

## 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***

- DEFRA have published Government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 as the first revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan (2018).
- Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 focuses on 10 goals including "Thriving plants and wildlife", "Clean and plentiful water", "Mitigating and adapting to climate change" and "Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment".
- Under the 'enhanced beauty' goal the Government will "invest in a new national landscapes partnership for National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and National Trails" and "extend the delivery of our Farming in Protected Landscapes programme".
- The Welsh National Designated Landscapes Partnership, Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW), is hosting a seminar on the role of Designated Landscapes in the nature emergency, on 9th-10th March 2023 on Gower, Swansea.
- Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) has three new seconded staff taking strategic leads for the AONBs and National Parks, meanwhile Andrew Blake, Wye Valley AONB Manager, has been appointed vice-chair of TCLW for 2023-25.
- 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 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) was published in 2018. One of the outcomes was the 'Glover' Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England, produced in 2019 with 27 Proposals for Government. Proposal 24 stated that "AONBs should be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, and renamed as National Landscapes." Proposal 25 suggested "A new National Landscapes Service bringing our 44 national landscapes together to achieve more than the sum of their parts".

In January Environment Secretary Dr Therese Coffey unveiled the [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#) which sets out how the government plans to restore nature, improve environmental quality and increase the prosperity of the country. The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 represents the first review of the 25YEP. It builds on the 25YEP vision and 10 goals setting out how government will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver each of the environmental goals, with interim targets to measure progress. The apex goal is “improving nature”.

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 Subgroup to advance a range of collaborative initiatives.

### ***Implications***

DEFRA are continuing to develop proposals for the new National Landscapes, Parks and Trails Partnership. Investment will enable National Parks, AONBs and National Trails to Collaborate more closely on three national priorities; improving nature; access for all parts of society; and building capacity for the National Parks Partnerships and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) to generate more private finance to deliver more for nature, climate, people and place.

Support is also forthcoming for the NAAONB to rebrand AONBs as ‘National Landscapes’. This is intended to reflect renewed values and boost understanding of the national significance of AONBs with more diverse communities, including residents, partners and visitors. However, there are currently no proposals to strengthen AONBs with new purposes and powers.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme will be extended by one year to March 2025, in recognition of the positive feedback and outcomes delivered by FiPL. This will continue to support the important role that Protected Landscapes play in delivering for nature, climate, people and place. It is anticipated that the best aspects of FiPL will be integrated within future environmental land management schemes within Protected Landscapes.

Natural England will be updating their guidance to strengthen Protected Landscapes’ management plans, promoting the importance of supporting thriving local communities and access for all, alongside climate change mitigation and adaptation and nature recovery.

Most of these initiatives were signalled in the Government’s response to the Landscapes Review last year. The NAAONB is working closely with DEFRA, the National Parks and Natural England to enable them. But without a strengthening of the duties on other public bodies to ‘have regard’ to AONB purposes, it is difficult to see how these commitments make a sufficient difference at the scale and the pace that is needed. The lack of movement by the Government to strengthen the duty of regard through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is a major concern. Similarly, all of the numerous initiatives, targets and commitments require funding. With the exception of private green finance and using the levers of farm policy, it is not clear where the balance of investment will come from for many of these commitments in the nationally Protected Landscapes.

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) is the partnership of the Designated Landscapes in Wales: three National Parks and five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), who are working together to address key shared challenges, including action on the climate change and nature emergencies. TCLW combines the strengths of its partners, working together for the benefit of Wales and its people, securing the long-term resilience of the landscapes and their communities. TCLW includes the lead officers from AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities (NPAs), Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB). The recently appointed new chair of TCLW is Emyr Williams, Chief Executive Eryri NPA, and Andrew Blake has been appointed vice-chair for a two year term.

Three new staff are seconded to TCLW from the National Parks to take a strategic lead across all 8 Designated Landscapes in Wales on: Nature Recovery and Carbon Sequestration; Nature Recovery and Nutrient Management; and Inclusion, Diversity and Governance Excellence. There is also a TCLW working group on the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS).

The TCLW seminar will take place on 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> March, with a closer look into the Welsh Government's Biodiversity Deep Dive and will ask some critical questions about the role of Designated Landscapes and how they can contribute to the 30 by 30 target. Key note speakers are Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change; Abi Reader, Deputy President NFU Cymru and Anita Kerwin-Nye, Executive Director of Strategy, Commercial and Engagement YHA.

### ***Background***

In 2018 the [25 Year Environment Plan \(25YEP\)](#) set out the Government's vision for a quarter-of-a-century of action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. Various progress reports have been published since: [reports on our progress since 25YEP](#).

In October 2022 Welsh Government published the Recommendations of the Biodiversity Deep Dive. 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>).

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales was established following the commitment to create a National Designated Landscape Partnership in 'Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks' (July 2018).