

AONB News – October 2013 – e-news from the National Association for AONBs

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Cabinet Reshuffle – new Minister for AONBs in England

Following the recent UK cabinet reshuffle, the new Parliamentary Under Secretary at Defra is Lord de Mauley. He is a Conservative member of the House of Lords.

Lord de Mauley was previously a Government Lord-in-Waiting (a position in the Royal Household given to Government Lords whips) and also served as a Shadow Minister for Children, Schools and Families and Energy and Climate Change. He was an Opposition Whip from 2009 to 2010.

The minister is responsible for the business of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the House of Lords. Other responsibilities include:

- Biodiversity (domestic and international, including international forestry)
- Land management and soil (including commons and contaminated land)
- **National Parks and AONBs**
- Ecosystem services

**The National Association for
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Fosse Way
Northleach
Gloucestershire GL54 3JH
Tel: 01451 862007
Fax: 01451 862001
Email: jill.smith@landscapesforlife.org.uk

- Joint Nature Conservation Committee
- Wildlife management
- Welfare of companion and wild animals (including circuses, dangerous dogs and zoos)

The NAAONB is already working with Defra to schedule meetings with AONB partnerships in the Minister's diary.

The Value of AONB Partnerships – a report by Land Use Consultants

The National Association for AONBs was delighted with the findings of an independent assessment entitled "The Value of AONB Partnerships" published in July.

The Report, prepared by Land Use Consultants (LUC) during a period when the role and work of protected landscapes is coming under scrutiny in the run-up to the UK Government's announcement of its Spending Round 2013 **and** during the current programme of expenditure reductions across government departments and local authorities, shows that

- **AONB partnerships are embedded within, and trusted by, local communities.**
The mix of locally accountable elected members with members of local interest groups and officers from national agencies provides an effective structure for deciding local priorities and co-ordinating shared programmes of action.
- **AONB partnerships excel at using small sums of public money to draw extra money and resources into rural communities**
AONB partnerships are highly successful at using the core funding they receive from central government and constituent Local Authorities to lever other income. The diversity of AONB partnerships' membership gives them the ability to turn small individual contributions, which would on their own achieve little, into significant shared endeavours. Without core funding the ability of the AONB partnership to lever in money and in-kind support will disappear.
- **AONB partnerships are flexible, adaptable and respond to change**
The work being undertaken by AONB partnerships is of growing relevance to national and local policy objectives. Concepts such as sustainable development, the ecosystems approach and the environment as an economic driver and determinant of health and wellbeing, all of which are core tenets of the AONB purpose, now have widespread acceptance in national and local policy. This has meant that the work of AONB partnerships is of mainstream interest to many partners in a way that would not have been the case ten years ago.
- **AONB partnerships are helping facilitate new ways of working in the public sector**
AONB Partnerships and their staff are actively involved in a range of delivery projects, often taking responsibility for leading projects where there are gaps in the capacity of partners to do so. This is seen as a key strength of the AONB Partnership approach and is increasingly relevant to the way most Local Authorities are operating more as commissioning bodies

- **AONB partnerships work together and recognise the benefits of acting together as a Family**

The potential for sharing best practice and using a collaborative ‘action learning’ approach to build the institutional capacity of AONB Units has been shown through the NAAONB Future Landscapes Programme. The 36 Lead Officers that participated in the Programme continue to work together at a national level to address key issues facing AONBs.

Richard Benyon MP, then Minister for Food and Fisheries, who had a preview of the Report at the recent Landscape for Life Conference 2013 was impressed with its findings and during his presentation highlighted the importance of partnership-working and the key role that AONB partnerships have as intermediaries, facilitating the right conditions and trust.

Howard Davies, CEO, NAAONB said

“LUC’s work has recognised the true value of AONB partnerships and has also highlighted concerns about their future funding. All AONB partnerships are keen to use their influence to support the current drive for economic recovery and growth. The high landscape quality of AONBs, articulated in terms of their natural beauty, is now recognised as a key economic driver and the greatest opportunities for AONB partnerships are likely to lie in those sectors that manage or derive their business from this natural beauty - such as food, drink, forestry and tourism.

He added

“It is important that AONB partnerships are well equipped to continue their important work at a local community level and the NAAONB will continue to work with Defra and Natural Resources Wales to ensure this.”

For a copy of the report click

<http://www.aonb.org.uk/wba/naaonb/naaonbpreview.nsf/bde8521bf448d64080256ceb004a1670/4a688a8114934c9380257bb3005d23d8!OpenDocument>

AONBs and IUCN Category V Compliance

The National Association for AONBs was delighted to receive confirmation from the IUCN UK Committee (International Union for Conservation of Nature) of Category V status for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in July.

The confirmation follows three years of work with the IUCN UK by the NAAONB consisting of input to developing IUCN’s guidance on categorisation (The Putting Nature on the Map Project), open forum discussion and the drawing up of a Statement of Compliance, supported by evidence from across the AONB Family. This statement was accepted by the IUCN panel in June and places AONBs firmly on the global map when it comes to biodiversity delivery.

Each individual AONB partnership provided further evidence to demonstrate that they meet the high standards demanded by the IUCN.

The NAAONB compiled all evidence and presented this as an accompaniment to the Draft Statement of Compliance to the World Commission on Protected Areas UK Protected Areas Assessment Panel.

Chris Mahon, Chief Executive, IUCN National Committee UK informed the NAAONB that, “We considered that the evidence was persuasive and that each manager had demonstrated a full understanding of the IUCN definition of a protected area, fully supported the generic statement and had plans to strengthen the place of nature conservation in future”. He added, “We were agreed that all the AONB partnerships had demonstrated to our satisfaction that they should retain their status as IUCN Category V protected areas and will accordingly so recommend to UNEP/WCMC”.

Howard Davies, CEO, NAAONB said, “This is the culmination of three years’ work by the NAAONB and we are indebted to Paul Tiplady from Craggatak for his pro-bono work on the Statement of Compliance. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty make a significant impact to conserving the UK’s biodiversity and the reaffirmation of their Category V status is a great recognition that AONBs remain the UK’s Landscapes for Life”.

See <http://www.iucn-uk.org/projects/protectedareas/tabid/65/default.aspx> for further information.

Landscapes for Life Conference 2013

The theme for **Landscapes for Life Conference 2013** was water. Management of water is one of the most important challenges that the global economy will face over the next decade and **Landscapes for Life Conference 2013** brought together over 120 delegates to discuss the part that the UK’s Protected Landscape Family has in ensuring that our water systems are well managed and our environment is safeguarded for future generations. Sponsored by **Adnams of Southwold, Anglian Water, The Environment Agency, Green Traveller, St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Suffolk County Council**, the three days of presentations, discussion, networking and site visits looked at the links between water and natural beauty and set out the challenges and changes ahead. National issues were addressed and the way Protected Landscape teams are working in partnership with local authorities, government bodies, landowners, utility providers, regulators and others to develop innovative solutions to manage our most precious resource were shared.

Landscapes for Life Conference 2013 was opened by then **Defra Minister, Richard Benyon MP** who as well as praising the work of the NAAONB and the AONB Family was delighted to sign a Sustainable Tourism Joint Accord between Defra, VisitEngland and the AONB Family. For full details of the Accord click on <http://www.landscapesforlifeconference.org.uk/2013/07/signing-of-the-tourism-accord-working-towards-sustainable-tourism-in-england>

Other speakers included academics, water companies, the Environment Agency, Natural England, National Farmers Union and local partnerships who assisted in the discussion and development of a vision for the future where Protected Landscapes play an important and integral role in the stewardship of our water.

Site visits to the iconic lowland landscape of Constable Country, the "fossilised" dune systems of the Norfolk Coast and Suffolk Coasts, and the stunning waterways which make up the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads highlighted the work that local people are undertaking to help manage our water systems.

Philip Hygate, NAAONB Chairman said, "We were delighted to bring delegates to the East of England and are extremely grateful to our generous sponsors. The lively debate and discussion will without doubt result in useful practical action throughout the UK's Protected Landscapes. I am sure that delegates left the conference with the knowledge that the AONB Family is working hard to protect our most valuable resource.

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The Bowland Award

The Bowland Award is presented annually by the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) for "the best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty".

The Award provides a platform to highlight the range of activity taking place across the country and the variety of AONB landscapes.

Linked with the Landscapes for Life Conference 2013, theme of water, this year nominations were invited for "the best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty" that promotes the landscape scale conservation or celebration of the water environment.

Promoted through the media and direct through member organisations, two nominations came from non NAAONB members demonstrating recognition for this Award outside the NAAONB.

There was an excellent geographical spread in the 8 nominations received including the Solway Coast, the Wye Valley and across to the Suffolk Coast and a diverse range of projects.

Voting took place by the membership and at Landscapes for Life Conference 2013, Mike Fox and Steve Rodrick, respectively Chairman and Chief Officer of the Chilterns Conservation Board were delighted to accept the Bowland Award for the work done by the **Chilterns Chalk Stream Project**.

For further information click <http://www.landscapesforlifeconference.org.uk/2013/07/bowland-award-2013-chiltern-chalk-streams-project>

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NB: A discussion about future training and conferences will shortly take place on Basecamp.

AONB Family at the CLA Game Fair

The National Association for AONBs was delighted to secure an invitation from the Game and Wildlife Conservancy Trust (GWCT) to share their stand at the CLA Game Fair in July.

The small team from the AONB Family (Philip Hygate, Howard Davies, Jill Smith, Jason Lavender and Paul Jackson) who attended the three day event were kept busy by running a raffle which enticed visitors to the stand and previously arranged appointments. Some of the highlights of the weekend were

- Teresa Dent, CEO, GWCT welcoming the AONBs as an important part of the GWCT stand in her opening address to Richard Benyon MP
- Jason Lavender's contributions to the GWCT Debate on whether "Reared Pheasant shoots can make a valuable contribution to nature conservation"
- Paul Jackson's contributions to The Country Life Debate "Nature – Should we interfere?"
- Discussion over how the AONB Family might be involved with GWCT landscape-scale research pilots with Nick Sotherton of GWCT
- Philip Hygate and Howard Davies meeting with Rene Olivieri and Paul Wilkinson to discuss how to take the NAAONB/Wildlife Trusts Accord forward and the development and recording of results with related joint internal and external communication on this
- Howard Davies and Jill Smith meeting with Poul Christensen and Dave Webster and being able to convey the positive feedback on Maddy Jago's input to L4LConf2013 and confirm the strength of the tripartite relationship.
- Howard Davies meeting with Joe Dimpleby, editor of Shooting Times, to discuss a potential article relating to landscape.
- Howard Davies meeting with Richard Benyon MP, Teresa Dent and Ian Coghill, GWCT Chairman who welcomed the plans for a Management Plan workshop at Loddington.
- Howard Davies meeting with Richard Ali, CEO, BASC furthering previous conversations to discuss relationship between BASC's "Green Shoots" campaign and the AONB Family.
- A chance meeting with Dorothy Fairburn, Northern Region CLA who indicated that CLA recognise the popularity of the AONB Family and NAAONB with the coalition government.

If you would be part of the team for next year's event please contact

jill.smith@landscapesforlife.org.uk

And then there were five...

We are well into the first year of the two year secondments which have allowed Richard Clarke and Dave Dixon join Howard Davies, Jill Smith and Amber Livingston as part of the core NAAONB Team.

The secondments mean that Richard and Dave can continue the outstanding work they have been doing in the southern regions on a nationwide-scale which is greatly assisting the NAAONB and the AONB Family in going from strength to strength.

A clarification of team member roles can be seen by clicking [NAAONB Core Team](#)

Monitoring Protected Landscapes

Representatives from AONB partnerships and NPAs were invited to attend a webinar hosted by Natural England on the 'Framework for Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in Protected Landscapes'.

The purpose of the webinar was to discuss how to access the statistics and use the framework and was chaired by Andy Nisbet, Natural England's Principal Adviser of Monitoring in their Evidence Function. Liz Bingham (the Framework's Project Manager) also gave a short presentation, followed by an opportunity for discussion and questions.

For those who missed it a recording of the webinar can be heard by clicking on <https://cc.callinfo.com/play?id=66mhd7>.

Information on spatial data: Natural England publishes much of its geographic information in the form of Geographic Information System (GIS) datasets. People can download the GIS digital boundary datasets from Natural England's website

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/data/default.aspx>

If you would like to download Environmental Stewardship options spatial data online, please contact Natural England's Geographic Information mailbox –

NaturalEnglandGIDataManagers@naturalengland.org.uk. Natural England will send English Heritage's spatial data on heritage at risk (with its associated licence) separately to all AONB partnerships who have requested it.

Training

Management Plan Workshops

The new area set up on Basecamp to facilitate the sharing of learning and resources around the review of Management Plans is being populated with useful documents from members of the AONB Family

Information is currently being shared by Lead Officers and staff who attended the recent NAAONB MP Review workshops in Birmingham. If you would like to nominate an alternative or additional person to this area please contact Amber.Livingston@landscapesforlife.org.uk

The workshop report and presentations have been added to <http://www.landscapesforlifeconference.org.uk/management-plan-review-workshop/> .

The Role of AONB Designation in the Planning Process Workshop

The workshop report and presentations have been added to

<http://www.landscapesforlifeconference.org.uk/the-role-of-aonb-designation-in-the-planning-process-workshop/>

Social Forestry Technical Workshop

The workshop report and presentations will be uploaded to the events website shortly.

Consultation Responses

For details of the latest NAAONB Consultation Responses on behalf of the AONB Family please click on the appropriate link(s) below

[NAAONB Response to DCLG Consultation on Greater Flexibilities for Change of Use](#)

[NAAONB Response to Defra's Triennial Review of the MMO](#)

[NAAONB Response to National Grid's Consultation on its Visual Impact Provision Policy](#)

[NAAONB Response to The National Assembly for Wales' Environment and Sustainability Committee Inquiry into Sustainable Land Management](#)

[NAAONB Response to the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery](#)

News from our Partners

Europarc Federation News

Click [Europarc Federation News](#) for information about our European colleague's activities.

EAI News

Click [EAI News](#) for information about EAI activities.

Hidden Britain

The latest edition of Hidden Britain News can be viewed by clicking on [Hidden Britain](#)

IUCN

Click [IUCN News](#) for news from IUCN

LIFE News

Click [LIFE News](#) for information from LIFE.

NFU Bulletin

The latest edition of the NFU Bulletin can be viewed by clicking on [NFU News](#)

Sustrans

The latest edition of Sustrans News can be viewed by clicking on [Sustrans News](#)

Dates for your diary

NAAONB AGM

Date: 14th November 2013

Venue: London

Please submit any articles for AONB News to jill.smith@landscapesforlife.org.uk