

LANDSCAPES REVIEW

Summary: To identify early priorities that could shape the Board's activity over the next 1-2 years

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Recommendation: That the Board considers these priorities, based on the proposals within the Landscapes Review

INTRODUCTION

In September 2019 the Landscapes Review (final report) was published. The review was led by Julian Glover and supported by a panel that included Ewan Cameron, Sarah Mukherjee, Jim Dixon, Fiona Reynolds and Jake Fiennes. The review was commissioned by the government in response to the 25-Year Environment Plan and focused on the ten National Parks and 34 AONBs in England.

Key to this review was not to ask the question '*what do national landscapes need?*' but, instead, '*what does the nation need from them today?*'

The review focused on five areas:

- Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty
- Landscapes for Everyone
- Living in Landscapes
- More Special Places
- New Ways of Working

In total, 27 proposals across these five areas have been put forward. Government are yet to respond but that shouldn't stop the Board thinking about its own priorities, in light of the review, that could shape our direction and activities over the next 1-2 years and how this could influence the next Management Plan (2023-28).

These priority activities may not, necessarily, be dependent on additional funding or other resources but instead they could demonstrate a reshaping of how the Board engages with, and supports, partners, organisations, communities and people living in or visiting the AONB.

The two priority areas within this report are focused on:

- Doing more for nature, and
- Doing more for people

PRIORITY AREAS FOR THE BOARD

1. Doing more for nature

What?

- Create a robust and resilient ecological network.
- Engage with farmers and other landowners to develop an Environmental Land Management System that is right for the Cotswolds and linked to national ambitions.
- Support appropriate tree planting – ‘the right tree in the right place for the right reason’ – within the AONB protected landscape.
- Continue to seek mitigation and/ or compensation funding for developments that have an adverse impact on the landscape and nature of the AONB.
- Meet the challenge laid down by the NAAONB in the ‘Colchester Declaration’ 2019.

Why?

- Because the Cotswolds is important for nature. The area has been independently identified as a priority area for grassland plants, farmland birds and woodland.
- Because the Cotswold landscape has intrinsic value and means so much to people.
- Because AONBs should be places of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife.
- Because nature recovery is central to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.
- Because climate change is one of the biggest threats to humanity and biodiversity.

How?

- Complete the ELMS Test and report its findings to Defra and other key partners.
- Use the Ash Dieback appeal, the 2,000 trees donated by the Woodland Trust and the tree planting partnership with the CPRE to act as the catalyst for engaging people and communities to identify appropriate areas for tree planting.
- Ensure the scope and desired outputs of the Rail Corridor Enhancement project have a positive impact on nature recovery and landscapes.
- Prepare a framework for an AONB Nature Recovery Plan by July 2020.
- Ensure the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2023-28 embed an ecosystem services approach and includes measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear ambitions around Net Zero.

- Adopt a species on the threatened list and prepare a Species Action Plan to ensure it is taken off the list by 2030.

2. Doing more for people

What?

- Think more creatively about how the Board can reach and engage with people who never, or rarely, enjoy and learn about the countryside.
- Early focus could be on those people who live in and around the AONB – targeting towns and cities such as Gloucester, Cheltenham, Bath, Worcester, Banbury, Oxford, Bristol, Swindon, Stroud, Stratford-upon-Avon and Chippenham.

Why?

- For health – at any one time 28% of people are inactive (*Sport England – Towards an Active Nation 2016*)
- For wellbeing – 92% of people participate in some form of activity to relax and de-stress (*Sport England – Getting Active Outdoors 2015*)
- For families and young people – between 70-80% of people feel participation in outdoor activity strengthens family relationships (*Sport England – Getting Active Outdoors 2015*)
- For education – it is important to capture the passion and understanding that young people have about our environment and the threat of climate change – they want to make a difference
- To overcome barriers – to reach three key groups that are under-represented visitor groups:
 - Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME)
 - Deprived communities
 - People with physical disabilities

How?

- Review our digital and print communication strategy to ensure it reaches the target audience, i.e. in addition to TICs and other outlets situated within the AONB.
- Engage communities in and around the Cotswolds AONB in the preparation of the 2023-23 Management Plan, including engagement events based on the Future Landscapes workshops.
- Use positive working relationships with partners, including GWR, to promote the Cotswold Gateways project to more diverse and harder-to-reach audiences.
- Use the 50th anniversary of the Cotswolds Way in 2020 to celebrate walking and exploring opportunities in the AONB and to engage new people. We will be working with Robert Welch Designs to deliver a

fundraising event along the trail in May. The event will start at their Chipping Campden shop (also in its 50th year) on Sunday 17 May (the day the trail was officially opened in 1970) and ending at their shop in Bath. The event will be run in partnership with the Cotswolds Way Association and our Voluntary Wardens.

- Identify accommodation partners, specifically those situated in areas that enjoy dark skies, to run '*big family camp out*' events during the spring and summer. The Chief Executive has experience of similar events, working in partnership with Exmoor National Park at Wimbleball Lake - <https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/about-us/press-room/press-room/news-2016/big-adventure-family-camp-out>
- Consider becoming the lead partner on an AONB-wide sculpture trail that gives people who don't normally visit the countryside a great reason to visit and explore.
- Understand how the National Citizen Service Trust (NCST) deliver its programme within and around the AONB and how the Board can become a partner. This quote from the NCST is from 'England's National Parks 8-Point Plan Progress Report':

"We are committed to the vision of connecting more young people to the natural environment as a lifelong source of wellbeing, identity, adventure and pride. Together we are building bridges between our experience and these incredible places"

SUMMARY

- The Landscapes Review should be viewed as a positive tool to focus the Board on its future priorities and ambitions.
- It isn't always a case of 'we need more money' and, indeed, this report highlights some of the great work that the Board is already doing that fits perfectly with the tone of this review and other recent publications.
- The priorities outlined above are in-line with our Business Plan 2020-23 Framework (introduced in item 9).
- There are other proposals that relate to planning, governance and new designations within the review which the Board broadly supports. When the government responds to the review the Board will need to give further consideration to how it addresses these recommendations and works with relevant bodies and partners.