

Biodiversity 2020 - Delivering Outcome 1C by England's AONB Partnerships

March 2019

Executive Summary

England's 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and 12 National Parks cover 23% of England (14% and 9% respectively). Together they have the potential to deliver Defra's Biodiversity 2020 policy Outcome 1C - 17% of land and inland water conserved and delivering for biodiversity and ecosystem services and Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan.

During 2018-19 AONBs reviewed how they contribute towards the above target, using the ecosystem approach checklist, and support on good practice, tools and guidance from Natural England.

Action and success

AONBs are contributing towards Outcome 1c – they are delivering on biodiversity and securing multiple benefits for people through the ecosystem service approach. This approach applies well to AONBs and adds value to their work. Embedding the approach in their management planning enables them to take stock and review their work in a systematic way and supports them to:

- Think beyond an area's special qualities, linking them with natural capital and the multiple services that they provide for people both within and further afield from the AONB.
- Identify areas where they need to work differently to deliver more for nature and people in the future.
- Work with partners to find effective solutions through shared delivery.
- Develop and deliver projects that deliver multiple benefits for nature and people.
- Better align their plans and delivery with Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan, prioritising key activities, and showing the 'value' of the landscape in ways that decision makers understand.

Delivering more

AONBs want to accelerate their work around natural capital and deliver more robust ecosystem services in their areas. The AONBs have identified several areas of support that they think could help them achieve greater results for nature and people in the future. These include:

- Continuity of core funding to support AONB teams of core staff along with a strong governance model.
- Additional staff capacity to develop evidence baselines, data to support ELMS, projects and partnership delivery.
- Support for existing behavioural change programmes to encourage innovative thinking and different ways of working within the community and stakeholders.
- Assistance to encourage cross cabinet support for delivery.
- A natural capital and ecosystem services support network to build confidence and capacity within AONB partnerships.
- Links to existing AONB platforms (Basecamp/website) to share advice, guidance, good practice and information between organisations working at a landscape scale.
- Building on existing thinking within the AONB family to develop a fit for purpose data system that will efficiently collate, develop and share data – particularly on natural capital and the public benefits this provides.
- Encouraging others to act through more active engagement in national landscape partnerships.
- AONB management plan guidance from Natural England on how to include the ecosystem approach and encourage embedding and more resilient landscapes.

The National Association of AONBs is a charity with very limited capacity at present. It shares the ambition of the AONBs to deliver more for people and nature but would need additional resources to support them in making a step change.

