

New £5 million project to save woodlands

- The project will restore the ravine woodlands in the Peak District National Park
- The project will tackle ash dieback in the ravines

The future of the beautiful ravine woodlands in the Peak District is looking brighter thanks to £5 million in funding.

The LIFE in the Ravines partnership project, led by Natural England, will tackle the threat that ash dieback poses to the forested river valleys of the Peak District. The project has received £3.6m in funding from the EU LIFE programme, with the remainder coming from project partners.

The Peak District's scenic ravines are treasured by locals and visitors alike, especially during the pandemic where more people have been seeking solace in nature. LIFE in the Ravines will save several woodlands, including the iconic 5 dales of the Derbyshire Dales National Nature Reserve, such as the well-visited Lathkill. All the sites are part of the Peak District Dales Special Area of Conservation, recognised as of international importance.

Lathkill Dale, Peak District

Natural England's chief executive Marian Spain, said:

I'm so pleased that Natural England and its partners are able to work together to support Nature's Recovery. This innovative project will help restore the landscape and wildlife of this much-loved area of the country following the devastation of ash die back. That means people who live and visit the Peak District will be able to appreciate the natural beauty of the woodland habitats once again and for generations to come.

Project partners include the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and the Chatsworth Estate. The project is also working with the Peak District National Park, Derbyshire Dales District Council, the Arkwright Society, the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust.

Ash dieback disease, caused by a fungus lethal to ash trees, arrived in the Peak District in 2015. The ravine forests of the Peak District are dominated by ash, so the whole woodland area could be devastated without intervention. The woods already have high levels of infection and have lost mature trees. The loss of ash threatens all the woodland wildlife, from rare beetles and moths to birds such as redstarts.

LIFE in the Ravines will help 900 hectares of forest survive this threat with a programme of tree planting and woodland management. Small and large-leaved lime and wych elm trees, historically present in the woods, will be planted to step into the spaces left behind when ash trees die. The project won't give up on ash, it will seek out trees that might be resilient to the disease and give a helping hand to natural ash regeneration. Planting aspen, willow and other trees will build resilience and add to the diversity of wildlife in the woods.

The project will pioneer some specialist techniques, including using drones for the first time in the Peak District to aid planting on the steep, rocky slopes of the dales.

The LIFE in the Ravines programme will help these special ravine woodland ecosystems survive beyond ash dieback, thrive into the future and help counter other threats such as climate change and flooding.

The lessons learnt from the programme will be useful for others battling ash dieback across Europe, especially in other ravine woodlands in the UK such as those of the Mendips.

Natural England leads several other ambitious conservation projects that have benefitted from LIFE funding. These include Dynamic Dunescapes, working to restore sand dunes across the UK and LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES, saving seagrass and other delicate underwater habitats around our coasts.

Dave Savage, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust regional manager (Dark and White Peak), said:

We are really excited to be involved in this scheme to reduce the impact of this potentially devastating disease. The woodlands managed by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust in the White Peak are dominated by ash trees meaning we will lose a great deal of our tree cover. LIFE in the Ravines will have a dramatic impact on the wildlife in the woodlands, increasing the diversity of trees but also the biodiversity of the woodlands themselves.

Julian Woolford, chief executive of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, commented:

At the end of a difficult year we are very excited about the project's funding success. Ash dieback is really hitting hard across the UK. LIFE in the Ravines will make a big difference to protected woodlands across the White Peak.

John Everitt, forestry manager at Chatsworth Estate, added:

We are very excited at Chatsworth about working alongside the other partners on this project to help restore some of the most important

woodlands within the Peak District. We have observed and tracked the rapid decline of these internationally significant habitats over the past 3 years due to the onset on ash dieback. It will be fantastic to help diversify these woodlands and create resilient habitats that will hopefully stand the test of time, benefiting the environment for years to come.

Ian Clemmett, lead ranger for the White Peak Estate, National Trust, said:

It's inevitable we are going to see some big changes in our ash woodlands over the next few years because of ash dieback. LIFE in the Ravines is a tremendous opportunity to tackle those changes and to futureproof our woodlands through careful management. The National Trust is delighted to be a partner in this work, helping to conserve and enhance our woodlands here in the White Peak for the benefit of wildlife and people alike.

Sarah Fowler, chief executive of the Peak District National Park, said:

Ash woodlands in the White Peak are amongst our most cherished places in the Peak District, providing sanctuary not only for wildlife but people too. Such areas have never been more crucial to our wellbeing and 'green recovery' than during the recent months of the pandemic. LIFE in the Ravines will be at the forefront of sustainable and resilient woodlands where there is a very real risk of the landscape picture we have known for generations being dramatically altered in the years ahead. I'm delighted to see so many partners coming together on such a pioneering approach to nature recovery in the National Park.

The River Dove about Ilam Rock

Image credit: National Trust

Notes to editor

- This £5m partnership project, led by Natural England, will restore 876ha of ravine woodland within the Peak District Dales Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is 16% of the UK's ravine woodland, a European Priority Habitat. All the project sites are now heavily infected with ash dieback fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, which usually leads to tree death. Without intervention, in some areas the whole woodland would be lost. LIFE in the Ravines will replant trees historically found in the woods such as *Tilia cordata* (small leaved lime), *Tilia platyphyllos* (large leaved lime) and *Ulmus glabra* (wych elm), alongside others such as aspen *Populus tremula* and willow *Salix* species. The woods are too far

from seed sources for these species to rely on natural regeneration. The project will also seek to retain ash in the woods.

- Project partners: the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, the National Trust, the Chatsworth Estate. The project will also work with: Peak District National Park, Derbyshire Dales District Council, the Arkwright Society, the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust.

EU LIFE funding

- The EU's LIFE fund has agreed to support this £5 million project prior to the UK's exit from the EU. EU LIFE is giving £3.6 million funding. The rest of the funding will come from project partners and supporters.
- In August 2016, the government guaranteed EU-funded projects where UK organisations bid directly to the European Commission on a competitive basis, while we are still a member of the EU. Where EU LIFE funds are awarded to UK organisations they will be underwritten by the Government, even where projects continue beyond the UK's departure from the EU.

About Natural England

Natural England is the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide.

Within England, Natural England is responsible for:

- promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity
- conserving and enhancing the landscape
- securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment
- promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation
- contributing in other ways to social and economic well-being through management of the natural environment
- find out more on [Natural England's website](#) and follow us on [Twitter: @NaturalEngland](#).

Natural England leads several other ambitious conservation projects that have benefitted from LIFE funding. These include Dynamic Dunescapes, working to restore sand dunes across the UK; and LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES, saving seagrass and other delicate underwater habitats around our coasts.

About Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

- Media enquiries: contact the media team at Derbyshire Wildlife Trust on 01773 881188.

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, a Registered Charity, is the only organisation

working to protect all wildlife across the county. We are one of 47 in The Wildlife Trusts Partnership, a nationwide network of local trusts. We manage 47 nature reserves throughout Derbyshire, advise local authorities and landowners on nature conservation issues and run a range of conservation and education projects. We are committed to The Wildlife Trusts' strategy of creating Living Landscapes – robust, connected landscapes that address the challenges facing our wildlife and countryside. Find out more at www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

About Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, a registered charity, is the leading nature conservation body in the County of Staffordshire. It protects and enhances our wildlife and wild places and promotes involvement, enjoyment and understanding of the natural world. With the support of over 17,000 members, it manages 31 sites covering over 4,000 acres including sites of international, European and national importance. As part of The Wildlife Trusts, the Trust is the local face of the largest organisation in the UK concerned with the conservation of all forms of wildlife.

About Chatsworth Estate

- Chatsworth is home to the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire and is located in the Peak District National Park. The house, many of its contents and much of the surrounding landscape are leased to a registered charity, the Chatsworth House Trust. The Duke and Duchess pay rent to the charity to live at Chatsworth and work with the charity and others to welcome Chatsworth's visitors. Every penny of visitor admission goes directly to the Chatsworth House Trust, which is dedicated to the long-term preservation of Chatsworth House, the collections, garden, woodlands and park for the long-term benefit of the public. The charity promotes the study and appreciation of Chatsworth as a place of historic, architectural and artistic interest and of natural beauty, and encourages the use and enjoyment of Chatsworth by visitors for education and recreation.

About the National Trust

- The National Trust is a conservation charity founded in 1895 by 3 people, Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley who saw the importance of the nation's heritage and open spaces and wanted to preserve them for everyone to enjoy. This year, the charity celebrates its 125th anniversary, and these values are still at the heart of everything it does. To help mark this significant moment in its history, the Trust has committed to achieving carbon net zero emissions by 2030, and establishing 20 million trees to help tackle climate change, creating green corridors for people and nature near towns and cities, running a year-long campaign to connect people with nature and continuing investment in arts and heritage. Ensuring everyone who visits feels welcome, and more people can access its places continues to be another key aspect of the charity's work. Entirely independent of Government, the National Trust looks after more than 250,000 hectares of

countryside, 780 miles of coastline and hundreds of special places across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The National Trust receives more than 26.9 million visits each year to the places it cares for that have an entry fee, and an estimated 100 million visits to the outdoor places looked after by the charity. Together with 5.9 million members and more than 65,000 volunteers, they help to support the conservation charity in its work to care for nature, beauty, history. For everyone, for ever.

WTO Dispute Settlement Body: UK statement under Agenda 9

World news story

The UK delivered this statement on 18 December under Agenda 9: Appellate Body Appointments – Proposal by Various Members



The WTO is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Thank you, Chair.

The United Kingdom continues its support for this proposal for the launch of the selection process and we refer to our previous statements on this agenda item. We also support the statement made by Mexico on behalf of all co-sponsors.

This month marks a year since the Appellate Body has been able to hear new appeals, and a year since Members have had recourse to a two-stage dispute settlement system. At a time when the wider trading system is under strain, ensuring the fulfilment of rights and obligations of all Members under the Dispute Settlement Understanding is essential.

We have listened carefully to concerns and recognise the need for reform. We encourage all Members to reaffirm the value of, and Members' investment in,

the rules-based multilateral trading system. We look forward to working with all Members to ensure that we do not become accustomed to the current impasse on dispute settlement.

Finding a solution and engaging in reform discussions should not stand in the way of Members accessing two-stage dispute settlement, a central pillar of the multilateral trading system. We therefore call on all Members to launch the Appellate Body selection process for all seven vacancies so we can restore the system to full functioning while we prioritise discussions on a permanent solution.

Thank-you.

Published 22 December 2020

[DASA showcases tomorrow's technology today](#)

News story

Defence and Security Accelerator links investors to best innovators to boost UK capabilities and prosperity



Top innovators pitched their businesses and novel technological ideas to investors at an event by the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA).

More than 45 investors attended the virtual Investment Showcase earlier this month with 14 companies presenting their innovative business opportunities and associated technologies that have the potential to offer better performance and increased capability for defence and national security – as well as offering multiple uses across other sectors.

[Video of what DASA offers.](#)

The companies were split by technology area, to allow investors to easily identify those sessions of particular interest.

The innovations on display ranged from different software that tackles fake news and reduces harmful content to innocent audiences; a medical point of care innovation that provides a diagnostic answer in ten minutes on a patient's need for antibiotics; to drone software that could transform the signal denied autonomy aspect of the drone market; and others.

Categories showcased were:

- Cyber, Analysis and Training Software
- Medical Software and Scanning
- Advanced Materials
- Drones and Drone Software

An invited audience of investors saw each company present their business opportunity and growth plans.

All companies presenting have previously received either defence or security funding via DASA.

DASA offers our funded companies the opportunity to access business mentoring and finance advice, with pitch training a core training element.

DASA is resolute in its support of UK companies to help them reach the next level of development and funding necessary to take their innovation into the market place.

Investors who are interested in more details about UK innovations are welcome to [get in touch with DASA](#) to find out more about those companies that showcased and the associated investment opportunities.

The companies are looking at a spectrum of investment opportunities and are interested in syndicated as well as individual investments.

Published 22 December 2020

[Update following PCA investigation into Star Pubs & Bars](#)

News story

Next steps following the investigation into Star Pubs & Bars use of unreasonable stocking terms in proposed Market Rent Only (MRO) tenancies



The Pubs Code Adjudicator (PCA) recently published the findings of its investigation into Star Pubs & Bars in which it found that Star had committed a total of 12 breaches with the result that it had frustrated the principles of the Pubs Code. As well as identifying how the company had offered stocking terms that had acted as a deterrent to tenants pursuing a free-of-tie tenancy, the PCA highlighted systemic corporate failures by Star in its approach to compliance.

Following the investigation into Star, the PCA has:

- Made 8 recommendations telling Star what they must do to make good the harm caused to tenants and to ensure that they comply with the Pubs Code (summarised below)
- Said that it will require Star to publish a letter on its website to all its tenants explaining the findings in the investigation report, what Star will do in response to the recommendations and how these measures will affect tenants from a practical point of view
- Imposed a £2 million financial penalty on Star

Star were required to report to the PCA directly, within 6 weeks, with their proposed measures to comply with the recommendations. The PCA has now received Star's implementation plan and is currently engaging with them, including a meeting before the Christmas break, to ensure that the plan is appropriate to enable the recommendations to be implemented effectively. This will include an appropriate timetable for writing to tenants

The PCA will publish progress updates relating to the plan and monitoring delivery on the PCA's website.

The PCA's recommendations are summarised below.

Recommendations 1-7 focus on improvements Star must make to its current and future behaviour.

Recommendation 8 focuses on actions Star must take relating to tenancies that are already completed.

Recommendation 1:

- When making a MRO proposal Star must follow PCA advice and guidance, have evidence for the reasons why its offer is reasonable, take into account and record the factors it has relied on.

Recommendation 2:

- When serving a MRO proposal and when negotiating with tenants, Star must be transparent and provide tenants (or their representatives) with the evidence supporting its grounds for reasonableness.

Recommendation 3:

- When Star receives an arbitration award relating to compliant MRO terms or new PCA advice, guidance or investigation outcomes, Star must be proactive in considering whether MRO proposals in negotiation or arbitration contain non-compliant stocking terms. Star must be straight with tenants about that non-compliance, offer a new proposal, be as open as it can on the reasons for the change and ensure any policies and templates are updated.

Recommendation 4:

- Star's Code Compliance Officer (CCO) role must be sufficiently supported and independent to enable the CCO to challenge decisions that may be non-compliant with the Code. The CCO's job description should ensure the requirements of the CCO role are upheld and given primacy above other objectives.

Recommendation 5:

- Star must implement a monitoring system that supports the CCO's statutory duties under the Code. Any new system must provide for independent monitoring, further improvements to be made and a framework which evidences the effectiveness of Star's approach.

Recommendation 6:

- Star must ensure that its record-keeping and administrative systems can support and evidence Star's Code compliance.

Recommendation 7:

- In the next annual training cycle Star must train all its work force on the findings from the investigation.

Recommendation 8:

- Star must carry out an audit of its completed MRO tenancies to identify any non-compliant stocking terms (because they do not fall within the definition of a stocking requirement or are unreasonable and non-compliant given the report findings). Star must offer to change those

terms (or agree not to enforce them) without cost to the tenant.

End

Notes

[Investigation report](#)

Published 22 December 2020

Ilkley gets green light for first river bathing site in England

Part of the River Wharfe in Ilkley will be added to the list of bathing waters in England from 2021.

This follows a public consultation which ran from 7 August to 2 October 2020 on designating the area of the River Wharfe which runs between Ilkley Main Bridge and Beanlands Island at Ilkley in Yorkshire. It is a popular swimming and paddling spot for both local residents and visitors to the area.

The new status means that the Environment Agency will regularly take samples from the river to assess whether action is needed to cut bacteria levels, helping to ensure the water is cleaner and safer for swimmers, and improve the Wharfe's water quality. Monitoring will begin from May 2021.

Today's announcement comes as Yorkshire Water confirmed a new partnership to improve water quality in the River Wharfe, bringing together the Environment Agency, Bradford Council, National Farmers Union (NFU), Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and landowners upstream of Ilkley.

It has also set out plans to reduce storm overflow discharges into the river by 20%, increasing the use of smart tech to predict and prevent pollution incidents.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

The residents of Ilkley and the surrounding area have shown their overwhelming appreciation for the River Wharfe as an asset to enjoy and protect. I am delighted that this stretch of river will be the first river to host a designated bathing water site.

Unfortunately, we all know that water quality won't change

overnight. It will take time and we need farmers and businesses to commit to achieve the necessary improvements. I am pleased to see Yorkshire Water stepping forward with new proposals today to help move things in the right direction.

The Environment Agency has been monitoring at bathing water sites on the coast and at certain lakes since the 1990s, and in this time there have been significant improvements to water quality. In 2019, 98.3 per cent of England's bathing waters met the minimum bathing water standard and for the first time since the relevant regulations were brought into force, more than 70 per cent of bathing waters achieved the highest standard

Responses to the consultation were received from a wide range of interested parties across the country, including Ilkley residents, NGOs, conservation groups and local water company Yorkshire Water.

In total there were 1073 replies, the largest response to date for a proposed bathing water designation, with 998 of respondents in favour of making the site a designated bathing water area.