

Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Secretary of State for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

6 October 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Unleashing the potential of designated landscapes for people, climate and nature

A year has passed since the publication of Julian Glover's *Landscapes Review*.

During this time, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how much access to high-quality natural environments matters to the nation's health and wellbeing. The pandemic's disproportionate impact on Black and ethnic minority communities as well as the Black Lives Matter movement also reminded us yet again of the urgent need to deliver on diversity and equality issues.

National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) can and should play a leading role in a green recovery from the pandemic and in contributing to the Government's welcome commitment to protect 30% of England's land for nature by 2030.

Together these landscapes currently cover a quarter of England's landmass, and a substantial proportion of the most important habitats for driving nature's recovery and locking up carbon, which are critical in the wider context of addressing the nature and climate crises. They also make an important contribution to local economies and have the potential to engage all parts of society with nature, beauty and our shared heritage.

The *Landscapes Review* notes that many National Park Authorities and AONBs have demonstrated ambition on these matters but, overall, these landscapes are not bucking the trends of alarming wildlife loss and habitat degradation and are failing to reach out to new audiences. The Review also sets out what is needed, including:

- National Parks and AONBs should have updated purposes which, for example, place a more urgent focus on recovering nature and reaching out to engage people from all parts of society. The application of the Sandford Principle should be strengthened and extended to all designated landscapes.
- a national programme of activity designed to connect all parts of society with these special landscapes and improve their accessibility to support understanding, enjoyment and health and wellbeing for all. This should include ensuring that every child and young person can access high quality learning and residential experiences in the National Parks and AONBs

- regular and robust state of nature assessments and ambitious management plans with measurable targets to recover nature and fight the climate crisis, by delivering natural climate solutions in partnership with farmers and landowners, and expanding, restoring and connecting habitats on a large scale.
- greater protections for designated landscapes to ensure that neighbouring bodies also have a duty to further the purposes of designated landscapes, in particular in light of the recently proposed changes to the planning system.
- increased, multi-year funding settlements to enable the National Park Authorities and AONBs to plan, invest and innovate for the future. Funding should be linked to landscapes' performance on their statutory purposes and on tackling climate change, with transparent mechanisms for holding them accountable.

We believe that the *Review's* recommendations are now more relevant than ever and urge you to publish your proposals for implementing them.

Future primary legislation will be required to deliver a number of the recommendations. The plans for implementation should therefore also emphasise simple, low-cost interventions that can be delivered immediately and in the medium term to capitalize on the momentum provided by current wide-spread stakeholder support for a green recovery.

Lastly, we believe that change on the required scale can only be achieved through cross-sector collaboration. The signatories to this letter alone represent over 16,000 expert staff and over 145,000 volunteers delivering a wide range of nature, landscape and heritage conservation, engagement, education and employment programmes across our designated landscapes. Government commitment to longer term investment in co-designed portfolios of activity will unlock funding from other sources and enable key stakeholders to work together on realising the ambitions set out by Glover.

We would be happy to discuss any of these points in more detail with you and officials in your Department.

Yours sincerely

Anita Konrad
Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks

With and on behalf of the following organisations:

