

11 November 2010.

Government calls for local debate on National Park governance

The Government has called for a public debate on how National Parks in England are managed and what additional measures the park authorities could take to strengthen the links with their local communities on issues like planning.

Local people and communities are being given the opportunity to share concerns and suggestions with their National Park Authority, or Broads Authority, as part of a consultation exercise just launched.

Natural environment minister Richard Benyon said: "National Parks are not just beautiful and historic parts of the countryside, but places where people live and work. They are an asset to our country, helping to boost the economy and attract new visitors, businesses and investment.

"This is a real chance for local communities to have a say in how we should look after our National Parks for everyone to enjoy for years to come."

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is carrying out a review of the management of the National Parks, including the Broads, to look for ways in which the governance of the NPAs can be made more effective and responsive as well as considering the extent to which different arrangements are appropriate for different NPAs.

John Riddle, chair of the English National Park Authorities Association, said: "National Park Authorities have a long history of working closely with the people who live in and near them.

"Our aim is to support thriving rural communities. We welcome this consultation and are keen to hear everyone's ideas for how we can further enhance our accountability to all those who value and benefit from national parks."

Defra will consider proposals for individual parks, together with suggestions that will affect all parks, and publish a response in Spring 2011.

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The Government is calling for the public to contribute ideas on ways to improve the way we care for one of England's biggest assets – our National Parks.

Local people and communities are being given the opportunity to share concerns and suggestions with their National Park Authority, or Broads Authority, as part of a consultation launched today.

Natural Environment Minister Richard Benyon said:

'National Parks are not just beautiful and historic parts of the countryside, but places where people live and work. They are an asset to our country, helping to boost the economy and attract new visitors, businesses and investment.

'This is a real chance for local communities to have a say in how we should look after our National Parks for everyone to enjoy for years to come.'

John Riddle, Chair of the English National Park Authorities Association, said:

'National Park Authorities have a long history of working closely with the people who live in and near them. These beautiful places are loved by millions, and local communities, land owners and a wide range of partners make a huge contribution to making them so special. Our aim is to support thriving rural communities. We welcome this consultation and are keen to hear everyone's ideas for how we can further enhance our accountability to all those who value and benefit from national parks.'

The consultation is part of a review that will:

- look for ways to improve the areas that are cared for by the National Park Authorities (NPAs);
- look for ways to make the NPAs more responsive to the concerns of their local communities, whilst continuing to operate within the existing statutory purposes and their budgets; and
- consider the extent to which different arrangements are appropriate for different NPAs.

Defra will consider proposals for individual parks, together with suggestions that will affect all parks, and publish a response in Spring 2011.

Notes

1. Responses to the consultation will be collected by Defra. The consultation closes on 1st February 2011 and can be found on our consultation pages at www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/nationalpark-governance/index.htm
2. National Parks in England were designated under section 5 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. National Park Authorities were established under section 63 of the Environment Act 1995 to deliver the statutory National Park purposes. The Broads Authority was designated under the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988. There are ten National Parks including the Norfolk Broads.
3. National Parks are owned by a wide range of organisations. National Park Authorities work with private landowners, local communities, businesses, local authorities, tourism organisations, statutory environmental agencies and third sector bodies.