

NAAONB UPDATE

Purpose

To advise members of activity through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB), including the re-branding of AONBs to National Landscapes and the National AONB Conference in Bath on 5th-7th September.

Recommendation

That the JAC

- A. Endorses the proposal to rebrand Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to be known as National Landscapes.
- B. encourages AONB partners to attend the National AONB Conference at Bath University on 5th-7th September 2023

Key Issues

- The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) is leading on the rebranding of AONBs to National Landscapes, to be implemented later this year.
- The title National Landscape does not remove or replace the legal definition of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in law, but is a simpler common name without a complicated acronym.
- The NAAONB will rename as the National Landscapes Association.
- A suite of complementary logos for all AONBs/National Landscapes are being designed and will be presented to the next JAC, in November, for adoption.
- The National AONB Conference will be on 5th - 7th September 2023, with the focus on 'Invested and Investing in Landscape – who, why, how'
- The Conference is at Bath University with field trips to the co-hosting AONBs of Cotswolds, Cranborne Chase, Mendip Hills, North Wessex Downs, Quantock Hills and Wye Valley on 6th September.

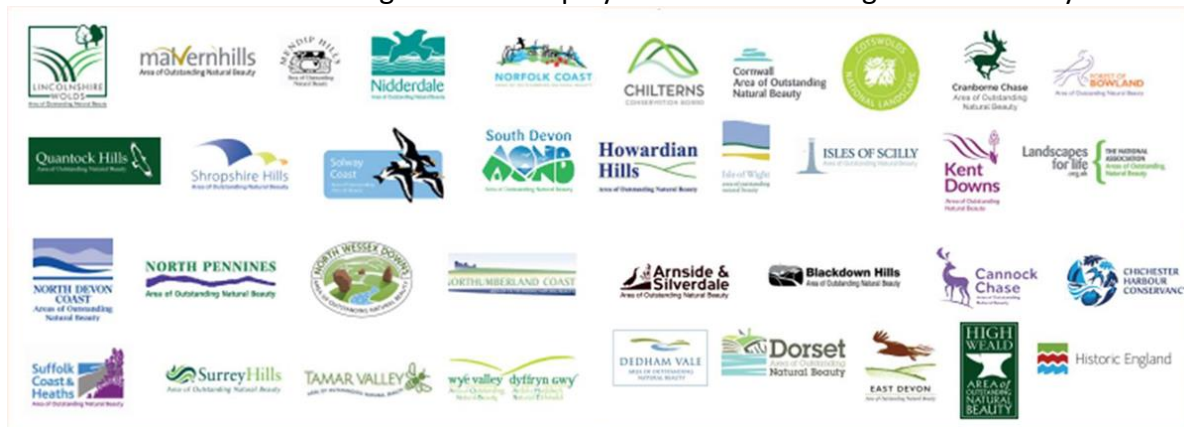
National Landscape rebrand

After nearly two years of steady work behind the scenes, the NAAONB are almost ready to launch the rebrand of AONBs to National Landscapes, with the support of DEFRA. A group of

AONB and NAAONB staff have been steering the creative agency Nice & Serious on designing and implementing the new branding. The work developing this new, united personality for the AONB network has been conducted with the input and insight of AONB teams along with representatives from groups not traditionally engaged with, members of the general public and existing stakeholders from partner organisations, landowners, local businesses and Welsh and English government.

The vision is for a national landscape designation for the 21st Century that is recognisable across the country and that contain naturally beautiful, thriving landscapes which everyone feels part of. By creating a more unified identity across the AONB family, the aspiration is to better show the collective size, ambition and the potential impact of the AONB/National Landscapes network. Clearly changing a brand name cannot do this by itself. However, it can signal a step-change, a threshold in how we do things as a family to ensure that individually and collectively more is done to ensure that everyone feels welcome and that all voices are heard in how the landscapes continue to evolve, particularly in the context of the climate and ecological emergencies.

The current suite of AONB logos do not display a coherent or recognisable identity



The suite of new National Landscape logos have yet to be finalised and will be presented to the JAC at the next meeting in November. Meanwhile some AONBs, such as the Cotswolds, are already self-identifying as National Landscapes, with their teams and partnerships recognising the power of this change to enhance the status of the designation in their area. However, the adoption of the new branding does not negate the existing designation, which can be retained as a descriptor or strapline: “Wye Valley National Landscape – an area of outstanding natural beauty”. The strength of the national AONB designation is that it is managed locally. The rebrand is the opportunity to assert a collective national identity as part of a family of locally managed and celebrated landscapes.

Creating a more unified identity across the AONB family will better show the collective size, ambition and impact of the National Landscapes, and generate greater recognition, both on the ground for residents and visitors, and more widely in the national consciousness. The more people build a connection with the landscape, the more invested they become in shaping its future.

The NAAONB is in discussions with DEFRA about funding for the implementation phase. The main focus of this work will be on a PR campaign designed to 'reach people where they are' which will be developed with the input of the working group and two way communication with the rest of the AONB network.

Welsh Government have yet to form a view on the rebranding, although the National Landscapes name was first proposed in the 2015 Marsden Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales. The Welsh AONB Lead Officers are meeting shortly with Welsh Government officials to discuss the options, opportunities and challenges to rebranding as National Landscapes, Tirwedd Cenedlaethol.

Depending on the differences between England and Wales, for the Wye Valley AONB, it would not seem to make practical sense to retain both AONB branding alongside the use of the National Landscape name, apart from as the descriptor/strapline. However, there may have to be a managed compromise or graduated process, as befits such frontier territory.

The National Association will trademark each of the new brand identities ensuring that each marque is protected in an appropriate way and giving each National Landscape Partnership free use of the brand. DEFRA funding will be available to assist each National Landscape in England to begin the process of changing their brand identity.

The NAAONB anticipate formally announcing the rebrand of the National Association at the national conference in September, with AONBs following in waves according to their readiness.

National AONB Conference 2023

The annual AONB Conference this year will be held 5th - 7th September at Bath University. The theme of the conference is 'Invested and Investing in Landscape – who, why, how'. Speaker, workshops and field visits will look at what goes into conserving and enhancing the nation's finest landscapes, in terms of investment of time, energy, and funding. The conference will explore what it takes to secure these investments, through volunteering, campaigning, and navigating the complexities of the new world of green finance. Keynote speakers include: Andy Middleton, North Star Transition; Guy Singh-Watson, Riverford Organic Farmers; Tony Juniper, Natural England; Polly Martin, National Trails UK; plus speakers from the Heritage Lottery Fund and WWF-UK

The 6 co-hosting AONBs are the Cotswolds, Cranborne Chase, Mendip Hills, North Wessex Downs, Quantock Hills and Wye Valley. The programme is available through the NAAONB website here: <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/events/landscapes-life-conference/landscapes-life-conference2023>

The AONB Unit is hosting a fieldtrip to the lower Wye Valley for 6th September, which will explore the investment in the outstanding landscape of the lower Wye Valley, around Chepstow and Tintern, from both a contemporary and historic perspective.

It is hope that there will be good representation from AONB partners at the conference in Bath.

Background

The NAAONB is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK's AONBs. It works on behalf of its membership, fostering collaboration and collective action between the 300 staff of the AONB Family, the 700 elected members that support the AONB partnerships and the many partners with whom the NAAONB does business at the local and national levels. For more information see: www.landscapesforlife.org.uk

The rebranding to National Landscapes will be implementing many of the recommendations made in the Glover Landscapes Review (2019) in England, building on the work of the Marsden Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales (2015). The Glover Review concluded too that AONBs & their partnerships are undervalued. Covering 15% of the land area of England, AONBs are twice the size of the National Parks, yet receive one tenth of the funding. The Review recommended amongst other things that a simpler name, less likely to be shortened to an acronym (often mispronounced) should be introduced to help drive up recognition.