a customised risk assessment for each district area in the UK which is based on their own UKCP18 data. This data shows that for the Ribble Valley district (which comprises most of the FBOW) that the very minimum increase in winter rainfall under 4 degrees of warming is 15% and could be as high as 24%. This data can be found here: <a href="#">Explore the Climate of your Local Authority</a>. LCC consider that is potentially misleading to include that 4 degrees of warming won't see an increase in winter rainfall days given the number could go up by 24%.</p> <p>LCC consider that there should be mention here of the increased risk of wildfires.</p>
Table on pages 5 and 6	Woodlands – there is no reference here of the impact of waterlogging during prolonged periods of wet weather or flooding. Waterlogging can increase the likelihood of trees being brought down in storms and can increase the risk of disease.
13	“Limiting this rise to 1.5°C was the aim of the Paris Agreement and it is suggested that we have already reached this level in 2024.” – it should be noted that the Paris Agreement did not refer to a single year of above 1.5 degrees temperatures but to a long-term trend. Although this fact makes the situation no less urgent, according to international law the targets of the Paris Agreement have not yet been broken
20	<p>The future action planning section outlines an approach which will aim to ‘resist change to moorland management, habitats and soils over the next 20-30 years’ – this would be a disastrous approach and not something that LCC consider should be a suggestion in a Climate Adaptation Plan. Serious changes in management of land (particularly heather moorland, which is not a naturally occurring habitat and is of low ecological value, low ecosystem service, and high fire risk) need to happen BEFORE it's too late, not after 30 years when the situation will be severe.</p> <p>As above, LCC consider that the ‘Resist’ portion of the RAD approach outlined on this page is not best suited for an environment which is actively degrading (peatland and agricultural soils for example). The ecosystem in the Bowland Forest is in need of repair, and the most effective method of doing that is to change and management practices.</p>
Table on pages 21 and 22	The third column of this table has been left empty.
Main Actions Table	<p><u>Planning pressures - new development</u></p> <p>There is mention here of the value of the floodplain and how it can alleviate flooding. This could therefore perhaps include a corresponding action for identifying spaces that could be introduced to the flood plain, such as agricultural land which is currently drained by ditches etc.</p>

	<p>It is unclear how 'pressure for building adaptations such as rooftop solar panels' could lead to 'loss of green/biodiverse spaces' such as meadows. Has this perhaps been placed in the wrong section?</p> <p><u>Towns and Settlements</u> Similar to the above, it is unclear how raingardens and water infiltration will improve air quality</p> <p><u>Moorland and peatland</u> LCC suggest that more actions are added into the fire risk section here, such as consideration of enhancing biodiversity, banning controlled burns, moving away from monoculture practices, re-wetting, potential fire breaks etc</p> <p><u>Upland Heath</u> The action here of 'improved heather management and grazing' could be misleading as to what is actually being supported. Does this include management practices such as controlled burns? Is this advocating a reduction in stocking rates or an increase?</p> <p>There is no mention of improving biodiversity on heather moorland. This would not only reduce the impact of the heather beetle, but also impact of droughts, reduce the risk of wildfires, and reduce risk of flooding elsewhere. It would also mean that bracken would be less likely to take over and would therefore lower management costs.</p> <p><u>Unimproved grassland</u> LCC consider that the CAP would benefit from additional specifics on the 'appropriate management' of purple moor grass and rush pasture, as this could be interpreted in multiple ways by the end user.</p>
--	---

## Your Response

19. Would you like your name to be displayed alongside your comments?

- Yes
- No (if no, your response will remain anonymous)

20. Name:

Lancaster City Council

21. Please provide your email address if you'd like to be notified when the **Consultation Report** is available on our website. (Your email will not be published in the report.)

dneville@lancaster.gov.uk

22. We take your privacy seriously and will only use the information you provide for the purposes of the Management Plan consultation.

You can find our Privacy Notice here: <https://www.forestofbowland.com/privacy-notice> \*

Yes, I have read the privacy notice

---

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Microsoft. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner.

 Microsoft Forms