

## **New National Parks A policy position statement**

August 2020

1. There is a significant body of evidence about the key role of access to nature in improving health and well-being, and this will be even more important as we recover from the impacts of Covid-19. Furthermore, natural resource protection, recovery and enhancement at a landscape scale has become even more critical given the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and other damage to the natural environment.
2. Much has changed since the first National Parks were created in England and Wales in the aftermath of World War 2 but the current national crisis has demonstrated how important and invaluable these landscapes continue to be. We believe that there is now a need for an improved network of designated landscapes, including new National Parks to support a healthy and inclusive society.
3. This could also extend the boundaries of coastal National Parks to include their adjacent marine features and seascapes and even potentially include completely new types of designation (see paragraph 10 below).
4. We urgently need to see improvements to the process for identifying and designating new National Parks, or making changes to the boundaries of existing ones. This process needs to be rigorous, but it should be quicker and far less resource intensive than it is currently.
5. The responsible bodies in both England and Wales, Natural England (NE) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) respectively, should take a far more pro-active and urgent approach to identifying where new areas are to be designated and then designation of those areas should be secured in a timely manner. To achieve this NE and NRW must have the necessary structures, resources and specialist expertise to allow them to undertake designation efficiently and effectively. Ministers must also play their role by making final decisions on designations as quickly as possible.
6. Where a strong and well evidenced case for designation has been made for a new National Park or extension to an existing Park, it should be for NE or NRW to justify why that particular designation is not appropriate and if there is no good reason for not proceeding then they should begin the designation process.
7. Any, and all new designations must be accompanied by appropriate new funding, and a commitment to funding in future years at a level which will enable National Parks to fully achieve their purposes and to ensure that there are no detrimental impacts on the existing National Parks.
8. Existing protections should be maintained and strengthened for both existing, and new National Parks, in order to ensure that they are able to deliver their statutory purposes effectively.

9. There should be no reduction in the size of any existing National Park as part of this process.
10. In terms of identifying a wider network of designations, particular attention should be given to restoring landscapes which could lead to the creation of future National Parks in areas where there are significant gaps in the existing network of designated landscapes in terms of both public accessibility and ecological connectivity, and where there are particularly rare or threatened habitats. These areas should be clearly identified as part of a wider Land Use Strategy and/or National Spatial Plan and afforded additional protection in recognition of their potential future status.
11. Areas that should be considered for National Park designation currently include, but should not be limited to, the following:
  - The areas identified in the Glover Landscapes Review published in September 2019. This specifically recommended that the Chilterns, Cotswolds and Dorset AONBs should be considered for National Park status and identified a number of other places which stakeholders believe meet the criteria for designation.
  - The extension to the southern boundary of the Lake District National Park for which a formal request was submitted to NE in June 2019.
  - The Cambrian Mountains was one of the areas deemed suitable for designated landscape status in the Dower and Hobhouse reports but has never been formally designated and there is an ongoing campaign to secure National Park status for it.