

GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON THE SELECTION OF COUNTY COUNCILLORS TO SERVE AS MEMBERS OF NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES

Introduction

1. This guidance provides a recommended framework and identifies key principles for Local Authorities on the selection of County Councillors to serve as members of the National Park Authorities (NPAs).
2. Its contents have been developed with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) and the three NPAs. The Welsh Government envisages the guidance will be of assistance to Local Authorities in making appointments to the National Park Authorities.

Legal framework

3. Under Schedule 2 of the National Parks Authorities (Wales) Order 1995, two thirds of the members of the NPAs are appointed by Local Authorities to represent local interests. The other third are appointed by the Welsh Ministers to represent the national interest in the Parks.

Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 also require the Local Authorities to appoint County Councillors according to the political balance of the individual Local Authority.

In addition, Schedule 7, paragraph 2 (4) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires them to have regard to the desirability of appointing Councillors to NPAs with wards wholly or partly situated within the relevant Park.

These legal provisions provide the framework within which the following principles of selection can be considered.

Key principles of selection

4. In considering County Councillors for appointment to the NPA the following key principles of selection are advised:
 - a) Merit – all selections should be based on merit, with individuals chosen on the basis of their abilities, experience, qualities and commitment in relation to the strategic work of NPAs and with full regard to the NPA member role description (available from the relevant NPA). Adequate consideration should be given to whether the Councillors possess, or can develop, the necessary skills to contribute effectively to good governance of the NPA;
 - b) Equal opportunities – selection should be fully in line with the principles of equal opportunities and there should be no barriers to increasing the diversity of

membership. It is noted there is a history of an imbalance of men compared to women on the NPAs;

c) Transparency – the Local Authorities should be prepared to share with key stakeholders information on the selection process followed;

d) Commitment to National Park purposes – in addition to being committed to the overall values and principles of conduct in public service in performing their duties, Councillors being considered for selection should be committed to the two statutory purposes and duty of the NPAs and aim to perform their duties in the interests of the National Park as a whole. Being selected as a NPA member is an appointment to a separate Authority and as such will require dedication to successfully fulfil the obligations attached to the position. This includes a commitment to undertake the training and development necessary to govern a special purpose Local Authority;

e) Electoral wards – in accordance with the legislation the aim should be to give priority in selection to those Councillors who have wards wholly or partly within the relevant National Park boundary. Selection of Councillors with electoral wards some distance away from the Park should be avoided where possible;

f) Main Park communities – in considering candidates for appointment, account should also be taken of the desirability of achieving equitable representation from across the Park area, including seeking to ensure the main communities within the Park are represented on the Park Authority;

g) Providing stability - when selecting Councillors for NPA membership, consideration of whether they are likely to be able to fulfil the position for the electoral term should be made. There is a significant impact on NPAs when replacement members have to be appointed during an electoral term.

Attendance

5. The IRPW determines the payments made to NPA members. Currently this is an annual payment based on an input from members of 42 days. There is an expectation all members achieve, at the very least, attendance of 75% at Park Authority events. Member attendance is monitored by each Park Authority and reported to the IRPW.

Application of the key principles

6. In selecting Councillors to serve as members of the NPA, the appointing Authorities will need to satisfy the legal requirements associated with selection and balance the overall weight to be given to the individual principles. The Welsh Government recognises it may not be possible in every case to meet the recommended principles in full.

Review of guidance

7. The contents of this guidance will be reviewed by the Welsh Government, the WLGA, the IRPW and the three NPAs one year before the next County Council Elections.