

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'  
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB  
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
5<sup>th</sup> March 2018

## **NAAONB UPDATE**

### ***Purpose***

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

FOR INFORMATION

### ***Key Issues***

- The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Chairman's Conference and AGM was attended by the AONB Manager.
- The 2017 Annual Report for the NAAONB is published and the Latest News bulletin.
- The NAAONB have welcomed the UK Government's 'A Green Future - 25 Year Environment Plan' and are working with DEFRA on implementation.
- The NAAONB has been in discussion with DEFRA around how AONB partnerships and Management Plans can support agri-environmental delivery post Brexit. This was also the focus of the AONB Lead officers' meeting in Birmingham in February.
- The Landscape for Life 2018 National Conference is likely to be in Kent in late July.

### **NAAONB Chairman's Conference**

The Landscapes for Life Chairmen's Conference took place on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017 in London. The Chairmen's Conference built on the work from the previous year, focusing on 'Brexit and Landscape'. In the morning, attendees heard from

- The Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Under Secretary of State, DEFRA
- Howard Davies, NAAONB Chief Executive – the work being done by the NAAONB and the AONB Family offer
- Jim Bailey, Chair, North York Moors National Park Authority – farming in the English National Parks post-Brexit
- Sally Marsh, Director, High Weald AONB Partnership – linking Natural Beauty with farming and agriculture
- John Davies, Vice President, NFU Cymru – the changes required to make a success of post Brexit agriculture
- Graeme Willis, Senior Rural Policy Campaigner, CPRE – the challenges of marginal farming and what Protected Landscapes can do to support farmers
- Teresa Dent, Chief Executive, GWCT – the hub approach as a solution to Brexit, citing the work of the Marlborough Downs NIA

In the afternoon, there were presentations on work already progressing from Cranborne Chase AONB, Dorset AONB and Kent Downs AONB. Attendees subsequently broke into

small groups to consider the challenges raised in the morning, some of the solutions already being offered by the Protected Landscapes and what can be achieved by working collaboratively as a Protected Landscapes Family.

## **Landscapes for Life 2017 Annual Report**

The 2017 Annual Report for the NAAONB is published here <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Annual-Report-2017.pdf>. The Report provides examples of work under four themes: Landscapes for Nature, Landscapes for People, Landscapes for Business and Landscapes for Culture. The Wye Valley AONB Youth Rangers programme is included as a case study under Landscapes for People.

## **Latest News**

The NAAONB 'Latest News' bulletin, for December 2017, is available to download here <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Latest-news-from-the-NAAONB-December2017.pdf>.

## **A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment**

The NAAONB welcomed the UK Government's long-awaited 25-year Environment Plan, launched in January. It sets out the Government's goals for improving the environment, within a generation, and leaving it in a better state than we found it. The Plan forms the culmination of over 2 years of close work and consultation with environmental bodies, including the NAAONB.

Chapter 2 of the Plan 'Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes' states: "...the creation of designated landscapes – which also include Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty AONBs) – has been among the outstanding environmental achievements of the past 100 years. They provide a patchwork of stunning, and protected, landscapes. In England, a quarter of our landscape is designated in this way, around 10% as National Parks and 15% as AONBs. We will make sure they continue to be conserved and enhanced, while recognising that they are living landscapes that support rural communities."

Under Section 2 'Conserving and enhancing natural beauty' the Plan goes on to say: "Over the next 25 years we want to make sure they [*National Parks & AONBs*] are not only conserved but enhanced. Many of the policies set out in the rest of the Plan will contribute to making all areas more beautiful...."

Reviewing National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty:

The UK's first National Parks were created by an Act of Parliament in 1949 following the government's 1947 Hobhouse Report, which remains the basis for most protected landscape designation in England today. Now, 70 years on, the Government will commission a review for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This will consider coverage of designations, how designated areas deliver their responsibilities, how designated areas are financed, and whether there is scope for expansion. It will also consider opportunities to enhance the environment in existing designations, and expand on the

existing eight-point plan for National Parks to connect more people with the natural environment.

Actions we will take include:

- Commissioning a 21st Century ‘Hobhouse’ Review of National Parks and AONBs.
- Working with National Park Authorities and AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards to deliver environmental enhancement, including through demonstrator projects, and engaging with communities through their statutory management plans.

NAAONB Chairman, Philip Hygate, said

“The National Association for AONBs welcomes the 25 -year plan and sees it as an opportunity for AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards to work even more collaboratively with Government to provide rich and diverse landscapes that conserve and enhance the UK’s wildlife. Using our powers to convene, AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards have long engaged with and supported anyone who cares about our landscapes. We recognise that maintaining vibrant, healthy and diverse local communities is essential to the future of AONBs and we will continue to work to improve the connection between people and nature. Part of this work is recognising that, as dynamic, living landscapes, AONBs are important for the UK’s economy, so we will strengthen our relationships with landowners, farmers and other businesses to ensure a robust and sustainable local economy after Brexit. We are confident that Management Plans, consulted on locally, and produced by the AONB Partnerships/Conservation Boards, provide the tools and opportunities to deliver the Government’s plans.”

### **AONB Lead officers’ meeting**

The AONB Manager joined 25 other AONB lead officers in Birmingham to debate how AONB Management Plans might relate to the development of a post Brexit agri-environmental support scheme. AONB Management Plans are statutory documents with a democratic basis rooted in evidence that provide a locally led, strategic articulation of the character and qualities of these places recognised as outstanding national assets. The Plans articulate what constitutes valued landscape, endorsed by expert input and public opinion. Where high quality landscape is coincidental with sustainable land management the Plans provides an ideal framework within which to drive agri-environment and rural development funding. This would ensure that agricultural policy cross references with wider environmental, social, and economic outcomes, resulting in more productive and prosperous rural areas that conserve and enhance these locally and nationally valued landscapes. The NAAONB will be feeding the results of the discussions back to DEFRA.