

Number: WG30791



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government Consultation Document

Consultation on the Proposed Reduction in the size of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Date of issue: 11 April 2017
Action required: 29 June 2017

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Overview

The purpose of this consultation is to seek your views on the proposal to reduce the Membership of the Board of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

How to respond

To respond to this consultation, please complete the online form which can be accessed here:

<https://consultations.gov.wales/>
<https://ymgyngoriadau.llyw.cymru/>

Alternatively, respondents may use the separate response form provided, which can be e-mailed to:

Tirweddau.Landscapes@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Or send to the address below.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

Consultation web addresses

<https://consultations.gov.wales/>
<https://ymgyngoriadau.llyw.cymru/>

Contact details

For further information:

Landscapes and Outdoor Recreation Branch
Land, Nature and Forestry Division,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park 2
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Email: Tirweddau.Landscapes@wales.gsi.gov.uk

telephone: 0300 0622170

Data protection

How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

Consultation on the Proposed Reduction in the size of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Introduction

This consultation details the Welsh Government's proposal to reduce the size of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority from 24 members to 18, bringing it into line with the Snowdonia and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authorities.

Background

A National Park is designated in recognition of the outstanding quality and natural beauty of the area and the opportunities it offers for outdoor recreation. There are three National Parks in Wales: Snowdonia, Pembrokeshire Coast and the Brecon Beacons. Each National Park has a dedicated National Park Authority which has two statutory purposes set out in the Environment Act 1995:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks;
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities [of the Park] by the public.

As well as seeking to fulfil these two statutory purposes the National Park Authorities have a duty to foster the economic and social well being of their local communities.

Each Authority is required to prepare a National Park Management Plan. The Plan sets out policies for the management of the Park and for the organisation and provision of services and facilities by the National Park Authority to achieve National Park purposes. It includes policies for the management of the land in the National Park and forms the basis for collaboration not only with statutory and voluntary conservation organisations, but also with other public and private landowners. The National Park Authorities are also the planning authority for their area and are responsible for producing development plans and for development control.

National Park Authority members act as advocates for the purposes of the National Park Authority. The Local Authority appointees are required to represent the interests of the population of the Park as a whole, not just the local authority who has appointed them. They carry out their decision making role through participating in committee and working group meetings, overseeing performance and working with officers to achieve set objectives each year. They also represent the Park Authority on outside bodies and participate in opportunities for personal development provided by the Park Authority.

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority operates a high standard of governance and a comprehensive member support framework, for which it has twice been awarded the WLGA Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development. It expects a high level of commitment from its members.

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales determines the payments made to all members of National Park Authorities in Wales. Currently this is an annual payment of £3,600 based on an input from members of 42 days.

Current Structure and Membership

Schedule 7 of the Environment Act 1995 provides the legal framework for the creation of a National Park Authority, with the detailed arrangements then set out in Regulations. The Schedule provides that a National Park Authority is a body corporate whose members, for Authorities in Wales, are drawn from a combination of local authority councillors and appointments by the Welsh Ministers. Two thirds of the members of the Authority are to be appointed by the unitary authorities wholly or partly comprised of the National Park as set out in an order, with the other third appointed by the Welsh Ministers.

The National Park Authorities (Wales) Order 1995 specifies the size and appointing Unitary Authorities for National Parks in Wales. Schedule 2 sets out that the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority must have 24 members, of which 16 are appointed from seven of the principal councils, see Table 1, and 8 are appointed by Welsh Ministers. Both Snowdonia National Park Authority and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority have 18 members (with the membership of the latter being increased from 15 by the National Park Authorities (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2007).

The original reason for a larger Authority for the Brecon Beacons National Park is understood to have been because the area comprised seven principal authorities and therefore it was deemed necessary to have a greater number of Local Authority appointees.

Table 1: Appointment of local authority members

Council of a principal area	Number of members
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	1
Carmarthenshire County Council	2
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	1
Monmouthshire County Council	2
Powys Council	8
Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council	1
Torfaen County Borough Council	1
Total	16

The National Park Authorities (Wales) Order 1995 is made under section 63 and Schedule 7 to the Environment Act 1995. Those powers initially vested in the Secretary of State but transferred to the National Assembly in 1999 and thereafter to the Welsh Ministers under the Government of Wales Act 2006. Section 75 of the Environment Act 1995 requires that the Order is made by statutory instrument subject to approval of the Assembly by negative procedure. Therefore the Welsh Ministers now have the necessary executive power to amend the 1995 Order, to amend the size of a National Park Authority.

The Case for Change

In September 2014, the then Minister for Natural Resources, Culture and Sport, John Griffiths AM, sought views from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and its 7 appointing unitary authorities on reducing the membership of the Park Authority board to 18.

This proposal suggested a reduction of 4 unitary authority appointees and 2 Welsh Government appointees. This would retain the two thirds unitary authority and one third Welsh Minister appointee ratio. While the majority were supportive of a smaller board and maintaining the ratio, there was no consensus on the number of representatives from each of the seven Local Authorities.

In September 2016 the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority board met and voted unanimously to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths AM, to recommend that the Welsh Government “...*reduce the membership of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority board from 24 to 18 while also retaining representation from all 7 current unitary authorities*”.

The National Park Authority feels that with 18 members the committee structure could be reviewed to ensure decision making and accountability are not compromised. A smaller board is also consistent with maintaining good governance and would start a process of increased focus and efficiency on Park Authority business. The Authority is currently restructuring the way it delivers its services and a leaner decision making structure would make more effective use of member and officer time, as well as making further savings in member travel and subsistence. This time could then be refocused on developing partnerships to achieve objectives, with more emphasis on the Member Champion role to increase member expertise and strengthen the ambassador remit. The Authority is carrying out a member skills audit to identify any key skills needed to take it forward.

With the Authority confident that it could maintain good governance with a reduced sized board, unnecessary cost burden to them compared to the other two National Park Authorities.

The Authority estimates that a reduction in the size of the board could deliver annual savings of £40,000 a year. This is through a direct saving of the salary paid to members, as well as a reduction in their induction/training and travel expenses.

Table 2: Estimated savings with a reduced board

	Current annual cost (24)	Savings through reduced Board (18)
Basic Salary	£86,400	£21,600
Induction (actual and staff costs)	£34,472	£8,572
Travel costs (savings based on average mileage for 30 meetings pa)	£16,000	£9,720
Total	£136,872	£39,892

A reduction in members appointed by Welsh Ministers may also mean less frequent recruitment exercises, leading to financial and officer time savings associated with their recruitment, such as the cost of advertising.

In their letter to the Cabinet Secretary the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority set out a detailed proposal of how this could be achieved. Their proposal retains appointments from each of the existing unitary authorities whilst also broadly respecting the existing ratio in terms of the area of the principal council which falls within the Park.

The Proposal

The proposal is to reduce the membership of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority from 24 members to 18. This will mean reducing the number of Local Authority members from 16 to 12, as set out in Table 2, and reducing the number appointed by Welsh Ministers from 8 to 6..

Table 3: Proposed reduction of local authority members

Name of Council	Current	Proposed	Change
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	1	1	-
Carmarthenshire County Council	2	1	-1
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	1	1	-
Monmouthshire County Council	2	1	-1
Powys Council	8	6	-2
Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council	1	1	-
Torfaen County Borough Council	1	1	-
Total	16	12	-4

Next Steps

The Welsh Government invites views and any evidence relating to the proposal in this consultation by 29 June 2017. In particular, comments are welcomed on the questions outlined in the "Consultation Response Form" below. In addition Brecon Beacons National Park Authority will liaise with stakeholders to seek their views which will also be fed into the consultation summary.

Consultation Response Form

What do you think?

We would welcome your comments on the proposal in this document. We would particularly welcome your responses to the following questions:

Question 1: What are your views on the proposal to reduce the membership of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority from 24 to 18?

Question 2: What are your views on the proposed distribution of members of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority between the seven principal authorities and the Welsh Ministers as set out in Table 3?

Question 3: We would like to know your views on the effects that reducing the membership of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority would have on the Welsh language, specifically on

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh and
- ii) on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Question 4: Please also explain how you believe the proposed actions could be formulated or changed so as to have

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Question 5: We have asked two specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Please enter here:

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: