

Response to Common Agricultural Reform Consultation November 2013

The NAAONB is a voluntary body whose membership includes all but one of the AONB Partnerships in England and Wales, as well as many of the local authorities with statutory responsibility for AONBs, the Trust which manage AONBs in Northern Ireland, as well as a number of voluntary bodies and individuals with an interest in the future of these iconic landscapes.

A number of AONBs may respond individually to this consultation and the comments of the NAAONB should be seen as supportive and supplementary to these.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document.

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) wishes to highlight the following key responses to the CAP consultation:

- We strongly support the transfer of funding from Pillar I to Pillar II and urge that this should be the maximum 15%. Shifting funding to Pillar II provides the best option for securing environmental gains and sustainable economic development from public investment.
- Agri environment support packages have made a major contribution to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in our designated landscapes. As we move into a transitional phase, new programme and reducing budgets it is essential that landowners and farmers retain confidence in the continuity of agri-environment support packages.
- We recognize that agri-environment programme should evolve and we support the growing emphasis on mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, production of renewable energy and sustainable management of water and of river catchments. We are also keen to see High Nature Value farming appropriately supported through CAP and support the High Nature Value Farming manifesto, see: <http://www.highnaturevaluefarming.org.uk>

- We are concerned that the objectives for the new Rural Development Programme do not specifically identify the importance of building and supporting sustainable rural communities. The viability of rural economies is intimately connected to rural infrastructure and rural services. The LEADER programme, often working alongside AONB partnerships, has an excellent track record in delivering effective locally focused support to help bring about transition to more sustainable economic models.
- We are comfortable with the proposed structure for the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMs) and welcome the inclusion of the Landscape scale approach. AONB partnerships have long pursued integrated and unified local delivery strategies and are well placed to support ELMs delivery, including taking on delegated roles and responsibilities.

DETAIL

6 Do you support our preferred option that we should apply the minimum level of reduction possible? If not, what level do you think should be applied?

£150,000 should be the most that any farmer can receive. With public funds shrinking we need to be assured that public goods, environmental gains and sustainable economic development result from public expenditure. Shifting funding to Pillar II is the best option for securing these outcomes.

19. What lessons can be learned from the current Rural Development Programme? How can we build upon its successes?

Agri environment support packages have made a major contribution to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in our designated landscapes and beyond. As we move into a transitional phase, new programmes and reducing budgets it is essential that landowners and farmers retain confidence in the continuity of these agri-environment support packages.

The NAAONB recognizes that agri-environment programme should evolve and we support the growing emphasis on mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, production of renewable energy and sustainable management of water and of river catchments. We are keen to see High Nature Value farming appropriately supported through CAP and support the HNV manifesto.

The LEADER approach has made a significant contribution to farm diversification and helps build more resilient rural economies across England. It is essential that

this approach continues and is strongly connected to the framework of strategies led by the Local Enterprise Partnerships.

20. Are there any key areas we have missed in our assessment of need to support the new Rural Development Programme?

We are concerned that the objectives for the new Rural Development Programme do not specifically identify the importance of building and supporting sustainable rural communities. The viability of rural economies is intimately connected to rural infrastructure and rural services. The LEADER programme, often working alongside AONB partnerships, has an excellent track record in delivering effective locally focused support to help bring about transition to more sustainable economic models.

The new RDP should give LEADER groups the flexibility to support rural services and infrastructure, particularly where such support would clearly underpin the viability and diversification of the rural economy.

27 What are your views on the structure of the proposed new environmental land management scheme, in particular the new “landscape scale” approach?

We are comfortable with the proposed structure for the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMs) and welcome the inclusion of the Landscape scale approach. AONB partnerships have long pursued integrated and joined up local delivery strategies and are well placed to facilitate and support ELMs delivery, including taking on delegated roles and responsibilities.

AONB partnerships are piloting a criteria based self assessment process that will support and strengthen the ecosystems approach to land management. We urge defra and Natural England to make the most of the 34 AONB partnerships, their expertise and delivery reputation, to ensure CAP reform brings about the shifts in necessary to build more resilient land use and management practices.

29. How could we help facilitate landscape-scale approaches under the proposed new environmental land management scheme?

NCA profiles provide a useful national framework for landscape scale approaches however, it is through statutory AONB management plans that stakeholders are engaged in agreeing objectives specific to the management of designated landscapes. AONB management plans provide a firm basis for integrated and joined up delivery of a wide range of environmental and socio-economic outcomes, including those in the Biodiversity 2020 strategy.

AONB partnerships have a good track record in delivering integrated local strategies and are well placed to deliver the new environmental land management scheme on the ground supported and guided by priorities identified in the AONB management plans.

31. Do you agree with the principle that five year agreements should be the norm under the new environmental land management scheme?

AONB partnerships are well aware of the need for continuity and certainty in the construction and delivery of environmental land management programmes. Farmers, foresters and land managers demand certainty in the support they receive. We support the principle of five year agreements as the norm but suggest that, subject to a light touch review, schemes should be automatically rolled forward to secure long term environmental outcomes.

41. How can we strengthen LEADER's contribution to delivering jobs and growth in rural areas?

The NAAONB greatly values the LEADER approach. With AONB partnership input LEADER has proved to be an effective mechanism for supporting sustainable economic activity. An early decision on the proportion of England covered by LEADER will ensure continuity of LEADER activity through the transition period.

Local Enterprise Partnerships should articulate clearly, in their strategies, the role of LEADER groups and the scope that LEADER groups can have to call down match funding.

43 Should we transfer funding from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2?

Yes

If so, should we transfer the maximum 15% or less?

15%