Briefing Next steps for the Glyndŵr National Park Designation Order

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Key messages

1. **Not a final decision**

- Provisional view only.
- Four-week opportunity for further representations.
- Final decision after consideration of all relevant evidence.
- Representations particularly welcomed that provide new evidence or information that may not already have been considered.

2. **Meeting the challenges and opportunities**

- National importance and qualities of the area are not in doubt.
- Decision concerns whether a new National Park is the most effective, affordable and appropriate mechanism.
- Many desired outcomes already align with Government priorities, including: Nature recovery; climate resilience; sustainable tourism; Welsh language; rural investment.
- Relevant existing work includes our work on biodiversity recovery, peatland restoration, Nature Networks fund, the Sustainable Farming Scheme and Ffermio Bro.
- Future plans include developing Climate and Nature Action Plan, Culture Strategy and Rural Proofing and Environmental Sustainability Duty.

3. **Evidence, affordability and delivery**

- NRW concluded that the designation criteria are met.
- Ministers must consider the wider evidence and practical implications.
- Key issues include long-term cost, governance, deliverability and potential alternative approaches.

Strategic position

- No final decision has been taken.
- Provisional view: minded not to confirm the Designation Order.
- The issue is not whether the area is special or nationally important.
- The issue is whether National Park designation is the most effective, affordable and deliverable mechanism.
- Clear environmental, social, economic and cultural opportunities across the proposed area.
- Uncertainty regarding affordability, governance, long-term costs and whether many of the desired outcomes could be achieved through alternative mechanisms.
- Further evidence and representations will be considered before a final decision through a four week engagement period.

Decision-making process and NRW's role

- NRW has undertaken a substantial designation process.
- NRW concluded that the statutory designation criteria are met and its work remains an important part of the evidence base.
- Ministers have a separate statutory decision-making role.
- Ministerial consideration extends to wider evidence, representations, impacts, affordability, governance and deliverability.
- Evidence considered includes: NRW Designation Order, Integrated Impact Assessment, Regulatory Impact Assessment and representations.
- A public inquiry is typically used to test competing evidence and arguments. At present, I am inviting further representations on my provisional view before deciding whether a public inquiry may be necessary.
- Reaching a different conclusion does not mean rejecting the evidence.

Evidence and representations

- All consultation responses and statutory representations have been considered.
- Decisions must be based on considering all the evidence, not solely the numerical balance of responses.
- NRW Statutory consultation in 2025: 1,678 responses, with 66% supporting and 32% opposing.
- WG Statutory notification in 2026: 429 responses, with 54% supporting and 45% opposing.
- Support/opinions both for and against designation are recognised and has been given careful consideration.
- Further representations during the next four weeks are particularly helpful where they provide new evidence or directly address the reasons for the provisional view.

Financial implications and value for money

- Financial considerations are relevant but are not the sole basis for the provisional view.
- Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) estimated establishment costs: approximately £11.6 million.
- Additional ongoing costs associated with establishing and operating a new National Park Authority at around £4-5m per annum.
- Quantified benefit-cost ratio below one in all modelled scenarios.
- Evidence base contains uncertainty.
- Important benefits, including ecosystem resilience, cultural heritage, wellbeing and landscape stewardship, are difficult to monetise.
- Central question: whether designation represents the most effective use of limited public resources.
- Alternative delivery mechanisms are relevant where they may achieve comparable outcomes more efficiently.

Delivery, governance and local authority concerns

- All five local authorities opposed the proposal during statutory notification.
- Ten of the eleven responding town and community councils opposed the proposal during statutory notification.
- Local authority concerns include: future funding; governance; planning arrangements; housing; increased pressures on infrastructure and service delivery.
- Local authorities would have significant roles in implementation and delivery. Their concerns are therefore relevant practical evidence.
- No single stakeholder group has determined the provisional view.
- Ministerial consideration encompasses objections, representations both for and against, NRW's evidence, impact assessments, financial and wider policy considerations.

Alternative approaches and environmental ambition

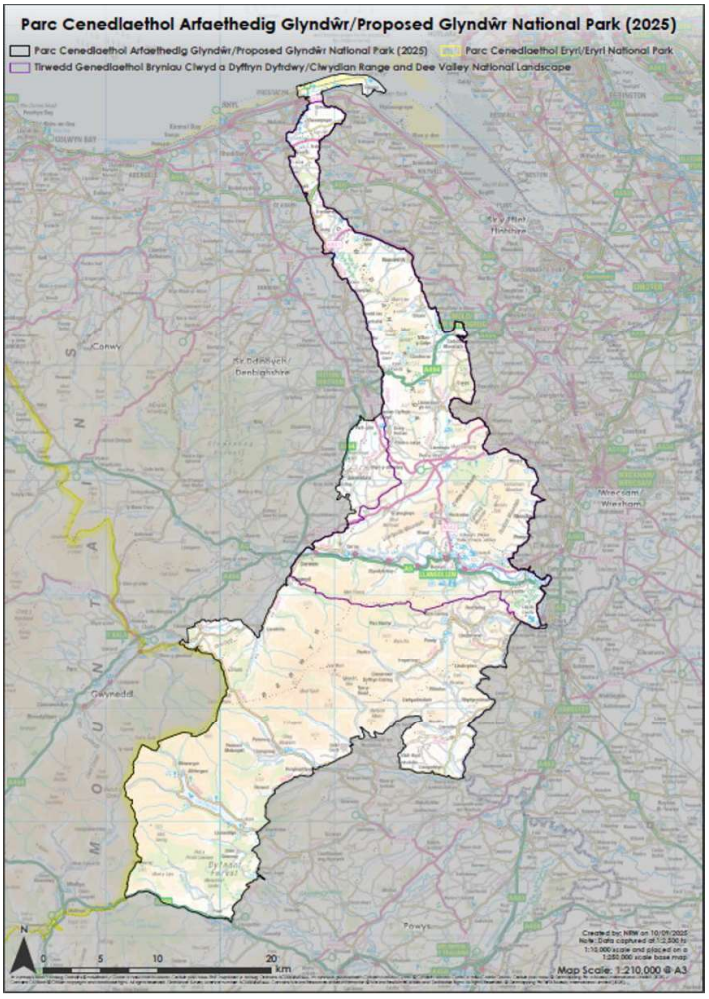
- Government remains committed to: nature recovery; climate resilience; sustainable tourism; landscape protection; access & recreation; Welsh-speaking rural communities.
- Challenges identified through the designation process remain real, whatever the final decision.
- Relevant existing mechanisms include: National Peatland Action Programme; Sustainable Farming Scheme; and Ffermio Bro.
- Future actions include: policies and programmes emerging from developing the Climate and Nature Action Plan, Culture Strategy and Rural Proofing and Environmental Sustainability Duty;
- Further considerations may explore options to strengthen National Landscapes and integrated delivery.
- If designation does not proceed, the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape designation remains in place.
- Evidence developed through the designation process can continue to inform policy, decision-making and investment.

Next steps and further representations

- Four-week period for further representations.
- Email and postal addresses available for submissions
- Provisional view remains open to further evidence.
- Most useful submissions will provide new evidence or information that may not already have been considered.
- Representations will be considered before determining the appropriate next procedural step.
- No final decision has been taken.

Annex A: Proposed National Park area and map

- The Designation Order covers some 927km^2 across parts of Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham, Powys and a small area of Gwynedd.
- The proposal was based around the existing Clywdian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape (also known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).
- If a National Park is not designated the original Clywdian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation remains in place, which covers some 42% of the proposed National Park area.



Annex B: Designation Order timeline

2021	Previous administration Programme for Government commitment to designate a new National Park.
2022-2025	NRW as the designating authority begins work to commission, assemble and assess the evidence base designed to test the criteria for National Park designation.
2023	NRW engagement period
2024	NRW public consultation
2025	NRW statutory consultation
2026	Statutory Notification period
2026	Glyndŵr National Park Designation Order submitted by NRW for consideration by Welsh Ministers
2026	Written Statement by previous administration to establish a public local inquiry.
October 2026	Cabinet Minister announces minded to refuse and opportunity to submit further evidence and representations

Annex C: Consultation and representation statistics

NRW Public Engagement (2023)	• 7-week engagement programme, included online and in-person events period to explain the process, gather views and present initial Area of Search Map. • 966 questionnaire responses received, with a slight majority supporting a new National Park.
NRW Public Consultation (2024)	• 10-week consultation on the Candidate Area, supported by in-person and on-line events. • 1,960 responses received. NRW reported approximately 10% more respondents in favour than opposed
NRW Statutory Consultation (2025)	• 12-week statutory consultation on the draft Designation Order and proposed boundary, supported by online and in-person events. • 1,678 responses received: 66% supported, 32% opposed and 2% were unsure. • Three local authorities objected; the remaining two could not support the proposal without further information on funding and implementation.
Statutory Notification (2026)	• Formal 31-day period for objections and representations on NRW's intention to make the Designation Order. • 429 responses received: 54% supported, 45% opposed and 0.9% were undecided or expressed no view. • All five local authorities opposed the proposal. • Ten of the eleven responding Town and Community Councils opposed the proposal.

Annex D: NRW evidence and assessments

NRW commissioned a range of reports to establish the evidence base.

- Procedural Guidance
- Area of Search Report
- Public Engagement Period Report 2023
- Special Qualities Report
- Forces For Change Report
- Management Options Report
- Evaluation Areas Report
- Candidate Area Report
- Public Consultation Report 2024
- Final Assessment of Land for Designation Report
- Statutory Consultation Report 2025

- Benefits of Nature Report
- Health Impact Assessment
- Welsh Language Impact Assessment
- Economic Assessment Report
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Review of Planning Report
- Naming the proposed new National Park in Wales Report
- Potential Pros and Cons of a new National Park
- Case Studies of good practice in National Parks report

Annex E: Principal themes raised through the process

The key themes arising from the statutory notification were broadly consistent with those raised throughout the consultation and statutory notification periods.

In summary, these themes covered:

- Governance and funding uncertainties
- Planning and infrastructure resilience concerns
- Welsh language impacts both positive and negative
- Visitor management and recreation pressures
- Housing affordability and boundary issues
- Potential benefits for climate adaptation, nature recovery and access

Annex F: Party Spokespeople and Government Business

[Redacted – s12 (4)d Incomplete internal information]