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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Welsh Government  
Consultation – summary of responses

## The Proposed Reduction in the size of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

November 2017

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

## 1. Introduction

The consultation on the Proposed Reduction in the Size of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) was published on 11 April and ended on 29 June 2017.

The National Park Authorities (Wales) Order 1995 specifies the size and appointing Local 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 7 of the principal councils 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).

A reduction in members from 24 to 18 was initially proposed by the BBNPA. The National Park Authority felt that with 18 members the committee structure could be reviewed to ensure decision making and accountability would not be compromised. BBNPA also asserted a smaller board is consistent with maintaining good governance and would start a process of increased focus and efficiency on Park Authority business. The Authority estimates a reduction in the size of the board could deliver annual savings of £40,000 through a direct saving of the salary paid to members, as well as a reduction in their induction, training and travel expenses.

The consultation set out the proposal to reduce the size of the BBNPA from 24 to 18, by reducing the number of Local Authority members from 16 to 12 and the number appointed by Welsh Ministers from 8 to 6. The following table outlines the proposed distribution of Local Authority members included in the consultation:

<b>Name of Council</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Change</b>
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	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>-4</b>

This document summarises respondents' views to the consultation which can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at:

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/proposed-reduction-membership-brecon-beacons-national-park-authority>.

A total of five responses were received. The respondents were:

- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA),
- Carmarthenshire County Council,

- Monmouthshire County Council,
- Powys County Council, and
- An individual

The response from the Individual arrived after the close of the consultation but has been considered and included in this summary. Four of the constituent Local Authorities affected by the proposals did not respond.

## **2. Responses to the Consultation**

An analysis of the responses to the consultation is as follows:

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

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) supported the proposal to reduce the membership of the BBNPA from 24 to 18 on the basis that they have 18 members and are able to meet the governance and oversight arrangements required of a National Park Authority. They see no reason why BBNPA could not do the same. PCNPA also referred to the Future Landscapes Wales (FLW) process highlighting the need for designated landscape bodies to develop governance frameworks that are appropriate for their requirements. As the proposed reduction in membership emanates from the BBNPA themselves, PCNPA see the proposal as an example of implementing the aspirations of FLW.

Monmouthshire and Carmarthenshire County Councils did not oppose the proposal to reduce the membership from 24 to 18 but had firm views on how the reduction should be achieved (see Question 2 below). Powys County Council stated they could only agree to a reduction if a number of conditions were met (see Question 2 below). The individual opposed the reduction on several grounds including that it would lead to an increased workload for the remaining members and it having a negative impact on the quality of governance and services delivered by the BBNPA. The individual also suggested that the majority of recently appointed Local Authority members have indicated they are opposed to the principal of a reduction in membership.

### **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?**

Powys County Council stated they do not support the proposed reduction in the number of members appointed by them because 80% of the National Park is within Powys. They argued that the reduction should come from lowering the number of members appointed by Welsh Ministers because, in their view, these members have no mandate from the residents of the Park and have little contact or understanding of the needs of residents. Similarly, Carmarthenshire County Council are opposed to a reduction in the number of members they appoint on the basis that with the exception of Powys, they have more land (16.7%) within the Park than the other Local Authorities.

Monmouthshire County Council opposed the proposed distribution of members and instead recommended using National Park population figures for each Local Authority within the Park to calculate the distribution of members. Monmouthshire County Council also stated they have the second highest population within the BBNP.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority suggested that as members do not represent constituencies and are expected to take account of the National Park in its entirety the number from each Local Authority should not be a crucial factor.

#### **Questions 3 and 4:**

**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?**

**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 favourable than the English language**

Carmarthenshire County Council stated they have the highest population of Welsh speakers of all the Local Authorities who appoint members to the BBNPA (43.9%) and felt that retaining their two members will safeguard bilingual communities and ensure BBNPA has adequate bilingual representation. They also stated the members they appoint will ensure that the NPA discharges its responsibilities in treating Welsh no less favourably than the English language.

Monmouthshire County Council reported that their wards within the Park have some of the highest levels of Welsh language speakers in Monmouthshire (up to 11.7%) and that appropriate representation of the Monmouthshire communities is essential to ensure opportunities for people to use the Welsh language are maintained. Powys County Council felt any reduction in members could cause a reduction in Welsh speaking members and a desire to use Welsh within the BBNPA.

In summary, Monmouthshire, Powys and Carmarthenshire County Councils all felt that a reduction in the overall number of members, or a reduction in their members, could have an adverse impact on the use of the Welsh language within BBNPA. The other respondents did not comment on questions 3 and 4.

**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.**

The consultation states that the BBNPA have calculated the proposed reduction in membership 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. Some of the respondents offered alternative methods of saving money instead of reducing membership. These included Powys County Council recommending that the BBNPA's statutory planning responsibilities be removed and the County Council be the planning authority for the area of Powys within the Park. The individual's response

suggested many members would be willing to sacrifice their remuneration to save money and Monmouthshire County Council expressed an interest in collaborating with BBNPA to identify immediate cost saving opportunities.

Powys County Council believe that rather than implementing the proposed reduction in membership, which they view as a reduction in local democratic representation, consideration should be given to new governance arrangements that are linked to local accountability. They also suggest the purpose of the NPAs needs to be reconsidered and that BBNPA should attach greater weight to encouraging economic development.

### **3. Next Steps**

The consultation on *Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable Management of Natural Resources* consultation was published on 21 June 2017 and closed on 30 September 2017. The consultation set out a number of proposals relating to designated landscapes including seeking views on enabling governance arrangements to evolve to reflect local circumstances.

The Welsh Government intends to consider the responses to both consultations before making a statement to include whether it believes the governance arrangements of the National Park Authorities, including the size and composition of the BBNPA, would benefit from being changed.