

# Proposal to expand Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- Surrey Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) extension to be considered.
- Natural England will take forward the Prime Minister's commitment in his 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution to designate more national landscapes.
- Renewed commitment to boost nature recovery and help more people access Britain's most beautiful landscapes as we build back greener from the pandemic.

Natural England is today (Thursday 24 June) announcing that the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is to be considered for boundary expansion. Securing this designation would allow the area to benefit from greater protections, so that more of England's beautiful landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

The Surrey Hills AONB stretches across a quarter of the county of Surrey and includes the chalk slopes of the North Downs from Farnham in the west to Oxted in the east, and extends south to the deeply wooded Greensand Hills which rise in Haslemere.

On the doorstep of London, an extension to the Surrey Hills AONB boundary would give greater access to the natural environment. This would help preserve its rural heritage, promote tranquillity and give more access to nature for the benefit of people's health and wellbeing.

## Newlands in Surrey

Three other areas – the Chilterns, Cheshire Sandstone Ridge and Yorkshire Wolds – will be considered for greater protections, with potential to deliver over 40% of the additional 4,000 square kilometres required to meet the UK's commitment to protect 30% of our land by 2030.

Allison Potts, Area Manager for Natural England, said:

The Surrey Hills is an iconic and beautiful landscape encompassing rare habitats from chalk grassland to extensive ancient woodland and is enjoyed by millions of residents and visitors from all across the region.

We are very excited to announce proposals to explore an extension to the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a move we hope will boost nature's recovery and help more people access one of England's most beautiful landscapes, as we build back greener from the pandemic.

Heather Kerswell, Chair of the Surrey Hills AONB Board, said:

We are delighted that work is starting on a proposed extension to this nationally important landscape. I find it difficult to understand why the existing boundary was drawn so incredibly tight and excluded many beautiful natural landscapes. This will be a once in a lifetime opportunity to assess how the boundaries should be redrawn to benefit nature and people and to give these areas the protection they deserve. We will be working closely with Natural England and local partners.

Julian Glover, who led the government's independent review of England's National Parks and AONBs, said:

It's over 70 years since we first began to protect our national landscapes. Now it's time to redouble our efforts to do more for nature and more for the people who live in and visit wonderful places such as the Surrey Hills, by finding fair and swift ways to sort out their boundaries. I'm really pleased that Natural England and the government are working with local groups to make sure we get it right.

The proposals follow the [independent review](#) led by Julian Glover, which called for action to make our protected landscapes greener, more beautiful and open to everyone. Natural England welcomed the review which set out a compelling vision for more beautiful, biodiverse and accessible National Parks and AONBs.

Chair of Natural England Tony Juniper said:

Today's announcement signals an ambitious step forward in growing our family of precious national landscapes, as well as protecting and improving the ones we have.

One thing that has become very apparent recently, and especially during the pandemic, is the enormous benefit people get from having access to beautiful nature-rich landscapes. These can, however, be hard for many people to access, thereby raising the question of how more can be done to bring nature and people closer together. On this, we see huge opportunities arising from the establishment of the England Nature Recovery Network, of which wilder national landscapes will be a vital part.

As Government's statutory landscape adviser, we look forward to continuing to work closely with Government, designated landscape bodies and stakeholders to deliver more for and through England's diverse landscapes.

## Further information

- Find out more about the [Surrey Hills](#)
- See [further details about today's announcement](#)
- Natural England is the government's statutory advisor on landscapes in England, with duties and powers to conserve and enhance landscapes that include the designation of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- The designation process is likely to take several years and will be a collaborative process including local stakeholders at every step

These new areas of landscape designation have been selected through an evidence-based assessment from proposals that have been made to Natural England over the last 10 years.

## The 4 areas across the country being considered for designation are:

- An extension to the Surrey Hills AONB – to consider including areas of high scenic quality including chalk grassland, parkland and historic features adjacent to the existing AONB
- An extension to the Chilterns AONB – to consider many special features including chalk streams, magnificent beechwoods, native woodland and wildflower-rich hills, bringing nature closer to populations in North London
- Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB – a diverse, distinctive, and celebrated landscape located in the heart of Cheshire, in close proximity to the large populations of NW England, rich in heritage, archaeology, wildlife, and culture
- Yorkshire Wolds AONB – a tranquil landscape of rolling hills, valleys and open plateaux interspersed with ancient woodland, chalk streams, farm holdings and historic villages, extending north from the River Humber

Today, the Environment Secretary will set out the government's support for improved nature recovery and public access in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty ahead of a consultation on draft proposals later this year. The statement will also outline a new 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' programme to support farmers and other land managers to improve their landscapes and create thriving destinations for communities to enjoy. As Government's statutory landscape adviser, the proposals for new designations will be delivered by Natural England, who will also be supporting the new programme for farmers in protected landscapes.