



# Landscapes Review

*We want our national landscapes to work together with big ambitions so they are happier, healthier, greener, more beautiful and open to everyone.*

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*Final Report*



# Contents

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Preface	4
Introduction	6
Summary of our findings	9
Chapter 1: Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty	25
Chapter 2: Landscapes for Everyone	65
Chapter 3: Living in Landscapes	101
Chapter 4: More Special Places	117
Chapter 5: New Ways of Working	127
Annexes	147
Annex 1: Glossary	148
Annex 2: A brief history of National Parks and AONBs as kindly provided to the review by some alumni of our national landscapes	150
Annex 3: Existing National Park and AONB funding formulas	152
Annex 4: Stakeholder proposals submitted to Natural England for further landscape designations	153
Annex 5: Membership and diversity of National Park Authorities and AONB Joint Advisory Committees and Conservation Boards	154
Annex 6: Extent of Deep Peaty Soils (Natural England Data)	165
Photo locations and credits	167

# Preface

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Every Easter, for much of my childhood, my family set off walking with friends through the uplands of Britain. The experiences form some of my most vivid memories: marching from Haweswater over Kidsty Pike in the heaviest rain imaginable; crossing from south to north in the Peak District from a country of limestone walls to peat bogs; getting lost in the mist on Nine Standards Rigg in the Dales; climbing up Offa's Dyke; drinking milk, still warm from the cows on farms; all of these memories and more form part of my love for our countryside.

It has been a pleasure to spend snatched days over the last year revisiting some of these places and others I never knew – especially our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in the south west – just as it is a privilege today to spend as much of my life as I can living in the Peak District National Park.

The experience has produced two strong emotions. First, gratitude that so much of so great a quality is out there, saved in part by the efforts of those who fought for our National Parks and AONBs and work in them now. Second, fear that these places are fragile, that nature in them is in crisis as elsewhere, that communities are changing and that many do not know these places.

The aim of this review is to respect the former while helping with the latter. Nothing in what follows is intended as a criticism of the many wonderful people involved in National Parks and AONBs. They have given up their time to show me what they are achieving, and it has been humbling to see it.

Everywhere I've been with my fellow panel members I've seen energy, enthusiasm and examples of success. Supporting schools, youth ranger schemes, farm clusters, joint working with all sorts of organisations, tourism, planning and design, backing local businesses, coping with the complexities of local and central government; things like this happen every day, not much thanks is given for them and yet much of it is done well, for relatively small sums.

I did wonder at the start if, amid all these challenges, they would be able to help with a review like this, and I am hugely grateful for the universal support they have given it. I am just as grateful, too, to members of our panel: Ewen Cameron, Sarah Mukherjee, Jim Dixon, Fiona Reynolds and Jake Fiennes, who have shown such passion and support in bringing their humanity and great experience to the task.

I am also grateful for the excellent support we have received from

Defra officials, led by Louise Leighton-McTague along with Jean Comrie, Ellie Randall, Jo Sweetman and David Vose, and both the current and former Secretaries of State and Lord Gardiner, too.

I hope in the process we have given those involved professionally and personally in these special places, and those who visit, work in and care for them, a fair chance to let us hear their views. They have all shaped our thinking.

The remit of our review has been wide and allowed us to look at a great range of issues that affect, and are affected by, our landscapes. But no one review can seek to solve all such issues, which could, on their own, make a lifetime's study; things such as biodiversity, natural beauty, planning and housing, or the future of farming and the diversity of visitors. I hope

we've done justice to them as far as we can, and have offered ideas and encouragement for the future.

In the 70 years since the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, our country has changed immensely. One thing has remained the same, however: the affection of a large and varied part of our fellow citizens for the places this review covers. They really are England's soul and we should care for them as such.

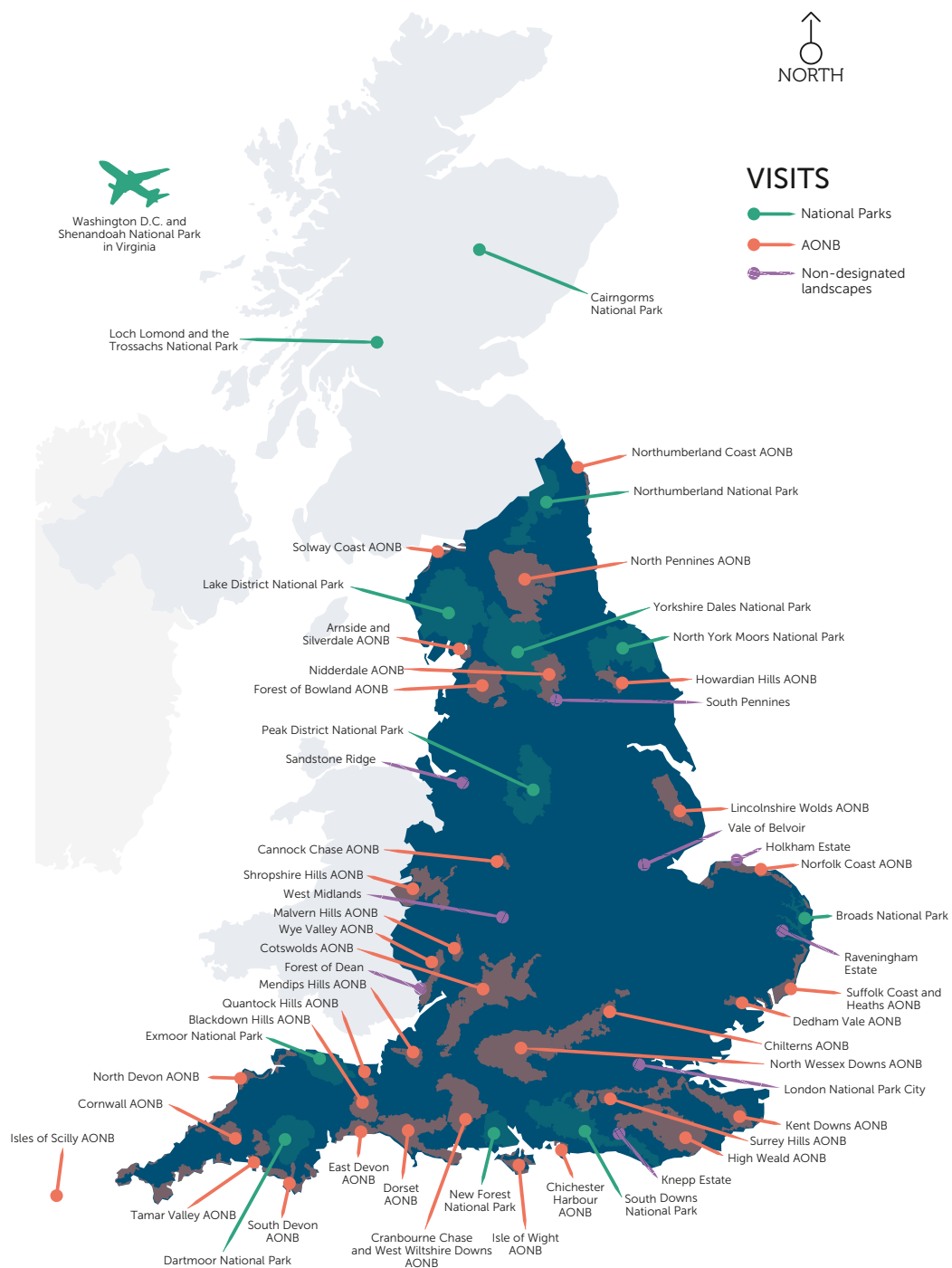
## Julian Glover

Gratton, Derbyshire  
September 2019



# Introduction

Figure 1: Map of where review panel have visited



In the summer of 2018 we began gathering evidence for the Designated Landscapes Review, which the government commissioned in response to the 25 Year Environment Plan.<sup>1</sup>

Since then members of our panel of six have been to every English National Park and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as well as to National Parks in Scotland and unprotected landscapes for which people have hopes, from the canalsides of Digbeth in Birmingham to the moors above Halifax.

We have tried hard to meet visitors, farmers and campaigners as well as those in charge of managing landscapes. We have travelled on foot, by bike, on horseback in Exmoor and the New Forest, and by boat in the Broads and the Lake District. One member learnt much from the way US National Parks are managed and funded during a visit to Washington. People everywhere have been generous with their time and ideas.

Our call for evidence received around 2,500 detailed and enthusiastic submissions from organisations and individuals. We have held many meetings in London and elsewhere with bodies representing those interested in our landscapes.

We've also worked with the Policy Lab team in the Cabinet Office, who have made powerful films working with people whose voices are less likely to be heard, including those in cities who are not traditional visitors to the countryside.

We have made sure our review has been open and responsive, and we have given everyone a chance to tell us what they think. We want an ambitious response to what we've seen and heard to be a core part of the new ways our landscapes work.

The message from all this work has been vigorous and clear. Though there's much that is good, we should not be satisfied with what we have at the moment. It falls far short of what can be achieved and what the people of our country want.

Why? Because the national zeal of the founding mission for landscape protection has been eroded. There is no common ambition and a culture which has neither kept pace with changes in our society nor responded with vigour to the decline in the diversity of the natural environment.

Our country is changing fast. It is becoming more diverse. More urban. Much busier. New forms of farming, carbon emissions, the sprawl of housing, new technology and social shifts have changed the relationship between people and the countryside, and left nature and our climate in crisis.

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1 A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment

The way we protect and improve our landscapes needs to change radically to respond to this. If their natural beauty is to be in a better condition 70 years from today, even better to look at, far more biodiverse, and alive with people from all backgrounds and parts of the country, they cannot carry on as they do now.

We need to reignite the fire and vision which brought this system into being in 1949. We need our finest landscapes to be places of natural beauty which look up and outwards to the nation they serve. In essence, we've asked not 'what do national landscapes need?', but 'what does the nation need from them today?'





# Summary of our findings

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## Our priority: working together

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; and yet 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) which 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, and 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

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We have focused our review on five areas and they form the detail of the report which follows.

They are:

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 report, we refer to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) 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 United Kingdom is now among the most nature-depleted nations in the world", the former Secretary of State, Michael Gove, said in a speech in July 2019.<sup>2</sup> This is the context for our National Parks and AONBs.

The 2010 *Making Space for Nature* review<sup>3</sup> and the most recent 2016 *State of Nature* report<sup>4</sup> 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.

There is much debate, and not enough data to say for certain, whether the state of nature in national landscapes is better, or no better, or even worse than it is elsewhere.

In the end, this is a fruitless discussion. While it is good news that in a small, heavily populated and very urban island we have retained places of great natural beauty, sometimes alive with wild species – which the policies and staff of our national landscapes have been instrumental in – what can be agreed is that what we currently have is not good enough. That the natural beauty

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wcl.org.uk/michael-gove-asks-if-not-now-when.asp>

<sup>3</sup> <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/state-of-nature/state-of-nature-uk-report-2016.pdf>

which led to their protection in the first place is being lost.

Ultimately, while much effort has gone into protecting pockets of the special and the rare, encouraged by structures such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which try to save what is left, what was once common has become rare.

Why has decline continued? The answer is partly one of influence. Our system of landscape protection has been hampered by having little influence over the things which have done most harm to nature. This includes a system of farming subsidies which, although it has improved, for decades rewarded intensification regardless of the consequences.

Climate change and pollution have also put huge pressure on designated and undesignated landscapes alike. It shouldn't really surprise us that the simple fact of designation hasn't held back natural decline.

Our landscape system hasn't been helped either by the so-called great divide, which left landscape separate from other action to protect nature, seeing National Parks and AONBs in one box, and SSSIs and National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in another.

But the confusing array of designations is not the main issue. The basic fact of failure is. As the National Trust put it, in its submission to our call for evidence, "We believe that National Parks and AONBs are not currently delivering on their duty in relation to nature".

## **What answers do we set out in this report?**

We want a new commitment to recovery which puts natural beauty at its core to make all these places special.

They should be exemplars of the very best, improving not degrading. They should look and feel special. Even if we only managed to restore diminished biodiversity to levels taken for granted in 1949 when the law to create National Parks and AONBs was established, we would have achieved something extraordinary.

To do this, we first want to renew the purposes of national landscapes to meet the modern challenges of restoring natural beauty – it must be more urgent about recovery, not just conserving what we have. It must also be applied equally to National Parks and AONBs.

Critically, alongside this, our national landscapes must be supported by a new National Landscapes Service, bringing together these 44 disparate bodies to deliver for nature across boundaries, driving ambitious action and holding them to account for delivery.

A key mechanism for this will be strengthened Management Plans, with clear targeted actions to recover nature, underpinned by robust assessments of the state of nature and natural capital in our national landscapes.

We would like to see these plans set ambitious proposals to support the climate challenges we face, not least on tree planting and peatland restoration, as well as how to support

wilder areas. They will contain bold plans for national landscapes to become leaders in Nature Recovery Networks, thinking across and indeed beyond their landscapes, as no individual landowner or non-government organisation can do. As John Lawton's *Making Space for Nature* review said so clearly, we need "more, bigger, better and joined up sites".

To do that, they need to act as and be one family, and work in partnership with others, since they are not significant landowners or grant givers. We've seen in particular how AONBs have become good at partnership working; lacking any resources of their own, they have had to be.

Our landscapes should also be bold about the potential of subsidy reform, with the forthcoming Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS). We think all national landscapes should be priorities for ELMS payments delivering nature recovery and other benefits through farming.

Recovery of nature and natural beauty, and indeed fulfilment of the wider purposes of our landscapes, also requires changes to the role

of our national landscapes in our planning system.

National Parks carry out a complex and difficult role and have fought to sustain natural beauty in the face of immense pressure. We do not propose changes in the way they do this.

We do however want to see AONBs given greater status in the planning system. They should become statutory consultees, and we set out later how we think this can work. They should also, where appropriate, be supported to work towards local plans for their areas, prepared in conjunction with local authorities. For larger AONBs, especially those we highlight as candidates for possible National Park status, this plan should have statutory status, in place of the multitude of local authority plans.

We also want to see public bodies recognise the status of national landscapes, as they do not always do so at present. The existing duty of 'regard' is too weak. We believe public bodies should be required to help further their purposes and the aims and objectives of individual national landscapes' Management Plans.

## 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

"There can be few national purposes which, at so modest a cost, offer so large a prospect of health-giving happiness for the people," John Dower argued in the closing words of the report which led to the system we have today.<sup>5</sup>

He wrote those words on 12 April 1945, as Allied forces closed in on Berlin. But Dower pushed on, arguing that the Britain which would follow the war would be happier and healthier if our finest landscapes were kept safe for everyone and for all time.

From the Dower report, and the work of others which followed, much good has come. When you gaze across Morecambe Bay from Arnside; when you sit in the solitude of the Iron Age hillfort at Nordy Bank in Shropshire or cycle through the lanes of the Isle of Wight; or follow the Pennine Way over the northern moors; you are part of the world it helped secure.

This natural beauty matters, wrote the campaigner John Muir, because "everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."<sup>6</sup>

In a technological age, when global travel is easy and digital systems provide instant entertainment, it is reassuring that people still find spiritual and physical enrichment from beautiful places. Indeed it is perhaps because the rest of our lives have changed so much that the

tranquil, the raw, the wild and the special matter even more today.

In the course of this review, around 1,000 people and organisations took the trouble to send in photographs which they felt captured what these landscapes meant to them. They are images of enjoyment and natural beauty and some are included in this report.

### What needs to change?

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 are all paying for national landscapes through our taxes, and yet sometimes on our visits it has felt as if National Parks are an exclusive, mainly white, mainly middle-class club, with rules only members understand and much too little done to encourage first time visitors.

Public funding is not a given for any organisation and decisions ultimately rely on public support.

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Town and Country Planning, *National Parks in England and Wales: Report by John Dower*, Cmd, London, HMSO, 1945.

<sup>6</sup> *The Yosemite* (1912), page 256.

Although we were pleased with the response to our call for evidence, the relative lack of interest and engagement from particular and significant communities that make up modern Britain should be a warning call to all those involved in national landscapes. They must reach out with determination and urgency to those for whom they are currently an irrelevance.

Further, although there are already examples of links with the National Health Service – we saw them in the New Forest, for instance – there is no overall agreement about how these two great institutions from the post-war settlement might work together.

Our national landscapes are national and that means they should be places for everyone.

### **What answers do we set out in this report?**

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.

This requires a new mission in law putting this at the heart of what they do, with AONBs equally charged with delivering for people.

In turn, we want to see our national landscape bodies doing much more to reach out and welcome people in. An important way of getting interest across all of society is of course to

inspire our younger generations. This is why we set out a proposal for every child to spend at least one night in a national landscape. We think that seeing and knowing our country is the best way to respect and save it. There are many good examples of working with schools, but we want to see more done.

We also want to see long-term programmes established to reach out to black, Asian and minority ethnicity communities, picking up and going further than the previous and successful, but short-lived and small-scale 'MOSAIC' programmes.<sup>7</sup> The same for volunteering.

Active work to support the nation's health and wellbeing is also needed. With leadership from the National Landscapes Service, social prescribing and a wider preventive approach to managing health have huge potential to improve physical and mental health at low cost.

We also recommend a number of measures to improve the welcome and visitor experience, not least through a National Landscapes Ranger Service, present in all our national landscapes.

Lastly, we make recommendations which aim to maximise the most of what we have, strengthening links with other designations, bringing National Trails into the national landscapes family, and considering further open access rights in our national landscapes.

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<sup>7</sup> Supported by the Campaign for National Parks, it encouraged black, Asian and minority ethnicity visitors to National Parks. It was a success but a one-off, and fell away when its funding ran out.



## 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.

More than that, traditions such as Herdwick sheep breeding, Derbyshire well-dressing, or the pattern of commoners in the New Forest, matter in themselves and are part of the reason these places are designated.

In almost every place we visited, we heard similar warnings about the challenges communities face. Residents are getting older. Public transport links are being cut back.

In particular, we have heard repeatedly that local communities see housing costs climb while not much affordable housing is built to add to the supply.

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.

### What answers do we set out in our report?

First, we want to see renewed commitment by those managing our national landscapes to make local communities stronger. We have seen many excellent examples of work

being done. But we would like to see more.

We therefore propose that the existing duty required of National Parks, to seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities in their area, be strengthened by making it a third statutory purpose, in support of the first two, which should then apply to all national landscapes not just National Parks.

Second, we propose a new National Landscapes Rural Housing Association to build affordable homes for rent. We heard often that sites could be found for small numbers of homes, and that communities were keen to see them built, but that builders did not come forward. Government schemes, while available to rural communities, are often focused on pressing needs and larger sites in cities.

Third, we have heard repeatedly about the pressures on transport, and the challenge of traffic congestion. These do not, of course, apply only to national landscapes. But traffic spoils tranquility and poor access keeps people who should be able to visit away.

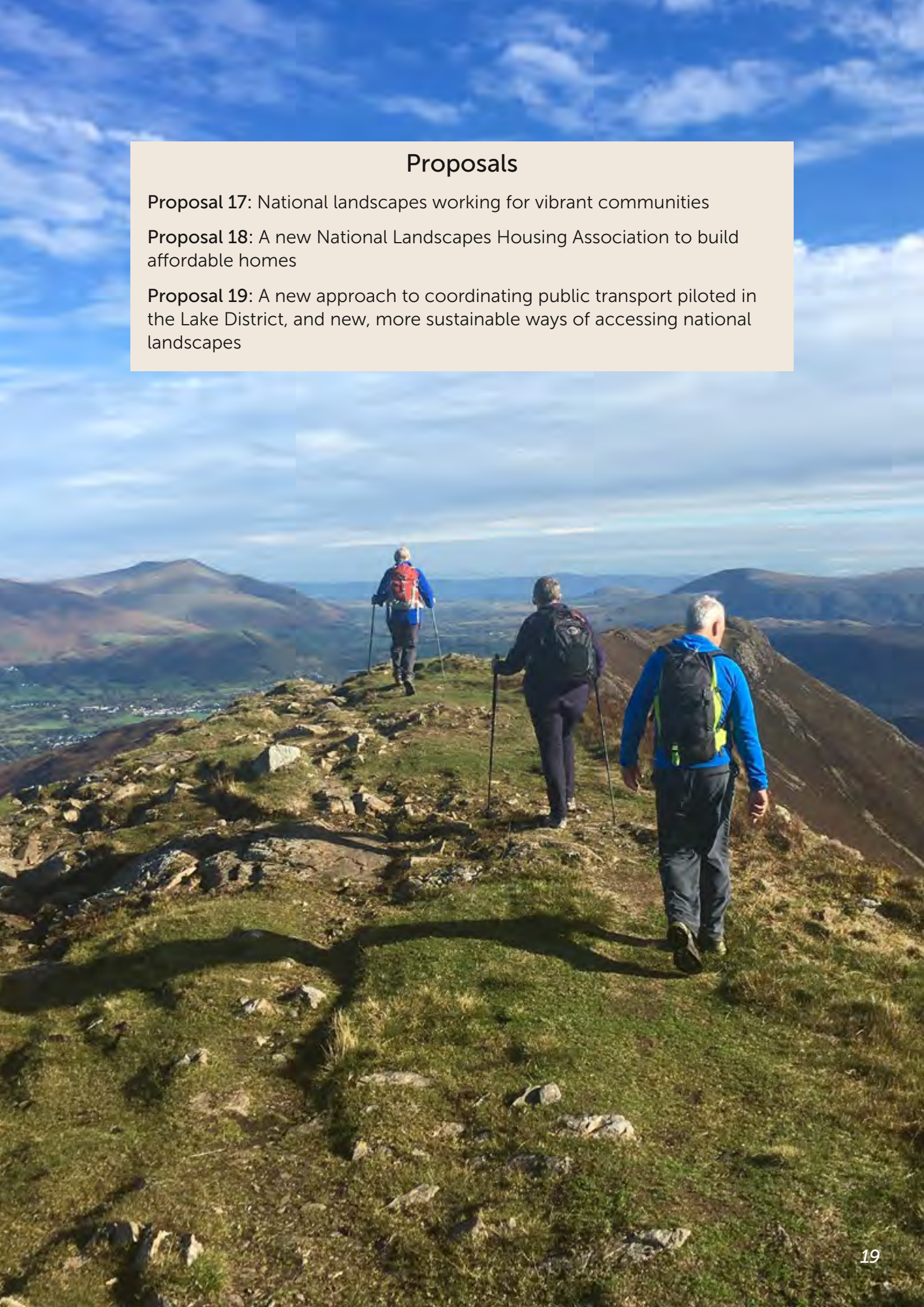
We therefore propose that national landscapes, especially National Parks with their existing role in planning, take on a more active role in coordinating and promoting low-carbon, accessible forms of transport.

## 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. Should this grow?

We were asked to look at this, and the process of designation, as part of the review.

We heard impressive arguments from those in favour of giving particular areas protection and many enthusiastic calls for change, including with regard to our marine and coastal areas.

We have also been impressed by work being done to promote the idea of a new West Midlands National Park, and to make London a National Park City. These are not asking for new laws, or powers, but exist as a way of getting people to act and think differently. We applaud them.

If we want our national landscapes to serve the nation as it is today, then new structures may be needed. It does not always make sense to have forms of designation which have remained largely unchanged for decades.

### What answers do we set out in our report?

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.

We think there is a very strong case for putting energy and goodwill into new forms of cooperative landscape improvement, especially in areas close to towns and cities – and we make a proposal about increasing nature in our green belts.

We also want to see the process for creating designations and changing boundaries made simpler, easier and quicker.

### 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

Repeatedly, from those involved in national landscapes and those who live in them and work in them, we heard huge support for the things they are supposed to achieve. At the same time, we heard frustration at one of the things which holds them back: a lack of coherence, limited ambition and too little collective working or challenge.

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.

### What answers do we set out in our report?

First, as we set out at the start of this summary our central proposal is for a new way of bringing our many varieties of national landscapes together to work in a new, more ambitious way through a National Landscapes Service.

Second, as we set out in various chapters, and bring together in this final chapter, we think the statutory purposes of our landscapes should be renewed. We think it wrong that AONBs only have a single purpose, which refers to 'natural beauty', and, unlike National Parks, have no stated role in public enjoyment or to support communities and sustainable economic activity.

We want to see a single set of expanded national landscape purposes. And in turn, a stronger duty imposed upon others for supporting these ambitions.

We want to see AONBs strengthened beyond their statutory purposes too.

We also make proposals to simplify and strengthen governance of National Parks and AONBs, while leaving a strong place for local identity and decision making especially on planning issues.

We recognise that any increase in ambition will need to be matched with funds. All calls for more public money to be spent will face scrutiny. Budgets are tight for a reason.

That is why we want to see our landscapes funded from a wider range of sources. Our new National Landscapes Service must be an entrepreneurial body, able to fundraise ambitiously, enter into commercial partnerships and make efficiencies across the system.

As Dower wrote in 1945, "if National Parks are provided for the nation they should clearly be provided for by the nation".

At the very least we want to see existing budgets for National Parks secured in real terms and sustained for at least a further five year period, so they can plan ahead with confidence. Annual changes stand in direct contradiction to the sort of long term thinking about landscape we recommend. Any new national landscape designations must be funded with additional money, not from the current budget.

And budgets for AONBs need increasing and likewise making more secure if they are to deliver for the nation as we propose.

## 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







# Chapter 1: Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty

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In 2018, the government's 25 Year Environment Plan<sup>8</sup> set a clear ambition: "we want to improve the UK's air and water quality and protect our many threatened plants, trees and wildlife species."

Our national landscapes should lead the way.

They should be at the forefront of our national response to climate change. The government has committed to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The quarter of England which is covered by national landscapes will need to respond if this is to happen.

They should also renew their commitment to enhancing the natural beauty which led to their creation in the first place.

Natural beauty is a powerful cause and our national landscapes should leap at the chance to re-energise this mission.

They are places which are lived in and farmed, as well as places full of nature, known by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'Category V': "areas where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant

ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value".

The 2016 report from the IUCN, *Putting nature on the map*, is a useful starting point because it recognises that our national landscapes are different from many others elsewhere in the world.<sup>9</sup>

It states that landscape designation in England is based on "a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values". These 'Category V' designations, which the UK led the way with, recognise the importance of protecting lived-in landscapes. "In the case of conflict, nature conservation will be the priority," it adds.

To do this, we need people and nature to work together. We should encourage creative harmony.

William Wordsworth understood this. His *Guide Through the District of the Lakes*, first published in 1810, was a hymn to the twin forces which have shaped England's landscapes since the Paleolithic: humans and nature.

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8 A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf)

9 <https://www.iucn.org/content/putting-nature-map-summary-a-report-and-recommendations-use-iucn-system-protected-area-categorisation-uk>



Like many of us since, Wordsworth saw a place whose character came not just from the “holly, broom, wild rose, elder, dogberry” of lakeside woods, but the “ancient mansions” of the Lakes, and the “community of shepherds and agriculturalists – proprietors, for the most part, of the lands which they occupied and cultivated”.

It was Wordsworth who made the famous call for them to be preserved “as a sort of national property”. It became an inspiration for the National Parks movement around the world.

He deplored the loss of native woodland and the taming of wild beauty just as much as the breakdown of “the almost visionary mountain republic” of people who lived beneath the fells.

Today, we can learn from this.

Every acre of our landscapes has been modified by human activity. A hay meadow, ringed by healthy trees, and clear, slow-flowing streams rich in wildflowers and curlews in summer, grazed by sheep and cattle in winter, protected by stone walls and hedges, looked after by farmers who can make a living, enjoyed by people who gain physical and emotional strength from seeing it and walking or riding past it or just knowing it exists; all this comes together as natural beauty.

If the curlews are gone, the hay meadow has been turned to silage and species lost, the streams dug out, the soil degraded and the walls broken, replaced with tangled wire; if the trees are ageing and dying from disease, if the farmers

are leaving their land, the visitors are marginalised, then natural beauty is lost.

Natural beauty is about the human response to a place as well as the things in the place itself. It elevates us in mind and spirit. It is when the beauty in nature, in geology, insect life, storms and clouds, comes together with the beauty of a hand-crafted farm gate, a Dales barn, or a shepherd’s crook, that the power of our landscapes is revealed.

Some fear that in thinking of our landscapes like this, we risk disguising or even excusing the crisis of nature.

We disagree. We believe that it is only by recognising the role of people and nature together in shaping our landscape over thousands of years, and the good and harm that they can do today, that we will once again bring our landscapes alive.

## What we found

In our call for evidence, the message was clear: more than any other single thing, people and organisations agreed that our landscapes should do more for nature.

After all, who would not want healthy forests, more birdsong, cleaner streams and rivers, and soil that is in a good condition, not rapid decline?

It is in the interests of farmers and landowners as much as it is hill walkers or people who live downstream in cities.

In 1991, the Edwards report argued that, “Substantial improvements in environmental quality are needed in many Parks; landscape deterioration needs to be reversed; wildlife habitats

conserved more actively, and the tensions with local communities addressed positively and creatively.”<sup>10</sup>

In 2010 Professor Sir John Lawton’s report, *Making Space for Nature*, called for ecological networks which can withstand climate change and improve the state of biodiversity compared with 2000.<sup>11</sup> “To make space for nature we need more, bigger, better and joined up sites,” it argued.

They are, after all, as Sir John argues, incredibly well placed to help. “We believe that National Parks and AONBs should become exemplars of coherent and resilient ecological networks. This will require strong leadership and high levels of cooperation between landowners, public bodies, businesses and the voluntary sector,” his report says.

Many National Parks and AONBs, in their submissions and on our visits, highlighted individual schemes and success stories.

These are more than isolated exceptions and they have come about despite years of adverse pressure. Criticism can go too far – or at least it should be directed at things such as the policies of different governments over many decades, before challenging landscape bodies which have been working to help nature in difficult circumstances.

Without this work, and that of Natural England, for example in National Nature Reserves, and

non-government bodies such as the Wildlife Trusts, the RSPB and the National Trust, the natural environment would be in a much worse condition.

Everywhere in the course of our visits we found officers and volunteers in our landscapes passionate about nature and natural beauty and keen to protect it.

Staff at the Yorkshire Dales National Park, for instance, in an engaging online film submitted to our review, demonstrated their desire to do more.<sup>12</sup>

The Moors for the Future programme has led ambitious and effective work to restore peat bogs from Nidderdale in Yorkshire to Kinder Scout in Derbyshire. In the Arnside and Silverdale AONB we saw how a local government-owned reserve, a reserve run by the RSPB and, not far away, a National Nature Reserve achieve more together when they work with a national landscape body.

You can find uplifting examples of work like this in every national landscape. We have highlighted some achievements in this chapter and the AONBs’ ‘70@70’ report sets out more.<sup>13</sup>

The 2019 Colchester Declaration – developed by all 34 AONBs – sets out their collective ambition and intent to do more for nature and is a model for what should be happening across all of our national landscapes.<sup>14</sup>

10 Fit for the Future: Report of the National Parks Review Committee, Countryside Commission, 1991.

11 <https://web.archive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130402170324/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>

12 <https://youtu.be/-QofoDVOM10>

13 <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/nature-recovery-solutions>

14 [https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/7815/6326/2583/The\\_Colchester\\_Declaration.pdf](https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/7815/6326/2583/The_Colchester_Declaration.pdf)

But if this work was enough, then nature would not be in the crisis it is in today and our landscapes would feel more special than they do.

Many submissions to our call for evidence reflected strong concern and this review shares it.

“National Parks and AONBs are national assets and should represent resilient ecosystems, within which wildlife is flourishing and a range of public environmental goods are provided to residents, local communities and the wider public,” the RSBP told us, for instance. “These

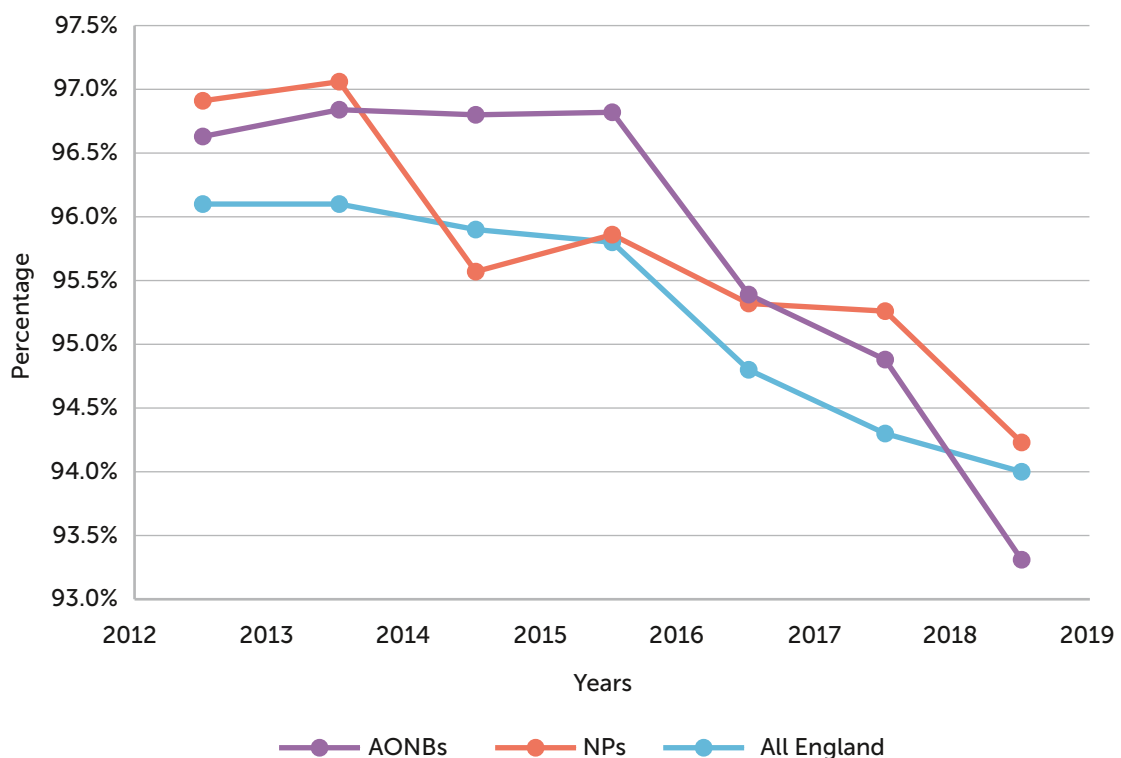
landscapes have not yet managed to buck the negative trends affecting wildlife across the UK.”

The submission from the National Trust expressed a similar desire to see more done.

Even if for reasons beyond their control, National Parks are currently unable to fulfil their statutory purpose to “conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage” of their areas.

Nor is the situation in AONBs any different.

### SSSIs in Favourable or Unfavourable recovering condition



**Figure 2:** Percentage of SSSIs in English National Parks and AONBs that are in Favourable or Unfavourable recovering condition.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Source: Natural England commissioned report (available in draft in August 2019) monitoring trends since 2013 in environmental outcomes in national landscapes, undertaken by the University of Plymouth.

## What needs to be done

Natural recovery needs us to recognise two things.

The first is that a huge amount of what happens in our landscapes is shaped by things over which our landscape bodies have little control.

We should rebalance this.

They cannot be held responsible for the consequences of climate change. They were not responsible for shaping the subsidy system of the Common Agricultural Policy.

They have, in places, insufficient commitment from local authorities and other stakeholders. They lack powers and some resources.

National Parks England, in its submission to this review, pointed out that “although National Parks are important reservoirs for wildlife, National Park Authorities (NPAs) have few powers (beyond planning) to manage or influence relevant decision making”.

It goes on to say that “NPAs therefore look to those who do have the necessary powers to ensure they do prioritise action that positively

restores habitats, support species, and improves biodiversity”.

This is a passive approach and it points to the second issue we want to see addressed: strategic leadership and – until recently – lack of government commitment to this goal.

Nature recovery has not always been a priority for our national landscapes.

This should not be a surprise.

The government’s 8-Point Plan for National Parks, published in 2016, did ask that they “champion integrated management of the natural environment, showcasing the benefits that national landscapes can bring”.

But it told them to do a lot else besides and was more specific on that than on nature recovery, which was not set as a priority.

Nor is nature recovery a regular item of discussion for the boards of National Parks. We looked at agenda items for each of their last three board meetings and nature was a specific topic of discussion at only one of the 30 meetings.



**Table: Number of agenda items/topics covered in the last three National Park Authority meetings as at 19 August 2019**

National Park	Planning	Nature	Access and recreation	Landscape	Other	Finance	Governance
Broads Authority	5	1	3	0	5	2	15
Dartmoor	3	0	0	1	5	0	3
Exmoor	6	0	0	0	2	2	8
Lake District	3	0	2	0	8	2	5
New Forest	2	0	3	0	2	7	6
Northumberland	1	0	0	0	9	4	9
North York Moors	3	0	1	0	10	3	18
Peak District	3	0	0	0	4	2	9
South Downs	7	0	1	0	4	1	16
Yorkshire Dales	3	0	2	1	6	3	19

We also looked at their Management Plans.

The Campaign for National Parks argued in its useful 2018 report, *Raising the Bar, improving nature in our National Parks* that “the scale of the decline in wildlife is not well articulated in the plans and neither are the strategies for confronting these issues and reversing the decline”.<sup>16</sup>

While national landscapes have played a positive role in specific projects, such as ones supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, there isn't always evidence of wider visions for nature recovery. Our own examination of Management Plans found that, although they are important in describing each national landscape and in setting out what

activities are taking place, they fall far short in their implementation.

Nor is there a sustained and structured national conversation between National Parks, AONBs or the 44 of them together, on how to join up to recover nature.

Single organisations working well locally with partners can only do so much. These local groupings alone cannot address the cross-boundary impacts of climate change, the recovery of nature, or deal with the consequences of diseases such as Ash Dieback.

<sup>16</sup> Raising the Bar: Improving Nature in Our National Parks, Campaign for National Parks, 2018. <https://www.cnp.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploadsfiles/Raising%20the%20bar%20-%20improving%20nature%20in%20National%20Parks%20June%202018.pdf>



To help address this, we make proposals below to strengthen statutory purposes, assess the state of nature, give statutory weight to detailed Management Plans and create a new coordinating role for a National Landscapes Service, all of which we believe will give strategic clarity and drive improvement.



## Understanding the state of nature in our national landscapes

Until we know what we have got, and what we have lost, efforts at landscape-scale work on nature will be incremental. It is worth noting briefly how little we do actually know.

National Parks produce regular 'State of the Park' reports, but they tend not to get into detail—sometimes saying little beyond stating SSSI condition, used as a proxy for the state of the nature altogether.

This issue, applicable to all National Parks, is picked up in the Lake District's State of the Park report: "the condition of priority habitats... is only monitored within protected areas (SSSIs) and it is not possible to report comprehensively on the extent and condition of habitats outside SSSIs in the Lake District National Park. This is a major deficiency".<sup>17</sup>

In the 2016 State of Nature in the Peak District report,<sup>18</sup> words and phrases such as 'fragmented', 'extremely limited', 'vulnerable', 'declining' are all too frequent.

But this too notes that "there is limited up-to-date information on the extent of some habitats, their quality and trends of loss or gain across the whole LNP [Local Nature Partnership] area in recent years".

In England there are currently 4,126 SSSIs covering 1.09m ha of which just over 50% lies in national landscapes: 297,000ha in National Parks, and 254,000ha in AONBs.

The state of SSSIs is monitored by Natural England and has been analysed further by the Campaign for National Parks in Raising the Bar. It shows that of the SSSIs in England's 10 National Parks, nearly 75% are in 'unfavourable' or 'unfavourable – recovering' condition.<sup>19</sup>

This compares to 61.3% of the total SSSIs in England. It added that 88.5% of SSSIs in the North York Moors, 84.7% in Exmoor and 83.9% of the Peak District's SSSIs are in an unfavourable condition.

Latest figures indicate a continued downwards trend, as shown in Figure 2.<sup>20</sup> SSSI condition, whether in or outside National Parks and AONBs – is falling and it is notable that according to the IUCN our National Parks and AONBs 'only just' met the nature conservation standards for international recognition.<sup>21</sup>

The state of SSSIs is also an imperfect measure. The term 'recovering' can simply mean land in the SSSI is in an agri-environment scheme and as such under scrutiny, so theoretically getting better. But it does not guarantee that the recovery work will actually be undertaken, or that in practice, it is improving.

17 P17 of the State of the Park 2018 report for the Lake District National Park, [https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/1661598/SOTP-Report-2018-V6-FINAL-02.05.19.docx.pdf](https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1661598/SOTP-Report-2018-V6-FINAL-02.05.19.docx.pdf)

18 [www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/nature-report](http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/nature-report)

19 <https://www.cnp.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploadsfiles/Raising%20the%20bar%20improving%20wildlife%20in%20our%20National%20Parks.pdf>

20 Source: Natural England commissioned report (available in draft in August 2019) monitoring trends since 2013 in environmental outcomes in protected landscapes, undertaken by the University of Plymouth.

21 <https://www.iucn.org/content/putting-nature-map-summary-a-report-and-recommendations-use-iucn-system-protected-area-categorisation-uk>

## 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

## 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

National Landscapes should be special places for nature.

They should lead the way to nature recovery, in line with the 25 Year Environment Plan.

They should do this through management which protects and enhances their special qualities as landscapes shaped by human and natural activity.

They should become exemplars of the IUCN's Category V landscapes,

supporting the very best in nature and natural beauty.

In order to support this, we make two recommendations. The first is that the legal purposes of national landscapes should be revised to be explicit about this purpose, and the same purpose applied to AONBs as to National Parks. Second, we need a new National Landscapes Service to drive ambition, collaboration and delivery.

### A stronger purpose for nature and beauty

The mission of our national landscapes is enshrined in law

through statutory purposes and duties.

#### National Park purposes and duty

1. Conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
2. Promote understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public

A duty to seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park in pursuit of purposes.

#### A single AONB purpose

Conserve and enhance natural beauty

These purposes provide foundations for all actions that follow: for government policy, resource allocation and decisions; helping people understand what these places are for and why they deserve protection; and providing the tests

against which difficult and important decisions are made.

They also secure their national importance and have implications for how these areas are regarded by the international community.

During the review process, a group of alumni of our national landscapes shared with us a brief history of how National Park and AONB purposes have evolved (see Annex 2).

This shows that though John Dower's language from his 1945 report still resonates, the legislation that followed has had to be updated.

Today's wording has been clarified by later legislation and now requires each National Park to "conserve and enhance its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage".

AONBs, now designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, still only have a single purpose, and only in relation to 'natural beauty'.

We believe the current purposes are inadequate in relation to natural beauty and nature recovery.

'Wildlife' does not reflect the wider scientific ideas embodied in 'biodiversity' and 'nature'. Nor does it support the concepts of natural capital or ecosystem services.

Nor does 'conserve and enhance' reflect the reality that much of our biodiversity is badly damaged; simply sustaining what we have is not nearly good enough.



## Some important concepts disentangled

- ‘Natural beauty’, although not defined in detail in the legislation underpinning our national landscapes, is considered in that legislation to include flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features.<sup>22</sup>
- ‘Wildlife’ is a non-scientific term that usually covers non-domesticated plants, animals and other organisms.
- ‘Geological and physiographical features’, more usually referred to as ‘geodiversity’, embraces the whole variety of earth materials, forms and processes that constitute and shape the earth.
- ‘Cultural heritage’ concerns the associations of the landscape with people, places or events throughout history and encompasses the built environment, archaeology and designed landscapes, characteristic land management practices and associations with art and the written word.
- The terms ‘wildlife’, ‘flora’, ‘fauna’ and ‘geological and physiographical’ do not entirely embrace all the important aspects inherent in the term ‘biodiversity’.
- ‘Biodiversity’ is defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity as: “the variability among living organisms from all sources including .... (that) within species, between species and of ecosystems”.
- ‘Nature’ is defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in the context of protected areas as always referring to biodiversity, at genetic, species and ecosystem level, and often also refers to geodiversity, landform and broader natural values.

Protecting biodiversity is therefore more than the conservation of fauna and flora or ‘wildlife’ as it includes ecosystems and genetic variation within species.

We propose a new set of wording applicable to both National Parks and AONBs to read as follows:

***Recover, conserve and enhance natural beauty, biodiversity and natural capital, and cultural heritage.***

A revised statutory purpose that combines natural beauty and cultural heritage with the delivery of biodiversity and natural capital would

be very significant. It would be a new statement of the national importance of our national landscapes in providing vital, life supporting ecosystem services, to be placed alongside their established role in protecting landscape and nature of national importance. It would also help enshrine the essential link between people and nature.

<sup>22</sup> Section 114(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and section 92(2) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

## A National Landscapes Service

Our system of landscape protection today is fragmented, sometimes marginalised and often misunderstood. We believe this leads to duplication, wastes resources and diminishes ambition.

We want to see a National Landscapes Service maximise partnerships between national landscapes, set challenging targets and make sure they are met. Key to this would be the National Landscapes Service working alongside Natural England, including creating greater collaboration between different forms of designation, such as National Nature Reserves which are currently often poorly connected, and SSSIs. And working alongside Forestry England on the public forest estate and the Canal and River Trust where relevant.

It should share skills, good practice and link landscapes. It should challenge and help landscape bodies do more than they do now.

Improved oversight, coordination, direction and national focus would enable National Parks and AONBs in their individual management to act more collectively as a 'family' to deliver benefits which could then be expected to exceed the sum of their individual efforts. Oversight by the National Landscapes Service would also facilitate much clearer monitoring of, and reporting upon, the outcomes delivered by national landscapes collectively.

We set out fuller details on the role of a new National Landscapes Service in the New Ways of Working chapter.



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

Today, not enough is known about the state of nature in our national landscapes.

The state of SSSIs is certainly not a sufficient basis for assessing or improving their condition.

If we are to restore nature, and make it resilient – and grasp the economic opportunities which come from properly accounting for and protecting nature – we must start by understanding what we have, and have a regular way of checking its health, so we can focus action in the right areas.

We support the call in the Colchester Declaration from AONBs for such work and argue that this should form part of the Management Plans for all national landscapes.

These assessments should follow a standardised process across landscapes and incorporate a range of data layers. This will enable the identification of specific locations for a range of actions to help improve the ecological resilience of habitats and species.

They should describe the extent and location of habitat networks within each national landscape and links beyond their boundaries.

They should show not just what is present across the whole of our national landscapes but what is not – i.e. what is not there today, but could be.

They should be carried out with and by partners, involving all who are able to contribute.

They should follow natural capital principles. The government's 25 year Environment Plan is underpinned by the natural capital approach and the benefits of this approach are well documented.<sup>23</sup>

This should include for example an asset register which identifies assets that are at risk of going beyond the point they can renew themselves and hence risk being lost forever, and a set of natural capital accounts. We would like to see national landscapes embark on this approach by learning from those who have already trod the path, and in an enterprising spirit. Digital techniques, from satellite imagery to drones and on the ground data, have revolutionised our ability to understand what we have got and there is much more afoot.<sup>24</sup>

These assessments and accounts should then form the basis for prioritised, targeted and long-term programmes and projects of action to recover nature to be set out in the

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<sup>23</sup> Natural Capital Committee: [NCC advice on government's 25 year environment plan](#).

<sup>24</sup> The 'Living England' project being developed by Natural England in partnership with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee is producing the next generation of satellite-based priority habitat mapping of England, and intends to produce it as an open dataset under the Open Government Licence, with big opportunities to aid nature recovery efforts.



national landscapes' strengthened Management Plans (see proposal 3 below), and used to support monitoring, evaluation and reporting on progress.

These must be developed with the involvement, knowledge and experience of those with an interest, not least farmers and land managers, recreational groups, communities and businesses.

We see the collaborative development of these plans – and through them, the articulation of the priorities for landscapes that safeguard beauty, natural capital and public goods for people – as forming the basis on which future farming payments should be made too.

It is important to note that the Environment Bill will place the 25 Year Environment Plan on a statutory footing, ensuring that clear plans are developed and progress reported on in a statutory cycle of Environment Improvement Plans. The concept of Local Natural Capital Recovery Plans is being developed at the moment.

We think it vital that these plans exist at the national landscape level, ideally through the Management Plan route as set out here, and not just as a collection of individual plans by local authorities in those areas.

It makes little sense to develop multiple small-scale plans along administrative lines, when our national landscapes can, and should be, taking a landscape-scale approach in a national context.



## Towards a Register of Exmoor's Natural Capital<sup>25</sup>

In 2017, Professor Dieter Helm, Chairman of the Natural Capital Committee, challenged the Exmoor Society (a group supporting the National Park) to explore how they could use the natural capital concept.

The Exmoor Society quickly rose to the challenge, starting with a project to trial a practical toolkit that would help it identify the ecosystem services provided by Exmoor. They've tested it in three pilot areas which, between them, cover almost all the landscape types in the National Park.

This work has moved forward the natural capital approach in several ways:

1. It proposes a unifying classification describing all elements of natural capital, overcoming the duplication and inconsistencies inherent in existing typologies.
2. It investigates and describes the relationship between natural capital and cultural considerations, a topic that is frequently neglected in other work.
3. It uses landscape character to ensure descriptions of natural capital are place-based, capturing the distinctiveness and special qualities of landform, land cover, management, experiences and perceptions.
4. It shows the importance of involving local knowledge and values to gain the commitment of the people who own, manage or use natural capital. This gives them a personal stake in the concept of natural capital.

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<sup>25</sup> [https://www.exmoorsociety.com/wpcontent/uploads/2018/07/ES\\_Register\\_Report\\_FinalWeb\\_290618.pdf](https://www.exmoorsociety.com/wpcontent/uploads/2018/07/ES_Register_Report_FinalWeb_290618.pdf)

### **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

National Park and AONB Management Plans need to be strengthened to lead natural recovery. They are incredibly important documents which need to be prepared and implemented as such.

They should set out (a) an overall vision and (b) detailed and specific ambitions for the entire area. They must be made clearer. We want to see them:

- developed and implemented in partnership;
- set visionary, ambitious and long-term plans to deliver on their strengthened purposes for nature, people and communities;
- set long-term plans to widen funding sources;
- provide targets and actions against which their performance can be measured;
- be used by the National Landscapes Service to hold landscapes to account for delivery, and support with the allocation of central resources;

- become the guiding framework for setting landscape-scale priorities for future payments for public goods and other relevant schemes such as rural development funds.

With regards to the much stronger role we want to see our national landscapes playing on nature recovery, we think Management Plans must cover a number of important issues. Underpinned by the assessments and natural capital approach we recommend in Proposal 2, these should include measurable steps towards nature-friendly farming, the potential of natural capital, tree planting, peatland restoration, connections beyond their boundaries and areas where the hand of management should be very light indeed and where more intensive farming and landscape management could give way to wilder approaches. We set these out in detail here.

## Role of wilder areas

National Park and AONB Management Plans should support and encourage efforts to create wilder areas in some places.

They should do so while also ensuring the continuation of the cultural traditions which gave our landscapes their natural beauty in the first place.

The diversity and distinctiveness of our national landscapes means we can trial different approaches in different places, from 'letting nature take its course', to active interventions.

In the 1990s the Campaign for national parks published a report, *Wild By Design*, which said that "creative conservation and wilder area creation have a role to play in National Parks".

It noted that wild areas need not be large, but could be: "a wilderness experience has very special qualities that can be encountered in a range of different scenarios from a small pocket of dense woodland to vast open landscapes of heather moorland. The elements that make an area evoke this experience are diverse but principally include a sense of closeness to nature, freedom, solitude and even a sense of danger and challenge".<sup>26</sup>

On a visit to Shenandoah National Park in the United States one member of our panel saw how what was once a farmed landscape has become almost entirely wild, with thick forest and a wide range of species.

Wilder areas do not necessarily mean standing back from these areas completely – it is not a choice for example between farming and wilding, or landscape and biodiversity, but a continuum where there is space for all.

This could include supporting less grazing or different kinds of grazing, with cattle or ponies in places.

In the Lake District, Upper Ennerdale which was largely taken over by the Forestry Commission in the 1930s, and Mardale, which was flooded by the Manchester Corporation at the same time, are unusual in that they are unpopulated – and it is no coincidence that they are now seen as leading examples of wilder areas.

Other places may take a similar path. Some Ministry of Defence land is particularly suitable. So are some areas of the Forest England Estate.

This can only succeed if it is recognised that our landscapes are lived in, with strong cultural traditions including farming which needs to be sustained. The aim should be a balance – not conflict.

<sup>26</sup> Wild by Design, In the National Parks of England and Wales. Council for National Parks (now Campaign for National Parks) 1998.

## Knepp Wildland Project

Knepp is a 3,500 acre estate in West Sussex. Since 2001, the land – once intensively farmed – has been devoted to a pioneering rewilding project. Restoration of the 350 acre Repton park in the middle of the estate provided a chance to look at the land in an entirely different way, suggesting the possibility of rolling out nature conservation across the whole estate.

Using grazing animals as the drivers of habitat creation, alongside the restoration of dynamic, natural water courses, has resulted in extraordinary increases in wildlife. Rare species like turtle doves, nightingales, peregrine falcons and purple emperor butterflies are now breeding here, and populations of more common species are rocketing.

The vision of the Knepp Wildland Project is radically different to conventional nature conservation in that it is not driven by specific goals or target species. Instead, its driving principle is to establish a functioning ecosystem where nature is given as much freedom as possible. The aim is to show how a 'process-led' approach can be a highly effective, low-cost method of ecological restoration – suitable for failing or abandoned farmland – that can work to support established nature reserves and wildlife sites, helping to provide the webbing that will one day connect them together on a landscape scale.

The Knepp Wildland project is now a leading light in the conservation movement, supported since 2010 by Higher Level Stewardship funding. It is an experiment that has produced astonishing wildlife successes in a relatively short space of time and offers solutions for some of our most pressing problems like soil restoration, flood mitigation, water and air purification, pollinating insects and carbon sequestration.

### **Response to climate change**

National landscapes should take a leading role in the response to climate change through their Management Plans.

The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) has set out ambitious targets for peatland restoration and for afforestation, as part of their Net Zero report, and the government will soon publish an England Peat Strategy and an England Tree Strategy setting out how it will incorporate the new ambitions for England's afforestation and peatlands.

National Parks and AONBs must be clear how they will support these ambitions, securing natural beauty as this happens.

### ***Increasing tree cover***

Trees play a vital role in combatting climate change, acting not only as a carbon sink, but offering myriad other benefits, like habitat connectivity, biodiversity improvement, help with preventing soil erosion, and reducing flood risk.

People like them, too. Trees were heavily featured in the almost 1,000 photos people submitted to our call for evidence.

But they are under threat. Many isolated field trees are ageing or unwell. Tree diseases, particularly the catastrophe of Ash Dieback, are spreading fast. If nothing is done in some places, such as the White Peak in Derbyshire and Staffordshire, tree cover may diminish not increase.

The National Park Authorities and the Forestry Commission published an accord in 2018<sup>27</sup> to improve joint working in local areas and to develop a more collaborative approach to respond to climate change.

This is a good starting point but the pace needs to step up. We found limited ambition in woodland creation and some understandable concern about the landscape impact of doing it badly.

There are no specific figures for either tree cover or planting rates in national landscapes but work in this review suggests they have often been slow to support it.

This needs to change. The challenge ahead is huge: the CCC target requires 30,000ha of tree planting per year – about 48m trees per year UK-wide.

The UK-wide maximum potential is estimated to be around 40,000ha/year, but planting rates in recent years have been nowhere near this amount. In 2018 it was just 8,900ha across the UK, with only 1,273ha in England.<sup>28</sup>

We think that the National Forest in the East Midlands is an admirable example of how tree cover can be increased in a way which strengthens natural beauty and works with landowners and local communities. The new Northern Forest has the potential to succeed in the same way.

New woodland should make use of appropriate trees, allowed to regenerate naturally, with respect for the landscape and look and traditions of the places in which they grow. For example, there may be certain landscapes, such as open downland slopes, where woodland planting would not be appropriate. But even here, the adjoining river valleys could host more trees.

### ***Restoring peatland***

Peatland makes up about 15% of National Parks and 18% of AONBs, with big variations among them – over 40% of the North Pennines AONB is peatland for example (see table at Annex 6 for full figures).

But currently over 70% of England's peatlands are either drained or in poor condition. The true cost of taking this national asset for granted has only recently begun to emerge. Research recently revealed that degraded peat in England is emitting approximately 11m tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents every year.

The CCC set ambitious targets for peatland restoration in its Net Zero report, suggesting the area of restored UK peatland could increase from the current 25% to around 55-70% by 2050, with the remaining

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accord-between-forestry-commission-england-and-national-parks-england>

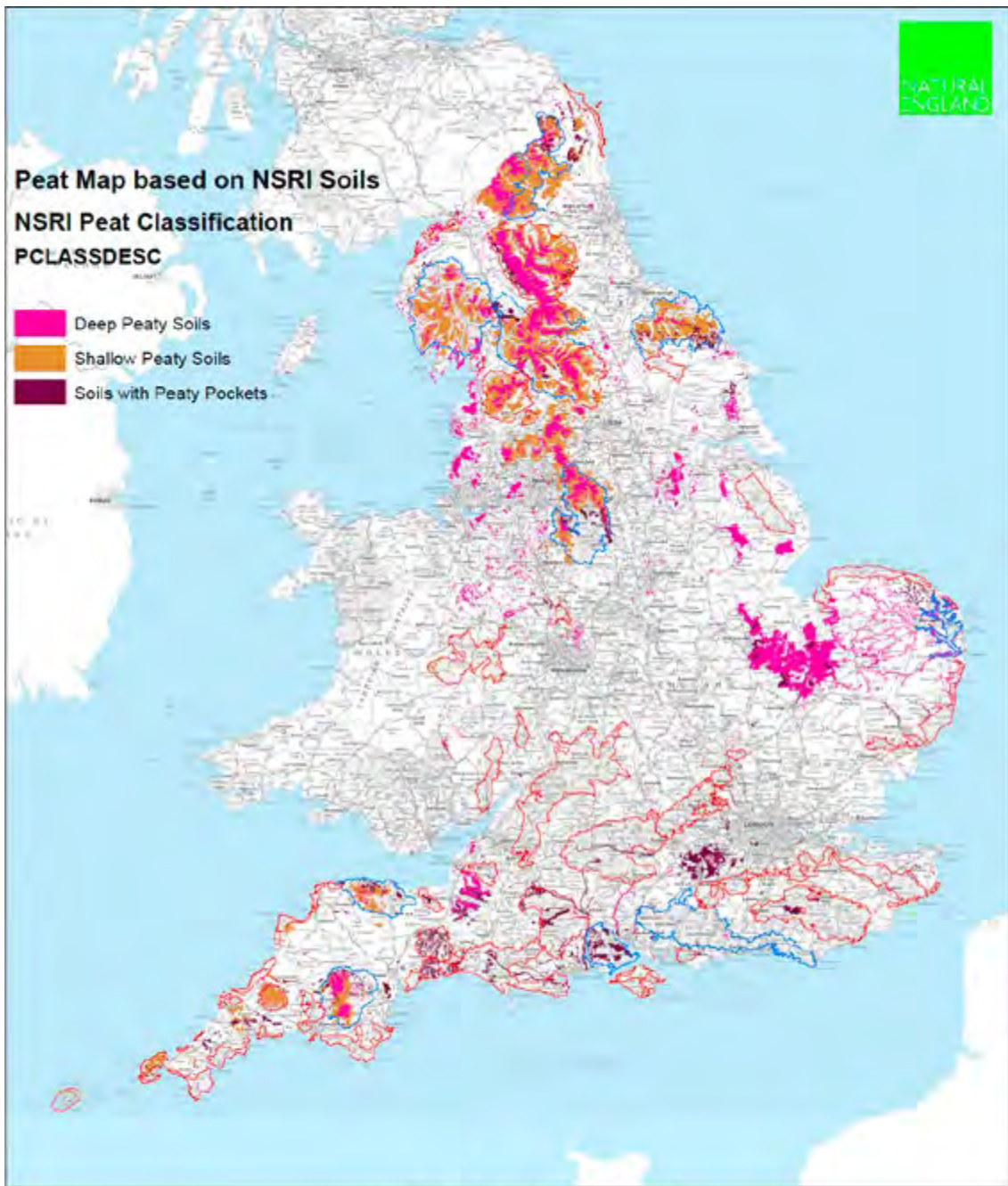
<sup>28</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/808858/Government-supported-new-planting-trees-England-2018-19-.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/808858/Government-supported-new-planting-trees-England-2018-19-.pdf)

lowland peat area being more sustainably managed.

Many national landscapes, such as the Peak District and Northumberland National Parks have been at the forefront of peatland restoration. They have capitalised on the significant benefits that can be gained from rewetting peat, from wildfire mitigation to reduced flooding, but others have been slower to embrace these opportunities.

Given the multiple natural capital benefits it provides, peatland restoration should be a priority for all National Parks and AONBs that contain it. All should be involved in the local partnerships that are actively developing peatland restoration plans, whether existing schemes, or new ones being facilitated by Natural England as pilots for the forthcoming England Peat Strategy; a great opportunity to be involved at an early stage and shape the national framework being developed for peat restoration in England.





**NSRI Peat Soils &  
AONB (red)  
National Parks (blue)**

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Ordnance Survey Licence Number 100023211



Map Reference: NE190222-1149-004  
Mapped by: Camie Payne (2019)  
GI and Analysis Team, Natural England



## Peatland Restoration in AONBs and National Parks

Programmes such as *Moors for the Future* in the Peak District and the North Pennines AONBs *Peatland Programme*, have been restoring peatlands since the early 2000s. The Yorkshire Peat Partnership (hosted by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust) includes the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authorities, and Nidderdale and the Forest of Bowland AONB Partnerships, while other restoration programmes have also been active in the Lake District, Northumberland, Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks and on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall AONB. This work has often been carried out under the umbrella of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme.

The restoration work involves re-wetting large areas of blanket bog through grip (drain) and gully blocking, and revegetating bare and eroding peat. This protects the carbon-rich soil, benefits vegetation communities and supports wading birds including curlew, golden plover and dunlin. As well as its importance for biodiversity and climate change mitigation, it can play a vital role in flood-risk management and addressing both sediment load and water colour in our rivers.

This work has restored around 110,000ha of peatland, an area around twice the size of Leeds. This equates to 3.3Mt of avoided CO<sub>2</sub> losses and enables the sequestration of between 121,000 to 330,000 tCO<sub>2</sub> equivalent/year.

Willing landowners and tenants, government agencies and water companies have also had a crucial role to play in helping the landscape teams deliver this work; over £50m in funding has been raised from the EU (LIFE and INTERREG funds), Defra, Environment Agency, Water Companies, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Trusts and Foundations.

## Legal status of Management Plans

Improved Management Plans should be given strengthened statutory recognition.

National landscapes must carry proper weight when public bodies carry out activities that might affect them. Currently, such public bodies have a duty to have 'regard' to their purposes and we have heard in strong terms from very many respondents to our call for evidence that this is too weak.

The requirements on public bodies with regards to national landscapes' Management Plans is even weaker. Management Plans have legal status only in so far as there is a statutory requirement for National Park Authorities, and local authorities in the case of AONBs, to produce and periodically review them.<sup>29</sup> There is no legislative requirement for

relevant public bodies to commit to their implementation, and this has consequences for the energy put into their implementation, by some of these partners in some locations, limiting their effectiveness.

Both need improvement.

First, 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.

The ultimate aim of both measures is to ensure that public bodies do much more to support the aims and work of our national landscapes and managing bodies, though precise legal wording should be finessed.

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<sup>29</sup> Section 66 of the Environment Act 1995) requires National Park Authorities to produce Management Plans and to review them every five years. Sections 89 and 90 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CRoW Act) creates a statutory responsibility for local authorities and Conservation Boards to produce AONB Management Plans and thereafter to review adopted and published Plans at intervals of not more than five years.



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

The establishment of a national Nature Recovery Network is set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan.

The Lawton Review set out the need to move beyond wildlife contained in isolated reserves and towards whole landscapes that are vibrant, wildlife-rich, and ecologically functioning. The aim of policy today reflects this and aims to improve, expand and connect habitats to address wildlife decline while providing wider environmental benefits for people.

Our national landscapes could not be better placed to put into effect Nature Recovery Networks. As Sir John Lawton said, “AONBs and National Parks...could be very important for enhancing the resilience of the network by providing large areas of high quality wildlife habitat”.

However they are not achieving anything like their potential, as Sir John Lawton also recognised: “the evidence that protected landscapes provide biodiversity benefits over and above those delivered by SSSI or LWS [Local Wildlife Sites] designations outside these areas is mixed”.

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.

National landscapes should therefore help to catalyse common plans and visions for their areas and indeed into the landscapes that lay beyond their boundaries. They should work jointly across national landscapes and beyond to offer a strategic view on common biodiversity issues, as well as development, especially in the south east.

They should facilitate processes that result in target-based plans, lead in taking steps toward their delivery, convene and encourage others to work in partnership and measure and audit what is being done, always seeking to join things up to create a greater whole.

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.

As set out above, the on-the-ground delivery of the kinds of goals we speak about will rely on partnerships. The National Landscapes Service should play a central role in ensuring a 'gold standard' in partnership is happening everywhere and in fulfilling Lawton's aspiration for our national landscapes to provide "coherent and resilient ecological networks".

### Dorset AONB habitat mapping<sup>30</sup>

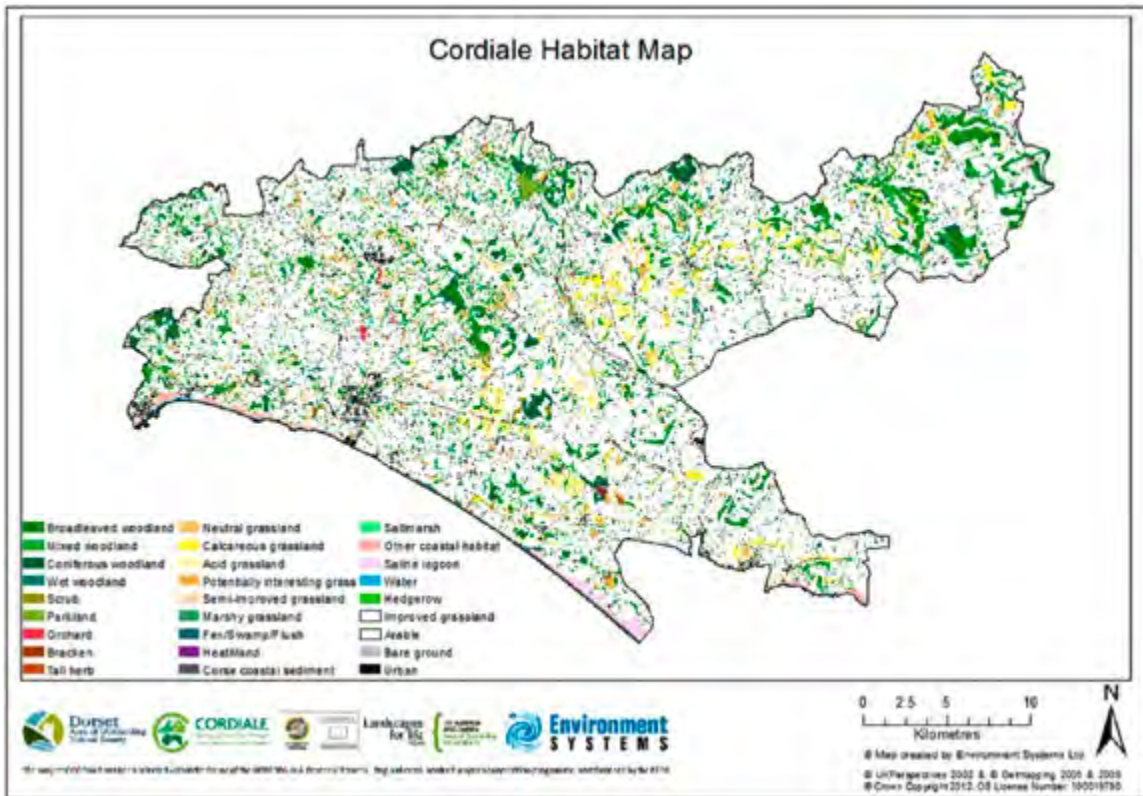
Dorset AONB has completed a pioneering study that identifies areas to prioritise action to arrest biodiversity decline, enhance existing habitats and create new ones. The work covered by this project has been carried out under the auspices of the EU Cordiale project for managing landscape change (<http://www.cordialeproject.eu>).

The AONB has mapped existing high quality ('core') habitats and then evaluated the ability of different species to move freely through the landscape. If species can move freely between 'core' habitats, then the resulting ecological networks can both protect these habitats, and potentially reverse a decline in biodiversity.

Ecological knowledge together with advanced data processing and earth observation expertise enabled the team to establish a rules based classification of the AONB landscape. Through this classification, broad habitat classes were selected to be mapped. 'Core' semi-natural habitat, 'potential' and 'permeable' areas of the woodland, grassland, wetland and heathland were classified and habitat networks created by combining the locations of suitable target areas with the 'permeability' of the surrounding landscape. Buffer zones around these core networks representing the distance species could move through the surrounding land cover were also created. Restoration of these buffer areas will have the most benefit by enhancing the existing network. New small fragmented patches of habitat were also identified to provide 'nodes' for further network expansion.

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30 <https://www.barsc.org.uk/mapping-habitat-connectivity-in-the-dorset-aonb/>



## Poole Harbour catchment initiative<sup>31</sup>

Dorset AONB is amongst a number of organisations working with Wessex Water to tackle the many challenges facing the water environment, taking an integrated approach to sharing knowledge and delivering long term improvements that will protect the water, land and people in the catchment area.

One of these issues is the high level of nitrogen and phosphorus in waterways, undesirable because it encourages excessive growth of algae which smothers native plants and reduces oxygen levels in the water, which can affect fish. A catchment management approach is being used to offset nitrate contained in the effluent discharged from Dorchester's water recycling centre.

The aim is to reduce the amount of nitrogen entering Poole Harbour by 40 tonnes of nitrogen per year by 2020. By working with farmers to reduce agriculturally derived nitrate from the catchment, it is hoped to avoid building an expensive and less sustainable nitrate removal plant. Work is taking place with farmers in a targeted area of the Poole Harbour catchment to:

- identify and raise awareness of water quality issues
- share the results of water, soil, crop and manure testing
- provide advice and information on ways to improve the efficient use of key inputs

An example of this is encouraging farmers to grow cover crops to reduce leaching while locking up nutrients that can be utilised by the subsequent crop.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/environment/catchment-partnerships/poole-harbour-catchment-partnership>

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

We believe the future ELMS should recognise the special qualities of national landscapes.

This is not a review into farming policy. Plans for ELMS will apply to the country as a whole, not just to national landscapes, and are being developed elsewhere in government.

But it is obvious that ELMS, if it comes in as proposed, will have a bigger effect on our national landscapes than anything else being planned by government.

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 ELMS fulfil its promises to make the schemes flexible, long-term and locally adaptable.

It should give priority to farmers and land managers who aim to regenerate the natural environment and who collaborate to restore habitats and work across landscapes.

It should also give weight to the special status of national

landscapes as places for nature and natural beauty.

It should support a broad range of public goods including the recovery of biodiversity, but also natural beauty and access.

It should support the people and cultural traditions of our national landscapes, too.

The case for change is strong.

The 2019 RSA *Food, Farming and Countryside Commission* report, *Our Future in the Land*, is explicit:

“Driven by poor policy and perverse incentives, the food and farming system has become one of the main drivers of human and ecosystem crisis”, it states. “We need leaders who can hold together broad coalitions of interests, unified around a connecting mission, to imagine a better version of our shared future, and to translate shared intention into collective action.”<sup>32</sup>

At present, we have a system which costs taxpayers huge amounts of money and yet often destroys nature and natural beauty and leaves many farmers in upland areas making losses. It is the definition of unsustainable.

We can be optimistic about the possibility of doing far better.

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32 <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/future-land>



## Role of farming

We should be confident about the positive role farming can play.

Repeatedly in this review we have seen outstanding examples of the way good farming practice can restore nature, and more than that we have seen that enthusiasm for this is growing.

To spend time in somewhere such as Matterdale, in the northern Lake District, is to see a valley landscape whose local custodians are changing its ecology for the better, on their own initiative, while continuing to farm. And this is not an exception. The work of farm clusters in Cranborne Chase and the South Downs, and of farmers coming together in Exmoor for example, shows the potential.

In encouraging this, we also need to see well-managed farming as a good in itself. Especially in the uplands, it is the guardian of the natural beauty and cultural identity of our national landscapes. The Lake District is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site specifically because its landscape was created and is sustained by its upland farming.

The tradition of farming on shared common land, too, is a powerful feature of many of our national landscapes; from the Pennines to Dartmoor and Exmoor and, in a different form, it has shaped and conserved the New Forest. In it lie the essentials of landscape-scale working to support natural beauty; 88% of common land carries some kind of environmental designation and almost all of it is open to public access.

But commoning is also part of a cultural tradition of a kind that has been lost in many other parts of Europe.

Of course there can be tensions between farming and landscapes too. Some places have been farmed badly, over or undergrazed, and not only because the subsidy system has encouraged it.

We want to see a coming together of ambition for our natural environment and our farming communities.

It is, for instance, the aim of the declaration agreed in April 2019 by farmers, land managers, the Lake District National Park, government agencies and others at a meeting organised by the Foundation for Common Land, attended by the Prince of Wales:

“In this time of change we in the Lakes will work collectively to empower and enable thriving farm businesses and communities to create enhanced habitats and networks for nature in this celebrated cultural landscape,” it states.

This is a model for greater partnership not just in farming, but in wider land management too, and resonates especially with the issues in some of the upland landscapes. Moors are a feature of many National Parks and AONBs and many are managed for shooting. In the course of this review, we have been left in no doubt about the controversy this causes. This is not the place to set out a firm answer here.

We respect the passion on both sides but note that both have one interest at heart: healthy moors, with good biodiversity. Well-managed moors

can achieve that and overcome past mistakes such as the draining of uplands, mostly encouraged not by grouse management but by government. We shouldn't blame all failings on shooting interests, but nor can that excuse owners and managers from bad management or the lack of species which one would expect to see in the upland landscape. A balance is the way forward. Partnership and compromise should allow land to work for nature, without conflict with people.

### **Special significance of national landscapes**

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

Four decades of production and area-based support through the CAP has resulted in a catastrophic decline in nature in our national landscapes. We have heard often of centrally dictated conditions which are at odds with nature-sensitive farming.

The decision to focus future public money on public goods presents a major opportunity to help our National Parks and AONBs.

The majority of public goods in mind – better air and water quality, improved soil health, public access to the countryside, measures to reduce flooding and improve biodiversity – directly support the purposes of enhancing natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and helping the public enjoy these special places.

We believe the priorities for our landscapes should flow from

improved Management Plans which need statutory recognition. These plans should be backed by concrete actions, determined using natural capital approaches, shaped by partners, informed by accurate data and whose delivery is monitored and assessed.

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.

It may be, however, that over time some landscapes, particularly larger ones take a leading role in creating bespoke schemes.

We argue that it is essential that funds should also be payable for wider public benefits such as supporting public access, education, supporting rural communities, and enhancing the beauty of the landscape, for example through features such as stone walls.

We think the phrase 'Environmental Land Management Schemes', even if it is a temporary title, risks diminishing the importance of these wider public goods a new scheme should support.

We also think serious consideration should be given to other, connected public and private funding streams using these re-energised Management Plans to direct their

own funds. The obvious ones that align to ELMS would be the Shared Prosperity Funding, which is intended to replace EU structural funding after Brexit, and funds to improve water quality and flood risk within the water industry.

### **Working with farmers and land managers**

It is essential that farmers and land managers are meaningfully involved in the process of shaping ELMS and this should be done through engagement in the Management Plan.

Managing land is not short-term. It is done best working with those who understand it, want to achieve something positive out of it and are involved in making decisions about it as part of a bigger ambition.

Relationships in some areas need strengthening. Farmers sometimes feel that conversations with their local National Parks and AONBs are tokenistic. Decisions are taken far away from the farms themselves in offices, with meetings scheduled at times that ignore the realities of the farming calendar.

Key to constructive conversations will be all national landscapes having dedicated farm advisers that land managers can trust. Where these are in place now, farmers often work well with them.

### **The transition to new Environmental Land Management Schemes**

In planning for ELMS we should remember that what happens now matters a lot.

The transition from the current agri-environment schemes to a future one has perils as well as benefits.

In the history of agri-environment schemes, uptake has peaked and troughed. Even at its peak in 2015, nature failed to benefit as it could have done.

Agri-environment scheme take-up is now falling;<sup>33</sup> in part, we heard from farmers, because it is complex, inflexible and payments have a reputation for being late and erratic. There is also uncertainty about new schemes becoming available.

We have had consistent feedback that current schemes are too prescriptive and date driven, not allowing farmers and land managers to make on the ground decisions for the benefit of nature.

There is a risk of farmers falling out of agri-environment schemes altogether.

We urge that more attention be given to the transition period to ELMS, to ensure our national landscapes do not suffer harm while a new schemes are being designed.

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<sup>33</sup> In 2015 80% of total AONB area was in an agri-environment scheme; at end July 2019 this stood at 42%. This is at least in part due to the Environmental Stewardship scheme being phased out and replaced by the Countryside Stewardship scheme. Source: Natural England (available in draft in August 2019) monitoring trends since 2013 in environmental outcomes in protected landscapes, undertaken by the University of Plymouth.

## **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**

Sympathetic land management for re-energised conservation purposes is at the heart of what national landscapes can offer the nation. But there is more to conservation than land management, and the planning system has long played a critical role in protecting National Parks and AONBs.

The ability to control and/or influence development that would have an adverse impact on our national landscapes is crucial. We feel a number of areas of planning need addressing.

### **National Parks**

Arguably the biggest role National Parks currently play in shaping landscapes and affecting those who live in them is as statutory planning authorities.

We don't suggest this power should change, although we think there are improvements which could be made to separate the planning function from other work they also need to do, which we set out in the New Ways of Working chapter.

We think their planning powers are important, the protections they give are essential and we don't think they hold progress back.

There will always be grumblings with regard to individual planning decisions made but we think for the most part they do a difficult job well.

### **AONBs – statutory consultee status**

AONBs need a stronger voice in planning. The pressures on AONBs are often greater, especially in the south east, and their voice is not always heard.

They should not become responsible for day to day decisions on planning as National Parks are. Most AONBs don't want this power, and very few argued for it in our call for evidence.

But 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.

At present, statutory consultee status for AONBs sits solely with Natural England which, as a national body, cannot be expected to know every area in the way a dedicated local AONB team does.

We are aware that local planning authorities are already required to prepare policies specific to AONBs. They must meet new rules on a 'Duty to Co-operate', and 'Statements of

Common Ground' are expected to support this. But we heard repeatedly and convincingly in the course of this review that this is not sufficient.

Statutory consultee status should encourage developers to consult AONB bodies before making a formal planning application, to facilitate good design and mitigation and – with net gain soon to be mandated – helping secure this. It is better to have a partnership approach than an adversarial one.

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.

### **AONBs – local plans**

Single local plans for AONBs do not exist. They are prepared at local authority level so AONBs can be subject to different plans and policies for each of the constituent local authorities they sit within.

We heard repeatedly that planning policies and decisions, especially in large AONBs, can vary immensely between authorities. There is often no shared vision for the landscape as a whole, with different local authorities taking different approaches, inconsistent with the AONBs' purpose and character.

This can be done better. We heard in the Arnside and Silverdale AONB how two local authorities came together to support a single Development Plan for the AONB.

## Arnside and Silverdale AONB Development Plan Document

A dedicated Development Plan Document (DPD) for Arnside and Silverdale AONB has been prepared jointly by South Lakeland District Council and Lancaster City Council, with support from Arnside and Silverdale AONB Partnership. The AONB DPD, the first of its kind in the country, is part of both authorities' local plans and complements the AONB Management Plan.

The AONB DPD includes specific development management policies for the AONB and a number of land allocations where housing and employment development has been found to be appropriate. It also designates open spaces within settlements that make a significant contribution to their character as Key Settlement Landscapes, to be protected from development. Public open spaces valued for their recreational importance are also identified and protected. It includes a policy that 50% of all new housing in the AONB on sites of two or more dwellings should be affordable, in order to ensure affordable housing is actually delivered in the area. The overall development strategy is to take a landscape capacity-led approach with the AONB purpose as the central consideration.

The AONB DPD sets out a joint planning policy approach to ensure development is planned and managed in a way that conserves and enhances the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB. Any new development should seek to deliver enhancements to the landscape, biodiversity and settlement character wherever possible. Robust implementation of the AONB DPD will help to enable the local authorities to fulfil their statutory duty to have regard to the AONB purpose in their decision-making with respect to planning matters.

The DPD was adopted on 13 March 2019 as part of the Lancaster City local plan and as part of the South Lakeland local plan on 28 March 2019.

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.

We understand that not all AONBs will have the capacity to produce one soon – but they should work towards one together with their constituent local authorities, and be supported to do so. We also accept that AONBs with especially small planning loads, or single local authorities may not feel this is necessary, and we agree different approaches should be tried.

In the case of the Chilterns and the Cotswolds which already have

Conservation Board Status and with aspirations to become National Parks, we think a single statutory local plan is required for the entirety of their area. This could also apply to other especially large AONBs which cross multiple local authority boundaries and under particular development pressure, for instance, the High Weald and the Kent Downs.

### Strategic planning

Some of the most controversial developments in national landscapes

are not local issues at all, but subject to national policy and we think there are several areas where the place of all national landscapes needs clarifying in the planning system.

We welcome the recent revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which have strengthened the place of National Parks and AONBs. But guidance should make clearer that developments proposed in the areas buffering national landscapes' boundaries must avoid detrimental impacts on them.

## National Planning Policy Framework, 2019, paragraph 172

"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest."

We think that the NPPF should make a reality of its promise that 'great weight' should be given to national landscapes by issuing new advice that will secure confident delivery of this aim by both public and private sector players. In situations where such cases are determined with the expert advice of the National Infrastructure Commission, we urge the government to give the strongest emphasis to its commitment to our national landscapes. They should

not be the place for major intrusive developments unless, as is stated in the NPPF,<sup>34</sup> they are truly in the national interest without any possible alternative locations being available.

Such guidance should also help ensure that our proposed new third purpose (social and economic development which enhances the first two purposes; see the Living in Landscapes chapter for our recommendation on this) will be effectively implemented and that this

<sup>34</sup> Paragraph 172 of [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/810197/NPPF\\_Feb\\_2019\\_revised.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf)

applies to all national landscapes and not just National Parks as currently.

Guidance should also ensure that care is taken around the boundaries of our national landscapes to prevent a situation where inappropriate developments are tactically sited on beautiful and important areas just outside.

The current Permitted Development Rights (PDR) system should also be reviewed and, if necessary, further PDRs should be added to the list of those currently withdrawn within national landscapes to ensure that the full application process applies before determining planning approval.

For example, forestry and agricultural changes allowed under permitted development can have significant

impacts on landscape quality, and the South East and East Protected Landscapes forum has made a convincing case that these should be reviewed.

We also welcome the development of net gain during the course of this review and hope it is adopted in our national landscapes as soon as possible.

Finally, national landscapes should have the flexibility to use funds collected through Section 106 agreements and, where relevant, the New Homes Bonus raised by the constituent authorities, to support locally needed affordable housing, services or community infrastructure.



## Chapter 2: Landscapes for Everyone

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“Every day, millions of people find themselves deepened and dignified by their encounters with particular places ... brought to sudden states of awe by encounters ... whose power to move us is beyond expression”, the landscape writer Robert Macfarlane has argued.

He expresses a truth which is not always easy to explain through the usual measurements of economics or science. Our landscapes, and their natural beauty, matter in themselves. They shape who we are, how we feel about each other and they make us happy. They are about people as well as place.

That is why the ideal of England’s green and pleasant land feels real to many of us. The British countryside makes more people proud of their country than anything else, even above the NHS and royal family.<sup>35</sup> It defines how England is seen abroad. Books about our natural beauty fill bookshops. We care about what happens in the countryside, even if we don’t live in it.

Our national landscapes can excite or calm us, test us or unite us, regardless of age or background.

Access to the countryside, for returning heroes who had risked their

lives to keep their country free, was one of the reasons National Parks were founded.

Some will always want the solitude of the wild fells, drawn to the joy of tramping up Eskdale past Hardknott on a frosty March morning, or taking a pony across Exmoor in the long daylight of June. These are pleasures people have enjoyed since the Romantic poets first popularised them, and which were a founding part of the movement which led to the creation of our National Parks.

Many others do different things and the way we visit and use the countryside is changing: mass all-night walks for charities; volunteering; mountain biking; music festivals; scuba diving; glamping; arts trails; cycle racing and more.

But we also know that there are large parts of society that have no relationship with them at all. Their overall popularity masks big differences in the types of people who enjoy them. Some remain excluded. We have tried to reach some of those groups during the review. Their views and experiences have heavily shaped our thinking.

The founding mission is even more important today. Changing

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35 [Taking part survey 2014/15](#), Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport, 2015

demographics, physical and mental health and technology mean there are new challenges.

We want to see our landscapes reaching out and welcoming everyone.

## Bowlees Visitor Centre

In 2011 the North Pennines AONB Partnership used LEADER and National Heritage Lottery Fund money to renovate and reopen Bowlees Visitor Centre in Upper Teesdale. Remodelling the building, they created a cafe, toilets, nature-themed gift shop, info-point, interpretation and a gallery and community space.

Outside, the grounds now host artworks, a bird hide, a nature garden, a waterfall trail, a Dark Sky Discovery Site and a 'mud-kitchen' for messy play. It's popular with visiting schools and there's a Saturday morning 'Discovery Club' for families and 'Wild Wednesdays' in the holidays. The Centre provides a gateway to the AONB, while creating nine new jobs, generating thousands of volunteer hours and supporting local artists, producers and community activities. It provides a 'shop-window' for the landscape, nature and heritage of the North Pennines, but also for the work of the team and partners. The 2019 season will see it break the 50,000 visitor barrier for the first time. Bowlees was the North East of England 'Small Visitor Attraction of the Year in 2017'.

## Wye Valley River Festival

The Wye Valley River Festival is an ambitious biennial arts and environment festival run by the Wye Valley AONB Partnership in 2014, 2016 and 2018. The festivals are co-created with local communities and professional artists, providing the opportunity to engage the public in fresh ways about conserving and enhancing the landscape. Over three festivals they reached audiences of 81,500 with inspiring art focused on the special qualities of the landscape, nurturing emotional connections with the natural environment. The festival is multi-sited with events spread around the Wye Valley AONB, between Hereford and Chepstow, over 16 days in early May. Funding comes from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund, Arts Council, local partners and many smaller donors, sponsors and in-kind support. Through the festival, the AONB Partnership has built new relationships linking outdoor arts with more familiar partners from built and natural heritage, landowners, local communities, tourism and recreation, deepening their appreciation of the Wye Valley.

Central to each festival has been a theatrical narrative, developed by Bristol street theatre company Desperate Men, that brings to life the issues around the theme. The build up to each festival also has an outreach programme of activity in schools and local communities. The 2014 theme was 'Nature and Culture'; in 2016 it was 'Water' and the relationship to it locally and globally; 'Woods & Trees' was the 2018 focus. For the next festival in 2020, with a projected budget of £300,000, the theme is 'Time' as now is the time to act for nature and the climate.

### What we found

Each year, millions of people visit our national landscapes.

They are doing so more than ever before and more frequently. This is an upward trend that holds across different parts of the population and ranges from a few minutes out of the home to long trips. Around 65% of adults living in England report taking visits to the natural environment at least once a week.<sup>36</sup>

A huge proportion of these visits occur within our national landscapes.

The Natural England 2019 MENE Report estimates that 100m people visit English National Parks each year, and a separate report, that visitors generated an estimated £3 billion of spend in 2017.<sup>37</sup>

Significantly more people visit AONBs (170m) and separate estimates for individual AONBs include 23m visitor days each year in the Cotswolds, with tourism worth around £900m to the local economy; 1.58m visitors each year to the Wye Valley, spending nearly £134m; over 776,000 overnight and day trips to Dedham

<sup>36</sup> Natural England and Office for National Statistics (2019) Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment.  
<sup>37</sup> 2017 STEAM Reports collated by National Parks UK in August 2019.

Vale generating a total tourism value of over £62m.<sup>38</sup>

Statistics can show the scale, but not always the depth of feeling. We wanted to know what people felt about our national landscapes and asked them about this, and to send us their favourite photos (many used throughout this report) as part of our call for evidence.

There is great pride and care for our special places, and a great appreciation that there is a system in place to protect them. Respondents highlighted not just the scenic value but the impact on wellbeing.

The Ramblers referred to the importance of “Being connected with nature, the beauty and the elements” and another that National Parks and AONBs are important for “providing a feeling of freedom and spiritual renewal, and escape from widespread industrialisation and the disconnection from our physical world that comes with it”.

### **But this masks disparities – some are excluded**

Having an increasing number of people enjoying our national landscapes, caring for them as the evidence to our review has shown, is positive.

But it also masks big differences in *who* is using them.

If you grew up knowing how to read an Ordnance Survey map, or learnt the joys and sometimes miseries

of hillwalking in the mist as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award, or if you have retired to a village, the countryside can seem a very open and welcoming place; and it mostly is. But we don’t think it is good, either for the countryside or for our society, that there are people cut off from the possibilities it offers.

The statistics show certain groups especially disconnected.<sup>39</sup> Most visits are made by the same (better off, less diverse) people repeatedly, and those who miss out are the older, the young – especially adolescents – and those from lower socio-economic groups and black, Asian and minority ethnic communities:

- 13% of children (under 16) and 5% of young people (aged 16-24) typically never visit the natural environment or even spend any of their leisure time outdoors.
- Children are spending less time unsupervised outside and children from black, Asian and minority ethnic, and low income, communities are even less likely to do so.
- 18% of children living in the most deprived areas never visit the natural environment at all.
- 20% fewer Visibly Minority Ethnic (VME) children go out into green spaces weekly compared to white, middle-class children.

38 Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013-18; Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Destination Management Plan 2015 – 2020; Economic Impact of Tourism, Dedham Vale AONB – 2017.

39 Natural England’s 2018 MENE report on children and young people; Natural England and Office for National Statistics (2018) Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment; Richardson, M., McEwan, K., & Garip, G. (2018). 30 Days Wild: who benefits most? *Journal of Public Mental Health*, 17(3), 95-104.

- Children from deprived backgrounds visit 10% more than VME children.
- The numbers of children going on school visits to the countryside is shockingly low at just 6-7%.
- The groups which visit the countryside least are those aged 65 and over, members of the black, Asian and minority ethnic population and residents living in the most deprived areas of England.

Conversations during our visits have highlighted the scale of the challenge. The director of one outward bound centre talked of children crawling on their hands and knees up hills during a forest walk, as they had not encountered such terrain before. A study for the Broads National Park found that of 623 local children asked, only two knew that a broad was in any way associated with water.

An evaluation of the '30 days wild intervention' run by the Wildlife Trusts each year has found that, while it generally attracts those who are already nature connected, those who are less connected receive the most benefit from engaging with nature over the 30 days.<sup>40</sup>

## Barriers – 'the Club'

Knowing these differences existed, we wanted to hear from those who would not normally visit national landscapes, and those who do but face obstacles such as disabilities. We wanted to hear from the young and people who live in cities as well as rural areas, or those who work with visitors such as rangers.

We did it working with the Policy Lab team in the Cabinet Office, who carried out filmed ethnographic interviews and vox pops, spending time in people's homes as well as visiting national landscapes with them. They produced over 60 hours of footage which we found compelling and among the most powerful evidence considered by the review. You can view a summary video here [https://youtu.be/FTKMY-\\_TjHA](https://youtu.be/FTKMY-_TjHA).

This exposed the barriers people face and the positive real impacts contact with our most special places can have. One person told how they got inquisitive looks and comments when in the countryside: "look, an Asian person in the woods". And the team directly experienced this when visiting with black and minority ethnic families, having to stop filming to minimise stares from passersby.

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40 Richardson, M., McEwan, K., & Garip, G. (2018). 30 Days Wild: who benefits most? *Journal of Public Mental Health*, 17(3), 95-104.

In conversations with non-visitors – young people at a youth club with family origins from Slovakia, Lithuania, Bangladesh and Pakistan – we heard that their perceptions of National Parks in England are influenced by national parks in their countries of origin. These are perhaps places of danger due to animals or lack of maintenance, and often incur an entrance charge, and they have no reason to expect National Parks in England to be any different.

Others said that they hadn't heard of National Parks, but often visit their local park. "I've been to safari parks", "They're like a museum", "Like zoos?" people said when asked what a National Park was for.

Many communities in modern Britain feel that these landscapes hold no relevance for them. The countryside is seen by both black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and white people as very much a 'white' environment. If that is true today, then the divide is only going to widen as society changes. Our countryside will end up being irrelevant to the country that actually exists.



Peak District MOSAIC Champions

## Introducing new audiences to the Broads National Park

A 'Water, Mills and Marshes' pilot project run by English+ (a charity based in Norwich) in partnership with Natural England and the Broads Authority is bringing together individuals and families of recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers along with members of other migrant communities who often find themselves isolated.

The project provides:

- Family educational trips to explore new areas close to home.
- Outreach opportunities for people to join existing teams of volunteers carrying out conservation work in the Broads National Park.
- Integration with local communities and increased understanding of each other's cultures, beliefs and values.
- Education in conservation as well as improving participants' mental health and wellbeing, helping create a sense of place and belonging in their new country.

The project is helping to maintain and conserve the natural landscape but more than this, families who often can't afford to take their children on holiday get to spend quality time together in a beautiful environment, and their children have something exciting to share about their holidays when they return to school.

The pilot is proving to be very successful. Families are learning about the Broads, finding places they enjoy, making return visits and sharing their experiences with their friends. It is helping to provide respite from stressful lives and situations and the Broads landscape is benefitting too.

The next step is to put together a three-year programme and apply for additional funding.

But diversity is not only an issue of ethnic background. It can be one of age, wealth or educational background. There are hugely successful links between landscapes and young people, with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and school visits. But it was very striking in the course of the review how many other young people played no part in such schemes, and how much joy they got from discovering what they offer.

Policy Lab heard, for instance, from a 22-year old from Cheshire: "Even

though I was only [growing up] in Macclesfield, about 20 minutes, half an hour away, I didn't really know about the National Park and it wasn't until I got older that I even realised it was there."

"We're only four or five miles from the centre of Brighton, but for a lot of people it could be a different universe," a ranger from the South Downs National Park, said.

The things which put people off can be as simple as transport. "The trains

aren't too regular. Today we would've been looking at having to be here for about four or five hours in order to get a return journey that wasn't within the same half hour," we heard from one teaching assistant about access from Middlesbrough to the North York Moors.

But even when there is good access by public transport, as there is from Sheffield into the Peak District, understanding can be a barrier. "In the Peak District, you might hear a noise and think someone's hiding there... or farmers with guns," one member of a Sheffield youth club said.

There is also a group of people identified through Policy Lab research as being very familiar and particularly engaged with national landscapes. They may have grown up visiting them as children, or work or volunteer in them and feel very comfortable out in the environment.

Policy Lab termed these people as being members of what one might call 'the club'. This can be seen by some to be an exclusive membership, and all members feel they have a right to access national landscapes. It is as if access to the countryside involves joining a club. Those on the inside get the benefits. Those on the outside need ways in which to join.

Part of the issue appears to be that little is known about what those who don't visit our national landscapes need or want. The video ethnography we did helps shine a light, but it is nowhere near sufficient.

Policy Lab work produced many uplifting comments and moments which explain the power of natural beauty for people. "You start to get

in tune with the seasons and that has made me slow down because you can't hurry winter up, you can't hurry spring up...and I feel less panicked about life in general because you're working with the cycle of the land," one trainee ranger said. "This is where you find peace. You can't charge your phone in a tree," said another.

"How precious it is to leave the city life, hustle and bustle after working Monday to Friday," we heard from one regular ethnic minority visitor to the Peak District. "It's a joyous feeling to get up in the morning and say 'Peak District here I come, I need therapy, I need to revive me!'" One woman with her described the "experience of feeling free, feeling happy, just walking, smiling and talking to my friends".

"It's weird because you've never seen the high places before, it's weird seeing all this from so high," said a 13-year old visiting the North York Moors for the first time from Middlesbrough. "When do you think sunset's going to be?", "Do you think someone could ride [a bike] up here?", "What's over there? Just mountains?", "Is that the countryside?" he asked.

And for many visitors the sense of freedom is what is most attractive. "People talk to you when you're walking, it seems to open people's communications. If you sat the same group of people in a room you'd hardly get any conversation, but if you put them on a walk, whether that's in a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, then people just tend to walk together and communicate, and talk," said one volunteer.



“It doesn’t matter who you are, or what your ability is or what background you’re from or what your circumstances are, everyone should have a right to access the countryside in a National Park,” one ranger told Policy Lab.

### **The purpose to connect people to nature, and its execution, is too weak**

We think part of the problem is that the legal purpose which is supposed to drive our landscape bodies to connect people with our special places is too weak.

As we set out in the previous chapter, the purposes are fundamentally important because they tell us in law what the priorities are and are the basis on which action should happen.

Yet the second purpose of our National Parks to “promote understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public” is too passive, and – in part because of this – it seems to be the thing that they get to when all the other work has been done. It has felt, overall, discretionary, passive and ad hoc. And, though all do it anyway, AONBs don’t even have this purpose.

This is not to diminish the great deal of excellent and varied work carried out by our national landscape bodies to connect people with nature, most of it on a shoestring.

We have had the privilege of seeing many of these during the course of the review and have included some of our favourites in this chapter. National

Parks have made strides against the challenges they were set in the 8-Point Plan<sup>41</sup>, and are contributing firmly to the ambition in the government’s environment plan to connect more people with nature.<sup>42</sup>

In every national landscape, AONBs included, there is at least one brilliant example; a fabulous junior ranger scheme in Dartmoor, support for those on probation in the Peaks, support for new mothers in the Malverns, those with dementia and physical disabilities in Arnside and Silverdale, the fantastic Wye Valley festival.

But we have found this to be uneven and none seem to have the full complement; a landscape doing excellent work with local children but none on health, others with amazing volunteer schemes but with no connection to people beyond their boundaries.

### **Diversity**

And we have found interest, rather than a burning desire to change, when we have discussed diversity. It was rarely raised by those we met. This is unsurprising; as we set out later, the lack of diversity among those governing the bodies looking after our national landscapes is extremely narrow. They are almost all white, almost all male and many are retired. It is not surprising their priorities can seem alien to many. When we conducted research on the make-up of AONB and National

41 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-parks-8-point-plan-for-england-2016-to-2020>

42 For example National Parks have met a target to engage with over 60,000 young people a year through school visits.



Park governing bodies the results were stark:

- There is a large gender imbalance across the membership, with roughly 68% of members being male and only 32% female.
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic board members are extremely rare. Across National Parks and AONBs, together only 0.8% are from black, Asian or ethnic minorities.
- There are no members across any of the boards under the age of 25 and the average member age is 64 in National Parks and 54 in AONBs.<sup>43</sup>

It has been particularly dispiriting to hear how little legacy there is from the 'MOSAIC' projects, funded by the Campaign for National Parks, to increase black, Asian and minority ethnic visitors. There are notable exceptions, the Peaks and North York Moors for example, but they are just that: exceptions.



## Volunteering

We have been lucky enough to spend some time speaking to those involved in various volunteering projects. Their enthusiasm is enriching. We have heard the transformative effect volunteering can have for people suffering from loneliness and family loss, through to those seeking to build new lives after leaving prison. Volunteering makes a difference to volunteers' lives as well as to the natural beauty of the places in which they volunteer.

But levels of volunteering are highly inconsistent and so are opportunities. Some areas operate waiting lists, others have no volunteers at all.

AONBs especially, who are not charged with the 'people' purpose nor funded to do it, do their best. We found most of the AONBs in the south west have big volunteering teams: in North Devon they support beach cleaning; in the Blackdown Hills they maintain hedges; in the Mendips stone walls; and in Cranborne Chase for archaeology.

## Cranborne Chase AONB Landscape Partnership

Cranborne Chase AONB secured £1.68m from the National Heritage Lottery Fund for a 20-project "Landscape Partnership". This includes volunteer archaeology (some 200 new volunteers on this alone) and various work to nurture nature including river improvements, planting more woodland, "starry starry nights" (a clear skies project), restoring ancient ways and footsteps on the chalk.

Heritage has also been covered including heritage festivals – words in the landscape, a Roman rally, "Do you have a bronze age warrior haunting your parish?", celebrating the Dorset Cursus ceremony (the Dorset Cursus is the largest Neolithic site in the UK) plus an app for virtual historic tourism guides (local characters – who they were and what they did).

Their next project is to get funding for a Living Landscape Heritage Centre for tourism, training and schools.

But they all complained that they have no core funding of their own for the oversight and training of the volunteers, and rely on securing other funding to keep things going. Often this falls away, losing that community engagement and having to start over in two or three years' time when more funding is found.

We also heard that volunteer managers in national landscape bodies can feel undervalued and under-resourced. And at present each National Park and AONB runs its volunteering separately, duplicating efforts.



## Building skills and reducing reoffending through volunteering

Skills Builder is an 18-month pilot project in the Peaks which offers offenders on probation a 12-week training programme, where they engage in conservation-related activities at a range of countryside sites.

It is a partnership project between Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, a rehabilitation company based in Nottingham (DLNR) and the Peak District National Park Authority, funded by Big lottery (£82,000), building on earlier work between the Probation Service and the National Park over several years.

The programme has been a powerful influence and many individuals have reported a new outlook on life and a desire to move away from the 'revolving door' of prison/release/prison.

Many positive outcomes are already reported:

- The project re-offending rate is 8.7% set against a national average of 27%.
- 27 people have secured employment.
- 61 Level 1 Awards in Practical Skills and Health and Safety in construction have been gained, plus 24 CSCS card qualifications.
- at least 49 countryside sites improved for public access and or biodiversity.
- Many attendees have reported improved motivation to avoid reoffending, reduce alcohol and drug intake, access training/employment, improved health and motivations as well as increased self-confidence and self-esteem. One participant said: "I wanted to learn skills that could lead to future employment. I am going onto an accredited dry-stone walling course soon and would like to start working as a waller".

### Health and wellbeing

Our population is increasing, and living longer, healthier lives. However, a larger elderly population also brings with it an increase in the number of people with long-term health problems. We are seeing more people suffering from mental health conditions, and more children with

obesity. People from more deprived areas are still more likely to present certain health issues, and health inequalities are not improving.<sup>44</sup>

It was a founding principle of the National Parks movement that access to open space not only enhanced quality of life, but physical and mental wellbeing as well. This view is now

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-profile-for-england-2018>



being backed up by a wide range of qualitative and quantitative evidence, which tells us that spending time in the natural environment has huge potential in terms of improving physical and mental health, lowering blood pressure, increasing cardiovascular health and improving mood.

There is a huge and almost untapped opportunity to utilise open spaces, cost-effectively treating health conditions against a backdrop of financial pressures on health services and an ageing population. Recent research put the savings from every £1 invested as £7 of health and wellbeing benefits.<sup>45</sup>

As society and government recognises these benefits, the concept and practice of 'social prescribing', offering patients activities in their community rather

than drugs, is attracting a small yet enthusiastic following. Whilst the evidence base for its effectiveness is growing,<sup>46</sup> current projects are small scale and mainly run by the third sector.

NHS England's Long-Term Plan commits to creating 1,000 new social prescribing link workers in the next year and a half, rising thereafter so that 900,000+ people will be referred to social prescribing by 2023/24.

Some National Parks and AONBs have and are developing interesting projects. Some are highlighted in this chapter. And an accord signed between National Parks England and Public Health England in 2017 is a helpful start. But there is scope for them to move faster to be at the heart of this developing field.

45 Linsley, P & McMurray, R (2018). North York Moors National Parks Authority: Measuring Health and Well-being Impact. York: The York Management School.

46 NHS England, 2018: In Rotherham, people with long-term conditions and their carers benefit from access to additional support—69% reported being less isolated and 54% more active. Other benefits included a reduction in hospital episodes (47% of referred patients attended fewer outpatient's appointments, 38% had fewer A&E attendances and 40% had fewer hospital admissions).

## Mondays up the Malverns

In 2016 the Malvern branch of the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) approached the AONB Partnership for help with an initiative to enable new parents to meet up and walk on the Malvern Hills with their babies. The overall aim of the project was to improve the physical and mental health of new parents by creating a supportive environment where parents could talk and share experiences, while exercising and being close to nature.

The Trust had identified a number of barriers preventing new parents from deriving the health benefits of social walking in the area. These included the costs of slings for carrying babies on longer walks, costs of car parking, a lack of knowledge about appropriate places to go and fear of doing so without the support and participation of others.

A small grant of almost £600 from the AONB was used to purchase:

- Six good quality slings which are free to borrow for anyone needing them.
- Car parking passes which are offered to those most in need.
- Publicity for the walks, including at food banks and GP surgeries to engage with those who might be most in need.

The walks now operate weekly, rotating five different routes, with an average 15 parent participants (there have been 60). Feedback has been excellent, in terms of benefits to participants as well as raising awareness of the AONB and its special qualities. The initiative is now entirely managed by the local NCT branch and is still a huge success three years on.

### Support for Visitors

The basics such as information and signage, and on-the-ground help, need to be done better in our national landscapes.

#### Websites

For those planning a visit, the experience can be challenging. There are not many places where it is easy to find the answers to basic questions like:

- Where can I go?

- Will the landowner get angry if I use this footpath?
- Where's the entrance?
- Do I have to pay?
- Is this accessible for buggies, wheelchairs and people with sight challenges? If not, where can I go?
- Is there a loo and baby changing facilities at the end of the path?

There is no single website for all of our national landscapes. Instead, people are expected to know how to find the 40+ individual websites –

given awareness of our special places is not especially high, and 'AONB' in particular is a mystery term to most, this is an unreasonable expectation.

The one umbrella website that does exist is for National Parks across the UK. We're glad this exists and it has improved: when we checked it initially, we found an events page that referred to past, not future events, and which linked to opportunities in only two National Parks, both either full or closed. On checking again in August 2019 we found a daily list of upcoming events which is an improvement. But it still only had entries for four of our 10 English National Parks, and of course none of our 34 AONBs.<sup>47</sup>

### *Signs and markers*

Physical information in our landscapes could also be better: clearer and more beautiful. We've seen a confusing array of signs on our visits. In the New Forest for example, Forest England signs often dominate without any explanation that people are in a National Park. Many others suffer from an often random crop of local government signs off tarmac roads but not much else to guide people. Where entry signs do exist, they are often over-modest. Rights of way markers and interpretation boards are also variable in style and quality.

### *Rangers*

Without exception, the most positive feedback to the review about people who work for National Parks was for their rangers. And as one member of our panel saw in the United States,

rangers there are at the heart of the link between the nation and its National Parks. They wear their uniform, especially their iconic hat, with pride. When a visitor sees a National Parks Service Ranger, the signature silhouette communicates 'I'm here, here to help.'

In England too, rangers are the eyes and ears of the National Park Authority, as they are out and about in the park most of the time. One day they might be working with volunteers to maintain footpaths, gates, stiles and bridges, the next explaining the natural environment to school groups or running events for the public, or supporting visitors to explore new areas of the landscape. They provide the essential link between land managers, visitors, local people and the National Park Authority.

National Parks told us they have 177 rangers (full time equivalent). Covering about 10% of England, with at least 55m visitors each year, this is far too few. Our 34 AONBs who cover another 14% of England with at least as many visitors, and who are not resourced for rangers but attempt to provide them anyway, have just 24 rangers between them.

What we don't have in England is a single unifying vision for what rangers are or could be, consistent values and forms of training, and opportunities for progression across the whole family. We recognise the value of many of them being local and deeply knowledgeable about their areas, but there are also advantages to a stronger sense of family.

<sup>47</sup> <https://nationalparks.uk/visiting/events> checked on 2 August 2019. Listed events were in Exmoor, Dartmoor, the Lakes and North York Moors only.



## **Relationships with leisure groups are inconsistent and local**

We took time during the review to talk with organisations representing many different user groups, including anglers, canoeists, cavers, horse riders, cyclists and walkers among others, and heard from many more in our call for evidence.

They identified both legislative issues and practical relationships on the ground which would help connect even more people with our special places.

On the practical side, groups pointed out that the interests of recreation users were underrepresented on National Park and AONB boards and there were inconsistencies of approach between National Park Authorities – some working closely with groups to enable maximum access, others perceived to lack interest or commitment to promoting enjoyment of certain users and activities, or in understanding changing habits and interests across society. This seemed to be connected to a general presumption against multi-user access.

We experienced this range of approaches and attitudes on our visits; some landscape bodies are clearly eager to see lots of different ways of enjoying the areas, others more reluctant.

Some recreation groups noted the absence of national level conversations between their organisations and the National Parks and AONBs too.

## **Restrictive laws which include favouring walking over other uses**

Concerns were also raised about what are perceived to be restrictive laws, or restrictive interpretations of them. We heard, for instance, how cavers face restrictions on what is otherwise designated as open access land once they move beyond an unspecified distance from cave entrances, perhaps the limit of daylight.

We heard from canoeists how access is restricted to a tiny percentage of waterways which increases the pressure on 'uncontested' rivers. There is a lack of consistency between National Parks with some considered to be promoting shared and fair access, others less so.

And there seems little logic across the country to the nature of rights of way at the moment. Cumbria and Shropshire are rich in bridlepaths. In some other places, almost all routes are only open to walkers not horse riders or cyclists. As even rural roads become busier and more dangerous, it is all the more important that fair access is given to all.

## **National Trails**

During the review we have met many of those involved in looking after England's National Trails.

Long distance footpaths were a central, founding part of the movement 70 years ago. The 1947 Hobhouse Report established the idea of long distance paths which were seen as integral to proper access to and through national landscapes. Seventy years on, there

are 13 National Trails across England delivering long-distance paths that help people access, experience and enjoy our finest landscapes. They are very popular and attract people from around the world. They will gain an exciting addition when the England Coast Path is completed.

They have much in common with our National Parks and AONBs – they cover our most beautiful areas and help connect people to nature. They also share in common small amounts of funding. With only a few staff (albeit working with many volunteers and partners), they have appeared a little lost in the system, a disparate but passionate group of people who lack the resources to do more.

## How we think it should be solved

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.
- National landscapes should also be encouraged to bid to become ‘tourism zones’ under the new Tourism Sector Deal, helping pioneer truly sustainable tourism.

## 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

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

We need our national landscape bodies to lead the charge in connecting more people to nature. The purpose we have now needs reinvigorating and applying equally to AONBs and National Parks.

We recommend that the second purpose is changed so that it requires our national landscapes to:

**actively connect  
all parts of society  
with these special  
places to support  
understanding,  
enjoyment and the  
nation's health and  
wellbeing**

We want to see our national landscapes as places for all, where barriers are broken down so everyone can enjoy them, not just 'the club'.

We expect all national landscapes, as part of their Management Plans, to produce ambitious strategies to increase diversity of access for marginalised groups, which should include measurable delivery indicators, against which they will be assessed by the National Landscapes Service.

The National Landscapes Service will have a key role in setting levels of ambition, checking local plans align to them, and ensuring local landscapes deliver.

It will play a key role in helping the 44 landscapes to embed all the best examples we have seen.

We also believe that, long-term, our national landscapes should be playing a much bigger role with others who may be marginalised, such as ex-offenders, looked after children, those suffering addiction.

The Sandford Principle should remain in place as discussed earlier, and be extended to AONBs, to ensure the primacy of the first purpose.

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

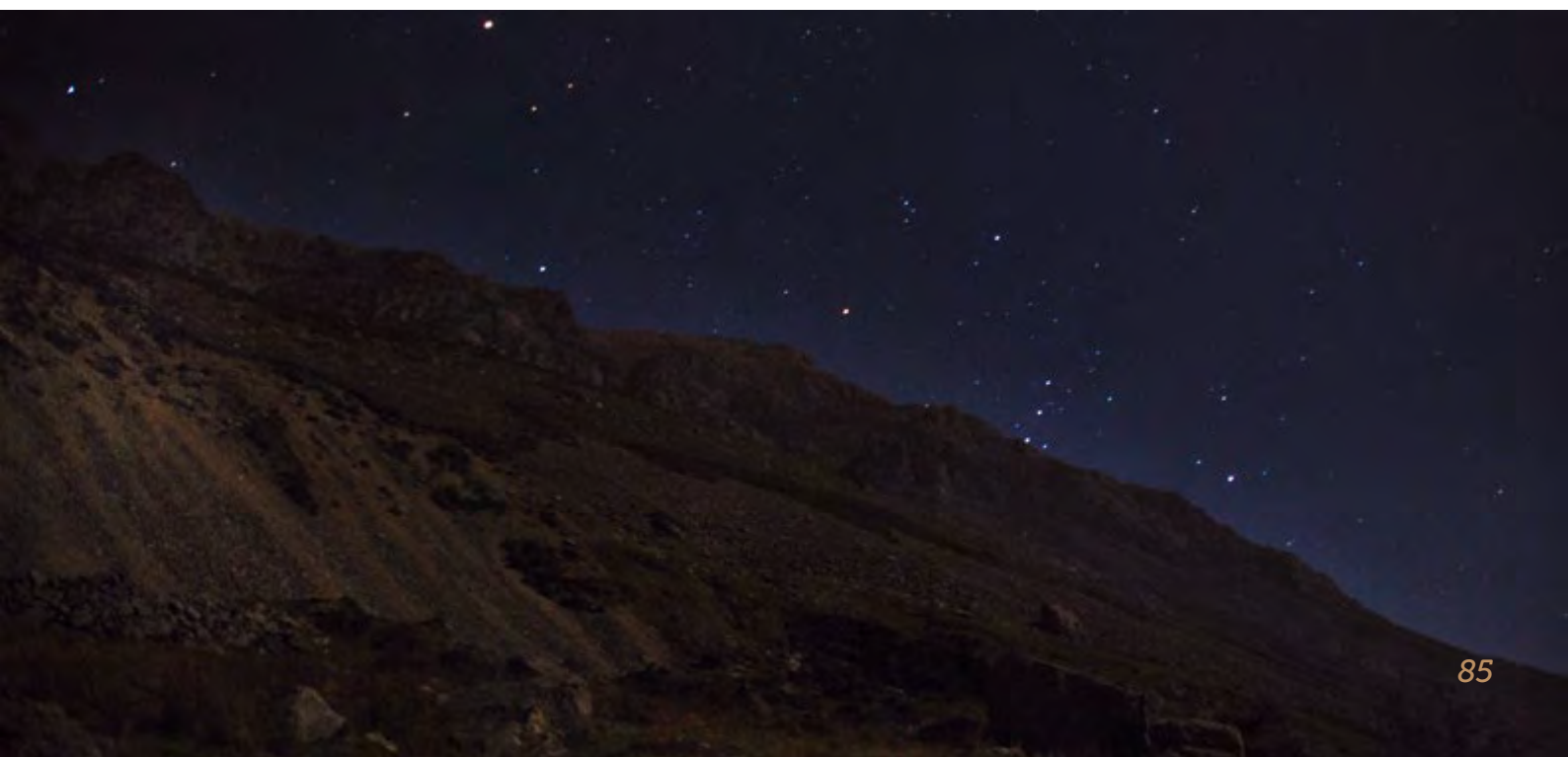
Many of our national landscapes already do wonderful work with schools. We don't want to disrupt what is already done or think that all contact with the countryside must be regimented, or take place only in national landscapes or arranged through them. But we know how many children could benefit, but don't.

National landscapes could do – and want to do – more for the physical and mental health of children and young people, and give them a chance to experience nature. Each child who comes back with a positive experience after visiting a national landscape is an ambassador for their future.

We think there should be a big, bold ambition to change this for everyone. All children should be helped to develop pride in their national landscapes, their environment and its

biodiversity. They should learn how landscapes have inspired generations of artists, poets and musicians. They themselves should be inspired by the lives of their forebears, who have forged this countryside and whose very existence is written into the cultural landscape, and above all they should learn how they too can pick up the baton of nurturing and enhancing what they have inherited.

With help from a new National Landscapes Service, we would like to see national landscapes work with the many organisations already involved in this area to provide a clear, consistent offer for a meaningful visit that we think should include an overnight stay. It would be a chance for children to meet others from communities they may not normally meet, to learn about the nature that we all rely on, and even enjoy the thrill of a night under the stars.



## Working with school children in Shropshire AONB

Through the John Muir Award, the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership aims to involve and inspire children with the natural world. The award is run by the John Muir Trust and inspired by one of the founders of the national landscapes movement. It seeks to foster responsibility for wild places through fun and adventure.

An AONB staff member has supported primary schools through the award's four stages: discovering a wild place, exploring it, taking practical action to conserve it, and then sharing the experience. Wild places have included nature reserves and an upland farm. Conservation activities have included hedge planting, heathland restoration, making nest boxes and coppicing.

Since 2012, the AONB Partnership has worked with around 500 pupils and teachers from 12 primary schools.

"The opportunities which the AONB has brought to our children have developed and grown so much that they have become an integral part of our learning. Presenting children with the opportunity to understand and appreciate the wild places around us has had many benefits, not only from an environmental aspect, but also from a creative and academic one too", says Les Ball, School Head.

Teachers have also completed the award, and training days have been provided for some schools to continue unsupported. Based on the Shropshire Hills experience, the John Muir Trust have developed resources to support delivery in other AONBs.

The budget has been around £8,000pa and the programme has been delivered in partnership with Shropshire Wildlife Trust. A project is being developed to upscale delivery across the AONB.

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

We know that specific targets can drive unintended consequences and we don't want to force them on national landscapes. But we also know that without clear expectations, inaction can follow, as the abandonment of the MOSAIC programmes after funding finished shows.

We want to see a new version of MOSAIC developed and brought

in as a priority and long-term programme, actively connecting England's diverse communities to our most special places. The National Landscapes Service would take a view across the national landscapes to ensure ambitions and actions were challenging and credible, and take a central role in reaching out to other organisations and sectors to improve outcomes in our national landscapes.

### Peak District MOSAIC

Peak District MOSAIC provides opportunities for people from black, Asian and minority ethnic and marginalised communities, living around the borders of the Peak District National Park, to engage in activities that develop their capacity, knowledge and skills to take an active role in management, conservation and promotion of the National Park; raise awareness of diversity and shared history in rural areas; and promote understanding between people from diverse backgrounds.

Local 'champions' do this by organising visits and fun activities.

When the Campaign for National Parks' MOSAIC-led project concluded, the champions, with support from the National Park and Derbyshire Dales Council for the Voluntary Sector, established themselves as a charity in April 2016, to continue their work.

In 2017 the group successfully applied for an Awards for All grant of £8,938 that was used to train 15 new champions from Sheffield and Manchester. The champions received a £200 grant to organise group trips in the National Park. A total of 173 visitors participated in different activities of which 92 were first time visitors. The group is currently working with the South West Peak Landscape Partnership project to train 10 champions from the Stoke and Macclesfield areas.

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

We think there should be a new role for our national landscapes in helping the health of our nation, working with another great national institution founded the year before legislation for landscapes: the NHS.

They can and should move faster to be at the heart of this developing field, locally and nationally.

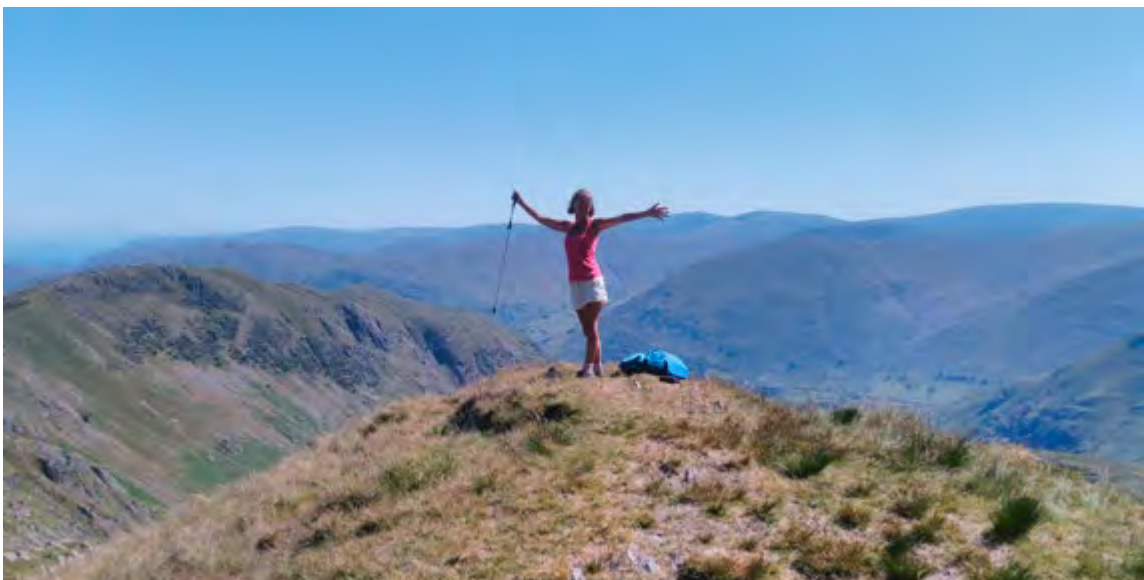
At a national level they should, through a new National Landscapes Service, come together to establish national conversations and relationships with the Department for Health and Social Care, Public Health England and NHS England, to ensure their role and all they can offer is embedded in relevant strategies, policies and guidelines.

At a local level, they should all establish strong relationships with local public health teams, clinical commissioning groups and social prescribing link workers.


Our national landscapes must also make strides to make their areas more accessible for disabled visitors.

The Policy Lab work and meetings with groups representing disabled visitors showed us the huge appetite those faced with physical disabilities have for getting out into nature. But poorly designed countryside infrastructure can needlessly make it hard for them or stop them visiting at all.

We would like to see more done. 'Miles Without Stiles' routes were commonly mentioned as exemplars of best practice and we were highly impressed with the work of Accessible Derbyshire. We think national landscapes should work to develop a network of accessible, hard surface, stile-free paths that are disabled and wheelchair-friendly, deploy gates with RADAR keys, and provide all-terrain mobility scooters and routes.







## Arnside and Silverdale AONB Tramper

Visitors with limited mobility now have greater access to RSPB Leighton Moss nature reserve thanks to the funding and provision of a Tramper. As an all-terrain mobility scooter, the Tramper is ideal for exploring the nature reserve, and enables those who may need a little extra help getting around to experience the area's special landscape and nature.

The Tramper was funded through the Arnside and Silverdale AONB Sustainable Development Fund, with match funding from the RSPB, Lancashire County Council, Lancashire and District Ramblers Association, Arnside Ramblers, Yealand Manor and Leighton Hall Estate.

The Tramper is free to use and no prior experience of using a Tramper is necessary, as users are given an induction in how to operate it. The Tramper comes with instructions, wet weather gear, and a radio and first aid kit. Staff training events were organised in order to provide a good service to the public. The Tramper is used frequently each week.

Work has now started on the provision of a much longer Tramper-friendly route, linking up Leighton Moss with nearby Trowbarrow, Gait Barrows and Coldwell nature reserves and widening access to some of the must-see parts of the AONB. A route map will be published shortly and the new route will be widely promoted, both in its own right and also as part of a network of such routes in the Morecambe Bay area.

## Proposal 11: Expanding volunteering in our national landscapes

We want national landscapes to develop a structured approach to volunteering.

There should be a really strong pro-volunteer ethos right across the board in all national landscapes. It should be a highly diverse, professionally-supported and powerful group of people doing many different things, which could include volunteer rangers, education, practical conservation, surveying and information gathering, wildlife watchers, rights of way support through to people playing a role supporting the administration and organisation of the national landscapes.

National Parks and National Landscapes should take on an 'enabling' role to foster a very wide range of volunteering for a wide range of organisations working in the landscapes. The New Forest has done just this, with its volunteer opportunity directory and workshops.

They must also set ambitious goals for attracting and retaining volunteers and, via the National Landscapes Service, work collectively to ensure a consistency of approach both for volunteers themselves and third party partners. Particular emphasis should be made in forging links with communities currently underrepresented among volunteers.



## Volunteering with the South Dorset Ridgeway Landscape Partnership

The South Dorset Ridgeway Landscape Partnership, led by Dorset AONB, set out to conserve, enhance and celebrate a little known but internationally important ancient ceremonial landscape, and to engage volunteers in the process.

The volunteers achieved a huge amount:

- 440 condition surveys of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age monuments, with half completed by just two volunteers.
- 40 archaeological features brought into improved condition.
- 540m of dry stone wall restored and 2.2km of hedgerow laid.
- 30 training and survey events, 300 participant days and 2,000+ new records for nature.
- 18 Wildlife Champions recruited and trained.
- 12 village greenspaces improved for biodiversity and 15ha of priority habitat in improved condition.

The volunteers comprised a core group of 40 Volunteer Rangers who committed over 1,700 volunteer days – their average commitment was 43 days over three years. Female participation was improved, rising to 57% of the regular volunteers.

Overall, volunteers committed over 2,700 days to the project and the total value of volunteer time was over £300,000.

“I never thought I’d do anything like this, you get out with your bowsaw and loppers – I’ve even got a chainsaw ticket now! I like to feel useful and the Ridgeway project has really changed me – I was never one for high heel shoes but now I go around in steel toe caps!”

## Proposal 12: Better information and signs to guide visitors

The National Landscapes Service should develop core principles of public access for all of our national landscapes, from a single helpful website, to high standards on rights of way signs and entry points.

It should feel special to be in a national landscape, and people should be helped to find their way. They should work with other private and public bodies who have their own signage and branding to help visitors understand how it all fits together.

As part of this, we think National Parks should take on the legal responsibility to maintain rights of

way in the areas they cover and that funding for this should move from local government. In practical terms, most local authorities devolve this power already. But it makes no sense for some of the most used walking routes in the country to be overseen by local highways authorities.

Given their size, AONB bodies are unlikely to have the resources in some cases to take on the legal responsibility, but we nevertheless urge close working between them and local highways authorities to ensure that rights of way in our nationally important landscapes receive the priority they deserve.



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

We recommend a 1,000-strong, professional, nationwide ranger service.

The type of impressive, engaging nationwide ranger service which underpins the US National Park Service and is part of its welcome to visitors does not exist in the same way here. The small number of rangers that National Parks do employ are popular and hard-working, aided in many places by excellent volunteers.

We want to build on this approach, with many more rangers with an explicit purpose to help and encourage visitors make the most of our wonderful landscapes and to support local communities.

Rangers should become the friendly face of our national landscapes, supported through a career structure based in the National Landscapes Service.

Rangers would also be a key link with land managers and residents, picking up on issues as they occur, informed

by excellent knowledge of their patch, their communities and the issues at hand. We have heard from many people the friction that can be caused by some visitors and the need for education and information provision to tackle this. Rangers should be the friendly face providing this service.

Rangers should be the ambassadors for our national landscapes and have a key role in supporting visitors to make the best use of the full range of opportunities our landscapes offer, helping spread visitors more evenly and away from the so-called honeypot sites to other treasures.

They would also have a key role with schools, supporting our ambition for every school child to spend a night in a national landscape. We hope that volunteer rangers – including the excellent junior ranger scheme in Dartmoor – would be established through this.

In order to deliver this ambition, we want to see 1,000 rangers across our 44 national landscapes.

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

We realise that increasing numbers of visitors is not without its challenges. One respondent to our call for evidence reflected that certain places were being overwhelmed: “their popularity heralds their demise”.

We believe who comes, where they go, what they do and how they benefit from their experience can be shaped through leadership and education, and good destination management, rather than restrictions on numbers through rules or fees.

Everyone involved in managing landscapes knows the so-called honeypot sites, the days to avoid, the moment quiet lanes along somewhere like Wastwater are lined with parked cars, impacting the special qualities people come to enjoy in the first place.

Some have talked of using charging as a way of managing numbers and raising funds. We would never want to discourage anyone from visiting and we do not believe charging would be fair or practical. Our national landscapes do not have entry fees and nor should they.

Instead, 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. Some of our national landscapes should be at the forefront of these initiatives, with others able to benefit from lessons learnt.

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

There is scope for our national landscapes to do more with the other public bodies operating in their areas, from Natural England on SSSIs and National Nature Reserves to Forestry England on public forests. We see the National Landscapes Service having a core role in supporting national level conversations to make these links and join things up.

Within this, we think there is a very strong case for bringing National Trails into the national landscapes family.

Doing so could help develop the links between national landscapes and their surrounding areas, forming

the basis for accessible networks of routes linked to these long distance routes and imaginative ways to encourage enjoyment of these special places. We believe the stronger links and wider relationships will also help National Trails with issues we've heard of, for example, walkers facing difficulties finding accommodation when providers want a minimum booking of three nights.

We think they should be brought squarely into the fold of the new National Landscapes Service, supported by funding, giving them a national voice and focus.

## National Trails

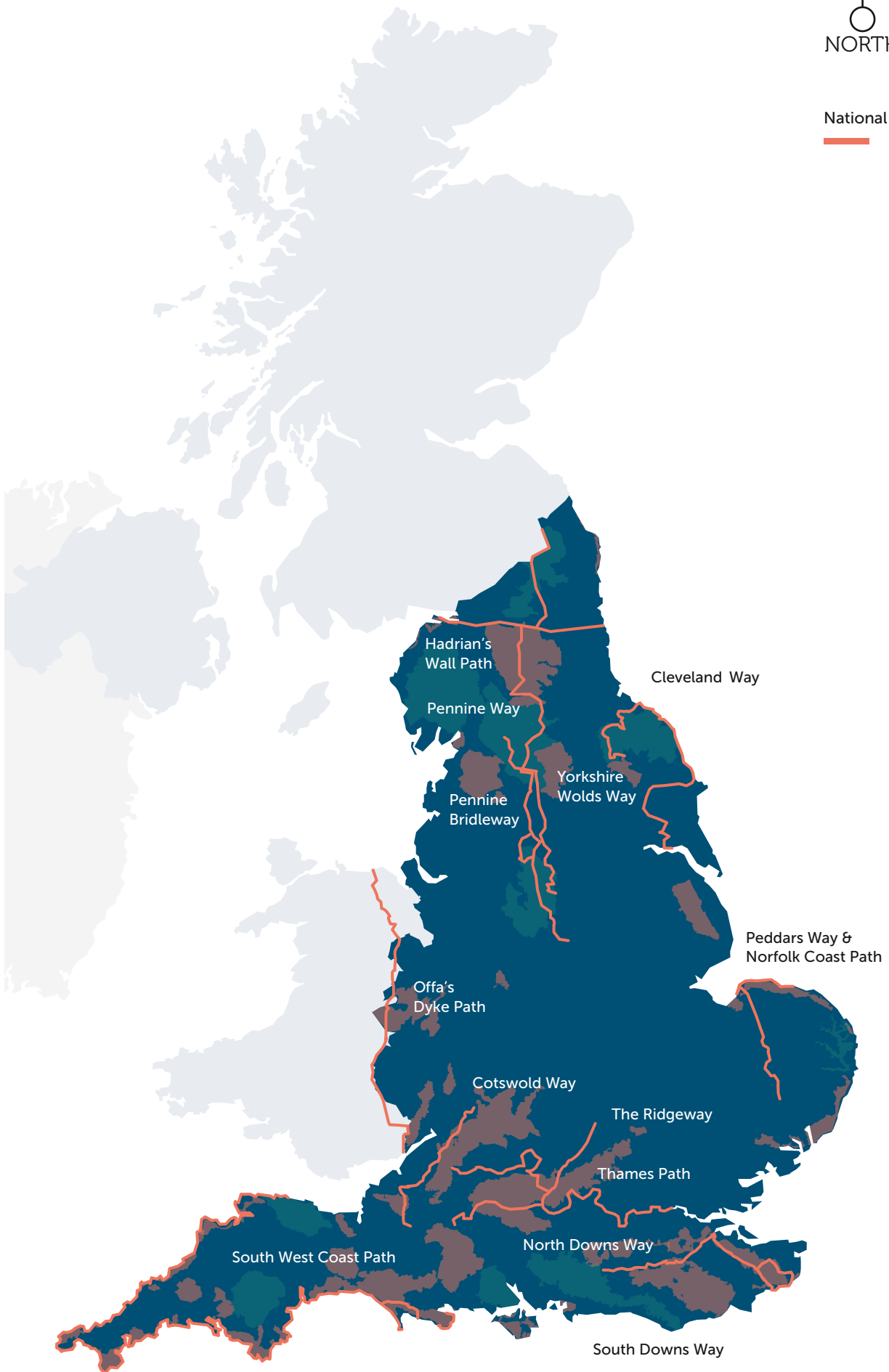
Walking in the wild and beautiful parts of Britain became increasingly popular in the early decades of the twentieth century. After World War II the desire to keep areas of Britain 'special' and protect them from post-war development ran alongside the establishment of National Parks and AONBs. The same legislation that laid the foundations for our national landscapes also did so for Long Distance Routes (now called National Trails in England).

The first National Trail, the Pennine Way, created following lobbying by Tom Stephenson and others from the 1930s, was finally opened in 1965. The latest, the England Coast Path, will be the longest managed and waymarked coastal path in the world when complete. During the last 70 years over 2,200 miles of trails have been created to traverse England's coast and countryside. All 13 in England run through at least one, and often two or three, National Parks and AONBs. They see 83m day visits per year and visitors spend £533m. Current government spending equates to 3p per visitor, supported by 3,000 volunteer working days each year, valued at £300,000. They estimate that walking and riding on National Trails could save the NHS £167m in health benefits.<sup>48</sup>





National Trails



## Proposal 16: Consider expanding open access rights in national landscapes

Though it is not a core part of our review, and any look at open access needs a much more in depth investigation, we think there is a case for looking at whether further access rights should be established, or at the very least considered or trialled in our national landscapes.

The existing law and its application excludes many different user groups entirely, or favours walking on foot. We do not seek to undermine those rights; indeed we want to see walking further supported by national landscapes taking on rights of way management and the National Landscapes Service supporting National Trails.

But it feels wrong that many parts of our most beautiful places are off-limits to horse riders, water users, cavers, wild campers and so on. We hope that as part of the government's commitment to connect more people with nature, it will look seriously at whether the levels of open access we have in our most special places are adequate.



## GROW Project: South Downs National Park

GROW aims to improve wellbeing and mental health by enabling access to the therapeutic benefits of the natural environment. It was delivered with the South Downs National Park Authority's (SDNPA) eastern area ranger team, through events and training sessions, as well as guided walks. SDNPA supported GROW in applying to the Sustainable Communities Fund who awarded them a £12,000 grant to fund a minibus lease for three years to enable collection and transport of participants.

GROW evaluated outcomes and found 87% of participants reported a significant or great benefit to their mental health. 63% reported GROW had a significant or great benefit to their physical health. 89% said their social interaction had increased.

Participants said:

"I'm less isolated, more optimistic and connected to others. It's been so refreshing to learn how to focus on the beauty of the environment rather than my illness."

"In an area which is often neglected – mental health – and where conventional treatment all too often tends to involve sitting in a room processing, GROW stands out for me as something radically different, and a little bit magic too."

GROW learnt that working in collaboration with other projects might enable more sustainability for the project in future, and with that in mind created the Green Wellbeing Network which brings together other projects doing similar work in the local area.



# Chapter 3: Living in Landscapes

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The countryside is a living part of modern England. It is not isolated from the forces which shape the rest of society. People are born in it, grow up in it, work in it, farm in it, build things in it and run businesses from it, linked by broadband, or fast roads and train services. People come to it from all over the world.

It's always been like this. WG Hoskins began writing his famous analysis of how the country was shaped and changed by people over thousands of years because, as he put it, "I felt in my bones that the landscape was speaking to me in a language that I did not understand".<sup>49</sup> A village founded by the Anglo-Saxons would have been transformed by the early medieval period and transformed again by 1949. It will have changed a lot too since legislation to establish national landscapes was passed and we should not worry that it will change again in the future, if we get that change right.

You can see this evolving human history everywhere: on the great Cumbrian ridge of High Street, for instance, which the Romans used as a road, and the Georgians as a race course. These days, shepherds follow Herdwick sheep on quad bikes and one member of this review panel was with his mother when she looked

down and picked up a Neolithic flint arrow head lying on the path.

Landscape has always been about people and some of the things we find most attractive and interesting in it are human creations, not all of them old: stone walls, villages, churches, field barns and industrial remains. This is why the IUCN Category V delineation is so important and why combining both people and nature is a particular challenge for England's national landscapes.

One of the most popular sites in the Peak District National Park is the Monsal Trail, following the old rail route from Matlock to Buxton through tunnels and over viaducts. More people crowd the Peak's towns and villages than ever do its hills, and that is true of almost every national landscape.

Hoskins' view of this living past was positive but he dreaded the future. "Since 1914 every single change in the English landscape has either uglified it or destroyed its meaning or both" he complained. "We should contemplate the past before all is lost to the vandals."

In the course of this review we have seen the good news that he was wrong, at least in part. He was right about industrial farming and the poor

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49 The Making of the English Landscape, William G. Hoskins, 1955

quality of much new development. But what stands out is not how much has been wrecked since 1914, or 1949, but how much has been protected and given new uses and is still lived in and beautiful.

What of the future? Simon Jenkins argues in the epilogue to his book *England's 100 Best Views*,<sup>50</sup> that "England's landscape has become a battleground between those who wish to guard its intrinsic beauty and the commercial pressures placed on it". His despair about what may happen to landscapes, especially ones given no designated protection, is not misplaced. In the south east of England, in particular, the pressure of development is immense and may only get greater.

Some national landscapes – the Chilterns for instance – risk changing very fast as a result and mostly not for the better. We shouldn't just accept this as sadly unavoidable. It should shame our generation to leave uglier, less liveable human settlements than those left for us by the generations which came before.

The challenge of balancing protection with the needs of people is something those who manage our national landscapes have been dealing with since they were created. Repeatedly, we heard from them in this review that they are in favour of new things and their difficult task is to get it right. To use a lazy phrase, no one wants to preserve things in aspic, but that doesn't take us very far when deciding what recipe should be used instead.

The question that those who love and shape our landscapes need to answer is not, 'how do we conserve them?' but 'how do we make sure both natural beauty and society benefit from change rather than suffer?'

Any attempt to create a division between what visitors need and what locals want will always be arbitrary: lots of people who live in national landscapes love their natural beauty, and lots of people who visit want to be in places which are real communities. It is a shared interest. After all, the most popular social media account linked to any national landscape is not about nature or tourism but the one run by a sheep farmer and writer, James Rebanks (Twitter handle:@herdyshepherd1).

There will always be tensions between the different pressures on the countryside and in places these are very acute at the moment. But we think that the future story of the link between people and our most beautiful places can be a positive one, just as it has often been in the past.

In this chapter, we offer some thoughts on what might be done to support communities inside national landscapes, and also, through good public transport, provide benefits for people living outside them too. Challenges are wide-ranging and although it would be an immense task to find a solution for everyone, we have come across some particular issues, and provide some ideas on how to address these.

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50 *England's 100 Best Views*: Simon Jenkins, Oct 2013

## What we found

One thing stood out, talking to people in the course of this review and examining the responses to our call for evidence. They worry that longstanding communities feel under great pressure, and point in particular to house prices and jobs. Although 70% of the working age population in English National Parks is economically active, and unemployment is 2% lower than the national average, the population is both ageing and slowly growing.<sup>51</sup>

How are younger people going to be part of the countryside's future, they ask? Many farmers on small farms in particular are close to retirement age. Schools are closing. Northumberland National Park faced the prospect of every school inside its boundaries shutting. There are often plenty of seasonal jobs in tourism. But the days when lots of people worked on the land have gone and in the future fewer will do than now. What will support communities instead? Where will they live?

Many of these fears are ones people in towns have as well. The gap between generations is a national dilemma. So is the loss of shops, and the rise in traffic and the change in the nature of jobs. The countryside can't ask to be protected from this just because it is rural. But national landscapes face a particular pressure. Because of their success and natural beauty, they have more visitors, more people who want to come and live in them, and more restrictions on what can happen in them. We need

a bigger response to help them as a result.

There are lots of benefits to communities from designation – pubs and village shops are kept busy, and more visitors means more people who might support bus services. Studies, which are largely based on surveys of businesses in national landscapes, provide strong evidence that environmental quality in general, and in national landscapes in particular, help to support a significant proportion of local economic activity.

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51 [https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/717637/Valuing-Englands-National-Parks-Final-Report-10-5-13.pdf](https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/717637/Valuing-Englands-National-Parks-Final-Report-10-5-13.pdf)

## The Economic Contribution of National Landscapes<sup>52</sup>

It is estimated that £408m of turnover and £155m of regional Gross Value Added (GVA) is dependent on the high quality landscape and environment that the Peak District National Park designation protects, once multiplier effects have been taken into account; this supports 7,000 jobs.

The National Parks in Yorkshire and Humberside are estimated to make a major positive impact to 24% of the National Parks' businesses and support over 8,000 jobs. In the north east, 10% of businesses located in national landscapes specifically because of the high quality environment, and £22m of turnover (10% of the total) and 1,187 full time equivalent jobs (26%) are supported by businesses which started or relocated due to the quality of the landscape or environment in national landscapes.

A similar study in the Cotswolds AONB showed that 73% of respondents felt that a deterioration of the landscape and environment would have a serious (22%) or some (51%) impact on business. The proportion of businesses which indicated that a deterioration in the quality of the landscape would seriously affect their business performance varied from 33% of tourism and tourism-related businesses to 12% of other businesses. The economic contribution of the AONB was estimated to £337m Gross Value Added and 9,720 jobs once multiplier effects had been taken into account.

Our rural communities are often in a better state than shuttered, depopulated villages that can be found in parts of rural Spain or France, for instance. The village nearest to the home of the lead reviewer on our panel, in the Peak District National Park, still has three pubs, two busy shops, a GP surgery, a garage, a school, its own water company and an almost hourly bus service. However, this is not representative of villages everywhere and often deprivation is hidden.

Houses in National Parks and AONBs cost more. A study by Nationwide in 2017 found a 22% price premium for a property in a National Park.<sup>53</sup> Another by Lloyds Bank calculated that the average cost of a house in a National Park is 11.6 times local average gross annual earnings – compared with an average multiple of 7.8 times earnings across the whole of England and Wales.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/9315/5552/1970/Economic-Contribution-of-Protected-Landscapes-Final-Report-28-3-14.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> [https://www.nationwide.co.uk/-/media/MainSite/documents/about/house-price-index/2017/National\\_Parks\\_Special\\_2017.pdf](https://www.nationwide.co.uk/-/media/MainSite/documents/about/house-price-index/2017/National_Parks_Special_2017.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/Media/Press-Releases/2018-press-releases/lloyds-bank/national-parks-house-price-review-2018/>



Table: House prices and premiums in a selection of National Parks<sup>55</sup>

National Park	Land area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population living in Park	Average house price	Indicative premium
New Forest	570	34,000	£525,000	£115,500
South Downs	1,624	115,000	£350,000	£77,000
Lake District	2,362	40,100	£250,000	£55,000
Dartmoor	953	34,000	£245,000	£53,900
Yorkshire Dales	2,178	19,600	£234,000	£51,500
Peak District	1,437	37,200	£230,000	£50,600

Second homes and holiday lets are particularly widespread across national landscapes and limit the supply of homes for local people. The number of second and holiday homes has increased significantly since 2001 and now accounts for 22% of the stock in the area of the Yorkshire Dales National Park as it stood before being extended in August 2016.<sup>56</sup> In remote rural communities, transport costs are higher and services fewer. A lot of people come to retire and need services which aren't easy to provide.

In responses to our call for evidence, people told us that:

"[A] failure to limit second-home ownership... is slowing [sic] killing the old dales communities, and outpricing local youngsters from continuing to live where they grew up. Too few affordable houses are being built." (a member of the public and works in a National Park)

"Housing is critical to the sustainability of the [National Park], as in many cases it is too expensive

for locally born people to afford. There are issues with second homes and a lack of social housing, but the solution is complex, allowing for elements of control over the former and some more of the latter. More 'affordable' houses are also required." (Chapel-en-le-Frith Parish Council)

"There is a need to maintain and continue to develop vibrant rural and semi-rural communities which can play a part in protecting our landscapes and sustaining cultural heritage, which are ultimately integral to the unique 'fingerprints' for our National Parks and AONBs. A clearer focus [is needed] on employment, social housing, and good transport arrangements that are appropriately integrated into National Parks' and AONBs' settings." (Drigg and Carleton Parish Council)

We need more homes in the countryside, including in national landscapes, but in small numbers, built beautifully and made affordable.

<sup>55</sup> [https://www.nationwide.co.uk/-/media/MainSite/documents/about/house-price-index/2017/National\\_Parks\\_Special\\_2017.pdf](https://www.nationwide.co.uk/-/media/MainSite/documents/about/house-price-index/2017/National_Parks_Special_2017.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> [https://www.richmondshire.gov.uk/media/8845/270218-council\\_item-11\\_second-homes-in-the-yorkshire-dales-national-park.pdf](https://www.richmondshire.gov.uk/media/8845/270218-council_item-11_second-homes-in-the-yorkshire-dales-national-park.pdf)

Efforts to address this are not new. In 2005 the *Affordable Rural Housing Commission*,<sup>57</sup> led by the journalist Elinor Goodman, recommended increasing the provision of affordable housing in rural areas. It identified that “the shortage of affordable housing is the less visible aspect of a countryside where the wider economy is often thriving and where many people aspire to live”. “We repeatedly heard how the lack of affordable housing is undermining community life”, it points out, as this review does too.

Many of its proposals remain good ones, although there is little in it that addresses the particular pressures faced by national landscapes.

The dilemma is to build the right sort of homes; ones that suit the places in which they are built, which do not ruin the settings of national landscapes and which people can actually afford.

We saw some good examples of development, in Chagford in Dartmoor National Park for instance.

But we also heard in other areas that although there are many sites which could potentially take small numbers of affordable homes, developers are not coming forward to use them.

The main reason for not bringing small sites forward for development is that they are not commercially viable (too few units on highly priced land).

Talking to the South East and East Protected Landscapes group we heard of the scale of the pressure for a different kind of development in their areas.

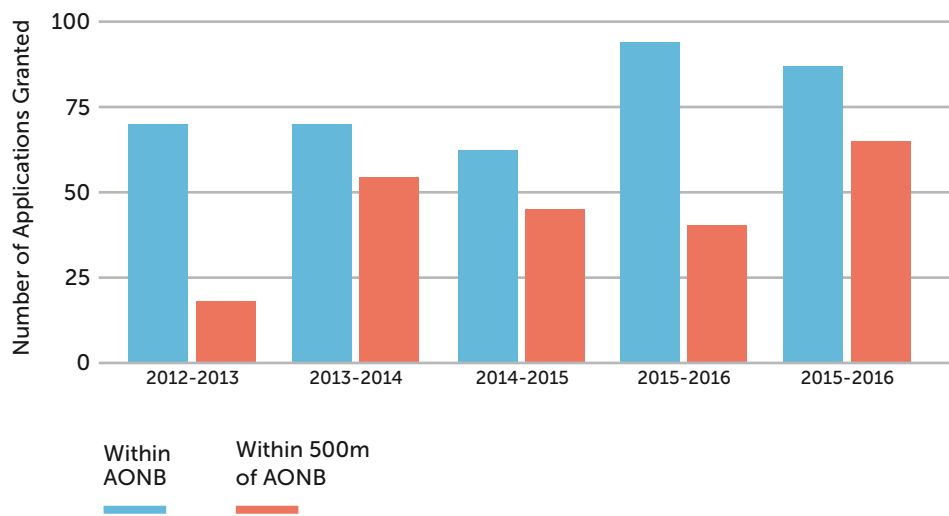
A report, commissioned by the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the National Association of AONBs, published in 2017,<sup>58</sup> found a growing number of applications for large developments, that more were being approved but that at the same time social housing approvals had dropped. Since 2012, it found, 15,485 housing units had been approved within AONBs, and an increase of 82% between 2012-13 (2,396 units) and 2016-17 (4,369 units).

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57 <https://www.thenbs.com/PublicationIndex/documents/details?Pub=ARHC&DocID=278618>

58 <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/5315/5552/0923/Housing-in-AONBs-Report.pdf>

## Financial year of decision



**Figure 3:** Housing approvals within AONBs and within 500m beyond their boundaries <sup>59</sup>

This report highlights the risk that the ‘exceptional circumstances’ provision in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was intended to limit development in national landscapes is being used to argue for major development instead, on the grounds that no other sites outside AONBs are available.

We believe strongly that this is in contravention of the purpose of designation.

On the other hand, we heard how the NPPF also holds national landscapes

back from much needed affordable housing sites.

We heard, too, in the course of our work, concerns about transport, and in particular the loss of public transport and the rise in traffic. We heard far less about what might be done to solve these problems, although the 2018 report from the Campaign for National Parks, *National Parks for all: Making car-free travel easier*,<sup>60</sup> contains useful ideas. We set out some thoughts at the end of this chapter.

<sup>59</sup> <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/5315/5552/0923/Housing-in-AONBs-Report.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.cnp.org.uk/transport-research-fullreport>

## 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



## Proposal 17: National landscapes working for vibrant communities

The current duty in relation to local communities is vague, leading to wide variation in how National Park Authorities interpret it and some National Park communities feeling disengaged.

It is also wrong that it does not apply to AONBs.

We therefore think this duty should be upgraded to a purpose, refreshed, and applied to both National Parks and AONBs equally. We think they should have a statutory purpose to:

### Foster the economic and community vitality of their area in support of the first two purposes

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. There's a real future in good jobs in rural areas including growing and processing local food, sustainable tourism, nature recovery and land management; many enterprises connected with their purposes.

It is striking for example that the Wales Coast Path, which cost £14m to put in, was, within just a year, generating £33m per annum.<sup>61</sup>

We also think it essential that communities have a voice in decision-making, which is why we want to keep local authority and parish representation on planning committees, and introduce community seats on boards. We set this out further in the New Ways of Working chapter.

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61 Welsh Economy Research Unit, Cardiff Business School (2012) The Economic Impact of Wales Coast Path Visitor Spending on Wales 2012.

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

There is a clear need for a steady supply of a small number of affordable homes to rent in many national landscapes.

More sites are available which could be granted planning permission than there are being utilised to build affordable homes in some areas.

Although excellent work is done by rural housing associations, working with local authorities, this is not consistent or enough.

As local planning authorities themselves, National Parks have the power to create housing, and we heard how the New Forest National Park has done so. But this is not likely to become a widespread activity, given the pressures on budgets and other demands.

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.

National Parks, as local planning authorities, should consider using their powers to set conditions on new housing to ensure it remains affordable.

We also recommend that the NPPF is amended to allow National Parks and local authorities more flexibility to deliver affordable homes in national landscapes generally. Infilling should count towards new build targets in AONBs and 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.<sup>62</sup> We hope government will work with national landscape bodies and rural housing providers to help them deliver the affordable homes they need.

We are not making proposals to tax or restrict second homes. Although they can cause acute problems in some areas. We think local authorities, in consultation with residents, remain best-placed to determine whether to use the powers already open to them to charge increased rates for second homes.

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62 Paragraph 63 of the NPPF

## Affordable homes in National Parks and AONBs

**New Forest:** In July 2016 the New Forest National Park Authority completed two new affordable homes in the village of Bransgore. This is the first time a National Park Authority has built and managed housing for local people. Land on the outskirts of Bransgore was gifted to the Authority in 2013 specifically for affordable housing. Early discussions with a local housing association revealed that they would require the freehold ownership of the site which was not the basis on which the offer of land was made and therefore the Authority chose to take the project forward with the support of the District Council's housing team. The project was funded by Section 106 agreements and the Authority adopted its own Tenancy Policy, rented out at no more than 80% of the open market value. Two families with a local connection to the village were suggested by the local authority for the properties, which were then let within two weeks of completion. The rent is ring-fenced to support future affordable housing provision in the Park.

**Dorset AONB:** Yarlington Housing Group and Lyme Regis Community Land Trust completed 15 affordable homes in February 2018 in Dorset AONB. Yarlington, a non-profit Community Benefit Society and registered housing association, developed and now manages the completed homes, while the Community Land Trust is the long-term steward of the homes, owning the freehold. These homes provide long-term sustainable solutions to local housing needs as they are not open to Right to Buy and the community retains the assets.



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

The days when Alfred Wainwright wrote his walking guides to the Lake District setting off from Kendal each morning by bus have long gone.

Today, car use is the dominant mode of transport in National Parks and AONBs, as it is in the rest of the country.

The 2011 census showed that 88% of households in National Parks owned one or more cars,<sup>63</sup> and research by National Parks UK in 2014 suggested that 93% of visitors arrive by car.<sup>64</sup>

Car dependency and public transport pressures present huge challenges for our national landscapes. Because many people cannot afford to live there, they are forced to commute in, and because public transport information is not widely available people rely on their cars. This creates traffic and pollution, and limits how visitors can access these landscapes. Parking is insufficient, and when people do use public transport the limitations of this mean that they struggle with ways to transport luggage across 'the final mile'. 72% of large attractions in the UK are over one mile away from a train station.<sup>65</sup>

Fees from car parking are also a big source of funding for some National Parks (the Lake District National Park charges up to £500 for an annual permit). Those fees may be both a

deterrent to car use and an incentive to National Parks to tolerate their continuation.

We don't think all car use is wrong, or that it can be ended. But we do think people should be given a choice and we also think that unlimited car use can spoil the natural beauty of the special places people come to see in the first place. It is not much fun being on the shores of somewhere such as Windermere on a bike or on foot when the A592 is nose to tail, or queuing to get to a beach in Cornwall.

Some National Parks told us that they have had to cut back on schemes such as DalesBus in recent years. In the Peak District National Park even though the road along the Derwent Valley is closed to cars at certain times of the year, the bus service which was offered was underused. In 2016 just 1,600 people used the minibus. In 2017, it didn't run at all.

In many places the only simple way to find out what is available is to use the transport planner on Google Maps. And although national landscapes may play a role in encouraging sustainable transport, the duty is held by local authorities, which means different parts of one National Park or AONB can come under different authorities

63 Key statistics for National Parks in England and Wales, Office for National Statistics, 2011

64 [http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/538772/visitor-non-visitor-survey-2014.pdf](http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/538772/visitor-non-visitor-survey-2014.pdf)

65 VisitBritain/VisitEngland Call for Evidence Response



with different structures and levels of support.

The 2017 Campaign for National Parks Report *National Parks for all: Making car-free travel easier*<sup>66</sup> identified this complexity. It argues that: “With so many different organisations involved, there is a need for one organisation to take a strategic overview of how best to improve access for visitors. We believe that National Park Authorities should take on this role”.

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. For example, in Cannock Chase there is a confusion of parking places and now little alternative public transport.

In its submission to our review, the Lake District National Park set out an ambition to be a world leader and test bed for low carbon transport, by 2040. It wants to formalise its influence in regional and sub-regional transport policy, to secure, lead, commission and provide schemes and infrastructure by becoming the Strategic Transport Authority for the Park.

### Local Transport Sustainable Fund in the Lake District<sup>67</sup>

The Lake District National Park Authority in partnership with Cumbria County Council was successful in obtaining nearly £5m from the government’s Local Transport Sustainable Fund. Targeted at reducing the carbon impact of the millions of visitors to the central and southern Lake District National Park, the funding will be used to bring about improved passenger transport services, safer and better connected routes for walking, wheelchairs and cycling, new integrated ticketing and the availability of electric bikes and clean vehicles to hire.

Projects will be delivered through local businesses and community enterprises to ensure the economic benefits are spread throughout the local economy.

We think the Lake District is a suitable area to pilot this proposal. It is heavily congested, it has logical boundaries and a limited number of entry points.

More widely, as part of an increased strategic role in transport, national landscapes should encourage ‘total transport’ schemes, which integrate a wide range of government spending

on transport into frequent systems open to a range of users. School and NHS transport money can be used to support public bus services, for instance. We strongly encourage interest in this, following on from successful trials funded by the Department for Transport.

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.cnp.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploadsfiles/180226%20National%20Parks%20for%20all%20Making%20car-free%20travel%20easier%20FULL%20REPORT.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/eLibrary/Content/Internet/538/755/1929/42150122647.pdf>



We should also encourage the Swiss model of Postbuses into rural areas. Visitors are told: "You may take your bicycle with you on Postbuses providing there is sufficient space available and you do not obstruct passengers from getting on or off the vehicle. During the summer season, Postbuses travelling on most tourist routes are equipped with bike racks at the back of the bus".

Increased availability of 4G mobile signals means there is an opportunity for new forms of ride sharing, including on-demand minibus services and private hire vehicles.

Finally, in its submission to the review, the Lake District National Park

Authority notes that 50% of its carbon budget is made up of emissions from visitors, much of which is from cars.

The government has set out plans for the electrification of the vehicle fleet. A glance at maps of electric charging points shows an almost precise inverse correlation between them and National Parks. National landscapes have not come together to push collectively for more charging points, and urban areas have led the way.

We suggest all public car parks in national landscapes which have a suitable electricity supply are fitted with e-charging points within the next two years, drawing on central government funding.





# Chapter 4: More Special Places

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## What we found

This review does not make detailed proposals on boundaries, nor do we want to see protection removed from any landscape which has it today.

But we were asked as part of our terms of reference to consider new designations.

We have found that a static system is not a responsive one. It does not complete the original vision of the 1940s, nor does it match the demands of an urbanised society which more than ever needs links to nature. More of our national landscapes are in the uplands and they lie more to the west of the country than the east. Many areas of population are a long way from these special places. Choices made mainly in the 1950s and 1960s need to be added to today.

The separation of landscapes into two distinct families of National Parks and AONBs is unhelpful and we would like to see them part of one family, albeit with varied powers and sources of funding.

That, in itself, may answer some of the calls we heard from those wanting specific AONBs to be redesignated as National Parks.

Nevertheless, there is a case for additional National Parks.

This however is not enough to link our landscapes better to people and support the recovery of nature. So we also strongly support new ways of linking landscape and people. We should think in new ways about land close to urban centres, which may not require formal designation.

Finally, we also found that the process of creating new or amending the boundaries of existing national landscapes needs to work faster and better.

Ultimately, we think there should be a renewed vigour in the process for boundary changes, new designations and new types of designation which the new National Landscapes Service should take on.



## 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

## Proposal 20: New designated landscapes and a new National Forest

The pattern of national landscapes across England has been remarkably static. After a burst of activity in the 1950s the creation of new National Parks slowed to a crawl. Only the Broads, New Forest and the South Downs have been added in recent years (1988, 2005 and 2009 respectively) along with extensions to the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District in 2016.

Less work has been done on AONBs. The last new AONB was Tamar Valley in 1995 and the last extension to one, the Dedham Vale, was in 1991, although in July 2019 Natural England submitted legal Orders extending the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB to the Defra Secretary of State for confirmation.

Our system remains weighted towards the west against the east, the uplands not the lowlands, the deeply rural against urban fringes and the inland against the coast.

There are benefits to stability. National landscapes, especially National Parks, have become a

rooted part of the areas they cover. In the Peak District and Lake District, few residents or visitors will now remember a time when they were not in place. They have lasted longer than many local authorities and are better understood as a result. They have earned their place and our respect.

But new pressures exist.

As a result, we think three of the larger AONBs should be considered for National Park status.

It is essential that if any new National Park is created, it is supported with additional funds, as the South Downs National Park was, and that costs are not met by stretching the current budget.

### The Chilterns

In July 2018, the Chilterns Conservation Board submitted a request to Natural England for a review of the designation and requested that National Park status be considered.

We see very strong merit in this. Designation as a National Park should not be a block on growth in the wider region, but a natural counterpart to it. The aim should be to enhance natural beauty and nature in an area of high landscape value, while giving due recognition to the importance of the Chilterns for access and enjoyment.

It is precisely because the government has made big strategic choices for the region – such as HS2, the Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor, the Heathrow expansion and new homes – that it should also consider a big strategic choice now in favour of a new National Park for the Chilterns.

The Chilterns is an obvious choice for National Park status. It is already designated as an AONB. It more than meets the criterion for recreational opportunity, with 10m people living within an hour's drive, many just a tube ride away. That number will

increase given developments around its boundaries and in the Oxford-Cambridge corridor. It also boasts a 1,200 mile network of rights of way and is easily accessible to the increasing populations around its boundaries.

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc mirrors the west and northern boundaries of the AONB and is due to see another 1m more homes – an increase of more than 25% – by 2050. The Oxford-Cambridge Expressway and East West Rail are also planned.

People who benefit from these will also benefit from a new National Park, and in turn we think some of these developments should be able to meet many of the costs. Money has been allocated to develop a local natural capital planning approach in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc but this must take in the surrounding areas of importance, including the Chilterns AONB, and work with other projects





such as HS2 which is already funding environmental work in the Chilterns.

Should the Chilterns remain an AONB there is a strong case for the Conservation Board to be given increased resources, and, if other recommendations are accepted in this report, further powers to address the specific challenges that it faces. Namely, it currently works with 17 local authorities, and a multitude of local plans. A single statutory local plan, as we discuss in the next chapter of this report, could manage some of the pressures. But we think National Park status offers wider benefits and should be pursued as the preference.

## **The Cotswolds and Dorset**

We received submissions on the case for several other AONBs to become National Parks too.

The two that stand out as leading candidates are the Cotswolds AONB and the combined Dorset and East Devon AONBs.

The Cotswolds suffers the same challenges of the Conservation Board model as the Chilterns, including a lack of a single strategic local plan with statutory status.

The area is world-famous for its natural beauty, hugely popular with visitors from around the world and its landscape and villages are one of the emblems of England. It is a big contributor to the national economy.

These things would be better supported by National Park status.

Dorset has some of the greatest concentrations of biodiversity in Britain and opportunities for

enjoyment. It includes the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site as well as farmed areas inland where development pressures are less strong and support for a change in status may be less established. We heard from opponents as well as supporters of a new status.

Both the Cotswolds and the Dorset proposals are strong candidates, alongside the Chilterns, to be considered for National Park status.

We suggest Natural England and ministers consider the case for each.

## **Other new national landscapes**

The Forest of Dean was on the original list in the 1947 Hobhouse report linked with the Wye Valley, which was designated as an AONB on its own in 1971.

There have been several attempts since then to fulfil the expectation that the Forest of Dean would be designated.

There now appears to be considerable local support that national designation would be good. There is a collaborative National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported project (the Foresters' Forest) which would appear to provide an excellent jumping-off point for a new designation. We support it.

We have also heard from others who hope to see further areas designated: the Sandstone Ridge in Cheshire, Churnet Valley in Staffordshire, and the Vale of Belvoir on the borders of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire made persuasive cases to us that deserve further consideration.

## New national status for Sherwood Forest

We did not, in this review, hear as much from people in landscapes close to cities which are not designated, but that is precisely why we need new ideas and action.

The success of the National Forest has been huge.

This grew out of a competition held by the Countryside Commission in 1987 and has been funded since then. It aimed to link two ancient and degraded forests, Needwood and Charnwood, with new planting in the former coalfields of the East Midlands. "It transformed and literally turned the landscape from black to green", it argues – and is now aiming for 9m trees. It has done this without statutory powers and with a great effort to involve people including children through initiatives such as Forest Schools and with public financial support.

It is a model for the future and the proposed Northern Forest seeks to achieve similar social and environmental benefits.

There is room for more. The Committee on Climate Change (CCC)<sup>68</sup> is clear that "significant changes to land use are needed now and over the next 80 years to move the sector towards achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions, while protecting natural capital that the land currently represents and which will otherwise degrade as the climate changes".

It calls for substantial changes in land use by 2050 including an increase in the area of new woodland of up to 1.5m ha. Moreover the important role that trees and woodlands have in providing a range of ecosystem services is recognised and supported by many people – this was clear in responses to our call for evidence.

We now think there is a strong case for a new national forest taking in areas such as Sherwood Forest, north of Nottingham and south of Worksop.

This area contains fine natural areas such as Charnwood, Sherwood and Clipsham. It is close to many urban areas and to transport links. Its name is famous, it has many cultural and heritage sites and parts of it are already protected by various designations and organisations.

But it is not joined up as a single landscape and managed with a connected vision.

A new national forest in this area shouldn't involve an elaborate system of new designation, or a big official structure.

As with the National Forest in the East Midlands it should work with existing landowners and local people to create a more wooded, more accessible landscape, better for nature, helping to meet national ambitions on climate change.

## Joining up

We make one final point.

From many of our current national landscapes you can see others from high ground – the Yorkshire Dales

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68 <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Land-use-Reducing-emissions-and-preparing-for-climate-change-CCC-2018-1.pdf>

and the North York Moors are on each other's horizons, as are Exmoor and Dartmoor and many others like them.

Yet at times, it can feel like each is a separate, special region. There should be much closer working and a lot more joining up, including working in areas that are not formally designated.

The South Pennines, for instance, should link the Peak District National Park to the Yorkshire Dales.

New connections should be made between others, including the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors, Exmoor and Dartmoor, and the North Pennines AONB with its neighbouring areas.

This may eventually allow some designations to flow into each other so that in time much of their management becomes one. It should shape wider decisions about future Environmental Land Management Schemes.



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

Our established network of national landscapes should sit alongside innovative ideas to link people to natural places close to their homes.

We hope our existing landscapes, and government, give them energetic support.

We have been impressed by two different National Park City models in London and the West Midlands and want to see them thrive.

In July 2019 London declared itself a National Park City. This is a fresh way of getting us to see London for what it is: one of the greenest cities anywhere; a place of trees, parks and window boxes as much as skyscrapers.

In the West Midlands, with the support of the Mayor of Birmingham, proposals are being developed to link the urban area with parts of its surrounding green belt, and to think of landscape, urban and rural, in new ways. It is exciting and we hope it happens.

Neither asked this review to make specific proposals.

These are not a threat to the established National Park movement but instead a new way of thinking about people and landscapes which has the power to strengthen the whole family.

We also saw impressive work to establish a South Pennines Regional Park, in which local authorities work across boundaries.

We hope its two neighbouring National Parks, the Peak District and the Yorkshire Dales, become more involved in supporting it as part of the connected landscapes we would like to see.

Limited by time and scope, this review does not assess the many things which should be done to better protect our maritime areas.

But protection offshore, and onshore, could be better coordinated and public access put at its heart.

We heard the case for a Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, an initiative being developed in part by Plymouth City Council, and we strongly support it in principle. We also welcome steps to complete the 2,795 mile England Coast Path.

We would like to see a new National Landscapes Service welcome all such activity into the family.

We make one other specific proposal.

The National Park City idea should specifically embrace green belts. It should take urban fringe land that is currently given planning protection today but is of mixed ecological value to create much more ambitious, socially and ecologically useful land close to our urban cores.

These could be wilder, full of nature, more beautiful and much more accessible.

In places, our cities could begin to surround themselves with woodlands and wetlands, alongside well-designed new development.

We suggest a national competition supported by government for at least one city or large town to try this out with the aim of making it England's greenest city.



## Proposal 22: A better designations process

Many call for evidence responses lamented the complexity and length of the designations process. Few set out how to make it better.

Natural England is currently responsible for designating new landscapes including boundary changes to existing designations, which it is then for the Defra Secretary of State to 'confirm'.

It appears to be an overly-technical, legalistic, under-resourced and defensive process but we do not think it is fundamentally flawed. Any system of designation will need to hear evidence, face conflicting views, reach decisions and inevitably disappoint some.

In the last 20 years Natural England has designated just the South Downs and New Forest National Parks and extended the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Parks, the first two being already mostly designated as AONB.

In the 50 years prior to that some 42 landscapes were designated as National Parks or AONBs, covering about 11,120 square miles.<sup>69</sup>

Natural England's guidance sets a negative tone for designations, pointing out that they only get out of the starting gate if there is "availability of resources" and are considered of "relative importance against other work priorities".<sup>70</sup>

Natural England also has a long list of new areas proposed by others to work through, estimated at over 3,080 square miles, which at the current rate of progress will take them at least 50 years to get through. These are listed at Annex 4.

Local groups who campaign for new designations have a minimal role in the process. Consultation has become excessive, with multiple rounds of 12-week consultations.

The law does not help, with a requirement to publish legal notices in local papers, not keeping up with modern ways of communicating, and often at a disproportionate cost.

Natural England has been working to improve the process that it follows and has helpfully shared some suggestions that we think have merit, including involving local groups more in gathering evidence and exploring the scope for a simplified process for smaller boundary variations.

These should be worked up in a way that retains the integrity of the process and continues to give those with an interest an opportunity to input views. Above all, this activity should be properly resourced and given greater priority, as this is the main reason for the long delays.

We think that a new National Landscapes Service should be home to this work in the future.

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69 Information provided by Natural England.

70 [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605090108/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/B1DesignationGuidanceMar11\\_tcm6-26242.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605090108/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/B1DesignationGuidanceMar11_tcm6-26242.pdf)

# Chapter 5: New Ways of Working

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We set out at the start of this review keen not to get bogged down in structures and processes and to keep focused on the big picture. But the reality is that these things matter.

Brilliant people can achieve brilliant things, and we have seen many examples on our visits. We have also seen that this is often in spite of the laws, policies and systems, not because of them.

Sometimes these have led to a defensive culture; of guarding rather than reaching out and looking for opportunities.

In order for the system of national landscapes to be as effective as possible and to live up to the high expectations for people and nature that we advocate, there needs to be greater cohesion between the currently disconnected networks of 10 National Parks, 34 AONBs and other important landscapes and assets. These networks should develop as a system, led by the National Landscapes Service. There should be a substantial, programmed and radical transformation based on:

- a new set of clearer and up-to-date statutory purposes and a regrouping of resources around these;
- closer working between all of the national landscapes on all aspects of policy and technical development, leadership, partnerships, resourcing and accountability;
- a fit for purpose national governance arrangement and significant modernising of national landscapes' boards locally; and
- the widespread adoption of a new funding model that creates greater long-term financial stability, grows commercial and philanthropic giving, strengthens delivery in project management and distributes more effectively funds from central government.

## What we found

### Direction in law and the two-tier system

As we have set out in previous chapters, we think the existing purpose for AONBs and the purposes and duty for National Parks need reform. We have found the current direction our landscapes are given in law to be variously too vague, outdated and lacking urgency, with consequences for the way they are taken forward.





And the early distinction between National Parks and AONBs has created an unhelpful two-tier system.

This is reinforced by differences in governance, finance and administration and by a misplaced perception that AONBs are somehow second grade.

The reality is that on the ground the vast majority of AONBs are indistinguishable from National Parks and their statutory purpose for natural beauty is only different in minor detailed wording. They account for more of England's landscape, making up 60% of the total area of national landscapes, contain just as much important nature as National Parks and are even more popular with visitors. They all do vital work to promote understanding and enjoyment of their places, but without the recognition in law or support in resources.

At present, AONBs work as part of local government, but have no independent statutory status of their own. We have heard repeatedly how their planning officers play a role and give advice but the extent to which their advice is listened to varies extensively. With so few resources of their own, they rely on Natural England as a statutory consultee, but it too lacks the resources or the local expertise to express an opinion in many cases. We heard how Natural England's silence, or reference to the importance of hearing the views of AONBs, is often taken as consent. This system leaves AONBs incredibly vulnerable.

Finally, we have found their name holds them back. While descriptively accurate, it's a rambling title, often

shortened to an acronym few know and many get wrong. There's probably a stray 'ANOB' somewhere in this report.

## **Lack of working between National Parks and AONBs**

For all these reasons and others, AONBs and National Parks don't work well together.

Perhaps because overall funding for our national landscapes is ultimately quite thin, we picked up a sense among some in the National Park world that any improvement in the situation of AONBs would be to their detriment.

This is not to deny some brilliant collaboration – the South East and East Protected Landscapes and Upland Chain partnerships are great examples of National Parks and AONBs working together on strategic challenges. And the Howardian Hills AONB shares office space with the neighbouring North York Moors National Park. But it is not commonplace that National Parks and AONBs work together as they should.

National Parks themselves also fail to cooperate with each other fully and effectively. A prime example is the laudable-in-principle-but-troubled National Parks Partnership which seeks to generate commercial income. Disagreements on how to set it up meant it was established as a Limited Liability Partnership company, an unattractive proposition for commercial giving, instead of a charity. Attempts to rectify that by creating a charity were expected to have concluded last winter, yet it

has only recently come into being, and only four English National Parks joined in.

All 44 national landscapes representing almost a quarter of England, should work together to conserve our most important nature, beauty and heritage and encourage public enjoyment.

Though these places were created for the nation – for all of the people of the country to enjoy – they are incredibly local. Eyes often look in and down, not up and out.

## Governance

Part of the reason for this is how we govern our National Parks. Again, this is not to say there aren't brilliant and committed people doing brilliant things. We've been extremely grateful to meet many of them during this review.

But the constitution and operation of National Park Authority boards is poor. They are:

- Far too large to be effective. There are 220 board members across the 10 National Parks, governing a collective core budget of just £48.74m and a population of 334,000.<sup>71</sup> To put this into perspective, the Arts Council distributes £576.5m under three funding streams and is run with a non-executive board of 14 members.<sup>72</sup> The result is that officers spend an excessive amount of time servicing these bloated boards. One National Park spends an

entire day in committee each month, and not discussing the important issues of the day.

- Lacking in diversity – they suffer from the same demographic biases as most authorities in England, lacking proper representation across age, gender, ethnicity and (dis)ability. Collectively they have an average age of 64 years, have a big gender imbalance (with almost 2.5 males to every female) and shockingly, have only 0.9% representation of black, Asian and minority ethnic members.<sup>73</sup> They also lack sufficient turnover of members with many serving decades.
- Lacking people who emphasise the purposes of securing nature and connecting people with our special places. Boards are heavily focused on planning and day-to-day administration rather than strategy. As our review of the agenda topics covered in the last three meetings of our National Parks found, a disproportionate amount of time is taken up with broad procedural and bureaucratic matters such as corporate planning, standards, subcommittee appointments and minutes and the like. Planning matters also featured prominently. We found less evidence of matters related to landscape and biodiversity or to access and recreation.

<sup>71</sup> <https://nationalparks.uk/students/whatisanationalpark/factsandfigures>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-organisation/national-council-0>

<sup>73</sup> See Annexe 5 for full details.

Annex 5 provides a summary of the current governance of National Parks and AONBs.

We've found local people often feel National Park Authorities are remote, despite the heavy presence of locally-elected representatives.

The most is not made of Secretary of State appointees. Many officers and board members we have spoken to value the fresh perspective these nationally-appointed members bring, but such members have often expressed frustration to us at the lack of interest in them or national leadership from Defra.

The Environment Act 1995 established National Park Authorities as independent legal entities, and applied to them many of the operating rules that apply to local government. National Park Authorities are subject to the provision of the Local Government Act 1972 in relation to their meetings, proceedings and decision making. This is despite them not having responsibility for most of the myriad of other services local authorities provide (such as social care, schools, refuse collection, etc.).

We've had direct approaches from members and officers alike, exasperated at the system.



AONB boards, usually called Joint Advisory Committees though two have Conservation Boards, while not constituted so formally in law, suffer many of the same traits. They can be larger than those of National Parks and their record in terms of other diversity issues is generally similar to that of the National Parks.

### Interest within Whitehall

Perhaps because National Parks and AONBs do not punch at or above their collective weight, they are not always taken as seriously at national level as they should be.

They seem to be held just outside the Defra sphere, never at the forefront of officials' minds when it comes to delivering government priorities. No role has yet been carved out for them in Environmental Land Management Scheme development or in the Nature Recovery Networks.

Responsibility for our national landscapes has shifted across various public bodies, from the original National Parks Commission, to the Countryside Commission, to the Countryside Agency, to Natural England and (for funding at least) into Defra. This shifting of responsibility, usually coupled with a reduction in resources and staff at the central government end, has been unhelpful in giving direction and support to our national landscapes.

### Funding

National landscapes received a total of £55.4m from Defra for 2019/20. In government terms, that is not a big sum. There is a significant disparity of funding between National Parks and

AONBs within this: the 10 National Parks received £48.7m and the 34 AONBs received £6.7m. Indeed just one National Park, the South Downs, receives several million more on its own than all 34 AONBs combined.

This is in part because of a funding formula that is fossilised and complex. Indeed, it has been difficult to find a clear and concise explanation of it anywhere during the course of the review.

What we have pieced together is shown at Annex 3. It shows that different features are taken into account for the two designations, despite them facing the same challenges, and that they are based on existing attributes. While this makes sense to a degree, it doesn't focus money on priorities.

Thin funding has led AONBs to be enterprising. We have been highly impressed with their ability to deliver with and through others. We don't want to lose that strength. But neither do we think it is right to keep their wings clipped. We have heard often of 'fireworks of funding that take off and then fizzle out', meaning legacies are lost or need to be rebuilt. And, worryingly, of battles with local authorities to secure the full 25% of the core funding they contribute (indeed, we have even heard of AONB teams put on redundancy notice when basic grant has not been forthcoming). The Defra grant is also paid to AONBs in arrears, which, given their overall very small funding, leaves them in difficulty.

Both National Parks and AONBs have tried to broaden their funding base. They have been effective at using their core public funding to lever

money from a variety of sources. The most significant of these appears to be the National Heritage Lottery Fund's (NHLF) Landscape Partnership Programme, and European Union funding (such as from the Rural Development Programme's LEADER programme).<sup>74</sup>

The NLHF has been a particularly important source of funding over the 25 years it has been in existence, investing over £400m in AONBs and National Parks. Just one of the many examples is the South West Peak Landscape Partnership, a five-year project working with local communities with the Peak District National Park Authority as lead partner, to build stronger connections with the landscape and with each other. We have seen and heard many fantastic examples of what these

funds have achieved, and are very pleased to see the NHLF continuing with a new programme.

National landscapes have also set up local and national bodies and charities to support philanthropic and commercial giving and have had some good successes. The National Parks Partnership efforts secured branded workwear for all National Park staff and several commercial partnerships. Individual charities have had some good successes too.

But the reality is that we have 44 national landscape bodies operating as many charities without any central mechanism for learning from each other or joining up, and that overall, funding for our national landscapes is not as well-diversified as it could or should be.

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74 Maximising Revenues for Protected Landscapes Final Report Prepared by LUC in association with SQW March 2014.

## 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

## Proposal 23: Stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes

As we have set out in previous chapters, we think the purposes for our national landscapes should be updated and apply equally to National Parks and AONBs – there is no reasonable basis for the currently unhelpful distinction and people and nature need more from our landscapes.

Our understanding of nature has moved on, and ‘wildlife’ no longer covers the breadth of the biodiversity challenge.

We need our landscape bodies to reach out and connect more people to nature. Access and recreation is at the heart of the meaning of national landscapes.

And we need to better support the communities that make our landscapes so special. The current duty for this should be upgraded to a purpose.

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.

Where there is a conflict between any of the three purposes, and the further navigation purpose assigned to the Broads, then greater weight must be given to the first of these purposes under an updated ‘Sandford Principle’ that applies to all our national landscapes and not just to National Parks as it does currently.

These strengthened purposes will help underpin consequently stronger Management Plans, which in turn, as we set out in earlier chapters, must be given stronger weight in law. They must be the basis for ambitious targeted actions, with delivery to be driven forward by a new National Landscapes Service (see below).

## The Sandford Principle

"The first purpose of National Parks as stated by Dower and by Parliament – the preservation and enhancement of natural beauty – seems to us to remain entirely valid and appropriate. The second purpose – the promotion of public enjoyment – however needs to be re-interpreted and qualified because it is now evident that excessive or unsuitable use may destroy the very qualities which attract people to the parks.

We have no doubt that where the conflict between the two purposes which has always been inherent, becomes acute, the first one must prevail in order that the beauty and ecological qualities of the National Parks may be maintained."<sup>75</sup>



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<sup>75</sup> Report of the National Park Policies Review Committee 1974, Chairman The Rev Rt Hon Lord Sandford. The Sandford Principle was subsequently enshrined in law in section 62 of the Environment Act 1995.



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

AONBs should be strengthened in law, policy and resources. We are not the first to say so. A 2001 review of AONBs concluded that “a new agenda is required to address their shortcomings and to ensure that AONBs are firmly at the top of the conservation tree, alongside National Parks, as a key part of our national heritage”.<sup>76</sup> Nearly 20 years later, this is even more pressing.

We think the family of national landscapes should be a varied one, with different powers, funding and names. We should retain differences where they add flexibility and strength.

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 (proposal 23). This reflects the reality that AONBs deliver the same purposes as National Parks.
- Increasing their funding (proposal 27).
- Giving them statutory consultee status to strengthen their role in the planning system (proposal 6).
- Renaming them ‘National Landscapes’. Their national importance should be properly reflected by something much less unwieldy that elevates them alongside National Parks.

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<sup>76</sup> Landscapes at Risk? The Future for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty” by Edward Holdaway and Professor Gerald Smart, Spons Press 2001.

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

A new National Landscapes Service should bring our National Parks and AONBs together: to inspire, join-up and look out, drive action, and hold each other to account.

The potential of England's 44 most beautiful places, sharing their best practices and working together for the nation, can only be delivered through national coordination.

A new National Landscapes Service should:

- Set the vision and strategy for England's 44 national landscapes from which their own Management Plans will evolve.
- Hold national landscapes to account for carrying out these plans.
- Drive national and regional collaboration, internally and with partners.
- Ensure best practices become common everywhere.
- Promote consistent, high-quality standards in our special places, including overseeing a new professional ranger service and visitor experience.
- Represent the 44 bodies with a single strong voice to Whitehall, making ambitious offers to the nation, for example on access

and recreation, transport, health, education, and nature, as well as advocating on their behalf.

- Establish national relationships with key partners on all areas of the landscapes' purposes.
- Learn from and work with designated landscapes elsewhere in the United Kingdom, Europe and beyond.
- Support non-designated landscapes and initiatives to work with national landscapes.
- Provide high-quality, essential services across the 44 bodies, reducing duplication and improving join-up, for example on evidence and research, project development, fundraising, planning support, training and careers.

This new National Landscapes Service should be led by a small, high calibre board appointed by Defra.

Its members must be successful, inspirational leaders in their own fields, which should reflect the renewed purposes of the national landscapes – nature, culture, economic vitality and people – and fully reflect diversity in our society. We need young voices, people from cities and beyond.

It should have a small central staff with expertise in all things relevant to national landscapes (landscape,

ecology, land management, planning, cultural heritage, access and recreation, finance and so on).

Importantly, the chief executives, lead officers and chairs of national landscapes should report into the National Landscapes Service, which will provide a proper career structure across the country that gives staff opportunities to grow and develop their experience in different landscapes.

While a new National Landscapes Service will cost money in the short-term, there will be some immediate efficiencies, as well as a mission to increase the funding base of national landscapes, which, if carried out successfully, has the potential to substantially increase the external money that support our national landscapes. We discuss this further in the finance section below.

The two existing bodies representing national landscapes, National Parks England and the National Association of AONBs, should ultimately be subsumed within the new National Landscapes Service.

Since both are already taxpayer funded, either directly by Defra or from National Park and AONB contributions, even at current levels, this would see something in the order of at least £170,000 per annum available for the National Landscapes Service.

Likewise, efficiencies in the fees paid to members by reducing their numbers (see Annex 5) should support the new body.

In time the process for designating new national landscapes or changing boundaries should move from Natural England into the National Landscapes Service.

It is vitally important that the overriding priority of the National Landscapes Service is to support the national landscapes to be more ambitious, more action-focused and more collaborative.

We believe that the National Landscapes Service should be an entirely new body, not simply an arm of Natural England. But we think the two should work closely together.

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

Alongside a new National Landscapes Service, we propose an overhaul of how our national landscapes are governed individually.

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 chair should be appointed by the Defra Secretary of State after a process led by the National Landscapes Service. Other members would be appointed by the National Landscapes Service working with the relevant national landscape.

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.

We propose:

- Every National Park should have a partnership group that works alongside the main board, as per the model already in place at the Lake District and in some others. These should comprise the voices of those who have a stake in the national landscape and who are fundamental to achieving outcomes.

- The main boards of National Parks should be reduced to between 9 and 12 members, bringing them into line with other models of public sector governance.<sup>77</sup>
- Members on boards are selected for their passion, skills and experience including biodiversity, natural beauty, culture, leisure, education, and community.
- **Every** effort should be made to achieve diversity – of social background, gender, age, ethnicity, (dis)ability.
- The main task of each board would be to prepare and drive ambitious delivery of Management Plans, delivering for nature, people and communities.
- The structure above should apply to AONBs where possible. We recognise that for some smaller ones it may be over-elaborate, or challenging to put in place. For larger ones, it is appropriate.

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<sup>77</sup> As an example, at 22 July 2019, board sizes were as follows: Natural England 11, Environment Agency 10, Kew Gardens 12, Canal and River Trust 9.

- For National Parks, which will continue to have responsibility for development control, planning issues should continue to involve local authority members. We propose each National Park retains or establishes a Planning Sub-Committee, reduced in size to between 9 and 12 members to correspond with the smaller main board and those typical of local authority planning sub-committees.
- These Planning Sub-Committees should be chaired by a member of the main board, with at least two members from the main board on it, and made up of representatives from the constituent local authorities and parishes, who should agree between themselves who they wish to see on the Sub-Committee.
- 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.



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

A new approach to financing is needed.

Central government funding should continue, and be both extended and secured across a five-year period.

This is justified to redress historical under-funding, to enable landscapes to deliver the new responsibilities we set out and to secure new landscapes for the nation.

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.

### Core funding

The current funding formula for our national landscapes is fossilised, complex and reinforces historic anomalies, such as the poor funding of AONBs. This needs to change to a simpler, fairer and dynamic system of funding, overseen directly by the National Landscapes Service, which drives activity and doesn't reflect historic patterns.

We also recommend stopping the complex routing of funds via Defra. Responsibility should pass to the new National Landscapes Service, as was the case prior to creation of Natural England when funds were administered by the Countryside Agency. Other unnecessary complexities, such as the requirement for the Broads Authority to account for income and expenditure from

National Park Grant and Navigation separately, or 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.

When implementing the new formula, no organisation should receive a cut in grant. Any adjustments related to the formula should be in the form of additional grant where the new formula determines additional funds are required.

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

Efficiencies should be made across the system from reduced costs of governance (see Annex 5 for details of current governance spending, a great deal of which could be saved through our recommended governance reforms) and from specialist services being concentrated and shared by the national landscapes working together.

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:

- core democratic, leadership and strategic planning;
- area of land designated for biodiversity value and the number of areas under nature improvement plans;
- size of resident population;
- number of visitors;
- Local Development Framework and development control responsibilities (for National Parks only); and
- number of planning cases (based on a five-year rolling average).
- funding to deliver strategic priorities across the network.

This should be phased in over a period of time to ensure they have time to adjust.

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.

## **Local financial planning**

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.

## **National Landscapes Service's role in finance**

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.

It is surprising to see how little progress has been made in turning the evident public support for our national landscapes into models which can help support them financially. During the course of this review we heard repeatedly of tensions over proposals for a national charity to support National Parks, and of difficulties in developing commercial links. There has been a failure of coordination, ambition and expertise.

But the potential is there. There should be an ambitious commercial and philanthropic programme of fundraising. It should learn from best practice across Defra agencies such as the Canal and River Trust, Forestry England and Kew Gardens and established UK charities such as the Woodland and National Trusts and from international experience, for example the US National Parks Foundation. Many such organisations and other great cultural institutions such as museums, galleries and music venues succeed at it – and in doing so have been able to engage better with the people and places they serve.

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.





# Conclusion

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Thank you for reading this far. This review is the product of many conversations and meetings and of the hard work of people who care for our countryside and took the time to tell us what they think.

We know there are areas where we could have said more – and of course things that people will think we should have addressed differently. But we hope one thing stands out. That working together, people and nature can make our most special countryside happier, healthier, greener, more beautiful and more accessible to everyone. That means seeing conservation and farming as partners, and farming for nature as well as for food.

It means a new expanded ranger service, to welcome people in. It means supporting local communities through the planning system when they need homes they can afford

and local jobs, while protecting natural beauty.

Making our national landscapes something everybody, and especially every child, knows are there for them, reflecting the diversity of our nation. It means bringing our special landscapes together in one diverse but unified family with bigger ambitions. It means better ways of running things, both nationally and locally with secure, sufficient and wider sources of funding and a renewed focus on new areas also deserving of protection. It means protecting what we have and leaving these special places in a better state for the future.

We found excitement everywhere for this and optimism about what can be done. This moment matters. Get it right and England's green and pleasant land will be made better still.



# Annexes



# Annex 1

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## Glossary

- national landscapes – used to refer to National Parks and AONBs together
- national landscapes family – the terminology we recommend is used to refer to National Parks, AONBs, National Trails and other non-designated systems of landscape protection
- National Landscapes – the term we recommend is used for AONBs in the future. We continue to refer to AONBs as AONBs in this report to avoid confusion. As noted above however, during this report, we refer to the two designations of National Parks and AONBs together as ‘national landscapes’ in lower case
- AONBs – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- National Landscapes Service (NLS) – the new national body we recommend to bring together all 44 National Parks and AONBs
- National Landscape Rural Housing Association – a new housing association we recommend to deliver affordable housing in national landscapes
- National Trails – long distance walking, cycling and horse riding routes in England and Wales.
- ELMS – Environmental Land Management Schemes
- NAAONB – National Association of AONBs
- NPE – National Park England
- NPA – National Park Authority
- NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework
- SSSI – Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- NNR – National Nature Reserve
- LNR – Local Nature Reserve
- LPA – Local Planning Authority
- NE – Natural England
- CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

- NHLF – National Heritage Lottery Fund
- LNP – Local Nature Partnership
- LEP – Local Enterprise Partnership
- JAC – Joint Advisory Committee (for AONBs). We use the term ‘AONB boards’ for short in this report
- LWS – Local Wildlife Site
- CCC – Committee on Climate Change

## Annex 2

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A brief history of National Parks and AONBs as kindly provided to the review by some alumni of our national landscapes

Date	Event	Significance
1936	Standing Committee on National Parks founded	Begins coordinated campaigning for National Parks.
1945	Dower report published	John Dower proposes National Park purposes: a park should be an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation's benefit: "a) the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved, b) access and facilities for public open air enjoyment are amply provided, c) wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected, and d) established farming use is effectively maintained". He also recognises that there are Other Amenity Areas (i.e. fine landscapes that are not suitable as National Parks) but does not give them a purpose in his scheme.
1947	Hobhouse Committee report published	Endorses Dower definition of purposes. Of Dower's Other Amenity Areas (now called Conservation Areas) it says "special measures should be taken to preserve their natural beauty and interest".
1949	National Parks and Access to Countryside Act	National Park and AONB sections apply to England and Wales only. The Act states that National Park powers are to be used for the purposes of i) preserving and enhancing the <i>natural beauty</i> of National Parks, and ii) promoting their enjoyment by the public; and it explains that 'natural beauty' includes "the natural features, fauna and flora". Hobhouse's Conservation Areas were called 'areas of outstanding natural beauty', places to be designated because it is desirable that the powers of the Act relating to natural beauty should be applied (a rather torturous way of saying that AONBs are designated for the same purpose as purpose i) for National Parks).
1968	Countryside Act	1) Modifies 'natural beauty' definition by substituting: "conservation" for "preservation"; and "geological and physiographical features" for "natural features"; 2) places duty on National Park Authorities to have due regard to social and economic interests of the local community. Also a duty placed on all public bodies "to have regard to desirability of conserving natural beauty and amenity of the countryside".

Date	Event	Significance
1974	Sandford Committee report	Addresses National Parks only. Endorses first purpose but recommends that when the two purposes are in conflict, conservation "must prevail" (Sandford Principle).
1991	Edwards Panel report	Addresses National Parks only. 1) Recommends revised first and second purposes: i) "protect, maintain, and enhance the scenic beauty, natural systems and land forms, and the wildlife and cultural heritage of the area", and ii) "promote the quiet enjoyment and understanding of the area, insofar as it is not in conflict with the primary purpose of conservation" (i.e. Sandford Principle by "back door"); 2) rejects third socio-economic purpose but National Park Authorities should "support the appropriate agencies in fostering social and economic wellbeing of the communities within the National Park, in ways which are compatible with the purposes for which National Parks are designated"; 3) says all public bodies should "further National Park purposes", and report on this annually.
1995	Environment Act	Affects National Parks only. 1) Enacts revised purposes: i) "Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage"; and ii) "Promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of these areas by the public"; 2) places duty on public bodies to "have regard" to "National Park purposes"; 3) National Park Authorities are required to "seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the National Parks"; 4) Sandford Principle put into law.
2000	Countryside and Rights of Way Act	Affects AONBs only. A Conservation Board may be set up for an AONB, which shall "have regard to (a) the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty, and (b) the purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty". If there is conflict between these purposes, greater weight must be given to (a). Also a Conservation Board "shall seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the area of outstanding natural beauty". Adds a duty on public bodies to have regard to purposes of AONBs.
2006	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act	Indirectly affects both National Parks and AONBs by 1) redefining "natural beauty" to include wildlife and cultural heritage; natural beauty may "consist of, or include, land used for agriculture or woodlands, or used as a park, or an area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape"; 2) recognising significance of opportunities provided for the public to understand and enjoy an area's special qualities.

# Annex 3

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## Existing National Park and AONB funding formulas

### National Parks

The formula has two elements:

1. Each National Park receives a flat £1m for certain fixed costs – such as running Authority meetings – which have to be met regardless of size.
2. The bulk of the remaining funding is distributed according to a number of indicators which are intended to reflect the comparative need to spend. Some of these – such as area – carry more weight than others. The indicators are:
  - the area of the National Park
  - the number of visitors
  - the resident population
  - the length of linear features (hedges, walls, water courses, ditches)
  - number of monuments
  - length of public rights of way
  - length of public rights of way which the National Park Authorities manages
  - number of Authority members
  - number of planning cases
  - number of listed buildings
  - number of conservation areas
  - area of land owned by the National Park Authority

### AONBs

The AONB formula is:

$[AONB \text{ area in km}^2 \times \text{£}60 \text{ per km}^2] + [\text{number of local authorities} \times \text{£}6,000 \text{ per local authority}] = \text{total AONB grant.}$

Defra then pays 75% of this and local authorities whose area makes up the AONB pay the other 25%.



# Annex 4

## Stakeholder proposals submitted to Natural England for further landscape designations

Name (in alphabetical order)	New/ Variation	Approx extent (Km2)
Cambs Ouse Valley AONB	New	290.97
Cornwall AONB	Variation	
Cotswolds NP	Conversion of existing AONB to National Park	2401
Chilterns NP	Conversion of existing AONB to National Park	838.3
Churnet Valley AONB	New	232.8
Chilterns AONB	Variation	331.3
Dedham Vale AONB	Variation	47.04
East Devon/Dorset NP	New	1568.4
Forest of Dean AONB	New	354.9
Herefordshire Marches AONB	New	200
Lincolnshire Wolds AONB	Variation	–
Malvern Hills AONB/ Abberley Hills	Variation	34.84
Norfolk Coast AONB	Variation	1.6
North Devon AONB	Variation	8.03
Northants Ironstone Uplands AONB	New	299
South Devon National Park	New	354.3
Surrey Hills AONB	Variation	82.5
Wellhead Valley (CC&WWD AONB)	Variation	29.1
Yorkshire Wolds AONB	New	1114.2

Source: Natural England, August 2019.

# Annex 5

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## Membership and diversity of National Park Authorities and AONB Joint Advisory Committees and Conservation Boards<sup>78</sup>

Information was collected from National Park and AONB bodies on the make-up of their boards and analysed as it stood on 1 July 2019.

The analysis in the following tables provides an overview of the information, anonymised as required, to provide an overall sense of the diversity on the boards.

Not all bodies collected the requested data or were able to provide full figures, so in some cases the information remains partly incomplete. This is highlighted in explanatory footnotes where relevant.

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<sup>78</sup> We use the term 'AONB boards' for short.

## National Parks

### Make-up of National Park Authority members (including navigation members in the Broads)

National Park	Secretary of State Members	Local Authorities Members	Parish / Navigation Members	Total
Broads	10	9	2	21
Dartmoor	5	10	4	19
Exmoor	5	12	5	22
Lake District	3	10	5	18
New Forest	6	12	4	22
Northumberland	6	6	6	18
North York Moors	5	10	4	19
Peak District	8	16	6	30
South Dales	6	14	6	26
Yorkshire Dales	6	15	4	25
Total	60	114	46	220 <sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> This does not include a further four vacancies across the National Parks at 30 August 2019.

## Gender diversity of National Park Authority members (M = male, F = female)

Across all members in all 10 National Parks there are 71% male to 29% female members.

National Park	Secretary of State Members		Local Authorities		Parish / Navigation		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	1	7	3	4	1	13	5
2	2	2	9	3	4	1	15	6
3	5	3	13	3	3	3	21	9
4	3	2	8	2	2	2	13	6
5	3	3	5	1	4	2	12	6
6	2	4	11	4	4	0	17	8
7	9	1	5	4	1	1	15	6
8	6	0	9	3	4	0	19	3
9	3	2	7	3	3	1	13	6
10	3	3	9	5	4	2	16	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>65</b>

## Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and disability diversity of National Park Authorities

Figures provided showed only two members from BAME backgrounds and four with a declared disability across all National Park Authorities. This represents a 0.9% from BAME communities and 1.3% disability representation across the entire board membership.<sup>80</sup>

## Age ranges of National Park Authority members and average age of all members<sup>81</sup>

National Park	0-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Average Age
1	0	0	3	4	9	3	66
2	0	0	0	11	4	3	65
3	0	1	4	9	5	1	60
4	0	1	3	7	9	1	62
5	0	0	6	6	11	3	68
6	0	3	2	6	4	3	60
7	0	1	5	9	12	3	62
8	0	1	5	6	12	1	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>64</b>

80 Figures cover eight National Parks for BAME members and nine National Parks for declared disabilities. It is important to note that there may be members who prefer not to disclose their ethnicity or any disability, so there is a possibility these figures may under-represent the true picture.

81 Information was provided by eight National Parks. Seven of these directly calculated and provided the average age of their members. For the eighth National Park, we calculated an estimated average by taking the mid-point of the age ranges.

Number of members serving eight years or more, and the number of years of the longest-serving member (regardless of appointment type)

National Park	8 years	12 years	16 years	20 years	24 years	Number of years served by the longest-serving member
1	5					9
2	2	2	1	1		20
3	2	1	1	1		23
4	3	2	1	1		23
5	3	3				14
6		2				13
7		4		1		13
8	3		1			16
9	11	1		2	1	31
10	1					8
Total years	30	15	4	6	1	13.6

## Remuneration per person, per annum, excluding travel and subsistence

The total amount spent by all National Parks on remuneration of their board members, excluding travel and subsistence, is estimated to be £651,171. The two tables below provide the details.

National Park	Secretary of State Members	Local Authorities	Parish / Navigation	Total (per annum)
1	£3,119	£3,119	£3,119	£77,975
2	£1,046	£1,046	£1,046	£21,966
3	£3,009	£3,009	£3,009	£78,243
4	£1,710	£1,710	£1,710	£23,940
5	£3,156	£2,650	£3,323	£87,566
6	£2,739	£2,739	£2,739	£60,258
7	£2,346	£2,346	£2,346	£44,574
8	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£54,000
9	£1,804	£1,804	£1,804	£32,472
10	£1,960	£1,960	£1,960	£43,120
<b>Total</b>	<b>£23,889</b>	<b>£23,383</b>	<b>£24,056</b>	<b>£524,114</b>

Additional special responsibility allowances paid<sup>82</sup>

National Park	Chair	Deputy Chair	Other	Total
1	£7,216	£3,608	£5,412	£6,236
2	£6,000	£4,500	N/A	£10,500
3	£3,925	£1,963	£523	£6,411
4	£5,478	£8,217 <sup>83</sup>	£2,054	£15,749
5	£5,100	£1,710	£7,175	£13,985
6	£3,920	£1,960	£6,370	£12,250
7	£4,693	£1,759	£3,120	£9,572
8	£6,019	£4,561	£6,137	£16,717
9	£5,865	£2,933	£5,455	£14,253
10	£6,238	£1,559	£3,587	£11,384
<b>Total</b>	<b>£54,454</b>	<b>£32,770</b>	<b>£39,833</b>	<b>£127,057</b>

82 For two National Parks, special allowances are calculated as a multiple of their basic remuneration, e.g., for the chair 2x their basic remuneration and for the deputy chair, 1.5x basic remuneration. As remuneration varies between member types, we took an average of the remuneration across all member types for those National Parks and estimated a total figure.

83 Two lots of £4,108.50



## AONBs

### Number of AONB board members and gender diversity

AONB	Members (no. of posts)	Gender (M/F)	
1	24	14	10
2	34	24	10
3	22	16	6
4	26	22	4
5	29	23	6
6	18	10	8
7	37	25	8
8	12	8	4
9	22	12	10
10	19	12	7
11	31	20	11
12	21	11	8
13	18	13	5
14	13	10	2
15	26	14	5
16	32	18	14
17	21	13	8
18	19	14	5
19	29	20	9
20	14	6	8
21	13	10	3
22	21	15	6
23	12	5	7
24	25	16	5
25	18	12	6
26	25	17	8
27	40	26	14
28	5	4	1
29	24	15	8
30	26	19	7
31	22	14	8
32	12	8	4
33	21	13	8
<b>Total in 33 AONBs</b>	<b>731<sup>84</sup></b>	<b>479</b>	<b>233</b>

84 This covers figures for 33 AONBs, not all 34. It also includes 19 vacancies, so only 712 positions were filled as at 1 July 2019.

## BAME and disability diversity within the boards

Figures provided showed five members from BAME backgrounds and three with a declared disability across all AONB boards. This represents a 0.7% BAME and 0.4% disability representation across the entire board membership.<sup>85</sup>

### Age ranges of board members and average age of all members<sup>86</sup>

AONB	0-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Average Age
1	0	2	3	4	2	1	55
2	0	0	8	9	4	1	61
3	0	2	3	6	2	0	55
4	0	0	3	14	7	5	60
5	0	3	6	5	8	2	58
6	0	2	9	4	4	0	47
7	0	1	5	12	14	1	62
8	0	3	4	8	6	0	57
9	0	3	3	21	13	0	60
10	0	3	7	6	5	0	55
11	0	9	10	11	2	0	49
12	0	3	4	2	7	3	62
13	0	1	1	0	3	0	58.6
14	0	6	12	4	2	1	50
15	0	3	6	3	0	0	50
16	0	3	2	14	0	0	53
17	0	3	5	3	5	1	56.6
18	0	0	6	6	5	2	61
19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	0	4	4	10	4	0	55
21	0	4	4	7	3	0	47
22	0	3	6	10	9	1	55
23	0	6	13	4	3	0	49
24	0	2	4	6	6	0	57
25	0	1	3	6	9	2	52.9
26	0	2	8	13	6	2	58
27	0	3	9	9	2	1	54
28	0	0	2	8	2	0	55
29	0	1	2	3	6	2	60
30	0	3	6	3	6	1	57
31	0	0	8	7	11	0	61
Average age across 31 AONBs							53.8

<sup>85</sup> Figures cover 33 AONBs. It is important to note that there may be members who prefer not to disclose their ethnicity or any disability, so there is a possibility these figures may under-represent the true picture.

<sup>86</sup> Figures as provided for 31 AONBs. Average ages were calculated directly by many AONBs. We used a mid-point of the age ranges to calculate average ages for nine AONBs.

Number of members serving eight years or more, and the number of years of the longest-serving member (regardless of appointment type).<sup>87</sup>

AONB	8 years	12 years	16 years	20 years	24 years	Longest serving
1	3	3	4	1	0	20
2	5	0	0	2	1	28
3	0	4	0	0	0	14
4	0	0	0	0	0	7
5	1	0	0	1	0	21
6	1	1	0	0	0	12
7	6	3	0	0	0	14
8	1	0	1	0	0	17
9	1	2	3	0	0	19
10	1	0	0	0	0	10
11	16	2	2	1	0	17
12	4	0	2	1	0	21
13	2	1	3	1	0	20
14	5	0	0	0	0	15
15	8	1	0	0	0	14
16	2	0	0	0	0	
17	2	1	0	0	0	12
18	12	5	3	2	0	21
19	0	0	0	0	0	6
20	21	0	1	0	0	14
21	7	15	0	0	0	12
22	5	3	1	2	1	42
23	2	1	4	0	0	17
24	7	0	0	2	0	21
25	1	0	0	0	0	11
26	4	2	0	0	0	15
27	20	5	2	2	0	17
28	8	5	3	0	1	25
29	0	0	2	0	0	16
30	5	2	0	0	0	12
31	2	2	3	0	0	16
32	0	0	0	0	0	24
33	0	0	11	0	0	16
Average longest serving members and years served						17.1

<sup>87</sup> Figures provided for 33 AONBs.

## **Remuneration of AONB board members**

Only a handful of AONBs reported paying fees or expenses to their board members so this data is not reported here.

# Annex 6

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## Extent of Deep Peaty Soils (Natural England Data)

### National Parks

	Peat coverage (Ha)	NP total Area (Ha)	% Coverage
DARTMOOR	19,175.82	95,574.75	20.06
EXMOOR	4,629.47	69,312.18	6.68
LAKE DISTRICT	31,336.59	236,239.55	13.26
NEW FOREST	50.37	56,652.48	0.09
NORTH YORK MOORS	5,876.03	144,106.16	4.08
NORTHUMBERLAND	22,627.94	105,093.44	21.53
PEAK DISTRICT	30,253.00	143,783.18	21.04
SOUTH DOWNS	902.29	165,267.93	0.55
THE BROADS	10,588.06	30,151.28	35.12
YORKSHIRE DALES	61,241.77	218,482.67	28.03
<b>All National Parks Total</b>	<b>186,681.34 Ha</b>	<b>1,264,663.62 Ha</b>	<b>14.76 %</b>

## AONBs

	Peat coverage (Ha)	NP total Area (Ha)	% Coverage
Arnside & Silverdale	948.31	7,587.26	12.50
Cannock Chase	7.05	6,865.83	0.10
Cornwall	2,751.37	96,403.17	2.85
Cotswolds	24.45	204,109.11	0.01
Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs	452.35	98,594.78	0.46
Dedham Vale	1.27	9,058.49	0.01
Dorset	90.08	112,933.07	0.08
East Devon	11.07	26,913.42	0.04
Forest Of Bowland	16,728.56	80,573.33	20.76
High Weald	34.45	146,173.78	0.02
Howardian Hills	0.53	20,420.27	0.00
Isle Of Wight	60.13	19,137.05	0.31
Kent Downs	22.31	87,900.44	0.03
Lincolnshire Wolds	0.46	55,898.18	0.00
Mendip Hills	50.44	19,846.97	0.25
Nidderdale	12,567.45	60,117.42	20.90
Norfolk Coast	870.08	44,590.88	1.95
North Pennines	85,740.72	198,516.99	43.19
Quantock Hills	14.88	9,916.75	0.15
Shropshire Hills	44.30	80,829.71	0.05
Solway Coast	1,604.46	12,255.00	13.09
Suffolk Coast & Heaths	1,707.49	40,537.33	4.21
Surrey Hills	4.95	42,246.24	0.01
<b>All AONBs Total</b>	<b>679,925.24 Ha</b>	<b>3,803,464.91 Ha</b>	<b>17.88%</b>

# Photo locations and credits

Chapter	Location	Credit
Cover	White Gill, Lake District National Park	Jon Sparks of <a href="http://www.jon-sparks.co.uk">www.jon-sparks.co.uk</a>
Preface (p5)	Longridge Fell, Forest of Bowland AONB	Graham Cooper
Introduction (p8)	North Pennines AONB	Chris Woodley-Stewart
Summary of findings (p10)	Near Ashburton, Dartmoor National Park	Oliver Stapleton
Summary of findings (p14)	Sidbury in East Devon AONB	Chris Woodruff
Summary of findings (p17)	Wetherhouse Moor, North York Moors National Park	Matt Chapman and Janet Cochrane
Summary of findings (page 23)	Lincolnshire Wolds AONB	Stephen Jack
Summary of findings (p24)	Langdale Pikes, Lake District National Park	Pete Martin
Chapter 1 (p33)	Peter Rock, Exmoor National Park	Julian Gurney
Chapter 1 (p39)	Upper Thurne, Broads National Park	Kelvin Allen
Chapter 1 (p41)	Sherbrook Hill, Cannock Chase AONB	Cannock Chase AONB
Chapter 1 (p44)	Greensand Ridge, Boughton Monchelsea	Cllr Brian Clark, Maidstone Borough Councillor
Chapter 1 (p51)	Belinda, Cumbria	Peter Trimming
Chapter 1 (p57)	Storrington, South Downs National Park	Duncan Hurwood
Chapter 2 (p70)	Houndkirk, Peak District National Park	Peak District MOSAIC
Chapter 2 (ps74/75)	Dorset AONB	Eucan
Chapter 2 (p76)	Corfe Castle, Dorset AONB	Rupert Hardy
Chapter 2 (p78)	Sticks Pass, Lake District National Park	Paul Parkinson
Chapter 2 (p81)	Derbyshire	Ben Seal
Chapter 2 (p83)	Merrow Hill, North Wessex Downs AONB	Christopher Head of HeadForward Consultancy Ltd.
Chapter 2 (p88)	Lake District National Park	David and Linda Kitto
Chapter 2 (p90)	Doddington Moor, Northumberland National Park	Confor

## Landscapes Review

Chapter	Location	Credit
Chapter 2 (p95)	Upper Ribsdale, Yorkshire Dales	Mark Corner of Friends of the Dales
Chapter 2 (p100)	Oakmoor, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	Samantha Cunningham
Chapter 3 (p111)	Little Bewden Affordable Housing Development in Dartmoor National Park	Hastoe Housing
Chapter 3 (p114)	Thurne Mouth Open Regatta, Broads National Park	Sue Hines
Chapter 3 (p116)	Doxley Pool, Peak District	@wilderness_gongs on instagram
Chapter 4 (p118)	Botallack, Cornwall AONB	Stephen Wilcox
Chapter 4 (p123)	Raveningham Estate, Norfolk	Ellie Randall
Chapter 4 (p125)	Woodborough Hill, North Wessex Downs AONB	Dave Gray
Chapter 5 (p131)	Whiteleaf Hill, Chilterns AONB	John Morris of Woodlands Project
Chapter 5 (p137)	Edale, Peak District National Park	Steve Snow
Chapter 5 (p146)	Hemingford Meadow, Cambridge	Peter Quest
Annexes (p147)	Derwent Water, Lake District National Park	Jo Newman-Smith