

Environment Minister confirms no changes to Designated Landscapes

Speaking to AMs today, the Minister confirmed the designated landscapes review process, which has been ongoing since 2013, will draw to a close with the publication of a policy statement in the coming months.

In May 2017, the Future Landscapes Working Group, chaired by Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, published a review of Wales' National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

The Group was established to explore the recommendations of the Marsden Report into the future of Wales' designated landscapes, which provided 69 wide-ranging recommendations.

During a plenary debate last June, the future protection of Wales' designated landscapes under the current Welsh Government was called into question. Today the Minister sought to reassure all concerned parties the Welsh Government will not be changing the purposes of National Parks or AONBs.

In an Oral Statement in the National Assembly, Hannah Blythyn said:

“Designated landscapes have been in a state of review since a draft policy statement was consulted on in 2013.

“Today I want to settle some of the key questions on the Government's position and to give this Assembly the opportunity to get a sense of my priorities before I publish a policy statement in the coming months which will bring the review process to a close.

“I welcome the thorough and thought provoking reviews and reports of Professor Marsden and his panel and Lord Elis-Thomas and the Future Landscapes Working Group.

“The process of review has ingrained a new way of working between Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and stakeholders where they now share a much greater understanding of the national priorities which they can help to address by working together.

“My priority over the coming months will be to work with the Park Authorities and AONB partnerships on our contemporary Welsh approach to ecosystems and landscapes, while recognising the enduring value of their original purpose.

“I am committed to ensuring Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks are valued for their natural beauty by our people, communities and country and our designated landscapes deliver rich ecosystems, vibrant and resilient communities and opportunities for outdoor recreation for all of the people of Wales.”