

Landscape Review Background

Post-Brexit under the Govt' s is evolving a whole host of strategies associated with: climate change; bio-diversity; agricultural policy; re-wilding; public health and well-being under its '**25 year Environmental Plan**' so be assured we will hear more that will affect us in one way or another,.

Of greatest significance to us the **Landscapes Review** – their new encapsulating name for our National Parks (NPs) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

The VMCC responded to the first of Defra's inquiries into the functioning and administration of the NPs and AONBs in 2019, when Pat Robotham was chairman, our extensive and robust replies at that time will help you assist with any background that you may wish to include with the current consultation. (available from gilesdavid@talktalk.net)

In between has come an independent study by a body of experts under the chairmanship of **Julian Glover** who was asked to review the current fitness of the NPs & AONBs for the 21st century: their report was produced in September 2019. One of their key recommendations was to bring the NPs and AONBs together under a new **National Landscape Service (NLS)** to give them more authority and regulatory powers giving better value for the funding they receive.

Defra, the government department responsible for implementation have now produced their response to the **Glover Report** with what may be regarded as their own preferences entitled '**Landscapes Review (National Parks and AONBs); implementing the review**' which is where you will find the current on-line consultation – buried at the end.

Defra is strongly minded to upgrade at least 3 existing AONBs: The Cotswolds; the Chilterns & North Wiltshire Downs: and much of Hampshire and Dorset, including the New Forest. Others may be added in the North between the Lakes and the Dales. (see the map).

It is important from the standpoint of motor vehicle access to recognise that NPs have been given additional powers to the normal Highway Authorities with regard to traffic regulation (TROs): i.e. tests associated with Amenity and Nuisance – which they have defined in the past as they saw fit rather than objectively. And they have not been answerable to the Public for their decisions, nor has there been any mechanism for appeal.

My very real fear here is for the future of VMCC Section events in these new extensive areas. I can envisage that in a similar manner to 'Quiet Roads' where individual or a couple of riders are not banned in law but are frowned upon, that a Section run or an event such as a scatter navigation rally would simply not be allowed: a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) as suggested in question 13 could easily put paid to that.

Some strident Bridleway Groups have lobbied hard for the removal of MPVs from any Unsurfaced Unclassified County Roads (UUCRs) running through the Parks (to which you can now add the upgraded AONBs). This had been anticipated as an amendment to the Environment Bill by Lord Bradshaw (a favourite equestrian protagonist) but it has now emerged here as part of a public consultation (questionnaire) that Defra is running to gain some semblance of support from the general public. It would affect all the remaining ancient stone roads which we use (see photos) estimated at several thousand miles of our heritage.

The pertinent question for MPV users which must be rejected are between 13 and 17.

/continues

The total questionnaire is long and covers areas beyond our immediate interest, an easier way is to make your response is via an email directly to Defra, send it to:

Landscapesconsultation@defra.gov.uk. clearly marked the “**Managing Visitor Pressures section questions 13- 17**”.

Repeating the question for clarity and give your response and reason(s).

I have been assured that this is acceptable to Defra – indeed the consultation has been designed in sections with this in mind. But I would be inclined to e mail a copy (c.c.) to you Member of Parliament so that it cannot be overlooked. (just Google My MP to get your MP’s address) .

My inside information is that 2000 returns had been made by the end of February, which will overwhelm their ability to read any detailed argument – so please concentrate on getting your response in – it will become a numbers game. So please send your response in.

Dave Giles 1st March 2022

