

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Review of National Park governance:

Implementation update

April 2013

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Review of National Park governance: Implementation update

Introduction

1. This note provides an update on progress in implementing the outcomes of the 2010 review of National Park governance.
2. The aim of the review was to look for ways in which the governance of the England's National Parks and the Broads can be made more effective, and to look for ways in which the National Park and the Broads Authorities (Park Authorities) can be more responsive to the concerns of their local communities.
3. The outcome of the review was a wide range of proposed improvements to the way Park Authorities operate. Some of these were individual improvements tailored to each Park and some were general; some could be carried out under existing powers and others needed new legislation. The proposals included changes to five particular areas of governance that would require amendments to primary legislation.

Update

4. The individual improvements proposed by each Park Authority focused on using existing mechanisms to make the work of the Park Authorities more visible to local communities and to increase local engagement. Good progress is being made by each Authority in implementing the individual actions at the local level.
5. In Spring 2012 Defra issued a public consultation on the five proposals arising from the review which would need changes to primary legislation. These were:
 - to enable Park Authorities to include some directly elected members, and to trial elections in two National Park Authorities
 - to remove the need for the Secretary of State to appoint the parish members
 - to relax the political balance requirement on local authorities when appointing their members to a Park Authority
 - to allow parishes in subsequently specified National Parks to choose non-councillors for their seats
 - to apply a maximum length of service of eight years to all Park Authority members
6. In addition to the public consultation a House of Commons Westminster Hall debate about the introduction of direct elections and improving local accountability of the Park Authorities was held on 28 November 2012. Richard Benyon, whose Ministerial responsibilities include National Parks, re-iterated the Government's commitment to enabling direct elections, subject to resources and local demand. The full debate can be read [here](#).

7. Since publication of the consultation further discussions have also been held with Cabinet Office to explore the legislative implications of proposals to enable direct elections. This has clarified that primary legislation would be required as well as extensive secondary legislation.

Conclusion

8. The Government has looked carefully at all of the comments made in response to the 2012 consultation and intends to publish its response shortly. In conjunction with the Park Authorities we will continue to look at what can be achieved to increase accountability and openness.

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