

GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTATION ON THE RESPONSE TO THE GLOVER REVIEW

Purpose

To seek members' views on the Government Response to the Landscapes Review and delegate the submission of comments to the AONB Manager and a small task group to meet the consultation deadline of 9th April 2022.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Welcomes the Government Response to the Landscapes Review.
- B. Establish a small task group to assist the AONB Manager in compiling a formal response to the Government's consultation, aided by commentary from the National Association for AONBs.
- C. Delegate the AONB Manager to submit comments on behalf of the AONB Partnership by the consultation deadline of 9th April 2022.
- D. Encourage individuals and partner organisation to make their own comments and submissions to the Government's consultation on the Landscapes Review.

Key Issues

- The Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England, led by Julian Glover, was published in 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- A Written Ministerial Statement published on 24th June 2021 provided the Government's initial response to the Landscapes Review.
- In January 2022 the Government released the formal response to the Landscapes Review, indicating the Government's preferred direction for England's AONBs of, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response>
- A 12 week public consultation period on the Government's response is open until 9th April 2022 with 25 questions, listed in Appendix 1 below.
- The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has been co-ordinating discussion and debate and collaborating with key stakeholders in preparation of a considered response to the consultation.
- The NAAONB and other environmental Non-governmental organisations (eNGOs) have noted that the Government's Response fall short of the ambitious, transformational

change that Glover envisaged, which AONB teams are keen to see implemented, and which the pressures on these nationally designated landscapes demand.

- There are potential knock-on implications for AONBs in Wales and consequently the Welsh part of the AONB and the integrity of the Wye Valley AONB.
- The AONB Manager will prepare a response drawing on NAAONB commentary and other sources as directed by members.

Reasons

Julian Glover's Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England was broadly welcomed when published in September 2019 (see link below). The Glover Review established a conversation about what the nationally designated landscapes in England should deliver for a 21st century society and the environmental challenges they face. Central to the changes Glover recommended was a clear recognition of the enormous potential and frustrated ambition of the 34 AONBs, and their partnerships. Glover recognised that AONBs, covering 15% of England's land area, could deliver so much more for nature, climate and people at this critical time, if they were properly resourced.

The Government has now published its response, including a 12 week consultation until 9th April (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response>). There are 25 questions in the consultation which variously address most, but not all, of the 27 proposals in the Glover's Landscapes Review. The proposed changes tackle a number of important issues highlighted within the Glover Review, but DEFRA has recognised the need for further clarity in some areas and more detailed development of ideas through a consultative approach which is to be welcomed.

The Government's response indicates that they wish to reinvigorate the status of AONBs in line with Glover's Proposal 24: "AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, and renamed as National Landscapes". There is a focus around the challenges of strengthening purposes through legal changes, increasing resources, to help drive nature recovery and access/inclusivity, and enhancing local and national networks to help secure transformational and positive change for all the nationally important landscapes. They also emphasise that the designated landscapes "should contribute to our target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030 and our 30 by 30 commitment" and "drive forward nature recovery, and build our resilience to climate change".

There are also some new and additional aspects raised on managing visitor pressures and enforcement issues and uses of green lanes. A summary of relevant extracts of the response is in Appendix 1, along with the 25 consultation questions. These appear quite selective relative to the Glover's proposals, but are sequential following the order of the Government response.

Implications

The Landscapes Review was recognised as a once in a generation opportunity for AONBs. The Government's response is broadly welcomed by the NAAONB and many in the eNGO sector. However, the NAAONB believes that the Government's proposals, as currently

presented, fall short of the ambitious, transformational change that Glover and his team envisaged. The NAAONB note the chronic underfunding cited in the Landscapes Review, with Government funding for all 34 AONBs in England totalling around £6M per year, roughly the same as a single medium sized secondary school. Glover advocated an immediate doubling in core funding for England's AONBs as essential to secure the future for AONBs, with adequate teams to address the pressures on these nationally designated landscapes.

The headline position of the NAAONB and the AONB family is the full implementation of Proposal 24 of the Glover Review that: 'AONBs be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes'. The crux to this is that 'form follows function' and evidence is used to back up the following:

Purposes:

- Extension and revision of AONB purposes to reflect contemporary priorities for AONBs and natural beauty, with a strengthened link to nature recovery on a landscape scale and the importance of cultural heritage.
- A second purpose to promote understanding and enjoyment of the area (equal to National Parks and with a corresponding Sanford Principle - of primacy of the first purpose).

Powers:

- Strengthening the 'duty of regard' and linked to enhanced status of AONB Management Plans
- A formal role in planning and development management.

Resources:

- A doubling of core funding over this parliament (three years), leading to
- A dynamic and progressive formula which reflects ambition and future needs.

Governance:

- Robust minimum governance standards which provide sufficient independence to guarantee the integrity of the designation,
- More representative of the wider dynamic UK population.

National Landscapes:

- A colloquial name change where this reflects the step change above.

Appendix 1 outlines and summarises the key points raised in the Government's response. The NAAONB is working with AONB Partnership chairs and lead officers, environmental Non-governmental organisations (eNGOs) and other key stakeholders on preparing a co-ordinated, collaborative and comprehensive response. The AONB Manager, in liaison with the NAAONB, and potentially supported with a small JAC task group if appropriate, will prepare and submit comments on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

If the statutory purposes for AONBs in England change, along with the colloquial name of the designation, then there will be implications for the integrity of the cross-border Wye Valley AONB and potential knock-on effects for AONBs in Wales. The AONB Manager is working with the NAAONB Wales Officer, NRW & Welsh Government to assess those implications. This will form part of the response to the consultation.

Members of the public and partner organisations to the JAC are encouraged to submit views on the Government's response. This is a one in a generation opportunity for people to shape how nationally designated and protected landscapes will deliver benefits for people and nature for years to come.

Background

Government Response to the Landscapes Review document, published 15th January 2022:

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/future-landscapes-strategy/government-response-to-the-landscapes-review/supporting_documents/Consultation%20on%20the%20Government%20response%20to%20the%20Landscapes%20Review.pdf

The Written Ministerial Statement, published on 24th June 2021 on the Government's initial response to the Landscapes Review: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-06-24/hcws119>)

Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England:

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