

Government response to independent Landscapes Review- Q&A

Top Q&A

Q. Why has it taken two years for the Government to respond to the Glover review?

- The last two years have been an unprecedented time for the country, and the government.
- Since the review was published, the Prime Minister has made a commitment to establish new National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which Natural England is now implementing.
- We have established the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FiPL), which provides funding to farmers in National Parks and AONBs to deliver projects that support the four key themes of the programme; climate, nature, people and place.
- We have supported important projects in our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty through our Nature for Climate Fund, Green Recovery Challenge Fund, and Green Social Prescribing pilots, which will help to kickstart nature-based projects to restore nature, tackle climate change and connect people with the natural environment.

Q. When would you expect to make changes to legislation to implement these proposals?

- We are consulting on potential legislative changes to implement certain proposals.
- Where legislative change is considered necessary and appropriate, the timescale for making those changes will be subject to securing parliamentary time.

Q. Will you be investing additional resources in protected landscapes to implement these proposals?

- We have already established the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, which provides funding to farmers in National Parks and AONBs to deliver projects that support the four key themes of the programme; climate, nature, people and place.
- We have already increased the core grant for AONBs by 15% this financial year.
- We are also pursuing a new long-term funding model to deliver increased and more diverse sources of funding, building on the progress that is already being made in this area.

Q. What will the ‘national landscapes partnership’ look like?

- We are establishing a new partnership that brings existing national organisations, such as National Parks England and National Association for AONBS, to collaborate more closely together for *nature, climate, people and place*.
- This is not a new statutory arms-length body, but a national partnership of existing organisations.
- We are working with partners to agree on the most effective governance arrangement for the partnership.

Q. What will the partnership do?

- The partnership will bring together the organisations responsible for managing our protected landscapes.
- We expect the partners to collaborate to help address national issues in the public interest, such as recovering nature, tackling climate change, and improving access to nature.
- Our national landscapes strategy will set out priorities for the partnership to focus on.

Q. Will the devolved administrations be taking forward similar proposals for protected landscapes?

- Landscape policy is a devolved matter. It is therefore a matter for each administration to decide how best to manage their National Parks and AONBs that reflects their own legislative context and in a way that works best for the people and environment of their nation.
- We will continue to discuss our proposals with the devolved administrations, and will explore opportunities to take forward proposals jointly, where it would be appropriate and beneficial to do so.

Since publication of the review

Q: What have you done to designate more landscapes since the Landscapes Review was published?

- The Prime Minister's ten-point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution included a commitment for creating more National Parks and AONBs as set out in the government's manifesto.
- In June 2021 Natural England set out an ambitious designation programme which includes the consideration of two new AONBs, the Yorkshire Wolds and Cheshire Sandstone Ridge, together with extensions to the Surrey Hills and Chilterns AONBs.
- The England Trees Action Plan sets out proposals to support Woodland Creation Partnerships to establish at least three new community forests.

Q. Who makes decisions with regard to new landscape designations?

- Natural England is the government's independent adviser on the natural environment, with special responsibilities for creating National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Designation orders made by Natural England are subject to the DEFRA Secretary of State's confirmation.

Q. What is the timescale for the landscape designation programme?

- A national landscape designation (AONB or National Park) is a significant undertaking, requiring sufficient time to gather robust evidence, and to engage and consult with local and national communities and stakeholders.
- We expect each designation to take approximately 2-3 years. The time until the Minister confirms an order varies according to several factors including whether a public inquiry is deemed necessary.

Q. What is an 'all-England Assessment'?

- Natural England aims to create a visionary map for England in the 21st Century, reflecting the spirit of the Hobhouse Map which led to the establishment of the first National Parks 70 years ago.
- The new assessment will identify landscape conservation and enhancement needs across England, including any remaining places suitable for future National Park or AONB designation.
- It will also identify those places where new landscape designation and approaches will be more appropriate and are wanted by local communities.

Chapter 1- A more coherent network

Q. Is the Government creating a new public body?

- We believe that creating a new public body would cause unnecessary complexity, cost and disruption at a crucial time for protected landscapes.
- We are working with existing partners to establish a national landscapes partnership, which has the potential to develop strategic partnerships and programmes, build capacity and generate additional income for the protected landscapes.
- We are working with partners to develop the structure of this new partnership in the coming months.

Q. What will the new partnership cost?

- The partnership will cost considerably less than a new public body, as proposed by the review.
- We envisage the partnership may have a small central staff, overseeing national campaigns and programmes, creating opportunities for training and development, and building capacity to generate additional income for National Parks and AONBs across the country.

Chapter 2- Nature and Climate

Q. How will you improve nature recovery in protected landscapes?

- National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) will form an important part of the Nature Recovery Network.
- We will increase the extent of our protected areas and drive up their biodiversity value to support delivery of government's commitment to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030.
- We will create and restore wildlife rich habitat within our protected areas and establish connectivity beyond their boundaries to improve the abundance and resilience of species.

Q. How can protected landscapes contribute to the delivery of 30 by 30?

- We know that National Parks and AONBs cannot be said to contribute to 30by30 in their entirety at this time
- At the same time, protected landscapes have enormous potential to deliver on our environmental ambitions, including the 25 Year Environment Plan goals, Environment Act targets, and reaching net zero.
- We are working to understand, including through planned consultation with stakeholders through a Green Paper due later this year, what reform, investment and management might be required in these areas to ensure that more of them can contribute by 2030.

Q. How can protected landscapes contribute to the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies?

- We have explored the important roles that National Park and AONB teams can play as part of the five LNRS pilots which we ran in 2020-21.
- They should support responsible authorities in preparing and delivering LNRSs, utilising their expertise to highlight landscape scale opportunities across their areas and embedding links with their statutory management plans so they align.
- Teams in Protected Landscapes are well placed to use their extensive knowledge of their areas, together with strong local partnerships, to contribute to LNRSs and drive nature's recovery.
- Further details on LNRS rollout will be published in due course.

Q. Why are you changing the first statutory purpose?

- We are proposing to strengthen the wording of the first statutory purpose to make it more focused on nature recovery and natural capital. We need to actively recover nature in these areas, rather than simply conserve what remains.
- As part of the consultation, we are seeking views on any other priorities, such as climate change, which could form part of a strengthened first purpose.
- We want our protected landscapes to be living, working, naturally beautiful and nature rich areas sustained through rich cultural heritage and support from local

communities. The proposed changes as part of the response to the Landscape Review will help to achieve this.

Q. How is Government going to improve monitoring in protected landscapes?

- Improving our monitoring and reporting in protected landscapes will help us to understand the state of nature and prioritise action towards our desired environmental outcomes.
- New ambitious outcomes for protected landscapes should contribute towards our 25 Year Environment Plan and the statutory targets in the Environment Act 2021.
- Natural England will monitor and evaluate progress against the key indicators and outcomes and will also help to translate these into individual management plans.
- We are developing the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA), which will provide data on habitats, natural capital, and ecosystem function, to help monitor progress towards agreed environmental outcomes and inform the priorities of protected landscapes.

Q. How will the Environmental Land Management Schemes work in protected landscapes?

- The response sets out a number of options for how the special status of Protected Landscapes could be reflected in the design and delivery of our Environmental Land Management schemes.
- As part of the consultation we would like to seek views on these options and how farmers and landowners in Protected Landscapes can best engage in the Environmental Land Management Schemes.
- We want to build on the successes and learnings from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and incorporate these into new schemes as they are developed.

Chapter 3- People and place

Q. What is the Government doing to increase access to nature to improve public health?

- We are working with National Park and AONB teams and other partners to develop opportunities to enhance people's engagement with the natural world and to open up the mental and physical health benefits of the natural world to people from the widest possible range of ages and backgrounds.
- Defra is working closely with the Department for Health and Social Care to pilot green social prescribing projects to improve mental health outcomes, reduce health inequalities, reduce demand on the health and social care system, and develop best practice at a local level.

Q. What has the Government done since the review on increasing access to nature in protected landscapes?

- One of the main objectives of our £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund is "connecting people with nature" to support a green recovery from Covid-19. This has invested in nature-based projects across England, including several National Parks and AONBs.
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme provides funding for increasing public access, such as improving existing rights of way and associated signage or the provision of permissive access.

Q. What is Government planning to do to specifically enhance engagement for all parts of society?

- A key function of the national landscapes partnership will be to enhance community engagement through national strategic partnerships and collaborative campaigns. These will ensure that currently underserved communities and demographics are welcomed and engaged with their protected landscapes.
- The government is funding the 'Generation Green'. This partnership project aims to provide more than 100,000 progressive opportunities to connect young people to nature, prioritising young people from BAME groups, disadvantaged backgrounds and coastal communities. The partnership includes the 10 English National Park Authorities.
- Defra has commissioned two independent social research projects to increase understanding of children and ethnic minority engagement with protected landscapes. The projects generate practical recommendations to inform policy development and the design and implementation of future engagement programmes.
- Defra is working to explore how we can expand volunteering and connect with currently underserved communities to create a more inclusive and diverse community of visitors and volunteers.

Q. Will the Government be funding any increase in the number of rangers in protected landscapes?

- Rangers are the eyes and ears of a landscape, engaging visitors, local people and landowners.
- We are working across government and with National Park and AONB teams to explore ways of increasing the number of rangers engaging with people in protected landscapes.

Q. What impact will amending the second statutory purpose and extending it to AONBs have?

- A strengthened second statutory purpose, extended to the AONBs, would clarify and reinvigorate our ambition to connect with all parts of society.
- We will ensure that any revised purpose does not create any unnecessary burdens for public bodies, or have unintended consequences for National Parks and AONBs.
- Timescales for making this change are subject to securing parliamentary time.

Q. Why have you rejected Glover's recommendation to make the statutory purposes of National Parks and AONB more focussed on socio-economic issues?

- Many National Park Authorities already discharge their existing statutory duty effectively for the benefit of their local communities and businesses.
- There is a risk that introducing a new purpose could dilute the importance of the existing purposes and have unintended outcomes such as impacts on future designations.
- Extending the existing duty to AONBs based in local authorities may have a very limited effect, as they already have statutory responsibilities to consider the rural economy.

Q. What other measures are you proposing to improve the economic and social wellbeing of communities?

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is already providing funding in protected landscapes to deliver towards this recommendation.
- National Park Authorities should be supported to discharge their existing duties effectively and consistently, for when preparing and implementing their management plans.
- National Park and AONB teams should strengthen their relationships with local economic development bodies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- We would also like to see greater community representation on boards and committees.

Q. Are you going to expand open access rights?

- We will confirm the national Open Access land maps as a first step prior to considering what expansion of access rights may be appropriate.

Q. Why can't you revise open access rights in parallel with confirming the open access land maps?

- We are listening to stakeholders who have expressed clearly that this is the correct way around.
- The establishment of precisely where open access rights exist is a logical first step before considering whether to expand those rights.
- Once the mapping is complete, we can identify the best options to improve access, for example joining up with the rights of way network.

Q. What are you doing to bring the National Trails into the protected landscapes family?

- National Trails are an important part of the protected landscapes family.
- A new charity called National Trails UK is being established to support the work of the National Trails.
- We are exploring the role that National Trails UK could play as part of the new national landscapes partnership.

Q. What will changes to the traffic regulation order (TRO) process look like?

- The current TRO process to preserve the surface of an unsealed route is open to interpretation and as such can be easily contested in the courts. National Park Authorities also currently only have the power to issue TROs on byways, whereas many unsealed routes are unclassified.
- We are consulting on proposals to create specific grounds for issuing TROs, to prevent damage to the surface or preserve the character of an unsealed route.

Q. Why do you want to ban motor vehicles on unsealed routes if National Park Authorities can already impose restrictions on them?

- Traffic Regulation Orders are often onerous, contentious and expensive for authorities to introduce due to the risk of litigation involved. As such, many authorities do not use them as they have limited resources to do so, and yet are still required to maintain the surface of routes which may be subject to repeated damage by motor vehicles.
- We are consulting on possible statutory access restrictions on unsealed routes, that would provide legal clarity, and reduce the need to use Traffic Regulation Orders.

Q. What impact would restrictions on Green Lanes have on access for people with disabilities?

- We would ensure that people with disabilities are still able to access routes with vehicular rights removed.
- The aim of the restrictions is to protect the route from damage. This should improve access for people with disabilities who need to use mobility vehicles on the routes.
- The needs of people with disabilities will be carefully considered as part of an equality impact assessment to establish if further exemptions are required.

Q. What exemptions would there be for access on Green Lanes ?

- Existing rights of access for necessary use will be maintained. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Residential
 - Business
 - Emergency services
 - Infrastructure (such as power, water)

Q. How will you ensure that the government retains the high level of protection afforded to National Parks and AONBs as part of planning reform?

- The National Planning Policy Framework gives 'great weight' to the landscape and scenic beauty of AONBs and National Parks and establishes a default of no major development within them unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.
- We are continuing to work closely with colleagues in Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities, to ensure that planning reforms continue to protect places of environmental and cultural value, particularly our National Parks and AONBs.

Q. What is a statutory consultee?

- Planning law prescribes circumstances where local planning authorities are required to consult specified bodies prior to a decision being made on an application.

Q. Will there be an opportunity to review landscape and visual policy set out within the National Planning Policy Framework?

- The recent update to the National Planning Policy Framework in July 2021 included changes with regards to protected landscape policy to avoid adverse impacts on the designated landscapes.
- A review of the National Planning Policy Framework is likely to be required as part of the programme of planning reform, subject to decisions on how the reforms will be taken forward.

Q. What is a permitted development right?

- Under a national grant of planning permission known as a permitted development right certain types of development can be carried out without having to apply for planning permission from a local planning authority.

Q. What has the government achieved with regard to affordable homes in rural areas?

- Over 190,000 affordable homes have been provided in rural local authorities in England since April 2010.
- Between April 2015 and March 2020, 11% of new build additional Affordable Homes have been delivered in villages with a population of fewer than 3000
- We recognise the importance of these settlements for both economic and housing growth.

Q. What support is government offering to support affordable housing in protected landscapes?

- We are progressing delivery of suitable, and affordable housing for local communities in rural areas, including protected landscapes.
- We will deliver this through the government's proposed reforms of the planning system and Homes England's funding prospectus for the new 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme.

Chapter 4- Supporting local delivery

Q. Will your proposals reduce local representation?

- Local authority members have an important role in ensuring local voices are heard, and giving the board democratic legitimacy. As such, we are not proposing to remove all local authority members, as was recommended by the review.
- We are seeking to retain local representation while streamlining boards so that they can more efficiently use local knowledge to deliver national strategic priorities.

Q. What is the government doing to strengthen management plans?

- Strengthening the statutory purposes, together with the duty of regard on relevant bodies, will in turn reinforce the role of management plans in delivering our goals.
- Ambitious goals to tackle climate change, including both mitigation and adaptation measures, together with improved natural capital reporting, should be embedded in all management plans.
- We are working with Natural England to establish the contribution of our protected landscapes towards key environmental targets including in the 25YEP, the Environment Act and the Net Zero Strategy.
- Natural England are working on an accompanying outcomes framework which will help to translate these targets into local management plans and help to monitor and evaluate progress.
- Natural England will also play a stronger role in reviewing the delivery of management plans.
- As we look to strengthen management plans, we will also consider how best to ensure a smooth transition so that valuable work is not lost.

Q. What is the government doing to support more investment in the protected landscapes?

- We have already increased the grant settlement for AONBs by almost £1 million (15%) for the current financial year.
- We need to develop a new funding model that delivers increased and more diverse financing. Core grant funding will continue to be available for National Park Authorities and AONBs teams.
- The baseline three-year funding settlement for protected landscapes will be confirmed shortly, subject to the conclusion of Defra's business planning process.

Q. How do you expect the protected landscapes to deliver more without significant additional resources?

- We believe that private and blended financing models provide significant opportunities to lever more investment into protected landscapes, alongside government funding such as the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and Environmental Land Management schemes.
- Some of our lead partners have already successfully attracted private finance into protected landscapes, such as the National Parks Partnership Net Zero With Nature pilot programme.
- We are also already supporting a number of nature projects in protected landscapes to attract private investment through our Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF).
- By learning from projects such as these, and providing the right support, data and expertise, we want to scale up and accelerate these approaches to unlock the economic value of our protected landscapes.