

Consultation on the Governance arrangements for the National Parks and the Broads

Summary of responses

Date: 13 September 2011

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Contents

Introduction

<u>Background.....</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Purpose of the Review.....</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>The consultation process.....</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Responses to the consultation.....</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>National.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Responses in respect of each individual NPA.....</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Conclusions and next steps.....</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Annex A – List of respondents.....</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>Annex B - Government response to NPA proposals.....</u>	<u>16</u>

1. Background

1.1 For about forty years most National Parks were a purely county council responsibility, and the remaining two were run by special ‘planning boards’ though still within the local government structure. They were financially supported by the Government through supplementary grants within the Rate (later Revenue) Support Grant system. The 1995 Environment Act replaced that system with independent National Park Authorities which became operational in 1997. These bodies have a strong local government aspect to the way they are constituted and operate. For the Broads, an independent Authority had been in place since the outset.

1.2 The concept of independent authorities was reviewed 5 years later (Defra’s 2002 “Review of English National Park Authorities”). Since then, attention has largely focused on the performance of individual authorities - primarily through the National Park Authority Performance Assessments - rather than on the concept itself, though the designation process for the two new National Parks in the New Forest (designation confirmed 2005) and the South Downs (designation confirmed 2010) meant that the need for Authorities was publicly aired. There was some questioning in both areas (and to a lesser extent elsewhere) of the idea that a National Park needed a separate Authority to run it, additional to the pre-existing local authorities and other statutory bodies.

1.3 Following the election, the Government’s “ Programme for Government” said

“We will review the governance arrangements of National Parks in order to increase local accountability”

1.4 That commitment was honoured by a public consultation which ran from 9 November 2010 until 1 February 2011. In the introduction to its consultation document the Government set the parameters for this exercise, as follows :

“The Government wishes to retain an independent authority, as currently exists, for each of the National Parks and the Broads. It intends that these authorities (“the NPAs”) should continue to be the local planning authority for their areas.”

1.5 Purpose of the Review

- a. look for ways in which the governance of the NPAs can be made more effective;*
- b. look for ways in which the NPAs can be more responsive to the concerns of their local communities (whilst still operating within the existing statutory purposes and the Spending Review 2010 budgets) ; and*
- c. consider the extent to which different arrangements are appropriate for different NPAs.”*

1.6 The consultation document then went on to pose six key questions about National Park Authorities (“NPAs”) - a term which in this context includes the Broads Authority - namely:

- a. whether the membership of NPAs, both the size and composition, should be changed*
- b. whether the selection process for all categories of members of NPAs can be improved*
- c. whether there should be a limit on the length of time which local authority and parish members can serve, and a reduction in the maximum term for the Secretary of State ‘national’ members (currently 10 years).*
- d. whether the current membership and structure of consultative committees, groups and forums can be strengthened so as to better achieve ‘Big Society’ benefits*
- e. what additional measures NPAs can take to strengthen the links and engagement with their local communities on a variety of issues including planning*
- f. whether there are any other ways in which the NPAs can improve their effectiveness and accountability*

2. The consultation process

The consultation was intended to deliver individualised solutions for each of the 9 National Park Authorities in England and the Broads Authority (“the NPAs”). It was run as a joint exercise between Defra and the NPAs. Key elements in that joint approach were that :

- Defra initiated the consultation by issuing the consultation document

- respondents could send their response either to Defra or to the NPA(s) to which their comments related
- to supplement the written responses to Defra, each NPA also took soundings in other ways appropriate to its circumstances, for example by an additional consultation or by workshops or through “drop-in” sessions
- at the end of consultation, and reflecting all the feed-back it had acquired, each NPA then submitted to Defra a list of recommended changes which reflected its particular needs and circumstances

3. Responses to consultation

In total over 360 responses were received, as follows :

Responses mainly relating to	No. responses
National	45
Broads	28
Dartmoor	34
Exmoor	19
Lake District	24
New Forest	62
Northumberland	41
North York Moors	7
Peak District	55
South Downs	21
Yorkshire Dales	25
Total	315 *

* less than the sum of individual figures because some covered more than one NPA

3.1 The list of respondents is at Annex A.

3.2 The Defra Information Resource Centre will supply copies of consultation responses to personal callers or in response to telephone or email requests (tel: 020 7238 6575, email: defra.library@defra.gsi.gov.uk). Wherever possible, personal callers should give the library at least 24 hours notice of their requirements. An administrative charge will be made to cover photocopying and postage costs. Copies of the responses and the Authority’s proposals are also available from the individual National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority – the contact details for which are shown on pages 5-7 of the consultation document.

3.3 General themes to emerge across the responses were: many respondents wanted smaller authorities though equally there was a lot of support for the status quo. Arguments for changing the mix of members commonly focused on increasing the local representation. There were also some calls for direct elections. Views on maximum service were divided with support for both 8 years and 10 years (and for retaining the status quo). Accountability was raised by a number of respondents. There were also calls to allow non-councillors to take parish seats, to remove the need for the Secretary of State to confirm parish appointments, and to free local authorities from the political balance requirement when making their appointments.

National

3.4 There were 45 'national' responses which were not area-specific and so not picked up by any individual NPA(s). These comments were disparate in nature with no common themes emerging, however: 3 respondents wanted the mix of NPA members kept the same and 1 wanted a greater bias towards national members; two wanted improvements in the selection of parish members, 1 wanted a simpler national selection and LA selection aligned with the other groups.; 4 wanted to retain a 10 year limit for national members and 1 wanted a reduced limit; 3 wanted to continue applying no limit to LA/parish members, 1 wanted an 8 year limit and 1 a 10 year limit; 1 saw no need to change consultative structures and 3 wanted a strengthening of them with 1 respondent suggesting executive committees; 2 wanted a greater engagement and 1 asked for more use of social media; and a range of suggestions were made for improving efficiency included more transparency on land ownership within National Parks, equal weight for economic well-being alongside conservation; sharing a planning service with local government, and establishing youth councils.

3.5 In addition, the responses from Natural England (NE) and the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) should be highlighted as, although these were reflected in individual NPA analyses, both have a very specific national role - NE as the Government's statutory adviser on landscape and as the Arms Length Body which has specific statutory powers in respect of NPAs; and CNP as the national voluntary sector body which lobbies for National Parks.

3.6 Key points in NE's response were :

- to retain the current ratio of local and national members with members ideally living locally and understanding local issues
- the national and local authority selection process seems to have worked well but could be improved for parish members with greater clarity and openness perhaps with parishes within an NPA agreeing and publicising the process
- the national application forms and selection criteria need to be made clearer
- national appointments to reflect the Government's commitment to ensuring that ecosystems services are recognised in an increasingly green economy
- a cross-sectoral approach to engagement, through the use of consultative forums etc, is a good way to achieve positive debate and consultative fora can also provide technical advice
- meetings should be in accessible locations and presentations should be clear and easily digestible, using new technologies

- NPAs need to develop ways of explaining the bigger picture of the relevance of the planning process as a key and positive conservation tool
- some scope for stronger links with business community . Here and elsewhere the importance of National Park purposes must be recognised
- the National Park Authority Performance Assessment process is a strong mechanism for sharing best practice but needs itself to be kept refreshed

3.7 CNP's key points were :

That any reduction in membership should recognise these principles :

- Reduction in membership should not be at the expense of altering the current mix of national and local members
- Continue a good geographic coverage around the National Park
- Critical ties to principal local authorities must be maintained
- Membership should comprise a good mix of interests, expertise, experience and skills
- Consideration should be given to the links that members can provide to key communities of interest, such as nearby urban communities and minority groups
- Diversity of the NPAs membership should be increased, or at worst unaffected, rather than decreased by any changes to its size and composition
- No significant increase in workload for the remaining members if the membership of the Authority is reduced

That the selection process would be enhanced by the following:

- Common job description and person specification should be agreed for all categories of member.
- Clear, accessible and accurate material must be widely promoted (see below) to potential applicants/members, which draws attention to the time commitment required and the nature and requirements of the role
- Equal effort should be invested in the selection process for all categories of appointment
- More proactive dialogue should be undertaken with the leaders of appointing authorities on the nature and requirements of the role of members, and a regular feedback loop introduced on the member attendance and performance, as assessed against the common job description.
- The greatest potential improvements relate to the process for selecting parish members, the transparency of which could be improved – elections should be promoted more widely, with minimum national requirements for publicity such as hustings. That would increase interest in and turnout at parish elections.

That the maximum term for which Secretary of State 'national' members can serve is appropriate, given the added value that experience brings and that

Defra reflects on whether there would be merit in ensuring a consistent approach on length of service to all categories of membership.

That consultative structures are matters best determined at the local level, in partnership with the relevant groups.

That these factors in particular are key to strengthening and securing strong links and engagement:

- Effective and meaningful communication with local communities and their representative groups/elected representatives
- A locally responsive approach to the provision of the Authority's planning service – for example, to include planning for real, village design statements, local housing need surveys, parish council training events etc
- The principle of increased involvement by local people through the mechanisms in the Localism Bill (for example, neighbourhood planning) offers an opportunity further to strengthen links with local communities.
- Authorities should also be encouraged to use the resource already in place via Mosaic Community Champions, for example by using their annual celebrations and events to publicise the National Park and using the passion they have for National Parks to promote and enable greater access and awareness.
- Authorities should also ensure that their staff and members buy into and believe the benefits of new groups using the Parks.
- Links with local authority transport planners will be crucial, especially as funding for public transport provision and promotion is squeezed. Often, public transport services are the only practical way for some communities to gain access to National Parks.

That a principal outcome of this review ought to be increased sharing amongst the authorities of good ideas and best practice, via whatever mechanism is deemed to be most effective (for example, an interactive web forum, national best practice seminar, etc).

That there are some areas where Defra must establish an unequivocal and clear national minimum standard, namely:

- Improvements to the appointment process for parish council members
- Retention of the proportion of members appointed to bring a national perspective to the governance of the authorities
- Members' commitment to the delivery of National Park purposes, which links directly to high quality decision-making and depends on good member induction, training and briefing

That each Authority should explore fully ways to involve audiences who are under-represented as visitors to the National Parks, for example, young people and minority communities. Such ways might include involvement in working groups, dedicated events, use of social and new media networks and contact with groups such as the Scout and Guide movement.

3.8 Responses in respect of each individual NPA

Broads

There were 28 responses. Key themes were :

- Whether there should be some parish members (8 respondents asked for this)
- Whether the statutory Navigation Committee should be retained or not or whether it should be matched by an equivalent, statutory, Conservation Committee

Government view

We accept the Broads Authority proposals. On the Navigation and Conservation Committee, the Government endorses the Authority's suggestion to carry out a review of its whole consultative structure. The Broads Authority itself does not propose parish members and, although it was raised in consultation there were only 8 such responses in total so we agree no change as proposed.

Dartmoor

There were 34 responses. Key themes were :

- A preference (11 responses) for more weighting towards local members within the same overall size (14 supported current size)
- Pressure for members to be more local / have greater local knowledge / the NPA to play a bigger role in selection (10 responses in total)

Government view

We accept the Authority's recommendations. On size the Authority proposed to reduce to 19 members . It also proposed a greater role for the NPA in selecting members, which the Government accepts up to the limits set by the OCPA code.

Exmoor

There were 19 responses.

There were no major themes though there were some calls (3) for direct elections and for more transparency on parish appointments.

Government view

We accept the Authority's proposals. The Authority proposes to discuss an improved selection procedure for parish members with its parish councils and the Government endorses that. On direct elections, the Government proposes to trial that approach in the New Forest and Peak District.

Lake District

There were 24 responses. Key themes were:

- Some pressure (12 responses) for a smaller Authority
- Some preference (7) for a greater local bias and for an improved method of selecting parish members(4)

Government view

We accept the Authority's recommendations. The Authority recommends an overall reduction to 20 members but, within that, providing an additional parish seat. It also recommends allowing non-councillors to be eligible for parish seats.

New Forest

There were 62 responses - the largest number for any NPA.. Key themes emerging were:

- Pressure for the Authority to be abolished (8) or merged with the district council (4) or to be directly elected (18)
- Pressure to reserve seat(s) for some or all the pre-existing Forest institutions, namely the Commoners (13), the Verderers (26 responses), and the Forestry Commission (1)
- That the New Forest Consultative Forum should be given a more active role or placed on a formal footing (4)

Government view

The Government had made clear at the outset of consultation that it was not minded to remove or replace the existing NPAs. We accept the Authority's offer to explore the option of introducing a proportion of directly locally elected members and will be pursuing this with the Authority so that a number of directly elected seats can be introduced on a trial basis.

We do not propose to reserve seats for particular interest groups as that would undermine the principle that all members should serve the NPA as a whole, rather than represent a particular interest group, and that it could also restrict the choice of member.

The Government thinks that the status of the Consultative Forum - which has already proved its worth in a number of configurations - is a matter for local decision.

Northumberland

There were 41 responses. Key themes emerging were:

- Mixed views on size (9 wanted to retain 22 members and 7 wanted some reduction)

- Some pressure (13 responses) for more local membership with some of those taking 'local' to mean more parish members rather than local authority
- Some pressure (10) to remove the Secretary of State's role in appointing parish members

Government view

We think that the Authority's recommendation to reduce to 18 members does not go far enough as, given the low population and the fact that it lies within a single local authority area , this would still leave the Authority "over-membered" compared to other NPAs. We are therefore asking the Authority to look at again at a more significant reduction. The Government endorses the suggestion that Secretary of State should no longer be required to confirm parish appointments.

North York Moors

There were only 7 responses and thus no general themes.

Government view

We note the package of measures the Authority wishes to explore, including the feasibility of running services as social enterprises.

On membership, the Authority also recommends allowing non-councillors to be eligible for parish seats.

Peak District

There were 55 responses. Key themes were:

- Some pressure for a smaller authority (27 responses in total, compared to 8 saying overall size should not change) and alongside that some preference (28 responses) for a greater local bias
- Calls for better communication or greater engagement with communities (14 responses)
- 6 respondents sought improvements on planning

Government view

We are not persuaded that the Authority's current membership size and structure may be best suited to meet local needs, and note the relatively high number of responses to the consultation which called for directly elected members. We think that the membership structure of the Authority provides a very useful contrast to that of the New Forest and so propose to introduce a number of directly elected seats on a trial basis.

On extending performance assessments, we agree the intent but think this should be achieved by collective, rather than individual, assessments.

We agree the Authority's proposal for a more formal linking of individual members with geographic areas of the Park.

South Downs

There were 21 responses.

The Authority became operational in April 2011 and is still implementing its structures. Indeed it ran its own consultation in parallel with the governance one about the way it should engage in future.

Given the newness of the Authority, most respondents either suggested no change for the present or repeated the position on size and composition they had expressed in the 2009 consultation.

Government view

We think it would be premature to make any structural changes at this stage and we endorse the steps the Authority proposes to take in developing dialogue with interest groups, engaging young people and establish a partnership group to produce the National Park Management Plan.

Yorkshire Dales

There were 25 responses. Key themes were:

- Satisfaction with the current size of the Authority (16 responses) and its composition (18 responses)
- Some calls for improved engagement with communities (5)

Government view

We recognise the argument for retaining 22 members and the level of support for that number and we do not propose to change it.

From that starting point, though, we feel it is even more important to explore other avenues for improving services and so we are asking the Authority to reconsider what else (alongside its proposals for members to have a more championing role) it might do to further improve its engagement with its residents.

4. Conclusion and next steps

4.1 Each NPA submitted individual responses to Defra for consideration, and the Government responded to these in a written Parliamentary statement by the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries on Tuesday 13 September. The response to the individual NPA proposals is at Annex B.

4.2 The Government's key decisions are to:

- a. trial the concept of directly-elected members by introducing some directly elected members to the New Forest and Peak District NPAs. This will allow experience to be gained of operating direct elections and will allow evidence to be gathered in England (to supplement that coming from the rather different

Scottish context) to establish whether direct elections change an NPA's performance.

- b. ask Northumberland NPA to look again at the scope for reducing the number of members on the Authority. Although the Authority looked at options and concluded it should reduce to 18, the Government thinks that number is hard to justify for an Authority which lies within a single local government area and has only approximately 2,000 residents.
- c. ask the Yorkshire Dales to look again at their proposals in the light of the report on their recent NPA Performance Assessment to identify whether (given no change in the Authority's composition) there are avenues for improving its engagement which have not yet been identified.
- d. impose a consistent maximum limit, possibly 8 years, on the period for which all members may serve.
- e. end the requirement for the Secretary of State to formally appoint the members whom the parishes have chosen, provided a suitable alternative appointing person can be identified. Although the legislation requires the Secretary of State to appoint these members, the Government has always made clear that, provided a fair selection system is in place, it will never challenge the parishes' choice. The issue is therefore a pragmatic one as to whether a suitable alternative can be found.
- f. end the requirement that parish seats may only be taken by parish councillors (or chairmen of parish meetings) so that anyone who lived within a National Park parish would be eligible. This has been requested in some areas but would not be wanted in others - the Government proposes to apply it only in those areas where it is sought.
- g. rather than seek to introduce annual appraisals for all members, ask Authorities to produce an annual report on the collective performance of the membership, its achievements and milestones. This recognises the need to improve performance without affecting the autonomy of local authorities /parishes to select and 'manage' their appointees.
- h. ask Natural England and the NPAs to review the way they work together, leading to the possibility of repealing any of NE's remaining powers which are considered redundant.
- i. Await the North York Moors' report on whether parts of the National Park service could be better delivered by social enterprises.
- j. remove the political balance requirement on local authorities when appointing their members because of its potential to work against the appointment of local members who represent the National Park area.

List of respondents

Annex A

Respondent	Respondent
A M Harding	Braemore Parish Council
A Phipps	Brian Jackson (via Julian Smith MP)
Adrian Russell Associates Architects	Brian Johnson
AG Jennings	Brian Tarnoff
Alison Bolton	Bridford Parish Council
Allerdale Borough Council	Brighton and Hove City Council
Amanda Steers	British Mountaineering Council
Andrew Brockelhurst	Broads Reed and Sedge Cutters Association
Andy Saunders	Broads Society
Andy Symons	Brockenhurst Parish Council
Angela Web and Elizabeth Cox	Bronwen & Anthony Slack
Angmering Parish Council	Bryan C Read
Angus CC	Buckfastleigh Town Council
Anna Craven (via Julian Smith MP)	Buriton Parish Council
Anonymous (Peak District)	Burley Parish Council
Anonymous (Dartmoor)	C Adams
Arkengarthdale Parish Council	Calver Parish Council
Assoc.of Caravanning & Camping Exem.Orgs.	Campaign for National Parks
Association of Rural Communities	Carl Singer
Ballidon & Bradbourne Parish Council	Catherine Law
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Centre for Rural Economy
Belaugh Parish Meeting	Charlesworth Parish Council
Bill Breakwell	Chelmorton Parish Council
Bilsdale Midcable Parish Council	Cheshire East Council
Blawith and Subberthwaite Parish Council	Chilterns Conservation Board
Bootle Parish Council	Chris Armstrong
Borrowdale Parish Council	Chris Edwards
Christine Chapman	Dartmoor Society
Clare King	David Rowlands
Cllr Alan Stripp, Harbottle Parish Council	DC Waight
Cllr Anne Bell, Netherton & Biddlestone PC	Dean Prior Parish Council
Cllr C Jones (personal)	Debbie West
Cllr Carse, Falstone Parish Council	Delamore Estate (Gavin Dollard)
Cllr Heron	Derbyshire County Council
Cllr Jack A Sadler	Derbyshire Dales District Council
Cllr Jack Hasson, Hepple Parish Councillor	Des Thomas
Cllr Knights, Newborough Parish Councillor	Desmond Swayne MP
Cllr Wilkinson, Bellingham Parish Council	Devon Archaeological Society
Cllrs M Forrest and A Burns, Haltwhistle TC	Devon Association of Local Councils
Colton Parish Council	Devon County Council
Combe Martin Parish Council	Dr John Prideaux CBE
Ringwood & District Nat. History Society	Dr Julian Lewis MP
Community Council for Devon	Dr P M Jackson
Copythorne Parish Council	Dr S B Furness
Cornwood Parish Council	Duddon Parish Council
Cotswolds Conservation Board	Duncan Wise
Country Land and Business Association	Ed Bishop
CPRE	Edward Hunt
CPRE (Craven Branch)	Elizabeth Banks
Craven District Council	Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley Parish Council
Cumbria Association of Local Councils	Elsdon Parish Council
Cumbria County Council	Exmoor Society
Cumbria Tourism	Exmoor Uprising
Curbar Parish Council	FJ Westcott

D Jones	Friends of the Lake District
Dartmoor Access Forum	Friends of the Peak District
Dartmoor Commoners Association	Geoff Brown
Dartmoor Preservation Society	Gidleigh Parish Council
Graham Baker	Jack Heseltine (via Julian Smith MP)
Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement	Janet Nunn
Hampshire & Isle Wight Wildlife Trust	Jennifer Tubbs
Hampshire Association of Local Councils	Jim Brenan
Hampshire County Council	John & Marion Gregory
Hampshire Wildlife Trust	John Bradbury
Hannah Lane	John Poulter
Haslemere Society	John R Beaumont
Heather White	Joyce W Poulter
Herne & Broomfield Parish Council	Kathryn Whalley
High Peak Borough Council	Keith Butler
Historic Houses Association	Keith Izatt
Holmesfield Parish Council	Ken Parker
Holne Parish Council	Keswick Town Council
Horning Parish Council	Lake District National Park Partnership
Hugh Stoner	Landford Parish Council
Hyde Parish Council	Landmarc
Hythe & Dibden Parish Council	League Against Cruel Sports
Ian Harland (via Julian Smith MP)	Lewes District Council
Ian I Hancock	Longsleddale Parish Council
Ind. members of ENPA Standards Committee	Ludham Parish Council
Individual (Cllr Stan Collins)	Lynne Truell
Individual (John Farmer)	Lynton & Lynmouth Town Council
Individual (John Tallentine)	M Games
Individual (Patrick Panton)	Maggie Deacon
Individual (Veronica Boulton)	Mark Duchamp
Ingleby Greenhow Parish Council	Mark Oliver
Ingram Public Meeting	Mark Wilson
Ioan Richard	Marrick Parish Council
J Hancock	Martin Hart
J Spreyer	Martin Ryall
Matthew Gravener	NFU (Norfolk branch)
Melchet Park & Plaitford Parish Council	Nigel Dixon (Keep confidential)
Member of public	Norfolk & Suffolk Boating Association
Methodist Churches in South Yorkshire	Norfolk Association of Local Councils
Michael Parslow	Norfolk Wildlife Trust
Michael Seddon	North West Development Agency
Mike Bowles	North Yorkshire County Council
Milford-on-Sea Parish Council	Northumberland Association of Local Councils
Ministry of Defence (Defence Estates)	Northumberland Council
Miss S Davis	Norwich Canoe Club
Mollie Howes	Oldham Council
Mortonhampstead Development Trust	One Voice
Mr L & Mrs E Nightingale	Open Spaces Society
Mrs Charlotte Riddoch	P Coleman
Mrs Chris Marshallsay	Parish Council of Burrator
Mrs Diana Kenning	Patrick Webster
NAAONB	Paul Brandwood
National Trust	Paul Newman
National Trust (Midlands office)	Peak District Green Lane Alliance
Natural England	Peak District Local Access Forum
Neil Manning	Peak Horsepower
Netherton and Biddlestone Parish Council	Peak Park Parishes' Forum
New Forest Access Forum	Peter Bate

New Forest Association	Peter Frost
NF Partnership & Fed. of Small Businesses	Peter Thorn
New Forest Commoners Defence Association	Peter Waller
New Forest Consultative Panel	Phil Macari
New Forest District Council	Philip Lawson
New Forest History & Archaeology Group	Plasterdown Grouped Parish Council
New Milton Town Council	Prof David Hill
NFU	R C Pennington
R D Sidebottom	South Downs Advisory Forum (Executive panel)
R Kelly	South Downs Network
Rainow Parish Council	South Downs Society
Ramblers Association	South Hams DC (Cllr M Lawrence)
RC Pennington	South Lakeland District Council
Rebecca Casa Hatton Peterborough CC	South Norfolk Council
Redlynch Parish Council	Staffordshire County Council
Resident A (Northumberland)	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Resident B (Northumberland)	Stanton in Peak Parish Council
Resident C (Northumberland)	Steve King
Richmondshire DC	Steve Read
Ringwood & District Natural History Society	Stoney Middleton Parish Council
Ringwood Town Council	Storrington and Sullington Parish Council
Rob Good	Suffolk County Council
Robert Latimer	Susan Swire (via Julian Smith MP)
Robert Savage	SW Uplands Federation
Rocking the Boat	Swanmore Parish Council
Rowlands Castle Parish Council	Sway Parish Council
Rowsley Parish Council	T A Heyes
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	Taddington and Priestcliffe Parish Council
Royal Town Planning Institute	Test Valley Borough Council
Royal Yachting Association	The Environmental Network for Pembrokeshire
Sakamactnar	Throwleigh and Murchington Parish Council
Shaugh Prior Parish Council	Trevelyan Evans
Sheffield City Council	Trevor Townsend
Sheldon Parish Council	Twice Brewed Public Meeting
Singleton Parish Council (Sue Farham)	Ugborough Parish Council
Sir Michael Harrison	Underskiddaw Parish Council
Somerset County Council	Unknown (National)
Somerton Parish Council	Unknown (South Downs)
South Brent Parish Council	Verderers of the New Forest
Veronica Boulton	Winster Parish Council
Wabertwaite & Corney Parish Council	Wootton Courtenay Parish Council
West Devon Borough Council	Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes Alliance
West Sussex County Council	Yorkshire Dales Society
Whitlingham Boathouses	Yorkshire Local Councils Associations
Wiggonholt Association	Youlgrave Parish Council
William Moss	

Government response to NPA proposals

Annex B

NATIONAL CHANGES						
Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
Whether there should be a change to the maximum service of members (currently 10 years for 'national' members and no limit for local authority and parish members).	It is proposed that there should be a common limit for all members of 8 years.	The Government sees no case for this to vary between authorities and, in the light of the consultation as a whole, has decided to limit all appointments, probably to 8 years (which ordinarily will equate to two terms).	<p>Clause 3 of the Public Bodies Bill (if enacted) will be used to amend the Environment Act 1995.</p> <p>In the mean time this rule can be applied to 'national' members administratively by Secretary of State not making any re-appointments which would go beyond the new limit .</p>	Defra	Consultation will take place under clause 10 of the Public Bodies Bill and, as appropriate, an Order will then be laid under Clause 3 of that legislation.	This will follow enactment of the Public Bodies Bill.
Removing the requirement for Secretary of State to appoint parish members.	Agree	The legislation requires the Secretary of State to appoint parish members - though the choice is made by the parishes themselves and Defra has made clear that, provided the parishes follow a fair process for selecting their members, the Secretary of State	Clause 3 of the Public Bodies Bill (if enacted) will be used to amend the Environment Act 1995.	Defra	Consultation will take place under clause 10 of the Public Bodies Bill and, as appropriate, an Order will then be laid under Clause 3 of that legislation.	This will follow enactment of the Public Bodies Bill.

		will always appoint the people they choose. The Government agrees that the Secretary of State's role is purely administrative and will remove it provided that a suitable alternative person can be identified to make the appointments.				
Allow parishes to select members who are not serving parish councillors (or chairs of parish meetings).	Agree but only for those Authorities which want this change.	The Government accepts that this will widen the pool of people from which members can be drawn and so agrees to make the change in those Authorities where it has been requested. It also accepts, however, that in some NPAs it is felt important for parish members to have a constitutional link with the parish councils and so will not make the change in those Authorities.	Clause 3 of the Public Bodies Bill (if enacted) will be used to amend the Environment Act 1995.	Defra	Defra will ask each NPA to confirm whether or not this is a change which it wishes to see in its area. Consultation will then take place under clause 10 of the Public Bodies Bill and, as appropriate, an Order will then be laid under Clause 3 of that legislation.	This will follow enactment of the Public Bodies Bill.
Consistent performance assessments for all	Partly agree	Secretary of State members are currently given	n/a	Defra in consultation with	Defra will issue guidance on what the collective	To be included in the 2012/13 NPA annual reports

members		annual appraisals by the Chairman which influences the Secretary of State's decision on whether to offer them further term(s) of appointment. NPAs are encouraged to run a performance assessment for other members with the detail being decided by individual NPAs. The Government understands the case for applying rigorous performance assessment process to all members but would not want that system to cut across the right of local authorities and parishes to appoint whom they choose and reach their own views on performance. It will therefore ask the Chair of each NPA to publish annually a <u>collective</u> assessment of how well his / her Authority members have performed		ENPAA	assessments should cover	published summer 2013.
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		over the previous year, including a value for money judgment.				
The energy and cost of commuting to meetings should be taken into account when selecting Secretary of State members	Partly agree	A connection with the National Park is already a desirable quality for Secretary of State members. However the Government is not persuaded that it would be possible to favour those candidates who live nearest without deterring other would-be applicants and thus weakening the pool from which members are selected.	n/a	Defra	Defra will explore further with the NPAs and NE whether any change to the current selection process is needed.	March 2012
The political balance requirement on local authorities when appointing their members	This specific requirement should be ended because of its potential to work against the appointment of local members who represent the National Park area. This is a technical change relating to NPA appointment, it has no impact on the way political	NPAs are not organised on party political lines and are not covered by the political balance rules. However, a local authority appointing 3 or more members to an NPA is required to apply a political balance (Schedule 1, Local	Clause 3 of the Public Bodies Bill if enacted.	Defra	If the Public Bodies Bill is enacted as currently drafted, then Defra will consult on these proposals in accordance with clause 10 and then, in the light of consultation, may lay an affirmative resolution Order to amend the 1989 Act.	Timing will depend on the progress of the Public Bodies Bill. It may be possible to make this change in time for the next round of county council appointments to NPAs in May 2013

	balance is handled more generally in either local government or the NPAs.	Government and Housing Act 1989). This can conflict with the expectation that local authorities will appoint councillors who represent wards within the national Park and /or have a close knowledge of it.				
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NATURAL ENGLAND CHANGES

Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
Natural England's remaining powers in respect of NPAs	These should be reviewed in the overall context of NPA-NE working relations	The Government is asking NE and the NPAs to review the current understanding of the way they work together and in the light of that will decide if any legislative changes are needed. The key statutory powers which NE retains in respect of	If necessary, under clause 5 of the Public Bodies Bill, if enacted	Initially, Natural England and the English National Park Authorities Association. Defra will lead if a need for legislative changes is identified.	NE to agree the review process with ENPAA	Summer 2012

		NPAs are : the right to be consulted by Defra about Secretary of State appointments; the right to be consulted by Defra about NPA grant; the right to be consulted by the NPA about its management plan; and the right to be consulted by NPAs about Nat. Park Officer appointments .				
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CHANGES FOR INDIVIDUAL AUTHORITIES

THE BROADS AUTHORITY						
Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
Retain the current size and composition of the Authority	Agree	The Authority has already reduced from 35 to 21 members	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
More guidance should be provided to assist in choosing local authority members, including a "person specification"	Agree		This will be advisory so needs no new power.	Broads Authority	BA to draft its guidance and send to its local authorities.	BA needs to issue its guidance before the next appointments are made - probably May 2013
The Authority wishes to formally review its structure of	Agree		To be addressed once the Review is complete and it is clear whether	Broads Authority	n/a	n/a

consultative groups, committees, and forums			the changes (if any) can be achieved administratively or need a change to legislation.			
No specific proposals for altering the engagement with local communities on planning or other issues	Agree		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

DARTMOOR NPA

Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
Reduce Authority from 22 members to 19 by removing 1 county, 1 district, and 1 Secretary of State member	Agree		The Environment Act 1995	Defra	Defra will issue a consultation document, specifying the precise changes it proposes, as required by the legislation. Depending on the outcome of that consultation, a negative resolution SI will be laid.	Expected to be May 2013 (to coincide with normal turn-over of members)
Greater involvement of the NPA in selecting Secretary of State members	Partly agree	The selection process is governed by guidance issued by the Office of the Commissioner for	n/a	Defra , Natural England ,and Dartmoor NPA	Defra, NE and the NPA will draw up a detailed procedure for handling future recruitment	New procedures adopted for the 2013 recruitment round

		Public Appointments. Defra will therefore agree with all the changes sought by the NPA which are consistent with the OCPA Code.			rounds in Dartmoor	
Better liaison between NPA and local authorities about the skills and experience which the NPA particularly needs in its members.	Agree		n/a	Dartmoor NPA	For the NPA to initiate with its constituent local authorities.	In time for the next round of appointments.
Strengthen existing forums	Agree		n/a	Dartmoor NPA	For the NPA to initiate	Summer 2012

EXMOOR NPA

Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
Remove 1 Secretary of State member and replace with an additional parish member, thus keeping 22 members in total.	Agree		The Environment Act 1995	Defra	Defra will issue a consultation document, specifying the precise changes it proposes, as required by the legislation. Depending on the outcome of that	Expected to be May 2013 (to coincide with normal turn-over of members).

					consultation, a negative resolution SI will be laid.	
Greater transparency in the selection of Secretary of state members.	Partly agree	The selection process is governed by guidance issued by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Defra will therefore agree with all the changes sought by the NPA which are consistent with the OCPA Code.	n/a	Defra , Natural England , and Exmoor NPA	Defra, NE and the NPA will draw up a detailed procedure for handling future recruitment rounds.	New procedures adopted for the 2013 recruitment round
Improved procedure for selecting parish members.	Agree		n/a	Exmoor NPA	The NPA will initiate with its constituent parish councils.	In time for the next round of appointments.
Hold an annual open meeting to encourage participation of young people in particular.	Agree		n/a	Exmoor NPA	The Authority will initiate.	Summer 2012
Refer to organisation in everyday usage as the National Park "Service" for Exmoor rather than "Authority".	Agree		n/a	Exmoor NPA	The Authority will initiate this change.	March 2012
Take advice from Standards Committee about ways of independently monitoring the work of the Authority in future.	Agree		n/a	Exmoor NPA	The Authority will initiate the change.	March 2012

Explore ways of improving public access to planning meetings and extend existing planning surgeries.	Agree		n/a	Exmoor NPA	The Authority will initiate the change	March 2012
Reschedule Authority and Committee meetings to improve efficiency.	Agree		n/a	Exmoor NPA	The Authority will initiate the change	December 2011

LAKE DISTRICT NPA

Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
Reduce from 22 members to 20 by removing 1 county, 1 district, and 1 secretary of state seat but adding 1 parish seat	Agree		The Environment Act 1995	Defra	Defra will issue a consultation document, specifying the precise changes it proposes, as required by the legislation. Depending on the outcome of that consultation, a negative resolution SI will be laid.	Expected to be April 2012 or May 2013 (to coincide with normal turn-over of members)
Continue to use the Lake District National Park Partnership as the main means of engaging with other	Agree		n/a	Lake District NPA	n/a	Immediate

interests.						
Explore further ways of raising the profile of the Authority with its communities to facilitate the exchange of views and information.	Agree		n/a	Lake District NPA	The NPA will initiate this work	March 2012
To continue a substantial programme of member training.	Agree		n/a	Lake District NPA	n/a	Immediate

NEW FOREST NPA

Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
The Authority supports the existing composition of its Authority but would be willing to explore the scope for introducing a proportion of directly elected members	Agree	The Government wishes to pursue the Authority's offer to introduce some directly-elected members, on a trial basis	Clause 3 of the Public Bodies Bill (if enacted) will be used to amend the Environment Act 1995. Under Clause 10 of the PBB a public consultation will be required.	Defra, in cooperation with the NPA.	Defra will discuss with the NPA how many members should be directly elected, over what trial period, and which of the existing posts they should replace.	This will follow enactment of the Public Bodies Bill
The selection process for all members should be more transparent	Agree	The selection process for the national members is governed by OCPA. Defra will liaise with NE and NFNPA on any improvements to the transparency of	n/a	New Forest NPA	The NPA will initiate discussions with its constituent local authorities and parishes and with NE in respect of Secretary of State	In time for the next round of appointments.

		the process.			appointments.	
New Forest Panel to be placed on a statutory footing	Further work requested	The Government would like a fuller report from the NPA on the benefits which would derive from altering the legal basis of this long-standing body.		New Forest NPA	New Forest NPA to provide a detailed report to Defra.	December 2012
Look at the need for some additional consultative forums	Agree		n/a	New Forest NPA	NPA to consider	December 2012

NORTHUMBERLAND NPA						
Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
Reduce Authority from 22 members to 18 by removing 4 Secretary of State members	Further work requested	The Government understands why the Authority proposes a reduction to 18 members but is not persuaded that an	The Environment Act 1995	Defra	NPA to consider	Summer 2012

		Authority with just 2,000 residents, contained within a single local authority area, needs even 18 members. It is therefore asking the Authority to consider a significantly smaller Authority and to report again on the viability of that option .				
Encourage parishes to appoint members who live in or have a direct link with the National Park.	Agree		n/a	Northumber-land NPA	The NPA will initiate a discussion with its constituent parish councils.	If possible, in time for the next round of appointments.

The Authority to have a greater role in the selection process of Secretary of State members	Partly agree	The selection process is governed by guidance issued by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Defra will therefore agree with all the changes sought by the NPA which are consistent with the OCPA Code.	n/a	Defra , Natural England , and Northumberland NPA	Defra, NE and the NPA will draw up a detailed procedure for handling future recruitment rounds in Northumberland	Summer 2012
Formalise the parish council Forum arrangements	Agree		n/a	Northumberland NPA	The NPA will initiate this work	Summer 2012
Introduce clear job roles and appraisals for members	Agree		n/a	Northumberland NPA	The NPA will initiate this work	Summer 2012
Co-opt people from under-represented groups to working groups as appropriate	Agree		n/a	Northumberland NPA	The NPA will initiate this work	Summer 2012
Enhance members' outward-facing role	Agree		n/a	Northumberland NPA	The NPA will initiate this work	Summer 2012
Extend training for parish councils	Agree		n/a	Northumberland NPA	The NPA will initiate this work	Summer 2012

NORTH YORK MOORS NPA

Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
Retain current size and composition of the Authority.	Agree	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Publish good practice guidance on selection of parish and local authority members.	Partly agree	The Government thinks that this is best achieved by discussions between the NPA and its constituent authorities.	n/a	North York Moors NPA	NPA to consider	Summer 2012
Investigate further the potential for part(s) of the Authority becoming a social enterprise.	Agree	n/a	n/a	North York Moors NPA .	A report will be produced for the Authority identifying the pros and cons of a social enterprise in the NPA context.	March 2013

PEAK DISTRICT NPA

Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
Retain the current size and mix of members	Partly agree	The Government is not persuaded that the Authority's current membership size and structure is best suited to meet local needs, and noted the relatively high number of responses to the consultation which called for directly elected members. It therefore intends to introduce some directly elected members to complement the trial in the New Forest.	Clause 3 of the Public Bodies Bill (if enacted) will be used to amend the 1995 Environment Act. Under Clause 10 of the PBB a public consultation will be required.	Defra, in cooperation with PDNPA.	Defra will discuss with the NPA how many members should be directly elected, over what trial period, and which of the existing posts they should replace.	This will follow enactment of the Public Bodies Bill
Improved selection process for all members	Partly agree		n/a	PDNPA	The NPA will initiate discussions with its constituent local authorities and parishes and with NE in respect of Sec. of State appointments.	In time for the next round of appointments.
Introduce a new forum for working with business.	Agree		n/a	PDNPA	The NPA has already initiated this forum	Summer 2012

Better linking of members to areas by looking at area forums, 'allocating' members to geographical areas, more community visits, and involving ward members who are not on the NPA.	Agree		n/a	PDNPA	The NPA will initiate this work	Summer 2012
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SOUTH DOWNS NPA

Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
No change to the number and mix of members.	Agree	The NPA has only been fully operational since April 2011 so it is too soon to review its structure .	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Establish a partnership group to develop the NP Management Plan, amongst other things, and review the guiding	Agree		n/a	SDNPA	The NPA is taking forward this work	March 2012

principle behind it in 12-18 months.						
Consult young people on improving engagement opportunities.	Agree		n/a	SDNPA	The NPA is taking forward this work	March 2012
Develop arrangements for regular dialogue with identified sectors (local authorities, conservation and environment groups farming, landowners /managers).	Agree		n/a	SDNPA	The NPA is taking forward this work	March 2012

YORKSHIRE DALES NPA

Issue	Government response	Comments	Statutory power under which the change will be made	Who will lead this change	Next steps	How/when will it be completed
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Retain current number and mix of members.	Agree	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Local authorities to have more regard to the NPA's needs when selecting members.	Partly agree	The Government thinks that this is best achieved by discussions between the NPA and its constituent authorities.	n/a	YDNPA	NPA to consider	March 2012
Members to take on a more championing role for the Authority.	Agree		n/a	YDNPA	The NPA will initiate this change	March 2012
Make greater use of member champions and parish forums to promote understanding of what the Authority does.	Agree		n/a	YDNPA	The NPA will initiate this change	March 2012
Develop new and innovative approaches to community engagement.	Further work requested.	Given that there is to be no change to the composition of the Authority, the Government thinks it is important that the Authority identifies other ways of working at the areas identified in its (generally favourable) National Park	n/a	YDNPA in discussion with Defra	The NPA is asked to re-examine the ways in which it engages with its communities and to make a further report on the scope for change by the end of 2011	Summer 2012

		Authority Performance Assessment.				
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A public consultation ran from 9 November 2010 to 1 February 2011. In the light of the responses , each Authority produced a list of proposed actions. This Plan shows the Government's response to the proposals put forward by each Authority and summarises how each will be taken forward.

This document and the consultation paper which preceded it are both available on Debra's website at www.defra.gov.uk

The proposals put forward by each Authority are on the individual Authority websites which can either be accessed directly or via the National Park portal at www.nationalparks.gov.uk