

Response ID ANON-MW92-FMTU-B

Submitted to **Landscapes Review: Call for Evidence**

Submitted on **2018-12-16 14:01:52**

About you

1 Are you replying as a member of the public or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

2 If you are replying as a member of the public

What is your name?:

If you enter your email address then you will automatically receive an acknowledgement email when you submit your response. We may also use this to contact you further.:

3 If you are replying on behalf of an organisation or organisations

Which organisation(s)?:

Campaign for Better Transport East Sussex

What is your name and position?:

Derrick Coffee, County Officer

If you enter your email address then you will automatically receive an acknowledgement email when you submit your response. We may also use this to contact you further.:

derrick.coffee@talk21.com

4 We would like to be able to use extracts from submissions in our final report. If you would not like them, potentially, to be made public, please tell us here.

Yes, I am content for you to use extracts of my response in the final report

5 We have obligations under freedom of information laws and there is more information below. For the purposes of these laws, would you like your response to be confidential?

No

If you have answered yes, please give your reason:

Before anything else

6 We would love to know what makes National Parks and AONBs special to you

Upload :

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Yes, you can use my photo online or in the report

Part 1 - Opening thoughts

7 What do you think works overall about the present system of National Parks and AONBs in England? Add any points that apply specifically to only National Parks or AONBs

Please write your answer here:

Protections of landscape may not be as secure as necessary but overall the National Parks and AONBs can be said to effectively conserve and enhance places and areas with a special landscape character as settings for recreation, inspiration and as habitats for wildlife and plant life.

8 What do you think does not work overall about the system and might be changed? Add any points that apply specifically to National Parks or AONBs

Please write your answer here:

Development pressures are discernible in the form of buildings and traffic and this seems more of a problem in AONBs than in National Parks (NPs). The latter are more conspicuous and enjoy a greater public awareness, and efforts to control development and traffic are more prominent. Development is more controversial in the NPs than in the AONBs. An equivalence of funding and a common administration would, in our view, help - for instance in the area of public transport access opportunities and traffic control to incentivise take-up of all 'sustainable modes' of transport. This would raise the status and amplify the existence of AONBs in the minds of the general public and make politicians more sensitive to any risk of intrusive and destructive developments.

The presence of NP officers on Planning Committees with no equivalence in AONB management structures means that planning authorities in areas comprising AONBs may have a varying engagement with developers and transport agencies resulting in adjacent planning authorities being more or less effective in influencing transport arrangements, and better or worse in sanctioning car dependent developments. There's sometimes a lack of consistency in the quality of any development in terms of the ease with which they may be served by public transport - especially buses - and also in the quality of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.

Part 2 - Views

9 What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in nature conservation and biodiversity?

Please write your answer here:

Their roles are extremely important but insufficient on their own. Those areas cannot be the sole repository for 'ecological health' of the nation, and there are many cherished landscape features that are not in protected designated areas but which are in need of conservation/enhancement.

There has to be a much wider application of high conservation standards across administrative borders, including international ones.

Could they do more to enhance our wildlife and support the recovery of our natural habitats?:

They can certainly demonstrate best practice within their areas and hopefully export those practices widely. They should also continue with their best efforts to reinforce and develop the education curriculum (wider than the 'national curriculum' which can be ignored by some establishments) and strive to improve accessibility to their areas, working with planning and transport authorities to provide 'car-free' access. AONBs should increase their efforts in encouraging communities outside of their borders to visit and enjoy the 'special places' thus winning and strengthening support for their conservation and enhancement, and providing some economic gains for businesses within the AONBs - including tourism/recreation related ones - while residents of the AONBs deserve and need to visit settlements outside of their areas for services, education, recreation and supporting those economies too. Conserving assets of the AONBs solely for those who reside within the borders should not be practised. Fragmentation of habitats by transport infrastructure should be avoided in general but particularly in designated areas

10 What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in shaping landscape and beauty, or protecting cultural heritage?

Please write your answer here:

They are undoubtedly key custodians of those assets but sometimes unable to give them sufficient protection against development and the impact of traffic. Lanes within designated areas - undeniably part of our cultural heritage - are often rendered dangerous by poor and often threatening driver behaviour. This is true of rural lanes in general where ever larger vehicles - especially 4X4s intrude on the verges causing ruts - water filled in winter - and denying pedestrians safe refuge. A local councillor on a planning committee in answer to a concern raised on a development's likelihood of raising traffic levels on a lane ill suited to heavy traffic, and therefore increasing danger to pedestrians, commented: "Well, no-one walks in the lane as it's too dangerous". Put simply, the impact of traffic - including noise from high performance cars and motorcycles - is hardly ever challenged by elected members.

11 What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in working with farmers and land managers and how might this change as the current system of farm payments is reformed?

Please write your answer here:

We'd answer the first part of the question by suggesting that blocking of footpaths should never be practised and all efforts should be made to increase the 'permissive paths' available where these help to facilitate local journeys on foot and where feasible, by cycles.

12 What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in supporting and managing access and recreation?

Please write your answer here:

Access by public transport and by pedestrians/ramblers and by cycle should be prioritised, accompanied by a restraint on private motorised transport where this detracts from or harms the visitor experience. There should always be access for the disabled. National Park authorities and AONB managers should have comparable and sufficient resources to help bring this about.

13 What views do you have about the way National Park and AONB authorities affect people who live and work in their areas?

Please write your answer here:

Our understanding is that National Parks do what they can to support 'sustainable' transport links. They are better resourced than the AONBs .

Are they properly supporting them and what could be done differently?:

In the sense of public transport links, AONBs in our area appear to place less value on the needs of populations inside and outside of the AONB to seek employment/services/cultural activity/ recreation in each of those areas.

14 What views do you have on the role National Park and AONB authorities play on housing and transport in their areas?

Please write your answer here:

Housing developments large and small are incrementally causing congestion problems because those developments are not planned with sustainable transport in mind. National Parks demonstrate a greater level of concern over this than do the AONBs. This has to change, especially in the light of discernible effects of 'climate change'.

Part 3 - Current ways of working

15 What views do you have on the way they are governed individually at the moment? Is it effective or does it need to change, if so, how?

Please write your answer here:

Funding and governance of AONBs needs to be on an equal footing with National Parks.

16 What views do you have on whether they work collectively at the moment, for instance to share goals, encourage interest and involvement by the public and other organisations?

Please write your answer here:

I am vaguely aware of occasional meetings of the local National Park management and AONB management but not of the outcomes of those meetings. Our organisation has contributed to discussions from time to time with both organisations.

Dialogue between NPs/AONBs and local authority planners/transport planners/transport authorities/transport providers/ planning and transport academics/health authorities/conservation bodies/education bodies should be built in to governance to ensure best practice and to build trust and ensure sustainable outcomes and realisation of high level policy objectives across a range of policies.

17 What views do you have on their efforts to involve people from all parts of society, to encourage volunteering and improve health and well-being?

Please write your answer here:

Local AONB could do more to encourage those from deprived communities to come into the AONB to learn, enjoy and develop a stronger awareness of varied landscapes and habitats and the risks they face. There is a 'High Weald Heroes' schools project that might benefit from developing links with urban schools outside of the AONB to their mutual benefit. The higher profile of National Parks seems to lead to more involvement of volunteers and to larger visitor numbers and consequently, people who become 'protectors' of the special environments.

18 What views do you have on the way they are funded and how this might change?

Please write your answer here:

AONBs should be on an equal footing with NPs from a governance/finance point of view. They should have an independent position on transport/planning committees.

19 What views do you have on the process of designation - which means the way boundaries are defined and changed?

Please write your answer here:

We should place a greater emphasis on high quality or redeemable urban fringes in any case, but especially where they adjoin NPs and AONBs. These areas would then be accessible by foot/cycle or a short bus trip and perform a 'health improvement' role for those in 'deprivation'.

Health improvement (mental and physical) should be a strong strand running throughout roles of designated areas.

20 What views do you have on whether areas should be given new designations? For instance, the creation of new National Parks or AONBs, or new types of designations for marine areas, urban landscapes or those near built-up areas.

Please write your answer here:

See above. And:

Yes, these could be identified by experts (top down) or by local people (bottom up).

A national register of cherished places could be drawn up: this would have a value of itself and could form a basis for creating boundaries of large and small areas of landscape/habitat joining some up or 'stand alone' areas, along with areas containing built features valued locally or nationally..

21 Are there lessons that might be learnt from the way designated landscapes work in other parts of the United Kingdom, or abroad?

Please write your answer here:

Almost certainly. We should always be open to good practice abroad and perpetual students of good practice!

Part 4 - Closing thoughts

22 Do you think the terms currently used are the right ones? Would you suggest an alternative title for AONBs, for instance and if so what?

Please write your answer here:

Designate them all as 'National Parks' and then simply refer to them as e.g. Dartmoor. Arnsdale and Silverdale, The Peak District, The High Weald, etc.

23 The review has been asked to consider how designated landscapes work with other designations such as National Trails, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Special Protected Areas (SPAs). Do you have any thoughts on how these relationships work and whether they could be improved?

Please write your answer here:

All these designations are expressions of our shared national and international values and common humanity. A deep and comprehensive understanding of the

purpose and need for each designation should be delivered through a 'national curriculum' as children grow up and through wide publicity to promote understanding for the population at large.

24 Do you have any other points you would like to make that are not covered above?

Please write your answer here:

Summary: Recommend AONBs and NPs + Transport Authorities, all tiers of local government and transport operators engage in joint creative working to research, develop, secure, support and publicise sustainable transport links between urban centres and – especially – towns/villages in the AONBs and National Parks. These links should be accessible to all sections of society to enable everyone to exercise their right to fully enjoy and experience beautiful and special places – landscapes and habitats.

Recommend planning authorities adjoining/within AONBs/NPs exercise best practice to prioritise non-car modes through good, appropriate design and densities of new developments, and retro-fitting existing ones. Much greater effort should be made to prevent developers reneging on promises and 'commitments' to deliver sustainable infrastructure elements of developments. Stronger links and liaison between 'planning' and 'transport' authorities are much needed but often dysfunctional. It is essential that Planning and Transport policies are integrated. They are not. Resolution of this problem of unhelpful dis-integration would help bring forward appropriately located, truly affordable and sustainable housing developments that would reduce their transport related carbon footprint over the lifetime of the dwellings: car dependency undermines the sustainability of many developments however 'energy efficient' these may be. There would be clear 'social equity' benefits across communities for all ages and abilities delivered via good alternative public transport, pedestrian and cycling networks, giving access for all to essential services.

For some popular tourist destinations in National Parks/AONBs, car parking spaces should be restricted and in some cases, removed. This could apply where traffic volumes are beginning to erode the beauty, tranquillity and importantly the setting of these special places. Through restricting access by car, we could restore and enhance their quality and the 'visitor experience'. In these and all cases, high quality, affordable public transport services should be available (and would be more viable) and safe and attractive pedestrian/cycle access provided. Exceptions must apply to enable access for the disabled.

We suggest creation of an ISO type standard for tourism literature to publicise car-free access to venues/districts featured (Some publications do, some don't, some sometimes do). There is often an absence of information on bus services and less often, rail routes/stations. For some routes, both bus and train operators produce guides for the respective modes - some of high quality - but by definition, the bus/rail options are not presented as integrated. More consistency of information provision on transport would be an important step forward.

Observation: the media is saturated with car adverts but advertising for public transport – especially the bus - is extremely rare, or possibly non-existent. If there are successful examples, they should be shared.

Vehicle speeds should be restricted – especially in country lanes – where large 4x4 vehicles aggressively driven at inappropriate speeds frequently intimidate pedestrians and cyclists while at the same time damaging verges and effectively widening the lanes. This in turn leads to increased speeds, further discouraging walking and cycling. In winter, the damaged verges feature deep water filled ruts reducing or removing any refuge opportunity for a stranded and frightened pedestrian or cyclist. Intimidation of pedestrians and cyclists is exacerbated by revving and noisy vehicle engines and sustained acceleration of motorcycles, often present in numbers, which together frequently taint visitor experience. This can make people justifiably afraid and fearful of being present in what otherwise is a special place, since the noise is suggestive of inappropriate and dangerous driver/motorcyclist behaviour. In any sense, it is offensive.

Examine possible alignment of governance and funding arrangements to bring AONBs and National Parks together under DEFRA administration to better enable design and delivery of high quality sustainable transport access networks. This would inform and direct programmes of investment via Regional Transport Boards and also more accurately reflect the value of our AONBs.

Recommend examining potential integrated sustainable transport links between coastal towns and their National Park/AONB hinterlands as part of developing 'regeneration strategies' for those towns, improving accessibility for all sections of society and all journey purposes - and at the same time supporting rural economies.

Recommend that over the medium term – five years - funding be made available for expanding rural bus services as part of an effort to improve accessibility for all. This would allow for necessary behavioural change/ attitudinal shift where protection of special environments from high traffic levels would become the consensual position among the public at large, enabled by imaginative and positive marketing and with the welfare of future generations in mind.

Ascertain whether bus legislation can allow joint timetable/marketing of viable longer routes where each of two operators run on 'their' part of a longer route. If not, possibly change it. My very local example would be Hastings – Hawkhurst (Stagecoach) and Hawkhurst – Maidstone (Arriva). The services are '349' and '5' respectively. Crucially, they are not competing and currently have separate timetables for each section of the route. This is unhelpful to the travelling public, including potential passengers. The Sunday service has recently been reinstated thanks to collaboration between community groups, National Trust, Borough, two County and some parish councils, and Stagecoach South East and Arriva. The service runs through the High Weald AONB and serves medieval Bodiam Castle and the Kent and East Sussex steam railway, as well as a significant rural population.

Rural bus links have suffered major cuts, removing the potential of the bus to play its part in reducing congestion and improving air quality. Cuts have also reduced the quality of life for those depending on local buses for shopping, socialising, health visits, education and recreation – and links to rail services. The independence of the elderly and the young is particularly affected. These cuts should be reversed: the bus should and can be part of the future. Its status has sadly been diminished. Recommend funds being made available to support bus links across National Parks and AONBs.

Dust off and re-examine work of the early 2000s on longer distance limited stop bus/coach routes, especially where there is either a poor, or no rail option. Some limited stop routes could be upgraded to perform inter-regional roles with marketing opportunities through named routes reflecting iconic characteristics, and expanded bus priority measures where helpful. This already happens to an extent – e.g. Jurassic Coast (Dorset), Coaster (East Sussex/Brighton and Hove), The Wave (East Sussex/Kent). Leeds – York – Whitby Coaster (Yorkshire).

Focus on environmental and safety credentials of 'the bus' in AONBs and NPs, conservation areas and other cherished environments. The standard of bus driving is constantly monitored and overwhelmingly high. On board 'fore and aft' cameras can also record bad or dangerous driving by motorists and motorcyclists in the vicinity of the bus and can be accessed by the police.

Encourage and support services on 'heritage railways' where lines connect with national rail services/bus networks in situations where enhanced services could relieve traffic pressure. Examine the case for rail reopenings where benefits delivered would include improved access to AONBs/NPs.

Recommend Ordnance Survey 'Explorer' 1: 25,000, 1: 50,000 and other OS maps show AONB boundaries as they already do those of National Parks. This would emphasise the existence of AONBs and reinforce their status.

Emphasise mental and physical health benefits of access to AONBs and NPs for everyone, and acknowledge the inevitable negative health, environmental, social and economic impacts of large scale motorised access.

Capture the views of and listen to young people living in NPs and AONBs and discern their social, housing and accessibility needs at different times of day and night and weekends. Young peoples' transport, housing and social needs in rural areas are largely ignored. This situation is exacerbated by low density, unaffordable car dependent housing developments that undermine and hasten decline of essential rural bus services while leading to congested country roads. Young people should find it feasible to live in the countryside while enjoying access to a good social life and education and employment opportunities in the towns. Rural-urban transport links would facilitate this.

Educating Future Custodians of Wonderful Places: the 'High Weald Heroes' project overseen by the High Weald AONB – apprising young people of the special features of the AONB in which they live so fostering a conservation/enhancement' attitude - could be extended to partner schools in the urban areas that surround the National Parks/AONBs. This would bring awareness of landscape and nature and broader environmental principles to urban, as well as rural students, including those experiencing levels of deprivation, and enrich their curriculum and lives – and those of their parents. Short residential educational breaks could be offered – possibly with a town or city based reciprocal experience!

Certain transport schemes are frequently described as 'strategically necessary' – and that's too often the beginning and end of discussion. What should happen first is a discussion of the objectives that we should want a transport strategy to deliver to the population as a whole, and then a sifting of the measures proven or highly likely to best deliver those defined objectives. This applies generally but also in the context of your review of accessibility to and within National Parks and AONBs. Too often, 'strategic' is taken to mean 'big, expensive and a major road. Many low cost, smaller, high value for money schemes can together be part of a mosaic and make a big difference over a wide area, delivering many policy objectives across the policy spectrum.

If the objectives were to include: improvement of physical and mental health; reduced pollution; protection against ravages of climate change (transport is currently not playing its part), access for all to education, health care, work, shops, leisure opportunities, high quality homes and living spaces – urban and rural, formal and informal green areas, better protected landscapes and viable wildlife habitats, job opportunities, safe places to play close to home, tranquility, social activities, etc, then we believe that only a rebalancing of transport away from private cars and towards sustainable modes can achieve their delivery. Hopefully, you would agree that the measures described as worthy of pursuit in document above are 'strategically necessary'.

All the above is fairly obvious and easily defensible but it has to be repeated because the simplistic approach often adopted by vote seeking politicians is to promote apparently easy solutions: 'Vote for me, I'll solve congestion problems – I'll press for a new and bigger road – oh, and maybe a cycle lane'. It's dishonest, doesn't work and taints and shortens peoples' lives.

Derrick Coffee
(County Officer, Campaign for Better Transport – East Sussex)