

The Landscapes Review Report - update

Issue for consideration

Progress update on the implementation of proposals outlined in the Landscapes Review Report

Background

The report for the Government's Landscapes Review (also known as the Glover Review) was published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on 21 September 2019.

Headlines from the report were:

- 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 widen and diversify visitor demographics and improve the visitor experience
 - Amending and expanding the statutory purposes of AONBs and National Parks to include responsibility for nature recovery, recreation, health and well-being 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 and more enterprising'. Included the proposal to double the funding allocated to AONB Partnerships

Progress Update

To date, the Government has not formally responded to the report or commented on the proposals it contains. Clearly the COVID19 pandemic has heavily impacted government business since March and this response has been delayed. It is now expected before the end of this year.

This delay notwithstanding, AONB Partnerships and the National Park Authorities have been working closely over the last six months with the Defra, Natural England and other stakeholders to identify how the report's proposals can begin to be implemented:

1. Participation by selected AONB lead officers in the Defra Contact Steering Group, helping gather information on current delivery which contributes to the review proposals.

2. National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) participation in high level discussions with Defra, Natural England and National Parks England regarding the form and function of a 'National Landscape Service'.
3. Colchester Declaration Steering Group has led the development and support for AONB Partnerships to begin drawing up Nature Recovery Plans. The Group helped secure funds from Natural England to support this work. Finally, they also led the development and submission of a bid to the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund.
4. AONB involvement in the Environmental Land Management System tests has resulted in detailed discussions with Defra about how AONB Partnerships/Unit could be involved in establishing local system priorities and scheme delivery.
5. Art in the Landscape – NAAONB (with the support of the Arts Council and AONB Partnerships) commissioned work to increase the capacity amongst AONBs to embed the arts within their work as means to wider engagement.
6. 'Wider Engagement' workshop organised by the NAAONB to discuss how AONB Partnerships can help to widen and improve access to AONBs to more diverse range of people (e.g. BAME, people with disabilities, young people).
7. In terms of resourcing AONB Partnerships to deliver the review proposals, the NAAONB pulled together a costed prospectus of activity to assist Defra in preparation for the forthcoming Government Comprehensive Spending Review later in 2020. This outlined the ambition and, crucially, the resources that are likely to be required.

Decision Required

The Committee is requested to:

- i) note the update report and offer comments