



# Proposed Designation of a New Yorkshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

This factsheet provides summary information with regard to the consultation currently under way on the proposed designation of a new Yorkshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It also explains how to find further information about the project. The consultation will run from 8 October 2024 until 13 January 2025.

## Natural England

Natural England is the government agency with special responsibility for designating National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and for reviewing their boundaries. We are currently considering designating a new Yorkshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We also have other responsibilities for the natural environment.

You can find out more about our work at:

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england)

## Natural England and AONBs

Natural England has powers to designate AONBs, or vary the boundaries of AONBs, as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Section 82(1) of the CROW Act defines an AONB as an area which appears to Natural England to be of such outstanding natural beauty that it is desirable that the provisions of Part IV of the Act should apply to it for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the area's natural beauty.

Part IV of the CROW Act can be found at [legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk) [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

## How does Natural England decide which areas should be designated as AONB?

In deciding whether to designate an AONB, Natural England must first consider whether the area has outstanding natural beauty and then whether designation is desirable for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the area's natural beauty. This decision requires Natural England to address three questions:

1. Does the area have sufficient natural beauty to be considered outstanding?
2. Is it desirable for the purpose set out above, to designate this area as AONB?
3. If answers to 1 and 2 are yes, then where should the boundary be drawn?

## How does Natural England consider the above questions?

Natural England has produced Guidance which sets out how it evaluates natural beauty as well as the desirability of designation and the criteria used to identify detailed boundaries: Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England (2021) (also referred to in this document as the Natural England Guidance).

If Natural England decides that an area has sufficient natural beauty and that it is desirable to designate, the next step is to identify a suitable detailed boundary. Natural beauty rarely changes suddenly and one of the criteria states that where there is an area of transition in natural beauty, a boundary should be drawn towards the high quality end of the area of transition, to include areas of high quality land and exclude areas of lesser quality. In other words the boundary should be drawn conservatively.

The CRoW Act also requires Natural England to undertake a statutory Local Authority consultation and a statutory Notice Period prior to reaching a final decision. This project is at the statutory consultation stage and we have extended the consultation to everyone, so the public and other organisations can comment on the proposals.

## Which areas are being consulted on as a proposed new Yorkshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

The proposed area for designation as a Yorkshire Wolds AONB comprises two discrete areas as follows:

- An inland area: comprising the north and west escarpment of the Wolds, the foothills south of Malton and the High Wolds and their valley systems;
- A coastal area: extending between Reighton and Sewerby Rocks.

## Who makes the final decision?

It is Natural England's responsibility to decide whether to designate an area as AONB. Any decision would be made by the Natural England Board, having considered the evidence and the results of the statutory and public consultation and the following Notice Period. Any designation Order would not take effect however unless and until confirmed by the Secretary of State (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)). The Secretary of State has the power to call a Public Inquiry if minded to do so.

## What is the expected timescale?

If Natural England determines that a new AONB for the Yorkshire Wolds should be designated, then following the statutory Notice Period, we would hope to submit a legal Order to the Secretary of State for a decision in around mid 2026. It is not possible to say how long the Secretary of State's decision would take.

## What are the implications if designation goes ahead?

Any areas that become a part of a new Yorkshire Wolds AONB would have the benefit of the national status that designation brings and the statutory protection this provides. They would be fully reflected in future AONB Management Plans and benefit from the resources and skills of an AONB Management Team. Ownership of land remains unchanged within an AONB, and there is no restriction on how land is farmed, although some Permitted Development Rights would change to ensure that any development does not harm the natural beauty of the area. All planning decisions continue to be made by the existing local planning authorities, albeit with specific policies in the Local Plan which reflect the national importance of the AONB. There is no presumption against development in an AONB nor are there any changes to access rights over and above those that already exist.

## How to comment on Natural England's proposals and view more information

If you wish to send us your comments about these proposals, you can find more information about the proposed new Yorkshire Wolds AONB and complete the online response form by going to <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/ne-landscape-heritage-and-geodiversity-team/yorkshire-wolds-designation/> or by completing the response form in the Consultation Pack and returning it to Natural England in the pre-paid envelope.

You can also view supporting documents, such as the technical assessments and the Natural England Guidance document, by going to <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/ne-landscape-heritage-and-geodiversity-team/yorkshire-wolds-designation/>. Hard copies of supporting documents are also available to view at local libraries and consultation events.

Further copies of the Consultation Pack can be obtained by email:  
[YorksWoldsDesignationProject@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:YorksWoldsDesignationProject@naturalengland.org.uk)

Or by phoning 0300 060 3900 and requesting a pack.

