Briefing for Minister: Glyndŵr National Park Designation Order

In 2022–23, the previous Welsh Government commissioned NRW, in its statutory role as the Designating Authority, to evaluate the case for a new National Park based on the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape (formerly an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

NRW subsequently undertook a multi-year programme of work which culminated in the submission of a Designation Order for the proposed Glyndŵr National Park in January 2026 (see Annex 1 for pictorial overview/timeline).

As part of this programme, NRW initially identified a broad candidate area and subsequently refined the proposed boundary through a series of landscape assessments and technical evaluations.

NRW's work has been based around development of an extensive evidence base, including reports on: Special Qualities; Forces for Change; Management Options; Landscape Evaluation; and Benefits for Nature. NRW also undertook a number of supporting impact assessments, including assessments: Economic impacts; Health and well-being; and; The Welsh language.

Throughout the process NRW undertook significant stakeholder and public engagement, including: a public engagement exercise in 2023; a public consultation in 2024; and; a statutory consultation in 2025,

Legal background to the Designation Order

The relevant considerations for NRW when deciding whether to designate a new National Park are set out in section 5 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. In summary, NRW is required to assess whether the area possesses natural beauty, and, opportunities for open-air recreation. Designation is also based on a consideration as to whether designation as a National Park is especially desirable.

Following completion of its assessment programme, NRW concluded that the proposed area met the statutory tests for National Park designation. NRW's Board therefore agreed on 12 January 2026 to make the Glyndŵr National Park Designation Order and submit it to Welsh Ministers. However, a National Park is not designated until the designation is confirmed by Welsh Ministers.

Responses to the Designation Order

Following submission of the Designation Order, a statutory 28-day Notification Period was held during which representations and objections could be submitted to Welsh Government (n.b. this was in addition to NRW’s earlier consultation/engagement

exercises). A total of 429 responses were received with: 233 (54%) supporting; 192 (45%) opposed, and; 4 (1%) were neutral or unstated.

Among those supporting designation, over 100 respondents indicated support in principle but argued that the proposed boundary should be extended to include additional areas, particularly Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley.

All five Local Authorities within the footprint of the proposed National Park submitted objections to the Designation Order (see Annex 2).

Welsh Government officials have reviewed the representations received and discussed relevant issues with NRW. NRW provided detailed explanations of how boundary decisions were reached and how relevant evidence was considered during preparation of the Designation Order.

Stakeholder Views and Impact Assessments

The proposal for Designation has attracted significant support and opposition during the course of its development.

During NRW's statutory consultation in 2025 approximately 1,700 responses were received, with around two-thirds supportive (either fully supportive or supportive subject to boundary changes) and around one-third opposed. In broad terms:

- Environmental, tourism and recreation interests generally support designation.
- Farming, minerals and renewable energy interests generally oppose designation.

The principal issues raised by stakeholders included:

- Nature recovery and climate adaptation;
- Access and recreation opportunities;
- Governance and funding arrangements;
- Planning and infrastructure implications;
- Housing affordability;
- Visitor management pressures;
- Potential impacts on the Welsh language; and
- Boundary issues.

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

Welsh Government Assessments

In preparing advice for Ministers in the previous administration to consider the DO, Welsh Government officials have prepared both an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) and a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA).

The IIA concluded that National Parks and National Park Authorities generally deliver positive outcomes and that similar benefits could be expected from the proposed Glyndŵr National Park, provided adequate resources are available. The assessment identified potential benefits relating to: environmental stewardship; nature recovery; climate resilience; cultural heritage; promotion of the Welsh language; sustainable rural economies; and community well-being.

It also identified potential risks relating to housing affordability, visitor pressures, infrastructure capacity and maintaining linguistic and cultural integrity. The assessment concluded that these risks could potentially be mitigated through future governance, planning and partnership arrangements.

Economic Assessment

The RIA was commissioned to assess the potential economic costs and benefits of designation compared with the continuation of the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape arrangements.

The assessment highlighted significant uncertainties associated with forecasting the economic effects of National Park designation. These include limited comparative evidence from other National Parks, uncertainty over future funding arrangements, and uncertainty regarding the priorities and activities of a future National Park Authority.

Subject to those caveats, the assessment identified:

- Set up and transition costs for Glyndŵr NPA of £11.6m;
- A range of potential net benefits from environmental activities including £9.8m-£50m from climate change adaptation, and £2.4m-£3.1m from habitat restoration and species recovery over a 10-year period;
- Net benefit from additional tourism activity of £34m- £36m over a 10-year period;
- Potential net increase in value of housing stock between £32m-£55m p.a;
- Potential disbenefit from loss/displacement of renewable energy projects of £85m-£560m, and additional costs of £60m-£195m to strengthen the transmission grid network; and
- A Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) over a 15-year period ranging from: low (BCR 0.12), middle (0.69) to high (BCR 0.73). (n.b.it is important the BCR of a project is not considered in isolation and that unmonetisable benefits (and costs) are also factored into the assessment of social value. The RIA summarises the potential wider impacts of designating Glyndwr as a National Park.)

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

Current Position

As all five Local Authority statutory consultees objected to the Designation Order, the Order cannot be confirmed, or confirmed with modifications, without first holding a Public Local Inquiry.

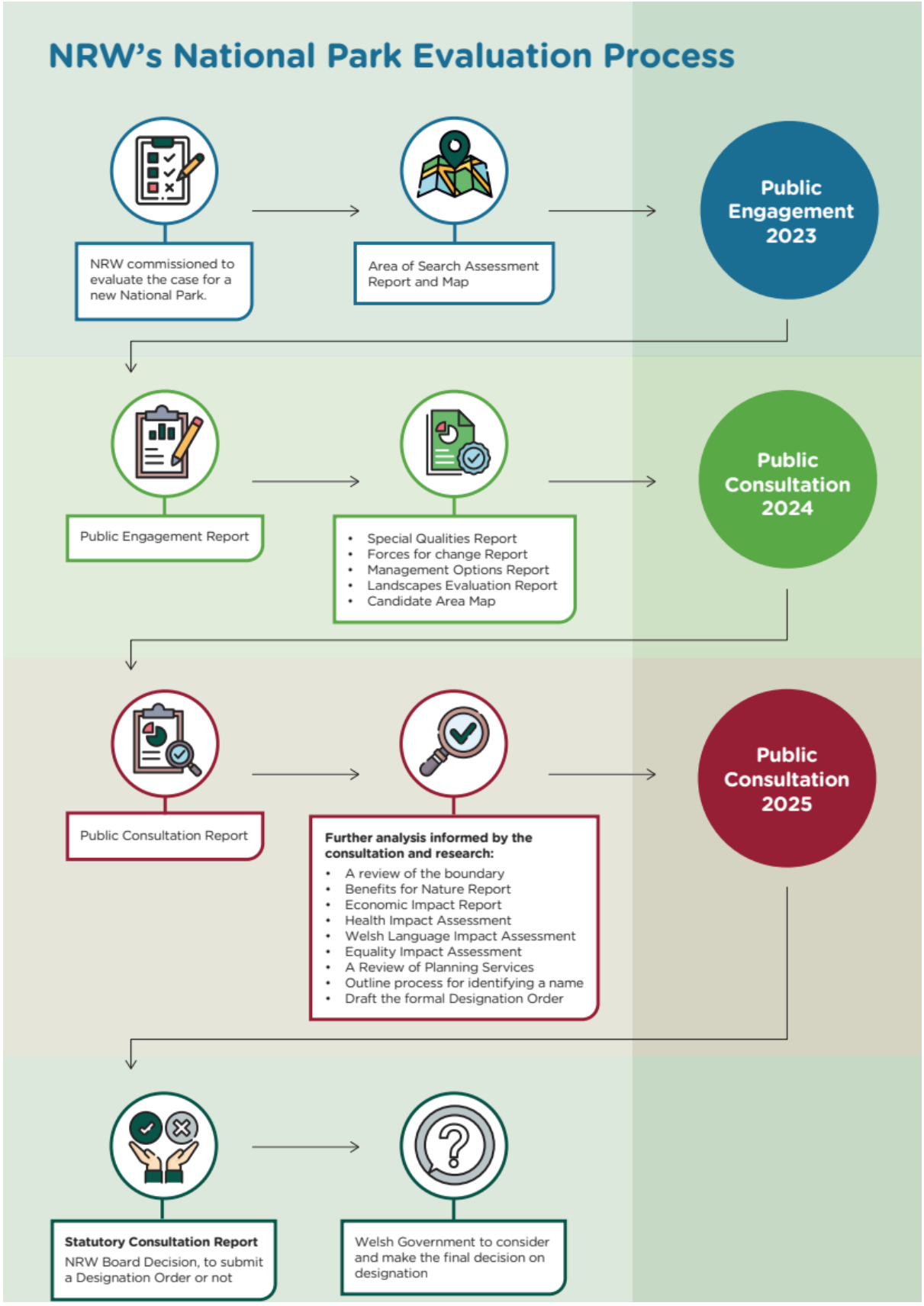
A Public Local Inquiry would provide an opportunity for objections and representations from statutory consultees and wider stakeholders to be considered in a formal process.

On this basis, the previous administration announced on 26 March 2026 its intention to hold a Public Local Inquiry and appointed Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) to administer the process. Officials have undertaken initial preparatory work, including development of draft inquiry guidance.

Officials are currently preparing Ministerial Advice setting out the two principal options currently available of continuing with the Public Local Inquiry or refusing the Designation Order without carrying out the Inquiry. It will also provide related advice on responding to NRW's "Case for Change" that has led to it recommending the designation.

Officials would be happy to meet with the Minister in advance of submitting formal advice if that would be helpful.

Annex 1: Timeline of Designation Order Preparation



Annex 2: Responses from Local Authorities

Under the 1949 Act, before a Designation Order is submitted to the Welsh Ministers (WMs) for confirmation, NRW has to give notice (the Statutory Notification Period). During the Statutory Notification Period, objections and representations have been made direct to Welsh Government.

The five LAs who have areas falling within the boundary of the proposed National Park have responded as follows:

Local Authority		
Cyngor Gwynedd	Object	Negative impact on language, planning & Local Development Plan (LDP), funding, governance and boundary includes an area proposed as an AONB.
Denbighshire County Council	Object	Unable to support due to lack of clarity on funding, governance and planning.
Flintshire County Council	Object	Not support based on available information. Financial burden, additional bureaucracy and governance, impact on LDP, effectiveness of existing National Landscape (AONB), and constraint on growth.
Powys County Council	Object	Object to principle. NRW evidence, boundary and impact on infrastructure from increased numbers of visitors
Wrexham County Borough Council	Object	Cited funding, pressures on services and infrastructure from increased visitor numbers not covered by additional WG funding.

Other consultees

Responses have been received from community and town councils

1. Cyngor Cymuned Llandderfel – object
2. Cyngor Cynwyd Llandrillo - object
3. Llanfair Caereinion Town Council - object
4. Llanfair Dyffryn Ceiriog Community Council – object
5. Llangollen Rural Community Council – object
6. Llangollen Town Council – object
7. Llangynog Community Council – object
8. Llanrhaeadr YM Community Council – object
9. Llantysilio Community Council – object
10. Nannerch Community Council – support
11. Penybontfawr Community Council – object