



**Submission by National Parks England to the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes**

**November 2018**

There is much to celebrate from the past 70 years of designated landscapes and we want to achieve much more. National Parks England’s response provides a collective ambition following discussion amongst the ten Authorities and will be supplemented in greater detail by individual National Park Authority (NPA) responses and some All Park Working Groups.

Our Purposes and Vision

Our statutory purposes and duty have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. Indeed, protected landscapes are key to meeting many of the challenges of modern society, such as wildlife fragmentation, climate change, chronic health conditions, the need for beauty and spiritual enrichment in our lives, and achieving sustainable development.

The collective Vision for National Parks<sup>1</sup> sets out an ambitious agenda and long-term aspirations. Though we believe the Vision is broadly right, we want to work with Government and partners to update it to support the goals in the 25 Year Environment Plan; so it recognises the full value of National Parks to England; ensures their positive impact reaches beyond their boundaries, and addresses climate change.

If we are to realise our Vision and the public’s increasing expectations of National Parks then further action is needed. There are no shortage of ideas. National Parks England has focused on six key ones that we believe represent exciting opportunities to enhance the environment and people’s experience of it.

Six Big Opportunities

**❶ National Parks as bigger and better places for nature, that are connected through wildlife corridors to each other and resilient to climate change.** The public rightly expects wildlife to be at its best in National Parks. Yet the vast majority of land and water in National Parks is owned and managed by public organisations, businesses, charities and private individuals. National Parks are key reservoirs for wildlife, yet the NPAs have no powers (beyond planning) to manage or influence the decisions that affect wildlife within the Parks. To improve biodiversity in our National Parks, NPAs should have the necessary powers to help achieve this. A transfer of wildlife powers would enable NPAs to be in a

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<sup>1</sup> See: *National Parks Vision and Circular 2010*

better position to stop harm to wildlife, and to promote actions to positively restore habitats and species. Coupled with landscape scale partnerships and farming policies (see below), NPE wants to see National Parks as bigger and better places for nature, that are connected through wildlife corridors to each other and AONBs, increasing resilience to climate change.

**② Bespoke farming and land management schemes that work for National Parks.** Farming in our National Parks is fundamental to delivering many of their special qualities. Building on their close working relationship with farmers and land managers, NPAs and AONB Partnerships should be able to have the power to direct and co-design the delivery of the new Environmental Land Management System within their diverse landscapes. Land management is closely linked to the wider economies of national parks and sustaining the unique qualities of these areas often requires an integrated response involving land management, community and economic development. We look for Government to support a rural development growth deal for our National Parks – co-designed by NPAs with partners. The aim should be to provide a system that is responsive to the quality and variety of their landscapes and farming systems, that better integrates environmental and rural development objectives, and works alongside local farmers and land managers.

**③ Awakening a passion for our National Parks.** We know National Parks are loved by the public yet for many people they are poorly understood. We want the Glover Report to be the spark for a new movement that tells the story of what our National Parks are, the people who were instrumental in their formation, the values underpinning our National Parks, and celebrate what they have achieved. National Parks are for everyone and NPAs are proactively reaching out to communities who might not otherwise have the chance to visit the countryside and engage with new audiences who can enjoy and be inspired by these beautiful places. Crucial to this will be developing National Park's brand to ensure people are aware of National Parks, identify with them, and are passionate about them – as they are in other countries.

**④ A strong new partnership with the NHS to improve people's health and recovery.** The ability of everyone to access these glorious landscapes was a key motivator for the social movement that campaigned for National Parks. We want National Parks to be parks for healing; widely understood, valued and used by the public as places that inspire greater physical activity and mental harmony, with a strong partnership with the NHS to prevent ill-health.

**⑤ A Government commitment that every child has the opportunity to visit a National Park to enjoy outstanding learning experiences during their time at school.** We want to inspire the next generation to experience and appreciate the values of National Parks and champion responsible stewardship of the environment. NPAs, working with partner organisations already facilitate thousands of experiences in our National Parks that can be transformative for the young people involved. They enrich learning experiences, provide inspiration and build aspirations for young people. We want that opportunity to be a right of all, whatever their background or circumstance; and to lead from early experiences of a National Park to a deeper engagement with them throughout their lives.

**⑥ Improved legislation to forge a new collective commitment to National Parks.** NPAs work in partnership with a wide range of bodies to agree common aims and achieve amazing things with few resources. But nationally, we can do better. NPE wants to see a combined collective partnership by all

public bodies to National Parks. Existing legislation that requires such bodies to “have regard” to National Parks and AONBs is unambitious and focuses on procedures not outcomes. To better align with the 25 Year Environment Plan, NPE would like to see a collective requirement for public bodies to “further” National Park purposes, and to co-operate in the development and implementation of National Park Management Plans as the primary place shaping document for their area.

The maintenance of our National Parks, of which the nation is rightly proud, is the product of hard work by many people, communities and organisations. The network of NPAs provide expertise, facilitation, partnership, and act as convenors for the National Parks – linking English and local priorities. They are place-based bodies that bring people together and deliver. Our planning powers are vital to achieving our statutory purposes.

If NPAs are to continue this task, and capitalise on the six opportunities above, they need the necessary resources, levers, and modern governance to deliver. National Parks England would recommend that:

- Government needs to provide dedicated investment to deliver against these six priorities and ensure NPAs can achieve the wider ambitions in the 25 Year Environment Plan, including a demonstrable enhancement of our designated landscapes;
- Government departments – Defra and beyond - should proactively seek national park expertise in the development of English policy and recognise the National Parks as innovators for testing new ideas;
- NPAs need a Governance framework that is agile, able to respond flexibly and quickly to events, and that supports National Parks to simultaneously deliver national purposes and be grounded locally; and
- NPAs establish exciting new partnerships nationally and locally with public, private, and charitable organisations to deliver our shared ambitions.

Expertise is not the provenance of National Parks alone, and NPAs will work alongside AONBs in their locality - to provide mutual support, share and learn from our experiences, and to further shared objectives to achieve a wider landscape impact that benefits society into the next 70 years.

NPE is very happy to provide further information to support the Glover Review.