

MEETING	Llŷn AONB Joint Advisory Committee
DATE	November 20 th 2018
TITLE	Review of Designated Landscapes
PURPOSE	Inform members
AUTHOR	Llŷn AONB Officer
ACTION	None

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides further information regarding the national situation in relation to the review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty of Wales.

2.0 NATIONAL LANDSCAPES – REALISING THEIR POTENTIAL

- 2.1 A few years ago Welsh Government commissioned a review of designated landscapes. A Panel, under the chairmanship of Professor Terry Marsden, were appointed to undertake the work. The final report - “National Landscapes – Realising their Potential” included a detailed analysis of the existing situation and identified opportunities and constraints. The report also contained a total of 69 recommendations for action relating to principles, purposes, vision, governance, management, relationship with other bodies, planning, participation and resources.

3.0 FUTURE LANDSCAPES WALES

- 3.1 Following the “Marsden Report”, Welsh Government established a programme named Future Landscapes Wales to consider the situation further and Dafydd Elis-Thomas was appointed as its chairperson. This was an intensive programme of training, research, discussion and drafting proposals mainly associated with a vision, governance, economic development and resourcing. The work peaked with the publication of a joint report - “Future Landscapes Wales – Delivering for Wales” in May 2017.

4.0 MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- 4.1 In November 2017 Hannah Blythyn AS was appointed as Minister for the Environment and she now has responsibility for Wales’ Designated Areas. The Minister made a statement to the Senedd on March 13th 2018 regarding Future Landscapes Wales.
- 4.2 She confirmed that Welsh Government are committed to the Designated Landscapes and that no changes will be made to the reasons for their designation - which is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The Minister also mentioned

that these landscapes need to do more to recognise, protect and promote the public benefits within them for the benefit of the people of Wales.

- 4.3 In terms of the AONB, she stated also that there is equality with the National Parks in terms of planning policies but that this was not the case in terms of status, profile and resources. She referred also to governance and suggested that even though there is flexibility, there are some weaknesses in present arrangements. The Minister said that a Policy Declaration will be published soon.

5.0 MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

- 5.1 During July 2018, the Minister announced a statement titled “Valued and Resilient – The Welsh Government’s Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks”. A copy of the full statement can be found on the Welsh Government’s website.

- 5.2 It is noted that the aim of the statement is to bring the review process to an end and set the Welsh Government’s priorities for the AONBs and National Parks. The statement declares **four goals** for the designated landscapes namely:

- That they are **Valued Places**
- That they contain **Resilient Environments**
- That they support **Resilient Communities**
- That the AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities adopt **Resilient Ways of Working**.

- 5.3 Also, 10 priority themes were set, stated below. An explanation and justification of these priorities are also included.

- Landscapes for everyone
- Exemplars of the sustainable management of natural resources
- Halting the loss of biodiversity
- Green energy and decarbonisation
- Realising the economic potential
- Growing tourism and outdoor recreation
- Thriving Welsh language
- All landscapes matter
- Collaboration
- Innovation in resourcing

- 5.4 The requirements and expectations of the Designated Landscapes in the declaration are wide, varied and significant. They are expected to implement on many different levels for the benefit of these areas and beyond. Also, the declaration mentions the intention to establish a performance review system and introduce a performance management arrangement to measure the effect of the designation and efficiency in terms of the administration.

5.5 There is obviously a great difference between the AONB Partnerships and the Park Authorities and therefore the abilities of these organisations to realise these requirements. There is a brief reference to this in the document and it is noted that there are differences in terms of **status, profile and resources** between the two designations.

6.0 THE MINISTER'S LETTER

6.1 As a progression from "Valued and Resilient", the Minister wrote to the AONB Partnerships, Natural Resources Wales and the National Association for AONBs. In the letter, she asked the organisations to co-prepare a paper with proposals in terms of gaining more equality between the AONBs and National Parks, concentrating on **status, profile and resources**. There was an emphasis on being practical and realistic in terms of these proposals.

6.2 Following this, the organisations met, held talks and prepared a joint-response. The response presents 12 proposals that would increase equality between the AONBs and Parks in terms of status, profile and resources:

- An additional purpose in terms of the enjoyment and promoting the AONB
- Strengthen the responsibility on relevant organisations towards the AONB
- Declare the AONB Partnerships as a statutory consultant on planning matters
- Welsh Government to appoint on behalf of the AONB Partnerships
- Brand the AONB and Parks as "National Landscapes Wales"
- The Minister to hold an annual seminar to promote good practice
- Raise the status of AONB Management Plans
- Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to provide specific statistics for the AONB
- AONB Partnerships and Unions to be sufficiently funded in the long-term
- The Society for AONBs to be sufficiently funded to assist Welsh Government to realise the National Landscapes Partnerships
- Welsh Government, NRW, Local Authorities and governing organisations to have the strength and capacity to implement "Valued and Resilient" and its purposes.

6.3 This paper has by now been presented to the Minister and we are awaiting a response. An update on the matter will be given at the meeting.

7.0 RECOMENDATION

7.1 To accept the information.