

Heaths to Sea: Landscape recovery of the lower Otter valley

VISION: A diverse landscape, rich in nature and ecologically healthy whilst also supporting sustainable food production, net zero, timber and access needs.

In September 2023, *Clinton Devon Estates* submitted a Landscape Recovery proposal to Defra for funding under the government's new Environmental Land management Schemes (ELMS).

[Landscape Recovery - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/landscape-recovery). Since Brexit, ELMS is the primary route for government to support environmental enhancement in farmed landscapes. Landscape Recovery projects will contribute to national priorities including net zero, biodiversity and water quality.

In April 2024 the project was awarded a development grant of £750,000 to plan a 20-30-year implementation phase that will see significant long-term landscape enhancement within the Otter valley. The project area covers the lower Otter catchment south of Newton Poppleford. Exact landscape change is yet to be defined but will fall within the area highlighted in Map 1.

The proposal aims to develop a detailed, fundable proposition restoring and connecting wildlife habitats across ca. 4,144 hectares of the lower Otter catchment. This multi-functional landscape will also meet the needs for food, timber, clean water and access alongside the mitigation of climate change effects such as flooding. The initiative is framed by the concept of a 'super National Nature Reserve' (NNR) and is strengthened by the declaration of the Pebblebed Heaths NNR and more recent extension to include the Otter Estuary Nature Reserve.

The 2-year development phase (April 2024-March 2026) will review existing habitat and landscape connectivity across the catchment and provide a blueprint for how this can be improved. In addition, long-term solutions to maintain public access would be developed and costed. This will include those footpaths alongside the River Otter where public access and existing health and wellbeing benefits are currently threatened by erosion. The potential for new woodland creation and providing enhanced access through the wider landscape would also be assessed.

A Stakeholder Communication Advisory Group has been established to help steer the development phase and includes representatives from local government, local parish councils, land managers and a range of private and environmental organisations with an interest in the landscape and the environmental, social and economic benefits it supports. Stakeholders will be involved in shaping priorities for the landscape plan and there will be opportunities for wider consultation throughout the course of the development phase, and beyond.

Our vision is that by working together this initiative will:

- 1) deliver an accessible, nature-rich landscape that is resilient to climate change,
- 2) support East Devon's net zero and food production ambitions, and
- 3) drive a stronger, greener and more sustainable economy.

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Have your say...
Stakeholder Engagement Survey
<https://forms.office.com/e/Hei0iFjfmV>



Map 1

