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THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
Areas of Outstanding
Natural Beauty

Prospectus for the AONB Network
An Offer to the Nation



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Introduction

This prospectus has been designed to support Defra during this spending review and will not be formally published. It is set within the context of the current coronavirus pandemic and seeks to build on the important role that AONB partnerships and conservation boards can play in supporting economic and social recovery. It is also designed to support delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan and responds in part to the recommendations of the Glover Review. It represents a collation of offers from the AONB network, some of which may be communicated separately.

The NAAONB welcomes the recommendations of the Glover Review, recognising it as the most thorough and insightful, evidence led appraisal of the AONB designation in a generation.

Julian Glover's recommendation that funding to AONBs be doubled immediately was, of course, welcomed by the AONB network, but we understand current constraints – this is why every costing in this prospectus is related directly to challenge funding and specific current government priorities. It is worth noting that funding for AONB teams in 2005/6 was £11,054,571. In 2019/20, the figure was £6,807,451, representing a real-term reduction in budget of 60%. However, agile AONB teams have continued to demonstrate their ingenuity and versatility, leveraging non-exchequer funding and creating partnerships that deliver projects which make a genuine difference to the lives of people and nature.

This spending round provides an opportunity to address the statement made by the Glover Review panel that 'the national zeal of the founding mission for landscape protection has been eroded'. We agree with this assertion and consequently every part of our offer is designed to support the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and and make sure that AONBs can be enjoyed more equitably, used by and cared for by everyone.

Additionally, our collective response to the recovery phase of the coronavirus pandemic is critical. We must generate momentum and align our activity to ensure that the recovery is genuinely green. Our contribution to economic recovery must support the delivery of our purposes and

- Reduce the impact of climate change
- Support nature recovery
- Promote more sustainable patterns of consumption and production

This will involve driving long term changes in behaviours.

The AONB network is ready and willing to progress these agendas, delivering not just for current generations, but for those in the future. We cannot do this, however, without an investment of resources. This is the time to strengthen the AONB designation with new purposes, powers and resources, and in doing so support them in the delivery of their offer to the nation. AONB teams have demonstrated time and again that they have delivered more with less, but with an average of four full time members of staff in each AONB team, we are now at full capacity. Defra funding for all AONBs is less than that for a single National Park, at less than 20p per taxpayer per year, yet we are geographically more accessible to a much wider section of the population. This is an enormous opportunity for government to deliver far more to society for a comparatively small investment.

Protecting and recovering nature

The Issues

There is a global ecological crisis. Society has a wide range of dependencies on nature and nature recovery is a global priority. There is public and Government expectation that our National Landscapes, as IUCN Category V Protected Areas, should be at the heart of nature recovery, with the Teams working closely with farmers, landowners, other partners and communities to protect what remains and recover what has been lost.

The AONB Teams have an outstanding track record of delivery on nature recovery, their capacity to draw in more resources and deliver even more ambitious programmes is hampered by extremely limited resources at their core. 'Shovel-ready projects' can only happen with the resources to do the spade-work that underpins them.

Flooding costs the UK £1.3bn per year, and the floods during winter 2015/16 cost £1.6bn alone.

Peat holds up to 20 times its own weight in water and 1,450 tonnes of carbon per hectare, helping flood management and carbon capture. AONB teams have restored 50,000 hectares of peat bog in areas across the UK since 2010.

The Offer

Taking forward the stretch targets of the Colchester Declaration (page 5) and the 25 Year Environment Plan through ambitious expansion of delivery for nature recovery in each AONB, working closely with the farming and landowning community, to arrest and reverse the decline in nature. We will make a significant contribution to increasing national tree cover and managing our woods better, restoring grasslands, peatlands, heathlands and wetlands and delivering AONB landscapes with greater connectivity and ecological integrity and where more and larger areas of land are better managed for nature. These more biodiverse landscapes, with regenerative agriculture at their core, will be more climate resilient, and more economically robust, delivering more for people and nature.

The Resources Required

Increased professional staff capacity in each AONB team, to engage with the farming and landowning community and with other partners to devise, develop and deliver landscape-scale programmes of nature recovery, to support locally agreed nature recovery plans, including raising additional resources to increase action and ambition. £5,100,000 pa.

A modest **fund to support delivery**, especially with individual landowners and communities. £2,040,000 pa.

The Outcomes

- Measurable impact towards arresting, and ultimately reversing, the decline of nature in AONBs and using them as a platform for national nature recovery.
- Conserving and enhancing natural beauty
- Increasing action to improve the environment from all sectors of society.
- Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our landscape and improving its environmental value, while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.
- Placing AONBs at the heart of developing a Nature Recovery Network.

The Colchester Declaration 2019

Set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world, and intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient – the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty believes that now is the time to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in AONBs. Using our unique network and partnership model, we are making a collective Declaration on Nature in AONBs, setting out our strategy for change.

With many AONB host authorities having taken the step of declaring a Climate Emergency we are demonstrating our readiness to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

We believe

1. Natural Beauty has intrinsic value and means so much to people
2. AONBs should be places of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife
3. Nature recovery is central to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
4. Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Designated landscapes offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change
5. The network of AONBs and National Parks, their teams, partnerships, authorities and stakeholders offer a unique solution to tackling environmental challenges

We pledge

By July 2020

1. To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature.
2. To prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB

By 2024

1. To embed an ecosystems services approach into all AONB Management Plans
2. To ensure all AONB management plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero

By 2030

1. That at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition
2. That at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/ restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals
3. That at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place
4. That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and by preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the list by 2030

We call on Westminster and Welsh Governments to provide the power and resources to make these targets achievable

Protecting and recovering nature – our track record



Common terns are on the UK Amber list, showing a general decline in population in recent years. Terns in Chichester Harbour have a very limited number of sites on which to breed, and those sites are often threatened by tidal flooding, predation or human disturbance; all 2017 nesting attempts failed.

To address this, in 2018 Chichester Harbour Conservancy AONB team installed a series of tern rafts, which were being used by terns within three days of being floated, giving terns a safe place to breed.

Eels have been at the core of the River Glaven ecology and local culture for hundreds of years but have suffered a steep decline in numbers. The Norfolk Coast AONB project increased scientific knowledge about the critically-endangered species, improved eel habitat and re-connected current generations with the eel, its folklore and traditions, and with the few remaining eel catchers, who made their living from the eel - before these connections are lost forever.



[Click to see the short film](#)

The North Pennines AONB has 40% of all the UK's species rich upland hay meadows. The Haytime and Nectarworks projects have seen 1120 upland hay meadows surveyed, leading to almost 300 management agreements with farmers and almost 400 hectares of habitat restoration. A Nectar Source Network Map has been produced and a successor project worked with hundreds of volunteers planting and managing key sites and creating nectar gardens in schools and care homes. Almost 2000 children were engaged in educational programmes focused on flora and pollinator art, fun and discovery. This work more than doubled the resource of species rich-hay meadow in the AONB and made a national-scale contribution to this Biodiversity Action Plan habitat.



[Click for more information on just 70 of the Nature Recovery Solutions AONBs we have delivered](#)

Safeguarding and enhancing landscapes

The Issues

The AONB Family shares the Government's ambition to help the natural world regain and maintain good health. In AONBs, and arguably elsewhere, it is important that measures to support sustainable farming are aligned with the need to conserve and enhance natural beauty. We are currently trialling new approaches to this alignment whilst, at the same time, delivering across all the goals and policies in the 25 YEP. We are testing new ways of working with land managers that will put the environment first and fully utilise the opportunities afforded by the AONB designation to deliver integrated, place-based solutions. There is a clear, emerging need for AONB convenors to align the work of farm advisors with the objectives to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the landscape.

AONBs need a stronger voice in planning. The pressures on AONBs are often greater than National Parks, especially in the south east, and their voice is not always heard. The Glover Review recommended, therefore, that AONBs are given greater status in the planning system. They should become statutory consultees, and we set out later how we think this can work. They should also, where appropriate, be supported to work towards local plans for their areas, prepared in conjunction with local authorities.

AONB partnerships and conservation boards have universal interests in their localities, so are ideally placed to ensure that health and wellbeing interests, the private sector, cultural and heritage organisations and economic partnerships can get the most from an improved environment and can participate fully in both its conservation and enhancement. AONBs are a key national asset that can unlock these opportunities and realise the Government's high ambitions for the future.

The Offer

The Environmental Land Management scheme

AONBs are already working with Defra and other stakeholders to progress 'Farming for the Nation'. More information is available on our [website](#).

The NAAONB is coordinating an ELM Test and Trial across 12 AONBs, looking at how the scheme might work in a wide range of settings including, vineyards in the Kent Downs, collaboration between small-scale farms in Devon, and High Nature Value Farming in the Northern Uplands.

AONBs are working with farmers and land managers to identify key elements of a successful ELM scheme, building on existing strong relationships with local communities.

The trial is defining how to effectively connect with farmers and land owners/farmers to promote ELMs, how AONB Management Plans can be used in the production of farm-scale ELM Land Management Plans, and how through the use of "convenors" activity is integrated to deliver landscape-scale priorities

Safeguarding and enhancing landscapes

The Offer

The Environmental Land Management scheme (cont)

The AONB network is ready and able to support **nationwide advocacy** across all National Landscapes: National Landscapes are intimately linked with farmers and land managers and are well positioned to spread the word about ELMs and thereby increase engagement. Working collaboratively, there is huge potential to work with farmers to engage them in ELMs, and then provide support and information during the pilot phase and beyond. The NAAONB has bid for £171k to establish programmes in this financial year. Additional funding could allow continuation throughout the ELMs pilot phase, moving from engagement into advice and guidance.

The Tests and Trials process has highlighted the need to develop spatial prioritisation in National Landscapes. Currently, the direction of travel is to develop “spatial” plans from scratch using County Council geographies. This proposed plan process has direct parallels to development of AONB Management Plans. The proposals present two major concerns to National Landscapes and contradict the Landscape Review. Those concerns are:

- a. Using a county council geographies will undermine the coherence of a landscape approach in National Landscape.
- b. There will be an unnecessary duplication of effort.

The solution is to use the existing AONB Management Planning process and plans to develop farm-scale ELMs plans.

It is becoming clear from the Tests and Trials that there will potentially be a plethora of farm advisors working throughout National Landscapes. Their advice will vary and may not always be aligned with the policies and approaches set out in AONB ELMs management plans. The NAAONB suggests that there is a need for **convenors in AONBs**. There will be a need for AONB convenors to align the work of farm advisors with the objectives to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the landscape.

A National Landscape Service

The Landscapes Review recommended that “we need a new National Landscapes Service to drive ambition, collaboration and delivery”, and in coming to this, and other, conclusions regularly remarked on how the culture of the AONB network differed, in a positive way, from that of the National Parks.

The National Association for AONBs is justifiably proud of the role it has played in promoting and supporting collaboration across the AONB network. It is equally proud of the energy, commitment, skills, and experience that AONB staff have applied to making it come to life. The collective impact has been inspirational and impactful.

Safeguarding and enhancing landscapes

The Offer

A National Landscape Service (cont)

We are, however, just part of the complex system that has formed around the delivery of the AONB purpose. Consultants, contractors, civil servants, politicians, NGOs, corporate business, grant funding bodies, and the public have all been instrumental in working with us to achieve our objectives. We have worked collectively to recruit many others to the cause.

A recommendation to improve collaboration across a complex network is straightforward. Making it happen, less so. A simple answer to a complex challenge is invariably wrong.

In designing a new National Landscape Service these issues of complexity, culture, and systems thinking should be considered. The NAAONB is keen to **continue working with Defra** on developing the best possible outcome and asks that Defra maintains an open and transparent dialogue with stakeholders to this effect.

The NAAONB has already put considerable effort into supporting the national conversation in this area, providing professional advice, opinion, technical insight, and evidence, and intends to continue to play a key part in this discussion. The NAAONB will support further discussion across the AONB network, and work with stakeholders to help ensure that the AONB network receives the national delivery service it requires to flourish in line with the aspirations of the Review.

Supporting a strengthening of the Duty of Regard

The Duty of Regard is a central pillar in the delivery of the AONB purpose(s). The NAAONB has long advocated for a strengthening of the Duty of Regard defined under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 by becoming a Duty of Due Regard. This was echoed in the recommendations of the Glover Review.

Over the course of the Glover Review of AONBs and National Parks, the NAAONB and National Parks England have been in regular communication. Effort has been made to agree on the most effective way to improve protection to designated landscapes and articulate this as one united voice. The issue of both the duty of Regard and the duty of Due Regard have been considered by both parties in detail.

The NAAONB therefore concludes that **s.85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act should be amended** to include reference to 'special regard' and 'furthering the purpose of designation'. This would ensure that any relevant authority would, in its decision making, have to give greater importance and weight to the furthering of the AONB purposes.

Safeguarding and enhancing landscapes

The Offer

Statutory Consultee Status

Statutory consultee status would speed up the planning process within AONBs. AONB teams could provide detailed advice to developers, local authorities, and other stakeholders ensuring that best use is made of the AONB management plan and its underpinning democratic principles. Statutory consultees status would also reduce the risk of conflicting opinion and the need for public inquiries. Local Authorities could also be reassured that their duty of regard to the AONB purpose is expedited, reducing potential tension between AONB partnerships, local authorities, and wider stakeholders.

Statutory consultee status would be welcomed by many AONBs. Whilst the level of resource required to deliver this function is dependent the kinds of applications that would be covered by statutory consultee status, the magnitude of development pressure, and the role of Natural England, our estimated costs are realistic.

The Resources Required

The Environmental Land Management Scheme

To continue nationwide advocacy across all National Landscapes for the pilot phase will cost £2.7 m over 3 years (21/22 – 23/24). This equates to £20k per National Landscape plus £20k national coordination per year.

To undertake the additional work to fine-tune AONB Management Plan to be fit for purpose at the farm-scale would cost on average £25k per AONB equating to £850k in total.

An ELMs Convenor in each AONB, to align advice with policy, coordinate farm advisors and review delivery of ELMs against national and local objectives. Cost £1.36m per annum.

Statutory Consultee Status

Experienced planning staff capacity in each relevant AONB team, to manage caseload, support public inquiries, and progress, where appropriate, the design, consultation, and publication of the AONB Development Plan.

£1,400,000 in year one, followed by £1,250,000 annually thereafter.

The Outcomes

- Conserving and enhancing natural beauty
- Measurable impact on protecting and recovering nature
- Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our landscapes and improving their environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing

The Issues

All AONBs are within half an hour travel time of large towns and cities, so AONBs are perfectly located to support their local communities, yet for some people access is an issue – either the practicalities of visiting the countryside or feeling welcome and/or confident are barriers.

The Glover Review recognised what we instinctively know – that designated landscapes are the preserve of white, middle aged, middle class people and AONBs are actively seeking to expand this audience to fully represent the variety of citizens in the UK today.

The legislation that paved the way for the designation of AONBs was sister legislation to that which set up the NHS – AONBs were conceived as spaces for people to seek exercise and care for their mental and spiritual health, while the NHS was there to care for them if they became sick. We have seen more than ever during the Covid pandemic that people need green and blue spaces to stay healthy and we know that people have found renewed solace in nature through this time of national hardship.

We have commissioned the University of Winchester to carry out a literature review on the barriers to accessing green and blue spaces faced by people from ethnic minority backgrounds, those from deprived areas, people with chronic conditions and people from LGBTQ+ groups. We would like to be able to explore this more with a full research project incorporating household surveys with our 'Missing People'.

The Offer

AONBs have a strong track record of engaging with people. In 2018/19 alone AONBs engaged with half a million people.

With more specialist community engagement staff and improved transport, AONBs could make a significant impact on the health and wellbeing and educational outcomes of their local areas and nearby urban centres.

AONB teams have expertise in:

- providing volunteering opportunities which bring physical and mental health benefits to attendees as well as providing work experience and maximising the conservation work we are able to deliver on the ground. All AONBs have volunteer programmes, some engaging as many as 250 people on a regular basis,
- engaging with local healthcare providers to create social prescribing or self referral opportunities
- supporting people living with dementia and their carers, through dementia friendly walks programmes and art sessions,
- creating self-guided walks of varying distances and levels of difficulty, many accessible from public transport links and some specially created for people with mobility issues,

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing

The Offer (cont)

AONB teams have expertise in:

- supporting visits by people from ethnic minority and refugee backgrounds through events, guided walks and the provision of signposting for independent visits.
- work with schools, one AONB's education service engaged 8000 school children in onsite visits during 2018/19 alone, other AONBs specifically target those schools with high pupil premium rates (over 50%) in their nearby urban settings,
- working with artists on projects to attract and engage new audiences, these range from large scale installations to projects with school children inspired by landscape,
- piloting 'A Night Under the Stars for every schoolchild' as recommended in the Glover Review.

The Resources Required

For a minority of AONBs, working with their nearby communities is an aspiration due to lack of resources, for many others it has been a bolt-on to an existing member of staff's responsibilities. We can demonstrate the benefits of people accessing green and blue spaces, and we can demonstrate how these benefits are maximised when specialist members of staff are employed. Where resources can be found to employ specialist community officers, these are multiplied in some cases by an order of magnitude due to the grant funding these officers are able to secure. This would enable us to develop closer relationships with community groups to improve community cohesion, increase our social prescribing offer to improve health outcomes and reduce costs to the local NHS and build relationships with local schools to improve educational outcomes.

An expansion of the pilot scheme for the Night under the Stars for every schoolchild to build this into a 'tried and true' funding package to take to local grant providers will enable us to collaborate and develop a model that can be flexed to work in most areas of England.

£500,000 per year for twenty new community officer posts.

£500,000 for an expansion of the Night Under the Stars pilot scheme, more comprehensive research targeting underserved groups specifically to better understand the barriers to accessing the countryside and a project to boost social prescribing provision within AONBs.

The Outcomes

- Conserving and enhancing natural beauty
- Helping people improve their health and wellbeing by using green spaces
- Helping children and young people from all backgrounds to engage with nature and improve the environment
- Increasing action to improve the environment from all sectors of society.
- Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our landscapes and improving its environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing – case study

The Forest of Bowland AONB Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership

Forest of Bowland AONB has demonstrated the clear benefits of recruiting Jayne Ashe, a project officer focussed on community engagement, to create new opportunities for engaging individuals and local groups from under-served communities as part of the AONB's Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership Project. By 'under-served' we mean those sectors of the community who we as landscape professionals need to do more to engage with and welcome into the countryside. (see blog by Dr Anjana Khatwa, <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/black-and-brown-faces-green-spaces>)

The Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership is a four year project designed to conserve this landmark hill, re-connect people with the nature and rich history on their doorstep, and to bring together the two contrasting sides of the hill.

Pendle Hill has always been an iconic sight, dominating the East Lancashire landscape, and is within easy travelling distance of the former mill towns of Nelson, Colne and Burnley on the south side, and the rural towns and villages of Downham, Clitheroe and Sawley in the north.

Broadly, the former mill towns are home to working class communities and large South Asian communities; while the towns and villages in the north are mainly home to white people, some of whom commute into the closest cities of Manchester and Leeds. However, this diversity in the local population is not always reflected in the mix of people who visit and benefit from the countryside around Pendle Hill: missing, and therefore target audiences for the LPS to encourage are the young, BAME and people dealing with mental health and social isolation.

The stories associated with Pendle Hill are a key starting point for engagement. The most well known historical link to the hill is that of the Pendle witches, a group of (mainly) women accused of witchcraft and tried at Lancaster Castle in 1612, but there is more to the hill. In 1652 George Fox had the vision that drove him to set up the Quaker movement – a moment that links directly to the drafting of the constitution of the US. This is not the only example of radical thinking that links directly to the hill – Selina Cooper, a hero of the suffrage movement lived in the shadow of the hill, as did numerous dissenters and reforming socialists, and Tom Stephenson, architect of the Pennine Way came from one of the surrounding villages. The area has a lot to be proud of, but communities have suffered from multiple deprivation as mills began to close from the 1960s.

The team at Forest of Bowland AONB have worked with and alongside existing community organisations to reach more and a wider variety of people.

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing – case study



Working with organisations which had already built trusted relationships with the South Asian (largely Pakistani) community has meant that events designed as stepping stones to get families out into the countryside take account of any cultural aspects which the AONB team may not have been aware of. Some families were already regular visitors to the hill, but many have not been able to venture into their local countryside. Creating a series of fun events, sometimes with transport provided meant that families could start building their own relationship with the green spaces nearby, gaining confidence from which to begin visiting independently.

Additionally, Jayne created links with a local mental health and social inclusion service, enabling people to be referred or to self-refer to the People Enjoying Nature programme. The people accessing the programme faced mental health challenges including depression, anxiety and agoraphobia. Getting outdoors in a no-pressure environment gave them the opportunity to engage as much or as little as they wanted, but attendees said they felt huge benefits of being outdoors, carrying out meaningful work and building friendships with other attendees. For the People Enjoying Nature Programme, Jayne runs weekly activities including conservation work such as brash clearance on the hill, and art activities – painting pebbles for a children’s trail. As there is very little public transport provision in the area and very few attendees have their own cars, a minibus was commissioned to collect people from central points and bring them onsite.

Volunteering opportunities have also delivered benefits for people and the landscape. A variety of volunteering opportunities are available, from physical outdoor work carrying out footpath maintenance and helping with peat restoration work; to researching local history and archaeology or planning local walking routes. Volunteering opportunities are advertised through the normal AONB routes, but they team also run an initiative for existing local community organisations to 'Get Into Volunteering' as a group. Existing activity and support groups such as Young Carers, Police Cadets, Princes Trust, inter-faith projects, women's and family support groups have engaged with the AONB and Landscape Partnership Scheme in this way. The overall aim is to increase the number of volunteers from all backgrounds, and the benefits to mental and physical health as well as the sense of pride in the local area are enormous.

Photos: 1. Peat Engagement Day, 2. Get Into Volunteering, 3. Meet you at the top. Groups from either side of the hill at the Landscape Partnership launch event, preparing to hike up the hill.

Strengthening Economic Recovery

The Issues

The likely trajectory of the economic and social impact of the Covid pandemic is becoming clearer. Unemployment, mental ill health, economic decline with particular impact on rural and coastal areas is already hitting home.

The Government is committed to a green recovery and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) stand ready to support this. AONBs have an important role to play in supporting a fair and equitable recovery as they are in predominantly rural areas, but often close to large centres of population. A significant proportion of the UK's rural coastline is covered by the AONB designation; areas that have already experienced disproportionate economic and social impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Offer

AONB Green Recovery Fund

Establish an AONB Green Recovery Fund; in terms of practical delivery at pace, we see an immediate opportunity to re-ignite and expand the 'Sustainable Development Fund' (SDF) which has been successfully delivered across the National Landscapes for many years.

The AONB Green Recovery Fund would be a light touch delegated grant, driven by the agreed priorities of the statutory AONB Management Plans, nature and carbon targets and the need for economic and social recovery in and beyond the AONBs. The approach is driven by community engagement (most grant panels were delivered in collaboration with the community representative) and is willing to take a managed risk to secure green recovery investments amongst rural business (for example food and visitor sector), public bodies and charities.

The Sustainable Development Fund model, on which we aim to build, is an acknowledged success, typically securing significant match funding in cash and effort from partner organisations and subject to rapid delivery. Many of the AONB teams and partnerships have been partners or have run LEADER rural development schemes and, in re-igniting the SDF, we would draw lessons from these schemes but not repeat the administrative burden.

The National Landscapes have an existing management and delivery system for the SDF and so the AONB Green Recovery Fund could be either re-established or geared up quickly. If funding confirmation were given this financial year, we could start generating schemes this year and deliver in year or in 21/22 and in subsequent years

Strengthening Economic Recovery

The Offer

Create 1000 new jobs

The Glover Review proposed 1000 new rangers for the English AONBs and National Parks. We welcome this proposal and are in a position, across the country, to start recruitment for new staff to deliver a green recovery on the ground service. Our aim would be to include rural business support, nature connection and mental health, diversity and inclusion, farmer and land management support, nature recovery and support for the critical visitor economy.

AONB teams have experience of creating **traineeships and apprenticeships** and, given the likely impact of Covid-19, this would be a focus of recovery - particularly in new traineeships in nature-based jobs. Apprentices would receive additional training support from existing Apprenticeship Levy funds, strengthening the skillset in the green sector.

Assuming the recommendations above are supported, the AONB teams would increase the number of traineeships and apprentices.

The Resources Required

Green Recovery Fund

Our initial proposal would be to seek £100K funding per AONB initially, plus £10K towards scheme management, monitoring and reporting. The grant can be geared up over subsequent years. We suggest making the grant available to spend across financial years which would greatly improve its effectiveness and makes sense given the current substantial uncertainties for all sectors.

Create 1000 new jobs

Scope, define and begin the programme of recruiting the 1000 new staff for AONBs and National Parks allowing local determination of the appropriate roles to support the visitor economy, health and well-being, diversity and inclusion, nature recovery and climate emergency. Scope/workforce plan agreed in 2020/21 - £60,000 and 100 new staff in AONBs recruited in 2021/22 - £1,200,000 per annum.

The Outcomes

- Conserving and enhancing natural beauty

Summary

As the nation recovers from the Covid pandemic and its effects on individuals and the economy, and the government remains committed to a green recovery, England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are able to offer ideal solutions to many government priorities.

Furloughed workers, families and staycationers have had the opportunity to rediscover the natural beauty around them and the incredible effect it has on their wellbeing, even in challenging times.

But more than this, AONBs are places of innovation. They are the bustling factory floor of the UK food industry as well as places where conservation brings research science to life.

AONB teams have a proven track record of delivery, and maximising their funding through collaborative partnership working, leveraging of non-exchequer funding and the development of strong volunteer groups which benefit attendees and the landscape.

From 'public money for public goods' farming solutions that work in every landscape type, to social prescribing targeting key health and wellbeing issues such as obesity and mental ill health; from meaningful social inclusion work to climate solutions to counter the annual multi-billion pound cost to the nation of flooding and soil erosion; AONBs are the answer on the nation's doorsteps.

We are now working at full capacity. A comparatively modest investment of resources would enable AONB teams to quickly ramp up their work and deliver more of government's priorities for the wellbeing of nature, people and all our futures.

Summary

Headline Offer	Activity	Year one investment	Annual resource requirement
Protecting and Recovering Nature	Taking forward the Colchester Declaration	£5,100,000	£5,100,000
	Supporting delivery	£2,040,000	£2,040,000
Safeguarding and enhancing landscapes	Statutory consultee status for AONB partnerships/conservation boards	£1,400,000	£1,250,000
	ELM nationwide advocacy programme	£900,000	£900,000
	ELM convenors	£1,360,000	£1,360,000
	AONB management plan fine-tune	£850,000	-
Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing	Recruitment and retention of twenty community engagement officers	£500,000	£500,000
	Expansion of Night Under the Stars project, research into underserved groups, expansion of social prescribing	£500,000	£400,000
Strengthening Economic Recovery	Green Recovery Fund	£3,740,000	£3,740,000
	Create 1000 jobs	£60,000	£1,200,000
	Totals	£16,450,000	£16,490,000