

FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE THURSDAY 19 OCTOBER 2023

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE REBRAND

The purpose of this report is to set out the final stages of a national initiative to rebrand AONBs as National Landscapes, including the anticipated outcomes from the rebrand and the implementation of the new name and visual identity.

Background

One of the recommendations in the Landscapes (or Glover) Review was to rename **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty** to **National Landscapes**. The report stated that AONB's "national importance should be properly reflected by something much less unwieldy that elevates them alongside National Parks."

The Government's subsequent consultation on the Landscapes Review demonstrated their view that the shift from *AONBs* to *National Landscapes* is a central part of the required change: "a step change for AONB teams with the ambitious new title encompassing new purposes delivered by skilled teams, sustainable funding and robust governance." Defra ministers have consistently championed this change and over the last year their officials have managed the rebrand process, which the National Association for AONBs (in strong partnership with the 34 English AONBs) are now delivering, led by a carefully procured expert branding consultancy.

Given the Government position, the AONB network has had limited choice in how to pursue the rebrand work. As mentioned at the April 2023 Committee meeting, the approach the network has adopted is to work constructively with Government to ensure that the rebrand also reflects our values.

Anticipated Outcomes from Rebranding

Rebranding to National Landscapes is clearly a significant change, but one that we hope will have a long-lasting and positive impact. Through this Defra-funded rebrand work, the AONB network hopes to be able to:

- Clearly articulate the importance, size and impact of our landscapes; and
- Create a collective national identity, while retaining our local distinctiveness.

The rebrand seeks to achieve several different outcomes.

Pragmatically, the most significant may be the creation of a strong collective identity (encompassing naming, visual identity and shared messages) that will increase our profile within Government and lead to greater powers and resources being made available for these landscapes. We are perhaps already beginning to see results from this approach with, for example, the new legislation introduced in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill and the beginning of work by Defra officials to look again at the funding formula for protected landscapes.

While a stronger, more coherent voice within Government is crucial, the rebrand offers many other opportunities as well. A simpler name will be easier for the public to recognise and understand and a coherent visual identity across the network will further enhance this. The name change will give AONBs a stronger national platform and being able to use that platform should help the Forest of Bowland AONB Partnership locally: to enable more

successful communications with residents, landowners and visitors; to better engage and get key conservation messages across to landowners and farmers; to bring more influence in partnership work with other organisations; and to bring in increased funding at a local level.

Implementing the Rebrand

Defra have set out some key targets for the rebrand work. These are:

1. The 'National Landscapes' brand is launched and publicised nationally by March 2024.
2. The rebrand is implemented locally across the majority of the AONB network by March 2024, with recognition that this may be phased to allow for local circumstances.
3. Implementation will include local PR, replacement of selected branded materials and rebranding of the AONB network's online presence.
4. The intellectual property of each National Landscape is protected.

Defra has provided funding to the National Association for AONBs to cover the costs of the central rebranding work and is also making a small amount of funding available for each AONB team to help with the initial transition. This has enabled the following work to be done:

- Seek views from under-represented communities about their perceptions and ambitions to try to understand how to communicate in ways that make everyone feel welcome.
- Analyse public awareness of AONBs and identify the difficulties with our current national and local branding.
- Develop a new vision for National Landscapes as "Beautiful, thriving landscapes that all people feel part of" and associated messages.
- Develop a new, nationally coherent yet locally distinctive visual identity, with new logos for each National Landscape and a new colour palette and design style.

A decision has been taken by Defra and the National Association for AONBs to launch the rebrand nationally and locally on 22nd November 2023. All AONB Partnerships will also be involved in this launch at their local level, with the national launch coordinated by the National Association for AONBs (which will be renamed the National Landscapes Association at the same time).

The Forest of Bowland AONB team will be working with local partner organisations in advance of the November launch to make them aware of the change. We will issue local media news releases about "Forest of Bowland National Landscape" for the launch day and will also change our online presence (website, social media, etc.) to reflect the new visual identity. We will use the launch to set out very positive messages about the Forest of Bowland's landscape, wildlife, heritage and people.

Recommendation

The Committee is requested to:

- Note the report and offer comments and advice on the best way to share the new name with both local people and visitors; on how to make the most of this opportunity; and on any risks and how best to manage them.