

<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 8 th October 2019	<u>Item</u> 4
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REPORT OF THE GLOVER REVIEW – INITIAL DISCUSSION

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Summary

This paper provides a summary of the Glover Review final report and some topics for initial discussion.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to consider the proposals in the Glover review report and the implications for the Shropshire Hills AONB.

Background

After about a year of taking evidence, meetings and visits, the final report of the Glover Review was published on 21st September 2019. Some of the key recommendations had been trailed in media coverage and the letter of interim findings in July, but much of the detail only emerged in the final report.

The published summary of the report with the 27 proposals is reproduced in Appendix 1. Some other key passages of the report relevant to us are reproduced here:

New legal purposes – proposed for National Parks and AONBs:

The exact wording will no doubt be subject to debate and legal discussion, but the substance of what they should be aiming to do, we think, can be achieved through the following:

- 1. Recover, conserve and enhance natural beauty, biodiversity and natural capital, and cultural heritage.*
- 2. Actively connect all parts of society with these special places to support understanding, enjoyment and the nation's health and wellbeing.*
- 3. Foster the economic and community vitality of their area in support of the first two purposes.*

To properly strengthen AONBs, we propose:

- Giving them the same reformed statutory purposes (and ensuring that the 'Sandford Principle' also applies) as for National Parks. This reflects the reality that AONBs deliver the same purposes as National Parks.*

- *Increasing their funding*
- *Giving them statutory consultee status to strengthen their role in the planning system*
- *Renaming them 'National Landscapes'. Their national importance should be properly reflected by something much less unwieldy that elevates them alongside National Parks.*

Duties of public bodies

The requirement of 'regard' to landscapes' existing purposes should be strengthened to one of 'furthering' the reformed purposes. Second, a requirement should be established in law on relevant bodies to support the development and implementation of national landscapes' Management Plans.

Nature recovery

National landscapes therefore can, and should be playing a major role in enhancing the resilience of the network, by providing large areas of high quality wildlife habitat. They should be at the centre of coordinated action to integrate effective ecological networks with landscape objectives and other uses, including farming, education, recreation, tourism and the provision of other ecosystem services. To do so, however, requires Nature Recovery Networks to be built on a sound foundation of:

- *a clear national strategy, closely geared into local delivery*
- *strong partnerships and the agreement of common goals among diverse actors*
- *sufficient on the ground advisory staff and other capacity, including accurate data*
- *being fully aligned with a range of policy tools, such as ELMS and net gain.*

The design and implementation of Nature Recovery Network actions on the ground in national landscapes must take momentum not only from conservation and landscape led policy but also other government priorities, including, for example, the aim of achieving net zero carbon emissions and steps toward more climate change resilient landscapes.

New Environmental Land Management system

Individual Management Plans should be the guiding framework for setting landscape-scale priorities for future payments for public goods which support and enhance the value of nature and natural beauty in all its forms.

All other forms of environmental payments should be made in line with the Management Plans too, for example, grants for woodland planting or rural development.

We want to see the special significance of national landscapes for biodiversity, natural beauty and cultural identity reflected in decisions about ELMS.

We do not propose that national landscapes directly administer the new Environmental Land Management Scheme. Moving the complex business of payments to 44 separate bodies does not make sense. Rather, their Management Plans should set the framework for all ELMS payments within their landscapes. The focus first should be on working with others to set priorities, and supporting farmers with the transition.

Planning

AONB bodies should become statutory consultees in the planning system. They need to be formally consulted on planning cases, and have a formal voice in the decision making process. This does not mean AONBs should become consumed with putting in advice on

every single planning application; they don't do this now, nor would they be expected to. They should agree with their local planning authorities what they should be consulted upon and be free to comment if something of significance appears.

Some additional resource and expertise is likely to be necessary too, but the vast majority already employ officers with planning expertise. There is also expertise across the wider family of national landscapes that can be better shared and some additional resource could be provided at a national level through the new National Landscapes Service we propose, reducing duplication across all 44 bodies.

We heard in the Arnside and Silverdale AONB how two local authorities came together to support a single Development Plan for the AONB. This is a good model. We want AONBs to work with local authorities to develop local plans and policies which set out a vision, explain how conservation and recreational purposes will be implemented and how the needs and requirements of the local community will be met within the broader context of achieving sustainable development appropriate to these nationally important landscapes.

Landscapes for everyone

Our national landscapes should be alive for people, places where everyone is actively welcomed in and there are unrivalled opportunities to enjoy their natural beauty and all it offers: landscapes for all. We need:

- *England's national landscapes to reach out and actively connect all parts of society with these special places to support the nation's health and wellbeing. Their legal purposes should be explicit about this, and the same purpose applied to AONBs as to National Parks.*
- *National landscapes must develop ambitious, targeted plans for helping those who currently fail to benefit from our most special places to do so, and be held to account for delivery. This must include excellent, but currently local, examples being established everywhere. The National Landscapes Service should have a key role in spreading these best practices and holding bodies to account for delivery.*
- *Ambitious programmes should include, but not be limited to:*
 - *children and young people;*
 - *Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities;*
 - *people with health conditions and disabilities;*
 - *volunteering.*
- *A truly warm and helpful welcome, wherever you want to go – better signs, information and websites are needed, and critically, a National Landscapes Ranger Service.*
- *Our national landscapes must become our most welcoming and easily accessible places. Here, more than anywhere else, people can get out into nature and enjoy it. This means joining up with others to make the most of what is already there, but also asking ourselves whether they could be more accessible than they are now.*

Tourism

National landscapes should also be encouraged to bid to become 'tourism zones' under the new Tourism Sector Deal, helping pioneer truly sustainable tourism. We hope they will be encouraged to apply to become tourism zones under the new Tourism Sector Deal. Such

areas would see destination management organisations, local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, and local businesses working together to develop solutions that address local market failures in relation to tourism. For areas that are successful in their bid to become a Tourism Zone, a package of support would be offered and they would create a sustainable development plan to reduce environmental impacts.

Living in Landscapes

Our landscape management teams need to think hard about the various communities in their area: farmers and landowners, businesses, towns and villages and above all, schools. How can they help those various communities really benefit from living and working in a national landscape? How can they ensure that they identify with the brand, and are inspired to take forward the living past into the future? How can they create the long-term partnerships with these communities that will ensure our national landscapes have a sustainable future? Positive action is required here.

Our landscapes should encourage the kinds of economic and social activity that promotes renewed purposes of national landscapes.

We want to see a National Landscapes Affordable Rural Housing Association formed to help meet the need. It should have clear, well-designed purposes and a defined scope (and in particular 'rural' should mean 'rural') with leadership from the new National Landscapes Service. It should be debt financed (the equity should be publicly owned) and should attract environmental, social and government investment funds. In addition it might in limited circumstances get some 'public monies for public goods' as farming support is reformed.

Local planning authorities in AONBs should also make use of the provision that allows them to demand on-site affordable housing contributions on all sites, including developments of five homes or fewer.

National Parks are well placed to take on an active role in coordinating and promoting transport. They are the bodies best placed to communicate with visitors, and to have a single strategic vision. We think that the pressures and need for strategy is the same in AONBs.

Governance

National Parks should be governed by smaller 9-12 person boards, in line with best practice in governance as recommended for charities and companies. The board should be advised by a partnership group, bringing together stakeholders of all kinds, to ensure the board is well informed about a wide range of interests and specialist expertise.

The structure above should apply to AONBs where possible. We recognise that for some smaller ones it may be overelaborate, or challenging to put in place. For larger ones, it is appropriate.

AONBs may choose to establish similar Planning Sub-Committees, but, given their role is not to decide planning matters but to comment, hopefully in future as statutory consultees, they should ensure such committees are proportionate in size.

AONBs may also have on their main board of 9 to 12 one local authority member drawn from the local authorities who contribute funding to the AONB, determined either by the agreement of those local authorities, or if not, by ballot.

Finally, we think there is merit in the idea of a citizen service for selecting community representatives for main National Park and AONB boards, and would like to see the new National Landscapes Service work with national landscapes to trial this.

Funding

Central government funding should continue, and be both extended and secured across a five-year period. However the system needs to move away from over-reliance on core grants towards more diverse, larger and more sustainable flows of funds – towards a new funding model. We also recommend stopping the complex routing of funds via Defra. Responsibility should pass to the new National Landscapes Service. The payment of AONBs in arrears, should also be addressed.

The National Landscapes Service should negotiate a multi-annual financial settlement with Defra which both secures existing resources, services and programmes, and also ensures a focus on growth, innovation and efficiencies.

The settlement should cover the current grant in aid distributed by a modernised and simplified funding formula to all existing National Parks and AONBs and in future to all national landscapes. No organisation should receive a cut in grant.

There should be a new and larger settlement for AONBs and this should include new resources to reflect their enhanced purposes, responsibilities and activities.

We believe that in time, there should be an across-the-board formula for national landscapes using a banding system to reflect the imprecision of a formula, containing a number of elements, the weighting of which would need to be carefully calibrated.

In the meantime, AONBs need an uplift. We believe their total funding should be doubled from the current £6.7m to £13.4m, with the uplift in funding that would no doubt come from a revised funding formula implemented over a longer period.

The local authority funding element for AONBs should continue.

Any new national landscapes must be funded with new money.

Importantly, alongside central government funding changes, national landscapes should prepare medium to long term financial plans that reflect a more diverse range of income sources to their organisations, complementing core central government grant-aid with growth in philanthropic giving, trading activities and large-scale externally-funded projects.

This should draw ambitiously on the potential of natural capital principles.

The financial model for national landscapes should be diverse to ensure growth, stability and a greater sense of self-direction.

The new National Landscapes Service has a key role to play in finance. It should be entrepreneurial: it should understand its brand value, enter into commercially successful partnerships, be skilled at fundraising and achieve efficiencies in operations by encouraging parts of the system to work together.

There should be an ambitious commercial and philanthropic programme of fundraising.

Either a wing of the new National Landscapes Service or a separate but constitutionally-linked charity should be set up with clear charitable aims, strongly commercial and well-connected trustees and a professional team skilled in fundraising.

Next steps

It is important to remember that this is an independent report to government, and while the designated landscape bodies will be able to take on directly some of its recommendations straight away, many of the more significant ones will require government action. The government's response to the report is therefore vital as a next stage. We have no indications of the timescale for this, but we understand that senior staff resource at Defra has been allocated to it.

The NAAONB is meeting with Lord Gardiner on the 9th October to discuss the Environment Bill, the duty of regard, and the role of designated landscapes in nature recovery. This will, amongst other things, ensure the Colchester Declaration maintains profile during this spending review. They are also meeting with Marian Spain (CEO) and Tony Juniper (Chair) of Natural England on 23rd October. They will discuss the practicalities of the central role of AONBs in nature recovery, and how we work together with Natural England to further the recommendations of the Review. The next meeting of the NAAONB Board on 31st October will include a substantive discussion on the Review recommendations and the next steps the Association needs to take to progress delivery. Finally, Lord Gardiner has confirmed attendance at the NAAONB Chairmen's meeting on 28th November and will be speaking on the outcomes of the Review. This meeting will also include a presentation by Maxwell Ayamba on the challenges of people from black and minority ethnic communities using designated landscapes.

For the AONB Partnership, we need to engage actively with the national discussion, and input to any further formal response from the AONB Family to the Review report.

There are some aspects of the proposals which are likely to require primary legislation (e.g. new purposes, creation of a National Landscapes Service) or secondary legislation (e.g. making AONB organisations statutory consultees in planning). Some other proposals would need actioning by Defra but could happen any time (e.g. increased funding). Some aspects can be progressed by us now and would reinforce some existing as well as some newer directions (e.g. priority to nature recovery, outreach work with under-represented groups) though these are also resource dependent.

The governance implications for AONBs will probably take time to emerge. The Review report says nothing specifically about new Conservation Boards. It does acknowledge the higher status of the Cotswolds and Chilterns which have these, and mentions 'the challenges of the Conservation Board model' (apparently in the context of this not being strong enough). It seems highly unlikely that Defra will wish in the short term to progress our proposal to create a Conservation Board. Our proposal may be overtaken by changes arising from the Glover Review, or this may still be an appropriate mechanism – this is not yet clear. The report does acknowledge that different structures may be appropriate for larger AONBs. It does not however seem fully to recognise the fundamental difference between National Park Boards that govern independent legal organisations, and AONB Joint Advisory Committees and their sub-groups which are advisory only. There may be a spectrum of responsibility and roles for different structures, but as we know there are along this some binary differences of where the final accountability lies (i.e. with the local authorities or with an independent body). Unless a new model emerges, the same main options of structure for AONBs are likely to remain.

List of Background Papers

Glover Review final report at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>.

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 Landscapes review: final report - summary of findings

Appendix 1 Landscapes review: final report September 2019 - summary of findings

The underlying argument of our review, which covers England, is that our system of national landscapes should be a positive force for the nation's wellbeing. Big ambitions are made possible by these 44 areas working together in new ways to become more than the sum of their parts.

We want this to happen not as an end in itself but because more must be done for nature and natural beauty. More must be done for people who live in and visit our landscapes. And a lot more must be done to meet the needs of our many fellow citizens who do not know the countryside, or do not always feel welcome in it, but should be able to enjoy it. Our landscapes are open and free to all, but can seem exclusive.

We think this can only happen if we are honest about what doesn't work at the moment and put in place a system which can do better.

Today, we have a system which is fragmented, sometimes marginalised and often misunderstood. Indeed it is not really a system at all, but 10 National Parks, who do not always work together effectively, and an entirely separate network of 34 less powerful Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). They have different purposes from National Parks, vastly less money, but sometimes greater pressures. Yet they cover areas that are more visited, sometimes more biodiverse and are just as beautiful.

We believe this duplication wastes resources and diminishes ambition.

That is why our central proposal is to bring National Parks and AONBs together as part of one family of national landscapes, served by a shared National Landscapes Service (NLS). This will give them a bigger voice, bigger ambition and a new way of working to meet new challenges.

Within this family, of course not every member will be the same. Local identity matters. National Parks need to keep their titles, at least their current levels of funding, and local autonomy, especially over planning.

The current system of governance for National Parks (and, as we'll explore later, AONBs) should be reformed substantially. Time after time we have heard and seen that National Park boards are too big, do not do a good job in setting a strategic direction and are deeply unrepresentative of England's diverse communities.

Of the almost 1,000 people on National Park and AONB boards today, the great majority are male, many are of retirement age and a tiny fraction are of black, Asian or minority ethnicities. This is wrong for organisations which are funded by the nation to serve everyone.

We also think what are now AONBs should be strengthened, with increased funding, governance reform, new shared purposes with National Parks, and a greater voice on development.

We think the current cumbersome title 'AONB' should be replaced. Our suggestion is that they should be called National Landscapes.

We would also like to see the encouragement of a wider range of non-designated systems of landscape protection, which should be members of the national landscapes family and served by the NLS.

This ought to include new areas of forest, along the lines of the successful National Forest in the East Midlands. We give our strong support for proposals for new urban National Parks, such as the one proposed for the West Midlands and the one already underway in London. We also praise the impressive work being done to bring the South Pennines together as a regional park and to create a marine park in Plymouth.

Our overriding conclusion is that without structural reform and greater shared ambition and status, our national landscapes will always struggle to do more than make an incremental difference.

Summary findings

The review focused on 5 areas:

1. Landscapes alive for nature and beauty
2. Landscapes for everyone
3. Living in landscapes
4. More special places
5. New ways of working

They are not separate but part of one ambition: to strengthen the natural beauty of England's landscapes in order to serve the country better by improving their biodiversity, and the lives of people who work in them, live in them and enjoy them.

For clarity when reading this summary, we refer to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as AONBs, and use 'national landscapes' to refer to the two designations of National Parks and AONBs together.

Summary 1. Landscapes alive for nature and beauty

The 2010 Making Space for Nature review and the most recent 2016 State of Nature report are explicit about the crisis of nature and what needs to be done to bring about a recovery. There is no need, in this review, to restate the excellent and mostly chilling analysis they contain, except to say that we agree and we want to see national landscapes lead the response.

Proposals

Proposal 1: National landscapes should have a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature, and be supported and held to account for delivery by a new National Landscapes Service

Proposal 2: The state of nature and natural capital in our national landscapes should be regularly and robustly assessed, informing the priorities for action

Proposal 3: Strengthened Management Plans should set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery including, but not limited to, wilder areas and the response to climate change (notably tree planting and peatland restoration). Their implementation must be backed up by stronger status in law

Proposal 4: National landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries

Proposal 5: A central place for national landscapes in new Environmental Land Management Schemes

Proposal 6: A strengthened place for national landscapes in the planning system with AONBs given statutory consultee status, encouragement to develop local plans and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework

Summary 2. Landscapes for everyone

National Parks were created in part to provide a healing space, both mentally and physically, for the many who had given so much to protect our country during the Second World War. They were meant for everybody. Much has changed in the 70 years since. Modern Britain is a very different place socially and demographically. Today we recognise diversity as the mark of a healthy and resilient society. However, many landscape bodies have not moved smartly enough to reflect this changing society, and in some cases show little desire to do so.

We want our nation's most cherished landscapes to fulfill their original mission for people, providing unrivalled opportunities for enjoyment, spiritual refreshment and in turn supporting the nation's health and wellbeing.

Proposals

Proposal 7: A stronger mission to connect all people with our national landscapes, supported and held to account by the new National Landscapes Service

Proposal 8: A night under the stars in a national landscape for every child

Proposal 9: New long-term programmes to increase the ethnic diversity of visitors

Proposal 10: Landscapes that cater for and improve the nation's health and wellbeing

Proposal 11: Expanding volunteering in our national landscapes

Proposal 12: Better information and signs to guide visitors

Proposal 13: A ranger service in all our national landscapes, part of a national family

Proposal 14: National landscapes supported to become leaders in sustainable tourism

Proposal 15: Joining up with others to make the most of what we have, and bringing National Trails into the national landscapes family

Proposal 16: Consider expanding open access rights in national landscapes

Summary 3. Living in landscapes

Our system of national landscapes works best when it works with people on its side. We can all agree that a village that is lived in, with an active school, people who work, and who are part of a living tradition, is better than a sterile place that is full of shuttered homes, empty pubs and derelict shops.

If we are serious about demonstrating the value of 'lived in' landscapes to the global family of national landscapes, then we need to be serious about the people who live in them, and show how it's possible to offer meaningful social and economic support for them.

Proposals

Proposal 17: National landscapes working for vibrant communities

Proposal 18: A new National Landscapes Housing Association to build affordable homes

Proposal 19: A new approach to coordinating public transport piloted in the Lake District, and new, more sustainable ways of accessing national landscapes

Summary 4. More special places

Almost a quarter – 24.5% – of England is already covered by national landscapes.

We think there is a case for several larger AONBs to take on National Park candidate status, as well as for a new AONB (or National Landscape as we propose they are called in future).

The success of the National Forest is also a model which should be replicated.

We also think that a changing nation needs new ways to come together to support natural beauty and access.

Proposals

Proposal 20: New designated landscapes and a new National Forest

Proposal 21: Welcoming new landscape approaches in cities and the coast, and a city park competition

Proposal 22: A better designations process

Summary 5. New ways of working

We want our landscapes to focus on enhancing natural beauty, supporting communities and visitors. But to do it better, we think they need to change and work together more.

Proposals

Proposal 23: Stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes

Proposal 24: AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes

Proposal 25: A new National Landscapes Service bringing our 44 national landscapes together to achieve more than the sum of their parts

Proposal 26: Reformed governance to inspire and secure ambition in our national landscapes and better reflect society

Proposal 27: A new financial model – more money, more secure, more enterprising