

**AVEBURY PARISH COUNCIL**  
**PROPOSED RESPONSE TO THE GLOVER LANDSCAPES REVIEW**  
**(item 10.a on the 24 February agenda)**

**A stronger mission for nature recovery**

6. We think that the powers of AONBs to manage development of the built environment within their borders should be enhanced. They must also be resourced - financially and with expert staff - to exercise those powers effectively. AONBs need to be capable of making decisions consistent with their brief to protect the landscapes for which they are responsible.

7. A key consideration must be the sustainability of access. In this context we insist on the word 'sustainable' with every mention of 'access,' especially enhanced access. We are in favour of encouraging the widest possible access to protected landscapes but only if that access does not damage or destroy. Reasonable wear and tear may repair itself naturally, even with the minimal and declining level of public authority maintenance typical of our times, but actual destruction of the surface does not. Much more effort needs to be made to stimulate an educated appreciation of the landscape. Communities should be encouraged to use whatever covered public space they have available to demonstrate the variety and fragility of their natural environment locally. Volunteer groups managing rights of way under the supervision of the relevant public authority should be encouraged.

**Agricultural transition**

8. Our local farmers have shown what can be done to revive and protect the landscape on which they work (see <https://www.spacefornature.net>). The role of similar initiatives in informing and educating the public is critical. Farmers are transitioning, willingly or otherwise, from pure agriculture to landscape management with agriculture (and, in many cases, with tourism, too). AONB support for the transition exists but needs to be enhanced.

### **A stronger mission for connecting people and places**

10. We support the proposition that AONBs should have a second purpose relating to connecting people and places. We need greater visibility of our AONBs in their local communities: in schools, colleges, social centres, parish meetings - everywhere in the relevant locality. The health benefits of access are increasingly understood by experts but not always well appreciated by members of the general public, especially - in current circumstances, why should they be? - by those living in urban areas some distance from an AONB. The network of rights of way provides a remarkable and interconnected resource. Sustainable access to it should be a core responsibility of our AONBs.

11. As noted in our response to Q7, we strongly support improved access to protected landscapes but only if that access is sustainable. Appreciation begins in primary school; appropriately supported, it will be followed by a deeper understanding that access must be sustainable. We need to recognise from an early age that our footprint must be light if others are not to be excluded from the access we ourselves enjoy.

13. Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices should be a last resort. This kind of enforcement comes after the event: hoping to discourage repetition by punishing the first transgression. It is far better to encourage 'good' behaviour. This may mean closing sections of rights of way completely or to certain categories of access or at particular times of the year. Deep ruts on rights of way constrict or prevent their use by pedestrians, cyclists, and horse-riders. There is little point in a farmer exercising self-restraint in ploughing no deeper than four inches over archaeologically sensitive land if there are ruts eighteen inches deep on an adjacent right of way, probably no less archaeologically sensitive. AONBs should have the power to close rights of way, even at short notice, if their duty of care for the natural landscape requires it to be exercised.

14. See the answer to Q13. We support public authorities being given additional powers to restrict recreational motor vehicle use on unsealed routes. As important is ensuring that these authorities have the resource to exercise those powers.

Without resource there can be no enforcement; without the capability to enforce, there can be no meaningful empowerment.

15. We find it hard to understand why recreational motor vehicle use in an AONB is thought to be appropriate. Our experience locally is that recreational motor vehicle use is not sustainable access. It follows that it should be prohibited.

17. We believe that there should be no exemptions to a ban on the use of recreational motor vehicles in an AONB. Indeed we would extend the ban to all motor vehicles. The only exemptions to such a ban should be for landscape managers, farmers, emergency vehicles, and businesses owners and residents whose properties fall within the AONB and for which there is no other access. Access should be gated and gates should be padlocked to prevent access to all except those authorised. Fences adjacent to the gates should be of a type able to resist removal by would-be illicit users.

#### **The role of AONB teams in planning**

18. We noted in response to Q6 that, in our view, AONBs should have enhanced powers to manage development of the built environment within their borders. That includes having visibility of neighbourhood and local plans in good time to be able to make substantive contributions to them. AONBs should be statutory consultees in this context. AONBs must be resourced - financially and with expert staff - to be effective in planning matters. They need to be capable of making decisions consistent with their brief to protect the landscapes for which they are responsible.

19. As noted in response to Q18, AONBs should be statutory consultees. They are the only authority whose sole interest is the protection of the landscape. In these straightened times, local planning authorities can too often be tempted to allow encroachments on the integrity of a protected landscape by the prospect of direct or indirect financial gain.

20. AONBs should be statutory consultees on all planning applications, probably on all those made within their area of jurisdiction but certainly on any requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment. AONBs should be expected to give an opinion on all developments with an actual or potential impact on protected sites, skylines, views, and biodiversity.

### **Local governance**

21. AONBs should be required to have representation on their boards from the parish and town councils within their area. If they are to have enhanced statutory powers, as is suggested, they must have a mandate for exercising them. This will come from having locally elected board members. These members would also act as a conduit along which information could flow in both directions. There needs to be some measure of democratic accountability.

### **A clearer role for public bodies**

22. We share the view that an AONB's statutory duties, if strengthened, should be given greater weight when exercising public functions.

23. Statutory duties should always be clear. If there is lack of clarity, it should be addressed. An AONB's management plan should be transparent about its objectives. It should also be clear about the process and the powers required to make measurable progress towards those objectives.