



**Submission by National Parks England to the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes**

**December 2018**

There is much to celebrate from the past 70 years of designated landscapes and we want to achieve much more. National Parks England’s response provides a collective ambition following discussion amongst the ten Authorities and will be supplemented in greater detail by individual National Park Authority (NPA) responses and some All Park Working Groups.

**Our Purposes, Duty and Vision**

Our statutory purposes and duty represent robust legislation that remain just as relevant today as when they were first drafted. Protected landscapes are a key component to meeting many of the challenges of modern society, such as wildlife fragmentation, climate change, chronic health conditions, the need for beauty and spiritual enrichment in our lives, and achieving sustainable development. We think it is appropriate that the duty<sup>1</sup> on the NPAs to seek to foster the social and economic well-being of their communities is subordinate to the Purposes given so many socio-economic activities are led by local authorities who have statutory responsibilities in this area and with whom we work closely.

The Vision for National Parks<sup>2</sup> sets out an ambitious agenda and long-term aspirations and is fundamentally sound. However, the Designated Landscapes Review presents an opportunity to consider how it could be improved to help deliver the Vision and the goals in the 25 Year Environment Plan. This should include recognising the full value of National Parks to England; ensuring their positive impact reaches beyond their boundaries, and addresses climate change.

If we are to realise our Vision and the public’s increasing expectations of National Parks then further action is needed. There are no shortage of ideas. National Parks England has focused on five key ones that we believe represent important opportunities to enhance the environment and people’s experience of it.

**Five Big Opportunities**

**❶ National Parks as bigger and better places for nature, that are connected through wildlife corridors to each other and resilient to climate change.** The public rightly expects wildlife to be at its best in National Parks. Yet the vast majority of land and water in National Parks is owned and managed by businesses, private individuals, public organisations and charities. Although National Parks are important reservoirs for wildlife, NPAs have few powers (beyond planning) to manage or influence

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<sup>1</sup> The duty is, in pursuit of achieving National Parks purposes, NPAs are to seek to foster the social and economic well-being of their local communities within the National Park (Section 11A, *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949*)

<sup>2</sup> See: *National Parks Vision and Circular 2010*

relevant decision making. NPAs therefore look to those who do have the necessary powers to ensure they do prioritise action that positively restores habitats, support species, and improves biodiversity in our National Parks. Coupled with landscape scale partnerships and farming policies (see below), NPE wants to see National Parks as bigger and better places for nature, that are connected through wildlife corridors to each other, AONBs, and the wider countryside to increase resilience to climate change.

**② Bespoke farming and land management schemes that work for National Parks.** Farming in our National Parks is fundamental to delivering many of their special qualities. Building on their close working relationship with farmers and land managers, NPAs and AONB Partnerships should be able to have the power to direct and co-design the delivery of the new Environmental Land Management System. Land management is closely linked to the wider economies of national parks and sustaining the unique qualities of these areas requires an integrated response involving land management, community and economic development. We look for Government to support a rural development growth deal for National Parks– co-designed by NPAs with partners. The aim should be to provide a system that is responsive to the quality and variety of their landscapes and farming systems, that better integrates environmental and rural development objectives, and works with local farmers and land managers.

**③ Harnessing a passion for our National Parks.** We know National Parks are loved by the public yet for many people they are poorly understood. We want the Glover Report to be the spark for a new movement that tells the story of what our National Parks are, the people who were instrumental in their formation, the values underpinning them, and celebrate what has been achieved. National Parks are for everyone. NPAs are proactively reaching out to communities who might not otherwise have the chance to visit the countryside and engaging with new audiences who can enjoy and be inspired by these beautiful places. Crucial to this will be developing National Park’s brand to ensure people are aware of National Parks, identify with them, and are passionate about them.

**④ A strong new partnership with the NHS to improve people’s health and well-being and recovery.** The ability of everyone to access these glorious landscapes was a key motivator for the social movement that campaigned for National Parks. The Parks represent a significant proportion of the green lungs of the country and the opportunities for engendering a greater opportunity for better physical and mental wellbeing are immense. We want National Parks to be parks for healing; widely understood, valued and used by the public as places that inspire mental harmony and greater physical activity. Through volunteering and other practical activities they can help people in challenging circumstances improve their life skills. We would like to see a strong partnership with the NHS so National Parks can be a core part of the ‘Natural Health Service’ and act as test beds for new approaches to sustaining health and well-being.

**⑤ A Government commitment that every child has the opportunity to visit a National Park to enjoy outstanding learning experiences during their time at school.** We want to inspire the next generation to experience and appreciate the values of National Parks and champion responsible stewardship of the environment. NPAs, working with partner organisations already facilitate thousands of experiences in our National Parks that can be transformative for the young people involved. They enrich learning experiences, provide inspiration and build aspirations. We want that opportunity to be a right for all, whatever their background or circumstance; and to lead from early experiences of a National Park to a deeper engagement with them throughout their lives.

Levers to achieve our vision and opportunities

The maintenance of our National Parks, of which the nation is rightly proud, is the product of hard work by many people, communities and organisations. The network of NPAs provide expertise, facilitation and partnership; they are convenors for National Parks – linking English and local priorities. They are exemplars of place-based bodies that work in partnership to balance the needs of the environment with those of communities enhancing the natural beauty of these nationally important landscapes and the lives of their people. Our aim is that our communities are our advocates.

NPAs work in partnership with a wide range of bodies to agree common aims and achieve amazing things with few resources. But nationally, we can do better. If NPAs are to continue this task, and capitalise on the five opportunities above, they need the necessary resources, levers, and flexible governance to deliver. National Parks England recommends that:

- The duty on relevant authorities to “have regard”<sup>3</sup> to National Parks and AONBs should be strengthened to better align with the 25 Year Environment Plan. NPE would like to see this duty amended so all public bodies are required to “further” National Park purposes;
- Relevant Authorities should also be required to co-operate in the development and implementation of National Park Management Plans as the primary place shaping document for their area<sup>4</sup>;
- Government departments – Defra and beyond - should proactively seek national park expertise in the development of English policy;
- Government recognise the strength that comes from the variation in National Park landscapes and use National Parks as exemplars for experimentation in partnership and place-based working, and innovators for testing new ideas;
- NPA’s planning powers are retained; they are vital to achieving our statutory purposes and the shared vision in our National Park Management Plans;
- Government transfer funding to invest in these five priorities and ensure NPAs can carry out their enhanced responsibilities and achieve the wider ambitions in the 25 Year Environment Plan, including a demonstrable enhancement of our designated landscapes; and
- NPAs need a Governance framework that is appropriate to our requirements, that supports National Parks to simultaneously deliver national purposes and be flexible enough to reflect local circumstances in different National Parks.

Expertise is not the provenance of National Parks alone, and NPAs are well placed, given their expertise, to offer a strategic lead, working alongside AONBs in their locality - to provide mutual support, share and learn from our experiences, and to further shared objectives to achieve a wider landscape impact that benefits society into the next 70 years.

NPE is very happy to provide further information to support the Glover Review.

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<sup>3</sup> Amendments would be required to Section 11(A)(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949; and Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988

<sup>4</sup> This would require an amendment to the Environment Act 1995.

