



Dear Councillor

CABINET - TUESDAY, 21 APRIL 2026

I am now able to enclose for consideration at the above meeting the following supplement following the publication of the agenda.

**Agenda Item
No.**

4. SELF-DESIGNATION OF THE GREAT OUSE VALLEY WAY(Pages 3 - 4)

To receive a report providing an update on partnership working with the GOVT and outlining the case for self-designation of the GOV and Washes as a national landscape – based on the outputs derived from a jointly commissioned piece of work undertaken by Arkwood.

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Officers are aware of email correspondence that has been received by Members from the Great Ouse Valley Trust on Monday 13th April 2026.

This supplement intends to respond to the points raised:

1. Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) acknowledges the correspondence undertaken during Spring 2025 between previous Officers and the Great Ouse Valley Trust (GOVT). This was regarding a collaborative partnership to develop a business case for self-designation of the Great Ouse Valley landscape. HDC can confirm that the agreed funding contribution of £20,000 total (£10,000 from HDC and £10,000 from GOVT) was paid to commission the consultants, Arkwood. This accords with the partnership approach discussed at the time.
2. HDC recognises that GOVT has pursued national landscape designation (formerly AONB) since 2014 and that the Trust's £10,000 contribution represented a significant commitment given its wider responsibilities.
3. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and associated project agreements were developed jointly by HDC officers and the GOVT. The details of this MoU are discussed in the 'Consultation' section of the paper presented at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on Wednesday 1st April 2026.
4. Arkwood submitted the final report, "Business Case for Landscape Self-Designation" on 22nd December 2025. This report identifies benefits associated with self-designation but also highlights the need for substantial further financial and governance investment to progress beyond the initial business case stage.
5. GOVT and Council officers did correspond regarding proposed next steps, including the potential formation of a joint GOH Action Group with key stakeholders. Officers confirmed that arrangements were being made to take the business case through the Overview and Scrutiny process and that GOVT would be updated once timings were confirmed. Officer recommendations from the main report are shaped by current resourcing constraints, the discretionary nature of this work, and organisational uncertainty linked to Local Government Reorganisation. These factors inform the recommendation **at this point in time** and do not diminish the quality of the Arkwood report, the validity of its findings, or HDC's long standing shared ambition to protect and enhance the Great Ouse Valley landscape. The Arkwood report itself recognises that further work would be required, at additional cost, beyond the current scope, with no identified source of funding.
6. Members are assured that the reference to the "Great Ouse Valley **Way**" (**emphasis added**) in the report's title and again in paragraph 3 of the recommendation is a legacy terminology issue linked to Arkwood's analytical framework. It does not indicate that the report concerns the long-distance footpath only. All content, conclusions and recommendations relate to the landscape self-designation and are correct.
7. Officers note the alternative recommendations presented by the GOVT; and for the reasons set out in the report, suggest that these are not carried forward. Officers also note the recommendations of the O&S panel which would also be at odds with the GOVT recommendations.

8. We note that there is reference to an AGM scheduled to take place on 18th April, with specific reference given to the title of a presentation to be given. We have no comments to make on this, particularly given the timing relative to the formal decision-making process at HDC.

HDC remains committed to collaborative working with the Great Ouse Valley Trust within the principles of Enable and Influence. The Council values the Trust's sustained investment, expertise and advocacy and recognises the Great Ouse Valley as a landscape of exceptional local and regional importance. While current operational and strategic constraints affect the ability to progress self-designation work at this time, HDC welcomes continued constructive engagement as circumstances evolve and opportunities arise.