

EMBARGOED UNTIL 0001 THURSDAY 24 JUNE 2021

Ambitious proposals to create and improve protected landscapes across England

- Yorkshire Wolds and Cheshire Sandstone Ridge will be considered for status as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as well as extensions to the existing Surrey Hills and Chilterns protected areas
- New funding programme launched to support farmers to improve protected landscapes
- Renewed commitment to boost nature recovery and help more people from all part of society access Britain's most beautiful landscapes as we build back greener from the pandemic

Two of England's most iconic landscapes are being considered to become new Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), alongside extensions to the Surrey Hills and Chilterns AONBs, under plans to create new protected landscapes and improve people's access to nature.

The Yorkshire Wolds and the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge have been put forward to be recognised as protected areas and, alongside the two proposed expansions, the four areas will now be formally considered for 'AONB' status by [Natural England](#). Securing this designation would allow them to benefit from greater protections, so that more of England's beautiful landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

Delivering on the manifesto commitment to create new protected landscapes, taken together, the four areas being considered have the potential to deliver over 40% of the additional 4,000km² required to meet the UK's commitment to protect 30% of our land by 2030, which under UK leadership at the recent G7 Summit, all G7 members have now signed up to.

The Environment Secretary will also outline plans to drive nature recovery and people's access to nature in protected landscapes.

The plans will include a renewed drive to support nature recovery within our protected landscapes, working hand in hand with local authorities and the teams operating National Parks and AONBs, as well as efforts to enable more people from across society to benefit from access to England's most famous natural landscapes. They will also include options to strengthen the status and support given to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and government will consult on the proposals next year to ensure that plans are developed in partnership with a broad range of stakeholders, including National Park Authorities and local authorities.

A new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is also being launched, which will provide funding to help farmers and other land managers in England based in National Parks or AONBs

to make improvements to the natural environment and improve public access on their land – the next step in the Government’s landmark plans for a renewed agriculture sector outside of the Common Agricultural Policy. The funding will go towards one-off projects to support nature recovery; improve public access; mitigate the impacts of climate change; provide opportunities for people to enjoy and understand the landscape; and support nature-friendly and sustainable farm businesses.

Projects could include creating ponds or other wetland to support a variety of wildlife; providing new or easier public access opportunities and links to the Public Rights of Way network; conserving historic features on a farm; or even action to reduce carbon emissions or use of plastics on farms.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

“We have an opportunity to create a new chapter for our protected landscapes.

“The work that we are going to take forward will contribute to our commitment to protect 30% of our land by 2030, and boost biodiversity, while designating more areas of the country for their natural beauty.

“Our Farming in Protected Landscapes programme will provide additional investment to allow farmers to work in partnership with our National Park Authorities and AONB teams to improve public access.”

Chair of Natural England Tony Juniper said:

“Today’s announcement signals an ambitious step forward in growing our family of precious national landscapes, as well as protecting and improving the ones we have.

“One thing that has become very apparent recently, and especially during the pandemic, is the enormous benefit people get from having access to beautiful nature-rich landscapes. These can, however, be hard for many people to reach, thereby raising the question of how more can be done to bring nature and people closer together. On this, we see huge opportunities arising from the establishment of the England Nature Recovery Network, of which wilder national landscapes will be a vital part.

“As Government’s statutory landscape adviser, we look forward to continuing to work closely with Government, designated landscape bodies and stakeholders to deliver more for and through England’s diverse landscapes.”

The proposals follow the [independent review](#) led by Julian Glover which called for action to make our protected landscapes greener, more beautiful and open to everyone. The government will respond to the review’s recommendations in full later this year.

Julian Glover, who led the review, said:

“Our national landscapes are the soul of England, beautiful, much-loved, and there for all of us, but they are also under pressure. We need to do a lot more for nature and more for people, too. Our report set out a plan for a brighter, greener future and I’m delighted that words are now being followed by action.”

Today's announcements will contribute to the Government's commitment of protecting 30% of our land by 2030, and builds on plans to boost biodiversity, protect our peatlands and create new woodlands as set out recently by the Environment Secretary.

ENDS.

Notes to editors:

- Please find a link to the WMS which will be published at 9.30am here.
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is open to all farmers and land managers (including from the private, public and charity sector) in a National Park or AONB in England or the Norfolk Broads. Farmers are encouraged to apply from 1 July.
- The scheme will be operated by the National Parks and AONB teams and will be supported by Natural England.
- Following its announcement as part of the Agricultural Transition Plan, the programme will provide funding for one-off projects which allow farmer and land managers in protected landscapes to:
 - o provide new or easier public access opportunities, links to the Public Rights of Way network or parking improvements to reduce congestion
 - o support nature recovery – such as increasing habitats to improve biodiversity or greater connectivity between habitats
 - o mitigate the impacts of climate change – such as reducing flood risk or storing more carbon
 - o provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage
 - o support nature-friendly and sustainable farm businesses
- Please use this link for images of the AONBs being considered for designation - <https://we.tl/t-G9UnFOZO5e>