

GLOVER REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARKS AND AONBS - DISCUSSION

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Summary

This agenda item encourages discussion among Partnership members of the topics in the national Glover review of designated landscapes, to inform the drafting of the Partnership's written evidence.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the issues raised.

Background

The Glover review of designated landscapes is under way, and Panel members have visited a number of AONBs and National Parks. We have invited Julian Glover to visit, and Defra have responded saying he is interested in doing this in the spring. The call for written evidence is expected imminently, and will probably ask some specific questions within the review's overall terms of reference. If this arrives before the Partnership meeting it will be circulated. It is expected that written evidence will need to be submitted by Christmas or shortly after. Discussion from today's meeting will inform drafting of an AONB Partnership response which will be circulated for comments and also discussed by the Management Board in December. It is not expected that an extra meeting of the Partnership will be necessary, but this is possible if further discussion is needed. Other organisations and individuals are encouraged also to respond to the call for evidence.

A preliminary paper was brought to the Partnership on 19th June 2018, and members are referred to that paper for background on the terms of reference of the review and commentary related to the Shropshire Hills AONB (see link under Background Papers below).

The main topic areas of the Glover review are:

1. The existing statutory purposes for National Parks and AONBs and how effectively they are being met
2. The alignment of these purposes with the goals set out in the 25-Year Plan for the Environment
3. The case for extension or creation of new designated areas
4. How to improve individual and collective governance of National Parks and AONBs, and how that governance interacts with other national assets
5. The financing of National Parks and AONBs

6. How to enhance the environment and biodiversity in existing designations
7. How to build on the existing eight-point plan for National Parks and to connect more people with the natural environment from all sections of society and improve health and wellbeing
8. How well National Parks and AONBs support communities.

The Management Board discussed topics around the review on 4th September, and the National Association for AONBs held a Lead Officers meeting on this on 27th September. The NAAONB has contracted some support from an experienced professional advocate and campaigner to help guide its actions around the review. Following the Lead Officers meeting in September, a draft 'prospectus' is to be drawn up. This has not been circulated yet, so what follows is from notes taken on the day.

The main 'asks' are being framed as follows:

1. Status and recognition

Good: Reputation, efficient and effective deliverers, sustainable development, living and working landscapes

Need to change: Low recognition, gap between words about AONBs and reality

Ask: Strengthening section 85 'duty of regard', reaffirm and strengthen status, re-brand?

2. Governance and operations

Good: Efficient, effective conveners, fleet of foot, do a lot with little

Need to change: No legal duty to deliver Management Plan, Partnership status

Ask: Stronger legal basis, statutory duty, scrutiny and accountability

3. Planning and development

Good: Wealth of knowledge in teams, advice, guidance

Need to change: Inappropriate development, low weight given to AONBs in reality

Ask: Become statutory consultee, decouple host authority arrangement for teams, stronger monitoring of local authorities' performance

4. Landscape and land management

Good: Track record, engagement & knowledge

Need to change: Declines in biodiversity and heritage, AONBs well used for recreation but this isn't recognised in purposes

Ask: Consistent policy for land use, restoration of nature, role of teams and management plans in ecosystem services and new land management schemes, access health budgets?

5. Capacity (resources)

Good: Partnership, levering in additional funds, collaboration

Need to change: Inadequate capacity to do the job required, increasing pressure on remaining funds such as HLF, competing organisations

Ask: Long term government funding to provide security, cover requirements of being a statutory consultee in planning

List of Background Papers

Defra web page on Glover Review at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-parks-review-launched>.

AONB Partnership paper on Glover review 19th June 2018

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/s18935/7.%20Glover%20review%20with%20Appendices.pdf>

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Differences of National Park status

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This is a factual summary of some of the main differences between AONB and National Park designations and their organisations, and not an evaluation of pros and cons.

Purposes of designation

The Environment Act 1995 revised the original legislation and set out two statutory purposes for National Parks in England and Wales:

1. Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, **wildlife and cultural heritage**
2. **Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public**

(Wording additional to AONB statutory purpose shown in **bold**). In carrying out these purposes, National Park Authorities also have the duty to *“Seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Parks”*.

The Scottish National Parks have four aims:

1. To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area.
2. To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area.
3. To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public.
4. To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area’s communities.

National Park Authorities

Following the Edwards review, the Environment Act 1995 established independent authorities for English and Welsh National Parks. National Park Authorities have between 10 and 30 members, and are a form of local authority with defined functions, including being the planning authority for the Park.

The members take advice from staff and make decisions about what the national park authority should do. Members do not work for the national park authority full time, and do not get paid. Most of the members come from local and parish councils within the National Park. Some members are appointed by government because they have specialist knowledge and experience in areas like the environment or rural communities. Members normally live in or very close to the National Park so they are local people.

Levels of funding reflect the additional functions of National Parks, and each National Park Authority typically employs between 50 and 200 members of paid staff.

For further information see:

<http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/students/whatisanationalpark>

<http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/about-us>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/25/part/III/crossheading/functions-of-national-park-authorities>