



# National Trails UK

## Member Newsletter

Issue 13 January 2026

### Is it too late to say Happy New Year? I hope not!

I hope you all had a good break over the festive period and that like me, you're excited for all the things that 2026 will bring for National Trails.....

Another major National Trail anniversary (Happy 30th Thames Path), two National Trails launches, (King Charles III England Coast Path, and Coast to Coast), some great projects to make our trails more inclusive, and we'll be continuing to advocate for National Trails funding and protection.

We've already had some great news in these first few weeks. Mary-Ann Ochota will be the first Chair of the Protected Landscapes Partnership (more on that below), and Debbie Stockwell has just been announced as the next Executive Director of National Parks England. Both bring a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to their roles. Mary-Ann is also Patron of the Ridgeway and knows the National Trails well, and I'm looking forward to introducing Debbie to our amazing network of routes.

And one further bit of good news: Your membership fees for the coming year are staying the same. Look out for an invoice in early February 2026.

Here's to another year delivering for our National Trails!

Polly Martin, NTUK Chief Executive

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Polly Martin'.



# PLP Chair Announcement

We're delighted to share exciting news! Mary-Ann Ochota has been appointed as the new Independent Chair of the Protected Landscapes Partnership. Mary-Ann has championed inclusive access for many years and rightly earned a reputation as a fantastic, effective and collaborative campaigner for our protected landscapes.

She's been a valuable ambassador for the Ridgeway National Trail, and we look forward to working with her across the whole National Trail network, National Landscapes and National Parks.

With her knowledge and expertise, Mary-Ann is ideally placed to understand and support the landscape scale innovation the Protected Landscapes Partnership (PLP) is looking to deliver for people and nature. Read the official announcement [\*\*here\*\*](#).



We are the Protected Landscapes Partnership



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# Policy Corner

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## Who pays for nature?

The Nature Restoration Fund is a new approach to using developer contributions to fund works to mitigate any environmental impacts from a new development. How could this create opportunities for National Trails and the landscapes they pass through? [\*\*Find out more\*\*](#):

## Trails for nature recovery

In December we were excited to submit for the first time on behalf of National Trails towards the [Environment Act's Habitat Creation and Restoration target](#). The work we've been doing on the [National Trails Nature Corridors Map](#) directly supported this as updates to the map helped document where habitat creation and restoration efforts have been delivered. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the map. We look forward to expanding on this dataset with you all in 2026 so we can further showcase the value of National Trails!

## A vision for Scotland's Designated Long-Distance Routes

Scotland's designated long-distance routes have huge potential to benefit walkers, nature and local communities. But they need clearer support and funding. Ahead of the Scottish elections later this year, see what National Trails UK is calling for to protect and grow these iconic Scottish trails. [\*\*Learn more\*\*](#)



*West Highland Way, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park*

# Stories from our Trails

Across the UK, our National Trails are shaped not just by those who care for them, but also by the people who use them. From inspiring projects to personal reflections on accessibility, inclusion, and connection, here's a snapshot of the latest stories from our trails.

## Stand with the Path

The South West Coast Path has sustained severe storm damage from Storm Gorettti, as well as from storms Ingrid and Chandra. A Storm Damage Appeal has been launched to repair the trail, and keep it safe, accessible and resilient. So far £5.7K has been raised and the appeal remains open. [\*\*How you can help\*\*](#)



## Ridgeway hits the screen

A new two-part film series: *Ancient ways: The Ridgeway*, brings the UK's oldest road to the big screen. Starring Ridgeway Patron, Mary-Ann Ochota, it explores the trail's landscapes, archaeology and history. Available on the History Hit subscription channel, you can download the trailers [\*\*here\*\*](#).

## What National Trail status means for the Coast to Coast

The Coast to Coast walk is set to gain National Trail status later this year! Discover what this milestone means for trail lovers, landscapes and the route's future. [\*\*Read more\*\*](#).



## Who feels welcome?

National Trails should be for everyone. In this thoughtful piece, charity leader and accessibility campaigner, Anita Eade, reflects on what must change for our National Trails to be truly accessible for everyone. [\*\*Read more\*\*](#)

## Stories from our Trails continued...

### Seeing accessibility differently

Accessibility isn't just about stiles and smooth paths. Discover how hidden disabilities shape the way we experience the trails.

[Read more](#)



### A celebration of heritage on the North Downs Way



The Pilgrims' Way which incorporates the North Downs Way, has taken second place in the British Pilgrimage Trust's Top 10 pilgrimage routes in England. Rich in history, the trail continues to inspire walkers seeking reflection, meaning and connection to the landscape. [Read more about the top ten routes.](#)

### Walk this way

As we edge closer to the grand opening of the King Charles III England Coast Path this summer, we're excited to announce that a new stretch between Culver Down and Binnel Bay on the Isle of Wight is now open to the public, offering even more spectacular coastal access. Image © J Brownscombe



### Trails on screen

Have you made a film that celebrates a UK National Trail or know someone who has? From social media shorts to feature-length films, submit your work to the World Film Festival and help showcase stories from the UK's 20 National Trails at the festival. Deadline February 28th, 2026. [Read more](#)

NTUK is excited to have submitted both our '[Path to Nature Recovery Films](#)', fingers crossed!



## Trails sparking real change

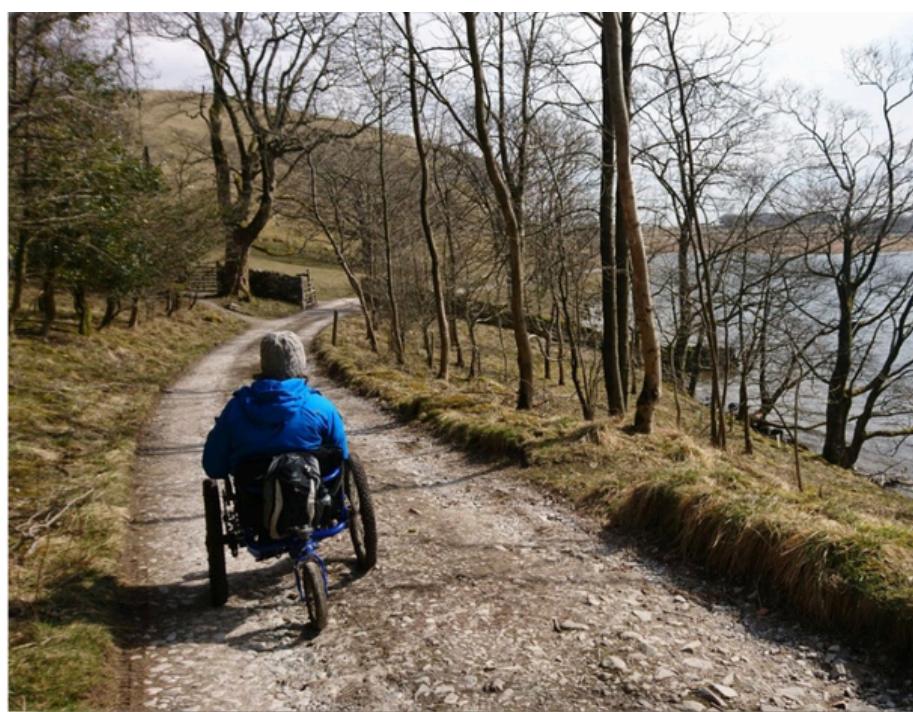
From peatlands to coastal mascots, discover five National Trail projects that are boosting nature, connecting communities, and tackling climate challenges. Explore how small ideas are making big impacts. [Read more](#)



© Gavin Duthie, Northumberland Coast National Landscape

## Shifting perceptions through photography

We're inviting emerging photographers from communities under-represented in nature to apply for our Shifting Perceptions grants. Help reshape how National Trails are seen. Deadline 15th February. [Apply now](#)



# Partner Events

## Managing Discrimination in Protected Landscapes

### Across March and April Online

Protected landscapes should be welcoming for all, but incidents of hate and discrimination do occur.

These online workshops, offered through the PLP to all NTUK members, are run with Diversiti UK. They're designed to help staff and partners build confidence in responding, supporting others, and tackling challenging behaviours effectively.

### Sign up here.

Any questions: email Saskia Luqmani, EDI Lead, PLP  
saskia.luqmani@naturalengland.org.uk



## Nature-Centric Governance Development Workshop

### March 3–4, 2026 The Swan, Streatley-on-Thames

Following last year's webinar series, the Protected Landscapes Partnership is delighted to announce this workshop, held in partnership with Reading University's Nature-Centric Catalyst Program.

We are inviting a small number of projects that are based within, or significantly overlap with, English Protected Landscapes (National Landscapes, National Parks, or National Trails) to take part. Participants will work alongside leading experts in the nature-centric governance space to transform ideas into practical, deliverable plans that give nature a voice in decision-making for 2026 and beyond.

To apply or discuss, email:  
tom.johnstone@naturalengland.org.uk



## Who leads our Protected Landscapes?

### 6 March 11.00am to 1.00pm online.

What does women's leadership look like in protected landscapes? And how can we learn from one another? This free event invites anyone working in or for these places to explore ideas, experiences and new ways of leading together. [Sign up](#)

# Dates for the Diary

## NTUK Talk Series

In December's newsletter we let members know about our upcoming NTUK Talks series, focussed on topics raised by our Coast Path Forum Members. As a reminder, these are 1-hour informal drop in sessions to discuss with fellow Trail Officers about shared challenges and opportunities. The following sessions will feature over the next few weeks. If you'd like to attend, or have suggestions for future talks please email [events@nationaltrails.uk](mailto:events@nationaltrails.uk)

### Accessibility on coastal National Trails (urban areas)

Tuesday 24 Feb – 12 – 1pm

### Charging for temporary closures on National Trails

Tuesday 10th Feb - 12-1pm

### Mental health and suicide prevention on National Trails

Tuesday 10th March – 12 – 1pm

### National Trail Ranger Meet up

Early March (TBC), Online

An introductory call for National Trail Rangers across the UK to share common challenges and opportunities.

To join, email [hannah@nationaltrails.uk](mailto:hannah@nationaltrails.uk)



### Field Trip: Access, Nature and Heritage on Offa's Dyke Path

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> - Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April  
Knighton, Shropshire

Offa's Dyke Path, Offa's Dyke Association, Offa's Dyke Conservation Project and NTUK are excited to invite you to an upcoming field trip focused on how practical actions for people, nature and heritage can be embedded into trail management.

Open to delivery staff working along National Trails, including National Trail Officers, rangers, public rights of way teams, nature recovery and heritage officers.

Sign up [HERE](#) by 20<sup>th</sup> February

