

DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES REVIEW IN ENGLAND

Purpose

To update members on the Designated Landscapes Review in England.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in England was launched by Environment Secretary Michael Gove MP last year with a small advisory panel chaired by Julian Glover.
- The 'Landscapes Review call for evidence' closed in December 2018.
- A small JAC task group assisted the AONB Manager in preparing a response on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.
- Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, provided evidence to a meeting on Volunteering in AONBs and National Parks with Julian Glover.
- Sarah Mukherjee, one of the Review advisory panel members, recently visited the Wye Valley AONB.
- The AONB Manager has provided advice to DEFRA officials on the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales and will attend a meeting with Julian Glover and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) in April.
- The Review Panel is expected to present its report to the Minister in Autumn 2019.

Reasons

The Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in England was launched in May 2018 as part of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. The 'Landscapes Review' is led by the writer and journalist Julian Glover, supported by an expert panel of advisors consisting of Lord Cameron of Dillington, Jim Dixon, Jake Fiennes, Sarah Mukherjee and Dame Fiona Reynolds.

A 'call for evidence' was launched in late autumn and closed on 18th December. By Easter Panel members intend to have visited every National Parks and AONB in England to talk to people on the ground.

Implications

The JAC nominated a small Task Group to assist the AONB Manager in collating a response to the 'call for evidence'. The Task Group consisted of Cllr John Hardwick, Colin Evers and Ben Nash. On submission the response extended to over 20 pages. It is believed DEFRA received about 2000 responses.

The NAAONB has worked with AONB Lead Officers, staff, elected members, and key stakeholders to form a national response to the Glover Review. The response offers a good balance of recognition and challenge and will help the Review Panel better imagine the huge

potential of the AONB designation if its future is set within the right policy framework and support mechanisms.

The Panel have been continuing conversations with AONBs and interested parties. Andrew Blake, AONB Manager, attended the NAAONB Landscapes for Life Chairmen's Conference on 29th November at which Julian Glover was a keynote speaker. Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, attended a meeting with Julian Glover on Volunteering in AONBs and National Parks, at which she presented evidence on the AONB Volunteers, the Wye Valley River Festival and the Youth Rangers programme. Andrew Blake has met with, and provided information and advice to, DEFRA officials about the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales. He will also attend a small meeting of AONB lead officers with Julian Glover and the NAAONB in April.

Sarah Mukherjee, one of the Review advisory panel members, visited the Wye Valley AONB on 7th & 8th February. This was an opportunity for her to see the AONB first hand and to get a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the landscape. The itinerary included meeting with a wide range of people including the JAC Chairperson & AONB Staff, Cadw staff at Tintern Abbey, Helen Kenneally (Chepstow Walkers are Welcome), Dr Stephanie Tyler (Monmouthshire Meadows), Neville Hart (Gwent Wildlife Trust), Will Wilding (CreateROSS), Sue Holland (Herefordshire Meadows Group), Hannah Elton-Wall (ArtSpace Cinderford) and Paul Howells (Wydean Canoes).

Anecdotally the collective responses to the Review from various AONB Partnerships and the NAAONB have been well received by Julian Glover and his Panel members. They consider AONBs ambitious and enthusiastic. The various meetings with the Panel members to date have also been acknowledged as useful and informative and have helped support the general message around the mismatch between current resources and AONB ambitions. DEFRA civil servants are also mindful of the future role AONBs have to play in relation to agri-environment delivery, planning, nature recovery, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, all areas of work that are currently under resourced.

The Review Panel expect to present their report to the Minister in October 2019. It is anticipated that the Government will undertake a Comprehensive Spending Review in the Autumn also.

Background

The review of National Parks and AONBs in England was initially proposed in the DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan. The review's purpose is to ask what might be done better, what changes could assist these areas, and whether definitions and systems, which in many cases date back to their original creation 70 years ago, are still sufficient. Weakening or undermining existing protections or geographic scope is not considered.

The Review panel is to report in Autumn 2019, during the 70th anniversary year of the formative National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. For more information on the Review of Designated Landscapes in England visit

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>