

REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Purpose

To advise members of the on-going progress following the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes in Wales and England.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The Welsh AONB lead officers continue to meet with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, the National Association for AONBs and the Welsh National Parks working together as Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales.
- Welsh Government and DEFRA have committed to 3 year core funding agreements for AONBs with additional or proposed capital funding programmes.
- DEFRA are assimilating the results of the public consultation on the Government Response to the Landscapes Review, with further announcements and outcomes anticipated.
- Natural England are progressing work on the All England Strategic Landscape Mapping Assessment Tool and evaluating the Yorkshire Wolds for potential AONB designation.
- Welsh Government are undertaking a deep dive focussing on how Wales can implement the target to restore 30% of land and sea by 2030 (known as '30 by 30') including convening a Designated Landscapes Expert Subgroup.
- The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) continues to liaise and co-ordinate collaboration with both governments and key stakeholders over progressing the agenda for AONBs.

Reasons

Both Reviews of Designated Landscapes in Wales and England are recognised as once in a generation opportunities for AONBs.

Implications

Both governments are broadly supportive of enhancing the purposes, powers and resources for AONBs. However, any changes to legislation take time to secure the necessary legislative platform, which can take 12 months or longer. Meanwhile public resources remain

significantly constrained, despite the Glover Review advocating an immediate doubling in core funding for England's AONBs (2½ years ago), from £6million to £12million per annum.

Further announcements from DEFRA are expected in the coming months on the conclusions of their consultation and pathway to implementing the desired outcomes.

DEFRA provision of the Farming in Protected Landscape programme is a major enhancement for land management funding in AONBs & National Parks in England. It helps farmers & landowners, working with their local Protected Landscape team, to deliver bigger and better outcomes for the climate, nature, people and place. See the AONB Update agenda item for an outline of projects supported to date.

As reported at the previous JAC meeting, Land Use Consultants (LUC) and Gillespies have been commissioned by Natural England to develop an 'All England Strategic Landscape Mapping Assessment Tool'. This has been reviewing and processing a wide range of datasets to create a series of indicator maps to highlight areas of search for existing national landscape designations and alternative landscape approaches. Information on the early stages of this commission are available here: <https://all-england-strategic-landscapes-mapping-hub-luc.hub.arcgis.com/>.

Meanwhile Natural England have commenced investigations into the proposal to designate the Yorkshire Wolds as a new AONB, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-yorkshire-wolds-need-you-have-your-say-on-potential-area-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-designation>. A new website gives further information on this process, which is likely to form the template for any subsequent areas identified as suitable to potential designation, see: <https://www.yorkshire-wolds-designation-project.org/>.

The Welsh Government Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, has launched a deep dive focussing on how Wales can effectively implement the Convention on Biological Diversity target to restore 30% of land and sea by 2030 (known as '30 by 30'). The aim is to develop a set of collective actions that will support meaningful delivery of the '30 by 30' target, recognising the capabilities under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Environment (Wales) Act. A Designated Landscapes Expert Subgroup has been convened to determine how National Parks and AONBs can most effectively deliver landscape scale biodiversity and ecosystem enhancement to support the 30x30 target. Andrew Blake, AONB Manager and Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer have both contributed to the subgroup.

Over recent years Welsh Government have provided a considerable increase in both capital and revenue funding for AONBs, including through the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme. This focuses on key Welsh Government objectives around nature recovery, decarbonisation, more resilient rural economies and more sustainable tourism.

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales is the National Designated Landscapes Partnership in Wales which brings together the National Park and AONB lead officers with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB). It aims to champion collaborative approaches to maximise benefits and tackle challenges. Current priorities include feeding into Welsh Government on the design of the proposed Sustainable Farm Scheme (SFS). This also feeds into the Biodiversity Deep Dive.

Background

The Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales, the ‘Marsden Review’ *National Landscapes: Realising their Potential* was published in October 2015. It highlighted among other things the inequalities between AONBs and National Parks. These disparities were reiterated in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* (published in March 2017) and the subsequent *Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government’s Priorities for AONBs & National Parks* (published in July 2018). This 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 continue to work towards addressing the levels of resourcing for AONBs.

The Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in England was launched in May 2018 by the then Environment Secretary Michael Gove MP. The ‘Landscapes Review’ was led by the writer and journalist Julian Glover and the final report was published in September 2019 with 27 Proposals for Government. For more information on the Glover Review visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>. A Written Ministerial Statement in June 2021 provided the Government’s initial response to the Landscapes Review. In January 2022 the Government released its formal response to the Landscapes Review, indicating the Government’s preferred direction for England’s AONBs & National Parks with 25 questions, 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 on the Government’s response closed in April 2022.