

Proving the importance of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

LUC

The Challenge

- Produce an impactful submission for the government's independent review of National Parks and AONBs

The Benefits

- Greater clarity about role of these landscapes
- Strong evidence to inform recommendations
- A powerful tool for raising awareness
- Insight to inform future planning

Working on behalf of CPRE, the countryside charity, an award-winning environmental consultancy, LUC, has revealed indisputable evidence of the importance of England's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). LUC conducted advanced geospatial analysis with ArcGIS and created an interactive story map, which has played a pivotal role in informing the recommendations of an independent review.

The Challenge

Seventy years after legislation was first passed to protect England's finest landscapes, the government commissioned an independent review of the country's 10 National Parks and 34 AONBs. This review was a direct response to a commitment in the government's 25-year Environment Plan and was led by Julian Glover and a panel of experts. It aimed to understand how to do things better, including how to connect more people with these landscapes and how to enhance biodiversity.

The Glover Review panel issued a public call for evidence, asking a range of questions about how National Parks and AONBs could be improved in the future. CPRE, the countryside charity, aimed to submit a detailed response and wanted an innovative way to communicate the value of these landscapes. It therefore appointed LUC to conduct geospatial analysis and uncover factual information that it could use to support its recommendations and have a significant impact.

The Solution

LUC used Esri's ArcGIS platform, including the Esri Network Analyst and Spatial Analyst tools, to investigate a wide range of societal, environmental and cultural issues relating to the National Parks and AONBs. LUC searched Esri's Living Atlas for relevant data, used open data from government sources and its own extensive data libraries. "We put Esri's geoprocessing tools to the test with a range of national datasets," says Diana Manson, Head of GIS and Visualisation at LUC. "ArcGIS enabled us to delve into diverse topics and analyse over 30 layers of data to gain a far deeper understanding of issues relating to the role of England's protected landscapes today."

As part of the project, LUC recommended presenting the ArcGIS analysis in a story map format, an idea that CPRE's Rural Enhancement Lead, Emma Marrington, describes as "completely genius!" LUC used Esri's 'Cascade' story map format to display its ArcGIS analysis in a series of maps, with short explanations of key points, and communicate its findings in a very visual way. This story map succeeded in making CPRE's submission really stand out from the other 2,500 contributions, which were made to the landscapes review.

While the ArcGIS story map was created specifically for the review panel, it actually reached a much wider audience. Julian Glover shared the story map publicly on Twitter, describing it as "brilliant and fascinating" (29 January 2019). CPRE subsequently promoted the story map in the media, gaining coverage in national newspapers and national and regional TV. During the consultation period alone, the story map was viewed over 2,100 times, with more than 200 views on a single day.



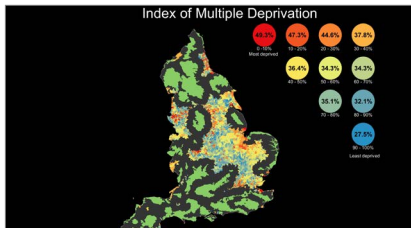
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Diana Manson, Head of GIS and Visualisation, LUC



An ArcGIS story map reveals that almost half of the most deprived areas of England are not well-served by the current network of protected landscapes

The Benefits

Greater clarity about the role of National Parks and AONBs

The spatial analysis that LUC undertook using ArcGIS enabled CPRE to evaluate the significance of protected landscapes more precisely. For example, the ArcGIS analysis revealed that National Parks and AONBs are home to an enormous number of cultural heritage assets, including 41% of England’s Scheduled Monuments, 27% of Registered Parks and Gardens, 17% of listed buildings and 92% of World Heritage Sites (increased by the Lake District being awarded the status in 2017). This helped CPRE to demonstrate how important protected landscapes are for preserving the nation’s cultural heritage.

Strong evidence to inform recommendations

Critically, the ArcGIS analysis and story map gave the independent review panel accurate, statistical evidence that it could use to help formulate its recommendations. For example, this evidence meant that the panel could see that 36% of the population (19 million people) live more than 15 miles by road from a National Park or AONB, and almost half of people in the most deprived communities are not well-served by the current network of protected landscapes. “The ArcGIS story map provided the panel with hard evidence for why there needs to be improved access to National Parks and AONBs for everyone, wherever they live,” says Marrington. “We had very positive feedback from the review panel, saying how innovative and helpful our submission was.”

A powerful tool for raising awareness

The ArcGIS story map proved to be a very powerful tool, which has successfully raised awareness of key National Park and AONB issues with the panel, the media and the wider public. The clarity of the story map format makes it very easy for everyone to understand important issues, including who currently benefits from these landscapes and who does not have easy access. “The ArcGIS story map captures people’s imaginations and communicates something quite complicated in a visual way that everyone can access and understand,” Manson says.

Insight to inform future planning

In line with its 2020-26 strategy, CPRE is now using the insight it has gained from ArcGIS to inform its future plans. For instance, CPRE is supporting pilot projects to improve local green spaces in those areas where ArcGIS has shown that 30% or more of the population does not have easy access to National Parks and AONB. “We have far exceeded our initial goals,” Marrington says. “The ArcGIS analysis and story map have not only influenced the Glover Review, but will also influence what CPRE does in the future.”

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