

ACCORD WITH NATIONAL PARKS ENGLAND**Purpose**

1. To seek the Committee's approval for an Accord with National Parks England.

Background

2. As the Committee will be aware, forestry and woodland issues have risen up the agenda in National Parks as well as in the wider policy environment. More and closer engagement with National Parks is required to achieve the ambitions of the 25 Year Environment Plan, especially on woodland creation. The National Parks are concerned to ensure that changes achieve environmental enhancement for National Parks and benefit local communities and visitors.
3. To facilitate this engagement, a new national Accord with National Parks England Forestry has been developed to replace the outdated Accord that was developed by the Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) in 2002, strengthen our relationship with National Parks and provide greater focus and clarity for our work together. The Accord includes an ambition to be at the forefront of delivery of relevant 25 Year Environment Plan goals:
 - Clean air
 - Clean and plentiful water
 - Thriving plants and wildlife
 - A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought
 - Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently
 - Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment
 - Mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - Enhancing biosecurity
4. The draft Accord (Annex A) has been prepared in conjunction with colleagues at National Parks England who have consulted their Tree and Woodland Officers during preparation of the document. FS Senior Managers, including the Area Directors, and the FEE Executive Board and Forest Management Directors were consulted during preparation of the document and their views are reflected in this draft. The emphasis has been on developing a concise, high-level national Accord that will provide an overarching framework for tailored local activity appropriate to the circumstances of each National Park. National Parks England will be seeking approval for the Accord at a meeting of their Board on 18 April. Defra officials and Ministers are aware that we are working together to agree this Accord and officials have had sight of this final draft.
5. Richard Greenhous and Mike Seddon have led the development of the Accord for Forestry Commission. During the development of the Accord, Andy Wilson (North

York Moors) has taken on the Lead Policy NPO role for Trees, Woodland and Forestry previously held by Alison Barnes (New Forest). But to provide continuity on this piece of work which was already in progress, Alison Barnes has continued to lead the development of the Accord. Robert Mayhew (Northumberland) has also played an important role in representing his National Park's position.

6. The resulting draft Accord is a welcome launch pad for proactive local dialogue about woodland creation and management in the Parks. Agreement has required some compromise, for example, the meaning of 'higher environmental standards' is opaque and likely to be contested in some parts of the country but that need not be problematic. The draft at Annex A includes some tracked changes and comments that show some of the areas still being pinned down. Nonetheless the important thing will be following up on a Park by Park basis.
7. The Committee is asked to approve the draft Accord as presented. Given it remains a draft and that it is conceivable that the National Parks England Board may wish to make some changes to the text, the Committee is asked to agree to delegate authority to Richard Greenhous and Mike Seddon to make minor changes to accommodate their comments so the document can be signed off.
8. A workshop is currently being organised to bring NPA Tree and Woodland Officers and Forestry Commission colleagues together to discuss local delivery of the Accord. It is anticipated that this will take place in May / June 2018.

Communications

9. We anticipate a joint launch by National Parks England and Forestry Commission (England) Chairs in a National Park during 2018. We will seek a suitable opportunity for this to take place and any suggestions Committee members wish to make would be welcomed.

Recommendations

10. The Committee are invited to:
 - Note the work undertaken to date in preparing the Accord;
 - Approve the draft Accord (Annex A) and provide delegated authority to the Director of Forest Services and Director of Operations of Forest Enterprise England to make any necessary minor changes specifically requested by National Parks England; and
 - Agree to a joint launch in a National Park in 2018.

Richard Greenhous – Director of Forest Services

Mike Seddon – Director of Operations of Forest Enterprise England

11 April 2018