

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?

What is your email address?

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.

Please tick all that apply

I live in a National Park or AONB

I work in a National Park or AONB

I visit a National Park or AONB

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

Which organisation(s)?

South Downs Land Managers (SDLM)

What is your name and position?

Alison Tingley

South Downs Land Managers Liaison Officer

What is your email address? sdlm@southdownsland.com

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.

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.

(Required)

[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?

[More Information](#)

(Required)

[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

Before anything else, we invite you to submit a recent picture which sums up what is special to you about our designated landscapes. It could be a place, a person, on a farm or of plants and wildlife. If you submit a photo, you must own its copyright and it may be used in the final report or online. Please tell us if that is OK.

[Upload](#)

[Yes, you can use my photo online or in the report](#)

No, you may not publish my photo

Part 1 - Opening thoughts

We would like any opening thoughts on the role played by National Parks and AONBs - you may want to make more detailed suggestions further on.

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

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) provide financial support to the South Downs Land Managers group to assist with administration. The group is an independent organisation that provides a voice for farmers, landowners, foresters, agents and other relevant businesses to the NPA. They respond to consultations and have been involved in the development of both the management plan and the local plan. The SDNPA took on board many (but not all) of the comments made by the SDLM and recognise the need for farming businesses to remain profitable in order that they can maintain the special landscape qualities for which the area is designated.

The SDNPA also run a series of annual landowner breakfast meetings to discuss topics that are of relevance and engage directly with the landowners. These are usually well received.

Where support for some of the farm clusters within the South Downs National Park is provided, this works very well, however, more needs to be done to assist farm cluster groups to develop in areas where they do not currently exist.

The development of Whole Estate Plans has been used by a few estates to provide the NPA with the necessary background to support planning applications. Endorsed by the SDNPA, the WEPs do not guarantee planning permission but do ensure that the planning committee make their decisions from a more informed basis.

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

More could be done by the SDNPA to engage with the SDLM group outside of the formal liaison meetings.

Prior to the South Downs being designated as a NP, the two AONBs developed excellent relationships with the landowners, through carrying out rights of way maintenance (Sussex Downs AONB) and the provision of small flexible grants available for wildlife and landscape enhancement (East Hampshire AONB). Despite the provision of more local SDNPA Rangers on the ground, landowners often complain that they no longer have much contact, possibly because the Rangers are concentrating their efforts on higher priority wildlife sites. Also, it would appear that Rangers discretionary spending funds have been held back (or at least not grown). Small grants from Rangers that may be match-funded by landowners are an excellent way of leveraging landscape and habitat gains at a low cost, with relatively little bureaucracy.

One of the downsides of designation of the SDNP appears to be an increase in the number of visitors to the area and the number of planned events. This has led to problems of anti-social behaviour, dog worrying and traffic congestion especially where the NP is close to centres of population.

Planning is frequently raised as an issue by landowners, whilst it is recognised that national parks are designated to protect the landscape, landowners can only do this if they are able to operate in a commercial manner. In order to remain viable, it is essential that they are able to take advantage of advances in technology, meet high welfare and environmental standards. All too frequently delays in the planning system and excessive demands lead to additional costs for the landowner or jeopardised capital funding applications.

Part 2 - Views

We'd like to hear views on particular issues.

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

Please write your answer here

This is the primary purpose of NP designation; however, many designated nature conservation sites are in or unfavourable or recovering condition, often because it has not been economic to farm the land or carry out woodland management. New economic forms of management need to be encouraged to ensure that they can be managed in the future or environmental payments, made to landowners, that reflect the true costs.

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

Protected landscapes are in an ideal position to take a wider landscape approach. More focus and funding should be put into linking priority habitats and improving the biodiversity of farmed land between SSSIs to provide better wildlife corridors.

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

There should be parity between NPs and AONBs in their statutory purposes, bringing wildlife and cultural heritage into the AONB purposes.

Of primary importance, in the future, will be the ability of NPAs and AONBs to ensure that these landscapes, their wildlife and cultural heritage are able to adapt to and mitigate for, the impacts of climate change.

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

Protected landscapes have a role in supporting industry-led initiatives such as Farm Clusters to improve biodiversity and carry out research into improved farm management systems which protect resources i.e. drinking water.

In and around Brighton and Hove the public water supply is pumped from groundwater held in the chalk beneath the Downs, one of the worst failing chalk block catchments, which supplies drinking water to hundreds of thousands of people in the coastal conurbation. ChaMP is a collaborative project, of which SDNPA is a partner with Southern Water, local farmers and others set up to find ways of reducing the rising trend of nitrates in the groundwater, for example by planting green cover crops to absorb nitrates. To do this ChaMP provides practical advice and improvements to land management in the urban and rural areas; it raises public and land manager awareness of ground water protection and informs the evidence base by undertaking success monitoring. This could open the door to payments for ecosystem services, in this case “paying farmers to farm water” as well as producing food.

NPs and AONBs are ideally placed to test and trial the new environmental land management scheme post Brexit. The scheme should be broad brush and more inclusive, enabling every farm business to contribute to environmental protection. Furthermore, any new environmental payment system needs to be calibrated in such a way that they are actually paying for this service to be delivered with a margin for re-investment i.e. not simply an income forgone model.

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

As a National Park with one of the highest number of visits, the issue of access and recreation in the South Downs is one where conflict often arises, especially where livestock are farmed. There is a perception amongst a minority of the public that National Park status means that they are allowed to roam at will. Greater clarity needs to be presented to members of the public as to what they are allowed and not allowed to do and what their responsibilities are.

Farmers play a major role in maintaining rights of way across their land and providing open access land. More resources should be provided to support farmers in their role as ‘access providers’ to ensure better maintenance of existing routes, whilst NPAs should have a greater role in visitor management. In particular awareness campaigns aimed at dog walkers, the promotion of the Countryside Code, and greater powers in controlling public walking, running and cycling events which use public rights of way, including the ability to demand contributions towards the upkeep of rights of way.

There are concerns that the incidence of Ash die back in woodlands with public access and on farmed land adjacent to roads and public rights of ways, could be a major liability for landowners. Additional funding should be made available to landowners to deal with diseased trees.

National Park Authorities should have a stronger role in developing and implementing sustainable tourism strategies for their areas. There should be a positive approach to farm-based tourism.

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

Both National Parks and AONBs should have a statutory duty to promote a sustainable rural economy. These landscapes are living, working landscapes that need to adapt and change over time. It is vital that farm businesses remain viable in order that they can continue to manage the

landscape and special features for which they are designated. Therefore, National Park planning policies need to enable diversification, the re-use of redundant farm buildings and ensure that farms are able to develop appropriate infrastructure.

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

The lack of high-speed broadband in rural areas is a major stumbling block to businesses, putting them at a disadvantage to urban areas. NPAs could do more to encourage and enable the installation of high-speed broadband within their 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

Affordable housing is a major issue in many NPs and AONBs, especially the South Downs. The NPAs need to take a positive approach towards the development of affordable housing to sustain diverse communities rather than becoming dormitory villages for commuters.

Part 3 - Current ways of working

We'd like to ask some specific questions about the way National Parks and AONBs work at the moment.

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

There should be a greater proportion of Secretary-of-State appointed Members and this should include at least 3 active land managers. The process of appointing Secretary-of-State independent members should be simplified to encourage applications. The nomination process for Secretary-of-State appointed Membership should include some democratic process.

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

NPs and AONBs should act as a conduit for investment by public and private bodies such as Local Economic Partnerships and Water Authorities to support the rural economy and pay for public benefits of environmental land management.

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

There is a role for NPs and AONBs to do more to build relationships between schools and farmers in order to improve young people's understanding of the countryside and food production.

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

Please write your answer here

Funding should include adequate resources to enable Rangers to have an easily accessible pot of money that can be used to offer incentives to landowners to carry out landscape and habitat improvements.

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

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

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

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

Few people understand the term Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and simplified name such as National Landscape would provide clarity.

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

National Park and AONB management plans already take into account other designations, which have their own legal framework, governance and management requirements. Protected landscapes have a major role in supporting the delivery of these and ensuring that they are in good condition. From a land manager perspective, it is essential that there are clear lines of responsibility with the relevant organisations.

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

Please write your answer here

In the interests of sustaining National Park landscapes, the reform of the current system of farm payments should also recognise that without BPS, environmental payments need to be a profit source for farmers rather than just compensating for lost production income. Payments should take into account the full range of ecosystem services that farmers provide. Without a profit margin, landowners will be unable to re-invest in their farms and continue to manage the landscapes and carry out habitat improvements.