

Item 14 - Natural England Report

Report to	The National Association for AONBs Board of Trustees
Subject	Natural England Report
Date	14 th March 2017
Report by	David Henshilwood
Purpose	For information

Suffolk Coasts and Heaths (SC&H) AONB Boundary variation

The formal consultation package is being prepared now, and will go to Natural England Senior Leadership team in April and to NE Board in early May for approval. The consultation has had to be deferred for a few weeks because its planned date coincided with local authority elections.

Other AONB boundary proposals

There has been considerable activity in recent weeks, particularly concerning a proposal to extend the North Norfolk Coast AONB to include Old Hunstanton and adjoining land. Members may have seen press coverage of this particular case. As a result of correspondence from the local MP senior NE staff attended a meeting with the Minister, Lord Gardiner, Sir Henry MP Bellingham and representatives from Old Hunstanton PC.

The result of this meeting was helpful in that it clarified the Minister's view that NE resources were currently fully engaged on Suffolk Coast and Heaths, and that it was then intended to move on to a proposal to vary the boundary of Surrey Hills. A number of other proposals, including Old Hunstanton, will be assessed when these two cases have been further progressed.

Natural England's Conservation Strategy CS21

We are currently exploring with a range of key partners, including the NAAONB, how best we may all work together in pursuit of the three themes of the Conservation Strategy – Resilient Landscapes and Seas, Putting People at the heart of the Environment, and growing natural Capital. The AONB family has a great deal to contribute across all three of these themes, and we have been exploring with Howard how to take them forward.

Discussions are at an early stage, however particular interest centres on how to extend the influence of AONB partnerships to land outside their boundaries, particularly in the many instances where other AONBs or National parks are situated nearby. There are a number of good examples where this sort of joint approach is already taking place or being planned, and we are keen to facilitate this. The forthcoming management plan review round also offers opportunities to jointly rethink how we frame AONB management plan objectives to reflect both the Conservation Strategy and Defra's 25 year plan, the publication of which is expected shortly.

It is worth re-emphasising that the contribution of AONBs and National Parks is seen as fundamental to the successful delivery of the NE's conservation strategy. We are aligning all our own resources around the CS themes, and it will therefore be helpful if our joint work together can be expressed in these terms.