Denbighshire County Council response to NRW consultation of the proposed Glyndŵr National Park.

Elected members and officers of Denbighshire County Council (DCC) have participated in several consultation and briefing events as part of this public consultation process and several dedicated DCC member workshops have been held to discuss the proposal.

A Task and Finish Group of Officers from across services in Denbighshire has also considered the potential opportunities and risks associated with the designation of a National Park and carried out a full Wellbeing Impact Assessment.

Full Council considered a draft consultation response in November 2025. The wide-ranging feedback presented by elected members at Council is reflected within this response.

Having reviewed the consultation document it is clear that:

Approximately 46% of Denbighshire's land area and 13% of its population would fall within the proposed Glyndŵr National Park Boundary.

This consultation response builds on Denbighshire Interim statement issued to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in January 2025 and the six subsequent evidence papers and impact assessments produced by NRW.

Denbighshire believes that a designation could, on balance, be largely positive to the environment and nature recovery, on Welsh language and culture and the communities of Denbighshire. However, the opportunities associated with a designation rely on the establishment of a well-resourced National Park Authority (NPA), which would need to proactively address the benefits, risks and potential pressures, and not come at the expense of existing services or communities.

At this stage, Denbighshire County Council does not believe that this has been demonstrated as there is no detail on the governance, form or wider function of a National Park that would give confidence that these opportunities and risks could be adequately addressed.

The key considerations are as follows:

Impact on Planning Services and Local development Plan – It is noted that there is still uncertainty around timescales and future arrangements for exercising planning functions. NRW's Review of Planning Report, presented as part of their evidence, outlines a number of planning models, but there is no clarity on a preferred option. The designation of a new National Park with full planning powers could have a significant impact on the progress of Denbighshire's Local Development Plan adoption. Given that the national park area includes 5 current LPA areas and 2 SDP areas some clarity on the transition of development management and compliance is needed to ensure consistency.

There is a concern that a New National Park with full planning powers could undermine local democratic representation in respect of planning decisions within the boundary of the National Park in Denbighshire.

There is a further concern that the creation of a new national park could exacerbate current skills shortages in key specialist areas such as planning, biodiversity and landscape. There will be a need for WG to invest in training and career pathways in these areas.

Future Resources and Funding - Denbighshire welcomes the recent correspondence from Welsh Government indicating that additional resources will be made available to Local Authorities to cover financial contribution to the National Park. However, Denbighshire seeks further assurance that this commitment would be embedded into long term funding arrangements and that this funding would not be at the expense of other public services.

It is also noted that funding is currently provided through NRW and Welsh Government to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape to support the management of key sites and services in Denbighshire, including Loggerheads and Moel Famau Country Parks. There is no detail at this stage on how these important facilities could be supported in the future and the role a future National Park would or could play.

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Denbighshire's economy and rural communities, and farming is essential to delivering for nature recovery. The Council, therefore, welcomes the opportunities for diversification and access to farm support schemes, such as Ffermio Bro, outlined in NRW's Economic Impact Assessment that a National Park could bring. That said, these schemes face their own limitations and pressures. A National Park should ensure that these opportunities can be maximised.

The summary of Wellbeing Impact Assessment undertaken is as follows:

Summary of Wellbeing Impact Assessment

Key Opportunities	Key Risks
1. Economic Development and Tourism - The National Park designation presents a significant opportunity to enhance sustainable tourism, promote sustainable agriculture and local food production by providing specific support and creating a strong brand image for local products. National Park could act as a visitor gateway to other parts of Denbighshire.	**1. Tourism –** risk of further visitor pressure on already busy sites such as Horseshoe Falls and Moel Famau. Need to ensure the new NPA is properly resourced to help address these existing and potential future issues.
2. Infrastructure – There are key challenges with our infrastructure, particularly visitor hot spots, that a National Park designation could address.	**2. Infrastructure –** Infrastructure - such as roads, public transport, public conveniences, housing etc – is already facing significant pressures. A designation could exacerbate these pressures further.

3. Environmental Protection and Climate Resilience - The proposal aligns with Denbighshire's commitment to biodiversity, landscape conservation, and climate action. Enhanced protections and funding opportunities through programmes such as Ffermio Bro and HLF's Landscape Connections could deliver long-term ecological benefits. There are opportunities on Y Berwyn SAC-nature recovery and peatland restoration. There are opportunities to address, through an NPA planning system, existing issues such as housing, infrastructure, employment.	**3. Planning** - Lack of clarity surrounding governance structures and planning arrangements. Potential impact on LDP progress with a risk that DCC would need to restart the LDP process on a revised LPA area. There is a concern that a New National Park with full planning powers could undermine local democratic representation in respect of planning decisions within the boundary of the National Park in Denbighshire. Need to ensure Denbighshire LDP and the new National Park LDP are aligned. Risk that the designation will have a displacement effect beyond its boundary – leading to development pressure in Denbighshire outside of the NP**.** Denbighshire will need to ensure its planning and development policies respond.
4. Welsh Language and Culture - The designation offers a platform to celebrate and promote the Welsh language, heritage, and identity. Need to ensure that cultural sustainability is embedded in the Park's vision and operations – reflected in housing and community strategies.	**4. Equality and inclusion** - In some areas, national park status has contributed to rising house prices and second-home ownership, making it harder for local people—especially younger and lower-income residents—to remain in their communities. This can affect the make-up of rural areas, in particular, the vibrancy of Welsh language and culture. A need to ensure the NPA has robust policies to support affordable housing.
5. Strategic Collaboration - The process provides an opportunity to strengthen regional collaboration across local authorities, statutory bodies, and community stakeholders. A NPA could be a strong regional voice for sustainable development, nature recovery and community resilience.	**5. Impact on wider public services -** Whilst the statement from Welsh Government indicating that funds will be made available to cover the required Local Authority contribution to a new National Park is welcomed, there remains concerns. There is uncertainty about whether the NPA will be sufficiently funded and whether the funds made available by Welsh Government to Local Authorities will come at the expense of funding for other public services.

Conclusion

While Denbighshire County Council supports the principle of enhanced landscape protection and the sustainable development opportunities that National Park designation could bring, based on the information provided so far, the Council rejects the proposal for a new National Park at this time until further clarity on governance, planning and financial arrangements - as well as transition plans - is received.

Denbighshire County Council feels that Welsh Government should delay a decision on the designation until after the Senedd elections in May 2026, when there may be greater clarity and certainty around resourcing.