

**HOWARDIAN HILLS  
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY  
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
7 NOVEMBER 2019**

**THE GLOVER REVIEW OF PROTECTED LANDSCAPES**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To receive details of the recent Landscapes Review and its Proposals.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In January 2018 the Government published its 25 Year Environment Plan. One of the significant proposals to emerge was a Review of Protected Landscapes, to be led by journalist Julian Glover. This was launched in May 2018 with a timescale of reporting to Government in September 2019. Full details of the Panel members and the Review's Terms of Reference can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-parks-review-launched>
- 2.2 The Panel launched a public consultation/Call for Evidence and the NAAONB organised a meeting for AONB Lead Officers in late September 2018, to discuss the issues arising from the Review and to formulate a suggested response. The most consistent points emerging were that:
- AONB protection and enhancement could best be boosted if bodies were made more directly responsible for implementing the AONB Management Plan. At present there is a Statutory Duty to prepare and review an AONB Management Plan, but not a Duty to then implement it. Likewise, the Duty to 'have regard to AONB Purposes' (s.85, Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000) is somewhat dated wording – more recent legislation uses the words 'further the purposes of ...'
  - AONB Teams should have a stronger/more formal role in the land use planning system.
  - Stability of funding settlements for AONB Teams was fundamental to drawing down significant external resources, e.g. from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Prior to the current 4-year protected settlement, grant offers were only made on an annual basis.
  - AONB Teams have a huge potential to deliver more landscape and biodiversity enhancement, but over recent years much of the responsibility for implementation has appeared to fall back onto our shoulders. A change in emphasis, focussing on the 'designated landscape' rather than on the 'managing organisation', could bring about a significant step-change.
- 2.3 The NAAONB subsequently produced a Prospectus to assist AONB Partnerships in engaging with the Glover Review. The summary of points is attached as Appendix 1 and this was subsequently fleshed-out to become the 20-page Prospectus. We supported the Prospectus in our response to the Call for Evidence.
- 2.4 The Review Panel visited all AONBs and National Parks in England, with Sarah Mukherjee visiting the Howardian Hills in March 2019. We took her to a variety of sites across the AONB, where she spoke to farmers, landowners and students at an environmental centre run by Autism Plus.

- 2.5 Julian Glover published a letter in July detailing the Panel's Interim Findings and this was swiftly followed by an acknowledgement letter from the then Defra Secretary of State Michael Gove.
- 2.6 The Review Panel's final Report was published in September, to coincide with the AONB's National Moment and the start of Landscapes for Life Week. This will have been carefully choreographed by the NAAONB in conjunction with Defra and Julian Glover and is a significant achievement.

### **3.0 LANDSCAPES REVIEW PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 An abridged version of the Review's Executive Summary is included as Appendix 2. This gives details of all the Proposals made in the report. The full Review can be found at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf)
- 3.2 Appendix 3 contains the AONB Manager's initial thoughts on what each Proposal might involve and its potential relevance/effect in relation to the Howardian Hills AONB and its Partnership.

### **4.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 The Government has indicated that it will respond to the Landscapes Review – this is significant because not all independent reports receive a public response. This commitment however was in late summer and the current political situation may well have an impact on when or if a response is issued.
- 4.2 The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act, which paved the way for the designation of AONBs and National Parks, is on 16<sup>th</sup> December. It has been suggested that this might be a logical date for the Government to issue a formal response.
- 4.3 It must be assumed that a response will be issued at some point, indicating which (if any) of the 27 Proposals the Government intends to take forward, either wholly or partially. Many of the Proposals will require primary legislation, with the current passage of the Environment Bill being one possible opportunity to facilitate this, although the timescales don't appear to be aligned particularly well.
- 4.4 At this particular moment in time it is very difficult to judge how many of the Review's Proposals might get taken forward. Rapidly increasing awareness of the climate and biodiversity emergency might indicate that many of the suggestions would be received favourably by tax-payers (and thus be attractive to Government). Conversely, the Brexit process has appeared to be all-consuming, with little apparent opportunity for significant new policy announcements. There is also of course the likelihood of a General Election in the reasonably foreseeable future, which could impact on any legislative proposals. The NAAONB will be working hard behind the scenes to ensure as favourable an outcome as possible for AONBs, and further clarity may emerge at the Chairmen's Conference in late November. Members will be updated via email with any significant developments.

### **5.0 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that:

- a) The Proposals contained in the Landscapes Review be noted.
- b) The AONB Manager report the views of the Howardian Hills AONB Partnership on these Proposals back to the NAAONB where applicable.

## Glover Review

### National headline messages

#### Purposes

The purposes of England's Designated Landscapes (AONBs and National Parks) must be future proofed with focus on enhancement and alignment with the principles of the 25 YEP

- The purposes of England's Designated Landscapes should be aligned. In bringing about an alignment, the following should be considered:
- The importance of a 'first purpose' that applies equally to AONBs and National Parks: 'to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage'. Note that the term 'wildlife and cultural heritage' does not currently apply to the AONB purpose.
- A second aligned purpose would specifically relate to recreation, formalising the current supplementary purpose, by the addition of a statutory purpose that focused on the promoting of opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of areas of outstanding natural beauty by the public. This is in recognition that all AONB partnerships already play a major role in delivering opportunities for outdoor understanding, enjoyment and recreation in England and indeed operate as if this was a formal purpose of designation. In our view this purpose should be expressed in way common to both Designated Landscape classifications.

As with the current National Park purposes, any second purpose that applies to AONBs should be supported by the principle that the delivery of that second purpose must be set within limits implied by the delivery of the first, and where conflict exists; the first purpose will outweigh the second.

#### Governance

- The mechanism by which the designation's purposes are delivered will vary according to local requirements; AONB governance models should therefore continue to reflect local requirements.
- In order to better utilise limited resources, we suggest extending the requirement to review the AONB Management Plan to a period of 10 years with a shorter term within which to review local Action Plans.
- We recognise that there is a need to strengthen national governance and improve the accessibility of national support for individual AONB partnerships and teams.
- Likewise, we would like to see a strengthening of local governance through improved accountability. Within the parameters of a local authority employer/employee relationship AONB staff should also be clearly accountable to AONB partnerships.
- Local governance models need to ensure national status is recognised, possibly through improved terms of reference for members and/or the use of national appointees.

## Land Management

- It is important that the Designated Landscape Management Organisations and their Management Plans have a central role in the restoration of nature and ecosystem services. This should be ensured through development and support for the role AONB teams will play in delivering on Outcome 1c of Biodiversity 2020, Net Gain, and their crucial role in supporting a Nature Recovery Network.
- Designated Landscape Management Plans should play a strong role in setting the framework for the delivery of a new Environmental Land Management Scheme.
- AONB partnership staff teams should be given the capacity to play a leading role in the local delivery of agri-environment schemes.
- It is essential that government helps optimise the ability of Designated Landscapes to deliver for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

## Planning

- Utilising the opportunities afforded by an Environment Act, strengthen the Duty of Regard through its replacement with a Duty of Due Regard
- Natural England to significantly raise the profile of the Duty of Due Regard.
- Consider legislation that places a duty on relevant authorities to support the *delivery* of the AONB management plan.
- Using the provision set out in Article 18, Schedule 4 of the Development Management Procedure Order (DMPO) 2015, give AONB partnerships statutory consultee status for Town and Country planning matters.
- Encourage the production of dedicated Development Plan documents for AONBs where appropriate.
- Government to support a consistent cross-departmental policy approach to sustainable development in Designated Landscapes.
- Government monitoring of Planning Authorities' performance in Designated Landscapes and associated accountability with incentives for Planning Authorities' performance.
- Ability of Designated Landscape Management Organisations to 'call in' specific cases for scrutiny.
- Consider extending Designated Landscapes offshore into the marine environment and giving their Management organisations a role in achieving the co-ordinated management of the coast and marine.

## Resourcing

- It is essential that core resourcing is aligned with the effective delivery of statutory purposes.
- Address the issue of vulnerability that can be caused by the relationship with the host Local Authority.
- Five-year funding packages agreed with government in line with the mid-term review of 10-year Management Plans, based on clear and agreed outcomes and return on investment.

- Adequate funding of Town and Country planning activity so that designated planning officers can effectively manage major planning applications and properly manage a new statutory consultee responsibility.
- There is a clear need for a national statutory advocate for landscape, championing the role of AONBs across government.
- The provision of a dedicated Sustainable Development Fund for both AONBs and National Parks to enable AONB teams to better support community and business activity allied to the purpose of designation.

## **Status and profile**

- Retain the statutory designation of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but support the rebranding of AONBs as 'National Landscapes'.



# 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*

# 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

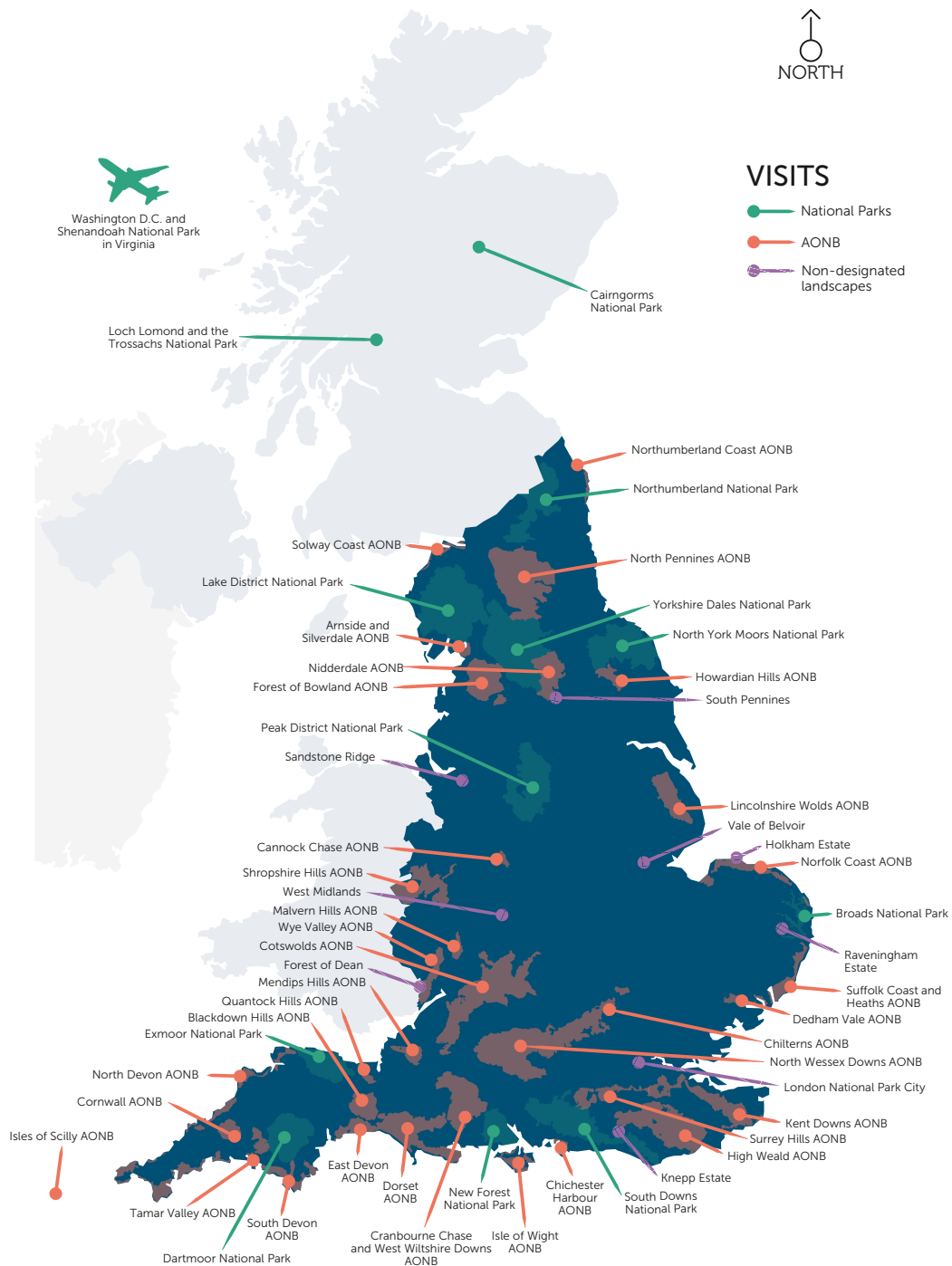
Gratton, Derbyshire  
September 2019





# 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.

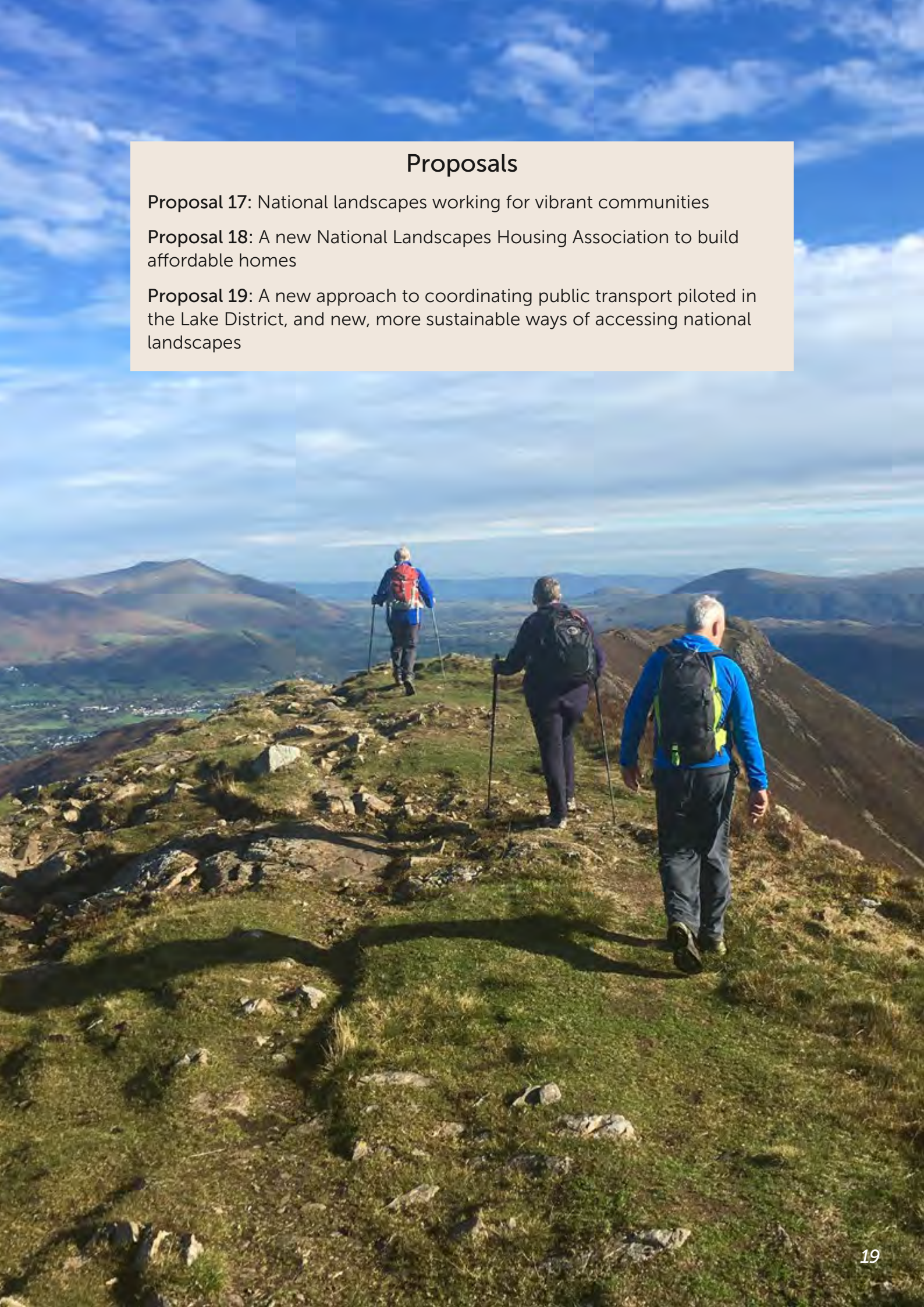
We therefore propose that national landscapes, especially National Parks with their existing role in planning, take on a more active role in coordinating and promoting low-carbon, accessible forms of transport.

## 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





Proposals in the report	Comments
<p>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</p>	<p>Supported. The recent review of the AONB Management Plan has helped clarify exactly how the Howardian Hills could become a more resilient landscape – recovering nature, improving the landscape and boosting ecosystem services, all within a landscape that is essentially still managed for food and timber production. This vision will be used to develop Nature Recovery maps for the Colchester Declaration, input to Nature Recovery Network development, help develop local strategies for the Environmental Land Management System, etc, etc.</p>
<p>Proposal 2: The state of nature and natural capital in our national landscapes should be regularly and robustly assessed, informing the priorities for action</p>	<p>Data gathering is a significant problem, and our data in the latest State of the AONB Report (updated every 5 years as part of the Management Plan review process) is a mixture of several-years-old Government data and anecdotal evidence from the AONB Team members.</p> <p>Notwithstanding that, the HHAONB Management Plan is believed to be one of the most detailed in the country when it comes to specifying what actions need to happen where, via its Landscape Management &amp; Priority Sites section. The Review Panel proposals are arguably what we would ideally like to see, but they would require a significant injection of resources, both financial and staff time. This would seem to be something that the proposed National Landscapes Service could usefully organise/procure at a national level, with additional staff resources at local level to provide analysis and interpretation into action.</p>

<p>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</p>	<p>The HHAONB Management Plan already fulfils a lot of these functions, most notably the detailed framework of suggested actions, including tree and hedge planting, contained in the Landscape Management &amp; Priority Sites section. We have deliberately retained and updated this section over the years, despite the effort it takes, when many other AONBs have followed the general trend for public bodies to publish slimmer and more easily digestible plans. This approach has arguably only been possible due to having long-serving AONB Team members who know a small AONB, its farms and habitats and all its land managers very well. 'Wildness' is a subjective term, defined by the viewer, and what countryside professionals feel isn't particularly wild may be perceived very differently by less experienced countryside users. The Howardian Hills arguably already offers some areas where people can experience a 'wilder' countryside – the large Yearsley Moor woodlands are frequently described to us as being quite intimidating (and therefore fulfilling some of the attributes of a 'wild' landscape). Given the secluded nature of many of the intimate valleys in the AONB, and the existence of Public Rights of Way through many of them, adjusting land management practices to enhance biodiversity, the landscape, and the 'wild experience' could be relatively easy to achieve. The suggestions of strengthening the requirement to 'have regard' to AONB purposes, and a new requirement to implement as well as prepare/review AONB Management Plans, is strongly supported.</p>
<p>Proposal 4: National landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries</p>	<p>As indicated above, the HHAONB Management Plan already provides a blueprint for a NRN in the Howardian Hills and potentially beyond, into the Vales of York &amp; Pickering, the Yorkshire Wolds and most notably (due to many cross-border initiatives) the North York Moors National Park.</p>

<p>Proposal 5: A central place for national landscapes in new Environmental Land Management Schemes</p>	<p>This is absolutely critical. The support system of agricultural payments has arguably been the one factor that has had the single biggest impact on biodiversity loss and landscape degradation within both national landscapes and the wider countryside over the last 50 years. We have made good use of agri-environment schemes in the past, with up to 70% of land at one time being within an ELS agreement. Although these ELS agreements sometimes provided limited environmental improvement, they would have been a useful stepping stone for going on to provide greater benefits on Agreement land. Reductions in funding schemes have led to a much lower area of land now being in agreements, and nature recovery simply won't happen unless an adequately funded and locally targeted scheme is available to ALL land managers via a series of tiers, thus enabling everyone with any land to potentially become involved. Having the resources to employ a full-time Farm Adviser would enable us to maximise the opportunities that ELMS could offer.</p>

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

In practice, Ryedale and Hambleton DCs already consult via an agreed framework and treat the AONB Team's comments on planning applications as 'honorary' Statutory responses. Making this arrangement formal would however put the responses on a proper legal footing and is to be welcomed. Given the current level of development within the AONB, and the excellent working relationships with the three LPAs, a move to formal Statutory consultee status should see very little change to current arrangements. The AONB Manager already uses the expertise of full-time Planning Officers within the AONB Network, as well as North York Moors National Park staff, to provide advice and guidance as necessary. As regards a dedicated Local Plan for the AONB area, it is felt that co-ordination, liaison and most importantly consistency of policy between the two Local Plans covering the Howardian Hills would be the most appropriate approach for this AONB. Better guidance on the weight to be afforded to national landscapes by the policies in the NPPF would be welcomed. Even though not under significant local pressure there have been cases where the national status of the landscape hasn't been afforded the weight that it ought to have been. Permitted Development Rights are also important in this context, particularly those relating to new farm buildings (recently increased from 465m<sup>2</sup> to 1,000m<sup>2</sup>) and mobile telecommunications masts (current Government consultation on new/higher 5G masts).

<p>Proposal 7: A stronger mission to connect all people with our national Landscapes Service</p>	<p>This is broadly welcomed, but it must not be a blanket approach. The Howardian Hills AONB doesn't contain any towns, whilst public transport access from even those on its immediate boundaries is patchy. Our biggest nearest large urban area (York) is between 30 and 45 minutes distant, even by car. BAME residents make up less than 2% of North Yorkshire's population. As well as holding national landscapes to account, the National Landscapes Service (via the proposed Rangers) must play a key role in helping national landscapes deliver on this objective, by leveraging-in national funding and providing an overall menu of engagement mechanisms that individual national landscapes can adopt as agreed appropriate for their local circumstances.</p>
<p>Proposal 8: A night under the stars in a national landscape for every child</p>	<p>As for Proposal 7. The 'backwoods' experience offered by the facility at Castle Howard already attracts children from schools all over northern England and delivering on this proposal would need us to engage a local delivery partner to provide it.</p>
<p>Proposal 9: New long-term programmes to increase the ethnic diversity landscapes, supported and held to account by the new National Landscapes Service</p>	<p>As for Proposal 7. This seems to take a more realistic approach to delivering on this important area of work. A National Landscapes Service would be the ideal vehicle for establishing mechanisms into which we could 'bid' to host programmes or projects that stand the best chance of success in relation to our local circumstances.</p>

<p>Proposal 10: Landscapes that cater for and improve the nation's health and wellbeing</p>	<p>This is an area of work we have been expanding on but we are restricted by lack of staff resources for development. Our six Easy Countryside Trails have been well-received by people with disabilities and those new to countryside walking, and our Sustainable Development Fund provided support for a Tramper all-terrain mobility scooter at the Yorkshire Arboretum. Again, developing a framework of co-operation with NHS providers is best done at a national level by the National Landscapes Service, with that expertise and contact information then being disseminated down to individual national landscapes teams.</p>
<p>Proposal 11: Expanding volunteering in our national landscapes</p>	<p>Although our volunteers group is good it could be expanded. More staff resource (either in the local team or via the National Landscapes Service) would allow better recruitment and co-ordination of volunteering opportunities across the AONB, National Park and beyond. Administration is currently via NYCC, for legal and H&amp;S reasons, but this could potentially transfer to a National Landscapes Service in the future.</p>



<p>Proposal 12: Better information and signs to guide visitors</p>	<p>We know that our gateway signs significantly improved public awareness of the AONB designation when they were put up. We're working hard with NYCC to maintain the high standard of signage of Public Rights of Way where they leave metalled roads, to maintain the improvements achieved at the turn of the century. The AONB website already sits under the umbrella of the National Association for AONBs website, so doing the same via a National Landscapes Service one would be logical. There could be much to commend a National Landscapes Service that was in effect a 'Tourist Board', dealing with enquiries centrally so that anyone from anywhere in the country (or world) could be given information about their nearest national landscape, choices for UK holidays/weekend breaks, etc.</p>
<p>Proposal 13: A ranger service in all our national landscapes, part of a national family</p>	<p>Nationally funded and equipped Rangers, 'out-posted' to the Howardian Hills AONB and carrying out a range of duties such as visitor interaction, PRoW improvements, habitat management work and landowner liaison, would be a significantly beneficial resource. They could liaise with tourism businesses in a way that we currently don't have the resources to, and could carry out many small-scale countryside management works that we currently have to procure contractors to do.</p>
<p>Proposal 14: National landscapes supported to become leaders in sustainable tourism</p>	<p>It isn't felt that Tourism Zone status would be suitable for the Howardian Hills AONB. The area isn't a traditional tourist destination, linked to a large urban and industrial area in the way that for example the Yorkshire Dales NP, Peak District NP, North York Moors NP, Nidderdale AONB or North Pennines AONB are. Tourist activity is relatively sustainable at present (other than in transport terms) and is generally constrained by the lack of formal facilities such as visitor centres, visitor car parks, public toilets, etc.</p>

<p>Proposal 15: Joining up with others to make the most of what we have and bringing National Trails into the national landscapes family</p>	<p>This makes sense, although we have very little public land in the Howardian Hills and no National Trails (although we could link with the Cleveland Way which starts in Helmsley).</p>
<p>Proposal 16: Consider expanding open access rights in national landscapes</p>	<p>This appears to relate principally to extending the right of access on existing Open Access Land to other user groups other than just walkers. As the Howardian Hills doesn't have any Open Access land this isn't relevant, although any proposals to open-up access rights on rivers could impact on the River Derwent SSSI.</p>
<p>Proposal 17: National landscapes working for vibrant communities. There is a need to better understand the challenges and develop solutions where possible based on successful work elsewhere</p>	<p>This is already the second purpose of AONBs, although it only comes from Government guidance rather than via legislation. Our AONB Management Plan contains Objectives for fostering economic and community vitality and over the years we have devoted significant financial and staff resource to this area of work, most notably via the Sustainable Development Fund. Having it as a statutory purpose would be welcomed.</p>
<p>Proposal 18: A new National Landscapes Housing Association to build affordable homes</p>	<p>This is a welcome idea on a national scale but may have relatively little impact in the Howardian Hills, where Local Plan policies already enable the development of new homes for local workers. It may however have a useful role to play in developing small sites of say 4-8 properties, in the way that the Council House building programmes of the 1960s and '70s did. Almost all villages in the Howardian Hills have developments of former Council Houses, but a large proportion of these are now believed to be in private ownership via Government Right-to-Buy schemes.</p>

<p>Proposal 19: A new approach to coordinating public transport piloted in the Lake District, and new, more sustainable ways of accessing national landscapes</p>	<p>Noted. The Howardian Hills is a sparsely populated rural area with a relatively low number of visitors, and as such a widespread local public transport service is probably unrealistic. Work could most usefully concentrate on visitors coming to the most popular ‘honey-pot’ destination – Castle Howard, and then possibly leading out from there into the wider landscape.</p>
<p>Proposal 20: New designated landscapes and a new National Forest</p>	<p>Only relevant to the Howardian Hills in the sense that we are probably the best example in the UK of two adjoining national landscapes working together in an integrated way, particularly demonstrated by the joint National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported Ryevitalise project.</p>
<p>Proposal 21: Welcoming new landscape approaches in cities and the coast, and a city park competition</p>	<p>No comments.</p>
<p>Proposal 22: A better designations process</p>	<p>No comments.</p>
<p>Proposal 23: Stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes</p>	<p>See Proposal 17 above. We are in essence already doing carrying out work to achieve the three proposed Purposes, so recognising it in law would provide the underpinning and legal basis for all our work areas.</p>

<p>Proposal 24: AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes</p>	<p>This is probably one of the most significant proposals relating to AONBs, bringing together a number of other Proposals under one umbrella. The most eye-catching is probably the proposal to re-name AONBs as National Landscapes. There have been calls from some AONB Lead Officers over many years to ditch the term AONB because although absolutely descriptive it is unwieldy and often misused for non-designated areas of land. “The Howardian Hills National Landscape” has a certain ring to it and although I have never been one of those strongly pressing for change, I feel that this proposal should be supported. It’s somewhat unclear what will happen with National Parks however, as they will also be re-named National Landscapes but will also retain the title of National Park.</p>
<p>Proposal 25: A new National Landscapes Service bringing our 44 national landscapes together to achieve more than the sum of their parts</p>	<p>If funded and set up properly, a National Landscapes Service could be a real game-changer for national landscapes, and particularly AONBs like the Howardian Hills with very small staff teams. We have always played a strong role in the National Association for AONBs, because we lack the finance and hence staff resources to do as much as we would like. We make good use of the extensive knowledge base out in the wider AONB family, because we can’t hope to have it all in-house. So a national campaigner encouraging all UK residents to use National Landscapes; an umbrella body seeking commercial and grant funding monies that could be available to the whole national landscapes family; a knowledge and expertise hub; and a centrally funded but out-posted Ranger Service, would all be significant benefits. A small, poorly funded unit that dictated national priorities with no regard to local circumstances, which set prescriptive roles for the Rangers, which then took national landscapes to task for not delivering (and then withheld funding as a result) would be a scenario to dread.</p>

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

The Howardian Hills AONB JAC technically has 15 members, although three organisations with places for two representatives have chosen to take up only one of those places. So to bring the JAC down to the recommended 9-12 members would require some consolidation, particularly among the Local Authorities which it is suggested should reduce to only one place (we currently have five). It would also require the identification of relevant new organisations who could be invited to join the JAC, to broaden its diversity. Although Glover recommends that this should happen, and it's undoubtedly a laudable aim, our experience has been that it is difficult to get smaller organisations, who might nonetheless have much to contribute, to become involved. Perhaps this is because they may see the JAC as a bureaucratic body and not a worthwhile use of their scarce time resources - a situation which may change in a new era? Our Partnership Group was dissolved a few years ago due to dwindling numbers, but this could be resurrected. Given the level and nature of planning applications seen in the Howardian Hills a Planning Sub-Committee isn't felt to be appropriate, although a more accountable mechanism than the one used currently would be needed.

<p>Proposal 27: A new financial model – more money, more secure, more enterprising</p>	<p>The recognition that all national landscapes, but in particular AONBs, must be funded properly is welcomed. The proposal to double funding for AONBs (although this can't be assumed as a doubling for every AONB as the distribution may not be proportionate) is very much welcomed. The proposed new formula may however hold some concerns for the Howardian Hills, as a small, low resident population, low visitor area with few SSSIs and under relatively little development pressure. This will need to be watched. The Report suggests that the Local Authority element of the funding should be retained but doesn't specify at what percentage this should be. If it remains at 25% then a doubling of Government funding would be meaningless if we couldn't also double the level of local government or other external funding to match it. There is no specific mention of how AONB Teams should be employed or hosted - it doesn't appear to be being suggested that this should be via the National Landscapes Service. The proposal to create a separate fund-raising wing of the National Landscapes Service, or a linked charity, is the only cost-effective way many national landscapes could diversify their income streams without massive duplication of staff and effort.</p>