

REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN WALES

Purpose

To inform members of the situation with the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales and the Minister’s interest in greater parity between AONBs & National Parks.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- Officers from the Welsh AONBs, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) met with the Welsh Government Minister, Hannah Blythyn AM, to discuss how to provide greater parity for AONBs with National Parks in Wales.
- In December 2018 the Welsh AONB lead officers, NAAONB and NRW submitted detailed proposals to the Minister on the parity issue.
- Following a Welsh Government reshuffle, Hannah Blythyn retains the responsibility for AONBs with National Parks although she has moved from being the Minister for Environment to Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government.
- Welsh Government officers are currently considering the submitted proposals on how to provide greater parity for AONBs with National Parks in Wales. A subsequent meeting is expected shortly.

Reasons

Hannah Blythyn AM, as the then Welsh Government Minister for Environment, wrote in 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 and how together they address the delivery of rich ecosystems, vibrant and resilient communities and opportunities for outdoor recreation. The Minister was particularly interested in the issues of status, profile and resourcing for AONBs.

Lead officers from the Welsh AONBs, the NAAONB and NRW submitted a response in September and met the Minister in mid-November to further discuss the issues. At the meeting the Minister requested additional work on a timetable of actions and resource implications to help Welsh Government deliver on ‘Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government’s Priorities for AONBs & National Parks’ (published in July 2018).

Implications

In December 2018 the AONB led officers, NAAONB & NRW submitted proposals to the Minister addressing the issues of status, profile and resourcing for AONBs. This included a timetable and resource estimates, which aimed to achieve greater parity for AONBs with the National Parks in Wales. The total figure was broadly similar to the resourcing of a small National Park in Wales.

At the time of the submission there was a Welsh Government reshuffle but fortunately Hannah Blythyn retained the responsibility for AONBs with National Parks although she moved to be the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government. There was also a turnover of staff at Welsh Government so a new team are currently considering the submitted proposals.

It is anticipated that follow-up meeting with the Minister &/or her officers will be held in the Spring to address the proposals.

Background

The independent 'Marsden Review' *National Landscapes: Realising their Potential - The Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales* (published in October 2015) highlighted inequalities between AONBs and National Parks. The subsequent collaborative work through the Future Landscapes Wales programme, chaired by Lord Dafydd Ellis-Thomas AM, and the *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales*, (published in March 2017) further identified the disparities between AONBs and National Parks, particularly in terms of status, profile and resourcing. These disparities were reiterated in *Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government's Priorities for AONBs & National Parks* (published in July 2018).

APPENDIX 1.

Greater parity between the National Landscapes of Wales

Summary

This paper has been prepared in response to the letter, dated 14th 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 partnerships¹ 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'.

¹ 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 5th and 6th November 2018

St Brides Spa Hotel, Saundersfoot

Theme – Valued and Resilient: Opportunities for Designated Landscapes

Monday 5th 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 6th 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