

Burton Bradstock Parish Council

Background on the Proposed Dorset National Park

The case for a National Park in Dorset and East Devon was originally put forward in 2013 by the Dorset and East Devon National Park Group, with further evidence submitted in 2014 and 2018. This initially suggested an area covering the Dorset and East Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and what remains of Thomas Hardy's Egdon Heath between Dorchester and Wareham.

Dorset CPRE, in its submission to the Glover Review, has suggested that, subject to Natural England's detailed assessment, the National Park should align with the new Dorset Council boundary. The evidence to support such a case, based on National Park designation criteria, needs to be assembled and its coverage and quality assessed.

The Dorset National Park team is driven by keen volunteers with a strong support base in the Purbecks. The proposed National Park it is argued would significantly strengthen and build on the good work undertaken by the Dorset AONB. The key point of difference being that National Parks have historically had significantly more resources and powers than AONB partnership and would therefore do a better job for the nationally important habitats and cultural heritage of Dorset.

Resources - The premise is that National Park status would mean significantly more resources are directed to conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the designated area. AONBs and NPs are directly funded by Defra but AONBs budgets are smaller and made up with local authority contributions, NPs are 100% government funded. For example South Downs AONB budget grew significantly (approx by £10m) when it became a national park.

Duties - The duties of the National Park are broader than AONBs and includes duties to support enjoyment of the area, sustainable economic development and social well being.

Housing - seen as the big win by many concerned at the impact of government driven housing numbers in Dorset. The reasoning is that National Park Authorities are not subject to government housing targets and need only provide for affordable local need. This would be a game changer in Dorset planning. However, some argue the impacts on house prices

Tourism economy - Again the thinking is that greater resources and higher status would be good for the local tourism economy. However, the impact of additional numbers of visitors could present unintended consequences.

Planning powers - Dorset AONB is not a statutory consult on planning. There are different models for how a NP engage in the planning process, either as the Planning Authority itself or contracting planning to the existing LPAs. Either way NP objectives play a stronger role in planning decisions than AONBs.

Glover Review 2019

Looked at the current arrangements for management of protected areas in England. The review also committed to assess whether there is scope for the current network of 34 AONBs and 10 National Parks to be expanded.

The Government is yet to respond to the Review's recommendations - expectation is that the government will announce a creation of a National Landscape Service, bringing management of NPs and AONBs into alignment, possibly creating more 'National Landscape Areas'?? Dorset NP is part of the mix and could be given a green light for more detailed assessment of the merits?

Dorset CPRE supports a National Park to benefit all of Dorset. For example, it says a National Park would:

➤ Partner with the Dorset Council to support its work, bringing additional resources and expertise including additional central Government funding; this would free some council funding for other priorities. National Parks are government-funded and are not a charge on residents or businesses.

► Partner with the Dorset Council to develop and consult on a future shared Local Plan reflecting housing and economic needs for the whole Dorset Council area, including for affordable homes. Dorset CPRE wants a National Park to include as much as possible of rural Dorset. It points to the exceptional interest, qualities and attributes of all rural Dorset.

See:

<https://dorset-cpre.org.uk/news/current-news/item/2230-evidence-for-national-park-rural-dorset>