

## **National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

**PRESS RELEASE: Thursday, 4 July 19**

### **BEGINS:**

### **Landscape Conference sells out amid unprecedented public concern for nature**

The Landscapes for Life conference, this year to be held in Colchester, Essex, has sold out in record time as surveys demonstrate historic levels of public concern for nature\*.

Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Michael Gove will send a prerecorded address to the Conference, which opens on Tuesday (9 July). Julian Glover, the chairman of the current Defra review of designated landscapes and Dame Fiona Reynolds will address conference in person. Topics covered will include 'rising to the challenge of climate change in designated landscapes', 'impacts of nature on health and wellbeing' and 'the value of natural beauty at a time of environmental challenge'.

Over 130 delegates from Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty across England and Wales will be in attendance and the final day of the conference will see them make the Colchester Declaration. The whole AONB family will be signing up to this #Declaration4Nature to pledge their collective ambition and intent to do more for nature.

Howard Davies, Chief Executive of the National Association for AONBs said of the declaration: 'The Colchester Declaration comes at a crucial time for nature. AONBs cover almost one fifth of the UK's land area and AONB staff have created strong partnerships with other nature conservation organisations

and landowners in their local areas. The targets we are setting ourselves are ambitious but collectively we have the tools, knowledge and skills to deliver for nature and people.’

Set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world; intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient; the UK Government’s ambitious targets for nature recovery and enhancement as outlined in the 25 Year Environment Plan; the Glover Review of AONBs and National Parks, and many AONB host authorities taking the step of declaring a Climate Emergency, the declaration will be a commitment by the AONB network to increase the scale and pace of our delivery to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

\* Public opinion specialists YouGov said that 27 percent of people in the UK now believe that the state of the environment is one of the top three issues facing the country.  
<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2019/06/05/concern-environment-record-highs>

Only Brexit (rated in the top three by 67 percent of people) and health (rated by 32 percent) are deemed more pressing.

Among young people aged between 18 and 24, concern for the environment is even greater. Some 45 percent of people in this age group said the environment is one of the three most pressing issues facing the UK, making it their second biggest worry after Brexit.

**ENDS.**

**Notes to editors:**

The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK’s 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Its objectives are to promote the conservation and enhancement of AONBs, advance the education, understanding and appreciation by the public of AONBs, and promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those promoting or representing AONBs, other Protected Areas and those areas for which designation might be pursued. It does this by taking a collaborative and partnership based approach to working with our membership and other organisations at a national level to achieve shared goals. For more information see Web: [www.landscapesforlife.org.uk](http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk) Twitter: @naaonb @AONBFamily

The Essex/Suffolk AONBs – Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths – are delighted to be the host team to support the National Association for AONBs with this “Outstanding Opportunities” conference in the special 70th anniversary year of the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act.

[www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org](http://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org) and [www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org](http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org).

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of the UK’s most outstanding landscapes and belong to an international Protected Landscape Family. There are 38 AONBs in England and Wales, and a further eight in Northern Ireland. For further information about the AONB Family visit [www.landscapesforlife.org.uk](http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk)

**Landscapes for Life Conferences** provide an opportunity for the AONB Family and those interested in protection our precious landscapes to join together and address issues of current concern. See <http://www.landscapesforlifeconference.org.uk/>

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