

FUTURE LANDSCAPES WALES AND AONB GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Purpose

To inform members of the opportunity to peer review the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Welcomes the opportunity to peer review with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes', as outlined in the *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* report.
- B. Investigates with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership the establishment of a Task & Finish Group to undertake the 'Good Governance Review'.

Key Issues

- The JAC agreed at the last meeting to adopt the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' as outlined in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales*.
- Swansea City Council, the lead authority for Gower AONB Partnership, are also interested in adopting the 'Principles of Good Governance'.
- A joint initiative between the Wye Valley and Gower AONB Partnerships over the adoption of the 'Principles of Good Governance' would demonstrate good collaboration in line with Future Landscapes Wales (FLW) programme and introduce some peer-review scrutiny to the process.
- The Review of Designated Landscapes (AONBs & National Parks) in Wales has continued with the Welsh Government consultation *Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*, which closed on 30th September.
- Lesley Griffiths, Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, stated that "The recent review has provided an opportunity to reaffirm the importance to Wales of our designated landscapes."
- The AONB Manager continues to contribute to The Future Landscapes Wales (FLW) Working Group, chaired by Lord Elis-Thomas, which is taking forward the priorities identified in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales*.

Reasons

At the last meeting the JAC agreed to adopt the ‘Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes’ as outlined in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* and report back to the JAC with any further actions. This fulfils the Future Landscapes Wales (FLW) Action

Fit for Purpose - Refreshing Governance: Improving Performance and Accountability
 Adopt the Governance Principles as a model for any future designation. Undertake a more detailed review of current governance against the Principles and make recommendations for change.

In discussing this with colleagues at Gower AONB the proposal was made that the two AONBs could share and peer review the process. This helps fulfil the FLW Action

Delivering for Wales - Collaboration and Partnership

All participants in the FLW Programme to adopt the way of working developed, which emphasises building relationships for effective collaboration.

Implications

The ‘Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes’ as outlined in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* report (page 11. Table 1.) are:

Legitimacy, participation and voice	• Acceptance in society
	• Representation and participation
	• Active dialogue and consensus
	• Subsidiarity
Developing and implementing a strategic vision for the area	• Inspiring and consistent vision
	• Consistent with national outcomes
	• Reflect obligations
	• Adaptive management and innovation
Effective performance management	• Management effectiveness
	• Learning culture, skills and knowledge
	• Advocacy and outreach
	• Acknowledging and addressing weakness or poor performance
	• Efficient use of financial resources
Accountability and transparency	• Integrity and commitment
	• Decision making and reporting
	• Allocation of resources
	• Communication
Fairness and rights	• Ethical and fair decision making
	• Impartial and without discrimination
	• Respectful of language and culture
	• Respect rights
	• Active engagement

Consequently the intention is to “undertake a more detailed review of current governance against the Principles and make recommendations for change”. Current governance of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership is through the four constituent local authorities and the Joint

Advisory Committee with the AONB Unit acting as the primary delivery agent, guided by the statutory Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.

A governance review based on the ‘Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes’ could be conducted either ‘in-house’ or facilitated by an external consultant. However, the opportunity to collaborate with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership has several benefits. These include:

- a) closer collaboration with our neighbouring AONB in south Wales
- b) peer review and objective scrutiny by another local authority and AONB Partnership.

The details of the review and the nature of the collaboration will need to be determined. The most likely scenario is that a small Task and Finish group is established with 2 - 3 members from each AONB Partnership, supported by both AONB lead officers. This group may need to meet 2 or 3 times over the coming months. The findings and any recommendations of the review will then be reported back to the JAC, as with the original decision.

Background

The previous Minister for Natural Resources, Carl Sargeant, established the Future Landscapes Wales (FLW) programme after commissioning the independent Review of Designated Landscapes (AONBs & National Parks) in Wales which published the ‘Marsden Report’ in October 2015. The FLW Working Group, chaired by Lord Dafydd Ellis-Thomas AM, was established to monitor implementation of the review programme.

In May 2017 Lesley Griffiths, Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs published *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales*, as the next stage in the review of AONBs & National Parks in Wales. The FLW Working Group continues to be tasked with monitoring the *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* report.

There was a chapter on Designated Landscapes included in the Welsh Government consultation *Taking Forward Wales’ Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*, which closed on 30th September. The responses and conclusions of that consultation are expected sometime in the new year. Lesley Griffiths recently stated during a National Assembly for Wales plenary debate that “The recent review has provided an opportunity to reaffirm the importance to Wales of our designated landscapes... I will make a statement on the way forward when I have considered the wide range of comments in response to the recent consultation on ‘*Taking Forward Wales’ Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*’... I will not bring forward any proposals for reform that would put the natural beauty and special qualities of areas of outstanding natural beauty and national parks at risk.”