

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2nd July 2018

REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES

Purpose

To advise members of the on-going Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales and the forthcoming Review of Designated Landscapes in England.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcomes the continued positive attention on AONBs and contributes as appropriate to the on-going Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales and the forthcoming Review of Designated Landscapes in England.

Key Issues

- The Welsh Government Minister, Hannah Blythyn AM, wrote to the AONB lead officers in Wales (see attached letter) seeking further input into the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales.
- The Welsh AONB lead officers are meeting together over the Summer and with Natural Resources Wales, the National Association for AONBs and the Welsh National Parks to collate a response to the Minister's request.
- In January 2018 the Westminster government published their '25 Year Plan for the Environment', setting out an approach to protect habitats and landscapes in England including undertaking a review National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).
- Environment Secretary Michael Gove MP launched the Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in late May to be led by writer and journalist Julian Glover (see attached letter)
- The Terms of Reference are published (see Appendix 3) and the Review panel, listed below, who are due to report back to Government during 2019.

Reasons

The Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales has identified that although parity broadly exists between National Parks and AONBs in terms of planning policy, there is an inequality of status, profile and resourcing. Welsh Government Minister, Hannah Blythyn has requested the AONB lead officers and others involved in the Future Landscapes Wales programme to report in September on how this should be addressed, while being realistic about the levels of current and future resourcing.

A review of National Parks and AONBs in England was announced in the DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan in March, and in late May the Terms of Reference were published (see below and Appendix 3). The Review is to be led by the writer and journalist Julian Glover, supported by an expert panel of advisors consisting of Nicola Blackwood, Lord Cameron of Dillington, Jim Dixon, Sarah Mukherjee and Dame Fiona Reynolds. The Review panel is to report during 2019, the 70th anniversary year of the formative National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Implications

The Terms of Reference for the ‘Glover Review’ (see Appendix 3) are to examine and make recommendations on:

- the existing statutory purposes for National Parks and AONBs and how effectively they are being met
- the alignment of these purposes with the goals set out in the 25-Year Plan for the Environment
- how to improve individual and collective governance of National Parks and AONBs, and how that governance interacts with other national assets
- the financing of National Parks and AONBs
- how to enhance the environment and biodiversity in existing designations
- how to build on the existing eight-point plan for National Parks and to connect more people with the natural environment from all sections of society and improve health and wellbeing
- how well National Parks and AONBs support communities
- the case for extension or creation of new designated areas
- the review will also take advice from Natural England on the process of designating National Parks and AONBs and extending boundary areas, with a view to improving and expediting the process.

This is a cross-government review, with implementation led by the Defra Secretary of State.

The tone and framework for the Review is very positive, focusing on helping Designated Landscapes to deliver more, and potentially having more of them. It represents the biggest opportunity for positive change for AONBs since the work leading up to changes in the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, and potentially since the original 1949 Act.

Julian Glover has hosted an initial meeting with The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) and a select few AONB lead officers. The forthcoming NAAONB ‘Landscapes for Life’ Conference will also hold several briefings focused on the Review. The AONB Manager intends to be fully involved in the Review and share the experience and lessons learned from the on-going Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales and the Future Landscapes Wales programme. He will present a paper on this at the NAAONB conference.

It is likely that in due course the ‘Glover Review’ will make a call for written evidence, as well as offering some invitations to discussions with the review panel. The Terms of Reference also mention visits by the panel. These are unlikely to involve all AONBs, but it is possible that the Wye Valley’s cross-border context and involvement in the Future Landscapes Wales programme will be of interest. It is anticipated that the JAC will have the opportunity to make a collective view on issues. In addition individuals and constituent organisations may choose to make their own input.

Meanwhile the Welsh AONB lead officers will be meeting together over the Summer and with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the NAAONB and the Welsh National Parks to collate a response to the Welsh Government Minister’s request.

Background

For more information on the Review of Designated Landscapes in England visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-parks-review-launched>