

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY (TOWP) REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
7th March 2016

**FUTURE LANDSCAPES WALES PROGRAMME - REVIEW OF DESIGNATED
LANDSCAPES IN WALES**

Purpose

To inform members of the progress of the Future Landscapes Wales programme addressing the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the involvement of lead officers in the Future Landscapes Wales programme and the opportunities to shape the future of Designated Landscapes in Wales.

Key Issues

- The Marsden Report 'National Landscapes: Realising their Potential - The Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales' Final Report was published in October 2015 and outlined at the previous JAC meeting.
- The Minister for Natural Resources subsequently established the Future Landscapes Wales programme to take forward the Recommendations in the Marsden Report.
- The programme entails four Project Groups that are preparing evidence for a Working Group chaired by Lord Dafydd Ellis-Thomas AM that will initially report back to the Minister in April (see attached Terms of Reference below).
- Andrew Blake (AONB Officer) and Matthew Lewis (chair of TOWP and Monmouthshire's Green Infrastructure and Countryside Manager) are both involved in the Project Groups, alongside other officers and members from across the Welsh AONBs, National Parks and other relevant organisations.
- There is wide political interest in the outcome of the Future Landscapes Wales programme but it is not known how the next government will want to take forward the programme following the Welsh Assembly elections in May.
- The process raises the expectations of what AONBs could and should deliver and whatever occurs post-election it is hoped that this raised profile will be maintained.

Reasons

In October 2015 the Minister for Natural Resources, Carl Sargeant AM, set out his commitment to the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty stressing that these areas are highly valued and form an integral part of Wales' national identity.

Future Landscapes Wales was commissioned by the Minister in response to the publication of the independent Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales (the Marsden Report) on 30th October 2015. The Review's purpose was to consider how the devolved area of designated landscapes fit with and deliver emerging Welsh priorities including green growth and natural resource management within the context of the Well Being and Future Generations Act. Important in this is aligning any reform of the approach to landscape in Wales with that of reform of devolved public services.

The Future Landscapes Wales programme is based on the AONB Future Landscapes collaboration programme run in 2013 by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) that achieved much closer and more effective working between the AONBs nationally. Future Landscapes Wales involves the Welsh AONBs, National Parks and other relevant organisations, with the aims;

- to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for the Designated Landscapes in Wales through shared mind-sets, values and behaviours.
- to support and stimulate the transition of key aspects of the Marsden Report into working reality.

Implications

In November the JAC Chairman and AONB Officer attended a Stakeholders Workshop with Lord Dafydd Ellis-Thomas AM where the Future Landscapes Wales programme was outlined.

Lord Ellis-Thomas chairs the Future Landscapes Wales Working Group of 18 people including academics, entrepreneurs, health and well-being specialists, senior figures in non-governmental organisations and senior representatives from designated landscapes (see attached Terms of Reference below). The Working Group aims to explore the Marsden Report recommendations and the case for reform, and report back to the Minister on initial findings before the election. It will provide support and challenge to four Project Groups that are made up of twenty four representatives of the National Parks, AONBs, interest groups and government in joint endeavour.

The Project Groups are focusing on the following four topics:-

- **Vision & aspiration:** The Well-being Goals and what they mean for refreshing the vision and ambition for designated landscapes.
- **Catalysts of rural development:** The true potential for designated landscapes to be catalysts for economic development, and what this looks like.
- **Governance:** Modernising governance and a blueprint for the future that reconciles national and local accountability.
- **Innovation in resourcing:** Looking for innovation in resourcing of activities.

Matthew Lewis (chair of TOWP and Monmouthshire's Green Infrastructure and Countryside Manager) is in the 'Catalysts of rural development' Project Group and Andrew Blake (AONB Officer) is in the 'Innovation in resourcing' Project Group. They are both actively involved in

the tight schedule of meetings and development workshops to progress the Project Group areas and the collaborative working across and between the Designated Landscapes.

The time commitment is considerable but this is potentially a generational opportunity to shape the future of designated landscapes in Wales. The timetabling of the work and the support and challenge role of the Working Group helps ensure that connections across the thinking of each part of the development programme are maintained. Some Working Group members act as a Mentors/Link Person for respective Project Groups, depending in professional interest/expertise, which helps deepen associations between the Groups.

The Working Group and Project Groups have a full day's meeting on 23rd March. Lord Ellis-Thomas intends to subsequently prepare an initial response to the Minister on the direction of travel and progress of the Future Landscapes Wales programme.

These are many variables and interdependencies including the up and coming National Assembly elections; local government re-organisation and the implementation of recent legislative changes. The Future Landscapes Wales programme is likely to address and repackaging the Marsden recommendations in light of considerations of the further information and practicalities raised by the Project Groups, suggesting longer-term ambitious / aspirational recommendations, medium term practical ones for delivery within the next administration and any 'quick-wins' deliverable on a far shorter timescale.

Background

The Minister for Natural Resources, Carl Sargeant, wants to “ensure that our designated landscapes are best equipped to meet current and future challenges while building upon their internationally recognised status”.

The Marsden Report was prepared by an independent panel of three, chaired by Professor Terry Marsden, Director of Cardiff University's Sustainable Places Research Institute, with John Lloyd Jones, former chairman of the Countryside Council for Wales and Dr Ruth Williams, Wye Valley AONB Officer from 1992-1998. The panel were commissioned by Carl Sargeant, Minister for Natural Resources, in September 2014, to conduct a review of designated landscapes in Wales.

The final Report on the Review was published on Friday 30th October and includes 69 recommendations covering a raft of proposals and observations on purposes, principles, vision, governance models, planning, and funding for Wales' AONBs and National Parks. The report is available as 3 PDFs on the Welsh Government website at <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/review-designated-landscapes-wales/?lang=en>.