

## REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN WALES

### ***Purpose***

To inform members of the publication of ‘Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government’s Priorities for AONBs & National Parks’ and the response to the Minister’s letter on greater parity between AONBs & National Parks.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC

- A. Welcomes the publication of *Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government’s Priorities for AONBs & National Parks*.
- B. Endorses the joint response from the Welsh AONB lead officers, National Association for AONBs and Natural Resources Wales to the Welsh Government Minister for Environment addressing greater parity between AONBs and National Parks in Wales.

### ***Key Issues***

- *Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government’s Priorities for AONBs & National Parks* was published in July 2018 and is intended to bring the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales to a close. The document is attached.
- At the July JAC members welcomed the letter from Hannah Blythyn AM, Minister for Environment to Welsh AONB lead officers, the National Association for AONBs and Natural Resources Wales requesting, by early September, views on how to provide greater parity for AONBs with National Parks in Wales.
- A joint response to the Minister’s letter was submitted in late September. The summary is in Appendix 1.
- Officers from the Welsh AONB, the National Association for AONBs and Natural Resources Wales are meeting the Minister to further discuss the response in mid-November.
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority is hosting the Designated Landscapes Wales Seminar on 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> November to which the AONB Manager will attend (after this meeting). The programme is in Appendix 2.

### ***Reasons***

The ‘Marsden Review’ of Designated Landscapes in Wales, and subsequent collaborative work through the Future Landscapes Wales programme, correctly highlighted inequalities between AONBs and National Parks, particularly in terms of status, profile and resourcing. Hannah Blythyn AM, Welsh Government Minister for Environment, wrote on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018 to the five AONB lead officers in Wales, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the National

Association of AONBs (NAAONB) asking for a collaborative response addressing the provision of greater parity for AONBs with the National Parks in Wales. The Minister is particularly interested in the issues of ‘status’, ‘profile’, ‘resourcing’, and how together they address the delivery of rich ecosystems, vibrant and resilient communities and opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The Welsh National Park Authorities hold an annual seminar for members and officers. In 2018 the AONB lead officers were invited to the event hosted by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. This year the seminar has been rebranded as the Designated Landscapes Wales Seminar and AONB lead officers and chairmen invited. The event is hosted by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority on 5th & 6th November. Hannah Blythyn AM, Welsh Government Minister for Environment, is a keynote speaker on 5<sup>th</sup> November. The programme is in Appendix 2, below.

### ***Implications***

Officers from the Welsh AONBs, NAAONB & NRW met several times over the summer preparing a joint response to the Minister’s request. In late September a document was sent to the Minister that focuses on four key areas, providing a coherent approach to raise the profile and status of AONBs and improve their ability to deliver rich ecosystems and opportunities for outdoor recreation. The four areas are as follows:

- Updating and strengthening of the AONB purposes – because the current purposes are limited, the associated duties on public bodies are weak and the proposals would give genuine mandate to activities that AONB partnerships already deliver
- Strengthening and implementing the AONB Management Plans – because the plans are the expression of what needs to happen in the AONBs and are the core organising principle for local delivery of Well-being goals and the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources
- Improve governance and scrutiny – because the profile and engagement of AONB Partnerships with their local authorities is often low and should better reflect their significance as nationally important designated and protected landscapes
- Focussed and secure resourcing and capacity building – because the current insecure, opportunistic and often ‘hidden’ resourcing position constrains the ability and potential for AONBs to deliver.

Officers from the Welsh AONB, the NAAONB and NRW are meeting the Minister to further discuss the response in mid-November.

Unfortunately the first day of the Designated Landscapes Wales Seminar, including the Minister’s presentation, clashes with this JAC meeting. However the AONB Manager will attend the remainder of the seminar after this JAC meeting.

### ***Background***

The Review of Designated Landscapes (AONBs & National Parks) in Wales was commissioned by former Minister for Natural Resources, Carl Sargeant, in 2014 with the independent ‘Marsden Review’ and *National Landscapes: Realising their Potential - The Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales* Final Report published in October 2015. The Future Landscapes Wales programme followed, chaired by Lord Dafydd Ellis-Thomas AM. In May 2017 *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales*, was published by Welsh Government as the next stage in the review. *Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government’s Priorities for AONBs & National Parks*, published in July 2018, is intended to bring the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales to a close.

## APPENDIX 1.

### Greater parity between the National Landscapes of Wales

#### Summary

This paper has been prepared in response to the letter, dated 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018, from Hannah Blythyn, Minister for Environment on the issues to be addressed to provide greater parity for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) with the National Parks in Wales, particularly in terms of status, profile and resourcing, and the delivery of rich ecosystems, vibrant and resilient communities and opportunities for outdoor recreation. It is also prepared in the context of the July 2018 statement 'Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for AONBs and National Parks'. It is a collective response prepared by the five AONB lead officers in Wales in collaboration with colleagues from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB). The twelve proposals below intend to build on the opportunities outlined in 'Valued and Resilient', be straightforward and robust and together address the inequality of status between AONBs and National Parks. They also recognise that there are inequalities between the AONBs in Wales.

'Valued and Resilient' identifies a number of key expectations of Designated Landscapes, including "the ability to function effectively at a national level to inform and influence strategic priorities and plans, whilst maintaining a credible mandate and the relationships necessary to deliver within a local area." Currently AONB teams across Wales, individually and collectively, do not have the capacity to meet all these expectations.

The network of Designated Landscapes in Wales is fundamental to creating the connectivity needed for truly resilient ecosystems. AONBs are a key delivery mechanism for the Well-Being of Future Generations Act, the Environment Act and NRW's statutory landscape remit, Area Statements and Natural Resources Planning. The opportunity and potential exists for AONBs to act as a focus and deliver place-based management of natural resources, if the capacity of AONB teams is enabled to do this.

**We believe the twelve proposals below will address the issues of status, profile and resourcing for AONBs in Wales. The rationale for the proposals is outlined in the subsequent sections.**

#### Status

- A. A second purpose on "Understanding and Enjoyment" be pursued for AONBs at the earliest opportunity in recognition that all AONB partnerships<sup>1</sup> play a major role in delivering opportunities for outdoor understanding, enjoyment and recreation in Wales. In the interim, Welsh Government provides policy confirmation of the 'supplementary purposes' for AONBs.
- B. Strengthen the CRoW Act Section 85 'Duty of Regard to the purpose of AONB designation' into a 'Duty of Regard to the purpose of AONB designation and implementation of the AONB Management Plan'.

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<sup>1</sup> AONB partnership(s) with a lower case p, is the generic term used to refer to an AONB Partnership, Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), Joint Committee (JC) or Conservation Board or any other organisation recognised as the lead governance body for an AONB.

- C. Explore the potential for AONB partnerships to become statutory consultees for planning applications.
- D. Welsh Government to make a 'national appointment' to each AONB partnership and these appointees to also sit on the new 'National Partnership for Designated Landscapes' alongside AONB partnership chairs and lead officers.

## Profile

- E. AONBs and National Parks to be referred to generally and collectively as the 'National Landscapes of Wales' rather than 'Designated Landscapes' or 'Protected Landscapes', hence the 'National Partnership for Designated Landscapes' would become the 'National Landscapes of Wales Partnership', etc.
- F. The post-Brexit agri-environment and LEADER replacement schemes to be targeted at delivering the AONB Management Plans and AONB partnerships to have a key role in providing advice and support.
- G. The Minister convenes an annual seminar for CRoW Section 85 public bodies to share good practice on how they are delivering their 'Duty of Regard to the purpose of AONB designation' and how the AONB Management Plan is being implemented.
- H. The Minister elevates the AONB Management Plans currently commencing their 5 year reviews by providing a Foreword, formal endorsement when adopted and ensuring supporting policy recognition in Planning Policy Wales (PPW).
- I. Welsh Government and NRW to produce data/statistics cut to each AONB as part of existing data and analysis activity, e.g. tourism, agriculture, population, state of environment, designated site condition etc., in order to inform the AONB Management Plans and support clearer understanding of the value, profile and significance of AONBs.

## Resourcing

- J. AONB partnerships commissioned and resourced on a long term basis to provide a core AONB staff team with the critical mass and capacity to deliver the AONB Management Plan and the functions outlined in Valued and Resilient.
- K. The National Association for AONBs is resourced to assist Welsh Government with the establishment and servicing of the new 'National Landscapes of Wales Partnership', co-ordinate AONB (& NLW) member training and AONB Performance Monitoring.
- L. Welsh Government, NRW, Local Authorities and NGO's to have the resilience and capacity to deliver Valued and Resilient and the statutory purpose(s) of the National Landscapes of Wales.

## APPENDIX 2.

### **Designated Landscapes Wales Seminar 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

**St Brides Spa Hotel, Saundersfoot**

**Theme – Valued and Resilient: Opportunities for Designated Landscapes**

#### **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November**

11.00 Welcome – **Mrs Gwyneth Hayward, Chair of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority**

11.10 Introduction – **Owain Wyn – Chair of National Parks Wales**

11.15 – **Hannah Blythyn, AM – Minister for Environment, Welsh Government**

12.00 – Lunch

13.00 – **Site Visits – Options to include:**

1. **Work of Saundersfoot Harbour Authority** - a guided tour of developments in Saundersfoot Harbour and other developments in Saundersfoot.
2. **Carew Castle and Tidal Mill** - a guided tour of Carew Castle and Tidal Mill

16.30 – Tea / Coffee

17.00 — Panel Discussion – Realising the economic potential of Wales' Designated Landscapes when faced with the challenge of Brexit

19.30 – Dinner – St Brides Hotel

#### **Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November**

9.00 - Introduction

9.15 A challenge for Designated Landscapes from Key Stakeholders on how to deliver **Valued and Resilient: Opportunities for Designated Landscapes**.

Speakers to include:

- Ros Jervis, Director of Public Health, Hywel Dda University Health Board
- Rachel Sharpe, Chief Executive, Wildlife Trust Wales
- Rusell De'Ath, Natural Resources Wales

11.45 – Group Discussion and feedback from discussion

13.00 End and Lunch