

Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee

Date: Wednesday 16th February 2006

Venue: Committee Room 2

Title: Proposed consultation on arrangements for appointing members to the Welsh National Park Authorities

Purpose

1. This paper seeks the views of the Committee on the proposed consultation exercise to be undertaken on the process for appointing members to the Welsh National Park Authorities.

Recommendation

2. That the Committee:

- notes the draft consultation paper; and
- provides views on the key issues set out in the paper, and advises if there are any other issues that should be explored as part of the consultation exercise.

Background

3. The proposed consultation exercise arises from the Review of Welsh National Park Authorities where a number of recommendations were made with regards the procedures for appointing members to the Park Authorities, including the possible modification of existing legislation to allow for the direct election of one-fifth of the members. Following the Review, I made a commitment to consult on the scope for making improvements to the current arrangements in 2005-2006. Officials have been working closely with the National Park Authorities on the production of the draft consultation paper in front of members today. I will report back to the Committee on the outcome of the consultation.

Consideration

4. While I consider that the current arrangements (as set out in the consultation paper) serve the National Park authorities reasonably well, this does not mean that improvements cannot be made. While not

seeking to confine discussions, I would like the Committee to focus on whether or not the status quo should be maintained (Option 1); what changes might be made to the way that local authority members are appointed (Option 2); should community councils be more engaged in the process (Option 2); the feasibility of a percentage of members being directly elected (Option 3) and what more could be done to encourage those sectors of the community that are currently under-represented on the National Park Authorities to apply to become Park Authority members. In giving their views on these issues, members are encouraged to consider the discussion material relating to these in the draft consultation paper.

Financial Implications

5. None at this stage, apart from the usual costs (postage etc) of a Wales wide consultation exercise of key stakeholders and individuals. The financial implications that may arise as a result of changes to procedures following the consultation, will be considered as part of future budget deliberations.

Cross cutting themes

6. The paper sets out (Option 6) our aim of engaging more widely with members of disabled, disadvantaged and other under represented groups. Dialogue between Assembly Government officials and members of disabled and ethnic minority support groups to take this process forward are ongoing.

Action for Subject Committee

7. To note and comment on the draft consultation paper prior to it issuing for public consultation.

Carwyn Jones

Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside

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