

## Dorset Council's response to the Landscapes Review Final Report (Glover Review)

Date of Meeting: 5 November 2019

Portfolio Holder: Cllr D Walsh, Planning

Local Member(s): All

Director: John Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

### **Executive Summary:**

In January 2018 the Government published a 25-Year Plan for the Environment. It set out an approach to “conserve and protect the natural beauty of our landscapes by reviewing National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) for the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. The review also committed to assess whether there is scope for the current network of 34 AONBs and 10 National Parks to be expanded.

The Landscapes Review (informally known as the “Glover Review”) was launched on 27 May 2018 and between October and December 2018 there was a public call for evidence. As Dorset Council was created on 1 April 2019, it did not have the opportunity to contribute to the Review.

The Landscapes Review Final Report was published on 21 September 2019, in time to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Park legislation. The Government is yet to respond to the Review’s recommendations and while Dorset Council awaits the Government’s Response, consideration has been given to the Report’s recommendations which have the potential to impact Dorset’s residents.

Dorset Council is not in a position to endorse the recommendations of the Landscapes Review or otherwise at this early stage, and will await the response of Government to the Landscapes Review and in particular to consider what proposals Government might wish to make regarding the future of AONBs and National Parks.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment:**

This report considers the recommendations of a national review of designated landscapes.

Any changes to AONBs and National Parks legislation or designation are a matter for Government. At this time, the recommendations contained within the Landscapes Review Final Report do not represent Government policy and

therefore the discussions and analysis remain theoretical.

When the Government responds to the Landscapes Review, Dorset Council will consider any accompanying proposals and will complete an Equalities Impact Assessment, as required.

**Budget:**

Any changes to AONBs and National Parks legislation or designation are a matter for Government. At this time, the recommendations contained within the Landscapes Review Final Report do not represent Government policy and therefore the discussions and analysis remain theoretical.

When the Government responds to the Landscapes Review, Dorset Council will consider any accompanying proposals and will complete budget analysis.

**Risk Assessment:**

Any changes to AONBs and National Parks legislation or designation are a matter for Government. At this time, the recommendations contained within the Landscapes Review Final Report do not represent Government policy and therefore the discussions and analysis remain theoretical.

When the Government responds to the Landscapes Review, Dorset Council will consider any accompanying proposals and will complete a full risk assessment.

**Climate implications:**

Any changes to AONB's and National Park's legislation or designation are a matter for Government. At this time, the recommendations contained within the Landscapes Review Final Report do not represent Government policy and therefore the discussions and analysis remain theoretical.

When the Government responds to the Landscapes Review, Dorset Council will consider any accompanying proposals their climate implications.

Climate change has formed a consideration within the accompanying Desk Top Study.

**Other Implications:**

The accompanying Desk Top Study has considered a wide range of implications.

**Recommendations:**

- Dorset Council notes the findings of the Landscapes Review, but it is important to stress that Dorset Council was unable to contribute to the

Review's "call for evidence" as it was only created on 1 April 2019.

- Dorset Council would engage with the Government concerning its response to the Landscapes Review particularly in regard to any proposal which would change the current designation and landscape management arrangements within Dorset.
- Dorset Council notes the contents of the desktop study in Appendix A of this report.
- That having committed to put in place a new local plan by 2024 this should remain the Council's highest planning land use priority and that the Council should not be distracted from this by any reconsideration of statutory planning powers and responsibilities in Dorset following the Landscape Review.

**Reason for Recommendation:**

As a new authority, it is important for Dorset Council to understand the possible implications of the Landscapes Review and consider the concerns, challenges and opportunities related to any changes to England's network of AONBs and National Parks.

**Appendices:**

Annex 1: Desk Top Study of Landscapes Review and Dorset National Park proposal.

**Background Papers:** None

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 In January 2018 the Government published a 25-Year Plan for the Environment. It set out an approach to "conserve and protect the natural beauty of our landscapes by reviewing National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) for the 21st century". The review also committed to assess whether there is scope for the current network of 34 AONBs and 10 National Parks to be expanded.

1.2 The Landscapes Review (informally known as the "Glover Review") was launched on 27 May 2018 and between October and December 2018 there

was a public call for evidence. As Dorset Council was created on 1 April 2019, it did not have the opportunity to contribute to the Review.

- 1.3 The natural environment is key to the social and economic well-being of the county and the people who live here and visit. Dorset Council plays a significant role managing, protecting and enhancing both designated and undesignated greenspace across the council area.
- 1.4 Dorset's two AONBs have an excellent track record of delivery and some of their most recent projects have been used as examples of best practice within the recently published Landscapes Review.
- 1.5 A qualitative Desk Top Study (Annex 1) has been produced in support of this paper which captures the discussion, research and analysis available to date. The document is a live document and we shall seek to develop it further as new information becomes available. The Desk Top Study shall allow us to identify where we can focus further work and analysis when the Government publishes its proposals in response to the Landscapes Review.

## **2. Review recommendations & proposed view**

- 2.1 The Landscapes Review recommends that AONBs:
- 2.2 Change their name from AONB to "National Landscapes". Dorset Council in principle does not consider this to be an adverse change.
- 2.3 Receive increased funding. Dorset Council in principle considers this to be a positive change, however would be important for any increase in funding to come from Central Government.
- 2.4 Revise their statutory purpose. The Landscapes Review proposed a shared, strengthened, statutory purpose for both AONBs and National Parks. It also proposed giving statutory weight to AONB Management Plans to ensure public bodies commit to their implementation. Dorset Council in principle does not consider these to be an adverse change.
- 2.5 Are given a greater voice within the planning process. The Landscapes Review proposes that AONBs become a statutory consultee within the planning process. At present, statutory consultee status for AONBs sits solely with Natural England. Dorset Council in principle supports this change as it could result in a more local approach. Dorset AONBs already work closely with our planning teams, so a move to legally formalise this approach would not require a significant operational change.
- 2.6 Should, where appropriate, be supported to work towards local plans for their AONB areas, prepared in conjunction with local authorities. The resulting

single plan should have statutory status and replace the usual multitude of local authority plans. This recommendation is relevant to AONBs which cover multiple planning authority areas. Dorset Council does not support this in principle because as a result of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), there will be only one Local Plan for the authority area, thereby ensuring a consistent approach to planning proposals within the AONB. Before LGR the Dorset AONB was governed by three Local Plans.

- 2.7 The Landscapes Review put forward candidates for designation as new National Parks and Dorset AONB was recommended as one of these candidates. Although designation of a National Park would ultimately be a matter for Government and not a decision for Dorset Council, it is our duty to ensure that any changes to the landscape designations we have here in Dorset deliver against our priorities, as set out within the Council Plan (once approved).

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 Through the Local Government Review process Dorset has significantly reduced the level of local government bureaucracy by creating two unitary councils to replace the previous two-tier system. Dorset Council would strongly resist any move to create additional bureaucracy or institutions which would be detrimental to the intentions of the Order creating the new unitary Dorset Council.
- 3.2 Dorset Council has committed to put in place a new local plan by 2024, this is a high priority for the Council, significant staff resources will be invested in the development of this plan leaving little capacity to consider any future arrangements until this is complete.
- 3.3 There is much to celebrate in this report into our treasured landscapes, however Dorset Council wish to keep the opportunities it recommends under review to consider their potential effects on Dorset the place, its residents and visitors, and the operation of Dorset Council.
- 3.4 Dorset Council will await the response of Government to the Landscapes Review and in particular to consider what proposals Government might wish to make regarding the future of AONBs and National Parks.

John Sellgren  
**Executive Director for Place**  
November 2019