Draft – Proposed new National Park – Potential measures relevant to issues identified in the Case for Change

Natural Resources Wales' (NRW) assessment and consultation processes identified a range of environmental, social, economic and cultural challenges across the area proposed as a new National Park in parts of north-east Wales and northern Powys. These findings, set out in the Designation Order Case for Change, suggest that further action may be required to strengthen the long-term resilience, management and enhancement of the area's natural and cultural assets, communities and economy.

The issues are summarised under the headings below. For each, existing and emerging policy initiatives, together with potential interventions, have been identified as viable alternative approaches. With some support, many of these options could be delivered through the established Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape (CRDVNL) partnership and governance arrangements, providing a coordinated mechanism for integrated delivery across some parts of the area. The CRDVNL however only covers about a third of the proposed area and the Case for Change highlights areas such as Berwyn as important for nature, water management and responding to climate change.

1. **Nature Recovery, Landscape and Climate Resilience**

Climate change and nature loss are cross-cutting challenges affecting the area's landscapes, habitats, communities and land management practices. Evidence suggests they place increasing pressure on ecosystems and rural land use, highlighting the need to develop a more resilient environment through landscape-scale interventions and supporting sustainable land management practices. NRW's Benefits of Nature report[1] highlights the significance of the proposed area for nature conservation and identifies its potential to contribute to nature recovery and decarbonisation objectives.

- New measures introduced by **The Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Act 2026**[2] provide a framework to support delivery at a local level. It establishes a statutory environmental objective and a set of environmental principles that Welsh Ministers, NRW and other public authorities must have regard to when developing policy. These measures are intended to embed nature recovery, ecosystem resilience and climate adaptation within decision-making across the public sector.

- The Environment Act also establishes binding biodiversity targets, which the existing National Landscape could be supported to help its constituent Local Authorities deliver. The new Act also makes provision for measuring and driving improvements in habitats, species recovery and ecological connectivity. The Act

[1] Wales's New National Park Proposal The Benefits of Nature Report, Natural Resources Wales, 2024 - benfits-of-nature-report-2025.pdf

[2] Environmental (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) 2026 Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Act 2026

also strengthens duties on public bodies relating to biodiversity and requires the planning, reporting and evaluation of biodiversity outcomes, to support long-term nature recovery programmes. Targeted support could strengthen the contribution of existing CRDVNL's and wider National Landscapes delivery on 30 by 30 national targets.

- An updated **Climate and Nature Action Plan** (White Paper[3]) for Wales will provide a strategic framework and practical pathway to drive net zero by 2040 and substantive nature recovery by 2050. It supports Welsh Government ambitions on stronger environmental governance, biodiversity recovery, peatland restoration and protection of nature-rich landscapes. Implementation of these plans and policies is expected to create opportunities to maximise the contribution of National Landscapes to national environmental objectives and delivery of key programmes such as the National Peatland Action Programme and the Nature Networks. With appropriate support, the CRDVNL could work with partners to deliver these initiatives at scale, helping to secure greater benefits for both nature and local communities.

- Emerging strategic legislation and policies provide frameworks to address some of the systemic challenges identified. The proposed **Rural Proofing and Environmental Sustainability Duty** (White Paper) would embed consideration of environmental sustainability, climate resilience and rural impacts across public sector decision-making. It would provide a framework for considering flood resilience, natural resource management and adaptation to climate change across policy development, while supporting a more coordinated approach to land use that balances climate mitigation, renewable energy, food production, landscape protection and nature recovery.

- In addition, commitments to establish a **Flood Resilience and Preparedness Forum** (First 100 Days[4]) bringing together NRW, local authorities and communities will strengthen coordination of flood risk management. The development of a **National Energy Strategy** (First 100 days), including renewable energy and support for community-owned energy projects, will further contribute to climate and nature objectives while delivering benefits for communities.

2. Agriculture, Development and the Rural Economy

Development to support housing, infrastructure, renewable energy and other strategic needs will continue to be required, and can be planned and managed to avoid or minimise adverse effects on landscapes and natural resources, while delivering benefits for local communities. Maintaining a sustainable and productive farming sector, supporting land managers and enabling appropriate rural business

[3] Rural proofing and environmental sustainability Wales White Paper, Welsh Government, July 2026 Rural Proofing and Environmental Sustainability White

[4] First 100 days plan May to August, Welsh Government 2026 The First 100 Days Plan

diversification will also be important in sustaining resilient rural economies, supporting nature recovery and enhancing climate resilience.

- The planned refinement of the **Sustainable Farming Scheme** (SFS), including a commitment to multi-year funding arrangements and a review of administrative requirements on family farms, is intended to provide greater certainty for the agricultural sector. This will help support opportunities for long-term investment in sustainable land management, climate adaptation and mitigation, and nature recovery. The **Integrated Natural Resources Scheme**[5] available across Wales as part of SFS and supports collaborative, landscape-scale projects delivering nature based solutions for sustainable natural resource management.

- **Ffermio Bro** is a targeted element of the SFS that supports farmers within Designated Landscapes (collective name for National Parks and National Landscapes) to work collaboratively on projects that deliver landscape-scale environmental benefits beyond what would be achievable through individual action. The scheme is supported by dedicated advisers based within Designated Landscapes, with local knowledge of the communities and landscapes in which they operate. Ffermio Bro Projects are contributing to healthier upland habitats, improved catchment management and greater ecological connectivity. Ffermio Bro is currently available within the CRDVNL and is supporting collaborative delivery of environmental outcomes across the Designated Landscapes in Wales. Continued support could enable the scheme to help more farmers adapt and deliver environmental outcomes across Wales's designated landscapes.

- New frameworks and enhancement of existing arrangements, including the CRDVNL working with partners, provide opportunities to deliver new national policy and initiatives at a local level. Proposals for a **statutory rural proofing duty** (First 100 Days) would help ensure that government policies take account of rural needs and circumstances. Alongside proposed planning reforms, this could support the delivery of appropriate development, renewable energy infrastructure and sustainable economic growth, while ensuring environmental considerations are reflected in decision-making. These proposals complement Manifesto[6] ambitions for a **National Development Agency** to support economic resilience, investment and workforce development, as well as a **National Energy Strategy**, including a **Renewable Energy Sector Deal**, which could help create opportunities for sustainable economic growth. Additional opportunities may also arise through forestry and woodland management schemes, including delivery of the objectives of the **National Forest for Wales** programme.

[5] Integrated Natural Resources Scheme Integrated Natural Resources Scheme: rules booklet [HTML] | GOV.WALES

[6] For Wales Plaid Cymru Manifesto 2026 - For_Wales_-_2026_Manifesto.pdf

3. Community Sustainability, Housing, Language and Cultural Heritage

NRW's evidence suggests that some communities in the area are experiencing challenges relating to housing availability and affordability, demographic change, and the sustainability of local services. Protecting cultural heritage, local distinctiveness and sense of place were also identified as important, alongside supporting the continued use of the Welsh language. Collectively, these issues are closely linked to the long-term sustainability, resilience and cultural identity of rural communities within the area. A range of existing and emerging policy initiatives and delivery mechanisms may provide opportunities to help address these challenges and support positive outcomes.

- A package of measures is intended to address the complex challenges affecting housing access in rural communities. These include the establishment of **Unnos**, a national development body to support the delivery of social housing, proposals for **a right to adequate housing** (First 100 Days), and a new approach to strategic planning that seeks to align housing, regeneration, connectivity and economic development within a coherent national framework (Manifesto). In addition, **Article 4 Direction planning powers**[7], which allow local planning authorities to manage the use of properties as second homes and short-term holiday accommodation, were introduced only recently and their long-term impacts are not yet fully understood.

- Evidence indicates that a number of communities within the proposed area have Welsh-speaking populations of over 50%. Measures to support these communities, including proposals to strengthen protections in **areas of high linguistic density** (First 100 Days), could help sustain the Welsh language and the area's cultural heritage. Work to safeguard **historic landscape names** is currently being piloted in Welsh National Parks and could potentially be extended to National Landscapes, helping to retain local identity and cultural distinctiveness.

- Preparation and implementation of a new **Culture Strategy** (First 100 Days) could provide a framework for increased focus on the cultural importance of the area and its relevance in the national story of Wales. This could be linked to greater recognition of a wide range of historically important sites, including Sycharth, the birthplace of Owain Glyndŵr, and measures to support the management and interpretation of sites within the CRDVNL such as Pontcysyllte Aqueduct World Heritage Site, and cultural events such as the International Eisteddfod at Llangollen.

[7] Article 4 Direction, The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (amended) The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995

4. Tourism, Recreation, Access and Transport

Tourism makes an important contribution to the rural economy; however concerns were raised during consultations that further growth could increase demand for visitor facilities and transport infrastructure, adding to the existing pressures at some of the area's most visited locations. Evidence highlighted the importance of sustainable visitor management, enhanced public transport and active travel provision, and ensuring that recreation and tourism are balanced with the conservation of the area's natural and cultural assets. Unlike National Parks, National Landscapes do not have a statutory purpose relating to recreation and are not the designated destination management lead for their areas, which may limit their ability to influence visitor management and access funding for tourism infrastructure and related initiatives.

- **Promoting sustainable tourism** through local collaboration and the sharing of best practice, such as the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Strategic Plan 2025[8], could help ensure that the benefits of tourism are realised for local communities, culture, the Welsh language and the environment (Manifesto). With appropriate support, the CRDVNL could play a greater convening role in coordinating visitor management and the tourism offer across the area, including its function as a gateway to North Wales.

- **Investment in active travel, public transport and accessibility** (Manifesto) could support more sustainable access to the area and help address transport and parking pressures at key visitor locations. Initiatives such as the Snowdon Sherpa in Eryri National Park demonstrate the potential for targeted transport provision to influence visitor travel behaviour. The CRDVNL already promotes sustainable travel through its Management Plan[9] and, with the right support, could assist in piloting and promoting innovative approaches. Regional Transport Strategies and the work of Corporate Joint Committees may also provide opportunities for a more integrated approach to sustainable transport and active travel planning.

- After National Parks, National Landscapes are among the most visited areas in Wales and offer significant opportunities to support health and wellbeing through access to high-quality natural environments. The focus on **preventative health** (Manifesto) presents opportunities to expand the contribution of Designated Landscapes by further developing initiatives such as volunteering, outdoor learning, social prescribing and targeted wellbeing projects that support improved physical and mental health outcomes. Examples include the Early Years Outdoors programme[10] in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and the CRDVNL's work on nature-based health for active lifestyles and recovery. Further development of these initiatives, aligned with Health Board priorities, could make a greater contribution to wider wellbeing objectives.

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[8] Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2025 Strategic Plan Layout 1

[9] Clwydian Range & Dee Valley Management Plan 2020-2025 Management Plan - Final Interactive.pdf

[10] Early Years Outdoors, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 Management Plan - Final Interactive.pdf

5. **Governance, Coordination and Long-Term Delivery**

Evidence highlighted the importance of effective governance to coordinate and ensure integrated delivery across organisations, sectors and geographical boundaries to address complex and interconnected environmental, economic and social challenges. While it was recognised that a National Park Authority could provide a single coordinating body across the proposed area, concerns were consistently raised through NRW's consultation on the costs and long-term affordability of establishing and maintaining a new authority. Alongside the development of new policy initiatives, reviewing and strengthening existing arrangements could help address governance challenges.

- A focus on **renewed strategic partnership arrangements** with local government and increased collaboration across public bodies (First 100 Days) may provide opportunities to address interconnected policy issues through the development of long-term governance structures and national frameworks covering areas such as planning, energy, health, skills, flooding and constitutional reform (Manifesto). Planned reforms to planning, regional development and local government arrangements may also help improve coordination and reduce duplication (Manifesto).

- There are established governance arrangements for the CRDVNL which covers approximately one-third of the proposed area. The statutory CRDVNL Joint Committee, comprises the three constituent local authorities and is supported by a Partnership that includes representatives from public, private, environmental, community and land management interests. These arrangements provide a platform for cross-boundary collaboration, strategic oversight and coordinated delivery at a landscape scale.

- The review and implementation of the statutory CRDVNL Management Plan brings together public bodies, land managers, communities and other stakeholders to coordinate action on issues affecting the area's special qualities, while providing a mechanism for local engagement and participation.

- Whilst the CRDVNL does not cover the whole area or have the powers and levers of a National Park Authority, there may be opportunities to strengthen governance, accountability and oversight arrangements within the National Landscape model. This could include enhanced national representation within partnership structures and more formalised arrangements for the endorsement, monitoring and reporting of management plans, helping to strengthen alignment with national priorities, improve transparency and support coordinated delivery across organisational boundaries.

Options for alternative measures

The issues identified through the Case for Change raise broader questions about the sustainable management of the area. Many of these can be considered through

emerging policy frameworks and programmes. Several challenges span multiple policy areas and are systemic in nature, requiring coordinated action at an appropriate scale and appropriate effective delivery mechanisms.

Potential alternatives to designation will be explored in more detail in forthcoming Ministerial Advice, but options include the following models.

Strengthening existing arrangements

Concerns raised through the consultation process regarding the affordability and long-term funding of a new National Park and National Park Authority suggest that lower-cost alternative approaches may merit consideration.

While the existing CRDVNL designation does not cover the full extent of the proposed new National Park area and does not have the statutory powers of a National Park Authority, there may be opportunities to strengthen existing arrangements at both local and national levels to help address a number of the identified issues. Supporting the sustainability of existing National Parks and National Landscapes to provide longer-term certainty on funding arrangements, alongside consideration of governance modernisation will help strengthen accountability, representation, diversity and community participation in decision-making. Progress has been made in implementing the Auditor General for Wales' recommendations on National Park Authority governance (2024)[11] through targeted training, modernised recruitment for Welsh Government-appointed members, and the publication of guidance[12] on members' roles and responsibilities. However, governance arrangements for National Landscapes remain unchanged.

[Redacted - Regulations 12(4)(d) and 12(4)(e) -Internal communications and Information in the course of completion – Incomplete internal information.]

[11] Governance of National Park Authorities, Report of the Auditor General for Wales, 2024 - Governance in National Park Authorities

[12] National Park Authority Governance in Wales, a guide to members' roles and responsibilities, Welsh Government, 2025 - Governance in National Park Authorities

Summary

The Case for Change identifies a range of interrelated environmental, social, economic and cultural challenges affecting the area. While these issues are significant, many can be addressed, in whole or in part, through existing and emerging policy frameworks, programmes and delivery mechanisms.

Taken together, emerging and existing policy measures relating to nature recovery, climate resilience, sustainable farming, rural development, housing, transport, tourism, cultural heritage and community wellbeing provide a range of opportunities to respond to the issues identified. The existing CRDVNL, alongside broader national and regional structures, could provide an established platform for coordinated and integrated delivery.

Given the interconnected nature of these challenges, effective partnership working, governance and long-term investment will be important in securing desired outcomes. These considerations indicate that a range of existing and emerging policy, governance and delivery mechanisms may contribute to addressing the issues identified in the Case for Change. The extent to which these measures could meet the objectives of designation is considered further in the Ministerial Advice.

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