



DEFRA STRATEGIC ACTIVITY - CONCLUSION OF LANDSCAPES REVIEW, AND 30 BY 30

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Summary

This paper highlights two recent publications by Defra – the report on consultation which brings to a close the Glover Review of designated landscapes, and a policy paper on the government’s approach to implementing the international commitment to protect 30% of land by 2030.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the information provided.

Landscapes Review

On 29th November 2023 the government published the outcome of the consultation it launched in January 2022 in response to the Landscapes Review. This stage effectively brings to a close the process of the Landscapes Review initiated in 2018, and the ‘once in a generation’ opportunity this represented. While there has undoubtedly been some progress and National Landscapes are now in a better position overall, the uptake by government of the review’s recommendations has been partial.

Some of the actions are still ongoing, including:

- Rebranding as National Landscapes
- Statutory guidance on the new duty to ‘further’ the purpose of designation
- Work on a new funding formula for protected landscapes

The possibility of statutory consultee status in planning for National Landscape bodies is not currently being taken forward but is still under discussion. The situation is the same for the possible strengthening of the statutory purpose to conserve and enhance and a possible second statutory purpose for connecting people to places – these received majority support in the consultation but there is no current legislative vehicle. It is understood however these are not ruled out longer term.

Funding is covered in agenda item 7.

30 by 30

The government have committed to protecting 30% of the UK's land by 2030. On 9th December 2023 they published a document setting out:

- criteria setting out how land can contribute towards 30 by 30 in England
- an indicative map - showing the areas which can already count, and broad areas with potential to contribute towards 30 by 30 in the future (the latter includes National Landscapes)
- how government will work with stakeholders to develop additional guidance on how land can contribute towards 30 by 30.

A key point to note is that protected landscapes (making up around 25% of England) will not in their entirety count towards 30 by 30, as not all of the land meets the threshold of being effectively protected and managed for biodiversity conservation.

The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP23) sets out the approach to delivering 30 by 30 on land in England by:

1. Strengthening: ensure effective policy and statutory safeguards and powers are in place to improve management for nature, prevent degradation and ensure appropriate access for people.
2. Extending and creating: designate new protected areas and restore or create wildlife rich habitat outside of these
3. Investing: invest in habitat restoration across our protected areas and beyond.

Commentary drawing on National Landscapes Association paper

There are two components required for a 30 by 30 framework - Protected Areas and 'Other Area-based Effective Conservation Measures' (OECMs). In this system, National Landscapes are Protected Areas which won't count in their entirety towards 30 by 30, but which have components that do. The mechanism for defining which parts of Protected Areas may contribute to 30by30 is as yet unclear. As an illustrative exercise, the National Landscapes Association has calculated that the area of deciduous woodland areas and non-woodland priority habitats makes up 30% of land across all 34 National Landscapes in England. This would appear to mean that the target could be quite challenging to meet at a national level if a meaningful threshold level is set.

30 by 30 is a valuable tool but needs to be supported and connected by other nature recovery work that might not fit the 30 by 30 criteria, for example Curlew conservation in agricultural areas. To focus attention, energy and resources too singularly on 30 by 30 would be a high risk for nature. In the UK and many other parts of the world Protected Landscapes will play a vital role in nature recovery. Here, an entire National Landscape or National Park should not count towards 30 by 30, but significant portions should, and these should be embedded in wider nature-friendly practices and management to ensure a landscape that is ecologically connected, viable and resilient to climate change.

List of Background Papers

Email to Partnership members 30th November 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-implementing-the-review/outcome/implementing-the-landscapes-review-summary-of-responses>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65807a5e23b70a000d234b5d/Delivering_30by30_on_land_in_England.pdf

National Landscapes Association working paper on 30 by 30

<https://national-landscapes.org.uk/evidence-based-landscape-approach-to-30-by-30>

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

None