



Landscapes Review: Call for Evidence

New Forest National Park Authority response

Submitted on 17 December 2018

Part 1 - Opening thoughts

7 What do you think works overall about the present system of National Parks and AONBs in England? Add any points that apply specifically to only National Parks or AONBs

The New Forest National Park is completely unique, its system of commoning has maintained arguably one of the richest of landscapes in Europe, in one of the most populous and economically vibrant areas in the country. This unique, living, working place is under extreme pressure.

There are great challenges to maintain this landscape for future generations and in doing so there is an opportunity to be an exemplar of National Parks for the 21st Century as envisaged in the 25 Year Environment Plan.

As part of the family of English National Parks we support the submission made by National Parks England and the 5 Big Opportunities it proposes:

1. National Parks as bigger and better places for nature, that are connected through wildlife corridors to each other and resilient to climate change
2. Bespoke farming and land management schemes that work for National Parks
3. Harnessing a passion for our National Parks
4. A strong new partnership with the NHS to improve people's health and wellbeing
5. Every child has the opportunity to visit a National Park to enjoy outstanding learning experiences during their time at school.

The New Forest National Park is a reservoir of natural capital with unique cultural heritage resulting in an exceptional landscape set amongst the highly populated communities of the south (16million within a 90 minute drive). We believe that the role, remit and resources of a future National Park Authority need to be tailored to meet the landscapes' unique set of circumstances.

There are four key areas of opportunity through which the Review might reinforce the inspirational value that National Parks can offer society. We see these being taken forward at both local and national levels to maximise our impact as we work with a range of stakeholders across sectors and

communities.

Our four asks of the Review are to:

- Inspire and achieve a renewed sense of joint mission and purpose across partners and communities for the purposes of National Parks, with the 70th Anniversary providing a catalyst for this; celebrating our joint achievements and restating our collective determination to meet the challenges and securing shared responsibility across the sectors and communities.
- Restate the importance of a Plan (Partnership Plan) for the National Park that is shaped and owned by all, in pursuit of the purposes and duty for which it is designated. The Review needs to enshrine the delivery of the Plan in law, policy and practice to secure the commitment and the alignment of skills and resources of all parties.
- Confer additional powers and resources to enable National Park Authorities to work with partners in meeting the expectation that a National Park should be an exemplar of delivery of the 25 Year Plan; including maintaining our planning function, delivering nature conservation and cultural heritage gains, enabling positive land management/rural development and benefitting communities both within and outside the National Park.
- Confirm and clearly mandate the role of National Parks in inspiring communities, partnerships and action for our natural and cultural heritage beyond our boundaries, recognising the experience and skills we can offer to enable society at large to access the benefits of nature, e.g. Green Halo Partnership.

The New Forest National Park is one of the newest National Parks and the geographical location and the history and ownership pattern of the Forest requires a particular emphasis on partnership working. We believe this way of working is especially important for protected landscapes in the future. Many stakeholders have and want a say in the future of these landscapes and NPAs should be the broker for these discussions.

The planning function is crucial for us to deliver our remit. This should be reinforced by the Review and the means given to NPAs to influence and direct other land use that has the capacity to bring about landscape change.

**8 What do you think does not work overall about the system and might be changed?
Add any points that apply specifically to National Parks or AONBs**

See our introductory comments and reference to the National Park England response in Qtn 7

Part 2 - Views

9 What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in nature conservation and biodiversity?

The New Forest National Park is internationally recognised for its wildlife and conservation value with over 56% designated as SSSI and SAC. We have a key role in supporting landowners,

commoners and managers in delivering protection and enhancement of this resource through advice, policy and winning resources. However, we currently are limited in our abilities to do more in respect of directly funding or delivering wildlife gain. (See 9b below)

Part of our role in developing partnerships is to inspire and catalyse greater investment in wildlife conservation in the National Park e.g. the recent purchase of Franchises Lodge by the RSPB. See also our introductory comments and reference to the National Park England response.

Could they do more to enhance our wildlife and support the recovery of our natural habitats?

More can, and should be done to make National Parks better for wildlife but this requires additional resources and powers for National Park Authorities and renewed commitment and responsibility of land managing partners to deliver for wildlife in National Parks.

(See also key points in Qtn 7 and NPE submission).

10 What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in shaping landscape and beauty, or protecting cultural heritage?

National Parks are principally landscape designations. Beauty and cultural heritage are the things that connect people with the place and provide the motivation to care for the National Park into the future. Coupled with our work on wildlife conservation, this makes the role of an NPA unique and potentially powerful in delivering the ambitions of the 25 Year Plan.

There are many projects that we can highlight in the New Forest that have successfully engaged people in landscape beauty and cultural heritage, not least relating to our unique cultural system of commoning.

11 What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in working with farmers and land managers and how might this change as the current system of farm payments is reformed?

This is a critical area of activity for the future of National Parks and is covered in the NPE response and our high level points above.

12 What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in supporting and managing access and recreation?

The second purpose of National Parks is focussed on promoting enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the National Park. We have an important role in education and enabling engagement of a wide diversity of people with our most precious landscapes.

NPAs also have a unique role in providing an overview of the whole landscape and how best to prioritise more robust areas for recreation and in doing so protect the more sensitive areas.

There is also an emphasis on understanding the special qualities of National Parks to help ensure that recreation is not detrimental to the landscape and wildlife quality of the National Park.

Achieving the right balance between our two purposes - protecting the New Forest by managing

recreation and access is arguably the biggest challenge facing our National Park and the protected landscapes of southern England. Resources and powers are needed to meet this challenge into the future.

With this in mind we are always looking beyond our boundaries to find solutions and support the provision of more access to nature near where people live as well as within the National Park.

13 What views do you have about the way National Park and AONB authorities affect people who live and work in their areas?

English National Parks are living, working landscapes – none more so than the New Forest National Park which is home to 35,000 residents and 2,500 businesses. Sustaining a diverse local economy and delivering housing for local needs while meeting the two statutory purposes of the National Park is a challenge. Together the Management Plan and Local Plan seek to deliver the Vision for the National Park, a Vision that is agreed through wide consultation with residents and stakeholders.

National Park status helps to reinforce the identity of the New Forest and attracts funding for projects and activities developed in partnership with local communities that strengthen and further the cultural heritage of the area (eg the £4.5m Our Past Our Future Landscape Partnership Scheme).

The provision of housing to meet the local needs of people living within the National Park is a key part of supporting the communities of the New Forest. Meeting housing needs must be considered alongside the protection afforded to the National Park's landscape and habitats. The Local Plan is the key means by which this can be achieved.

Provision of affordable is consistently raised as one of the biggest challenges facing local communities in the National Park, with the New Forest noted as being the least affordable National Park in the UK. The New Forest NPA has policies that seek to maximise the delivery of affordable housing, while at the same time upholding the purposes of National Park designation.

Are they properly supporting them and what could be done differently?

No comments

14 What views do you have on the role National Park and AONB authorities play on housing and transport in their areas?

See answer to Q 13

Part 3 - Current ways of working

15 What views do you have on the way they are governed individually at the moment? Is it effective or does it need to change, if so, how?

Our current governance model has worked to date in the New Forest with its balance of local representation and national members. We actively participated in the last governance review which demonstrated our commitment to transparency and accountability within the current structure.

16 What views do you have on whether they work collectively at the moment, for instance to share goals, encourage interest and involvement by the public and other organisations?

We believe we have a key role to play in connecting with other designated landscapes, both physically and by developing a shared vision for the future of these special landscapes in our geographical area.

We currently work with our fellow designated landscapes in the south of England and are very open to playing a greater leadership role to bring forward a connected network of landscapes delivering natural capital benefits across a wider area.

17 What views do you have on their efforts to involve people from all parts of society, to encourage volunteering and improve health and well-being?

We support the National Parks England submission that envisages a strong partnership between National Parks and the NHS. An active and well established volunteering culture exists within the New Forest National Park, managed and hosted by a number of different organisations.

The social and health benefits to the individual from volunteering are well understood; the mutual understanding between communities within and beyond the National Park boundary and the agencies responsible for management of the National Park is also enhanced through volunteering. Many volunteer programmes are dependent on grant funding which can limit their impact; finding ways to achieve long term sustainability would pay dividends for society and the designated landscapes.

18 What views do you have on the way they are funded and how this might change?

New resources are required to ensure we can deliver our statutory purposes and enhanced partnerships. We currently rely on funding from lotteries and grants to deliver what many would regard as our core work of protecting the environment of the National Park. A more sustainable and consistent source of funding is necessary to maintain effective partnerships that work both within and beyond our boundaries and would welcome the Review examining how this might be achieved.

We would also welcome the Review encouraging the provision of funding and resources from departments across government where National Parks provide clear benefits as evidenced in the 25 Year Environment Plan e.g. health and wellbeing, education, clean air, security of supply chains.

We would like to see, for example, an “invest to save” fund to which we might apply for capital works, land and asset purchase (to secure conservation gains) and to help us develop a sustainable approach to funding in the long term. This is needed specifically for us to secure a more sustainable work base for ourselves and key partners (e.g. New Forest Marque, Land Advice Service, Green Halo Partnership)

19 What views do you have on the process of designation - which means the way boundaries are defined and changed?

We believe that boundaries of all protected landscapes should be reviewed on a regular basis to allow renewed opportunities for closer working with our communities and partners.

We have been advocating 'porous boundaries' through working closely with areas outside of the National Park. Our ambition is that any major land use changes or developments on our boundaries be of such a high standard that they could be considered as part of the National Park in the future.

In addition, many surrounding communities are working in step with our purposes and duty and their contributions should be recognised and seen to be contributing to the wider objectives of the National Park e.g. working in parts of river catchments that extend outside of the National Park provide benefits across our boundaries.

20 What views do you have on whether areas should be given new designations? For instance, the creation of new National Parks or AONBs, or new types of designations for marine areas, urban landscapes or those near built-up areas.

No comments

21 Are there lessons that might be learnt from the way designated landscapes work in other parts of the United Kingdom, or abroad?

No comments

Part 4 - Closing thoughts

22 Do you think the terms currently used are the right ones? Would you suggest an alternative title for AONBs, for instance and if so what?

No comments

23 The review has been asked to consider how designated landscapes work with other designations such as National Trails, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Special Protected Areas (SPAs). Do you have any thoughts on how these relationships work and whether they could be improved?

No comments

24 Do you have any other points you would like to make that are not covered above?

No comments