

GLOVER 'LANDSCAPES REVIEW' IN ENGLAND

Purpose

To inform members of the publication of the Landscapes Review of AONBs & National Parks 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' final report was published on 21st September 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- The Review identifies that AONBs should be strengthened, with increased funding, governance reform, new shared purposes with National Parks, and a greater voice on development.
- The report references future designation of the Forest of Dean and also stakeholder proposals for the Herefordshire Marches.
- The publication coincided with the 'National moment' by AONBs, including the poem 'Fugitives' by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage (appended), as part of the 70th Anniversary celebrations of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- The Wye Valley River Festival is used as a case study in the Report.
- It is believed that the Review has been favourably received by DEFRA and a formal Government response will be provided in due course next year.
- The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has made an initial brief formal response (appended).

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' was 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 conducted in late 2018 and a small JAC Task Group assisted the AONB Manager in collating a response. In total DEFRA and the Review Panel received over 2,500 submissions. Panel members also visited every National Park and AONB in England, including the Wye Valley AONB, to talk to people on the ground.

The publication of the final report of the Landscapes Review was made to coincide with Landscapes for Life Week (formerly Outstanding Week) and the launch of a 'National moment' of hearts in the landscape by AONBs across the country. This included the poem 'Fugitives' by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage (appended below), as part of celebrating the

70th Anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 - founding legislation for AONBs and National Parks in England and Wales.

Implications

Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England is available here:

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

The Review has been generally well received, as being good for nature, good for people and good for our most precious landscapes. The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) have given an initial formal response which is appended below. It is understood DEFRA have staff dedicated to addressing implementation of the Review, with whom the NAAONB are liaising regularly with. Lord Gardiner, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DEFRA is giving a Government Update on the Designated Landscapes Review to the NAAONB Chairpersons' Conference on 28th November. However, it is not anticipated that there will be a formal response from Government until sometime next year.

Both the Forest of Dean and the Herefordshire Marches are mentioned in the Review with regards to possible future designation (Annex 4, page 153, of the report). There is positive support for the designation of the Forest of Dean (pages 121).

The report includes a variety of highlighted case studies, including in Chapter 2: Landscapes for Everyone, the Wye Valley River Festival (page 67) and reference on page 73 to "the fantastic Wye Valley festival."

The Review sets out its findings and recommendations (proposals) across five areas:

- Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty
- Landscapes for Everyone
- Living Landscapes
- More Special Places
- New Ways of Working.

"The Review makes the case for wanting our national landscapes to work together with big ambitions so they are happier, healthier, greener, more beautiful and open to everyone". It states that "our system of national landscapes (44 in total in England) should be a positive force for the nation's wellbeing and must find innovative ways to collaborate to become more than the sum of their parts" (page 9).

The Review highlights that our national landscapes are just that; "they are England's soul and we should care for them as such" (page 5).

The 27 Proposals are listed below, followed below by a 10 page summary of the 168 page Final Report:-

1. Landscapes alive for nature and beauty

"The [2010 Making Space for Nature review](#) and the most recent [2016 State of Nature report](#) are explicit about the crisis of nature and what needs to be done to bring about a recovery. There is no need, in this review, to restate the excellent and mostly chilling analysis they contain, except to say that we agree and we want to see national landscapes lead the response."

Proposal 1: National landscapes should have a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature, and be supported and held to account for delivery by a new National Landscapes Service

Proposal 2: The state of nature and natural capital in our national landscapes should be regularly and robustly assessed, informing the priorities for action

Proposal 3: Strengthened Management Plans should set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery including, but not limited to, wilder areas and the response to climate change (notably tree planting and peatland restoration). Their implementation must be backed up by stronger status in law

Proposal 4: National landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries

Proposal 5: A central place for national landscapes in new Environmental Land Management Schemes

Proposal 6: A strengthened place for national landscapes in the planning system with AONBs given statutory consultee status, encouragement to develop local plans and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework

2. Landscapes for everyone

“National Parks were created in part to provide a healing space, both mentally and physically, for the many who had given so much to protect our country during the Second World War. They were meant for everybody. Much has changed in the 70 years since. Modern Britain is a very different place socially and demographically. Today we recognise diversity as the mark of a healthy and resilient society. However, many landscape bodies have not moved smartly enough to reflect this changing society, and in some cases show little desire to do so. We want our nation’s most cherished landscapes to fulfil their original mission for people, providing unrivalled opportunities for enjoyment, spiritual refreshment and in turn supporting the nation’s health and wellbeing.”

Proposal 7: A stronger mission to connect all people with our national landscapes, supported and held to account by the new National Landscapes Service

Proposal 8: A night under the stars in a national landscape for every child

Proposal 9: New long term programmes to increase the ethnic diversity of visitors

Proposal 10: Landscapes that cater for and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing

Proposal 11: Expanding volunteering in our national landscapes

Proposal 12: Better information and signs to guide visitors

Proposal 13: A ranger service in all our national landscapes, part of a national family

Proposal 14: National landscapes supported to become leaders in sustainable tourism

Proposal 15: Joining up with others to make the most of what we have, and bringing National Trails into the national landscapes family

Proposal 16: Consider expanding open access rights in national landscapes

3. Living in landscapes

“Our system of national landscapes works best when it works with people on its side. We can all agree that a village that is lived in, with an active school, people who work, and who are part of a living tradition, is better than a sterile place that is full of shuttered homes, empty pubs and derelict shops. If we are serious about demonstrating the value

of ‘lived in’ landscapes to the global family of national landscapes, then we need to be serious about the people who live in them, and show how it’s possible to offer meaningful social and economic support for them.”

Proposal 17: National landscapes working for vibrant communities

Proposal 18: A new National Landscapes Housing Association to build affordable homes

Proposal 19: A new approach to coordinating public transport piloted in the Lake District, and new, more sustainable ways of accessing national landscapes

4. More special places

“Almost a quarter – 24.5% – of England is already covered by national landscapes. We think there is a case for several larger AONBs to take on National Park candidate status, as well as for a new AONB (or National Landscape as we propose they are called in future). The success of the National Forest is also a model which should be replicated. We also think that a changing nation needs new ways to come together to support natural beauty and access.”

Proposal 20: New designated landscapes and a new National Forest

Proposal 21: Welcoming new landscape approaches in cities and the coast, and a city park competition

Proposal 22: A better designations process

5. New ways of working

“We want our landscapes to focus on enhancing natural beauty, supporting communities and visitors. But to do it better, we think they need to change and work together more.”

Proposal 23: Stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes

Proposal 24: AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes

Proposal 25: A new National Landscapes Service bringing our 44 national landscapes together to achieve more than the sum of their parts

Proposal 26: Reformed governance to inspire and secure ambition in our national landscapes and better reflect society

Proposal 27: A new financial model – more money, more secure, more enterprising

Summary of Key Findings:

The Review recognises that there has been huge energy, enthusiasm and examples of success across our National Parks and AONBs in England. This has included farm cluster networks, school engagement, volunteer schemes and all sorts of joint working and dialogue on a diverse range of topics including wildlife conservation, tourism, planning and design, supporting local landowners and businesses, whilst also dealing with all of the complexities of local and central government. The Panel recognises that such activities like these happen every day, not much thanks is given for them and yet much of it is done well for relatively small sums of money (page 4). The Panel reports that "AONBs have become good at partnership working; lacking any resources of their own they have had to be" (page 13). Julian Glover expressed his personal gratitude that so much countryside, of so great a quality, is out there across our network of national landscapes, saved in part by the efforts of those who fought so hard to bring about the original concept and also those that work in them now. There is widespread recognition that all of England's most precious landscapes, be that

grassland, heath, farmland, river, moorland and coast, are living and working dynamic landscapes - sculpted and worked by the physical forces of nature and generations of farming and human activity.

The report demonstrates the many good examples of the way sympathetic farming practices can help support nature and well-managed farming systems should be viewed as good in itself (page 57).

What has not been working so well?

The Review has been hard-hitting in several areas stating for example that there is currently limited evidence of a wider common ambition; and that the national zeal of the founding mission for landscape protection has been eroded over time. The Panel believes that the national landscapes culture has not kept pace with the changes and demands in our society, nor responded with vigour to the decline in the diversity of the natural environment (page 7). The Review highlights an apparent disconnect with the wider public. Our National Parks and AONBs are national landscapes for the benefit of all, receiving tax payers' money, yet much of UK's society has little engagement, knowledge, or appreciation of these areas. The governance frameworks for National Parks especially, were found to be deeply unrepresentative of the country's diverse communities. The Review found that partnerships need to be strengthened and more representative of our diverse rural and urban communities (page 59)

The report stresses that what we currently have is not good enough and falls far short of what can be achieved and what the people of our country want. The current system of governance for both National Parks and AONBs requires substantial reform; the way that we protect and improve our landscapes need to change radically to take far greater account of modern pressures and the pace of change.

The report evidences a general lack of urgency in responding to the decline in the diversity of the natural environment and the climate crisis (page 7) citing critical commentary from organisations such as the RSPB, and the National Trust, and the continuing downward trajectory in the condition of what should be exemplar areas, including for example our Sites of Special Scientific Interest - SSSIs (figure 2, page 29). Often it has been shown that there has been a lack of sufficient data; "until we know what we have got, and what we have lost, efforts at landscape-scale work on nature will be incremental" (page 34).

Key Recommendations:

The Review sets out its findings and recommendations across five themes:

- Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty
- Landscapes for Everyone
- Living Landscapes
- More Special Places
- New Ways of Working.

Chapter 1: Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty

The report draws on the powerful and emotional connections between natural beauty and wildlife and argues that National Parks and AONBs should be leading the way in terms of the delivery of key government targets, as promoted through Professor Lawton's Review (page 28) and the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. The Panel highlights that from all of the responses received, more than any other thing, was the call for our national landscapes to do much more for nature. Despite some achievements (AONBs 70 @ 70 case studies, page 28) the negative trends affecting wildlife across the UK have not been reversed in our national landscapes, this must change. Nature recovery requires greater strategic leadership and

greater government commitment; the report recognises the challenges and the reality that a huge amount of what happens in our landscapes has been shaped by things over which our landscape bodies have had little control. The report repeatedly stresses the important and positive role farming can play in nature recovery, the enthusiasm for coming together with wider partners is growing and should be encouraged; this includes recognising and carefully balancing legitimate shooting interests (page 57, p58).

Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty - 6 proposals (Proposal 1- Proposal 6):

Proposal 1 is especially significant for AONBs, setting out the case for a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature, not simply relying on protecting and enhancing natural beauty. Performance should be assessed through a new, and independent, National Landscapes Service.

Proposals 2-5 cover the importance of nature, natural capital and climate change audits, strengthened Management Plans, and maximising the opportunities of Nature Recovery Networks and the (new) Environmental Land Management Schemes (NELMS). There is a recommendation that protected landscapes need to look beyond their boundaries to help ensure we have the most robust landscape and wildlife networks. Future Management Plans need to set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery and the response to climate change (notably tree planting and peatland restoration as and where this can be applied).

Proposal 6 makes the case for strengthening our national landscapes within the planning system, especially our AONBs, who should be given statutory consultee status and encouragement to develop local plans.

Chapter 2: Landscapes for Everyone

The report provides a powerful narrative on the value and importance of landscapes as described by the early Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth (page 25, p27) and passionate advocates for natural beauty including John Dower, John Muir (page 15) and landscape writers such as Robert Macfarlane (page 65). Glover recognises the widely understood belief, that is so hard to quantify, that our landscapes and their natural beauty matter in themselves and that our green and pleasant lands (so famously described by William Blake and immortalised in Sir Hubert Parry's Jerusalem) makes more people proud of their country than anything else, even above the NHS and the Royal Family (page 65).

Today our National Parks and AONBs provide a constant backdrop for a plethora of activity, not just walking, cycling and horse riding but fresh activities such as mass all-night walks for charities, volunteering, music festivals, scuba diving, glamping, arts trails, competitive triathlons etc. Perhaps, not surprisingly, the report found that significantly more people visit AONBs (estimated 170 million) than our English National Parks (estimated 100 million) - there are more AONBs and many are within 30 minutes' drive from sizeable conurbations. Relationships with leisure and recreation groups was found to be inconsistent and local, together with a perception that is a presumption against multi-user access (page 81).

Despite the wide recreational opportunities and the undoubted popularity for our national landscapes, this masks big differences in the types of people who typically enjoy them and a real concern from the Panel is that some groups remain excluded. The report powerfully argues that there are large parts of society that have no relationship with our National Parks and AONBs at all. Evidence from Natural England (2018) studies for example, serve to highlight that particular groups frequently disconnected from our natural landscapes are the older, the young – especially adolescents, those from lower socio-economic groups and weaker educational backgrounds, and black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. The Panel highlighted its engagement with the Policy Lab team in the Cabinet Office who undertook ethnographic interviews and vox pops on hard to reach and marginalised groups.

This resulted in 60+ hours of compelling evidence [https://youtube/FTKMY- TjHA](https://youtube/FTKMY-TjHA) (page 69).

Very tellingly the Review found that many communities in modern Britain feel that these landscapes hold no relevance for them (page 70). The Panel are firm in its belief and desire that our national landscapes should be open and accessible to all - regardless of age or background (page 65). Excellent engagement work was identified taking place across the National Parks and AONBs – including a case study on the Wye Valley River Festival (page 67). However the Panel found that this engagement was uneven nationally, some were doing good work with the young, others with health and volunteering but none seem to have the full complement.

Furthermore the Panel were highly critical of the lack of diversity within the governing bodies of National Parks and AONBs management/governance boards (page 73); for example highlighting the imbalance between male and female (68:32), the lack of youth with an average age of 64 in NPs and 54 in AONBs. Black, Asian and minority ethnic board members are extremely rare (<0.8%).

The Review recognises the strength and value of volunteering, but again found continual inconsistencies in the coverage and opportunities provided. At present each National Park and AONB runs its volunteering separately, duplicating efforts. AONBs were deemed to do their best, even though they are currently not charged with the 'people' purpose, nor funded to do it (page 75).

The Review recognises the mounting evidence for clear and powerful correlations between access to open space and enhanced quality of life, including the benefits to our physical and mental wellbeing (page 77) - these include lowering blood pressure, increasing cardiovascular health and improving mood. There is a huge opportunity to utilise our natural landscapes more fully, through for example growing 'social prescribing' programmes to help aid the wider public purse e.g. data from North York Moors National Park suggests that every £1 invested would provide some £7 of equivalent health and wellbeing benefits.

The Review is critical of the general support for visitors provided by our national landscapes with a need to improve on the basics, such as information and signage and on-the-ground help. This extends to websites, with some surprise that there is no single website for all of our national landscapes – with people expected to navigate through 40+ individual websites. The Review acknowledges that they have heard from many of the friction that can be caused by some visitor activity, and there is a need for better education and information provision to help rectify this, including effective dispersal from "honeypot" sites (page 93).

The Review makes a strong case for the future development and expansion of ranger services, for National Parks (currently with 177 rangers) and AONBs (currently with 24) which the Panel has identified as invaluable for providing links between visitors, land managers, local people and place (page 80). The Review is critical of the lack of training opportunities for ranger services (note: the report does not mention however that central training provision has been cut over the years, especially through removal of subsidies once provided via the previous governmental bodies such as the Countryside Agency (Countryside Commission) and closure of specialist rural training providers such as Losehill Hall in the Peak District).

Landscapes for Everyone - 10 proposals (Proposal 7 – Proposal 16):

Proposal 7 calls for a stronger mission to connect all people with our national landscapes, supported and held to account by the new National Landscape Services. The Review calls for a clear second legal purpose applied to all of our national landscapes to:

- "actively connect all parts of society with these special places to support understanding, enjoyment and the nation's health and wellbeing".

The Sandford Principle (page 136) should remain in place, and be extended to AONBs, to ensure the primacy of the first purpose (page 84).

Proposals 8-13 are aspirational in reaching out to new visitors and audiences through ambitious activity programmes focusing on children (a night under the stars for every child), ethnic diversity (new long-term engagement plans) and other marginalised groups (Reviewing and revitalising a new version of the National Parks MOSAIC programmes (page 87)). There is a call for the expansion and enhancement of ranger services and volunteering opportunities across all of our national landscapes (both with clearer national consistencies and a more structured approach). There should be a greater 'enabling' role to foster a very wide and inclusive volunteer base, especially focusing on under-represented groups (page 90). The Review would like to see 1,000 Rangers in place across our national landscapes, acting as ambassadors and the friendly and welcoming face of our national landscapes to visitors, school groups, land managers and residents (page 93).

There should be enhanced information and signs to guide visitors, and landscapes that truly cater for and improve the nation's health and wellbeing. The latter includes both national conversations with key health bodies (Dept for Health and Social Care, Public Health England and NHS England) and development of local partnerships with local public health teams, clinical commission groups and social prescribing link workers. Rights of way should be enhanced to include a network of accessible, hard surface, stile-free paths that are disabled and wheelchair-friendly, with RADAR key gates and provision of all-terrain mobility scooters and routes (page 88). National Parks should take on legal responsibility to maintain the rights of way in their areas, AONBs should embrace close working with local highway authorities to ensure they receive the priority they need in our protected landscapes (page 92).

Proposals 14-16 focus on further access and visitor provision recommending that national landscapes should be supported to become leaders in sustainable tourism (including possible 'tourism zones' under the new Tourism Sector Deal), link better with our family of National Trails and consider further expansion of open access rights. The Review is not supportive of charging mechanisms to help control visitor numbers or raise funds – "our national landscapes do not have entry fees and nor should they" (page 94), but rather they should rely on leadership, education and good destination management to help shape who comes, what they do and how they benefit from their experience. Partnership sustainable tourism development plans should be encouraged to help reduce environmental impacts and help counter claims that certain places were being overwhelmed - "their popularity heralds their demise" (page 94).

Chapter 3: Living in Landscapes

The Review highlights the importance of the IUCN Category V classification for the UK's national landscapes (page 101), recognising the very special relationship and the challenge of combining people and nature. This chapter draws on the history and changes to the countryside which have been well documented by a number of writers and academics, including famously WG Hoskins (*The Making of the English Landscape*, 1955) and more recently commentators such as Simon Jenkins (*England's 100 Best Views*, 2013). These document the tensions from our ever evolving landscapes - with the pace of change a concern to many.

The Review found that many of our longstanding communities within our protected landscapes are feeling under great pressure, stressing particular anxieties in respect of local house prices and employment, the increasingly limited opportunities for the younger generation, and concerns with limited public transport and the issues of second-home ownership. Many of the community problems described could be applied in equal measure to our wider countryside, although the problems can often be exacerbated in our national

landscapes. The Review poses critical questions for those who love and shape our landscapes – not 'how do we conserve them?' but 'how do we make sure both natural beauty and society benefit from change rather than suffer? The Panel are optimistic - they believe that the future story of the link between people and our most beautiful places can be a positive one, just as it has often been in the past (page 102).

Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty - 3 proposals (Proposal 17 - Proposal 20):

The Review finds the current duty in relation to local communities to be vague so

Proposal 17 calls for a revised statutory purpose to be applied equally to both National Parks and AONBs to:

- Foster the economic and community vitality of their area in support of the first two purposes.

The Review calls for positive action, "our landscapes should be encouraging the kinds of economic and social activity that promotes renewed purposes of national landscapes. There's a real future in good jobs in our rural areas including growing and processing local food, sustainable tourism, nature recovery and land management, and many more sympathetic enterprises connected with their purposes" (page 109).

Proposal 18 seeks a new National Landscape Housing Association to focus on building affordable homes. This recognises the need to further the often good work undertaken by rural housing associations and local authorities (page 110). The Review highlights strongly the need for greater clarity in the application of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in particular in terms of the 'exceptional circumstances' for major development, which clearly should not be contravened for large housing schemes under the argument that there are no other available sites outside the protected landscapes (page 107). The Review recommends that the NPPF is amended to allow greater flexibility to deliver affordable homes in national landscapes generally (page 110).

As in the wider countryside, car use is the dominant mode of transport in journeying to and from our national landscapes, however **Proposal 19** advocates a new approach to coordinating public transport piloted in the Lake District, and new, more sustainable ways of accessing national landscapes. Whilst unrealistic to reverse car use, there should be more encouragement for joint-funded initiatives to help secure more sustainable transport, with improved integrated non-car services to help reduce the carbon impact of the visitor economy (page 113). In terms of carbon reduction, there should be a much greater push for suitable e-charging points, national landscapes need to collaborate and push for this – urban areas (*and motorway service stations*) are leading the way (page 115).

Chapter 4: More Special Places

The Review firmly states that it does not want to see protection removed from any landscape which is currently protected, however the terms of reference requested an assessment of new designations.

It is widely acknowledged that many of our protected landscapes are deeply rural and distant from our largest areas of population, often located to the west rather than the east, in our uplands not lowlands, and invariably inland. The system of designations has evidently been remarkably static, not responsive (page 117, p119) - this has enabled some national landscapes, especially National Parks (e.g the Peak District and Lake District) to become very much rooted to the places that they serve, and respected as a result.

The Panel agree that the division of landscapes into two distinct families, namely National Parks and AONBs is however unhelpful, both should be part of one greater whole, albeit with varied powers and sources of funding. The Review acknowledges that some AONBs – such as the Cotswolds - have been requesting designation as National Parks (page 117). The Panel

also found the current process for boundary changes to national landscapes, and new designations and new types of designations requires fresh impetus (page 117).

The Review felt that there was need for greater imagination to help link landscape to people in those areas close to our urban centres and that in some cases this may not necessitate the need for formal designation.

More Special Places - 3 proposals (Proposal 20 - Proposal 22):

Proposals 20-22 call for new designated landscapes and a new National Forest, new landscape approaches in our cities and coast with a city park competition, and a much improved designation process. The Review recommends that additional funding be provided to create three new National Parks from some of the larger AONBs, based upon proposals from The Chilterns, The Cotswolds and Dorset (combining both Dorset and East Devon AONBs). The Review recognises that there are opponents as well as supporters of a new status for these areas and suggests that Natural England and ministers consider the case for each (page 121).

The Review endorses the growing support for a new landscape designation for the Forest of Dean - an area on the original 1947 Hobhouse report (page 121). The Panel acknowledges other persuasive cases in need of further consideration including the Herefordshire Marches. The Review highlights the strengths of the National Forest programme and makes the case for one in the north midlands, taking in Sherwood Forest (page 122).

The Review again makes the case for a more joined up approach with new and enhanced connections between neighbouring protected landscapes – helping to shape wider management decisions, including for example emerging Environmental Land Management Schemes (page 123). The Review highlights the value and importance of our maritime areas, off shore and onshore (page 124); furthermore the need for connecting with important city initiatives (London – now a declared National Park City, and the West Midlands). The Panel specifically highlight green belt planning and the need for more ambitious socially and ecologically beneficial land in the future to benefit wildlife, landscape beauty and access provision, alongside well-designed new city development (page 124).

Page 126 summarises some of the findings in respect of the complexity and length of the designations process, but few responses set out how to make it better. Natural England (NE) is currently responsible for both designating new landscapes and taking forward any boundary Reviews for existing AONBs and National Parks, which is then sent to the Defra Secretary of State to 'confirm'. New designations have been slow to materialise; in the last 20 years there have just been two new National Parks created in England and the further extension of two NPs. The Review believes that the process is not itself flawed, but the main reason for the delays has been a lack of national resourcing and prioritisation. The Review proposes that the new National Landscapes Service should drive this activity in the future.

Chapter 5: New Ways of Working

The Review Panel set out not to get heavily caught up in the mire of structures and processes but look strategically outwards at the bigger picture; however there has been a realisation that very often the excellent work accomplished in our protected landscapes has often been in spite of the laws, policies and systems, not because of them (page 127).

The Panel have found that the two-tier system of protection for National Parks and AONBs has not been helpful, reinforcing differences in governance, finance and administration. This has resulted in a misplaced perception that AONBs are somehow second grade – yet they are often indistinguishable on the ground from National Parks. The 34 AONBs cover some 60%

of England's designated landscape, contain just as much important nature and attract more visitors than the 8 National Parks. The Review highlights the vital contribution of AONBs in promoting the understanding and enjoyment of their places, achieved without the recognition in law or equivalent support in resources (page 129).

The Review is critical of the general lack of collaboration between the National Park and AONBs, although there are some notable exceptions. The governance arrangements for both are seen as overly bureaucratic, with governance boards often unrepresentative of wider society and with far too much time often taken up in the minutia of day to day business, rather than outward looking to strategic matters in respect of landscape, biodiversity, access and recreation.

The Review argues that national landscapes have not always had the support within Whitehall that they should, with a view that National Parks and AONBs have been failing to punch at or above their collective weight. This has not been helped by changes in central government agencies over the years and associated reductions in support from the centre. Consequently our protected landscapes have collectively often been on the periphery of DEFRA business, and not at the vanguard of officials' thoughts in achieving the government priorities of the day (page 132).

National landscapes will receive a total of £55.4 m from Defra for 2019-20. Not a big sum in government terms, with the Panel recognising the ongoing significant disparity of funding between National Parks (£48.7m) and AONBs (£6.7m). The original funding agreements are, in the words of the Review, "fossilised and complex" (page 132) with Annex 3 providing a summary of the different formulas applied (page 152). The now dated AONB formula is: total core AONB grant = (AONB area in km² x £60 per km²) + (number of local authorities x £6,000 per local authority). The Review is critical in stating that there is no clear and concise explanation for the funding formula, with the grant income not clearly set according to priorities. The Panel are praiseworthy of the work accomplished by AONBs and their ability to be enterprising in delivering with and through others. The National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) and the Rural Development Programme's LEADER programme have been particularly important sources of additional funding to National Parks and AONBs. As a whole however the Review concludes that the funding for our national landscapes is not as well-diversified as it could or should be (page 133).

New Ways of Working - 5 proposals (Proposal 23 - Proposal 27):

Proposal 23 calls for a stronger purpose in law for our national landscapes. As set out in earlier chapters, the Review makes a compelling case for the purposes for National Parks and AONBs to be updated and to apply equally to both types of designation.

Subject to further debate and legal discussion the Review recommends the following three purposes:

1. Recover, conserve and enhance natural beauty, biodiversity and natural capital, and cultural heritage.
2. Actively connect all parts of society with these special places to support understanding, enjoyment and the nation's health and wellbeing.
3. Foster the economic vitality of their area in support of the first two purposes.

The Review make it clear that where there is conflict between any of the three purposes, then as applied through an updated 'Sandford Principle' (page 136) greater weight must be given to the first purpose (page 135).

Proposal 24 is particularly relevant to the AONB family, recommending that AONBs should be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources and renamed as National Landscapes. This reflects desires expressed back in 2001 in the Landscapes at Risk? The Future for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (E. Holdaway and Professor G. Smart)

publication, that at that time called for a much higher standing for AONBs, "placing them at the top of the conservation tree, alongside National Parks, as a key part of our national heritage". The Panel feel that nearly 20 years on this is even more pressing (page 137).

Proposals 6, 23 and 27 are all specific to strengthening the position of AONBs, renamed as 'National Landscapes' to help raise their status to that alongside National Parks and remove the shackles of its rambling title, and its acronym that few know and many get wrong (page 129).

Proposals 25-27 make the case for a new National Landscapes Service, further reformed governance to inspire ambition across our national landscapes and to better reflect wider society, and a new financial model with crucially more money, greater security and increased focus on entrepreneurial approaches.

Pages 138-139 sets out the Panel's thinking and recommendations on how a new National Landscapes Service could work in practice. They envisage a small, expert board, appointed by Defra and working to bring our National Parks and AONBs (National Landscapes) together: inspiring collaborative and outward looking approaches, sharing and supporting peer Review, and stimulating joint action and initiatives across our 44 most beautiful landscapes to help the nation. The Review lays out in more detail ten aims of how such a body should work; helping ultimately to drive the new purposes of national landscapes – focusing on nature, culture, visitor experience, economic vitality and a drive for inclusiveness to both local communities and wider society.

Pages 140-141 details a recommended overhaul of governance arrangements, especially National Parks, which should have a much reduced main board (between 9 and 12 members), working alongside a wider partnership advisory group representative of the various interest and specialist groups. There should be a much greater effort to secure diversity - of social background, gender, age, ethnicity, (dis)ability. AONBs should consider adopting similar structures where possible, although in some cases, for smaller AONBs for example, simpler governance models may be more applicable. There should be scope to encourage wider citizenship opportunities and engagement within the main NP and AONB boards. There is a reaffirmation that the primary task of each board would be to prepare and drive ambitious delivery of Management Plans, delivering for nature, people and communities.

The Review covers the important issue of funding and resources in pages 142-144 (**Proposal 27**). A compelling argument is made in respect of the continuation of central government funding, and that this should be both extended further and secured across a five-year period. However the Panel are clear in their recommendations that there should not be an over-reliance upon core funding, but rather an ongoing drive to a new funding model – one that can secure diverse, larger and sustainable income. Building on earlier findings (page 133) the Review highlights the need for a simpler, fairer and dynamic system of funding, and that in future this should be overseen directly by the National Landscapes Service.

The Review proposes that the original funding formulas are revisited for all of our protected landscapes and carefully re-calibrated across a range of criteria (page 143) and phased in over time. In the more immediate period, it is proposed that AONBs need an uplift in their funding and that the current £6.7m (several million less than the South Downs N. Park receives - page 132) is raised to £13.4m. The Review clarifies that the local authority funding element for AONBs should continue.

The Review reported considerable tensions over various proposals to support our National Parks in developing charitable status, furthering commercial links etc. This the Panel found very surprising - with evidently a collective failure of coordination, ambition and expertise (page 143). Looking ahead the Review makes the case for a far more ambitious entrepreneurial and philanthropic programme of fundraising across the entire protected landscapes family.

Conclusions:

The Review argues that looking ahead there is a need for big ambitions - much more must be done for nature and natural beauty. Much more must be done for people who live in and visit our nationally protected landscapes. National landscape bodies themselves should do much more to reach out and invite people in (page 16, page 66). The Panel stress that our national landscapes should be alive for people, and places where everyone is actively welcomed and where there are unrivalled opportunities to enjoy their natural beauty - in essence landscapes for all (page 82). There is recognition that conservation and farming are partners, and that there should be farming for nature as well as food (page 145).

The Review Panel were appreciative of all involved and recognised the excitement and optimism of what can be achieved in the future. "This moment matters – aspiring to protect and enhance what we have will make England's special places even better" (page 145).

Background

The review of National Parks and AONBs in England was initially proposed in the DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan. The Review's purpose was 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 was not a consideration.