

Press release: Public to have say on new National Parks

For the first time in nearly 70 years, the public will have their say on how the country's most cherished landscapes can be enhanced for future generations.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove and writer Julian Glover are today [inviting views on how England's 10 National Parks and 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty \(AONBs\) meet the nation's needs](#) in the 21st century and whether there is scope for the current network to expand.

With more than half the population living within half an hour of a National Park or AONB – and over two million people calling these landscapes home – a call for evidence will explore how access can be improved and communities better supported – alongside which parts of the country could benefit from greater protection.

The public will also have input on whether housing and transport in protected landscapes could be improved, the role they play in our cultural heritage, and how these iconic areas can boost habitats for wildlife.

The evidence will form part of the [recently-launched review](#) into protected landscapes – led by Julian Glover – which is ensuring our National Parks and AONBs can be fit for the 21st century.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

For so many of us our love for nature is intrinsically linked with our protected landscapes, from holidays spent in National Parks to weekend rambles across our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

We want to ensure the people who live, work in and visit these cherished places have a say in their future. As we look afresh at these precious landscapes, I look forward to hearing from everyone who shares an interest in conserving and enhancing them for the next generation.

Through the designated landscapes review, launched in May, Julian Glover and an advisory panel are currently exploring how these iconic landscapes can be enhanced, alongside considering the case for expansion.

Weakening or undermining the existing protections or geographic scope is not part of this review, which is instead focusing on how designated areas can boost wildlife, support the recovery of natural habitats and connect more people with nature.

The review is of the key commitments of the government's [25-Year Environment](#)

[Plan](#), which outlines its vision for improving the environment over a generation by connecting people with nature and helping wildlife to thrive.

Lead reviewer Julian Glover said:

It's an honour to lead a review into something as precious as England's finest landscapes. From the Jurassic Coast of Dorset to the wilderness of the Cheviot Hills, they are still rich in beauty, local life, plants and animals – and enjoyed by millions of people.

But already, in this review, I've seen the pressures too. Local people need jobs and housing, farmers who look after the landscapes need help to survive, and biodiversity is under threat as the numbers of things such as birds and butterflies decline.

The good news is that I know we can do better – and in this review we are hearing lots of ideas about how to do it. Now we're offering a chance for everyone who loves our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Beauty to have a say.

Chair of National Parks England, Margaret Paren, said:

Our protected landscapes are special and worthy of celebration. We are keen to ensure their beauty is enhanced; they are loved by and accessible for everyone; and that they continue to support thriving communities.

But what of the future? Big challenges exist and people have different views about how they should look, feel and be managed. We all want our national parks to be the best they can be and to continue to benefit society in a rich variety of ways. We hope lots of people will respond to this call for evidence and the opportunity it presents to secure our best landscapes for the future.

Chairman of the National Association of AONBs, Philip Hygate, said:

The AONB Family and NAAONB are enjoying working with Julian and his review team.

We recognise that maintaining vibrant, healthy and diverse local communities is essential to the future of AONBs. AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards have long engaged with and supported anyone who cares about our outstanding national landscapes and we will continue to work to improve the connection between people and nature.

Sir Arthur Hobhouse's landmark report in 1947 paved the way for the creation

of England's network of designated landscapes, with the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act passed in 1949 to open up the countryside and connect more people with nature.

Now, AONBs and National Parks are some of our most cherished sites, spanning from the Lake District, which was recently announced as a UNESCO World Heritage site, to the picturesque Cornwall AONB.

The nation's 34 AONBs and 10 National Parks cover a quarter of England's land and are home to over 2.3 million people. They also generate over £20 billion for the rural economy, and support 75,000 jobs.

The [call for evidence](#) closes on 18 December. Evidence received will form part of the designated landscapes review, which will report back next year with recommendations.