

The Landscapes Review Report

What are the implications for Forest of Bowland AONB?

The Government announced its intention to carry out a review of AONBs and National Parks in its 25 Year Plan for the Environment published in January 2018. A review panel led by Julian Glover comprising Lord Cameron of Dillington, Jim Dixon, Sarah Mukherjee, Dame Fiona Reynolds and Jake Fiennes began its work in autumn 2018. The panel's objectives were to review:

- the existing statutory purposes for National Parks and AONBs and how effectively they are being met
- the alignment of these purposes with the goals set out in the 25 Year Plan for the Environment
- the case for extension or creation of new designated areas
- how to improve individual and collective governance of National Parks and AONBs, and how that governance interacts with other national assets
- the financing of National Parks and AONBs
- how to enhance the environment and biodiversity in existing designations
- how to build on the existing eight-point plan for National Parks and to connect more people with the natural environment from all sections of society and improve health and wellbeing
- how well National Parks and AONBs support communities

The panel's final report was published by Defra on 21 September 2019. The implications of the 27 proposals contained in the report are discussed at Appendix 2. Headlines from the report are:

- AONBs and National Parks are priceless assets: *'They really are England's soul and we should care for them as much'*
- But *'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'*
- The report's 27 proposals focus on what needs to be done to improve things. They include:
 - Setting up a National Landscapes Service comprising a small Defra-based team with responsibility for improving and monitoring progress by protected landscape teams, increasing collaboration and sharing best practice
 - Recruiting 1000 National Landscape Rangers to diversify visitor demographics and improve visitor experience
 - Amending and expanding the statutory purposes of AONBs and National Parks to include responsibility for nature recovery, recreation, health and wellbeing and to foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities
 - Strengthening the role of AONBs in the planning process by making them a statutory consultee of planning authorities
 - Re-branding AONBs as 'National Landscapes'
 - A new financial model. 'More money, more secure, more enterprising'

At the time of writing, the Government has not officially responded to the report or commented on the proposals it contains.