

**Cannock Chase National Landscape**  
**Farming in Protected Landscapes**  
**2021-2026 Review**



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



**Cannock  
Chase  
National  
Landscape**

**Farming in Protected  
Landscapes programme**

## What is Farming in Protected Landscapes?

The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme – or FiPL as it is commonly known - was introduced in June 2021 by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) as part of its Agricultural Transition Plan. It offers funding to farmers and land managers in England's National Landscapes (AONB) and National Parks for projects that:

- Support nature recovery
- Mitigate the impacts of climate change
- Provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage
- Protect or improve the quality and character of the landscape or place.

The programme is open to all farmers and land managers within National Landscapes and National Parks, as well as outside if there is a benefit to the designated area and its objectives.

The programme opened in July 2021 as a 3- year scheme and was subsequently extended in 2024/25 and again in 2025/26. It has now been extended for a further 3 years until 31 March 2029.

## How does FiPL work?

The programme is administered and delivered locally through FiPL Officers based in the National Landscape Team. The Officers work with farmers and land managers to develop projects that deliver on the four Programme themes. Projects must also be part of the solutions needed in local areas, so they must help deliver the priorities identified in the National Landscape Management Plan.

Applications for under £10,000 are assessed by a senior Protected Landscape Officer. Applications over £10,000 are assessed by an independent Local Assessment Panel made up of local farmers, experts and decision makers.

Funding is on an actual cost basis, at a percentage intervention rate based on any commercial gain and benefit to the applicant.

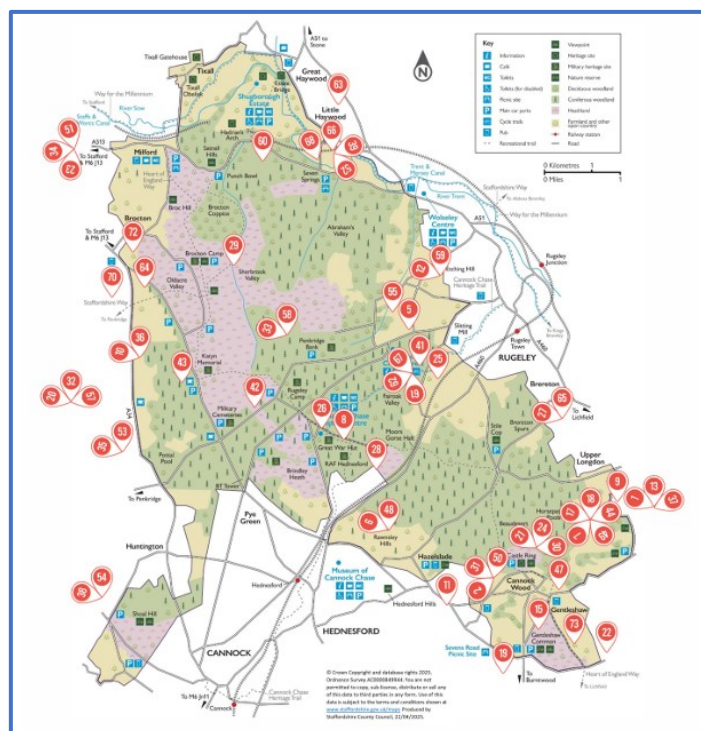
Programme monitoring and reporting to Defra is undertaken on a monthly and annual basis by the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officers.

## FiPL achievements up to 31 March 2026

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has supported 80 projects in Cannock Chase National Landscape since 2021, providing nearly £1.4 million of grants to farmers and land managers, and delivering a range of environmental outcomes such as:

- Hedgerow planting and hedgerow restoration including laying
- Tree planting in hedgerows, copses, orchards, parklands and shelter belts
- Wetland, watercourse, mire, heathland and meadow restoration, creation and management
- The expansion of herbal leys and rotational grazing opportunities across agricultural land and horse paddocks.
- Protecting historic features, including farm building restoration, and the conservation of below-ground and surface archaeology
- Improving the condition and accessibility of public rights of ways and permissive paths
- Raising awareness of farming, wildlife, cultural and historic heritage by installing interpretation panels
- Providing educational resources for teachers and partners on the links between farming, food and environmental conservation, and outreach projects involving schools, families and conservation volunteers
- Protection of wildlife, including surveys, population modelling and the installation of wildlife boxes hibernacula and reptile refugia
- Workshops for farmers, landowners, partners and conservationists to aid provide opportunities for collaboration across the national landscape.

Projects are spread across the National Landscape, and close to the boundary where there is a benefit to the designated area such as, improving ecological connectivity.



Grant locations 2021-26

### **FiPL in numbers**

- £1.4 million grants awarded
- 80 projects awarded funding
- Over 19 km of hedgerow planted, restored, 'gapped-up' or laid. (This is approximately the equivalent of planting a hedgerow the distance from North to South, and East to West in the CCNL)
- 3,300 trees planted, including orchards, hedgerow trees, succession parkland trees, copses and shelter belts
- 6 priority species targeted across 21 projects (adder, Welsh clearwing moth, log-jammer hoverfly, white-clawed crayfish, small pearl-bordered fritillary, nightjar)
- Multiple projects on protected sites, include SSSI, SAC and Local Nature Reserves
- 280 wildlife/nest boxes installed, plus 18 hibernacula
- 98 access improvements (field, pedestrian, school or 'kissing' gates)
- 21 interpretation panels
- 20 livestock water provision actions
- 45 hectares of heathland restoration over 10 different sites
- 12 projects protecting and enhancing watercourses and wetlands
- 9 projects improving visitor inclusivity
- 1 historic barn restored
- 2 projects targeting mire and peat conservation and assessment
- 15 schools involved with on-farm visits

## FiPL in action

### Case Study 1: Restoring floodplain wetlands at Navigation Farm, Little Haywood and land near Duck Covert, Shugborough Estate

**Grant total: Navigation Farm £69,594.54, Duck Covert £80,000**

**Year: 2024/25, 2025/26**

Navigation Farm, Little Haywood is a 95 hectares landholding, part of which lies on the River Trent floodplain – a strategic corridor for wildlife, storing water, as well as an area of landscape, historic and cultural importance.

The farmer is now largely retired and two tenants graze cattle and sheep across the holding. In addition, two horse owners rent land near the village. It was these tenants who initially engaged with FiPL, delivering 3 schemes on their paddocks across two years. Seeing the positive benefits of these projects, the landowner was subsequently encouraged to participate in the FiPL programme and 3 linked projects have since followed.

The first completed during 2024/25 was somewhat of a 'taster' and included measures to restore and manage field boundaries, including the first hedge-laying project on the Chase undertaken as part of FiPL. The second, more ambitious project in 2025/26 incorporated extensive hedgerow planting and management, erecting wildlife boxes and planting succession trees to replace veteran and ancient trees that had recently been lost. In addition, a feasibility study was undertaken to restore and extend a wetland scheme across the floodplains, originally established around 2006 but no longer functioning fully.



*Welcome to the River Trent floodplain*



*Cattle grazing the lush flood meadows in summer*

This resulted in the third project to restore nearly 50 hectares of wetland, bringing together expertise from a wide variety of organisations: Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT),

Environment Agency, Network Rail, Canal and River Trust, as well as specialist contractors and volunteers. A key aim was to enhance conditions for wetland birds, particularly lapwing, oystercatcher and snipe, and other declining wetland bird species. A winter bird survey was carried out to provide a baseline for future monitoring. Two black poplar trees were planted – these are one of Britain’s most endangered native tree species – with saplings kindly provided by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. Two interpretation panels were designed and installed. As the project unfolded, oral histories were told and archaeological mapping, drone footage and orthomosaic imaging were undertaken, with help from SWT and their volunteers.

### Navigation Farm highlights:

- 374 metres new hedgerows
- 165 metres hedge laid
- 180 metres hedgerow coppiced/gapped up
- 7 hedgerow trees, and 8 succession field trees
- 690 metres new stock fence and 2 new field gates
- 4 wildlife boxes
- Wetland restoration feasibility study
- 49.47 hectares wetland restored
- Winter bird survey
- 2 interpretation panels
- 2 black poplar trees planted

The work at Navigation Farm provides an important strategic link with wetland projects upstream and downstream on the Trent floodplain. Near Duck Covert on the neighbouring Shugborough Estate, FiPL supported extensive wetland and river restoration work in 2025 including scrapes, terraces, wetland areas, embankment removal and river widening. The works will create a variety of habitats providing breeding and feeding grounds for creatures like dragonflies, frogs, and wading birds. Working in partnership with the National Trust, the project was led and managed by SWT and funded by FiPL, the Environment Agency and the HS2 Environmental Enhancement Fund.



*Riverbank re-profiling and river widening*

### Duck Covert highlights:

- 2 hectares wetland habitat created
- 0.8km river restored through bank re-profiling and river widening and a riffle rapid
- 4 scrapes and 3 wetlands
- Reconnecting the river and floodplain

Together the projects at Shugborough and Navigation Farm will bring exciting landscape scale nature and climate mitigation benefits.

## Case Study 2: Regenerative farming, livestock production, conservation, barn restoration and on-farm education visits. Beadesert Park Farm, Upper Longdon

**Grant total: £82,269.52, plus an Historic Building Restoration Grant: £86,491.02**

**Years: 2022/23, 2024/25, 2025/26**

Beadesert Park Farm is a traditional working family farm in the east of the National Landscape that combines modern farming methods with conservation and education. The farm is mixed arable and livestock, keeping rare-breed White Park and longhorn cattle, Boer goats and poultry, set in a former parkland landscape with streams and heritage features.

In 2022/23 FiPL supported the farm's plans to reduce the use of antihelmintic medications and artificial fertiliser. Over 3.6 hectares of herbal ley was sown, with rotational grazing practices introduced through small temporary paddocks. Funding also supported permanent stock fencing, as well as a water bowser and in-field portable shelters to support stock movements. This combination of measures has improved the health of the goats by reducing parasites and improving the nutritional quality of the pastures. It has also helped to prevent the loss of topsoil and run-off into streams, and increased habitats and food resources for wildlife.

Improvements to livestock health have benefitted farm production, enabling the expansion of meat and home-made products for sale on the farm, and at weekly local markets. A second FiPL project



*In-field portable goat shelters*

therefore supported the

expansion of on-farm cold stores, weighing, packaging and labelling facilities, alongside new portable signs advertising the farm and business. Wildlife boxes were also funded to house the increasing number of farmland birds being attracted to the rotational grazing fields. This phase also inspired links with LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming), an educational charity that promotes better understanding of sustainable farming practices to create resilient food and farming systems for future generations. Beadesert Park Farm was able to support LEAF to develop a FiPL project that facilitated 6 local schools to visit the farm, undertaking curriculum-based learning, as well as providing in-school and teacher-focussed workshops.

As production and goat herds continued to expand, more indoor space was required for the 'kidding' season, and to house animals over winter. An Historic Building Restoration Grant (additional to FiPL Programme funding) enabled an historic former sawmill (Cockshutt Barn) to be re-purposed as an indoor livestock space, whilst using traditional materials and skills to retain the building's architectural integrity and historic character.



*Restoration of historic barn (Cockshutt Barn)*

In 2025/26 FiPL supported the expansion of the rotational grazing introduced in 2022/23 to a further 12 paddocks and one nursery unit, enabling mixed goat and cattle grazing through the provision of a piped water system, hard standing for animal feeding areas and water troughs. Cattle and goat wellbeing was improved by the addition of more portable in-field shelters, animal handling facilities and mobile veterinary handling units. This project also reinstated traditional hedgerow field boundaries, with fencing and new gates installed to channel livestock movement and protect hedgerows, trees and watercourses. Fruit, hedgerow and woodland trees were planted to provide additional resources for pollinators as well as shade and shelter for livestock and wildlife. Ecologically important areas of wet woodland were protected by buffer zones, dedicated to 'messy' habitat and the installation of hibernacula for small amphibians, reptiles, insects and mammals. The educational outreach was also supported with the funding of accessible hand-washing units adjacent to the barn and classroom, track-matting for improved access to facilities and the purchase of a fully accessible chicken coop and run, suitable for learners with complex medical needs and mobility aids. Ensuring inclusion in education is a priority for the farm, so we were delighted to fund 12 on-farm educational visits from local rural, urban, inner-city and additional needs schools, who would otherwise have little access to these opportunities.



*On-farm education*

**Beaudesert Park Farm highlights:**

- Mixed species rotational grazing over 13 paddocks
- 3.64 hectares of herbal ley
- Livestock welfare facilities, including 7 in-field shelters, 1 cattle handling and 1 mobile goat handling facilities
- Hard standing for 4 livestock feeders
- 12 water troughs, 1 water bowser and 600m of pipework
- On-farm cold stores, weighing, packaging and labelling facilities; new signs advertising the farm and business.
- 550m hedgerows planted or restored
- 70 fruit, hedgerow and woodland trees planted
- 3.5km of protective fencing and 14 field gates to improve access for mixed-livestock rotational grazing
- Creation of buffer zones protecting wet woodland and installation of hibernacula
- 33 wildlife boxes
- 18 on-farm educational visits, including via LEAF collaboration
- On-farm hygiene, access and education via accessible chicken coop, track-matting and hand-washing facilities
- Restoration of former sawmill into livestock barn

### Case study 3: Adders in the National Landscape, multiple sites

**Grant total: £15,178.58**

**Year: 2023/25, 2024/25**

Spear-headed by the Amphibian and Reptile Group (ARG) UK, and with the involvement of multiple partners and landowners, FiPL funding has supported efforts across the Chase to learn more about adders and help their protection and conservation. Cannock Chase is a national stronghold for this scarce and declining reptile.

Phase 1 involved creating a comprehensive 'Habitat Suitability Model' which enabled the identification of sites where habitat works would improve or connect 'good habitat' to encourage more sustainable and resilient adder populations.

Phase 2 has supported practical habitat improvements for adders including habitat restoration, hibernaculum creation and improving connectivity between sites. An 'Advice Note on Managing Habitat for Adders' for land managers has also been written. This is available online and has been used widely by partners and FiPL projects throughout Cannock Chase as well as in other national landscapes.

The work has provided the foundation for the preparation of a Species Action Plan for the Adder – one of ten Champion Species prioritised within the National Landscape Management Plan.



*Cannock Chase is a national stronghold for adders*



*Improving habitat for adders*

#### **Adders highlights:**

- Wide network of partners, landowners, specialists and volunteers
- Habitat suitability model
- Habitat restoration
- Hibernaculum creation
- Advice Note on Managing Habitat for Adders
- Species Action Plan

## Case Study 4: Heathland restoration, Beau Desert Golf Club

**Grant total: £48,995.37**

**Year: 2022/24, 2024/25, 2025/26**

Nestled between Hednesford Hills and Cannock Chase Country Park, Beau Desert Golf Club is renowned for its heathland that weaves between the fairways, offering a distinctive golfing environment. This landscape was part of the former Beaudesert Hall Estate, and has a deep cultural and social history that is important to the local community. However, over time, much of the grounds gradually reverted to pine and mixed-species woodland, enclosing the space, reducing light and threatening the continuation of the rare and valuable heathland habitat.

The Golf Club's Board of Management committed to reversing this decline and preserving the course's unique landscape. Three years of heathland restoration work began in 2022 with FiPL support, which has developed into a multi-focussed project embedded in the Course management plan for many years to come.

Project activities have included removing and thinning pine plantation and mixed woodland to allow light and air to move through to the understorey. Invasive and exotic plant species, including Himalayan balsam and Japanese Knotweed have been removed. This, together with scrub and ground vegetation clearance, leaving patches of mixed age structure gorse, has allowed important heathland species to regenerate from the seed bank, including heather, the Cannock Chase berry, cowberry, crowberry and heath bedstraw. Grinding out the cut tree stumps will allow the Club to purchase specialist mowing equipment to ensure that future heathland management is part of the annual grounds maintenance.



*Between 5th and 15th fairway - 'before' image*



*Between 5th and 15th fairway 'after' image*

To further enhance biodiversity, the Club has enhanced wetland areas and introduced bare earth scrapes and hibernacula to encourage invertebrate, small mammal and reptile species to move through and breed on site. The Club has also participated in other FiPL-funded projects, including surveys for locally important and priority species, retaining silver birch, oak and native mixed-woodland species to aid the expansion of nightjar, adder and Welsh clearwing moth populations.

Three interpretation panels have been installed to broaden awareness for Club members, visiting players and members of the public using the Public Rights of Way that cross the course about the historical and ecological importance of the place, and explaining the importance of the heathland restoration.

The restoration and preservation of Beau Desert's heathland landscape is a cornerstone of the Club's long-term vision for the course. Club members are fully engaged – volunteering their time to help with restoration initiatives, recording wildlife while playing golf, and leading tours of the course to interested groups, including hosting the Cannock Chase National Landscape Conference in 2025. The Club features project updates in its members' newsletter and has developed a dedicated page on its website providing frequent updates on the heathland and related projects. This solidifies the Club's commitment to being classed as a prime heathland course, where members and visitors feel that they are part of the wider National Landscape while they play.



*Hosting the National Landscape Conference 2025*

#### **Beau Desert Golf Club highlights:**

- 14 hectares of lowland heathland restoration
- Bare-earth scrapes and hibernacula
- Wetland restoration
- Removal of over 300 tree stumps
- 1.3 hectares of bracken control
- Control of invasive plants
- 3 interpretation panels

## Case Study 5: Slitting Mill Cluster near Rugeley – and a boost for White Clawed Crayfish!

**Grant total: £49,054.26 to five projects across three years**

**Year: 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26**

FiPL has supported a cluster of projects at Slitting Mill, near Rugeley, that together are helping to deliver landscape-scale change along the Fair Oak Valley.

The cluster began with work at Hazelmoor Farm, where a two-year project started in late 2023/2024 to establish hedges and field improvements as well as create a wide protective margin along the Stony Brook. Cannock Chase National Landscape supports good populations of the nationally rare white-clawed crayfish, which are known to be present in the Stony Brook upstream and downstream of the project site. Habitat improvements to the watercourse to bolster these populations were undertaken with advice from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's freshwater ecologist. 'Chop and Drop' work on a large scale was implemented creating conditions suitable for both the white-clawed crayfish as well as the logjammer hoverfly, a vulnerable species with a very rare niche habitat – semi-submerged logs in woodland streams. Other work included the restoration of a pond and planting of a copse.



*Hedges require protection from livestock and deer - contractor in action!*

Four neighbouring landowners subsequently carried out projects - three of which involved 'horse related' land management (horsiculture!). One of these neighbours has created a new wetland feature on their land as well as a range of other measures to improve habitats for wildlife such as, woodland management, hedging, fencing, wetland and meadow seeds and plugs, a small orchard, nest boxes and a tidy up! Woody dams were created in seepage streams to enhance conditions for white-clawed crayfish and the logjammer hoverfly. A peat survey has recommended that the site would benefit from further rewetting to conserve the existing peat resource and help with peat formation processes. Ring barking has also been undertaken to create standing deadwood and encourage species like the lesser spotted woodpecker.

### Slitting Mill cluster highlights:

- River improvements
- 500m new hedgerows
- 13 hedgerow trees
- 6 succession trees
- 18 nest boxes
- Two orchards and a copse
- Wetland plugs and seeds
- Pond restoration and new wetland feature
- New fencing and gates
- Peat survey
- Creation of deadwood habitat



*Landowner and fencing contractor, Fair Oak Valley*



*'Chop and drop' work along the Stony Brook*

## Case Study 6: Springslade Lodge

**Grants awarded: £11,723.33**

**Year: 2024/25 and 2025/26**

Springslade Lodge is a popular tearoom located on the west side of the Chase, offering camping and touring caravan facilities plus activities for groups including Wellbeing Walks.

Two projects here in 2024/25 and 2025/26 have created new habitats, softening the landscape and helping provide a peaceful haven for both people and wildlife. The first phase included planting new native hedgerows, hedgerow trees and a small orchard consisting of 3 traditional variety apple trees, installing wildlife boxes, a new wooden gate and a hedgehog house.

Additional hedgerows and hedgerow trees with associated protective fencing were established in phase two, along with the creation of a wildflower area by planting wildflower plugs and sowing wildflower seed, six wildlife boxes and some fence refurbishment. The land is on a movement route for deer, so the new fencing incorporated deer leaps to enable the animals to continue to roam freely across the landscape.



*New hedgerows flourishing at Springslade*



*Planting wildflower plugs - with a smile!*

### Springslade Lodge highlights:

- 376 metres new hedgerows
- 8 hedgerow trees
- Orchard
- Wildflower meadow creation
- 10 wildlife boxes
- Hedgehog house
- Protective fencing
- Deer leaps

## **The added value that FiPL brings**

The FiPL programme in Cannock Chase National Landscape has been effective at supporting farmers and land managers to complete 80 bespoke projects. In addition, it has achieved a range of wider benefits beyond the grant funding delivered across its four core themes:

### **Trusted relationships**

The FiPL programme has built meaningful and long-term relationships with local farmers and land managers on Cannock Chase who had not hitherto been engaged with the National Landscape. In turn, farmers and land managers value the advice and support from the FiPL Officers, helping foster a more connected landscape, great working relationships and successful projects.

### **Supporting the local rural economy**

FiPL funding is investing in local contractor businesses, supporting nature friendly farms to diversify their income streams, and helping attract visitors to the local area.

### **Greater collaboration**

The delivery of FiPL projects frequently brings together a broad range of organisations and individuals from different sectors and disciplines to work alongside farmers and land managers to deliver outcomes, resolve issues and sometimes test and trial innovative approaches. These include drainage engineers, wildlife surveyors, heritage specialists, Rights of Way Officers, Local Planning Authority Officers, and representatives from regulatory Government agencies.

### **Creating local impact**

FiPL funding has created impact across all four strategic aims of the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan – Nature, Climate, People and Place, supporting the delivery of a number of local actions and targets that would have struggled to proceed without the boost of funding and advice the programme has brought. It has also realised broader socio-economic impacts, such as knowledge and skills transfer, and increasing collaboration between farmers and land managers.

### **Sharing learning and good practice**

The FiPL programme has provided a range of opportunities for local FiPL Officers to learn from across the National Landscape family, and to then apply that knowledge locally to the benefit of Cannock Chase.

### **Community wellbeing**

FiPL projects provide learning opportunities for local people and visitors about farming, cultural heritage and increased access opportunities, rural life, and the benefits of a flourishing natural world around them.

### **Going the extra mile**

Whilst delivering their FiPL funded projects, farmers and land managers will often 'go the extra mile' and carry out additional, non-funded activities such as removing unsightly collections of fencing and other disused agricultural materials.

### **What next?**

The FiPL programme has been popular locally with farmers and landowners and nationally with Defra ministers and officials. The programme has therefore been extended for a further 3 years until 31 March 2029. It has become an important tool for Government to deliver its ambitions for agriculture and the environment, as well as targets for 30by30 and the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

Further information about the FiPL programme is available on [Farming in Protected Landscapes - Cannock Chase National Landscape](#).



*National FiPL Team visit to the Teddesley Estate where FiPL has supported a wide range of nature-friendly farming activities*

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