

## NAAONB UPDATE

### *Purpose*

To advise members of activity through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

FOR INFORMATION

### *Key Issues*

- The AONB Manager attended the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Chairman’s Conference and AGM on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018 which focused on “The Designated Landscapes Review in England”.
- The AONB Development Officer and the AONB Community Links Officer are both participating in the professional training ‘Taking the Lead’ programme as part of the Future Landscapes Programme. The AONB Manager sits on the steering group for the Future Landscapes Programme, which is supported by Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
- The NAAONB has proposed an amendment to the Agriculture Bill and provided DEFRA with proposals for a post Brexit Environmental Land Management Scheme.
- The annual National AONB ‘Landscapes for Life’ Conference will take place in Colchester on 9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> July.

### **NAAONB Chairman’s Conference**

The Landscapes for Life Chairmen’s Conference took place on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018 in London. Andrew Blake, AONB Manager, attended on behalf of the JAC Chairman and the Wye Valley AONB Partnership. The focus was on “The Designated Landscapes Review in England” and Defra’s 25 Year Environment Plan. Lord Gardiner, Under Secretary of State for Environment, and Julian Glover, chair of the Landscapes Review panel, were keynote speakers. There was good attendance from both AONBs and National Parks and robust discussions about the future of Designated Landscapes in England and Wales.

### **Future Landscapes**

The NAAONB secured £165,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Resilient Heritage award towards a £200,000 project that will radically shape the NAAONB as a Charity and the way AONB staff work collaboratively in the future. The Future Landscapes programme started in October 2018 and will run until December 2019. There are two elements; Taking the Lead, a staff development programme, and a Review of the Governance and

Sustainability of the NAAONB. The AONB Manager sits on the steering group for the Future Landscapes programme.

- **Taking the Lead**

Forty staff from AONBs across the country, including the AONB Development Officer and the AONB Community Links Officer, are part of Taking the Lead. The intention of the programme is to strengthen the professional expertise within AONB teams and the AONB Family so that they are better placed to respond to the political, policy and fiscal challenges that will confront us.

Participants of the programme have all undertaken a self-assessment questionnaire to understand how they work most effectively. They then attended a series of regional workshops to ensure shared objectives can be reached and to identify, address and find solutions to complex problems and help realise opportunities, such as the Review of Designated Landscapes.

They will shortly start Topic Working Groups which will focus on issues and activities that will provide greater resilience to AONBs individually and collectively. Topic Working Groups will specifically be tasked with developing tools and finding solutions that will better position the AONB network to respond to the rapidly changing context.

Those participating in Taking the Lead will acquire skills and insights into problem solving and collaborative working, and are expected to cascade and share newly developed expertise within their own teams and on behalf of the AONB family. The programme will take place throughout 2019.

- **NAAONB Governance and Sustainability review**

The consultancy, Matthews Associates, have been commissioned to undertake a Review of the Governance and Sustainability of the NAAONB. They started their work in November and as one of their first activities they ran a workshop for NAAONB Trustees. In the coming months they will be making contact with members and partners as they formulate recommendations and actions for the NAAONB. The ultimate objective is to develop the NAAONB into a charity with the right purposes, the right governance and having the right people to oversee and deliver activity. This will be critical to securing the longer-term success for our Protected Landscapes. Matthews Associates are due to report in June 2019.

### **Farming for the Nation tests and trials**

The NAAONB submitted to DEFRA the AONB Family proposals for a post Brexit agri-environment scheme “Farming for the Nation: AONBs as test beds for a new Environmental Land Management Scheme”. This proposal included reference to nine tests and trials within AONBs. The crucial link between AONB Management Plans and future farming support was also emphasised. Defra has since indicated that they would like to take the proposal forward for further development, as it aligns with current ELM priorities and will support government policy development. This is a significant step towards a better post-CAP mechanism for supporting farmers and landowners.

## **The Agriculture Bill amendment**

The NAAONB has worked hard, with significant support from the AONB Family, to enable the tabling of what is considered to be a crucial amendment to the Agriculture Bill. This proposed amendment has been tabled by Neil Parish MP for Tiverton and Honiton and seeks to facilitate future farming support being directed towards activity that helps improve landscape quality. The amendment, if incorporated, would then ensure that the mechanics of the Bill are aligned with the delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan with regard to landscape enhancement. The AONB Manager has raised awareness of the importance of this proposed amendment with the local MPs.

## **Landscapes for Life Conference 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> July in Colchester, Essex**

The 2019 conference will be held over the 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> July in Colchester with the support of the Dedham Vale AONB and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. The Landscape for Life Conference 2019 will celebrate the 70 years of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, and provide ample opportunity to share knowledge, learn from each other, and inspire others over the contemporary value of the AONB designation and the wonderful landscapes they represent.

### ***Background***

The NAAONB is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK's AONBs. Its objectives are to promote the conservation and enhancement of AONBs, advance the education, understanding and appreciation by the public of AONBs, and promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those promoting or representing AONBs, other Protected Areas and those areas for which designation might be pursued. It takes a collaborative and partnership-based approach to working with its membership and other organisations at a national level to achieve shared goals. For more information see:

[www.landscapesforlife.org.uk](http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk)