

NATIONAL UPDATES – ENGLAND AND WALES

Purpose

To advise members on issues and updates from DEFRA, Welsh Government and the National Landscapes Association.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- DEFRA published the Government's Response to the Glover Review 'Implementing the Landscapes Review: summary of responses' in November 2023 including an 'Action Plan for Protected Landscapes'
- Welsh Government, through Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW), offered member training on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and on Tackling the Nature and Climate Emergencies.
- There are two events at the Senedd promoting the Designated Landscapes in Wales, one in March organised by Campaign for National Parks and the other in April by the National Landscapes Association.
- Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) will host a Seminar in Bangor on 16th-17th May on 'Decarbonising the Welsh Designated Landscapes and working with our communities to achieve Net Zero'.
- The National Landscapes Association hosted the National Landscapes re-branding launch in November, alongside the Chair's Conference and AGM.
- The Investing in Nature team within the National Landscapes Association are providing training on Green finance, along with National Parks Partnership.
- The National Landscapes Conference will be on 5th – 7th July 2024, at Harper Adams, Shropshire.

Reasons

Following the Glover Review (2019) and Environmental Improvement Plan, DEFRA ran a consultation in early 2022 regarding changes to Protected Landscapes, their role in the planning system, the Environmental Land Management schemes and, and in managing visitor pressures. It received over 15,000 responses. In November 2023 'Implementing the Landscapes Review: summary of responses' was published which included an 'Action Plan for Protected Landscapes'.

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) and Welsh Government have been collaborating on members' training and through the Biodiversity Deep Dive Designated Landscapes Working Group.

The National Landscapes Association continues to work with both Westminster and Welsh Government on promotion of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, through the re-branding as National Landscapes, which has been well received by Ministers in both countries.

Implications

DEFRA's Action Plan for Protected Landscapes, focuses on 4 themes:

- *Strengthen legislative duties* – particularly through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 amendments to the 'Duty' on public bodies (in England), requiring them to 'to seek to further the purposes of designation'
- *Collaborative Partnership for Better Outcomes for People and Nature* - establishing a new Protected Landscapes Partnership to build on collaboration between National Parks England, the National Landscapes Association, National Trails UK and Natural England, along with publication of a new Targets and Outcomes Framework which will link to revised National Park and AONB Management Plans
- *Boosting financial support for Protected Landscapes* - particularly through providing additional funding, including extending the Farming in Protected Landscapes and Access for All programmes
- *Long term sustainable funding* – including reviewing the funding formula for National Landscape Teams and supporting National Landscapes and Parks to build the capacity to generate more private finance in Protected Landscapes.

The Government's guidance is awaited on the implementation of the strengthened powers and duties of responsible bodies in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

Designated Landscapes in Wales are benefiting from members training and two forthcoming opportunities to present issues and features to Members of the Senedd.

A celebratory event at the Senedd on the 24th April will be hosted by the National Landscapes Association and the five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Wales. The invitation is extended to JAC members and other key partners of the National Landscape Partnerships. Please contact the AONB Manager if you are interested.

The National Landscapes Conference will be take place from 3rd - 5th July at Harper Adams University. The theme is *Changing Landscapes: Changing Minds*, and will investigate what the role is of natural beauty and landscape designations in ever-changing landscapes; and what the different ways of working are and resilience needed if natural beauty is to prevail in the contested debate on the value and use of land and sea. The conference will explore these and other issues in the context of the policy and personal responses to the of climate and nature crises, and the unrelenting political pursuit of economic growth. Cannock Chase, Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, and Shropshire Hills National Landscapes will be the Conference hosts. They will be hosting the field trips along with a range of other organisations: the National Forest, the Peak District National Park, Cheshire Sandstone Ridge, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England. We hope there will be good attendance, at least matching the record numbers last year, in Bath. Several members of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team will be attending.

Background

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-implementing-the-review/outcome/implementing-the-landscapes-review-summary-of-responses>

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 strengthened the powers and duties of responsible bodies (in England), which includes the local County, District, Town & Parish councils, by amending Sections 85 and 90 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, under LURA Part 12 s245 (5-10):

“In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority...must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.”

“The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision requiring a relevant authority...to contribute to the preparation, implementation or review of [AONB Management] Plans....”.