

Date: 4th December 2019
Report: Response to Glover Review
Written by: Surrey Hills AONB Director

Purpose of Report

To agree the AONB Board's response to the Glover Review

Summary

In May 2018 the government asked for an independent review into whether the protections for National Parks and AONBs are still fit for purpose. In particular, what might be done better, what changes will help and whether the definitions and systems in place are still valid. The review's final report was published on 21 September 2019. It was led by Julian Glover and supported by an experienced advisory group: Lord Cameron of Dillington, Jim Dixon, Sarah Mukherjee, Dame Fiona Reynolds and Jake Fiennes.

On 24th October, the AONB Board held a special meeting to consider the findings of the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes. This workshop exercise was an opportunity to comment on and score the 27 Proposals. This was appraised by the AONB Director, along with notes from sessions that the Director attended with regional National Park and AONB Lead Officers on 11th October, a Council for National Parks (CNP) workshop on 12th November and the National Association for AONBs AGM on 28th November.

The most important issue is to ensure that the new government acts on the Review's proposals through guidance, legislation and funding settlements. A small unit has been established within Defra to consider the proposals and CNP has established a national forum to lobby government on behalf of both National Parks and AONBs.

It is proposed that the AONB Chair writes to the Secretary of State for the Environment after the December General Election, with copies to the Surrey Hills Members of Parliament.

Recommendations:

That the Members agree to:

- delegate the Surrey Hills AONB Chairman to write to the Secretary of State on behalf of the AONB Board

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DRAFT RESPONSE FOLLOWING AONB BOARD WORKSHOP

1. Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty.

1.1 The AONB Board acknowledges that there has been a failure to reverse the drastic decline in nature across the Surrey Hills which needs to be addressed. We support the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) Colchester Declaration and are pleased to be participating in its Farming for the Nation trialling of the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). On this we are working with Ordnance Survey, the Local Nature Partnership, our landowners and farmers to help co-design what a Nature Recovery Network would look like across the designated landscape, and how this could be delivered through ELMS.

1.2 The AONB unit already works with farm clusters through the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Scheme and, as we do not have any executive land management responsibilities, we can have an enabling role to support all land managers to deliver the Nature Recovery Network. It is important however that Government provides the appropriate resources with the enabling duties included in the Agriculture Bill and Environment Bill. In order to reverse the decline in nature, schemes need to deliver on a landscape scale, working beyond the Designated Landscape boundary, and should not be confined to local authority administrative boundaries.

1.3 The AONB Unit does not currently have the resources to undertake the assessment and monitoring of natural capital that is necessary to set clear targets in the AONB Management Plan, A National Landscape Service could have a pivotal role in coordinating and sharing data.

2. Landscapes for Everyone

2.1 Being so close to London, the Surrey Hills is one of the most visited and pressurised Designated Landscapes in the country. This is evidenced by Google insights, which shows that the Surrey Hills has the 6th highest number of Reviews of all the National Parks and AONBs in England. In order to help manage this pressure and enhance the visitor experience, we very much welcome the principle of a ranger service. It does however raise many issues regarding financing, hosting, employment and the relationship with existing ranger services provided by local authorities and charities, particularly the National Trust.

2.2 The AONB Board believes that our business community has a major role in developing the area's sense of place and visitor experiences. Our Surrey Hills Enterprises Community Interest Company invests in working with businesses to build the Surrey Hills brand as part of a sustainable local economy.

2.3 The Surrey Hills AONB business model is already highly dependent on volunteers. This includes the directors of Surrey Hills Enterprises and the Surrey Hills Society whose volunteers deliver more work hours per annum than the AONB Unit. This effort has recently been acknowledged with the Society's Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. In order to increase effective delivery, greater resources would be required to help recruit, train, motivate and coordinate volunteers.

2.4 We support the Review's recommendation to place health and well-being as a core purpose of Designated Landscapes. The Surrey Hills recently held a Symposium with Surrey University on Our Natural Health Service which presented research on the benefits of nature based therapy. Our Surrey Hills Trust Fund is committed to providing greater opportunities so that those most in need can benefit from the Surrey Hills. The Trust Fund

has supported an Into the Wild programme for disadvantaged children to have a night under the stars. This has made us acutely aware of the challenges required to overcome the barriers related to awareness, transport, funding, providing safeguarding and the availability of suitable sites. We are keen to share these experiences regionally and nationally.

2.5 The North Downs Way National Trail extends across the Surrey Hills and provides a focal point for walkers and cyclists to experience both the Surrey Hills and the Kent Downs AONBs. We already work closely with the Kent Downs AONB on the governance and strategy through the North Downs Way Partnership, and opportunities to further integrate the National Trails into the Designated Landscapes family would be welcome.

3. Living in landscapes.

3.1 The AONB Board agrees that a high priority should be given to sustainable tourism. In a landscape blighted by traffic, we are keen to help reduce the pressure on communities and the local environment by extending our work with the Community Rail Partnerships, rail and bus operators to create more sustainable access and an improved visitor experience. The Surrey Hills does however require substantive investment in recreation infrastructure to achieve this, particularly road cycling and mountain biking.

3.2 The Surrey Hills has some of the highest residential property values in the country and the AONB Board is well aware of the issues relating to the provision of affordable housing. We already work with organisations like Surrey Community Action and the English Rural Housing Association, which recently held a seminar on affordable housing in the Surrey Hills. The AONB Board is sceptical however about the value that a New National Housing Association could add locally.

4. More special places

4.1 The Surrey Hills is awaiting Natural England to commence its work on reviewing the Surrey Hills AONB boundary. This is a major priority for our constituent local authorities as it has a major impact on the provision of housing and employment land within the respective Local Plans. We very much look forward to working with Natural England on this and any improvements to the designation process would be welcome to ensure that it delivers a valuable public outcome with an appropriate amount of resources.

4.2 As the Surrey Hills AONB lies within the London Metropolitan Green Belt, we very much support the view that National Park Cities should have regard to their hinterland. We note the Review's support for the London National Park City and we agree that society needs to invest in the countryside on its doorstep, including the Surrey Hills, to become even more beautiful, wilder and accessible for more Londoners to enjoy. We plan to take this challenge up with colleagues in the Kent Downs, Chilterns and the London National Park City.

5. New ways of working

5.1 The Surrey Hills AONB Board is committed to delivering the AONB Management Plan through continuing to diversify our funding and resource base. However, given the massive pressures on our landscape and the financial constraints on our local partners, our resources are insufficient. The massive disparity in funding identified in the Review between the National Parks and AONBs needs to be addressed through additional resources and greater collaboration to deliver local outcomes.

5.2 Although the Surrey Hills AONB Board welcomes the purposes set out for a new National Landscape Service, which should have a governance to better reflect society, this does not negate the priority need for additional resources to deliver locally.

Annex 1. Workshop Scoring of Proposals by Theme

No.	The Proposal	Score
4.	National landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries	26
5.	A central place for national landscapes in new Environmental Land Management Schemes	26
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	23
2.	The state of nature and natural capital in our national landscapes should be regularly and robustly assessed, informing the priorities for action.	19
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.	16
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.	12

LANDSCAPES FOR EVERYONE

No.	The Proposal	Score
13	A ranger service in all our national landscapes, part of a national family	24
14	National landscapes supported to become leaders in sustainable tourism	20
8	A night under the stars in a national landscape for every child	18
11	Expanding volunteering in our national landscapes	18
10	Landscapes that cater for and improve the nation's health and wellbeing	17
15	Joining up with others to make the most of what we have, and bringing National Trails into the national landscapes family	15
9	New long term programmes to increase the ethnic diversity of visitors	13
12	Better information and signs to guide visitors	11
16	Consider expanding open access rights in national landscapes	9
7	A stronger mission to connect all people with our national landscapes, supported and held to account by the new National Landscapes Service	7

LIVING IN LANDSCAPES

No	The Proposal	Score
19.	A new approach to coordinating public transport piloted in the Lake District, and new, more sustainable ways of accessing national landscapes	25
18	A new National Landscapes Housing Association to build affordable homes	8
17	National landscapes working for vibrant communities	7

MORE SPECIAL PLACES

No	The Proposal	Score
22	A better designations process	13
21	Welcoming new landscape approaches in cities and the coast, and a city park competition	5
20	New designated landscapes and a new National Forest	4

NEW WAYS OF WORKING

No	The Proposal	Score
27	A new financial model – more money, more secure, more enterprising	30
24	AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes	29
23	Stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes	13
26	Reformed governance to inspire and secure ambition in our national landscapes and better reflect society	4
25	A new National Landscapes Service bringing our 44 national landscapes together to achieve more than the sum of their parts	3