

Exmoor National Park

A Vision and Strategy for the ENPA Woodland Estate 2017-2042



Culbone Wood

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Birchcleave Wood, Simonsbath. The highest beech plantation in the country

1. INTRODUCTION

From the luxuriant oak woods of the deep river valleys to the extensive plantations of east Exmoor or from the ancient trees of Nettlecombe to rare endemic Whitebeams, Exmoor boasts an unrivalled history and diversity of trees and woodlands. The coastal woodlands, which extend to the shoreline in places, are unique in the region and we also have a significant proportion of the UK and world total of the remaining western “Atlantic” oak woods.

9500 ha of Exmoor is woodland, about 13.5% of the land area. Despite the striking beauty of the high open moorland, trees and woodlands remain one of the defining characteristics of the Exmoor landscape.

Helping to ensure woodland on Exmoor continues to deliver for natural beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and communities and to meet our demands for timber and natural resources as well as adapting to the effects of climate change, disease other land-use pressures will be a continuing challenge in the short, medium and long-term.

Exmoor National Park Authority is directly responsible through ownership or leasing arrangements for 595 ha of the most important woodland in the National Park. The scope of this document is to set out how the National Park Authority through the management of its own woodland will meet its commitments to improve resilience in the face of unprecedented pressures, to deliver a wider range of services than before and ensure these woodlands remain a special part of the character of the National Park over the coming decades.



Oak coppice in Hawkcombe Wood National Nature Reserve

2. ABOUT ENPA WOODLAND ESTATE

Exmoor National Park contains some of the finest and most important woodland in the country helping define the special character of this protected landscape.

Exmoor National Park Authority owns or manages 595.5 ha or 6.5% of Exmoors woodland which includes 2 National Nature Reserves at Tarr Steps and Hawkcombe, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) mainly through the Barle Valley and the north coast and combes. Further areas of old estate plantations at North Hill and Simonsbath and other more recent secondary woodland. Additional outlying areas include The Incline, Timberscombe Wood, Haddon Hill, Pinkery, Larcombe and Ashton Cleave.

Our high value conservation woodlands - mainly sessile oak-woods, many formerly coppiced or derived from wood-pasture are managed to conserve and enhance the characteristic flora and fauna including iconic species such as pied flycatcher or red deer and lower plant communities of lichens and mosses which thrive in the clean moist air. This is achieved through a programme of active intervention along low impact or continuous cover principles including thinning, coppicing, gap creation and management of open space. Programmes to monitor the status of these species is carried out by ENPA and other partners in line with the designations and features of these sites.

Protected cultural assets and historic landscape elements are protected and managed to further our understanding of the history of the place. Some of these heritage resources are of international significance. This may include previously unrecognised picturesque landscapes in the coastal woods, ancient iron-working or industrial sites such as The Incline or the many charcoal platforms that tell us about past woodland management. Work is carefully planned and executed to minimise visual impact.

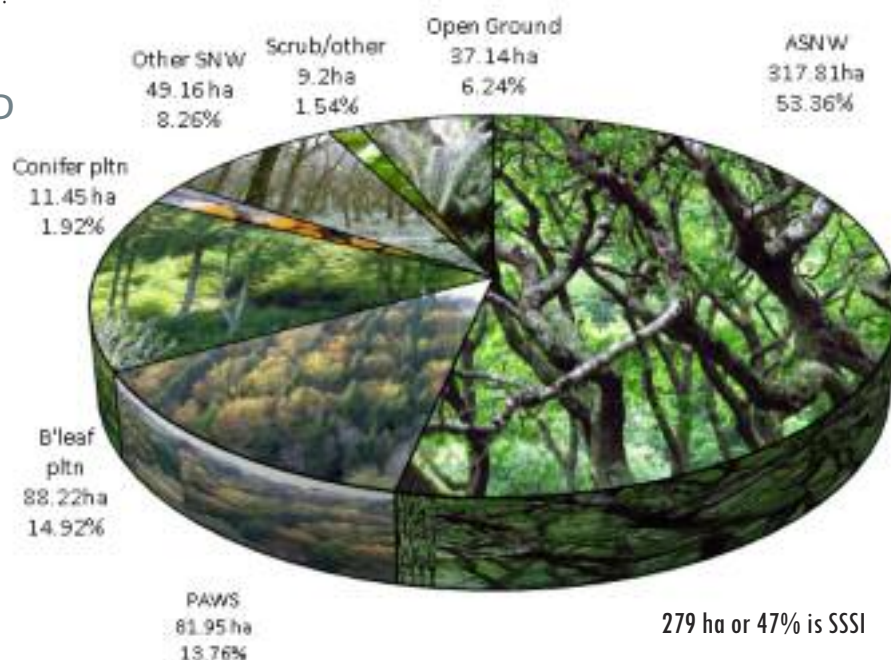
Public access and opportunities for education, research and recreation are actively encouraged. Most properties have a well maintained network of footpaths and access facilities. Details are promoted on ENPA's web-site and through other media.

An increasing volume of timber is released into local markets for firewood and other products and revenue is increasingly relied upon to fund conservation work. A proportion of timber harvested is directed to ENPA's own workshop to produce the distinctive Rights of Way signage, bridges, fencing, gates, benches and other items of countryside furniture used throughout the National Park. Local contractors are employed to deliver over 90% of the forestry work programme .

The role of the estate can alternatively be described in terms of the ecosystem services it can provide:

- **Supporting services** such as primary production, nutrient dispersal and cycling.
- **Provisioning services** such as timber, water and energy.
- **Regulating services** such as carbon sequestration and climate regulation, flood management, water purification, biological reservoirs for crop pollination, pest control and disease resistance.
- **Cultural services** around recreational and learning experiences, cultural, intellectual and spiritual inspiration and the advancement of science and education.

2.1 WOODLAND TYPE



Woodland Type	Area	% of total
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)	317.81	53.36
Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS)	81.95	13.76
Broadleaf Plantation	88.22	14.92
Conifer Plantation	11.45	1.92
Other Semi-Natural Woodland (OSNW)	49.16	8.26
Scrub/Other	9.20	1.54
Open Ground (OG)	37.14	6.24
Total	595.50	100.00

2.2 LOCATION



2.3 DETAILS

Compartment		Area ha	Designations	Woodland Type*
Name	Ref.			
Dulverton	BV1.1-4	34.27	SSSI/SAC/ASNW	Upland oakwood
Hawkridge	BV2.1-8	67.41	SSSI/SAC/ASNW/SAM	Upland oakwood
Tarr Steps	BV3.1-6	42.21	SSSI/SAC/NNR/ASNW/SAM	Upland oakwood
Culbone	CW1-4	183.74	ASNW	Upland/coast oakwood, PAWS
Hawkcombe	HW1-9	102.17	SSSI/SAC/ASNW/SAM	Upland oakwood
Simonsbath	S1-6	32.98		Broadleaf/mixed plantation
North Hill	NH1-9	99.20	SSSI/SAC/ASNW/SAM	Upland/coast oakwood, PAWS, Broadleaf/conifer pltn
Haddon Hill	HH1-4	19.29		Upland Oakwood, conifer plantation
Timberscombe	TW1	3.10		PAWS
The Incline	I1	4.90	SAM	Plantation, mixed woodland
Ashton Cleave	AC1	2.80	SSSI	Upland oakwood
Pinkery	P1	0.26		Conifer plantation
Larcombe	L1	3.50		Broadleaf plantation
Blackmoor Gate	BG1	0.33		Broadleaf plantation
TOTAL		595.50		

*for more detailed refer to individual site plans

3. OUR VISION AND OVERALL GOALS

3.1 VISION

The ENPA Woodland Estate continues to reflect and enhance the unique character of the National Park landscape and heritage. Its distinctive wildlife is flourishing, its cultural assets and human history are protected reinforcing the deep connection between humanity and environment. Our woodlands are special places for people to enjoy and to understand and the unique qualities and role of trees and woodland in our lives.

Spirit of Place which helps confer meaning, value, emotion and mystery to these woodlands and expresses the unique quality of place is defined for each site and forms the framework to guide activities to improve the quality of the management and interaction with the place.

The social, environmental and economic services woodland provides are better understood, more able to be quantified and influence the development of woodland plans which are designed to promote and enhance these functions. Communities are more closely connected to local woods and derive a range of benefits from them including health and well-being, learning, economy and environmental protection.

Woodlands are more robust, resilient and better adapted to deal with increasing pest, disease and climatic pressures. There is greater diversity in structure with more, younger trees and others maturing into future veterans and in composition with varieties and species replacing those lost to disease episodes and others more resistant to emerging threats. Through this process of adaptation woodlands retain their character and unique sense of place.

3.2 OVERALL GOALS

Exmoor was designated as a National Park in 1954. The 1995 Environment Act revised the original 1949 legislation and set out two Statutory Purposes for National Parks in England and Wales, to:

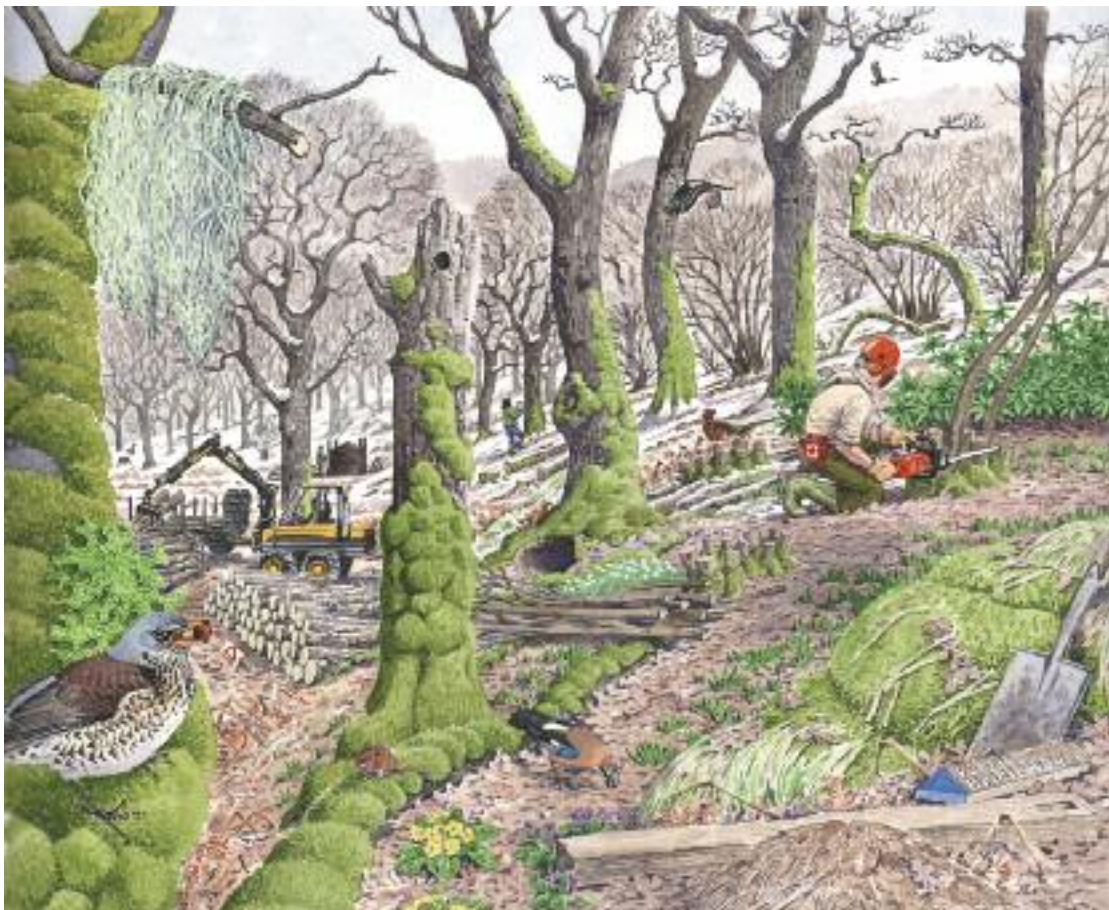
- **Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage**
- **Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the Public**

When National Parks carry out these purposes they also have the Duty to:

- **Seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Parks**

Woodland is integral to the many Special Qualities which help define the character of the National Park which in turn help develop the priorities for current and future Partnership Plans. This Strategy takes its lead from those Priorities and refines them into visions and actions for our own woodland estate. Other policy drivers will emerge and will inevitably influence our approach but shouldn't materially change our goals. Natural Capital for example is a way of defining the wide range of benefits that we derive from nature and is emerging as a key driver. Significant environmental and economic benefits can be secured through effective and efficient management of our natural capital and will be central to our approach to woodland management over the decades.

One of the main purposes of this strategy however is to ensure our aims, objectives and overall goals remain clear and consistent not unduly influenced by the inevitable policy pendulum.



Regular woodland management maintains diversity and produces timber

4. OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

4.1 WOODLAND IN THE LANDSCAPE



Tarr Steps National Nature Reserve

Vision

Woodland continues to be one of the defining characteristics of the Exmoor landscape contributing towards its quality, the ENPA woodland estate will help ensure these qualities and characteristics are secured. The rich unique historic and cultural features of ancient and other woodland reflected in artefacts and design are recognised and protected. High standards of woodland planning and management ensure that woodland operations are appropriate in scale and frequency and have improved the quality of the landscape and cultural heritage assets.

Aim

To continue to make a significant contribution to the landscape character and heritage of Exmoor.

Objective

Deliver woodland management that conserves and reinforces landscape character and protects and enhances cultural heritage.

Strategy

- Site management plans will continue to be in place for all properties and consider the woodland in its landscape context and its intrinsic values and place high priority on measures to conserve and enhance landscape features and attributes,
- Plans will contain Spirit of Place statements that expresses what is unique, distinctive and cherished about a particular place; and which guides activities to improve the quality of everything that we do,
- Trial, test and demonstrate woodland management practices which offer greatest potential to deliver landscape and cultural heritage improvements,
- ENPA will ensure that landscape impacts of any forestry operations are carefully considered and measures taken to limit impacts.

4.2 WOODLAND FOR WILDLIFE



Garden Warbler at Hawkcombe

Vision

Wildlife characteristic of Exmoor's extensive upland oak-woods and other woodlands continues to thrive. Rich communities of mosses, ferns and lichens flourish in the moist, clean air of woodlands which are largely free of invasive and non-native species. Management (which may be driven by other objectives such as timber production) will help improve conditions for iconic woodland birds such as the pied-flycatcher and provide increased opportunities for other species of insects, fungi and plants through provision of dead-wood, gaps or more sympathetic management of conifer and broadleaf plantations. Continuing research will ensure as far as possible that key features and communities are robust and resilient to a changing climate and that appropriate adaptation measures are encouraged.

Aim

To maintain and improve Exmoor's important woodland habitats and species.

Objective

Through appropriate management, monitoring and research to provide conditions for Exmoor's distinctive and special habitats and species to thrive.

Strategy

- Site management plans to be in place identifying priority habitats and species and placing a high priority on measures to conserve and enhance their status,
- Trial, test and demonstrate traditional and innovative woodland management practices which offer greatest potential to deliver wildlife benefits,
- Tarr Steps Woods and Hawkcombe Wood National Nature Reserves will meet externally derived NNR Management Standards,
- SSSI woodlands are in target condition i.e. 50% woodland SSSIs in favourable condition by 2020,
- Ensure non SSSI ASNW achieve similar target condition and PAWS are "recovering",
- Engage with partners to undertake bird and ecological monitoring,
- There is no flowering rhododendron; regeneration is regularly treated and measures are in place to assess and respond to spread of this and other damaging invasive species,
- Woodland wildlife is robust, resilient and able to adapt as far as possible to the effects of moderate climate change.

4.3 WORKING WOODLAND



Creating gaps for natural regeneration, the timber is milled at our workshop.

Vision

ENPA woodland is being managed for a wider range of timber products with an increasing proportion being processed closer to Exmoor. Forestry is regarded as an important activity employing a growing number of locally based skilled workers. Timber is directed into ENPA's own workshop and local supply chains serving enterprises ranging from charcoal and green woodworking to small workshops specialising in quality furniture, through medium sized milling businesses to large scale fuel and fibre producers. On-going research identifies further opportunities which the ENPA woodland estate can benefit from. Threats to sustained production from climate change and pests and diseases are understood and appropriate response strategies are developed.

Aim

To demonstrate sustainable use of natural resources and contribute to rural economic activity.

Objective

Increase the volume and quality of timber and wood from ENPA woodlands and the proportion being harvested by and used in local businesses to increase income from the woodland estate,

Strategy;

- Trial, test and demonstrate practices which offer greatest potential to deliver wood production in line with other objectives including use of CCF and irregular high forest,
- ENPA will continue to self-supply and process timber for the construction of the highly distinctive ROW furniture and other countryside products,
- Through the continued management of its own woodland estate ENPA will favour the use of local labour and will sell timber into the local wood-fuel and timber markets supporting local businesses,
- ENPA properties will be managed to externally derived standards and be part of a nationally recognised woodland assurance scheme,
- Exmoor National Park Authority will favour the use of locally grown and manufactured timber products through a Purchasing Policy.
- An increasing proportion of income is derived from the sale of timber and products which is re-invested to continue quality improvements.

4.4 RESILIENT WOODS AND RESOURCE PROTECTION



Award winning Continuous Cover Forestry at Moor Wood

Vision

Adaptation measures help ensure the ENPA woodland estate is increasingly robust against the effects of climate change. Creative and innovative approaches have helped ensure genetic, species and structural diversity are increased, all of which help build resilience whilst protecting the special qualities. Woodland is increasingly contributing towards mitigation through enhanced carbon storage capacity, more active intervention and through transfer of carbon into long term storage. Increased production of woodfuel and timber from ENPA woodlands contributes to the decline in use of fossil fuels, building materials and other synthetic products with high embedded carbon. Natural capital, provisioning and regulating services provided by ENPA woodlands are better understood, quantified and shaping long-term plans.

Aim

To build resilience to climate and disease pressure and develop provisioning and regulating services.

Objective

Develop integrated practices that;

- deliver objectives for water resources, ecological status and flood alleviation,
- help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon storage and
- build the resilience of woodlands to the impacts of climate change.

Strategy

- Trial, test and demonstrate appropriate management and timber harvesting practices which show greatest potential for reducing emissions and increasing storage of carbon,
- Increase supply of woodfuel and timber into local uses to reduce wood-miles and to assist material and energy substitution,
- Implement appropriate natural regeneration measures to broaden genetic variety and maximise opportunities for beneficial adaptation and site suitability,
- Explore use of alternative tree species in response to disease and climate risk
- Site management plans continue to be in place for all properties with clear objectives to manage risks associated with age and species composition, disease, pests and climate.
- Undertake ecosystem services audit to understand the financial contribution our woodlands make and explore how these services might be enhanced and develop best practices.
- Develop best practice around in-stream woody debris and measures to slow the flow.

4.5 WOODS FOR PEOPLE



A few of the many thousands each year who visit Tarr Steps National Nature Reserve

Vision

The woods are enjoyed by an increasing number of local people and visitors compatible with the special qualities. A right of way network offering opportunities for all abilities is maintained to a high standard. Opportunities to extend access arrangements and enhance the visitor experience will be taken. Visitors, local people, schools, and researchers have a deeper appreciation and develop greater understanding of the special qualities of the woodlands and the contribution they make to individual health and wellbeing, society and the environment through a programme of on-site and on-line information, guided walks and talks. The woodlands are increasingly used for research, learning and understanding and examples of best practice.

Communities are better connected to local woods and deriving perceivable social and economic benefits. The role of the woodlands in contributing to quality of life, providing ecosystem services and helping with adaptation to a changing climate is better understood, valued and influencing management decisions. More produce is harvested in a sustainable way and directed into local supply chains to sustain local employment and enterprise and to demonstrate social and environmental responsibility in making full use of a local renewable product.

People have a greater appreciation of and are better connected to the past through an awareness of past woodland practices and culture.

Aim

To provide more people with increased opportunities to understand and enjoy woodlands and derive genuine and tangible benefits from them.

Objective

Extend access and involvement through an active and ongoing programme of improvement, interpretation, inclusion and identification of learning and research opportunities.

Strategy;

- Manage and improve the PRow network so that it remains open and easy to use,
- Provide information and interpretation on the Authority's woodland and management through walks/talks, events and effective use of social media and the website,
- Identify community involvement opportunities and mechanisms for management,
- ENPA woodlands form a key part of the Moor to Enjoy health and well being project.

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW



Surveying trees on North Hill

5.1 MANAGEMENT PLANS AND PLAN OF OPERATIONS

ENPA will maintain comprehensive Woodland Management Plans for all its properties, an overall Woodland Estate Plan and Plan of Operations.

This will ensure clear long-term management objectives are established, regular monitoring can be implemented to determine the extent to which the objectives are being met and resources can be efficiently allocated to help achieve the objectives and desired outcomes.

Woodland Management Plans are in place for the following for the following properties;

Barle Valley, Culbone, Haddon, Hadborough Plantation, Hawkcombe and Colescombe, North Hill, Simonsbath, The Incline, Timberscombe, Ashton Cleave, Pinkery Farm.

A Forestry Commission approved UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) compliant woodland plan is in place for the woodland estate; i.e. the Woodland Estate Plan and Plan of Operations.

All plans will be subject to regular monitoring and will be reviewed every 5 years as necessary.

This Strategy will be reviewed in 10 years.

5.2 RESOURCES

The Authority employs 2 members of core staff with 30% of their time dedicated to the woodland estate. Core funding to discharge Duty of Care and essential obligations and to deliver other priorities and desirable outcomes is made available by the Authority. It is expected that this will continue and that this Strategy will help justify this continued expenditure.

The Authority will continue to secure grants for as long as they exist but will also secure income from timber and other novel streams and continuously improve efficiencies to demonstrate best value. Undertaking an ecosystems services audit will reveal the extent to which ENPA woodlands contribute financially towards the provision of these services. Once understood, quantified and valued, streams for receiving payments for these services can be explored.

Although not directly benefiting the management of the woodlands the Authority also operates a workshop using timber from ENPA woodlands for the distinctive countryside furniture used throughout the National Park which demonstrates the link between managed woodland and local produce. Using timber in this way avoids having to externally source timber at significant cost to The Authority.



Twisted oaks in Hawkcombe Wood

5.3 MONITORING

Vision	Objective	Monitoring Criteria	Period
Woodland in the Landscape	Deliver woodland management that conserves and reinforces landscape character and protects and enhances cultural heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodland plans which contain measures for landscape and cultural heritage are in place for all ENPA properties. Woodlands continue to contribute to the quality, character and condition of the landscape as detailed in the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment. 	Plan review period, 5yrs On review of the LCA
Woodland for Wildlife	Through appropriate management, monitoring and research to provide conditions for Exmoor's distinctive and special habitats and species to thrive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodland plans which contain measures for priority species and habitats are in place for all ENPA properties. Plans implement measures as detailed and monitoring and research is establishing the impact on target species and habitats. Wildlife Monitoring Framework 	Plan review period, 5yrs. As detailed in WMF
Working Woodland	Increase the volume and quality of timber and wood from ENPA woodlands and the proportion being harvested by and used in local businesses to increase income from the woodland estate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodland plans which contain measures for wood and timber production are in place for all ENPA properties. Wood production volume and value is monitored and the market destination of timber is traced. 	5 years
Resilient Woods and Resource Protection	<p>Develop integrated practices that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deliver objectives for water resources, ecological status and flood alleviation, that help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon storage and build the resilience of woodlands to the impacts of climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodland plans which contain integrated measures for resilience and resource protection and management are in place for all ENPA properties. Undertake ecosystem services audit within 1st 5 years of this plan Review harvesting and management practices, estimate carbon gains from product replacement and changes in carbon sinks 	Establish criteria and monitoring periods by 2019
Woods for People	Extend access and involvement through an active and ongoing programme of improvement, interpretation, inclusion and identification of learning and research opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spirit of Place statements in place for each site through consultation. Establish criteria for evaluating improvement measures in 1st 5 years of this plan. 	Establish criteria and monitoring periods by 2019