

# Natural England Board



Meeting: 18  
Date: 25 November 2009

Paper No: **NEB PU18 03**

Title: **Lakes to Dales Landscape Designation Project**

Sponsor: **Andrew Wood, Executive Director Evidence and Analysis**

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to secure Board sign off for both the methodology we have used to undertake a partial review of the boundaries of the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Parks and the proposed revised boundaries which will form the basis of a public consultation exercise.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Board approve for public consultation:
  - the Document: "*Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation as a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*"; and
  - revised boundaries for the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Parks (with a specific decision to be made as to which option should be proposed for the Orton Fells).

## 3. Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation as a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

- 3.1. Natural England has powers under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (for National Parks) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (for AONBs) to consider which areas meet the statutory criteria for designation, and then to designate such areas. These functions were most recently exercised by the Countryside Agency to designate the New Forest and the South Downs National Parks, both in 2002.
- 3.2. Since 2004, Natural England, and before it the Countryside Agency, has been engaged in a review of the area between the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District National Parks which has considered the potential for designating additional areas as extensions to the two National Parks. A public consultation was intended to begin in the spring of 2008, however, the work was halted between early 2008 and May 2009 to await the outcome of the reconvened South Downs National Park Public Inquiry.
- 3.3. In March 2009 the Secretary of State announced his acceptance of the South Downs Inspector's second report, which has gone a considerable way towards clarifying how the statutory designation criteria should be applied. This decision has enabled us to produce a Guidance document (see Annex 1) which explains how we intend to apply our powers to designate protected

landscapes in a way that is consistent with the NERC Act and the South Downs decision. It also allowed us to re-commence the National Park boundary review work in the North West region.

#### **4. Consideration of areas**

- 4.1. The map at Annex 2 shows the broad Evaluation Areas that we have considered for possible extensions to either the Lake District or Yorkshire Dales National Parks. At Annex 3 we provide a summary of our conclusion as to whether each Evaluation Area meets the technical criteria of natural beauty and opportunities for open-air recreation. One area, Cold Cotes, does not in our opinion meet the technical criteria for possible boundary extension.
- 4.2. In relation to those areas that meet the technical criteria (Candidate Areas), Annex 4 summarises our assessment of the desirability to designate them as National Park. For one area, shown as Orton Fells (CA3) on the map, we also considered the desirability of designating it an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Annex 4 also includes a brief explanation of the implications of designation for various public authorities.

#### **5. Proposed National Park Extensions for Consultation**

- 5.1. Our assessments have led us to recommend two extensions to each of the two National Parks (four in total) for consultation. While we recommend that we should consult on the basis that the Orton Fells should be designated National Park, we have not made a recommendation as to which of the two National Parks is most appropriate.
- 5.2. We request that the Board approves the following for public consultation, with a specific decision to be taken regarding the Orton Fells (these are shown on the maps at Annex 5):
  - An eastern extension to the Lake District National Park (Birkbeck Fells to Whinfell) with a decision to be taken as to whether the Orton Fells should be included in this.
  - A southern extension to the Lake District National Park (parts of Helsington Barrows to Sizergh Fell and the Lyth Valley).
  - A western extension to the Yorkshire Dales National Park (Middleton, Barbon and Leck Fells, part of Firbank Fell, Killington to Mansergh and the Lower Lune Valley excluding Kirkby Lonsdale).
  - A northern extension to the Yorkshire Dales National Park (Howgill Fells, Mallerstang and Wild Boar Fell) with a decision to be taken as to whether the Orton Fells should be included in this.
  - That the Orton Fells should be designated National Park, but that the Board decide whether
    - the decision as to which National Park is most appropriate is too finely balanced for decision now, and that it should be further considered following detailed consideration of responses to the public consultation; or
    - that the Orton Fells be included in a proposed eastern extension to the Lake District National Park; or
    - that the Orton Fells be included in a proposed northern extension to the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

## **6. Public Consultation**

- 6.1. We are planning to carry out a 12 week public consultation (including specific consultation with local authorities, as required by statute) to invite comments on the proposed designation and detailed boundaries. We intend to start the consultation as soon as possible and in any event before Christmas 2009.
- 6.2. A range of different consultation and engagement techniques will be used, designed to maximise opportunities to obtain people's views. There will be a consultation document, an online facility and events such as workshops, drop-in exhibitions and meetings. Our aim is to engage different communities of interest and place throughout the area. Active promotion before, during and after the consultation will target national and local media, to raise awareness of the consultation process.

### **List of Annexes**

Annex 1: Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation as a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Annex 2: Broad Evaluation Areas Considered as New Protected Landscapes

Annex 3: Assessment of Evaluation Areas Against the Technical Designation Criteria for National Park and AONB

Annex 4: Desirability to Designate Candidate Areas

Annex 5: Maps showing Proposed National Park Extensions

Annex 5a: Overview of Proposed Extension Areas

Annex 5b: Broad Evaluation Areas with Proposed Boundaries

Annex 5c: Proposed Boundaries at 1:25,000 with Key Map