



**Suffolk & Essex  
Coast & Heaths**  
National  
Landscape



**Dedham Vale**  
National  
Landscape  
& Stour Valley

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To: LGRconsultationresponse@communities.gov.uk

**A joint response from the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape Partnership and Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley Partnership to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government consultation on Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation**

The term National Landscape is used throughout this response. National Landscapes are the brand name for the legally designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Where the term National Landscape Partnerships is used in this response it refers to the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape Partnership and Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley Partnership.

**Introduction**

This response is made on behalf of two National Landscape Partnerships. Each National Landscape Partnership is an unconstituted body whose role it is to act as advocate and champion for a designated landscape. This includes supporting delivery of their purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty, particularly through activities set out in the National Landscape statutory Management Plans.

The National Landscape Partnerships do not advocate for a particular model of Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk or Essex, as Local Authorities with different views are represented on both National Landscape Partnerships. The purpose of this response from the National Landscape Partnerships is not to advocate for a particular model of Local Government Reorganisation, but to ensure that the responsibilities for the National Landscapes in any future unitary local government is clearly recognised and implemented.

It is important to note that many of the organisations represented on the two Partnerships, including several private and environmental Non-Government Organisations, will have their own thoughts on Local Government Reorganisation and in

some cases advocating for particular models. This joint Partnership response seeks to articulate a view that is in the best interests of the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape and the Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley, rather than express the view of any Partner organisation.

It is worth noting that that this response relates to the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation for Suffolk and Essex as both National Landscapes and associated project areas cover parts of both counties.

## **Response**

The overview of the National Landscape Partnerships is that:

- Any demonstratable cost savings to the public purse while maintaining service delivery by the replacement of the two-tier council system with the unitary system should be welcomed.
- Where a unitary system is introduced, there should be provision within the structure to ensure local voices are heard when forming policy and taking decisions, to ensure all voices are heard.

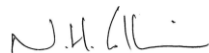
With specific reference to National Landscapes, any new authority should:

- Be classified as a relevant authority and as such be subject to section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Wat Act (2000) as amended by section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023).
- Maintain, or increase, current levels of National Landscape funding. If savings are made in other areas, levels of current funding from current district and county councils should be increased, to ensure that a full allocation of DEFRA funding can be drawn down for the running of the National Landscape staff team and running costs for the National Landscape Partnerships.
- Any new authorities created by the Local Government Reorganisation process should play an active part in the National Landscape's Joint Advisory Committees (the group of funders that provide strategic direction and ensuring appropriate use of funds by the National Landscape staff team) and the National Landscape Partnerships.
- Unitary Authorities created by the Local Government Reorganisation process should ensure appropriate representation on National Landscape Partnerships and Joint Advisory Committees. This should include councillors with appropriate authority (preferably Cabinet members / relevant portfolio holders), and officers of sufficient seniority with appropriate knowledge and capacity to enable appropriate decision making.
- Recognise the national significance of National Landscapes and the benefits that can accrue from the National Landscape to both Essex and Suffolk including:
  - Benefits to economic prosperity (tourism and securing grant aid),
  - Societal benefits to physical and mental health and wellbeing,

- Environmental benefits, supporting delivery of statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategies and of environmental policy at local and national level.
- Any Unitary Authority formed by the Local Government Reorganisation process should adopt the existing statutory National Landscape management plans.
- Any Unitary Authority formed by the Local Government Reorganisation process should acknowledge section 89 (2) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) requiring them to produce and review a National Landscape management plan every five years.
- Any Unitary Authority formed by the Local Government Reorganisation process should acknowledge their responsibilities in considering National Landscapes during planning determinations, including what is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Statements, Local Plans and other relevant policy.

The National Landscape Partnerships welcome the opportunity to take part in the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government consultation on proposals for Local Government Reorganisation.

Yours sincerely,



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Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths  
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