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**From Richard Benyon MP**  
Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries

*Dear Narinder*

I am writing to you to ask for your collective views on how to take forward this review.

You will be aware that the Coalition Agreement said:

“We will review the governance arrangements of National Parks in order to increase local accountability”

During my recent visit to the Northumberland National Park I was shown many examples of where the NPA's add value to both local and national priorities. At this stage I am not attracted to change the basic structure of the NPAs or their functions. However, there are three areas where I think there may be scope to make the existing bodies much more effective and accountable. I should be grateful for your thoughts on these areas and I am very happy to meet you and your colleagues to explore them further - perhaps at one of your periodic meetings of Chairmen.

The first area is on using existing mechanisms to make your work more visible to local communities and more aligned with their hopes and ambitions. I will be looking to see how much more can be achieved within the existing structures and I will be especially interested to see proposals for deeper local engagement, working across local authority boundaries.

The second is in the size and operating arrangements of your boards. I understand that, despite the reductions some years ago, your boards remain relatively large compared to your budgets and functions and that you operate on a fairly traditional local authority model. I should therefore like to explore whether these board arrangements are the most

effective or whether smaller boards, perhaps with greater use of lead members or similar, would be a better approach.

Finally, I would like to explore the relationship that you have with Local Authorities and how we might introduce arrangements to improve the democratic deficit - either informally or through legislative means.

It would be helpful if we could meet you and the other Chairs so we can discuss possible future governance arrangement.

*Yours sincerely*

*Richard.*

**RICHARD BENYON MP**