



## **Consultation on New Homes Bonus – Sharpening the Incentive**

### **A response by National Parks England**

**10 March 2016**

#### **Introduction**

1. National Parks England supports the policy-making process by co-ordinating the views of the nine English National Park Authorities (NPAs) and the Broads Authority. It is governed by the Chairs of the ten authorities. Our response represents the collective view of officers who are working within the policies established by the NPAs and Broads Authority. It should be noted that all references to 'National Parks' in this response refer to the nine National Parks and the Broads. We are happy for our response to be made publicly available and would be happy to discuss any of the points we make further with officials if that would be helpful.

#### **Summary**

2. We welcome the opportunity to comment on sharpening the use of the New Homes Bonus. NPAs are the local planning authority and therefore assess needs, develop local plans and make decisions about the housing needs of our resident population. We are not housing authorities, although we work in partnership with a range of social housing providers to ensure schemes come to fruition. We note the acknowledgement of our role in the consultation paper. However, the proposals for sharpening the use of the New Homes Bonus in no way address the current inequality that exists in which NPAs are the only LPAs in the country to not directly receive NHB.
3. Although the consultation helpfully points out that "*the original scheme design for the New Homes Bonus did, however, make clear that billing authorities were expected to discuss with National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority the use of Bonus receipts in their areas*". We would ask what monitoring CLG have undertaken to ascertain how many have done so?

4. Our experience has been that very few local authorities have willingly entered into negotiations and in only one case has this actually led to funding being transferred to the NPA. Given the budgetary outlook and the fact that some local authorities have mainstreamed NHB into their hard stretched budgets, we see little likelihood for them to transfer funds in this way. In our view this will not happen without a national change.
5. The current situation has a negative impact on our ability to promote local needs affordable housing in our National Parks where incomes are generally low and house prices particularly high. There is no compulsion on local authorities to ensure proceeds from decisions made on housing in National Parks (by NPAs) is then spent by the local authority on local needs housing schemes in the National Park. This means that the scheme is perceived as inequitable and puts National Park communities at a disadvantage.
6. The current process is also inefficient in that it requires the NPAs to engage in lengthy negotiations that require staff time - which itself is limited - and that could be better used in other ways. National Parks England therefore would recommend that amendments are made to the system in order that NPAs can receive NHB directly.
7. The question on page 18 of the consultation paper has little significance for NPAs since it simply seeks confirmation that there should be no NPA exclusion. Since the money doesn't go to NPAs direct anyway an exclusion would make little sense. We therefore see no need for a National Park exclusion.

National Parks England  
10 March 2016