

## Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs): Terms of Reference

### **Introduction:**

Our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are a great success. England is a more beautiful and more diverse place because previous generations took the care to campaign for their creation.

In 1945, the government set up a committee under Sir Arthur Hobhouse, who recommended that Britain establish national parks to preserve and enhance their natural beauty and provide recreational opportunities for all members of the public. In 1949, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act established these national parks, which the minister of the day described as “the most exciting Act of the post-war Parliament.” That legislation created a statutory framework for National Parks and AONBs. In brief, National Parks’ purposes are to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks. For AONBs, the primary purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.

Now, as the oldest National Park approaches its 70th anniversary, comes a chance to renew this mission.

That is the context in which this Review takes place. It aims not to diminish the character or independence of our designated landscapes, or to impose new burdens on them and the people who live and work in the areas they cover. Instead, its purpose is to ask what might be done better, what changes could assist them, and whether definitions and systems - which in many cases date back to their original creation - are still sufficient.

At the outset, it is also important to state one thing the review will not do: propose reductions in either the geographic extent or the protections given to England’s designated landscapes.

### **Some context:**

In January 2018 the Government published a 25-Year Plan for the Environment. It set out an approach to protect landscapes and habitats in England and committed to undertaking a Review National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

The publication of these terms of reference to guide that Review is the next step.

### **Scope:**

The Review will consider National Parks and AONBs in England, including the role of these areas in relation to other places designated for environmental purposes. Landscapes in Wales and Scotland are under devolved administrations and therefore do not fall under the scope of this Review.

The Review will respect the cultural and visual heritage of people, farms and businesses in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

### **Objectives:**

In the context of meeting both local and national priorities and wider environmental governance, the Review will examine and make recommendations on:

- The existing statutory purposes for National Parks and AONBs and how effectively they are being met
- The alignment of these purposes with the goals set out in the 25-Year Plan for the Environment
- The case for extension or creation of new designated areas
- How to improve individual and collective governance of National Parks and AONBs, and how that governance interacts with other national assets
- The financing of National Parks and AONBs
- How to enhance the environment and biodiversity in existing designations
- How to build on the existing eight-point plan for National Parks and to connect more people with the natural environment from all sections of society and improve health and wellbeing
- How well National Parks and AONBs support communities

Expanding on work already underway, the review will also take advice from Natural England on the process of designating National Parks and AONBs and extending boundary areas, with a view to improving and expediting the process.

### **Activity:**

The Review will be led by Julian Glover and supported by an experienced advisory group.

The Review will draw on existing evidence and that submitted by interested groups and individuals during the course of the Review. The review team will also visit people and places in a range of designated landscapes.

### **Cross-Government involvement:**

This is a cross-Government Review, with Defra providing the secretariat and appointing a lead to undertake the Review.

Recommendations will be made to the Government. Implementation will be led by the Defra Secretary of State.

### **Expected Timetable:**

The Review will report in 2019 (the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act).

A more detailed timetable will be developed following commencement of the Review.