

Ambitious proposals to strengthen our protected landscapes announced



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Plans to boost nature recovery and safeguard England's iconic national parks for future generations have been set out today by Environment Secretary George Eustice.

The proposals, which will be subject to consultation, are set out in the Government's response to Julian Glover's independent Landscapes Review which looked at whether the protections for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are still fit for purpose. The Government's response sets out ambitious changes to increase access to nature and ensure protected landscapes can deliver more for climate, nature, people and places for the next 70 years and beyond, as we build back greener from the pandemic and level up all parts of the country.

A new national landscapes partnership will bring together those responsible for managing England's National Parks and AONBs to collaborate, share knowledge and tackle common objectives such as nature recovery and improved public access.

By harnessing their collective strengths whilst preserving their independence, the partnership will support local leadership to work together nationally, including by carrying out campaigns, organising events and offering volunteering opportunities that bring people closer to nature.

The 12-week consultation will also ask for views on proposals to drive nature recovery within our landscapes and support for the communities that live and work within them, such as the design and delivery of new agri-environment schemes and an ambitious management plan for each area.

This announcement forms part of the Government's wider action to recover and restore nature, delivering on the pledge within the 25 Year Environment Plan to protect 30% of the UK's land by 2030 and commitments to achieve net zero by 2050.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are amongst our nation's greatest and most cherished natural wonders. The comprehensive set of measures set out today represents a new chapter in the story of our protected landscapes and we have worked closely with stakeholders to carefully form our response.

These reforms will play a pivotal role in meeting our international commitment to protect 30% of land for biodiversity by 2030 as we build back greener.

The package of measures announced today reflects many of Julian Glover's recommendations, as part of a renewed and strengthened focus on nature recovery in our protected landscapes and to make them greener and more accessible to everyone.

Chair of Natural England, Tony Juniper said:

From the beauty of the sandy beaches of the Scillies to the rugged glory of Northumberland, our protected landscapes are integral to our national identity, our health and wellbeing and our country's prosperity.

As Government's statutory landscape advisor, Natural England has a pivotal role in making sure our National Parks and AONBs are beautiful, thriving places. We welcome this package of measures which will help them deliver even more for the whole of society and combat the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. We look forward to playing a leading role in the national landscapes partnership and working closely with Government, protected landscape bodies and stakeholders to deliver these ambitious proposals.

Julian Glover, who led the review, said:

This is our chance to make England's landscapes more beautiful, better for people who visit and live in them and far more alive with nature. Our countryside is there for all of us, but from the heaths of the New Forest to the high fells of the Lake District, it is under pressure in an urban world. It won't be enough just to try to conserve what we have inherited - we can change the story from decline to recovery, to make them greener, more welcoming and full of hope. The review I led showed what needs to be done and I'm pleased the Government has agreed to act.

Protected landscapes play an essential role in tackling climate change, protecting biodiversity, and supporting the nation's health and wellbeing. Evidence from Natural England shows that almost half the population say that they are spending more time outside than before the pandemic, while the majority of adults surveyed by Forest Research agreed that their level of happiness when in nature has increased.

However, the pandemic has also highlighted the inequalities of access to greenspaces, with evidence from Natural England demonstrating that approximately a third of those on the lowest incomes visited a natural space in a typical week during the pandemic, compared to almost 60% amongst those on high incomes. Today's measures aim to increase people's access to nature, so more of England can benefit from having access to beautiful nature-rich landscapes.

Recognising the need to raise the profile of great British landscapes – particularly AONBs - as national assets, the 12-week consultation will also seek views on proposals, including:

encourage improved access to our protected landscapes and nature for all parts of society, particularly where this supports improved public health and wellbeing;

continue support for the local communities that live and work in protected landscapes, helping preserve our heritage for future generations;

drive nature recovery and nature-based solutions within protected landscapes to help address the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change; and

apply structural changes and resources to support our protected landscapes in delivering more for nature, climate, people and places.

The consultation closes on Saturday 9 April 2022 and can be found [here](#).

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