

ANNEX B

Responses to national consultation document on Sub National Review

Q1 How should RDAs satisfy themselves that sufficient capacity exists for programme management and delivery at local and sub-regional level?

No strong views particular to NPAs. A balance between safeguarding public money through accountability and freedoms to deliver and innovate will be necessary.

Q2 Do you agree that local authorities should determine how they set up a local authority leaders' forum for their region, and that the Government should only intervene if the required criteria are not met or if it failed to cooperate effectively? If not, what would you propose instead?

The regional scrutiny arrangements should be much more representative of the region, its social, economic and environmental diversity and existing organisational structures than just lead local authorities. Ideally, a dynamic and inclusive approach should be followed bringing people of ability into the scrutiny arrangements with as wide a mandate as possible. Relying solely on elected members from a small number of local authorities will not achieve this.

The Peak District National Park Authority is a statutory public body with some limited responsibilities conferred on it by legislation that would be the responsibility of other local authorities in other non-designated areas. In planning, we are the sole planning authority for the National Park, ie local, strategic, minerals and waste planning authority, such that we fulfill a role akin to both 'upper tier' county councils and 'second tier' district councils. In legislation, a National Park Authority is a Section 4(4) Authority under the Local Government Act and thus, for planning purposes, we are equivalent to a county or unitary authority. It is for this reason, that we are currently represented on the Regional Planning Board of the East Midlands Regional Assembly and we would expect to continue to be represented at an appropriate level in any subsequent arrangement. This follows national Ministerial guidelines. As the only National Park Authority in the East Midlands, our statutory functions and role cannot be represented by any other tier of local government (although we work closely in partnership with many). The National Park Authority is also the statutory planning authority for the whole of the National Park area beyond the boundaries of Derbyshire, and therefore there is even more reason why Derbyshire councils at either level are unable to represent our position.

Q3 Are the proposed regional accountability and scrutiny proposals proportionate and workable?

No, see answer to question 2 above.

Q 4 Do you agree that the regional strategy needs to cover the elements listed at paragraph 4.13? Are there other matters that should be included in the regional strategy to help in the delivery of key outcomes?

Broadly these criteria are the ones we would expect to see. However, we would add that a regional strategy must be expected to contribute to more environmental objectives than just reducing the likelihood and impacts of climate change. Defra has a second PSA target related to the Natural Environment and these targets should all be reflected in the integrated strategy.

Q5 Do you agree with the way that we propose to simplify the preparation of the regional strategy, as illustrated in the figure (on p 35), in particular allowing flexibility for regions to determine detailed processes? If not, what other steps might we take?

We welcome the simplification of the procedures, but query why if the strategy is to become the single integrated strategy for the region why such a narrow range of partners is seen to be defining the scope (we would want to see agencies such as Natural England and Environment Agency also involved) and why only CLG and BERR should sign off the strategy (we would expect Defra to play a role too).

Q6. Do you think that the streamlined process would lead to any significant changes in the costs and benefits to the community and other impacts?

Significant costs would be potentially a risk if anything other than a full sustainable development approach is adopted, integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions of the strategy. Otherwise, key policy directions may fail and contradict, returning policy-making to the silo-driven days of the past. We welcome simplicity, but this must be balanced with inclusivity and current proposals do not strike this balance well.

Q7. Which of the options for the local authority economic assessment duty (or any other proposals) is most appropriate?

We would prefer greater clarity on the elements to be pursued and would expect clear national guidelines to be produced on the methodologies to be used, the nature of consultation and inclusion of partners and the nature and quality of data to be used as evidence. Therefore, we would support option 1.

Q8 What additional information or support do local authorities consider valuable for the purposes of preparing the assessment

No particular National Park view.

Q9 How should local authorities engage partners, including district councils, in the preparation of their assessment?

We would expect to see greater reliance on economically-sensible units for assessment, rather than solely political boundaries. The Peak District National Park, for example, requires homogeneous policies to constrain certain developments that might harm the special qualities and support to foster economic development that would support them. Therefore, any assessment of the National Park must be holistic. Likewise, economic development in large urban areas should be considered holistically and we would support, and wish to be closely engaged in, any assessment that impinges on the National Park.

Q10 Which partner bodies should be consulted in the preparation of the assessment?

National Park Authorities.

Q11 – relates only to London

Q12 Do you agree that there is value in creating statutory arrangements for sub-regional collaboration on economic development issues beyond MAAs? What form might new arrangements take?

Yes. Where it makes sense for several local authorities, sometimes in several upper tier areas or even in more than one region, we believe it is sensible to do so. Indeed, a National Park Authority is a model of the kind of body that can draw political involvement from a variety of areas into the combined achievement of specific goals. We would be happy to share 57 years experience of doing this!

Q13 What activities would you like a sub-regional partnership to be able to carry out and what are the constraints on them doing this under the current legislation.

No particular National Park view on this question.

Q14 How would a sub-regional economic development authority fit into the local authority performance framework?

The National Park Authority experience might help answer this. NPAs are special local authorities with tightly-defined statutory purposes. Their powers, plans and resources are clearly targeted at these purposes and the scrutiny and governance arrangements are specific to them. These include a small selection of the local authority national indicators (such as those that relate to planning) but not all of the indicators. In addition, specific indicators that relate solely to the work of National parks are agreed nationally between NPAs, Defra and CLG.

Q15 Should there be a duty to cooperate at sub regional level where a statutory partnership exists? To whom should this apply?

Where sub regional issues impact on the variety of interests to the National Park, the NPA should be consulted and this should be on a statutory footing. It should be noted that Section 62 of the Environment Act that relates to bodies having regard to National Park Purposes applies to all local authorities and to the partnerships and agencies that have impacts in a National Park.