

**HOWARDIAN HILLS  
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY  
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
8 APRIL 2021**

**NATIONAL/NAAONB ACTIVITY**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To receive details of current national issues and the work of the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB).

**2.0 OVERVIEW**

- 2.1 The past year has been extremely busy for the NAAONB, with not only Covid-19-related issues generating significant work but also a number of significant initiatives being launched by Defra and requiring AONB Network liaison. This report touches on several of the more important areas.

**3.0 FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES**

- 3.1 The Agriculture Transition Plan, published in November 2020, contained a proposal for a Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme. Defra started discussions with representatives from AONBs and National Parks in early 2021 and these are still on-going.
- 3.2 The Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme is included as Appendix 1 and contains two principal strands – supporting land managers to carry out environmental enhancement works; and working with land managers and other groups to support and encourage greater enjoyment and understanding of the countryside.
- 3.3 Discussions are moving at a fast pace and any further information will be reported orally at the meeting.

**4.0 THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPES SERVICE**

- 4.1 One of the key Recommendations running through the Glover Review of Protected Landscapes published in 2019 was the proposal to create a National Landscapes Service (NLS). It was suggested that this would help to raise the profile of the Protected Landscapes (the AONBs and National Parks) as well as creating economies of scale to boost delivery of nature recovery and public engagement with nature.
- 4.2 Defra officials have been asked by Government to test a model that would bring AONB and National Park staff into a single Arms-Length Body, with local structures to deliver activity in each Protected Landscape. There is no clarity yet on the composition and detailed functions of an NLS under this model, or how it would relate to current local Partnerships and Local Authority hosting.

- 4.3 It is unlikely that substantial detail will emerge until later this year, as Defra wants to engage with AONB and National Park staff, as well as with local authorities and other stakeholders, to discuss the extent to which this is workable and desirable as a way to improve the management of AONBs and National Parks.
- 4.4 A group of AONB and National Park staff is working with Defra to help shape thinking on this matter and is keeping Lead Officers informed. Any further available information will be reported orally at the meeting.

## **5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL LAND MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1 The AONB Network's Test & Trial of Environmental Land Management (ELM) has been progressing, although activity has been severely hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic. Almost all the 11 sub-projects had reached the stage last spring where they planned to carry out farmer meetings, but these had to be switched to online webinars. The results are however starting to come through and this will provide a useful learning resource for not only Defra but also the AONB Network. The need to switch to online working has meant that many more AONB staff have been able to participate in webinars and web-based learning.
- 5.2 Defra made a sum of money available to each AONB and National Park last autumn, to carry out advocacy work with farmers and land managers to encourage entry into the current Countryside Stewardship Scheme and also to prepare for ELM. In the Howardian Hills we contracted an independent advisor (Fraser Hugill), who also farms in the AONB, to deliver the project on our behalf. A number of resources and webinars were prepared nationally, whilst Fraser has also been doing a number of one-to-one farm visits. A short report will be produced at the end of the project and this will be circulated to Members later in April when it becomes available.

## **6.0 ART IN THE LANDSCAPE**

- 6.1 In 2019 the NAAONB supported the development of an arts strategy with grant support from Arts Council England (ACE) and voluntary contributions from the AONB Network. A national steering group was set up and Activate Performing Arts were commissioned to:
- Consult with AONB teams with different levels of experience in delivering arts and culture projects, importantly hearing from those who have not yet delivered major projects.
  - Research good practice from the three land guardians: National Trust, Forestry England and Canal & Rivers Trust who have Memorandums of Understanding with Arts Council England.
  - Consult with senior officers from Arts Council England and other agencies.

- Deliver a training programme for the AONB members to offer insight into working with the arts sector and develop confidence in the teams.
- Produce the Arts in the Landscape Strategy to provide direction for the NAAONB and AONB Network.

- 6.2 The Art in The Landscape Strategy was formally adopted at the NAAONB Annual General Meeting in November 2020 and all AONBs have been invited to adopt the Strategy and participate in coordinated national and local action resulting from it. The Strategy helps the AONB Network achieve its Colchester Declaration aims, and those of Julian Glover's National Landscapes Review around:
- Engaging with a wider and more diverse audience.
  - Helping people to create deeper connections to nature, place and landscape.
  - Inspiring pro-environmental behaviour to tackle the conjoined ecological and climate emergency.

A summary of the Strategy is attached as Appendix 2.

- 6.3 The Howardian Hills AONB has been involved in a small number of arts projects over the years, ranging from a community-based programme delivered by Rural Arts North Yorkshire in 2002/03 as part of the preparation process for the first Statutory AONB Management Plan, to grant aiding various individual community and school-based art installations since then. Lack of staff resources and experience has meant that little attention could be given to this area of work in the past, but Francesca Pert has considerable arts experience and has been involved in delivery of the arts-based elements of the Ryevitalise Project within the AONB, as well as developing an idea for a 'Sounds in the City' project for an edge-of-town shopping centre in York.

- 6.4 Contributions to the national project would be requested by the NAAONB on a voluntary basis, as with initiatives in other areas of work. It is envisaged that any arts project developed in/by the AONB would be the subject of funding bids to deliver it.

## **7.0 OTHER NATIONAL NEWS/ACTIVITY**

- 7.1 Howard Davies, who has been the CEO of the NAAONB since autumn 2009, will be stepping down from his role at the end of September. The recruitment process for his successor is in train and it is understood that there will a substantial hand-over period is planned in order to ensure service continuity.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

It is Recommended that:

- a) the work being carried out on national initiatives be noted for information.
- b) The Art in the Landscape Strategy be endorsed, to enable enhanced partnership working with Arts Council England.

## **B.6 Farming in Protected Landscapes**

**We want: To support farmers and other land managers in Protected Landscapes, to help them diversify their income streams and lay the groundwork for our Environmental Land Management offer.**

**We will: Provide support to farmers, via National Park Authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty bodies, to help grow businesses, create green jobs, enhance biodiversity and invest in infrastructure to attract more diverse visitors to support local economies.**

Farmers in Protected Landscapes operate in challenging agricultural conditions and are often very reliant on Direct Payments. At the same time, they provide huge environmental, social and cultural benefits.

In addition to the other policies laid out here, we are proposing a specific and time limited package to help farmers adapt during the transition. This programme will support farmers and land managers so they can work with Protected Landscapes to deliver environmental outcomes, lay the groundwork for our Environmental Land Management offer, and contribute towards the delivery of recommendations in the Glover Review of National Landscapes.

### **Scheme description**

The scheme will deliver funding through the Protected Landscapes<sup>6</sup> bodies to support farmers, particularly upland farmers (75% of whom live and work in Protected Landscapes) to make improvements to the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access on their land.

### **Eligibility**

Farmers and other land managers in Protected Landscapes will have the opportunity to work with their National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. More information will be provided on this scheme in early 2021.

### **Payments**

The scheme will use existing delivery mechanisms through Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Park Authorities, who have existing infrastructure and relationships across Protected Landscapes.

The spend each year would support delivery against two complementary areas: (A) farm level projects and (B) wider infrastructure and projects on farmland.

### **Farmers and other land managers will benefit from:**

(A) Farm level projects to diversify incomes, prepare for our Environmental Land Management offer and create more green jobs.

- Support for farmers for delivering environment/landscape outcomes. Examples might include peat restoration, planting woodland, hay meadow restoration, creation of heathland and scrub, moorland management, enhancement of wetlands, and dry-stone wall repairs
- Support to farmers on areas such as carbon capture, business planning, and skills development including apprenticeships

(B) Wider infrastructure investment and projects supporting farmers and rural economies

- Infrastructure, such as better access, clearer and simpler signage, dedicated cycling/electric bike access – to attract more diverse groups of visitors (to farm businesses, camping barns, etc.) as well as creating jobs (e.g. expansion of landscape rangers supporting farmers and visitors)
- Strengthened public engagement with landscapes to attract more, and more diverse, visitors, improving mental health outcomes and better disabled access; walking routes to better connect landscapes.

**Timings**

We will be providing more information about the scheme in early 2021.

<sup>6</sup> The 44 Protected Landscapes include 10 National Parks and 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

## 1. Background

A national strategy has been created by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) to galvanise action that enables people to experience a deeper connection to the natural beauty of the landscape through the arts.

The Art in The Landscape Strategy was formally adopted at the NAAONB Annual General Meeting in November 2020 and all AONBs are invited to adopt the Strategy and participate in coordinated national and local action resulting from it. The Strategy helps the AONB Network achieve its Colchester Declaration aims, and those of Glover's National Landscape Review around:

- Engaging with a wider and more diverse audience
- Helping people to create deeper connections to nature, place and landscape
- Inspiring pro-environmental behaviour to tackle the conjoined ecological and climate emergency

The Art in the Landscape Strategy helps focus future delivery of art activity, collectively within the AONB family as well as locally. It also shows Arts Council England and other funders that the NAAONB and the AONB Network are committing to broaden and deepen our work with arts and culture in order to better connect people to nature.

## 2. Art in the Landscape Strategy Development

The 'National Moment' in 2019, supported by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage with '[Fugitives](#)', presented the NAAONB with a high-profile stage to make an ambitious '[Art in the Landscape Statement of Intent](#)' - a commitment to engaging people with nature through the arts.

In this statement, Howard Davies (Chief Exec, NAAONB) states, "The creative exploration of place, through music, painting, poetry, and dance opens up the experience of landscape beyond the world of science and policy and helps us better understand our place in the world. With better understanding comes better stewardship; the basis of a more sustainable future."

On the back of the statement of intent, NAAONB resourced the development of the strategy with grant support from Arts Council England (ACE) and contributions from the AONB network. A national steering group was set up and Activate Performing Arts were commissioned to:

- Consult with AONB teams with different levels of experience in delivering arts and culture projects, importantly hearing from those who have not yet delivered major projects.
- Research good practice from the three land guardians: National Trust, Forestry England and Canal & Rivers Trust who have Memorandums of Understanding with Arts Council England.
- Consult with senior officers from Arts Council England and other agencies.
- Deliver a training programme for the AONB members to offer insight into working with the arts and develop confidence in the teams.
- Produce the Arts in the Landscape Strategy to provide direction for the NAAONB and AONB Network.

A summary of the Aims and Recommendations of the Strategy are detailed below, the full Strategy can be found [on the NAAONB website](#).

### 3. Art in the Landscape Strategy: Vision and Aims

People experience a deeper connection to the natural beauty of the landscape through the arts.

1. **To connect** people to nature and the natural beauty of the AONBs – increasing creativity, wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour.
2. **To challenge** perceptions of access to the landscape in order to diversify engagement.
3. **To broker** new trusted relationships with the arts and cultural sector to co- create new programmes.
4. **To celebrate** the existing creativity in the AONB teams and the local community.
5. **To work with** arts and culture to understand and directly address the climate emergency and nature recovery.
6. **To welcome** provocations and questions in exploring ways that arts can change perceptions.
7. **To inspire** ambition by sharing exemplary projects of all scales.
8. **To capture** the public’s imagination through engaging them in creative responses to the landscape.
9. **To raise** the profile of the landscape and the AONBs and the purpose of the AONB teams.
10. **To lever in** resources and relationships at all levels for an ambitious programme.

### 4. Art in the Landscape Strategy: Summary of Recommendations

#### 1. Adopt the National Arts Strategy

*The process of developing the Strategy was grounded in the consultation across the network. A nationally and locally endorsed strategy will have strong currency in discussions with external agencies, both national agencies such as government and funders and locally with partners, arts and cultural organisations.*

#### Recommendations:

- NAAONB adopt and endorse the Strategy and report at the Annual Chairs meeting;
- following on from this each AONB circulates the Strategy to all AONB staff and members of AONB partnership boards;
- time is dedicated at full team meetings of each AONB and at partnership board for presentation and discussion of the Strategy;
- the Strategy is adopted by each AONB partnership board who agree an in-principle commitment to invest in the proposed National resource;
- a five-year national action plan should then be drawn up (relating to Recommendation 8), endorsed by the National Steering Group and adopted by the NAAONB;
- recognising the unique sense of place each AONB has, each creates a local action plan of how the strategy can be implemented in their area within their Management Plan and relating to the National plan.

## 2. Deliver a National Creative Projects Programme

*Research responses also strongly advocated for national creative projects to be clustered around specific themes, e.g., dark skies, coasts, ceremonial landscapes and hill forts. Crucially the national creative projects need a simple artistic provocation at the centre. Further ideas will be created by inviting experienced artists from diverse backgrounds into the AONBs and allowing their thinking to imagine new possibilities*

### Recommendation:

- That national creative projects, of different forms, are adopted as a powerful activity in line with the aims for the AONBs. They can offer the opportunity:
  - for all AONBs to be involved;
  - to be planned to share good practice and encourage peer to peer support;
  - to be scalable so can be variation of delivery dependent upon local partners and resource – it is important to note that small budgets can be used resourcefully with artists;
  - to create stories, images, film that can be used for gaining profile and inspiration for future projects;
  - to take place over a specified period, such as Spring, or at the same time across the country such as building on the existing national Landscapes for Life Week in late September each year;
  - for collaboration with other national organisations, for example Culture Declares Emergency.

## 3. Widen the welcome

*The NAAONB and many individual AONBs want to take positive action to set about broadening the reach of the work, which will result in far more people feeling connected to nature and wanting to be proactive in their tendency to nature conservation. Arts and culture are an excellent way to do this.*

### Recommendations:

- The AONBs work through arts and culture programmes to establish meaningful links, connections and visits with communities with higher levels of people from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.
- A target for new arts and culture projects that at least 50% of the commissioned lead artists are from D/deaf and disabled, BAME and lower socio-economic backgrounds. Equally, this should also be reflected in the teams brought in to work on the project and those participating in the work.
- The Steering Group and National lead will support the identifying of a cohort of interested artists that AONBs could then work with on creative projects.

## 4. Develop the Governance

*There is a relatively low level of membership by representatives from cultural organisations on AONB Management or Stakeholder groups and in partnership working.*

### Recommendations:

- that the positive recruitment of at least one person from the culture sector to become a member of these Governance groups with a specific brief to help both the board and staff team to develop their engagement with the arts and to adopt the Strategy.



- that relationships with artists, arts and cultural organisations that either are located in or near the AONBs are developed.

## **5. Advocate continually**

*Arts and culture should be integrated in delivering conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the same way that 'outreach' or 'education' currently are.*

### Recommendations:

- the NAAONB, the Steering Group and individual AONBs continue to advocate for the work through an existing and ongoing programme of conferences, regular information briefings and presentations and through the dissemination of case studies, evaluation and research findings and any generated external coverage into the enhanced arts programme.
- a dedicated area of the NAAONB's website to be created to showcase the arts programme and house the links to individual projects across the country.

## **6. Sustain and expand the National Arts and Culture Steering Group**

*This current research programme has been guided by a steering group, comprised of representatives from the NAAONB and individual AONBs, bringing a range of viewpoints, regional perspectives and represents differing levels of existing engagement across the membership.*

### Recommendation:

The Steering Group is extended to become an ongoing steering group and that its membership is widened either by co-option or invitation to include places for representatives from artists, arts and culture organisations and that diversity is considered and reimbursement for time is offered.

## **7. Develop an understanding between NAAONB, AONBs and Arts Council England**

*This funded research process has seen a continuing and developing dialogue at strategic level between NAAONB, AONBs and ACE.*

### Recommendations:

- the NAAONB continue these discussions with ACE and develop an agreement based around their shared priorities. This agreement should look to the coming five years, as a trial period for joint working to increase arts and culture engagement within AONBs, with artists and organisations for people based both within and without them. The agreement should be monitored annually by senior ACE officers and the NAAONB and the Steering Group.
- that as ACE refreshes its Rural Stakeholders group, it invites a representative from the Steering group to the bi-annual meeting considering issues relating to arts and culture and rural communities and sends officer/s to the NAAONB annual conference to understand the developing AONB context.

## **8. Create a Core National Resource**

*Research and consultation identified the benefit and catalysing impact of a core national resource would have - encouraging, inspiring, supporting and advocating for arts and culture within the sector and beyond.*

### Recommendation

Create a new national role (with some administrative support) based within the NAAONB to bring expertise and additional capacity to deliver the strategy's aim and vision. This should be resourced for a medium-term period of five years, with a delivery budget.

## **9. Create a Training and Professional Development Programme**

*AONBs and their staff have an identified need for specific training and capacity building and continuing professional development programmes in working with the arts.*

### Recommendations:

- Training & capacity building is developed in a number of ways and managed by the national Arts and Culture Development Manager:
  - Inspirational – making detailed case studies of projects available, commissioning online video interviews with AONB officers and artists on their work together and live presentations at future national conferences.
  - Practical – building on from the training delivered in this programme developing access to a set of bespoke resources e.g. project toolkit including planning guidance, suggested processes, timelines, budgeting advice, budget template, marketing and audience development; evaluation frameworks.
  - Mutual Learning and Support – cluster support and networking groups could emerge either from AONBs Taking The Lead programme, the Communications Group or areas of interest such as Dark Skies. These groups would develop a term of reference for a specific period to offer mutual support, explore themes together, develop potential group collaboration and share artist information.

NB: the full Strategy can be found [on the NAAONB website](#).