

## REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

### ***Purpose***

To advise members of progress with the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes England and Wales.

### **FOR INFORMATION**

### ***Key Issues***

- The DEFRA announcement following the public consultation on the Government Response to the Landscapes Review has been delayed due to the recent turmoil in Westminster.
- Dr Thérèse Coffey MP has now been appointed as the new DEFRA Secretary of State Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Meanwhile Natural England, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB), National Parks England and AONB lead officers are collaborating with DEFRA on various aspects of the anticipated proposals, including the potential rebranding of AONBs to 'National Landscapes'.
- Natural England have published the All England Strategic Landscape Mapping Assessment Tool and are continuing the evaluation of the Yorkshire Wolds for potential AONB designation.
- Welsh Government have published the recommendations from the Biodiversity Deep Dive which includes unlocking the potential of the Designated Landscapes.
- Responsibility for AONBs in Welsh Government has moved back to the Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd.
- 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***

The Glover 'Landscapes Review' in England was broadly welcomed when published three years ago. It included Proposal 24 which stated that "AONBs should be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, and renamed as National Landscapes." In January 2022 the Government consulted on proposals in response to the Landscapes Review. DEFRA received over 15,000 responses. Since then the Government has been distracted with other priorities, but it is believed a formal response is still forthcoming.

Welsh Government have been working with AONB and National Park lead officers, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the NAAONB through Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales and the Biodiversity Deep Dive Designated Landscapes Expert Subgroup, which the AONB Manager contributed to.

### ***Implications***

The NAAONB and AONB lead officers have been responding to a range of requests from DEFRA officials in support of implementing the response to the Glover Review and the collation of information following DEFRA's consultation. DEFRA have indicated that a significant opportunity arising from the Landscapes Review is the renewal of AONBs as a landscape designation fit for the 21st century. DEFRA have initiated funding for a rebrand to of AONBs to National Landscapes, as recommended in the Review, to drive change and increase awareness. In response the NAAONB has published a Prospectus on AONBs (see <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/designation/> ) and information and statistics about AONB resourcing and achievements. A formal announcement on the Review is awaited from DEFRA, now a new Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has been appointed: Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP.

Meanwhile Natural England has published the 'All England Strategic Landscape Mapping Assessment Tool', produced with Land Use Consultants (LUC) and Gillespies. The review and process is available here <https://all-england-strategic-landscapes-mapping-hub-luc.hub.arcgis.com/> and the Mapping tool is available here <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/58d17072b1454b73b94db50ea53d8f1a/page/Home/>. Initial viewing suggests the results appear to correspond quite closely to the original Dower & Hobhouse maps of the 1940s.

Natural England are continuing with investigations to designate the Yorkshire Wolds as a new AONB, see: <https://www.yorkshire-wolds-designation-project.org/home>. A recommended Candidate Area and supporting justification is being produced, followed by an 'Assessment of desirability to designate' in Autumn 2022 and an 'Assessment to define a proposed boundary' due during the Winter. The designation process could take a further 2 or more years before the area might formally become a new AONB.

In October Welsh Government published the Recommendations of the Biodiversity Deep Dive, conducted over the summer. Julie James, Welsh Government Minister for Climate Change announced the recommendations designed to develop a set of collective actions to support nature's recovery, see <https://gov.wales/written-statement-biodiversity-deep-dive>. Recommendation 3 is "Unlock the potential of designated landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) to deliver more for nature and 30 by 30" (see <https://gov.wales/biodiversity-deep-dive-recommendations-html#section-105982>) stating:

*"Our Designated Landscapes, both National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have a vital role to play in supporting nature's recovery. In the immediate term we will:*

- *Support the National Parks and AONBS to develop a prioritised action plans for nature restoration embedding these in strategic planning.*

*In the longer term we will:*

- *Realign Designated Landscapes priorities to enhance and accelerate nature recovery delivery, supported by updated policy, resources and guidance to build capacity and expertise and to target activity.*
- *Develop the evidence and mapping tools to enable designated landscapes to baseline, target and monitor areas of high nature value that could be secured as their contribution to 30 by 30*
- *Ensure Designated Landscapes bodies are funded adequately, sustainably and flexibly to deliver nature recovery at a transformational landscape scale.*
- *Ensure that the potential designation of a new National Park in northeast Wales affords opportunities for climate change mitigation and nature recovery as key delivery priorities for the new Park.*
- *Consider the need for legislation in the next Senedd to reform the statutory purposes, duties and governance arrangements for designated landscape bodies to equip them better to drive nature's recovery."*

## **Background**

The Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales commenced in 2014 with the publication of the 'Marsden Review' *National Landscapes: Realising their Potential* in October 2015. Welsh Government subsequently published *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* (March 2017) and *Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government's Priorities for AONBs & National Parks* (July 2018).

The 'Glover' Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England was published in September 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government. A Written Ministerial Statement in June 2021 provided the Government's initial response followed by a 12 week public consultation which closed in April 2022. For more information, see:

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