



BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MULTI-LOCATION MEETINGS POLICY

This Policy has been drafted having regard to the provisions of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Welsh Government Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings (August 2021).

This Policy is in addition to the Authority's Remote Meetings Procedures and the Authority's Procedure Rules as contained within the Authority's Standing Orders.

September 2022

\\

1

MULTI-LOCATION MEETINGS POLICY

Introduction

Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, Welsh Ministers issued Regulations (The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020, ‘the 2020 Meeting Regulations’) which temporarily relaxed the rules for Local Authority meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 Meeting Regulations were intended to enable Local Authority’s to safely continue to discharge their functions during the pandemic, whilst adhering to public health restrictions and guidance.

The provisions of the 2020 Meeting Regulations ended on 30th April 2021 and were replaced by new provisions for Local Authority meetings made under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the Act”), some of which were to take effect from 1st May 2021 and others from 5th May 2022.

In August 2021, Welsh Government published Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings which can be found at:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-08/interim-statutory-guidancehttps://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-08/interim-statutory-guidance-on-multi-location-meetings.pdfon-multi-location-meetings.pdf>

1. What is a Multi-Location Meeting?

- 1.1 A Multi-Location Meeting (MLM) is a meeting whose participants are not all in the same physical place, this includes joining from home or other remote location.
- 1.2 Under the Act, Welsh Government provisions confer on Local Authorities duties to convene MLMs to enable greater accessibility and public participation in the Local Government decision making process.
- 1.3 Section 47 of the Act required Local Authorities to make and publish arrangements that ensure that Local Authority meetings can be held by means of any equipment or other facility, which enables meeting participants who are not in the same place, to attend the meetings and be able to speak to and hear each other. (This provision came into force on 1st May 2021 and the Authority’s Policy for this provision was approved on 16 April 2021 and inserted into the Authority’s Constitution.)
- 1.4 However, from 5th May 2022 Principal Council meeting participants must not only be able to speak to and hear each other but for meetings which are required to be broadcast under Section 46 of the Act participants actively taking part in the meeting must also be able to see and be seen by each other.

- 1.5 When considering arrangements for MLMs or Remote attendance the Authority will also have regard to Welsh Government guidance and / or regulations issued by Welsh Ministers.
- 1.6 Section 2 of Welsh Government's Interim Statutory Guidance sets out several principles to guide Authorities when developing their meeting arrangements which are transparency, accessibility, good conduct, Welsh Language, local needs and future generations. The Guidance also confirms that the meeting arrangements should be reflected in the procedure rules set out in the Authority's Standing Orders.

2. Broadcasting of Meetings

- 2.1 Section 46 of the Act requires that the Authority shall ensure that meetings of a Principal Authority (paragraph 21.2 refers) are broadcast live and are available to view electronically save for when the meeting is not open to the public (Part II – confidential or exempt information). The Authority is not defined as a 'Principal Authority' under the Act and is awaiting further regulation from Welsh Government. However, the Authority considers broadcasting of meetings to be in the interests of transparency democracy and good governance and therefore the livestreaming of the meeting shall be accessible via the Authority's website and archived thereafter for future viewing.

3. Notice of a Meeting

- 3.1 The Authority will ensure that the relevant information shall be included on the Notice of the Meeting (Agenda) advising out how the Committee Members, Officers and the public may attend the meeting.
- 3.2 The Act requires that Notices of Meetings and electronic information relating to meetings (i.e., including notices of meetings, agendas, reports and background papers) must be published on the Authority's website and must remain available in an electronic format and be available for a minimum of six years following the date of the meeting.

4. Agendas, Reports, Decision Notices, Minutes and Background Papers

- 4.1 Agendas, Reports, Decision Notices and Minutes of formal meetings will be published on the Authority's website. A small number of hard copies shall be available to members of the public physically attending a meeting. Agenda papers are normally available four clear working days prior to a meeting.
- 4.2 Decision Notices of a meeting (that came into effect under the Act in May 2021) must show decisions made; names of those present; apologies; declarations of interest and outcome of any votes and must be published on the Authority's website within seven working days of the meeting taking place, including the day of the meeting.
- 4.3 From May 2021 background papers must have also been published on the Authority's website.
- 4.4 There is no longer a requirement to post Notices of Meetings at the Authority's offices. However, hard copies of agendas and reports must be available for the public if meetings are held physically and the Authority is also required to

make public access provision for members of the public who cannot access documents, for example by providing access to computers, limited copies of documents at meetings or via a fee or making documents available for inspection.

5. How are Physical or Multi-Location Meetings (MLMs) Conducted?

5.1 MLMs are meetings of the Authority or its Committees whose participants are not all in the same physical place. Such meetings can either be held:

- Hybrid – with some participants joining through remote means and some attending physically in the same place as others; or
- Entirely Remote – whereby all participants are taking part via remote means.

5.2 The Authority will not hold Hybrid nor entirely physical meetings.

5.3 Remote only meetings will be conducted via Microsoft TEAMS and broadcast live via OBS software through YouTube (save for meetings either partly or wholly confidential in nature).

6. How Can I Participate or Observe an Authority Meeting?

6.1 A participant at a meeting with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is defined as a person who takes an active part in the meeting. They may be a member (with or without voting rights), an officer of the Authority, a person giving evidence to a Committee as a witness, a person who has registered to speak at a Committee (in accordance with Authority procedures), someone presenting a question at a Full Authority meeting (under the Authority's procedure) or a representative from an outside organisation on a Committee. [Please see the [Authority's Public Speaking Scheme](#)]

6.2 A member of the public, not participating in a meeting, will be able to observe a meeting by observing a remotely. An observer at a meeting is defined in the Interim Statutory Guidance as (as is relevant) observing by remote means.

1.1. With regard to observing Remote meetings, members of the public will be able to view a meeting by accessing the link to the meeting online.

1.2. A participant at a meeting (as defined in paragraph 6.1 above) wishing to speak in Welsh or a person wishing to use the Welsh Language translation service, at a meeting is required to contact Democratic Services at least 72 hours before the meeting.

7. Quorum

7.1 The quorum of a meeting is one third of the voting Members unless specified otherwise within the Authority's Constitution. The quorum shall include those

attending Remotely; providing they are able to speak and be heard by each other and to see and be seen by others when actively participating in proceedings.

- 7.2 If the numbers present fall below the quorum required, the meeting ends immediately.
- 7.3 Apologies for absence by member for a meeting can be accepted by Democratic Services up to the publication of the Decision Notice for the meeting i.e., up to seven days from the meeting (the seven days will include the day of the meeting as per the Act).

8. Withdrawal from a Meeting due to a Prejudicial Interest

- 8.1 Should a member declare a Prejudicial Interest at a Remote meeting, the Member must withdraw from the meeting unless they have obtained a dispensation from the Authority's Standards Committee. However, where Members of the public can speak at a meeting, the member can also remain to make their representations but must leave after their representations are made. Notice to speak must be under the Authority's Public Speaking Scheme (For further information on declarations of interests at meetings see Authority's Code of Conduct.)
- 8.2 The Member will be invited back into the meeting once the item relating to the prejudicial item has concluded. Should that person not respond to the call to re-join, the meeting will continue without them, providing it is quorate.

9. Voting

- 9.1 Voting will either take place electronically, via a roll call or a mixture of both.
- 9.2 All voting results will be announced by either the Chair, the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer or the Democratic Services Officer before moving to the next item of business.
- 9.3 Should a member leave the room and not return; their vote will not be able to be provided by another member. However, if the voting device or audio on the laptop is unavailable the Member may use the message facility in the Remote software to relay their vote to the Chair.
- 9.4 Unless a recorded vote is requested in accordance with the Authority's Standing Orders, the Chair will seek a consensus from members. If no objections are received the recommendations will be considered as carried ("no dissent").
- 9.5 The vote will be carried out electronically and the names of those voting for, against or abstaining will be automatically recorded. If a physical roll call of votes is taken this will be undertaken by the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer or Democratic Services Officer at Full Authority and for any other meeting by the Democratic Services Officer.

9.6 If a member cannot initially be contacted to provide their vote, the officer will return to the member and following a second attempt, if no response is received and the meeting remains quorate, the member will be considered not present for that part of the meeting.

9.7 Remote attendees **should** only use the chat facility in the software system to:

- Alert the Chair they wish to speak; or
- If their audio fails to advise of the vote they wish to make.

It is also important to note that any information recorded in the chat facility will be a matter of public record which may be subject to a Freedom of Information request.

N.B. In the Microsoft TEAMS meeting platform Members may also indicate to the Chair that they wish to speak by activating the “Raise Hand” function.

9.8 The chat facility **is not to be used for discussions** as all discussions must be made verbally in the meeting for the sake of individuals observing the meeting and / or the meeting recording if a recording is being made.

10. How Will Exempt Matters be Dealt With?

10.1 The Chair of the meeting shall inform the public when the meeting is moving into private session (Part II). The recording must cease before any discussion on the item commences. The Democratic Services Officer will confirm with the Chair when the recording has been stopped.

11. Remote Attendance – Is a member “Present”?

11.1 Remote meetings provide additional challenges in terms of meeting attendance. There are a variety of circumstances in which this might become an issue e.g., taking of votes, loss of connection (WiFi or mobile).

11.2 To be considered present, the member must be able to speak and be heard and to see and be seen by others if the meeting is broadcasted. At a meeting, the Monitoring Officer and / or Democratic Services Officer shall provide the local determination and will consider issues such as temporary interruptions associated with connection issues.

11.3 Any failure in technology / connectivity which results in members’ loss of contact during the meeting shall not invalidate any part of the deliberations or any vote taken. The Chair of the Committee may adjourn the meeting if they consider appropriate whilst any technical issues are resolved.

N.B. Teams has a participants list function which demonstrates to the Chair and Democratic Services Officer which participants are connected to the meeting at any given time.

12. Public Questions at Authority and Public Speaking Procedures

12.1 Should a member of the public wish to ask a question at Full Authority meetings they must give notice in line with the Authority's procedure which can be found at [need link here]

12.2 Public speaking procedures for Committees (where procedures are in place) can also be found at:

[Application to speak under the Public Speaking Scheme | Brecon Beacons National Park Authority \(beacons-mpa.gov.uk\)](https://www.beacons-mpa.gov.uk/application-to-speak-under-the-public-speaking-scheme)

13. Formality and Privacy at Meetings

13.1 When attending Remote meetings (MLMs) members and any participants must ensure that the room from which they are accessing the meeting is secure and must ensure that the door of the room is closed so that no disturbance occurs during the meeting as it is important to ensure a degree of formality in the proceedings.

13.2 Participants are encouraged to use a suitable "corporate" background. (A library of "corporate" background images will be made available to members for their use.) Remember that as proceedings will be live, viewers will effectively be able to view you working in your home.

13.3 Members are reminded of their responsibilities under the Members' Code of Conduct during meetings and when considering exempt items during a meeting. Members should ensure that they cannot be overheard during discussions around confidential information. Members should consider the use of headphones for such meetings and make sure that they plan ahead.

14. Etiquette at Remote / Multi-Location Meetings

14.1 Participants should:

- (i) Dress appropriately for the meeting;
- (ii) Ensure that their microphone is muted if not speaking;
- (iii) Respect the Chair and others present;
- (iv) Behave appropriately and be mindful of the Members' Code of Conduct; and
- (v) Use the chat facility appropriately.

14.2 Disruptive Behaviour – If a member of the public interrupts proceedings, the Chair will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chair will order their removal from the meeting. With regard Elected Members, the procedure outlined within the Authority's Standing Orders will apply (see Standing Order 30.11).

15. All meetings will be facilitated by a Democratic Services Officer.

16. The following ICT equipment will be required by participants for Remote meetings –

- Microphones / Headsets;
- Cameras – if meeting is broadcasted;
- High speed Internet access; and
- Access to the relevant software (Chrome - internet browser) being used for the meeting.

17. Viewing and Attending a Meeting Links

17.1 For Members of the public wishing to view the meeting the link to the agenda and to the broadcasting of the meeting will be available on the Authority's website.

17.2 A link will be sent to Participants attending irrespective of whether the meeting will be undertaken via Remote means.

18. Calendar of Meetings

18.1 The Authority's Calendar of Meetings is agreed by the Authority on an annual basis and can be found on the Authority's website at www.beacons-npa.gov.uk. The Calendar will also include details of the time of the meeting. However, meetings can be subject to change or additional meetings included in the Calendar by the Chair of a Committee and / or the Chief Executive, as and when required. For details of the Remote means of access members of the public are requested to view the agenda papers online once published in advance of the meeting (see Section 4 above).

19. Invitations to Meetings for Participants

19.1 Invitations will be provided to all meeting participants electronically, and the invitation will detail that the meeting will be Remote

- For meetings taking place on Microsoft TEAMS, the URL joining link for the meeting will be included within the Outlook invitation itself.
- Other participants attending remotely – members of the public and / or witnesses – will be sent a URL link to join the meeting.

19.2 Prior to meetings Democratic Services Officers who support each of the Authority Committees will also get in touch with registered speakers and / or witnesses to help if required.

N.B. All participants are advised to contact Democratic Services at Democratic@beacons-npa.gov.uk or telephone 01874 624 437 at least 48 hours (on a working day) before the meeting should they require assistance prior to the meeting.

20. Record of Attendance

- 20.1 The attendance of each Committee member will be recorded by the Democratic Services Officer supporting the Committee. These records will be combined or added to the Decision Notice and minutes of the meeting and published on the Authority's website.
- 20.2 Committee members are to inform Democratic Services no later than seven days (including the day of the meeting) if they are unable to attend a meeting and their apologies will be recorded in the Decision Notice and thereafter the minutes of the meeting.

21. Broadcasting of Meetings

- 21.1 The broadcasting of meetings does not replace the formal record of the meeting and together with the decisions taken will be published on the Authority's website and retained in hard copy in accordance with the Authority's retention policy.
- 21.2 Having regard to section 46 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 all Authority meetings are to be conducted and broadcast on a Remote basis,
.
- N.B. All Committee meetings will be undertaken, as outlined in Section 21 above, and broadcast live on the Authority's website and the recordings uploaded thereafter for future viewing on the Authority's website.
- 21.4 All agendas on the Authority's website will clearly state the meetings will be held by Remote means.

22. Online Meeting Platforms

- 22.1 The Authority will use Microsoft TEAMS for Remote meetings
- N.B. Members are responsible for ensuring access to adequate high-speed internet when joining remotely. Advice can be provided on minimum standards where required. The Authority accepts no responsibility should a member choose to use a personal device and encounters connectivity issues prior to or during a meeting they wish to attend.

23. Attendance at Meetings Whilst out of the Country

- 23.1 Members wishing to attend meetings whilst out of the Country and using their own personal, other Local Authority or Brecon Beacons National Park Authority devices will be able to do so by accessing free Wifi facilities as the Authority will not be able to reimburse costs. However, to enable access to meetings on Authority laptops abroad members will be required to notify ICT Service and / or Democratic Services at least **two weeks** prior to departure so that the necessary security measures that will be required can be put in place on the device in time.

- 23.2 Should members wish to access meetings using mobile phones, due to the cost of international calls the Authority would not be able to reimburse call costs with access via phones personal or otherwise then being a matter for the member.
- 23.3 Technical support on any Authority supported devices whilst abroad will not be able to be provided by the Authority's ICT or Democratic Services Officers.

24. Confidential and Exempt Information (Part II)

- 24.1 Some information, in accordance with Legislation, may not be able to be made publicly available. This is known as confidential or exempt information (Part II). When such information is to be considered at a formal meeting the documents will only be made available to those entitled to view them on the Authority's internal network. Such matters are usually scheduled at the end of an agenda in order to minimise any inconvenience to observers who will be required to leave the meeting prior to the items being considered. The Chair will request that members of the public and press are excluded from the before continuing with the agenda. Any recording of the meeting will also cease.
- 24.2 If a meeting is being broadcast the recording will be paused and a notification displayed on the broadcast that the meeting is no longer open to the public.

25. Training

- 25.1 All Members and officers will receive training to be able to participate at meetings which will include the use of the meeting platform software for joining Remote meetings. Other participants will also receive support from Democratic Services regarding how to access the meeting.

26. Support for Meetings

- 26.1 In the first instance support for meetings will be provided by Democratic Services Officers who will ensure the following:
- Agendas to be emailed electronically (normally at least 4 clear days before the meeting);
 - Monitor attendance at Remote meetings and will assist any participant to join or re-join the meeting;
 - Facilitate the meeting, voting and take the minutes of the meeting. (Voting at the meeting will be undertaken in adherence to the requirements of the Authority's Standing Orders and in line with Section 9 of this Policy)
 - Facilitate the recording and livestreaming of meetings (in conjunction with an ICT officer).

Privacy Notice for Democratic Services and Planning Services

(This Privacy Notice is supplemental to the Authority's Corporate Privacy Notice linked below)

[to be drafted]

This Privacy Notice is specifically for Democratic Services and Planning Services.

Democratic Services provides support and administration for the Authority's Committee system (excluding Planning) for it to operate effectively. Planning Services provides support and administration for the Authority's Planning Committee

In particular both Democratic Services and Planning Services respectively:

- Organise and schedule meetings,
- Decide whether the meeting will be public,
- Issue public notices in relation to the meeting,
- Invite individuals to attend,
- Deal with correspondence received in relation to the business of the meeting,
- Deal with queries in relation to business of the meeting,
- Take minutes of the relevant meeting,
- Issue agenda papers and minutes,
- Deal with any other issue relevant to the business of the meeting,
- Arrange for the retention of documents and reports relating to the Committee.

In the context of this notice the word meeting includes:

- Audit and Risk Committee
- Authority meeting
- Chairs Committee
- Finance and Performance
- Planning Committee
- Standards Committee
- SDF Committee
- Any other meeting supported by Democratic Services

In order to promote open Government and Democracy most of the Authority's meetings are held in public and accordingly anything discussed at those meetings will be public and any minutes, recordings or webcasts will also be public. There are some circumstances however where it is not appropriate for matters to be discussed in public, for instance the personal business of individuals or information that is financially/ commercially sensitive. The agenda of the meeting will make it clear how information is to be treated.

Accordingly, if:

- you are submitting information to be discussed at a Committee, or
- you are attending a Committee to speak, or
- you are submitting documents to a Committee, or
- you are submitting petitions to a Committee
- you are submitting representations to a Committee
- you are submitting or providing documents / petitions on behalf of others.

This information will be dealt with openly and in public unless the meeting, or part of the meeting, discussing it is not held in public in accordance with the exempt information provisions in the Authority's Standing Orders

If you are obtaining information from third parties, you need to ensure that they understand the above and **consent** to their information to be put into the public domain. The Authority may ask you to confirm this, and information may not be further published unless we are satisfied that third parties have been made aware of this.

How do we collect information from you?

We collect information from you when you visit [Brecon Beacons National Park Authority \(beacons-npa.gov.uk\)](http://Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (beacons-npa.gov.uk)). Also, when you contact us in writing, speak to us on the phone, email or talk to us face to face.

What types of information do we collect from you?

In order to provide the service, the Authority may need to process some or all of the following categories of personal information about members of the public or elected Members:

- Name and title
- Address
- Contact number
- Email address
- Comments in relation to Authority business
- Special requirements to access meetings, including speaking in Welsh

How is your information used?

In accordance with our public tasks the following applies:

- To be used at the meeting as set out above and where necessary names and comments made recorded in the minutes,
- When registering to speak at Committees, members of the public's details will be entered into an Authority computer database.
- Any registrations to speak at Committee meetings and any information submitted to members and Democratic Services may be shared with Authority Officers and affiliated partners (e.g., organisations the Authority works with collaboratively to deliver services) for their professional observation and consideration.
- Any written correspondence received may be kept on file for future reference by the Authority.
- Enable Members or Officers of the Authority to investigate or assist with any issues which you may have raised. Also, so we can notify you of any updates.
- Refer your public representations across Committees in order to inform decision making.
- If your express permission is given, share with other members of the public who have registered to speak in order to nominate a spokesperson.

Who has access to your information?

We will generally only share personal data with Brecon Beacons National Park Authority staff or members who need it to perform their functions. However, as outlined above, if discussed in a public meeting the information will be publicly available.

In addition, we may rely on several exemptions, which allow us to share information without needing to identify a lawful basis for the sharing and without needing to provide you with information about the sharing.

Lawful bases

Our **lawful bases** for processing your personal information are:

- Consent.
- The processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out by us in the public interest or in the exercise of authority vested in us.
- The processing is necessary in order to protect your vital interests or those of another individual.
- The processing is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation to which we are subject.

What are your rights in relation to the personal data we process?

- **Access** – you can request copies of any of your personal information held by the Authority.
- **Rectification** – you can ask us to correct any incorrect information.
- **Deletion** – you can ask us to delete your personal information. The Authority can refuse to delete information if we have a lawful reason to keep this.
- **Portability** - you can ask us to transfer your personal data to different services or to you.
- **Right to object or restrict data processing** – you have the right to object to how your data is being used and how it is going to be used in the future.
- **Right to prevent automatic decisions** – you have the right to challenge a decision that affects you that has been made automatically without human intervention

How long will we keep your information for?

We keep and dispose of all records in line with our record retention schedule. Please contact the Democratic Services Department on 01874 624437 or Democratic@beacons-npa.gov.uk for further information.

What security precautions are in place to protect the loss, misuse, or alteration of your information?

We are strongly committed to data security and will take reasonable and appropriate steps to protect your personal information from unauthorised access, loss, misuse, alteration, or corruption. We have put in place physical, electronic, and managerial procedures to safeguard the information you provide to us. However, we cannot

guarantee the security of any information you transmit to us. We recommend you take every precaution to protect your personal information.

Broadcasting

Please note that certain meetings of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority will be broadcast, you will be informed verbally if the meeting you are at will be. If it is then this means that you are being recorded both visually and in sound and that is made available on the internet. This is done for the purposes of supporting and promoting democratic engagement and public interest. We will retain the data for 6 years and then destroy it. You have the right to apply to access, rectify, restrict, object, or erase this data.

Complaints

If you would like to make a complaint regarding the use of your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer:

By post: Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, LD3 7HP.

By phone: [01874 624437](tel:01874624437).

By email: dpo@beacons-npa.gov.uk

For independent advice about data protection, privacy, and data sharing issues, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) at www.ico.org.uk

For further information regarding this procedure please contact:

Democratic Services via email – Democratic@beacons-npa.gov.uk

Address: Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, LD3 7HP.

Phone Number [01874 624437](tel:01874624437)