REPORT 10: Landscapes Review

1. Purpose of Report
   a. This report provides a summary of the proposals contained in the Landscapes Review which was published on Saturday 21st September.

2. Recommendations
   a. Members are asked to note the recommendations of the Landscapes Review,
   b. Members are invited to meet to consider how the Authority wishes to respond to, or engage with the proposals in the Review.

3. Implications
   a. Financial – There are no immediate financial implications from this report.
   b. Equalities – No immediate implications, however proposals in the report if taken up aim to enhance diversity in national parks.
   c. Link to Business Plan – No immediate links, however the Review reports on elements relevant to all aspects of the business plan.

4. Background
   a. On 27 May 2018 Defra launched a Designated Landscapes (national parks and AONBs) Review.
      In announcing the review Defra set out that the review would be led by Julian Glover, a journalist and former special advisor to No.10 under David Cameron.
   b. The terms of reference made it clear that the review would not propose reductions in either the geographic extent or the protection given to England’s designated landscapes, nor diminish the character or independence or impose new burdens.
      The terms of the review are very broad, covering everything from statutory purposes, extensions and new designations, individual and collective governance, interaction with other national assets, financing, natural environment, public engagement for health and wellbeing and support communities.
   c. National Parks England (NPE) has engaged with the review throughout the past 18 months and Tony Gates as Lead National Parks Officer for England has been closely involved. The Chairs and Chief Executives of the English National Parks have met with Julian Glover and his Panel on several occasions and the Panel have visited all National Parks and AONBs in England.
      The Authority made a formal response to the Call for Evidence from the Review Panel and National Parks England earlier this year produced a Road Map setting out our five big opportunities for National Parks and how these might be achieved.

5. Summary of Key Findings
   a. The Review was published on 21st September, 2019 and is framed by a number of key propositions and questions including:
      - We should not be satisfied with what we have now. It falls far short of what can be achieved and what people of our country want.
      - The national zeal of the founding mission of landscape protection has been eroded and we need to reignite the fire and vision of 1949, and
      - Asking what does the nation need from our designated landscapes today.
   b. The Review addresses these propositions and questions through the priority of ‘Working Together’, that is, bringing together what it sees as a fragmented system
of designated landscapes which the Review believes ‘wastes resources and diminishes ambition’.

The solution to this is seen as a ‘National Landscapes Service’ providing a bigger voice, bigger ambition and a new way of working to meet new challenges.

c. National Park boards are highlighted as too big, not doing a good job in setting strategic direction and deeply unrepresentative of England’s diverse communities.

d. The Review’s overall conclusion is that without structural reform and greater shared ambition and status, our national landscapes will always struggle to do more than make an incremental difference. Throughout the Review it therefore refers to National Parks and AONBs as ‘National Landscapes’. The Review focusses its findings and proposals in five key areas:
   1. Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty
   2. Landscapes for Everyone
   3. Living Landscapes
   4. More Special Places
   5. New Ways of Working

6. Review Proposal
   a. Under these headings the Review sets out a total of 27 proposals. These are set out in Appendix 1 to Report 10, as a table showing how these proposals relate to the response made by Northumberland National Park Authority to the ‘Call for Evidence’ and the five opportunities set out by National Parks England as detailed in the ‘Road Map’ submitted to the Review.

7. Overview and Next Steps
   a. The Review contains many proposals of great merit, many of which are in line with the request of this Authority and NPE. These positive proposals are wrapped in proposals which would see some of the most fundamental changes to the structure and governance of our National Parks and AONBs since they were first designated.

   Whilst there is much that we will want to welcome in this Review, there is much that we will want to consider and question further.

   The Review is however simply that, a report for Government on the findings and recommendations of the Review Panel.

   b. Our focus must now turn to engaging with Defra on how Government will respond to the proposals in the Review. In this respect we are focussing our efforts through NPE in three areas:
      1. Communicating the Review and gauging views across the national parks family, and liaising with AONBs.
      2. Engaging with Defra as they shape their response to the Review, and
      3. Engaging with key partner organisations to gauge their interest in taking forward or working with National Parks, and/or AONBs, to take forward the findings.

8. Conclusions
   a. The Landscapes (Glover) Review has now reported.
   b. As a first step in informing our response members are asked to note the proposals in the Review and to consider how the Authority wishes to respond to or engage
with them. A meeting has been arranged from 10.00am – 12.00noon on Monday 30th September to facilitate our initial considerations.

c. Meetings are also being organised with staff to help answer any questions raised by the Review proposals and to gauge the views of staff.

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Background papers: