

Dorset National Park Newsletter

Spring 2019

A Great Opportunity

The Government's review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) is expected to report this autumn. It is chaired by Julian Glover who is also considering whether to propose new National Parks. Dorset & E Devon should be England's next National Park.

We have:

- ▶ internationally renowned and varied landscapes of outstanding beauty including the spectacular 90 miles long UNESCO World Heritage "Jurassic" Coast, the heritage of Dorset's ridgeways and much of England's surviving lowland heaths including what remains of Thomas Hardy's "Egdon Heath";
- ▶ exceptional biodiversity with wildlife habitats that are among the most species-rich in Britain, "gold standard" cultural heritage, and unrivalled and inclusive recreational opportunities and potential.

But we face challenges:

- ▶ our outstanding environment, biodiversity and heritage are under pressure and need the better-resourced landscape-scale approach which a National Park, working with partners, would provide;
- ▶ we need a relevant rural economic strategy, to better promote the area as an outstanding location for international as well as national business investment, build more genuinely affordable homes for local people including young families, extend the tourism season and promote eco, heritage and cultural tourism, manage tourism pressures and extend the benefits more to inland Dorset.

Our environment is our greatest economic asset. A National Park can add real value to our local communities and rural economy, help grow our businesses, attract new investment and jobs, raise skill levels, and work in partnership with those who live, work and farm in one of the loveliest parts of Britain.

Our submission to the Glover Review sets out our case:

<https://www.dorsetnationalpark.com/single-post/glover>

Many communities and organisations locally and nationally support the proposal and have made their views known. The Government's review offers a great opportunity to secure at last the NP that was first proposed in a Government report in 1945.

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www.dorsetnationalpark.com



Working to Benefit Our Communities

The motion approved by Weymouth & Portland Borough Council in January this year summarises what many other councils and organisations agree:

"This Council recognises the benefits a National Park could offer Dorset and encourages the Glover Review to support the proposal and ask Natural England to undertake a full assessment at the earliest opportunity."

- ▶ A National Park would work in partnership with the Dorset Council and all local authorities and communities to help ensure the environment, communities and economy are thriving and prosperous. It would bring extra resources, promote truly affordable homes for local people, and support and attract business, jobs and skills.
- ▶ Dorset deserves National Park recognition for the area's nationally and internationally important landscapes, World Heritage Coast, wildlife and heritage.
- ▶ Dorset needs a NP to better safeguard and enhance its outstanding environment, wildlife and heritage.

In these difficult times for public sector financing, this is a significant opportunity to secure a National Park for Dorset and bring significant extra public sector funding and the associated economic benefits to Weymouth and Portland's communities."

Decision

"That this council writes to both the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and The Glover Review Panel supporting this proposal for a National Park."



A Close Partnership with Councils and Others

The proposed National Park would be a close partner and asset for the new Dorset Council. It would work on a shared agenda and bring much-needed additional resources to support local services, communities and the economy. NPs are funded by central Government and are not a call on local people or businesses. At a time when the Dorset Council will have many priorities including the rising cost of adult and children's social care, a partner NP could look after the environmental agenda and free Council time and resources to focus on other priorities. There would be a shared planning team, seamless Local Plans and the National Park would buy in and pay for some key services from the Dorset Council.

National Parks attract investment and boost jobs and skills, both within their area and in gateway towns and surrounding areas. Evidence shows they extend the tourism season, boost international, eco, cultural and heritage tourism and encourage people to stay longer and spend more – as happened in the South Downs National Park. A NP would add value to local businesses – including through marketing and branding opportunities, and supply chain development. Through their planning powers, NPs support appropriate and sustainable development. They respond proactively to local housing needs, including for truly affordable homes. They support local people and their health and wellbeing. The report from Cumulus Consulting makes a clear case for the economic benefits a National Park would bring to the area.

<https://www.dorsetnationalpark.com/single-post/Economic-Benefits>



Benefiting Farmers and Land Managers

Our farmers face an uncertain future. Funding is likely to be focused on the delivery of “public good” and there could be benefits in being in a National Park which can attract the highest levels of funding and support for farmers. All proposals from National Parks to pilot new farm funding [ELMS] passed the first sift whereas around half of other bids failed.

The South Downs NP has helped its farmers secure 20% of Stewardship funding in the SE region, though the South Downs covers only 10% of the area under agreement. Additional funding has been secured for improved water quality, woodland management, heathland conservation, sustainable transport, heritage tourism and food marketing.

Their proposed pilot ELMS scheme aims to provide a range of benefits. These include agri-environment solutions which take full account of farmer expertise and ideas to improve productivity and resilience, enhance participating farms' incomes and reduce costs. The proposal has the support of both the CLA and NFU. We can learn much from the South Downs and our website has papers on land management and (at the suggestion of the NFU) a series of case studies on how farmers work with the National Park to their mutual benefit.

<https://www.dorsetnationalpark.com/single-post/Farming-Case-Studies>

Your Questions Answered

Would a National Park deliver the homes Dorset needs?

The Government wants National Parks to foster and maintain vibrant, productive living and working communities. Hence the relevant Government Circular says that NP Authorities, as Planning Authorities, should include policies which proactively respond to local housing needs, including a focus on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services. We need this proactive approach here in Dorset.

The South Downs National Park Local Plan foresees the development of several thousand new homes and has a policy that up to 50% of these should be truly affordable. To inform the Local Plan, the NP facilitated some 50 Neighbourhood Plans which reflect local communities' needs and priorities.

Won't there be pressure for more houses in areas outside the National Park?

National Parks are not against development. A Dorset National Park, like the South Downs National Park, would aim proactively to meet the need for local homes for local people and in a sustainable way. It would work with the Dorset Council and with communities to assess and meet local housing needs.

Under national planning policy (the NPPF) the same protections apply in an AONB as in a National Park. The suggested area for the National Park is largely based on the Dorset AONB and so in principle the same provisions should apply. The setting of the National Park would remain relevant as would local environmental and infrastructure considerations.

Would a National Park lead to higher house prices?

Economists have noted that high house prices are a feature of desirable areas of the country. National Parks have attractive landscapes and are desirable places to live. But so are some other areas such as parts of Dorset, the Cotswolds and Surrey Hills where house prices are also high. Yet none of these areas are National Parks. National Parks have a remit to promote local homes for local people including truly affordable homes. Without such homes we will struggle to retain young families and attract young people and growth businesses.

Would a National Park be locally accountable?

A National Park is a specialised local authority run by local people. Under current arrangements, the Dorset National Park Authority would be likely to consist of up to 50% elected members of the Dorset Council, around 25% elected members from Town and Parish Councils (thus giving them a say for the first time in decision making on planning strategy and on specific planning applications) and 25% of local people who put themselves forward for selection on the basis of their local knowledge and interests. The Glover Review is looking at whether some members might be directly elected to the National Park Authority.

What is the proposed coverage of the National Park?

The proposal to Natural England comprised the Dorset and East Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and what remains of Thomas Hardy's Egdon Heath between Dorchester and Wareham.



This suggested area was just a starting point and, for example, the councils of Portland and Sturminster Newton (both outside the Dorset AONB) have expressed their support and wish to be included. Other areas are also interested given the benefits on offer. The National Park could also be the first to have an offshore role and thus bring together in a coordinated way on-shore and off-shore designations.

Who funds a National Park?

National Parks are funded by central Government and not by residents or businesses. They also bid for extra funds which are invested in the local economy, in partnership with communities, not-for-profit and commercial businesses, farmers and landowners.

A National Park would be an asset and a close, efficient partner for the Dorset Council. It would bring additional resources and free up some council funding to help support local services and communities. The South Downs NPA secured over £100m in core and project funding in its first five years.



Keep our County Beautiful for all to Enjoy

At a Glance

A National Park is an exciting vision for our countryside, communities and economy and, with your help, can become a reality.

It would work in partnership to:

- Conserve and enhance our wonderful landscapes and heritage.
- Boost our economy and attract new funding, investment and jobs.
- Highlight Dorset as a global brand and destination; adding opportunities and value to our tourism businesses and local producers.
- Help farmers and landowners to thrive and access funding and other support.
- Work with communities for appropriate development, affordable homes for local people and a thriving, successful, sustainable and resilient Dorset.
- As the planning authority for its area, partner with the Dorset Council to help deliver what Dorset needs.

What Does a National Park do?

National Parks have a responsibility to:

- Conserve and enhance the environment, wildlife and cultural heritage of their area.
- Promote recreation, health, and the enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of their area.
- Foster the economic and social wellbeing of their communities.

Looking After our Environment

Our landscapes and heritage are very special. They have been judged to be amongst the top 4 percent in the country. The environment is Dorset's greatest economic asset and the National Park would have a duty to look after and promote our environment and heritage.

Supporting Community-led Development in the Right Places

The National Park would work with communities, councils and businesses to meet local needs, including housing and affordable homes for local people. National Parks are not against development, and they build on neighbourhood plans to support living, working, thriving local communities. The National Park would be a one-stop-shop for co-ordinated planning advice and would work in partnership with other local authorities.

Boosting the Rural Economy

A National Park would help strengthen and diversify the rural economy and attract investment and jobs. Tourism is Dorset's largest economic sector, and a National Park would boost the Dorset brand and encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more. It would help develop a Dorset wide marketing strategy, manage tourism pressures and could attract funding for sustainable transport and other initiatives.

Helping Farmers and Landowners

A National Park would work in partnership with farmers and landowners to help them thrive and access funding and other support, diversify their sources of income and develop conservation and recreational opportunities.

What can you do to Help?

- Spread the word about the benefits and opportunities a National Park would bring.
- Visit our website (www.dorsetnationalpark.com) and sign up for news and follow us on Facebook.
- Ask your Parish or Town Council, Councillors, MPs and local societies to support the proposal.

Together we can secure a great future for our communities, environment and economy.

A 21st Century National Park for Dorset

Dorset National Park: Safeguarding landscapes and heritage, Promoting tourism, Attracting investment and jobs, Truly affordable housing, Agri-environment funding. The National Park Team is a Community Interest Company [CIC] and you can support us with time, contacts, knowledge and funding.

For more information, visit www.dorsetnationalpark.com
Contact us at: info@dorsetnationalpark.com

