

# **Wales's New National Park Proposal 2023 Engagement Period Report**

Report No: 794

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# Contents

1. Executive summary .....	4
2. Background.....	5
3. Introduction .....	5
4. How we engaged with stakeholders and the public.....	6
5. Questionnaire summary of responses.....	9
6. Themes identified from responses to our engagement questionnaire.....	51
7. Summary.....	72
8. Next steps .....	73
9. Other resources / stay in touch.....	74
10. References.....	75
11. Appendices .....	79
11.1 Appendix A: Area of Search Map .....	79
11.2 Appendix B: Questionnaire .....	80

## List of Figures

Figure 1: How respondents identified when responding to the questionnaire .....	9
Figure 2: How respondents described themselves .....	10
Figure 3: Map of the engagement responses by postcode .....	11
Figure 4: How respondents felt about the proposed new NP.....	13
Figure 5: Areas respondents were interested in responding about.....	19
Figure 6: Foreseen potential benefits from this proposed new NP .....	36
Figure 7:Foreseen concerns or issues to be considered .....	42
Figure 8: Holiday Home Hotspots - Location of second addresses used as a holiday home (by Middle layer Super Output Area, England and Wales) (ONS 2024) .....	62
Figure 9:Wales’s New NP Proposal Evaluation Timeline.....	74

## List of Tables

Table 1. Attendance at the in-person drop-in engagement events 2023 .....	7
Table 2. Attendance at the online engagement events 2023.....	8
Table 3. In addition to these key themes mentioned across all 11 listed areas, these are the key themes by area:.....	21

Table 4. Key themes by 'other' suggested areas: ..... 28  
Table 5. In addition to these key themes mentioned across all 11 listed areas, these are the key themes by area:..... 32  
Table 6. The most frequently mentioned themes..... 51  
Table 7. Engagement and consultation milestones .....74

## List of Abbreviations

1. NP - National Park
2. AONB - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
3. SAC - Special Area of Conservation
4. SSSI - Site of Special Scientific Interest

# 1. Executive summary

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has been commissioned by Welsh Government to assess the case for a new National Park (NP), based on the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The statutory and procedural requirements of this process have been clarified and commenced in 2022. (See *Section 8 'Next Steps'*). In addition to the statutory requirements and the technical assessment work, which are ongoing, we undertook an additional early engagement period during October and November 2023.

This was **not** a consultation. At the time, we had no proposal to be consulted upon, but we wanted to share our initial Area of Search map and gather feedback and information, especially from residents and stakeholders. Our aim was to better understand the range of issues and perspectives related to the NP proposal. Evidence that might influence the Area of Search was welcomed. The engagement period was also an opportunity for us to start raising awareness among the local population, that an assessment was happening.

To publicise the engagement period, we carried out an official project launch which involved a new project website, various social media activities, a press release, and collaboration with key stakeholders such as the potentially affected local authorities, the existing AONB, and others. We were also pleased to have had the engagement period announced in local, regional, and national news articles including an ITV and a BBC evening national news segment.

During the Seven-week engagement period from the 9 October to the 27 November 2023, we ran 11 online and in-person drop-in events. 619 people attended events in-person, 105 attended events online and we received hundreds of emails and 966 people formally responded to the questionnaire.

**51%** of questionnaire respondents stated they supported and felt very or somewhat positive/optimistic about the proposed new NP.

**42%** of respondents stated they were against and felt very or somewhat negative/concerned about the proposed new NP.

**6%** of respondents stated they were neutral or undecided.

Respondents informed us about their support, concerns, and suggestions for the new NP proposal. (See *Section 5 'Questionnaire summary of responses'*)

We have carefully examined all the questionnaire responses and organised them into the following list of most frequently mentioned themes (in order from most to least):

1. Landscape conservation, Recognition for the area, Tranquillity.
2. Wildlife, Agriculture and Land Management, Environment and Sustainability.
3. Tourism, Public services, and infrastructure.
4. Necessity for change, Management and Controls, Costs, Funding, Bureaucracy.
5. Local people & Communities, Local Economy.
6. Access issues & Outdoor recreation.

7. Housing.
8. Culture and Heritage.
9. Planning implications.
10. Boundary queries.
11. A need for more information.

An initial consideration of each of these themes is provided in *Section 6 'Response to key Themes'*.

Following your feedback, based on evidence and further assessments, we have made some amendments to the initial Area of Search map. Some of the areas suggested for inclusion have now been added and will go forward for evaluation at the next project stage.

A public consultation is planned for the autumn of 2024. At that point, the suitability of a NP and alternative options will have been evaluated, and a detailed landscape assessment will have refined the study area into a proposed boundary.

## 2. Background

In its Programme for Government (2021-2026), Welsh Government set out its commitment to designate a new National Park (NP) for Wales.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is Welsh Government's statutory adviser on landscape and natural beauty and the designating authority for any new NPs or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Welsh Government has commissioned us to evaluate the case for a new NP based on the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.

The case for a new NP will be considered within the existing Senedd term (2021-2026).

We are an independent organisation and will make an independent recommendation based on the evidence gathered and implications for the citizens of Wales. The statutory process and tests will be applied.

## 3. Introduction

We have established a team to lead this work which includes undertaking data and evidence gathering, and engagement with local communities and other key stakeholders.

Between October and November 2023, we ran a first round of engagement which involved a series of online and in-person drop-in events that were offered to the public and targeted stakeholders.

The aim of this engagement period was to hold early engagement with stakeholders and the public, to share the initial Area of Search map of the area being assessed and start gathering feedback. We wanted to better understand the range of issues and perspectives related to the NP proposal, with a particular emphasis on residents in, or local to, the area being considered. The engagement period also aimed to raise awareness of the assessment and procedure and provide those who may want to challenge the area of Search with an opportunity to submit relevant evidence.

This report gives an overview of our 2023 engagement period on the proposed new NP in Wales and summarises the feedback gathered from the questionnaire and engagement events.

## 4. How we engaged with stakeholders and the public

### 4.1 Overview

Ahead of the official project launch in September 2023, we presented and engaged with local authorities and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB on the initial Area of Search map during the Summer of 2023.

On September 11, 2023, we officially launched the project which included the creation of a project website, various social media activities, and a press release circulated to local, relevant media outlets. This launch aimed to raise awareness of the proposal and promote the upcoming 7-week engagement period.

Between 9 October and 27 November 2023, we ran a set period of public engagement on the initial Area of Search map. The Area of Search is the geographical limits within which we will be evaluating whether the statutory criteria for a NP are satisfied. The area includes several landscapes that in combination with the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB have the potential to meet statutory landscape designation criteria. The Area of Search is not the boundary of a proposed NP and further refinement is likely as we progress through the process.

We held 11 events in total. 5 were in-person drop-in events and 6 were online. All events were offered as an early opportunity to learn more about the project, ask questions of the team, and share feedback on an early map of the area being assessed.

All the in-person drop-in events and 2 of the online events were advertised on our project website and open to the wider public. People were told they only needed to attend one event, be that online or in-person as the information shared was the same at each event. The 4 other online events were targeted toward specific stakeholder groups; elected members, environment and heritage groups, tourism and recreational groups, and the renewable energy sector. Unfortunately, the targeted landowners online session was withdrawn due to insufficient interest.

## 4.2 In-person drop-in events

The 5 in-person drop-in events were held at Canolfan Ceiriog, Llanbedr Village Hall, Llanfyllin Public Institute Committee, Llangollen Town Hall, and Trelawnyd Memorial Hall. Events were held on weekdays (between 1pm-7pm) and Saturdays (between 10am-4pm) and people were encouraged to drop by at the in-person events as they wished, there was no need to book a place.

Attendees at these events were counted in and out, asked to sign in on arrival, and given printed copies of the engagement leaflet, engagement events evaluation form, and questionnaire (all bilingual). They were invited to view the information boards, photographs, pop-up banners, and large maps showing the Area of Search map. Multiple staff were on hand, always with some Welsh speakers available, and identified with NRW branded clothing. Staff discussed the proposals, explained the Area of Search, and engaged in general discussions with attendees to understand their perspectives, answer their questions where possible, and encourage the completion of questionnaires as a mechanism for capturing feedback.

*Table 1. Attendance at the in-person drop-in engagement events 2023*

Date	Venue	No. of attendees
Wednesday 11 October	Canolfan Ceiriog, New Rd, Glyn Ceiriog, Llangollen LL20 7HE	72
Saturday 28 October	Llanbedr Village Hall, Llanbedr-Dyffryn-Clwyd, Ruthin LL15 1UP	200
Monday 6 November	Public Institute Committee, Park View/High St, Llanfyllin SY22 5AA	142
Saturday 18 November	Llangollen Town Hall, Castle St, Llangollen LL20 8NU	102
Wednesday 22 November	Trelawnyd Memorial Hall, The Record Journal, Trelawnyd LL18 6DN	103

There were **619** attendees in total across all 5 in-person drop-in events.

### 4.3 Online events

Those interested in participating in one of the online events were encouraged to email the project team their name, interest (e.g. resident, community leader, landowner, farmer, business owner, organisation representative, etc), and which event they were interested in attending. The project team sent out event meeting links ahead of the events. Each event was 1 hour 30 minutes and followed a structure of 30-minute presentations from the team and then 1 hour of questions and discussions. All the online events were bilingual with simultaneous translation provided and at the end of the events, people were encouraged to provide their feedback by completing the questionnaire.

*Table 2. Attendance at the online engagement events 2023*

Date	Stakeholder group	No. of attendees
Monday 9 October	Elected members	10
Thursday 19 October	Public	24
Wednesday 25 October	Environment and heritage groups	19
Thursday 9 November	Tourism and recreational groups	4
Tuesday 14 November	Public	38
Friday 24 November	Renewable energy sector	10

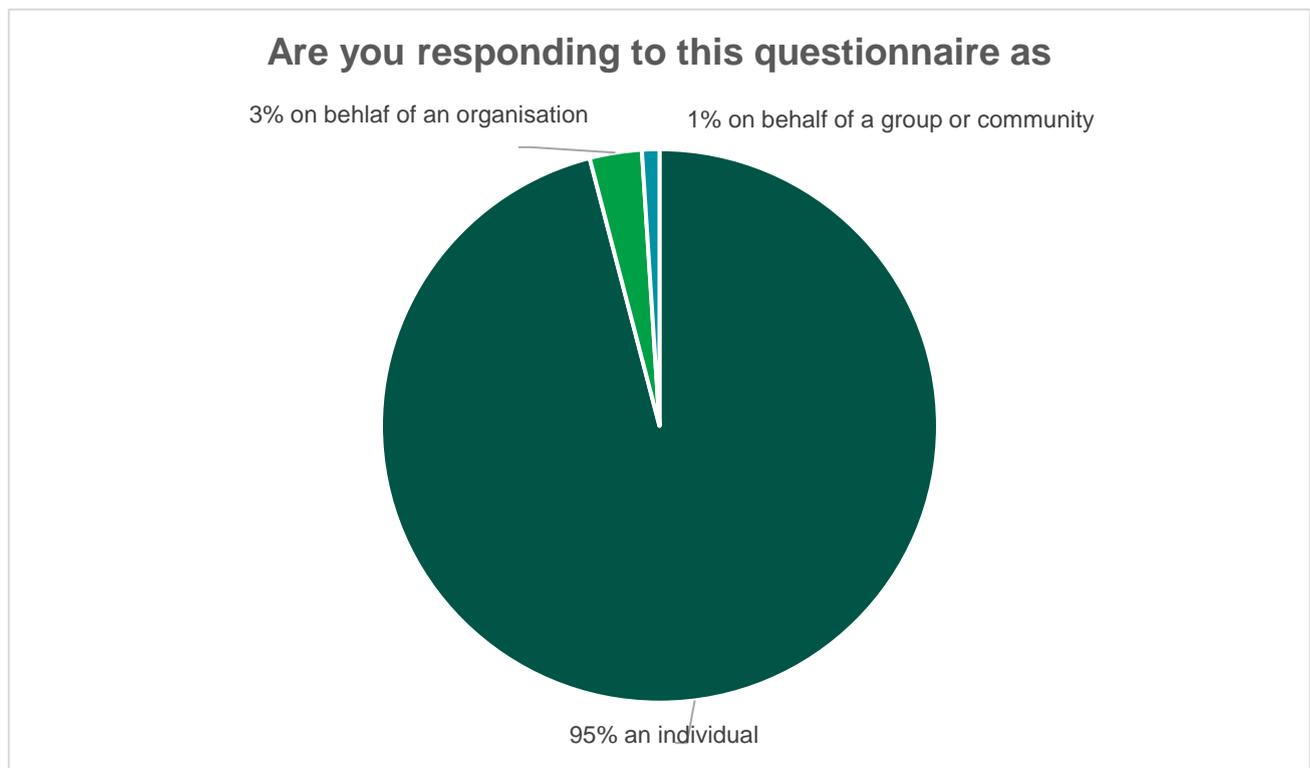
There were **105** attendees in total across all 6 online events.

## 5. Questionnaire summary of responses

A total of **966** people responded to the engagement questionnaire. **952** were completed in English and **14** in Welsh.

Following the end of the October - November 2023 engagement period, the team took to coding and analysing all the questionnaire responses. The findings of which have been summarised below.

### 5.1 Question 1. Are you responding to this questionnaire as an individual, on behalf of an organisation or on behalf of a group or community?



*Figure 1: How respondents identified when responding to the questionnaire*

From the **966** people who responded to the questionnaire; **95%** (920 respondents) said they were responding as individuals, **4%** (38 respondents) on behalf of an organisation, and **1%** (8 respondents) on behalf of a group or community.

Those who specified their organisations were from environmental organisations, schools, landowner representatives, and various businesses.

Those who specified the group or community they were responding on behalf of were from environmental and walking groups.

## 5.2 Question 2. Which of the following best describe you?

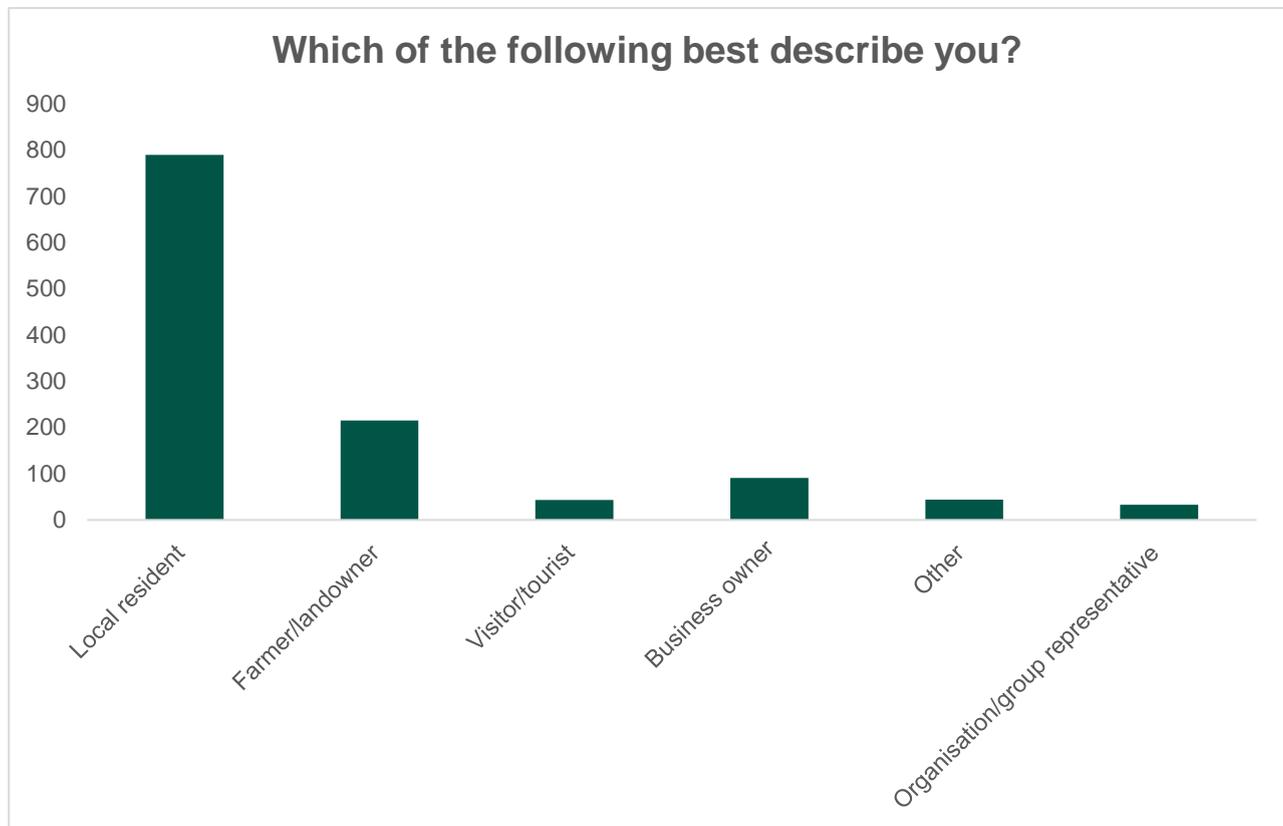


Figure 2: How respondents described themselves

Those who responded as individuals ticked as many answers as applied to them. **790** identified as *local residents*, **215** as *farmers/landowners*, **43** as *visitors/tourists*, **91** as *business owners*, **33** as *organisation/group representative*, **44** as *other*.

Very few of the **44** respondents who selected *other* specified what they meant by this. However, those who did identified themselves as local councillors, walkers, and residents living outside of the Area of Search map.

Not many organisation/group representatives specified their roles. Most only mentioned their name or their organisation's name. Those who did specify tended to be chairmen, managers, and directors.

The views of the people the organisation/group representatives represent were collected through word of mouth, meetings, discussions, social media, and emails. There was hardly any mention of how many people contributed their views, only that the number of contributors and interest was increasing daily.

Most respondents took the 'any further comments' section in this question to start raising their concerns, and queries, and express their views and interests in the proposal.

### 5.3 Question 3. What is your post code?

In this question, we asked respondents to provide their postcode in full or the first three digits to capture how many interested respondents live within the Area of Search or outside.

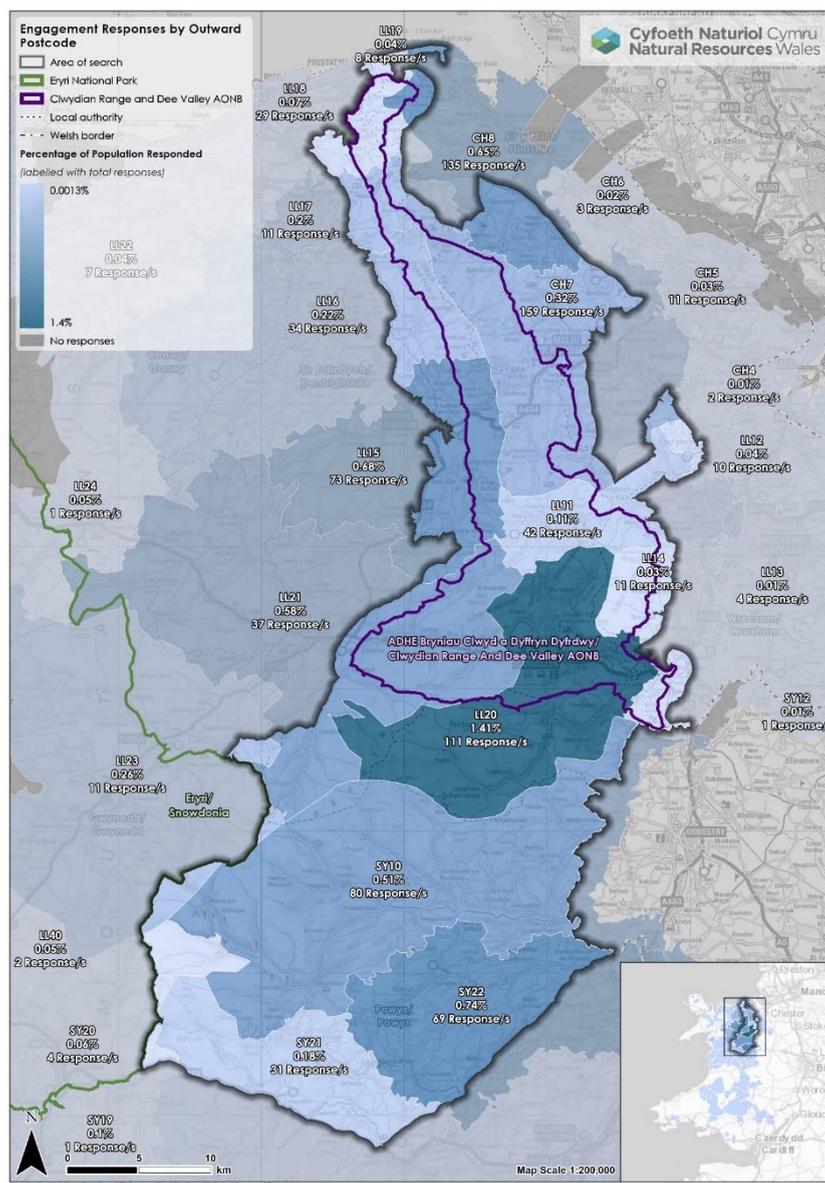


Figure 3: Map of the engagement responses by postcode

This map shows the responses received in the questionnaire for each town or district based on their outward postcode. The outward postcode is the first portion of the postcode that denotes the area or district. The map visualises the percentage of questionnaire participants and how well each town or district has been represented.

Representation from the responses is highest in postcodes within the Area of Search, with the highest percentage in the most central postcode, LL20. We also see good

representation in the North East, the West, and the South of the Area of Search. Low representation in the North West and the East may be due to higher populations in urbanised areas.

The labels on the map indicate the frequency of responses, which is higher within the Area of Search and decreases as you move away from it. The North West has the highest values within the Area of Search, which generally decreases in a South or West direction.

## 5.4 Question 4a. Which option below best describes your feelings towards the proposed new NP?

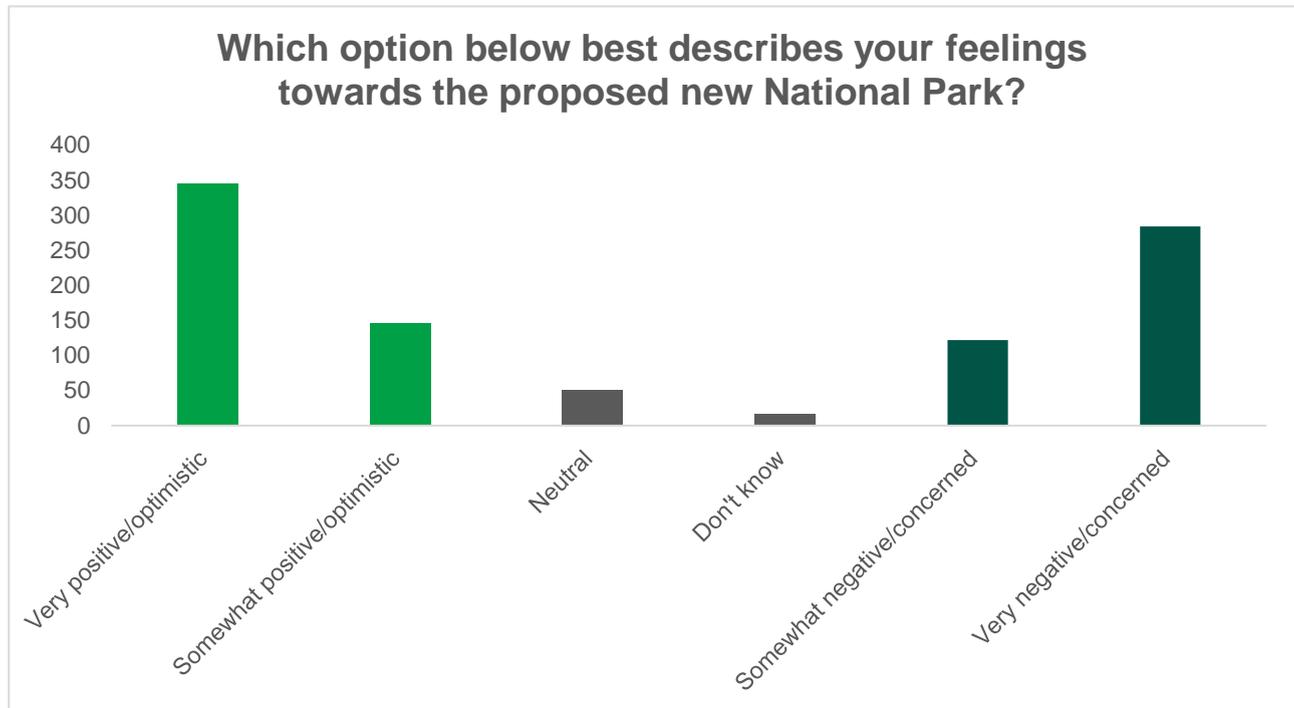


Figure 4: How respondents felt about the proposed new NP

From the **966** people who responded to the questionnaire; A majority of the respondents felt positive/optimistic about the proposal with **51%** saying they felt very positive/optimistic (36%, 345 respondents) or somewhat positive/optimistic (15%, 146 respondents), **6%** felt neutral (5%, 51 respondents) or said they don't know (2%, 16 respondents), **42%** felt very negative/concerned (29%, 284 respondents) or somewhat negative/concerned (13%, 124 respondents).

## 5.5 Question 4b. Please expand on your answer/explain why you feel this way

All responses to this question have been summarised and put into key themes. The themes are ordered from most to least frequently mentioned.

### 5.5.1 Positive/Optimistic

Those who felt **very positive/optimistic & somewhat positive/optimistic** towards the proposed new NP felt so for the following reasons:

#### Preserve and protect the landscape

- **Strong desire to protect** - Many feel strongly that the “beautiful” and “wonderful” local landscape needs better protection and welcome any opportunities to preserve it.

- **NP status best option** - NP status “*seems the right thing to do*” and “*can only be a good thing*” as it would provide this extra layer of protection and “*retain the area in years to come as beautiful as it is today*”.
- **Protect rural areas** - Important to protect rural areas, and the rural way of life and ensure the countryside is well maintained.
- **Enjoyment** - An “*amazing area*” deserving of protection “*so people can enjoy it... for generations to come*”.
- **Protect from unwanted development** - Concerns of “*too much unauthorised development*” in this area. The hope is that limited new housing developments would be built and the area would be protected from industrialisation by wind farm developments.

### Economic boost to the area

- **Need for investment** - Strong feelings expressed that North East Wales needs a boost as this region of Wales is often “*forgotten about*” and “*totally ignored*”.
- **Bring local investment** - Hopeful that a new NP would bring more visitors and increased investment to the area. The hope is that bringing more money in would also help develop infrastructure in these towns, generate more, and benefit existing local businesses and jobs.
- **Fix the over-reliance on farming in the area** - There is a need for a more “*broad-based economy*” that does not rely too heavily on farming. Many believe a new NP would allow for economic opportunities through leisure activities and provide an opportunity to promote sustainable tourism in the area.

### Conserve and enhance wildlife and biodiversity

- **Improve wildlife and biodiversity** - A new NP would be “*great for the area and wildlife*” as it would help to preserve the area, and its natural ecology and help improve it.
- **Garden wildlife** - Reference to the area being “*full of incredible animals*” and there being “*so much wildlife in the vicinity of people’s gardens*” including tawny owls, badgers, and a variety of birds.
- **Game birds** - Wildlife needs more protection from landowners that rear game birds for shooting.
- **Important habitat** - The area is a “*vital habitat*” for different species of flora and fauna.
- **Ecological and biodiversity crisis** - A NP could help address and reverse some of the causes of the ecological and biodiversity crisis seen across the whole of the UK, in this locality.

### Bring recognition to the area

- **Deserves NP status** - Many feel the area is “*worthy*” of NP status and that it is “*about time*” it “*got the recognition it deserves*” having long been “*undervalued as an area for leisure and tourism and experiencing the great outdoors*”. Many who currently visit describe it as an “*undiscovered gem*” and a place that “*has so much to offer*”.

- **Raise profile** - A NP status would “*raise the profile of the area*”, bring about more tourism, and give people more of a reason to stop here not just travel straight through to Eryri NP. It would help “*put rural communities on the map*”.

### Increased resources

- **Easier to secure resources** - A NP could make it easier to secure the resources needed to maintain the area and enable the custodians to impose regulations as necessary. For example, farming practices such as chemical runoff to lakes and rivers would be better regulated.
- **More funding** - It could release additional funding which may be used to provide more facilities for visitors and residents, maintaining bridleways for horse-riding and mountain biking.
- **More secure funding than an AONB** - Funding would be more certain than the AONB system and more of it would be available for the management of a NP which would provide greater long-term stability for the management of the area.
- **Diversify farms** - A NP could significantly help farms develop and diversify and provide grants and resources to maintain the landscape for all to enjoy, both residents and visitors.

### Protect culture and heritage

- **Architecture** - Conserve and safeguard local architecture and historic buildings. A NP would help regulate building standards.
- **Ceiriog Valley** - Preserve the historic environment of the valley whose landscape is “*rich*” with “*natural heritage*”.
- **Way of life** - Local traditions and way of life need protection.
- **Welsh language** - Conservation of the Welsh language.

### Increase access and participation in the outdoors

- **Countryside access** - Recognition that the area has some “*fantastic*” countryside and more needs to be done to “*make it accessible to all*”.
- **Health benefits** - Important to provide areas for recreation which will help enable people to exercise more and reduce the obesity crisis in Wales.

### Improve the environment and sustainability

- **Benefits to climate change** - Expressed urgency to do something about climate change, the positive impact a NP would have on the environment and the benefits it could bring with an increased ability to coordinate a response to climate change.
- **Safeguards** - Desire to see safeguards in place so that the area is managed sustainably as far as nature, the environment, tourism, and agriculture are concerned.
- **Sustainable farming** - An opportunity to develop and encourage more sustainable and “*climate-friendly*” farming practices.
- **Darker skies** - Hopeful it leads to darker skies protection and more restrictions on lights to help minimise light pollution.
- **Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR)** - It has the potential to bring to life the principles of SMNR in a focused area that makes sense from a

social economic and environmental perspective, with a tailored governance framework that could make a real difference.

### Promote and enhance natural beauty

- **Positively showcase the beauty of area** - Many welcome any opportunities to promote the landscapes, share the environment and *“bring more closely into focus the beautiful area we live in”*. Strong feelings of pride and sense that this is an area of *“undervalued”* natural beauty.
- **Support for a new NP** - Proposal described as *“a wonderful project!”*, one which will *“enhance, safeguard and showcase the most beautiful part of Wales!”*.

### Strong identity

- **Identity and character** - It would help give a *“strong identity”*, *“preserve the character”* of the area and be an opportunity to *“create a natural identity across the historic landscape of the area which is not focused on past industries”*.

### 5.5.2 Negative/Concerned

Those who felt **somewhat negative/concerned & very negative/concerned** towards the proposed new NP felt so for the following reasons:

#### Negative impact on the environment, livestock and wildlife

- **Too much access** - Concerns that too many people would have access to the countryside *“ruining the wildness”* of the area and creating all sorts of problems for farmers. These include gates being left open, more dogs not on leads going into fields, and distressing and or attacking sheep and other animals. Also, concerns that an increased footfall would lead to an erosion of footpaths.
- **Littering** - Visitors leave litter and local people find themselves frequently clearing up after them. Concerns that this problem will get worse with a NP.

#### More restrictions (e.g. on land use, planning)

- **Planning restrictions** - Concerns about an increase in planning restrictions.
- **Impact on renewable energy projects** - Concerns a NP would impede on any future renewable projects which would not help Wales work towards achieving net zero by 2030.
- **Lifestyle restrictions** - Concerns about more restrictions on people’s lifestyles.

#### Overcrowding of tourists

- **Too many tourists currently** - Do not want to attract more visitors to the area as there are already fears of too many tourists visiting.
- **Impact on traffic management** - Concerns the increase of tourism in the area would have a negative impact on the *“already stretched traffic management system”*.
- **Impact on hotspots** - Concerns of putting even more pressure on existing hotspots such as Moel Famau, Loggerheads, and Horseshoe Falls.

### Lack of infrastructure

- **Inability to cope** - Concerns about increased visitor pressure without adequate infrastructure e.g., inadequate roads and parking, and the lack of public toilets.

### Increased house prices

- **Unaffordable to locals** - Concerns that house prices will become more expensive leading to locals, particularly young people, unable to afford them and stay living locally.

### Cost

- **Unjustified cost** - Concerns the proposal is a “*waste of money*” with many questioning whether this expense can be justified during such a financially difficult time in Wales.

### Impact on local people who live and work in the area

- **No benefits** - Concerns that making this area a NP would not benefit the residents and communities.
- **No new job opportunities** - Concerns that tourism only brings lower paid, seasonal, part-time work unless you own property or a business. Therefore, for the average resident, a NP will not bring much benefit to the local economy.

### No need for it

- **Oppose NP** - Many see no need for a NP believing it would only bring burdens with it.

### Lack of information on benefits

- **More information required** - Concerns that the benefits and drawbacks, and reasons why a NP is needed have not been explained. Requests for more discussion and public engagement to take place as currently “*this seems to be something the government is going about in isolation without informing the public*”.

### Increased bureaucracy

- **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** - Questions around why this area needs a further level of bureaucracy given that it is already an SSSI.
- **Oppose more bureaucracy and state control** - Strong feelings rejecting more layers of bureaucracy and state control which “seems indicative of our times”. Some concerned it “*feels like bureaucracy for the sake of bureaucracy*” and made requests to leave people alone.

### Increased management and control

- **Increased government regulations** - Expressed concern for more Welsh government regulations.
- **Powers over local councils** - Concerns about the power a NP authority would have over the local councils.

### Misses some areas

- **Boundary concerns** - Concerns that “*the boundaries make no sense at all*” and that “*it is excluding areas that should be included*”. Some concerns as to why the area of Llandrillo is not included.

### Loss of solitude and tranquillity

- **Too many visitors** - Many locals “*love the peace and quiet*” and so there are concerns that giving the area NP status would bring an overwhelming influx of new visitors which would in turn take away the beauty and tranquillity of the area.

### Erosion of Welsh language and culture

- **Decline in number of local families** - Concerns a decrease in local families would lead to a closure of schools and further erosion of the Welsh language and culture. Concerns that the use of the Welsh language, which is currently widespread, would diminish as houses would be purchased by people from other parts of the UK.

### No benefit to Halkyn Mountain being classed as a NP

- **Negative impact on Halkyn Mountain** - Concerns about the negative impact the proposed NP would have on Halkyn mountain. Several requests to “*leave Halkyn Mountain alone*”.

### 5.5.3 Neutral or don't know

Those who felt **neutral or don't know** how they feel towards the proposed new NP felt this for the following reasons:

#### Need more information

- **About the overall proposal** - Uncertainty expressed as to what is being proposed and not enough information has been shared.
- **About the impact** - Concerns people are expected to have an opinion without seeing how a NP would affect them first.

#### Advantages and disadvantages

- **Benefit locals and visitors** - Strong feelings that the area must work for those who live and work in it, in addition to those who want to visit for leisure.

## 5.6 Question 5a: What part or parts of the area being considered are you interested in and responding about?

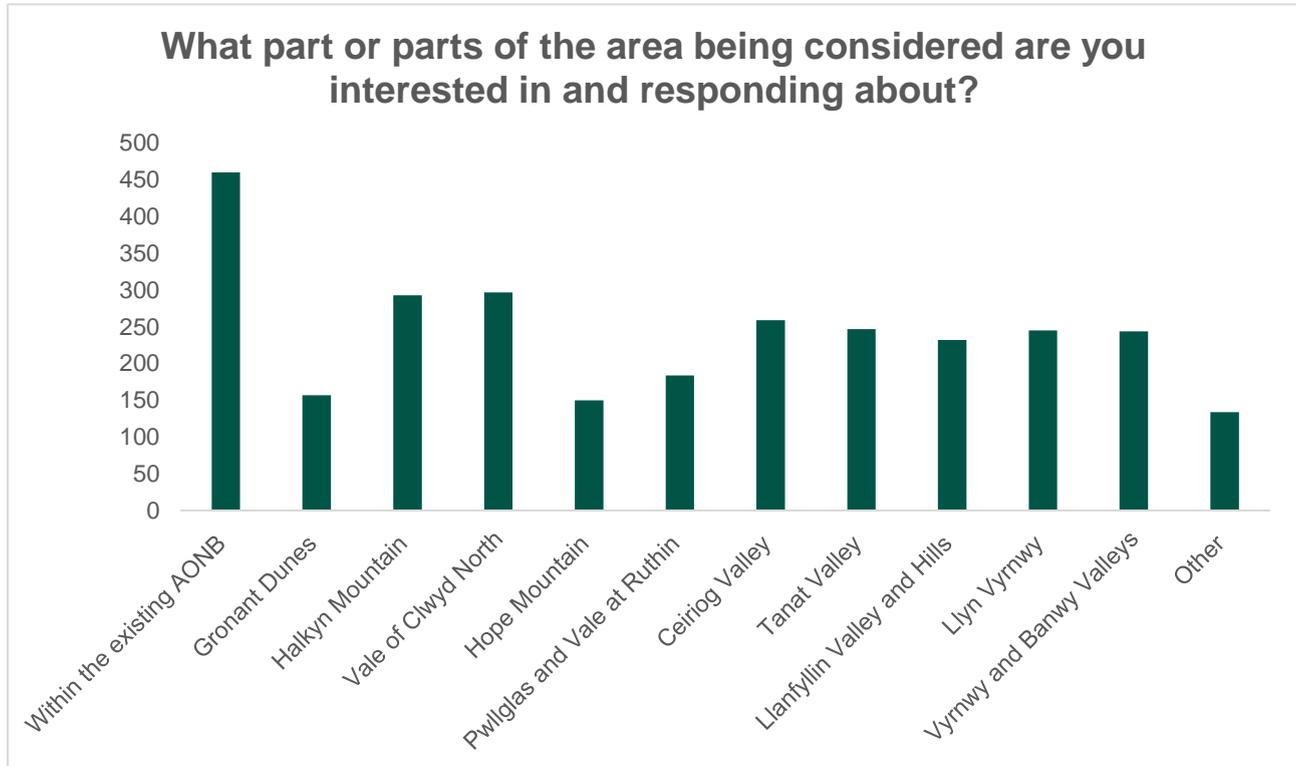


Figure 5: Areas respondents were interested in responding about

For this question, the **966** respondents to the questionnaire were able to tick as many answers that applied to them.

**463** said they were interested in responding about the area *Within the existing AONB*, **157** were interested in *Gronant Dunes*, **294** in *Halkyn Mountain*, **297** in *Vale of Clwyd*, **150** in *North Hope Mountain*, **184** in *Pwllglas and Vale at Ruthin*, **259** in *Ceiriog Valley*, **247** in *Tanat Valley*, **232** in *Llanfyllin Valley and Hills*, **245** in *Llyn Vyrnwy*, **244** in *Vyrnwy and Banwy Valleys*, **134** in *Other*.

Those who ticked *Other* and specified referred to the following areas most; Berwyn Mountains, Mynydd Mynyllod, Llansilin, Llandrillo and Pantasaph.

## 5.7 Question 5b: What is special to you about this place/these places?

All responses to this question have been summarised, split into location areas, and put into key themes. Within each area answer, the themes are ordered from most to least frequently mentioned.

### 5.7.1 Key themes mentioned across all 11 listed areas:

#### Landscape

- **Positive comments about the landscape** - The “*amazing natural beauty*” of the “*diverse*” and “*unique*” landscape. Reference to the “*stunning farming landscape*”, the “*mosaic of trees and hedgerows, rivers, moors, uplands, and productive farming areas*”.
- **Landscape not sufficient quality** - Concerns that the area does not have the special landscape quality and value of other NPs. Some even suggest that other parts of Mid Wales (yet undesignated) have more to offer in terms of landscape, natural beauty, tranquillity, sense of wildness and place, biodiversity (Special Protected Areas & SSSIs), and recreational opportunities.

#### Wildlife

- **Orchids and birds of prey** - The “*wild orchids*” and “*many birds of prey*” make these areas special.
- **Important areas for wildlife** - All these areas are important for wildlife, rare species (including birds, insects, and plants), and habitat that all need to be protected.
- **Need to protect areas** - Desire to see all these areas protected for the future and their biodiversity encouraged.

#### Culture and heritage

- **Vast amount to be shared** - The depth and breadth of history and culture in these areas should be uncovered and displayed for locals and tourists.
- **Welsh history** - The Druid, Celtic, Bronze and Iron Age Welsh history.
- **Welsh culture** - The local Welsh culture, language, and place names. Many state they are “*proud to be Welsh*”.
- **Historic farmland** - Historical area of farmland with “*proud agricultural traditions*” existing alongside biodiversity and rich industrial heritage.

#### Tourism

- **Lack of tourists** - The lack of people and mass tourism is described as special, particularly the peace that comes with that.

## 5.7.2 Key themes by specific area

Table 3. In addition to these key themes mentioned across all 11 listed areas, these are the key themes by area:

Area	Themes by area
<p><b>Within the existing AONB</b></p>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Attractive areas</b> - “Beautiful” and “unspoiled” areas, that have not been overdeveloped. Some say Moel Famau and the AONB are equally as significant as Yr Wyddfa.</li> <li>• <b>Connecting communities</b> - The Clwydian Range is referred to as “a wonderful green thread that runs through our countryside connecting our rural communities”.</li> <li>• <b>Views</b> - “Very special”, “stunning” and “varied” natural landscape and “magnificent” views.</li> <li>• <b>Special features</b> - The rolling hills, moorlands, heaths, woods, farmed grassland, rivers, and streams.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wildlife</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Diverse</b> - The diverse amount of wildlife is present within all the places mentioned in the AONB including curlews.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Culture and heritage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Historical landmarks, buildings, and monuments</b> - The Dee Valley’s many historic landmarks demonstrate the rich cultural and industrial heritage of the area e.g., the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct UNESCO World Heritage Site, Iron Age and Bronze Age hill forts. The high density of listed buildings and monuments: Moel Ty-Uchaf Circles, Tan-y-Coed Burial Chamber, Tyfos Stone Circle, and Mynydd Mynyllod Enlosure/Settlement. Protecting the environment and landscape around these and other sites is nationally important as it preserves our heritage for future generations.</li> <li>• <b>Owain Glyndŵr</b> - Historical significance such as the association with Owain Glyndŵr.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Home</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strong attachment</b> - Strong feelings that “this is our home”, many stating they grew up here.</li> <li>• <b>Strong farming ties</b> - This is home to many farms and agricultural businesses.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Local community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Local people</b> - The people who live here. The “<i>cohesive</i>” and “<i>vibrant</i>” communities, and “<i>friendly locals</i>”.</li> <li>• <b>Way of life</b> - The local traditions and local farming practices.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Peace and tranquillity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gratitude</b> - Appreciation for the “<i>solitude</i>”, “<i>super-peaceful</i>” and “<i>low noise</i>” of these areas. Many feel a “<i>sense of tranquillity</i>”, “<i>isolation</i>”, and “<i>peace and quiet</i>”.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Walking and footpaths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Access</b> - There is space and freedom for walking all year round with “<i>well-kept paths</i>”.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Place of work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outdoor industry and farmers</b> - The various industries workers who work here including the outdoor industry and farmers.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Outdoor recreational activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hubs</b> - Places like Llangollen are a hub for outdoor activities.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Cycling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cycle networks</b> - The cycle networks and possibilities for these.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Moel Famau</b> - The area has been “<i>sympathetically managed to allow access for all</i>”.</li> <li>• <b>Suitable access</b> - Outdoor access for walking, running, rock climbing, mountain biking and kayaking.</li> </ul>
<b>Gronant Dunes</b>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strong features</b> - The “<i>distinctive</i>” landscape and “<i>environmental features</i>” of the Gronant Dunes.</li> <li>• <b>Happy with the proposed inclusion in the NP</b> - Welcome the possible inclusion of the Gronant/Talacre dune system and foreshore including the shingle spit at Point of Ayr as it is the last natural dune system along the North Wales coast and is of considerable wildlife importance. Considered a “<i>unique landscape</i>” within the proposed NP and provides a link to the marine environment.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wildlife</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Little Tern colony</b> - Gronant Dunes with its nature reserve has much to offer. It is home to the only little tern colony in Wales and is an important habitat for wildlife including birds all year round.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Peace and tranquillity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gratitude</b> - The quietness of Gronant Dunes in winter.</li> </ul>
<b>Halkyn Mountain</b>	<b>Landscape</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mountain biking</b> - Mountain bikers delight in both the wild moorscapes in the South and the industrial landscape of Halkyn Mountain in the North.</li> <li>• <b>Unique landscape</b> - A historic landscape created in part by metalliferous mining/chert and limestone quarrying. Many of the community can trace their roots back to lead miners and quarry workers. Halkyn is a mixture of industrial heritage, SSSI habitat, free-range sheep, and has a long farming history. The landscape is also unique in its wildlife interest and its open moorlands.</li> <li>• <b>Flora</b> - <i>“Fantastic”</i> variety of flora. The rare foliage and flowers that can only be found on Halkyn Mountain need protection. As a result of the mining activity, the landscape now supports many rare plant species. Halkyn Common and Holywell Grasslands are a SSSI and Halkyn Mountain is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which supports the largest areas of heavy metal tolerant Calaminarian grassland in Wales.</li> <li>• <b>SSSI</b> - A <i>“special place”</i>, that is <i>“worthy”</i> of its status.</li> <li>• <b>Views</b> - <i>“Amazing”</i> and <i>“spectacular”</i> views. From the <i>“stunning” wildness of the place in winter to the “world class” views across the Clwydian Range in Summer.</i></li> <li>• <b>“A hidden gem”</b> - Many want to keep it that way.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wildlife and livestock</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positive interaction</b> - It’s a working mountain whereby the local community understands how to interact with the farmers and livestock, residents, wildlife, and environment. Some concerns upsetting this harmony and balance with a disproportionate number of visitors will only undo what is loved locally.</li> <li>• <b>Fauna</b> - The <i>“Fantastic”</i> variety of fauna.</li> <li>• <b>Crested newts</b> - Crested newts need protection as increased tourists on the mountain would cause damage to their natural habitat.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Culture and heritage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Important history</b> - The important history of the mountain going back to the Iron Age and its role and long history of supplying lead to the rest of the UK in the past.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Local community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strong sense of community</b> - There is a strong feeling of community in the area, especially amongst landowners who help each other with farming and equestrian. The people who live on Halkyn Mountain <i>“value and respect”</i> the landscape, <i>“understand how it works”</i> and <i>“take pride in being part of a small, rural community”</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Unique area</b> - The <i>“uniqueness”</i> of the village communities.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Peace and tranquillity</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gratitude</b> - Many “<i>enjoy the tranquillity</i>” of the area, and the fact it is “<i>quiet</i>” and “<i>peaceful</i>”. Residents of Halkyn Mountain “<i>love</i>” the mountain for its “<i>peace, freedom and stillness in a busy and frantic world</i>”.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Walking and footpaths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Variety of walks</b> - “<i>Wonderful</i>” walks around the nature reserve.</li> <li>• <b>Access</b> - An area with “<i>total freedom to walk anywhere with very few regulations</i>”.</li> </ul>
<b>Vale of Clwyd</b>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT) reserves</b> - Local reserves include Graig Wylt, sheltered by ancient woodland that comes to life with spring colour and the “<i>fantastic</i>” views across the Vale of Clwyd.</li> <li>• <b>Walks</b> - The landscape of the Vale of Clwyd is where many enjoy family walks.</li> <li>• <b>Sense of belonging</b> - Many have grown up here.</li> <li>• <b>Wildlife and flora</b> - The wildlife and flora on the landscape.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Outdoor recreational activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cycling</b> - Plenty of cycling routes.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Local businesses and amenities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cafes</b> - Plenty of small cafes.</li> </ul>
<b>Hope Mountain</b>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Views</b> - Hope Mountain “<i>offers great views</i>” alongside Waun y Llyn including Caergwrle Castle with its “<i>spectacular views over adjacent countryside showing a contrast between the lowlands to the east and hills to the west</i>”.</li> <li>• <b>Natural and historic landscape</b> - The rural landscape and small historic villages.</li> <li>• <b>Important amenity</b> - The land corridor included up Nant y Ffrith Valley from Cymau to the existing AONB forms an important local amenity.</li> <li>• <b>Boundary</b> - Surprised the boundary does not include the wooded valley down to Bersham and its historical interest.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wildlife</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wildlife</b> - Many important wildlife habitats.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Culture and heritage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Historic interest</b> - Many places of historical interest.</li> <li>• <b>Caergwrle</b> - The importance of culture and heritage in Caergwrle e.g., the story of the Castle provides access to critical events which set the scene for modern Wales. Reference to the beauty of Park in the Past being very important as it is set against the backdrop of Hope Mountain and a 35-acre lake.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Open skies</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Open skies</b> - The “<i>amazingly clear skies at night</i>”.</li> </ul>
<b>Pwllglas and Vale at Ruthin</b>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ruthin</b> - The landscape, history, and architectural heritage are important to Ruthin and the Clwydians’ appeal. Reference to there being few prettier towns than Ruthin anywhere else in the UK, and it is enhanced by its elevated location overlooking the Vale, lush pasture, and ancient oaks.</li> <li>• <b>Pwllglass</b> - Important limestone features including the pavement around Eyarth Rocks, and the gorge cut by the Afon Clwyd.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wildlife</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pwllglas</b> - The wildlife interest.</li> <li>• <b>Ruthin</b> - Large conservation area. The abundant trees and hedgerows facilitate an abundance of wildlife, both mammals large and small birds. Bird life seems to be thriving over the last few years. Red kites can now to be seen gliding gracefully over Vale and Hills.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Culture and heritage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Important history</b> - Ruthin’s interesting heritage is important within the context of Welsh history, from the time of Glyndwr to the industrialised era. The Medieval legacy of Ruthin is important, and as the venue for the inception of Owain Glyndwr’s rebellion of 1400, its historical relevance is clear.</li> <li>• <b>Materials</b> - The Library and Records office, as well as Nantclwyd y Dre, will provide material for anyone interested in exploring the heritage and culture of this area.</li> <li>• <b>Cultural centre</b> - Ruthin, referred to as a “<i>cultural centre</i>” with its Arts and Crafts centre.</li> </ul>
<b>Ceiriog Valley</b>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Beauty and diversity</b> - Referred to as “<i>an exceptionally beautiful valley</i>”, having “<i>outstanding</i>” and “<i>diverse</i>” landscapes, with a “<i>special character of its own</i>”. It combines unique habitats with traditional farming landscapes which themselves contain the relics of previous generations’ land use. Many “<i>enjoy exploring</i>” the “<i>unique</i>”, “<i>greatly undervalued</i>” area.</li> <li>• <b>Trees</b> - The special collection of ancient trees featured in the landscape.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wildlife</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A range of species</b> - It is “<i>home to diverse species</i>” and various natural habitats within the valley that need protecting. Wildlife and the comparatively low human footfall encourage wildlife and provide refuge for migrating and permanent residents which helps populate areas beyond the Ceiriog Valley.</li> <li>• <b>Role of farmers</b> - Families have farmed in the area for over 70 years and state their dairy and sheep farms are “<i>teeming with wildlife</i>”. The main reason given being they have been able to manage their farms in their own way without restrictions.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Culture and heritage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>“Fascinating culture and history”</b> - The links to Owain Glyndwr, the bards Huw Morris and John Ceiriog Hughes, the slate and granite quarries, the Glyn Valley Tramway, Llangollen canal, Chirk castle, aqueduct, and tunnel. Described as <i>“a centre of great heritage”</i> and <i>“rich Welsh cultural heritage”</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Culture “as important as its topography and biology”</b> - Criss-crossed with prehistoric tracks, Bronze Age burial cairns, unrecorded Iron Age hillforts, and other ancient monuments, there is clear evidence of the area's historical relationship with people. This relationship with people has never diminished, testament in its location as a site for warring nations to express their differences, such as the battle of Crogen in 1165, or as the landscape of inspiration for important poets including Huw Morus (Eos Ceiriog), and Robert Ellis (Cynddelw). The Ceiriog Valley has also been important for its flannel production, its slate quarries (and associated tramways), its farming, its communities, and ordinary people, many of whom regard Welsh as their first language. There is still a strong sense of community in the Ceiriog Valley, and a great pride in its borderland culture - a culture strengthened by its proximity to another nation and the inevitable need to actively maintain its special qualities in light of many forces for change.</li> </ul> <p><b>Peace and tranquillity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peaceful area</b> - A <i>“serene”</i> area known for its <i>“solitude, tranquillity and peace”</i> that would benefit from the protection of a NP designation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Outdoor activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outdoor activities</b> - Many walking, cycling and pony trekking routes.</li> </ul>
Tanat Valley	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The hills</b> - These are <i>“spectacular”</i> and interspersed with pockets of ancient woodlands.</li> </ul> <p><b>Culture and heritage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Longstanding family ties</b> - Family ties of those who lived and worked in the Tanat Valley date back to 1540.</li> <li>• <b>Wealth of cultural history</b> - There is a wealth of cultural history including Castell Sycharth which has <i>“never really received the recognition it deserves in Welsh history”</i>, and Llwyn Bryn-Dinas. The many remnant trackways and small field network represent an ancient landscape.</li> </ul>
Llyn Vyrnwy	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape</b> - Offers an <i>“amazing landscape”</i>, equal to any other area in the UK.</li> </ul> <p><b>Wildlife/animals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wildlife</b> - Existence of pine martin.</li> </ul> <p><b>Culture and heritage</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interesting heritage</b> - The interesting heritage, which is important within the context of Welsh history, from the time of Glyndwr to the industrialised era.</li> <li>• <b>Powerful cultural history</b> - The powerful cultural history leading to the creation of the valley adds to the importance of including and recognising this area and its community.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Outdoor activities/recreation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Countless opportunities</b> - Great walking, hiking, and cycling opportunities abound within the southern aspects of the proposed NP, with Lake Vyrnwy and Bala special places where all activities, including water sports, are offered and supported.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vyrnwy and Banwy Valleys</b></p>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Scenery</b> - The scenery of the Vyrnwy and Banwy Valleys offers “<i>endless inspiration</i>”. Described as having a “<i>unique</i>” and “<i>incomparable gentle beauty</i>” which cannot be seen elsewhere.</li> </ul>

Table 4. Key themes by 'other' suggested areas:

Other suggested areas	
Berwyn Mountains	<p><b>Wildlife/animals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hen harriers</b> - The Berwyn Mountains provide an important breeding site for hen harriers in the spring.</li> <li>• <b>Endangered species</b> - The Berwyn Mountains contain a variety of habitats for endangered species who move between the areas. Both upland areas contain blanket and raised bog which are susceptible to Nitrates and contain a diverse range of Mosses such as varieties of Sphagnum. These areas also provide an ecosystem for nesting curlews (the curlew protection area covers the areas around the valley) and other birds such as Dunnock, Sparrowhawk, Lapwing, Skylark, Red Kite and Buzzard are present in significant amounts. There is also a diverse range of insects that the land hosts such as the declining Wall Butterfly.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Walking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Walking</b> - A <i>“wonderful place to walk”</i>.</li> </ul>
Llansilin	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape</b> - Described as <i>“one of the most beautiful places in the UK”</i>.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Local community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Local community</b> - An <i>“incredibly strong”</i> and <i>“fantastic”</i> village community.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wildlife</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wildlife</b> - It is home to a variety of birds.</li> </ul>
Mynydd Mynyllod	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Views</b> - <i>“Beautiful”</i> and <i>“breathtaking”</i> views.</li> <li>• <b>The diverse landscape</b> - The <i>“special”, picturesque”</i> and <i>“rugged”</i> landscape <i>“wild with mountains, rivers and woods”</i>.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wildlife</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Endangered birds</b> - The number of red kites, buzzards, hen harriers, sparrowhawks, cuckoos, and many other endangered birds.</li> <li>• <b>Curlew recovery area</b> - The area has a significant coverage of peat, bryophytes and is designated by Welsh Government as a curlew recovery area.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Walking and paths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Walking</b> - A <i>“stunning area”</i> for walking and well-being.</li> <li>• <b>Bridleways and footpaths</b> - Area crossed with bridleways and footpaths.</li> </ul>
Llandrillo	<p><b>Landscape</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Scenic beauty</b> - The area “boasts stunning” and “beautiful natural” landscapes” from the rolling hills, forests, rivers, and unique geological formations that <i>“all contribute to its scenic beauty”</i>.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wildlife</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>“Abundance of wildlife”</b> - It is home to various plant and animal species which all contribute to regional biodiversity and conservation efforts.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Culture and heritage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cultural and historical significance</b> - The region holds cultural and historical significance that can be preserved and shared with visitors.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Outdoor activities/recreation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ample opportunities</b> - Opportunities for hiking, wildlife observation, and outdoor activities, make it an attractive destination for nature enthusiasts.</li> </ul>
<b>Pantasaph</b>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape</b> - Expressed love for the landscape and views.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Culture and heritage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Religion</b> - Requests for Pantasaph to be included as it is a <i>“unique hamlet”</i> with an extensive history as a place of religious pilgrimage.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Walking/footpaths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Walking</b> - A <i>“beautiful area”</i> with <i>“many wonderful walks”</i>.</li> </ul>

## 5.9 Question 5c: Do you feel this place/these places need conserving and enhancing?

All responses to this question have been summarised, split into location areas, and put into key themes. Within each area answers, the themes are ordered from most to least frequently mentioned.

Those who felt **YES** this place/these places need conserving and enhancing did so for the following reasons:

### 5.9.1 Key themes mentioned across all 11 listed areas:

#### Protect wildlife and the environment

- **Important priority** - Important to ensure focus on the natural environment, climate change resilience, and that nature and biodiversity do not lose out to tourists, visitors, and growth.
- **Conservation** - Wildlife needs conserving by encouraging local farmers and landowners to engage in conservation.

#### Protect landscape

- **Conservation** - Conservation of land is important for future generations.

#### Leave it as it is

- **No change** - Strong feelings that the best way to protect areas is by "*leaving them alone!*". Many feel they are "*looking after this already*".

#### Protect heritage and culture

- **Maintenance and protection** - Important to maintain the heritage of these areas and protect existing structures of historical significance.

#### Better access

- **Better access** - Important to provide walking tracks for "*all to access*".

#### Development threat

- **Unsympathetic development** - Important to provide further protection from "*unsympathetic development*".
- **Sustainability** - There needs to be a focus on sustainable development.

#### Intensive farming

- **Pesticides and herbicides** - Concerns for the use and impact of pesticides and herbicides on the land.
- **Greener methods** - Important to conserve against the harmful effects of agriculture and aid farmers in adopting greener methods.

### Conserve and enhance for local people

- **Impact on local people** - Important not to enhance at the expense and detriment of residents for the sake of tourism.
- **Local opinions** - Strong feelings that the best way to conserve and enhance is by supporting the residents in the areas and making sure not to ignore their opinions.

### Car parking management

- **Policing** - Parking needs to be policed and if necessary restricted when capacity is reached.
- **Facilities and services** - There is a need to create suitable parking areas. Day visitors are more difficult to control but better parking facilities away from the main features of the area but connected to them by a hop on/off bus service could help.

### Controlled planning

- **Planning and construction** - Important to have careful planning and construction to encourage tourism which has consideration for local communities in the same areas too.

## 5.9.2 Key themes by specific area

Table 5. In addition to these key themes mentioned across all 11 listed areas, these are the key themes by area:

Area	Themes by area
<p><b>Within the existing AONB</b></p>	<p><b>Protect wildlife</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Protect wildlife</b> - Moel Famau’s growing popularity amongst tourists means it is even more important to protect wildlife.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Protect landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enjoyment</b> - Important to protect the landscape for enjoyment now and for years to come.</li> <li>• <b>Shared responsibility</b> - It is everybody’s responsibility to ensure a landscape for future generations.</li> <li>• <b>AONB extension</b> - Positivity around extending the AONB to avoid the wind turbine proposals from destroying the landscape.</li> <li>• <b>Increased resources</b> - The extended area would benefit from greater resources to protect and enhance the area and better manage honeypot sites.</li> <li>• <b>Heather moorland</b> - Supports several rare animals and plants including black grouse, hen harrier, and other upland birds. Over the past 50 years more than half of the world’s moorland has disappeared. Three-quarters of the world’s remaining heather is in the UK, which makes the 3,000 acres of heather moorland of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB of international importance for conservation. With the inclusion of the grass moorland, this AONB forms the largest area of undeveloped wildlife habitat in Wales.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Leave it as it is</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No change</b> - Strong feelings that this is “<i>already sufficiently conserved</i>” and covered well by the AONB.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Car parking management</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Car parking</b> - Many villages are at their maximum parking capacity unable to cope with any more cars which causes resentment.</li> </ul>
<b>Halkyn Mountain</b>	<p><b>Protect landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mine shafts</b> - Frequent mine shafts opening on the mountain causing a safety risk to visitors.</li> <li>• <b>Impact of mountain ranger loss</b> - The loss of the mountain ranger has had a negative impact. There are issues with off-road driving and motorbikes which have “<i>plagued</i>” the area and caused damage to the grassland which have increased in the last few years. Since the pandemic, dog walking on the mountain seems to have increased rapidly too - there have been more reports of dogs attacking sheep and there seems to be more of a problem with dog fouling. Some believe that inclusion in the NP will likely deter these illegal activities and provide protection via the ranger scheme.</li> <li>• <b>SSSI</b> - The mountain is already protected by SSSI status.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Leave it as it is</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No change</b> - Many feel Halkyn Mountain needs to be preserved as it is, stating “<i>it is perfect just as it is</i>” and “<i>nothing needs to change</i>”. “<i>It needs to be conserved by leaving it alone and not interfering</i>”.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Protect heritage and culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Uniqueness</b> - Halkyn Mountain has a “unique bio” and historical/industrial heritage which requires effort to keep it preserved and enhanced.</li> <li>• <b>Working mountain</b> - A working mountain with quarrying and sheep farmers which is a big part of its heritage.</li> </ul>
<b>Vale of Clwyd North</b>	<p><b>Protect wildlife and the environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wildlife corridors</b> - There is an ambition to encourage the creation of wildlife corridors across the Vale of Clwyd to help some of the species that have been in decline to recover. If a NP were to be created, it could help wider engagement with a great range of stakeholders, especially from Agriculture, which has a key role to play.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Development threat</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wind farms</b> - Currently Welsh Government has earmarked this area for more wind farms. Concerns that wind farms destroy the structure of the local environment and upset the soil balance. Sustainable energy is needed but by upsetting the areas that offer most carbon capture this is destroying an opportunity to help efforts at climate sustainability. These upland, peat landscapes protect the beautiful Vale of Clwyd.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hope Mountain</b></p>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Views</b> - Hope Mountain is an important part of the Clwydian Range and the views of the range from Hope Mountain and over the Cheshire Plain need protecting - likewise the southern slopes of Hope Mountain and the rural villages (including Llanfynydd).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ceiriog Valley</b></p>	<p><b>Protect wildlife and the environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Declining species</b> - Some wildlife species seem to be in decline such as polecats, hedgehogs, and curlews.” There is evidence of a decline in upland habitat (and associated loss of species) attributable to changes in the climate. The clean river (from the point of view of phosphates) is threatened by development and the fish population is plummeting due to less easily tested for pollutants. Before exploring a proposal like a NP the reasons for the decline of invertebrate life in the river needs to be addressed. Supporting organic farming, emphasising the value of the environment in farming by paying for the care of the environment and the benefits it gives the whole population must come first. For example, migrating insects have significantly declined, largely because of habitat loss, causing loss of those animals which feed on invertebrates and loss of plant variety and soil health.</li> <li>• <b>Variety of wildlife</b> - A refuge for wildlife. The valley has wildlife on its doorstep ranging from peregrine falcons to the trout in the Ceiriog Valley which need to be protected to preserve the natural beauty of Wales and fulfil parts of Welsh government’s future generations act.</li> </ul> <p><b>Protect landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Requests for protection</b> - Expressed love for the landscapes down the Ceiriog Valley and desire to see them protected.</li> <li>• <b>Off-road vehicles</b> - Requests to help try and control the off-roaders who are destroying the beautiful landscape.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Protect heritage and culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rich history</b> - A “rich” history that the residents are “<i>incredibly proud of</i>” and want to preserve. The valley’s roots in the slate mining industry and tramway need to be celebrated and conserved along with the valley’s historic efforts to fight off the proposed flooding from Warrington which showcase the integrity of the valley’s culture.</li> </ul> <p><b>Better access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inaccessible footpaths</b> - Many marked footpaths on the OS map are inaccessible. Clearly way-marked routes with safe stiles and unchained gates would avoid wear on either side of the path and give confidence to the walker that they are not trespassing.</li> </ul>
<b>Tanat Valley</b>	<p><b>Development threat</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Constant threats</b> - Tanat Valley is constantly under threat from schemes that bring “<i>no benefits</i>” to the area. Concerns that unless these areas are protected, they will become industrial landscapes and the landscape, wildlife and heritage will be blighted forever.</li> </ul> <p><b>Intensive farming</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Farming practices</b> - The challenging nature of farming practices in areas like the Tanat Valley. As the fertilisers run off the soils and rivers become more nutrient - rich, favouring rapid growth of nutrient-loving species that then overwhelm the weaker species which utilise nutrient-poor soils, especially the balance of flora in these regions. More research and monitoring is needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Llanfyllin Valley and Hills</b>	<p><b>Better access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>OS trails and cycling routes</b> - Several OS trails traversing this area could be improved through the status of a NP, as well as some well utilised cycling routes. This could benefit the economy of small towns such as Llanfyllin.</li> <li>• <b>Public Right of Way (PROW)</b> - The existing PROW network in this area needs to be properly maintained and signposted.</li> </ul>

## 5.10 Question 6: With what you currently know, can you foresee any potential benefits from this proposed new NP?

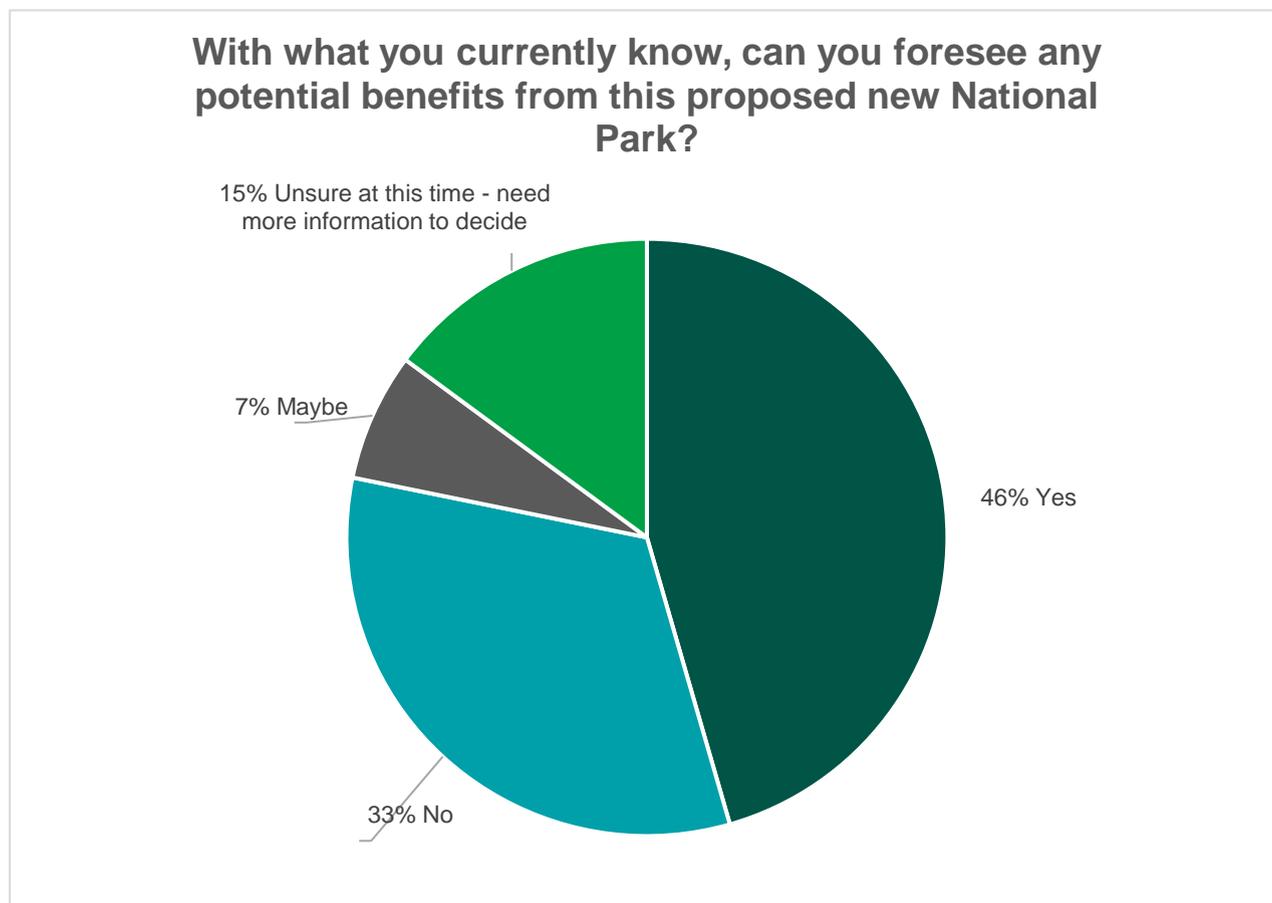


Figure 6: Foreseen potential benefits from this proposed new NP

From the **966** people who responded to the questionnaire; **46%** (441 respondents) said Yes they can foresee potential benefits from this proposed new NP, **33%** (317 respondents) said No, **7%** (66 respondents) said Maybe, **15%** (142 respondents) said they were *unsure at this time – need more information to decide*.

### 5.10 Question 6 continued: Please describe any potential benefits

All responses to this question have been summarised and put into key themes. The themes are ordered from most to least frequently mentioned.

#### 5.10.1 Yes

Those who said **Yes** they can foresee potential benefits from this proposed new NP did so for the following reasons:

### Protection and conservation of the area

- **Peatlands and farming development** - Enhanced protection and better protection of deep peatlands and better management of farming development.

### More investment in the economy

- **Businesses** - Local inns and shops would benefit from visitors.
- **Employment** - Local money is kept local through more employment.
- **Environmental benefits** - More jobs associated with the protection and development of nature and culture. Also, a potential increase in income through eco-tourism.

### Conservation of wildlife

- **Place of safety** - Described as “*a permanent safe haven for wildlife*”.
- **Flora and fauna** - Appropriate nurturing of flora and fauna.
- **Indigenous species** - Promotion of indigenous species.
- **Protected species** - Possibility for increased funding to maintain protected species.

### Increased funding available

- **More funding and security** - More funding to manage visitors, improve parking, and help conserve and educate people about the heritage of places such as Halkyn Mountain. It will also mean long term security of funding for the area.

### Tourism

**More and improved tourism** - Local towns need more footfall to survive and a NP will hopefully bring in more tourists.

### Tighter regulations and restrictions

- **Housing developments** - Proper controls on house buildings to ensure better quality and tighter planning around design and landscape impact.
- **Wind farms** - Protect communities from wind farm development.
- **Farming and hunting** - Regulation of farming and hunting on landscapes can be very destructive. NP rangers could help monitor these aspects.

### Recognition

- **Importance of the area** - A greater awareness of the importance of the area in its “*rich*” landscape, heritage, and wildlife.
- **Ease pressure on sites** - Wider recognition through NP status could help to ease existing pressures on sites and other NPs such as Eryri, by raising awareness of alternative places to visit.

### Promote Welsh language and culture

- **Interest** - Increasing interest in the Welsh language and culture.

### Sustainability

- **Diversification of farms** - Work with farming interests to assist in the diversification of their livelihoods to assist in sustainability.
- **Climate change** - Help tackle the climate and nature emergencies, achieving the 30 x 30 objectives and supporting farmers to achieve sustainability objectives.

### Improved public access and paths

- **Footpaths and bridlepaths** - Improved maintenance of footpaths and, especially, bridlepaths which will help enhance the outdoor area to be used more.

### Effective joined-up governance

- **Single body** - Upkeep of the area being managed by a single body with a narrow remit that is focused on the upkeep of the area.
- **Unified approach** - Unified approach to maintaining what will be the new NP.

### Preserve local heritage

- **Awareness** - Increased awareness of heritage.
- **Protection** - Protection for its history, traditions, and old buildings.

### Improve health (mental and physical)

- **Green spaces** - The positive impact of a NP on mental health allowing for “*adventure, escape, and pleasure*”. Increased use of green spaces leads to better health for the general population. Better health due to exercise, clean air, and time in nature.

### Opportunity for education

- **Educational topics** - Opportunity to educate about wildlife and rare plants and provide visitors with a better understanding and education of the ANOB.
- **Training** - Educational possibilities and training for new volunteers and the public.

### Recreational opportunities

- **Recognition and development** - Recognition and development of the outdoor recreational potential of the area which in turn could lead to the creation of more appropriate local businesses to attract visitors that would assist in the funding of the NP.
- **Better access** - Improved access for everybody and facilities for recreation.

### Increase in property value

- **House prices** - Possible increase in house values.

## 5.10.2 No

Those who said **No** they could not foresee potential benefits from this proposed new NP did so for the following reasons:

### Rules and regulations

- **More of it** - It will cause more rules and regulations to be put in place.
- **Restrictions on planning** - It will make everything with planning more difficult. Restrictions on land and homeowners.

### No benefit to local people

- **Locals pushed out** - Concerns about locals being pushed out of the area. Concerns that a NP would only benefit people who have recently moved to the area, with no ties, who would sell their houses to make a big profit. Many local people would not be able to afford them, it is rare that local families can afford to buy houses in areas such as Llangynog and Tanat Valley as it is. Strong feelings that the area needs to develop alongside conservation and keep jobs and houses in the area for local people.
- **Disrupt lives** - Residents would experience more crime and struggle more with parking.
- **Local businesses** - It would only cause more damage and limited benefits to local businesses.
- **More tourists** - “*No benefits to residents*” due to “*more uncaring tourists*” and less money spent on necessities as a NP will take precedent of local issues.

### Animal safety at risk

- **Sheep** - Sheep roaming will be in danger from those who speed along the roads. Also, concerns that there will be more dogs killing sheep and people leaving field gates open.

### More traffic

- **Road quality** - Concerns a large-scale road surface improvement scheme would have to be undertaken to cope with the increased traffic.

### More litter

- **Walkers** - Concerns more walkers lead to more mess and rubbish.

### 5.10.3 Unsure at this time – need more information to decide

Those who said they were **unsure at this time – need more information to decide** did so for the following reasons:

- **Limited information** - “*Vague*” information and not enough of it currently for people to provide comments.
- **Benefits** - Requests for the benefits of a new NP to be published by NRW.

#### 5.10.4 Maybe

Those who said **Maybe** they could foresee potential benefits from this proposed new NP did so for the following reasons:

##### Recognition

- **Awareness raising** - Raise awareness of the area and with this more recognition.

##### Possible increased investment in the local economy

- **More money spent locally** - A possible increase in money coming into the area, encouraging outdoor activities and visitors which will benefit the local economy.
- **Local businesses** - A boost for local businesses such as tourism-based and holiday companies, pubs, restaurants, and shops that could offer more job opportunities for residents.

##### Potentially more funding/financial aid

- **Landscape management** - Potentially more financial aid for targeted landscape management to maintain traditional land management techniques but this could be possible without becoming a NP.
- **Farmer grants** - Possible grants available to some farmers (like those offered by Eryri NP).
- **Local projects/groups** - Possible funding for local projects and groups. Funding is needed for on-the-ground recreation projects for walking and mountain biking with no promotion to reduce erosion.
- **Conservation projects** - Funding is needed for conservation projects on habitat protection and creation.
- **Roads** - The council might resurface roads in the local villages.
- **More staff** - If financed, more staff for management e.g., more rangers.

##### Protect landscape

- **Better protection** - Better protection of the landscape/environmental protection as a NP would protect the area from vested interests.
- **Trees** - Greater protection for trees, ancient and veteran trees.
- **Future developments** - Less development. Reduce developments coming forward and likely prevent any significant developments that will provide some level of impact reduction. Some concerns that if there are going to be planning restrictions like having slate roof on barns or no solar panels then it may be worse.
- **Renewable energy** - Concerns that the benefits of the proposed new NP area should not come at the cost of reducing the pre-assessed areas identified as priority areas for Solar and Wind Energy.
- **Off-road vehicles** - Ban off-road four by fours including banning quad bikes for shoot management.
- **Wild camping** - Better controlled wild camping.

### Biodiversity and wildlife

- **Improved biodiversity and wildlife** - If there is added protection for biodiversity and wildlife and it is improved.
- **Tackle water pollution** - Potentially stronger regulation to tackle water pollution to make fresh and sea water cleaner for wildlife and humans.
- **No shooting** - Enforcement of no grouse and pheasant shooting for the benefit of wildlife, conservation, fire risk, and flood management.

### Better access

- **Improved access** - Improved access to the countryside. Possibility of improving Active Travel in the area with improved longer-distance foot, cycle and horse paths connecting towns and villages in the counties. Also improve access to rivers and lakes for fishing and kayaking.
- **Increased access** - A NP proposal as an incentive to increase public transport and access to the countryside for people with limited mobility.

## 5.11 Question 7: With what you currently know, do you have any concerns or issues that you feel are important to be considered?

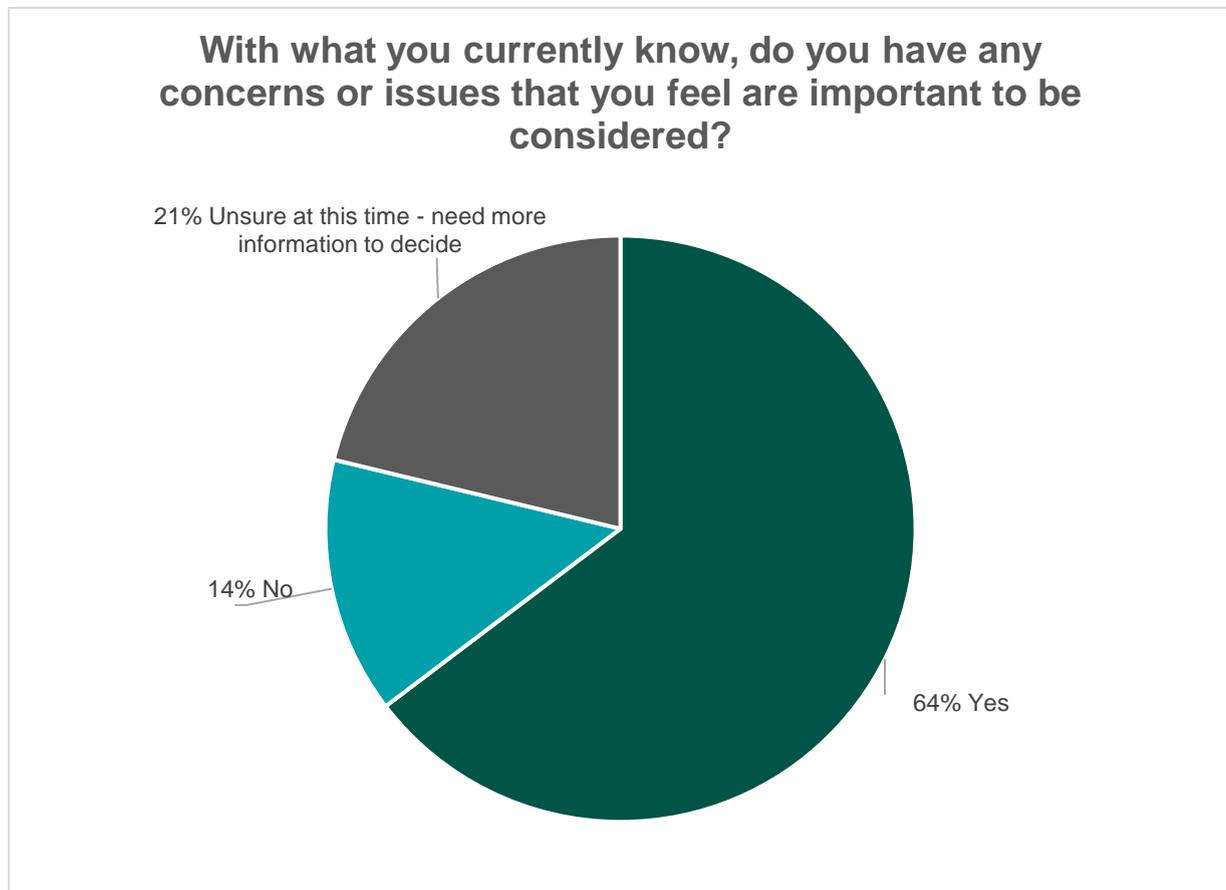


Figure 7: Forseen concerns or issues to be considered

From the **966** people who responded to the questionnaire; **64%** (622 respondents) said Yes they have concerns or issues they feel are important to be considered, **14%** (138 respondents) said No they don't have any concerns or issues they feel are important to be considered and **21%** (206 respondents) said they were *unsure at this time – need more information to decide*.

### 5.11 Question 7 continued: Please describe any concerns or issues

All responses to this question have been summarised and put into key themes. The themes are ordered from most to least frequently mentioned.

#### 5.11.1 Yes

Those who said **Yes** they have concerns or issues they feel are important to be considered felt so for the following reasons:

### More restrictions and red tape

- **Planning** - Planning decisions are even harder to obtain.
- **Restrict renewable energy projects** - With the increased need for renewable energy, whilst many would not be happy to see major wind farms in the proposed NP, they would not want planning to be so restrictive that small wind turbines and solar panels could not be used.
- **Game shooting** - Concerns about the restriction of game shooting.

### Housing

- **House prices** - Concerns about the rise in house prices in the area.
- **Second homes** - The impact of second homes and holiday homes pricing out locals from entering the residential property market and pushing the local community out.

### Increased tourism

- **Over tourism** - Further promotion of the area leading to tourist inundation. Concerns about how tourism and visitor numbers will be managed.
- **Destruction** - Concerns that the overuse of areas could lead to their destruction.

### Cost

- **High costs** - Concerns about it costing a significant amount of money. From the costs of branding and signage in the areas to the local cost; increased cost of living in the area and higher bills. Strong feelings that it is a “*waste of taxpayers’ money*”.
- **Money better spent elsewhere** - Concerns about the potential diversion of state expenditure away from more important projects and facilities.

### Damage to the environment, nature/wildlife

- **Further damage** - The area could become so saturated with tourists it would disturb and destroy the local wildlife and habitats.

### Parking

- **Parking issues** - Concerns over “*wreckless*” parking due to limited parking spaces, and hotspots such as Moel Famau that already have cars parked everywhere. People leave cars parked on the mountain and sides of lanes, and in gateways.

### Facilities/infrastructure

- **Lack of facilities/infrastructure** - Lack of bins and public toilets in the villages. Overall lack of infrastructure to support an increase in tourism.

### Litter/fly tipping

- **Increased litter problems** - People throwing rubbish out of car windows and leaving increasingly more mess behind.

### Governance/Management and control

- **More governance** - Requests for “*less Governance... not MORE*”.

- **National management and control** - Concerns about national management and control. Many would prefer “*local rather than national*”.

### Access

- **Farming land** - Concerns that farmers already have enough problems with tourists, with people walking over their land and leaving gates open. Concerns that a NP would mean more people would visit the area who have no understanding of farming and worsen these issues.

### Animals/ livestock at risk

- **Dog walkers** - Farmers (specifically sheep) are concerned there will be more problems with dog walkers, dogs “*worrying animals*” and killing sheep.

### The boundaries

- **Avoid splitting villages** - The border must not split villages along its boundary as this will defeat the intention for a holistic approach to establishing the new NP.

### Traffic

- **More traffic** - Concerns for the increase in “*extra cars*” and “*pollutants*” causing an increase in traffic on roads which are already too small for the current level of traffic in some parts.

### Road conditions

- **Poor quality roads** - Concerns over the lack of good quality roads. Many claim that the state of a lot of roads in and around the areas is not suitable (e.g., potholes, single-track roads) for an increase in traffic that a new NP would inevitably create.

### Footpaths

- **Damage** - Concerns for the mountain bikes and mud bikes churning up the grass, altering the landscape, and damaging footpaths.
- **Erosion** - Concerns for the increased footfall on the hills causing further erosion.

### More information required

- **On impacts** - Questions around the impact this will have on farmers, residents, and employment opportunities. Concerns that people do not know anything and have had no explanation on what may happen.

### Welsh language and culture

- **Erosion of Welsh language and culture** - A decrease in young people in the area reducing the numbers going through Welsh education.

### Loss of tranquillity

- **Noise** - The noise from motorbikes disrupting the serenity of more remote communities.

### Bureaucracy

- **Increased bureaucracy** - Concerns about the increased bureaucracy and difficulties with communication if there is a large NP spanning 5 local Authorities.

### Resources and services

- **Increased pressures** - Concerns of too much visitor pressure and limited resources to deal with it. Increasing the number of people in the area would put pressure on services such as the health care service. Requests to improve services and then attract more people.

### Jobs

- **Tourism** - Concerns that the only jobs available locally are tourism-based.

### Anti-social behaviours/crime

- **Increase** - Concerns around an increase in vandalism and rural crime.

### Inclusion of Halkyn Mountain in the new NP

- **Inability to cope** - Many believe it is not an area that would cope with becoming “*nationally famous*”.

### Nature recovery/tackling climate change

- **Not enough focus** - Concerns about the nature and biodiversity crisis and there not being enough focus on this.

### Short term visitors

- **Day-trippers** - Concerns that being near to Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham means constantly being under pressure from day visitors who use the free facilities without necessarily contributing to the local economy.
- **Passer-by** - Much of the UK sees North East Wales as a commuter belt to pass through, not to stay in.

### Impact on local people

- **Negatively impact** - Concerns that tourism may benefit but this could be at the expense of communities already under pressure.
- **Employment** - Concerns about there being no or limited employment for local people.
- **Farming community** - Possible negative impact on the rural economy particularly the farming community.

### Illegal off-road vehicles

- **Motorised vehicles** - Mountain bikes and motorbikes are a problem.
- **Prevent access** - Important to prevent access to off-roading vehicles.

### 5.11.2 No

Those who said **No** they don't have concerns, or issues they feel are important to be considered, expressed they are content with the new NP proposal. Many say, "*it's a great idea*" and state they have "*no concern for the NP in itself*".

### 5.11.3 Unsure at this time – more information needed.

Those who said **Unsure at this time – more information needed** requested more information on the following topics:

- **Infrastructure** - Questions around whether road infrastructure can cope with the increased traffic a new NP would bring to the area.
- **Protection and management of landscape** - Questions around how much a NP designation will lead to better protection and management of the landscape on the ground or whether it will simply be a paper designation with little practical difference.
- **Planning** - Unsure about whether NP status would have an adverse effect on planning. Many see no need for a NP authority to take over planning control from the current planning authorities.
- **Access** - Questions around whether access to current places people can walk to will be kept or will access be denied in these places with a new NP.
- **Styles/gates** - Questions around whether styles and kissing gates will be maintained by the NP.
- **Impact on local people** - Questions around if and how these changes will impact the families and communities that already live and work in the area. Specifically, whether their homes and buildings will be affected.
- **Restrictions** - Questions around what restrictions will be imposed on landowners.

## 5.12 Question 8: Are there any other comments you wish to add?

Most of the 966 respondents took this opportunity to emphasise key points they were keen to get across once again. These points and comments have once again been summarised into key themes and ordered from most to least frequently mentioned.

### Requests for areas to/to not be included within the boundary

- **Areas to include** - Requests to consider other areas such as Ruthin and Wepre Park.
- **Areas not to include** - Concerns about potentially extending the designation South into Powys.

### Support for the proposed new NP

- **Positive comments** - Many see the proposal as “*exciting*” and a “*great idea*”.

### Against the proposed new NP

- **Strong opposition** - Many took the opportunity to express strong feelings against the new NP proposal asking, “*don’t do it*”, “*please reconsider this misjudged project*” and “*please don’t spoil our area!*”.
- **Local opposition** - Many opposing views from local people asking to not approve the new NP as it is not wanted by residents.
- **More negatives than positives** - Many say we only need to see how Eryri and other NPs have suffered to see why a NP is not needed.
- **Insufficient public land** - The area does not have sufficient public land to justify a NP.
- **Lack of infrastructure** - Many took this as another opportunity to highlight their concerns about the lack of infrastructure in this area including leisure, accommodation, healthcare, and roads to cope with the proposed new NP.

### Concerns about cost

- **High cost** - Many took this as an opportunity to emphasises their concerns about how much the new NP proposal would cost to set up and run.
- **Money better spent elsewhere** - Priorities for spending money in this current climate should be well-considered and democratic. Some suggest money could be better spent elsewhere.

### Concerns about the impact on local people

- **Consideration** - Plea to “*please consider local residents who live in the area*” and requests for the local population to be properly considered, consulted, and listened to throughout. Some even asked for the proposal to be completely reconsidered as “*it spells the death of our traditional rural communities*”.
- **Halkyn Mountain residents** - Many residents took this as another opportunity to highlight their concerns about including Halkyn Mountain in the NP. Many feel it would be detrimental to the Halkyn Mountain community as there seems to be some members of the public already defacing Halkyn Mountain with cycles, motorbikes and other vehicles which would only get worse.

- **Access** - Local parks becoming inaccessible to local children due to increased visitors. Encroachments onto private land.
- **Farmers** - Many took this as another opportunity to highlight their concerns about the possibility of increased dog activity such as attacks during lambing season.

### Requests for more information

- **Pros and cons** - Concerns NRW has not made the benefits clear. Requests to be “*very thorough*” and “*clear*” what the pros and cons of designating an area as a NP is for those who live in it, those who have a vested interest in it, and wildlife.
- **Much more publicity and information** - Concerns about current “*insufficient information*”. Emphasis on the fact that more publicity and information is needed to enable public discussion, of which the people making decisions must consider. The discussion cannot be a tick box to say they were held when the decision has already been made.
- **Shared with households** - More information needs to be given for people to make informed choices and every household in Powys needs the chance to be given the information in the first instance.
- **Impacts of designation** - Essential that there is honesty about how the impacts of this designation will be felt “*no whitewashing telling every party that everything will be fine and it’s all just good and positive*”. The long-term funding sources need to be clear, the additional restrictions that will be placed on people need to be made clear, and potential benefits should not be overemphasised and need to be communicated in a balanced way. Requests for more information on what a new NP would mean on the ground; how the area might change if the project goes ahead? What does this mean in practice to people living in the proposed area? What will the relationship be between a new Park Authority and local county councils? What are the direct effects e.g., Planning restrictions? busier roads? House building restrictions? Local public transport vs encouraging more cars into the area?
- **Shared with Schools** - Requests for more knowledge and understanding to be given to schools.

### Engagement and Consultation

- **Predetermined outcome** - Concerns that the proposal came across as a “*done deal*” which Welsh Government were determined to proceed with and is only willing to tweak the boundaries.
- **Full transparency and engagement** - Requests for full transparency of process, including areas of uncertainty. Good communication and engaging dialogue across all stakeholders. Inclusion of all is essential if the project is to be received and implemented. Many would like more ‘push’ from NRW to contact and engage with local Facebook groups. Emphasis on the fact that there are a lot of local groups (village/sport/activity based) that would be prepared to offer input into the consultation.
- **Decision-based on feedback** - Many hope all comments will be taken on board and the conclusion will be based on genuine responses received from the consultation. Many also looked forward to playing a full role in the consultation in 2024 and are keen to engage further as plans progress.

- **Final decision** - This decision must be made honestly, and the value of the landscape and its wildlife must be the prime consideration. Many residents in rural communities are very opposed to change and what they perceive to be interference from those in cities. Others hope that those responsible for the decision do not allow those “*stubborn voices*” to override the needs of the environment and climate for generations to come. Strategic decisions must be made, and longer term thinking and commitment to the future common good should prevail.

### Request to leave the area as it is

- **Austerity** - Strong requests to leave things as it is given this time of austerity.
- **AONB** - Many using this as an opportunity to again highlight how much they think the existing AONB already works well and requests for the area to once again be left alone.

### Importance of protecting wildlife

- **Protection of great crested newts** - Many residents took this as another opportunity to highlight their desire to protect great crested newts. The population has decreased significantly in Pen yr Henblas quarry. This site once had one of the highest populations of these newts. Queries about whether NRW would consider additional protection measures to increase habitat such as restricting access to the quarry before the species disappears altogether. Concerns that the significant increase in visitors must have had a detrimental impact.
- **Biodiversity plan** - Questions as to whether there is a comprehensive plan for biodiversity across the whole proposed area and whether one will be developed.
- **The negative impact from increased tourism** - Many believe it is “*a catch 22 situation*”, as NP status would improve the protection for wildlife, but the increase in visitor numbers could be detrimental to the wildlife, “*especially the breeding bird populations*”. Bringing more people in is not the answer for biodiversity or for the protection of the environment. This is all very easy to see in existing NPs with the degraded environments and difficulties for wildlife on heavily used landscapes. Concerns about a new NP destroying the wildlife that nest and live on the hills.
- **Increased footfall** - Already fragile areas and ecosystems will need protection from the increased footfall and we already need to expand these areas to give any hope of our biodiversity surviving into the future. I hope that the watersheds will be considered when designating the boundaries, and that the pressure from public wishing to access the NP will be diverted away from areas of high biodiversity and that all the various organisations with expertise in areas of biodiversity will be involved in the discussions around how to manage this.
- **Protect important Curlew Area** - Many residents took this as another opportunity to highlight their desire to protect curlew areas. Many requests to help reverse the decline of curlews and many others. Much of the Upper Dee Valley and Mynyllod Mountain are within 'Important Curlew Area 5' (ICA5) for curlew. It is an important feeding area for several bird species that depend on soil invertebrates (e.g. ravens, starlings, black-headed gulls, terns, woodpeckers) which have all declined nationally - a sign that similar to the way soils are managed. Several other priority species that use the area such as the griffon hawk, kestrel, lark, horned owl, osprey,

hares, salmon, and lampreys, with the Dee and Lake Tegid Special Area of Conservation is a ribbon throughout.

- **Opportunities for wilding** - There are opportunities in the Ceiriog Valley to re-instate lost hedges and trees, and plant areas with willow, introduce beavers to prevent flooding in villages and towns. Also, create wild areas to improve overused and over farmed areas - especially pheasant rearing spot.
- **Biodiversity and climate change consideration** - Many believe the importance of considering biodiversity and the climate in the designation is central to the success of this project.

### Importance of conserving the landscape

- **Request for protection** - Requests for areas of beauty to be protected and cared for, specifically this area which *“should be afforded the protection and security a NP designation would provide”*. Many state, *“once they've gone, they've gone”* and asked if the NP does go ahead for it to have maximum benefits for the environment. Emphasis on the fact that *“these decisions need to be based primarily on protecting the natural world, not on exploiting it.”*
- **Protect from development** - Requests for the landscape to be protected from wind turbines, and pylons.

### Concerns about the increase in litter

- **Tourists littering** - People inconsiderately leave rubbish and throw litter out their car windows leaving residents to clean up.

### Concerns about increased bureaucracy

- **Bureaucracy** - Requests for no more bureaucracy.

### Concerns about the lack of infrastructure

- **Parking issues** - Lack of parking.
- **Lack of facilities** - Toilets, bins, dog waste bins.
- **Unsuitable roads** - Small narrow lanes not suitable for more vehicles.

In our last question, (question 9) we asked how people would like to be involved in our future work to develop the proposal for the project. Over 300 people have registered to receive email updates. If you would like to be added to our mailing list please contact us at this address; [designated.landscapes.programme@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:designated.landscapes.programme@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk)

**Thank you to all who completed the questionnaire.**

## 6. Themes identified from responses to our engagement questionnaire

### 6.1 Introduction

The questionnaire responses included thousands of comments expressing a wide range of views and opinions. We have organised them into the themes as shown in the table below. This section represents our initial consideration of the most common themes identified. Related themes are grouped so that we can address them together where appropriate. The assessment procedure is ongoing and along with stakeholder discussions, will continue to inform the assessment into 2025.

*Table 6. The most frequently mentioned themes*

Frequency ranking	Themes
1	Landscape, recognition for the area, tranquillity
2	Wildlife, agriculture and land management, environment and sustainability
3	Tourism, public services and infrastructure
4	Necessity for change, management and controls, costs, funding, bureaucracy
5	Local people & communities, local economy
6	Access, outdoor recreation
7	Housing
8	Culture and heritage
9	Planning implications
10	Boundary queries
11	Need for more information

We are mindful that several potentially relevant considerations do not feature in this list, such as the possible implications of a NP for mental and physical health. There were also comments not directly relevant to the assessment, such as on the 20mph speed limit, the Sustainable Farming Scheme, and concerns for public services not within the remit of a NP. We recognise that further work is required to help better inform future discussions ahead of a consultation in the autumn of 2024.

## 6.2 Most frequently mentioned themes

### Theme 1: Landscape, recognition and conservation of the area, tranquillity

Landscape, recognition, and conservation of the area, and tranquillity were collectively the first most common theme raised. Most responses in this section were positive and the possible NP was seen as an opportunity. However, some respondents were concerned that a NP could have negative effects on the landscape or have insufficient powers to deal with the problems.

Many respondents felt the area deserved recognition, with exceptional landscape, heritage, and ecology worthy of protection. NP status should increase the recognition of northeast Wales in the UK and internationally. The three existing NPs in Wales are visited by an estimated 12 million people each year, spending an estimated £1bn on goods and services. Nearly three-quarters of the population of Wales visit a NP each year. Recreation and tourism are important contributors to the local economy (ARUP 2013).

The most popular motivation for the UK staying visitors to Wales in 2019 was to enjoy the country's natural landscape (79%), up from 67% in 2016 (McAllister *et al* 2019). The study identified Wales' natural environment and scenery as a key motivation for choosing Wales for a staying trip. It was seen as a particular strength and something that set it apart as a holiday destination. Many (74%) came to relax from the stresses of life and for a sense of peacefulness. The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index (IPSOS 2022) identifies natural beauty as a strong key driver for visitors to many countries.

A NP would be able to address some of the concerns and provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the landscape. NPs are statutory landscape designations that apply in Wales and have protection under legislation and in national planning policy. The statutory purposes for the designation of NPs are:

- To conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage; and
- To promote opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities by the public.

All public bodies have a statutory duty to 'have regard to the purposes of NPs in exercising or performing any functions in relation to or so as to affect land in any NP.'

This duty to have regard to the purposes is set out in Section 11A (2) of the NPs and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Many were concerned that a NP would seek to promote the area as a tourist destination at the expense of conservation and tranquillity. However, the legislation is also clear that where a conflict exists between the first and second purpose, then greater weight is given to the first. So, the conservation of natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage must necessarily always take priority over the promotion of the area for understanding and enjoyment. This is known as the Sandford Principle and is enshrined in Section 11A (as amended) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Some felt that there were opportunities to better manage the landscape for sustainable tourism, a sustainable environment, and to enhance physical and mental well-being. Many felt that improved recreational opportunities were needed alongside the protection of traditional communities and culture.

It is recognised that NPs should be drivers of the sustainable use and management of natural resources in their areas (Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 2023). Valued and Resilient: Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks 2018 encourages designated landscapes to lead efforts to try and test new solutions to environmental and rural challenges, including working with areas without a statutory designation.

*'Valuing Wales's NPs (ARUP 2013) recognises that "beyond economic effects, the NPs contribute to quality of life in a variety of ways. The NPs are a recreational resource. NPs have previously been described as 'well-being factories'. Wales' three NPs provide access to open space, which allow a wide range of activities that are beneficial to individuals' mental and physical health and wellbeing".*

All NP Authorities are required to prepare and publish a management plan (S66(1) Environment Act 1995), setting out the vision, objectives, and special qualities of the area which are to be conserved and enhanced. The management plans set out proposals for sustainable land management, access and recreation, communities, wildlife, and heritage, often with case study examples of projects in their area. Eryri NP has produced their statutory management plan in partnership (Eryri NP 2020)

Tranquillity and dark skies are special qualities identified for protection in many NPs and National Landscapes (AONBs). Bannau Brycheiniog and part of Eryri NPs are International Dark Sky Reserves and promote astro-tourism, dark skies discovery sites, and the reduction of light pollution.

NPs are also able to draw in funding to support projects around nature recovery, climate adaptation, communities, and sustainable tourism. Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (2024) partnership provides information about work being carried out in the Designated Landscapes (NPs and National Landscapes (AONBs) in Wales.

**Theme 2: Wildlife, agriculture and land management, environment and sustainability**  
Agriculture, land management, and the natural environment underpin the special qualities of the area and help support rural communities and businesses. Many viewed the potential NP as an opportunity under this theme whilst the agricultural sector raised concerns

around the potential impact of a NP, and the uncertainty around the Sustainable Farming Scheme, on the future viability of farm businesses.

Increasing the size of the AONB will create a better ecological buffer, decreasing threats from development, and habitat fragmentation and allowing ecosystems and biodiversity to thrive. There is an opportunity to focus on conservation, nature recovery, and the biodiversity strengths of the area, recognising the biodiversity crisis with sustainable management of the natural environment. The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR), (NRW 2020) provides detailed information which can help identify strengths and opportunities for nature recovery. SoNaRR is being updated in 2025.

However, some respondents were concerned that a NP could have negative effects on nature and biodiversity or have insufficient powers to deal with the problems.

A NP would be able to address some of the concerns and provide opportunities to improve nature and biodiversity. The focus of NPs is changing, following COP15 (Scurlock 2023) and Welsh Government's Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations (Welsh Government 2022) to focus on protecting 30% of the land and 30% of the sea by 2030, unlocking the potential of Designated Landscapes to deliver more for nature. Welsh Government has provided further clarification on biodiversity targets through its consultation, Securing a Sustainable Future (Welsh Government 2024). In the future, NPs will be supported to develop prioritised action plans for nature conservation and updated management plans will need to reflect this. An example of this is Bannau Brycheiniog NP Nature recovery Action Plan (Bannau Brycheiniog NP 2019). A new NP would need to afford opportunities for climate change mitigation and nature recovery as key delivery priorities.

The IUCN provides a useful resource on nature-based solutions (IUCN 2020). Opportunities for nature-based solutions include river and wetland restoration, woodland and hedgerow restoration and expansion, peatland restoration, and protected site improvements. There is some evidence that extensive grazing regimes can be beneficial to nature recovery and are not necessarily negative in terms of climate resilience (Chandler 2024). Our existing NPs carry out exemplar projects to support nature recovery and climate resilience in their areas, including the Bannau Brycheiniog NP Peatlands and Uplands project (Bannau Brycheiniog NP 2024) and the Black Mountains Land Use Partnership (BMLUP 2024).

A new NP would therefore present additional opportunities for a NP Authority to lead exemplar projects and initiatives to improve nature recovery and biodiversity. Possibly accessing additional funding or helping to coordinate initiatives that provide additional revenue opportunities for farmers and land managers, within the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) or otherwise.

Specific concerns were expressed around the uncertainty around the future of the proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme. Following consultation, Welsh Government has announced in a Written Statement: Future of Farming in Wales 14 May 2024 that the SFS will now be introduced in 2026. The statement acknowledged that a successful future for Welsh Farming is about producing food sustainably, looking after our environment, and

underpinning rural communities while addressing climate and nature emergencies. It was acknowledged that the SFS must provide the right level of support to help with business resilience.

### **Theme 3: Tourism, public services, and infrastructure**

The interface between the visitor economy and opportunities for outdoor recreation and the transport system, road infrastructure, and public transport services, emerged as the third most mentioned theme.

There are existing opportunities for recreation in the Area of Search including Offa's Dyke National Trail, Loggerheads Country Park, Gronant, Moel Famau, Pistyll Rhaeadr, and Llyn Efyrnwy that, whilst benefiting the local visitor economy, result in pressure arising from car use and parking.

In some parts of the Area of Search, such as Glynceiriog and Powys, a lack of maintenance and signposting of the Public Rights of Way network has created tension between farmers and visitors.

The impact of illegal off-road activities on the environment and farming was highlighted, as a concern, especially in the Berwyn and Southern Clwyd Mountains SAC, and Halkyn Mountain areas.

The Area of Search currently adjoins large urban areas and includes peri-urban, rural, and sparsely populated areas. It was noted that the establishment of a new NP may add to the opportunities for outdoor recreation and benefits to the local economy however, concerns were raised relating to the capacity of the area to accommodate additional volumes of car use and visitor pressure. Specifically, the nature and character of the road network in Powys, narrow and lacking a footway/cycle track, was highlighted as being unsuitable for additional traffic.

Legislation (section 62 of the Environment Act 1995) requires relevant authorities to have regard for the purposes of NPs. This provides an opportunity to work in partnership with other authorities to address issues strategically. For example, the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee has acknowledged the need for the emerging Regional Transport Plan for North Wales to consider the potential new NP and support a reduction in car use should there be an increase in tourism.

Unlike Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty NP Authorities have a purpose to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the NP by the public. Whilst overall responsibility for the road and transport networks rests with Welsh Government, Local Authorities, and Corporate Joint Committees. NP Authorities and the management plan process have a role to play in coordinating visitor management and improving sustainable and Active Travel opportunities. This will assist with developing focused solutions to existing areas of pressure, providing benefits to local communities and visitors alike.

NPs provide an integrated approach to the management of recreation and access. Examples of NP initiatives include:

- The Sherpa`r Wyddfa bus service
- The Puffin Shuttle bus service in Pembrokeshire Coast NP
- Cairngorms Transforming Transport

The NPA warden service in Eryri, working with estate staff, local farmers, and landowners, provides a focused approach to managing the Public Rights of Way Network, permissive paths and `Open Country`. They erect stiles, gates, and waymarks along with resurfacing paths, and general maintenance work. They are also an important service for visitors, providing advice to walkers and climbers. NP Authorities have powers to make traffic regulation orders restricting the use of vehicles for off-roading to protect the NP.

In addition to funding from NP Grants, NP Authorities can establish partnerships to draw down additional funding e.g., the Carneddau Landscape Partnership Scheme.

#### **Theme 4: Necessity for Change, Management and Controls, Bureaucracy, Cost and Funding**

These topics form the fourth most mentioned theme. Those who felt positive or optimistic about the proposal referred to potential increased inward investment and additional funding. For them, additional management offered potential local employment opportunities, or anticipated controls were viewed as desirable in preventing inappropriate developments.

Those who were negative or concerned about the proposal felt that the costs associated with creating a new public body were unaffordable, particularly at the current time. They also perceived anticipated controls as restrictive or interfering and management as unnecessarily bureaucratic.

Some of the comments expressed a desire for less interference, which was generally understood to mean a combination of UK, Welsh, and local government and sometimes other organisations. This however was in sharp contrast with the commonly expressed desire for better public services, investment in infrastructure, and subsidy support.

#### **The necessity for change, management and controls, and bureaucracy:**

The area of search considers the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB, plus additional adjacent areas of high landscape value, not currently under any designation or coordinated landscape management. We have commissioned an analysis of the special qualities in this area that deliver benefits to the local communities and visitors alike. We have also identified several dynamic forces bringing about change. Tourism, climate change, built development, agriculture, and land management changes are among these. There are issues already affecting the area that were identified during the engagement period. Visitor pressures, rising house prices, nature and conservation concerns, and access and trespass issues were prominent among them. Some respondents believe that these would simply get worse with a NP designation, others were optimistic that change would bring

about better coordination and management. The purpose of the assessment NRW is currently undertaking is to better understand this, and what management model might be most effective in enabling improvements.

The main options being assessed in terms of their ability to manage the forces of change in the area are:

1. Do nothing, no change.
2. Non statutory models- e.g. Valleys Regional Park / South Pennines Regional Park.
3. AONB Conservation Board.
4. NP.

This work is currently underway and reports summarising the assessment and evidence gathering will be available on our project information webpage in advance of the public consultation later in 2024.

#### **Cost & funding:**

There were requests to clarify the costs and funding arrangements for a new NP.

The current 3 NPs in Wales receive 75% of their funding directly from Welsh Government in the form of the NP Grant. The remaining 25% is provided by a levy on constituent local authorities, the cost of which is reflected in their overall budget settlement from Welsh Government (Welsh Parliament 2000).

NP Authorities can draw down additional funding linked to the delivery of their Management Plans.

Together these potentially provide additional and long-term resources to focus on delivery within the area of a potential new NP.

Work on the scale of a potential new NP and the form and function of its governance arrangements will continue throughout the designation process. This will inform future funding requirements and subsequent Welsh Government decisions.

It is at that point that Local Authorities will have an opportunity to make an informed decision and take a position on whether they support or object to the proposal.

Some respondents supported the proposed designation but felt that now was the wrong time due to the current cost-of-living crisis. It is tempting although not necessarily directly comparable, to observe that all three of the existing Welsh NPs were established during the austerity of post-war Britain.

Others felt that the money would be better spent on the NHS or other priority public services. Without engaging in a debate on the relative importance of different public services, it is at least incumbent upon Natural Resources Wales to point out the vital role

of the natural environment in underpinning and enabling a prosperous economy and society to exist at all. A fact that has slowly gained wider recognition because of the unfolding climate and nature emergencies. An effectively managed landscape, able to leverage additional funding, coordinate stakeholders, and meaningfully address critical issues such as nature recovery, resilience to climate change, and biodiversity loss, whilst also positively impacting physical and mental health, social cohesion, and maintaining cultural heritage, would potentially provide exceptional value for money.

However, such decisions are the responsibility of our democratically elected government. Budget allocation and prioritisation decisions will be taken at the appropriate political level in view of the facts and evidence following the completion of NRW's assessment procedure.

### **Theme 5: Local People and Communities, Local Economy**

The Area of Search contains a diverse range of complementary and contrasting landscapes including coastal, upland, lowland, and remote rural. Similarly, it is a place with cohesive communities and distinctive settlement patterns.

The response to the engagement period demonstrated a strong sense of identity, community, and character, a bond between people and place articulated by the concept of Bro in Wales.

This was consistent across those who had a positive perspective on a new NP, those who had concerns, and those who were currently neutral.

Those who had a supportive perspective viewed a NP as a positive mechanism able to raise the profile of the area, draw in investment, and thereby support the local economy. The recreational opportunities and improved access could potentially provide health opportunities helping e.g., to address the obesity crisis.

Those who had a negative perspective raised concerns that a new NP would result in additional visitor/tourism pressures impacting local services and infrastructure and result in low-paid and seasonal work focussed on tourism. There were concerns about future housing supply and affordability impacting negatively on the ability of local people, the younger generation in particular, to remain in their communities with a consequential negative impact on the Welsh Language. Concerns were also expressed that a new NP would bring in additional planning restrictions thereby limiting future economic activity.

This, in turn, could impact negatively community cohesion with a detrimental impact on the sense of place and the Welsh Language.

The area is currently influenced by a range of key policy drivers including agriculture, housing policy (supply and affordability), public service provision, and infrastructure. These would need to be addressed irrespective of whether a new NP is established.

The main difference a NP designation would make, relates to the opportunity to draw down additional resources to address issues and opportunities in an integrated way informed by a NP Management Plan.

In addition, NPs are cultural landscapes with a resident population and NP Authorities have a socio-economic duty (under section 62(1) of the Environment Act 1995) in taking forward NP purposes to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities in the NP integrating social and economic objectives with the conservation and management of the special qualities of designated areas. In doing so they need to work closely with local authorities, Public Services Boards, and other public bodies.

We recognise and acknowledge the need to clearly capture and articulate the potential benefits and disbenefits of a new NP designation and will commission evidence to help inform future engagement, consultation, and decision-making more clearly.

### **Theme 6: Access and Outdoor Recreation**

Access and outdoor recreation were the sixth most mentioned theme. Many felt a NP could be positive in providing opportunities for people to experience natural beauty and outdoor recreation, which would benefit health and wellbeing. Many thought more or additional education on responsible tourism and improvements to public transport was needed, along with an increase in trails and facilities and improvements to signage and maintenance of the public rights of way network.

Some respondents were concerned that a NP could have negative effects through an influx of people eroding tranquillity and wildness and that there would be insufficient powers to deal with problems such as trespass, livestock worrying, and damage to vulnerable sites and habitats.

A NP would be able to address some of the concerns regarding access and recreation and provide opportunities to enhance access and recreation.

The second purpose of NPs is to promote opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities by the public. The NPs and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 defines that a NP must be an 'extensive tract of country in Wales'.

Natural beauty and opportunities for open-air recreation are the designation criteria that must be satisfied for an area to be designated as a NP. When considering opportunities afforded for open-air recreation, account may be taken of the extent to which it is possible to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of an area's special qualities by the public (Section (2(A)(b) NPAC 1949).

There is no legal definition of what opportunities for open-air recreation means in this context except that it:

- must be open-air and not organised games
- must have regard for the land

- provide a markedly superior recreational experience

Opportunities for open-air recreation are not limited to the present provision: consideration can be given to the potential of an area to offer recreational opportunities in the future.

Whilst consideration is given to the quantity of open-air recreation offered, the quality of that experience should be greater than that normally found in the wider countryside.

Recreational opportunities to be considered should be consistent with the conservation and enhancement of the area 's natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage, including noting effects on the tranquillity of natural beauty factor. Quiet outdoor recreation is therefore likely to be most appropriate.

NPs provide visitor centres, guides, books, and management of sites and maintain rights of way and operate full-time ranger services (ARUP 2013).

Through their Management Plan and related Action Plans, NPs can provide a focus for projects related to access and recreation to promote understanding and enjoyment of the area. Pembrokeshire Coast NP have produced a Sustainable Recreation and Visitor Management Action Plan (Pembrokeshire Coast NP 2020) to address this issue.

NPs provide education and advice on access, transport, and responsible behaviour e.g., with dogs. Cairngorms NP in Scotland provides information on its website about visiting with dogs and access for all (Visit Cairngorms/Cairngorms NP 2024). NPs produce recreation strategies (Eryri NP 2024) and work on visitor management and public transport (Pembrokeshire Coast NP 2024).

NPs can draw in funding, in partnership with other bodies such as NRW, and the Ramblers Association to improve access and recreation in their areas. This can include laying out new trails, path and stile repairs, and signage improvements. Bannau Brycheiniog NP runs a project on upland path erosion and supports the Community Interest Company 'Muddy Care' through the Sustainable Development Fund (Bannau Brycheiniog NP 2024).

### **Theme 7: House prices and second homes**

The cost of housing and the prevalence of second homes was the seventh most mentioned theme.

Most respondents on this theme were negative or concerned about the possibility of a new NP and felt house prices would rise if one was established. Some felt the second home and 'buy to let' market would grow if a NP was designated, and that this would drive up prices.

Those identifying as positive or optimistic about the proposed NP mentioned housing less frequently. When they did, it was with reference to the possibility of a NP authority preventing undesirable developments. A minority held the perspective that an increase in house prices was desirable.

The question we will address is; how might house prices and the second homes market be influenced by a new NP?

The average house price for the five local authorities potentially affected by the new NP proposal was around £226,000 in 2023, £8000 lower than the Welsh average (£234,086) and £62,000 below the UK average (£288,000). Due to rising interest rates, house prices fell in 2023 as they did across most of Wales. Denbighshire and Powys notably experienced significant double-digit declines (Principality 2024).

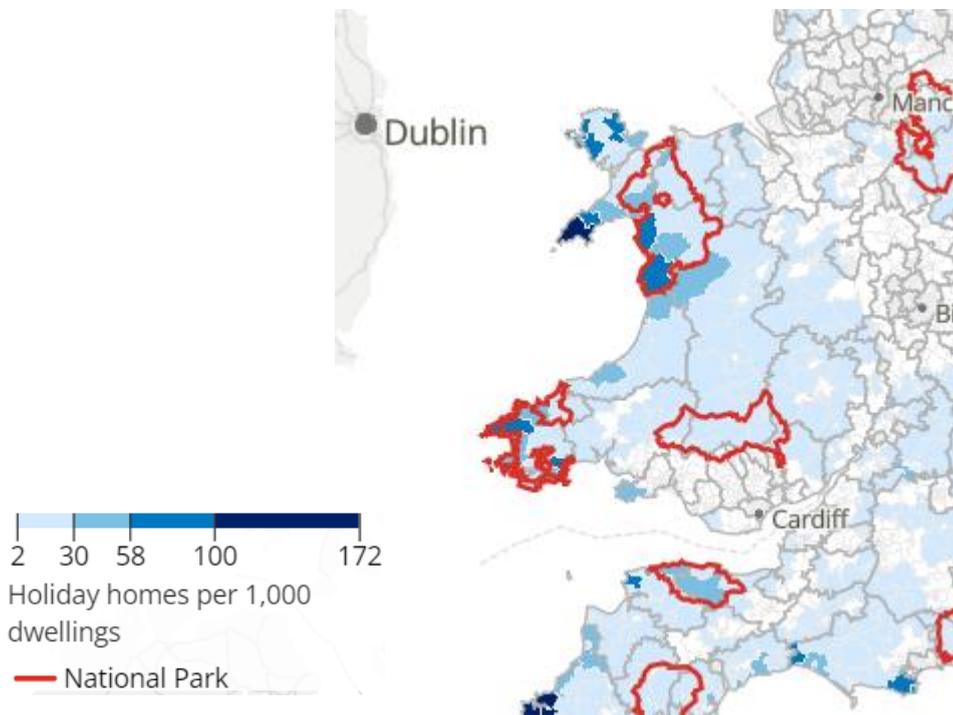
The housing situation within the area of search is typical of the UK pattern which reinforces that prices are mainly influenced by wider economic forces far more than local factors.

It was often quoted during the engagement period, that NPs can 'Boost house prices by up to 25%'. The source of this figure appears to be a special report by the Nationwide house price index. However, the report makes it clear that natural beauty, outdoor opportunities, and rural lifestyle are the driving influences rather than the NPs themselves, although it does suggest that controls on development would also 'contribute to this picture'. But again, macroeconomic factors dominate over local influences. Even within Eryri, the apparently 'boosted' average house price was £184,000 in 2022, £110,000 lower than the UK average for the same year (Nationwide 2024).

Although macroeconomic influences such as wages, interest rates, and banking behaviours dominate the picture, the prevalence of second homes as a proportion of the available housing stock could have a more significant influence in areas where the proportion is unusually high.

The data on second homes is not clear because they are poorly defined as a category and can include anything from holiday homes to military and student accommodation or vacant properties. However, the total number in Wales has hovered a little under 25,000 properties for the last six years (Welsh Government 2023). We are interested specifically in holiday homes that would otherwise be suitable for permanent residence (i.e. excluding parental addresses and student accommodation or temporary accommodation such as glamping and caravanning). The relevant figure here is thought to be closer to 10,000 properties in Wales (Welsh Government 2024). In either case, this represents between 1.7% and 0.7% of the 1.43 million homes in Wales.

A map published by the ONS and Welsh Government (using 2021 Census data) illustrates holiday home hotspots. The ONS has also overlaid NP boundaries onto this data. Figure 8 reveals that Northwest Wales has high rates of holiday homes. Within Eryri, the coastal zone between Porthmadog and Aberdyfi is the highest. However, the 'hotspots' are weakly correlated with the NPs, even in North West Wales. The highest rates of all are found outside the NP.



*Figure 8: Holiday Home Hotspots - Location of second addresses used as a holiday home (by Middle layer Super Output Area, England and Wales) (ONS 2024)*

Holiday home hotspots are strongly correlated with picturesque rural and especially *coastal* holiday destinations. Inland areas by contrast, (including NPs like Bannau Brecheiniog, the Peak District, and Dartmoor) do not register higher rates of holiday home ownership than the background level on this scale (between 0.2% - 3% of dwellings, Office for National Statistics 2024)

Second homes in these hotspots have been linked to other negative social and cultural impacts, such as the erosion of the Welsh language. The UK Government, Welsh Government, Local Government, and other NP Authorities, have all recognised concerns over second homes. The March 2024 UK budget removed tax incentives for short-term lettings in favour of long-term rental agreements and financially encouraged the release of second properties for sale (House of Lords Library 2024).

Welsh Government has committed to a series of actions to address the availability of housing in Wales such as the 'Three-pronged approach', the 'Welsh Language Community Housing Plan', and regulatory changes such as an increase in council tax fee for a second home and local tax rules for holiday lets (Welsh Government 2024). Eryri NP is consulting on Article 4 Direction for the Park area. This, if implemented, would mean that those who wish to change residential property to either second homes or short-term letting would need planning permission to do so (Eryri NP 2024).

In conclusion, the affordability of housing in all parts of the UK is predominantly a function of national and to a lesser extent, regional economic influences. Prices in the study area

are broadly typical of this pattern but below average for the UK and for Wales. They were also falling in 2023 in accordance with the national trend. Second homes make up between 0.2% and 3% of the housing stock in the area and have relatively little influence on the affordability of housing. This can be different in certain 'Hotspot' areas but the 2021 census data identified no hotspots within the study area. Hotspots are mainly located in well-established coastal holiday destinations and are not well correlated with NPs, especially away from the coast.

Even so, at the low concentrations found in the area, second homes could possibly have other negative social or cultural impacts which would remain a concern. These concerns have been recognised and have started to be addressed at UK, Welsh, and local government levels. If established, a new NP would provide an additional mechanism, through implementation of Article 4 to further restrict second homes and holiday lettings within its boundaries.

## Theme 8: Culture and heritage

Culture and heritage were the eighth most mentioned theme. Many respondents felt the area is important for its Welsh communities and culture and that a NP could help protect the language, heritage, and customs of the area. The importance of local traditions, farming practices, and historic villages and churches was stressed. The history of local people, the industrial heritage of lead mining and quarrying as well as ancient hill forts and vernacular structures were noted as elements a NP could help restore and promote. Long-distance paths and Pilgrim's trails and heritage attractions could benefit the local economy through NP promotion.

Some felt that the area could be expanded to include Caer Estyn hillfort as well as Caergwrle Castle and Hope church, forming a cohesive landscape from Caer Estyn through to Hope Mountain. Other cultural heritage for potential inclusion would be Malltrafal, Pentre Fort, and Llanfrairlight railway, including the whole of the Meifod valley with its historic church and listed buildings. Registered parks at Bryn Gwyn Hall, Wynnstey Hall, Rhug Estate and Chapel, Nequis Hall, Tower and Leeswood Hall near Treuddyn could be considered for inclusion. (*See theme 10 on boundary changes*).

Some respondents were concerned that a NP could have negative effects on the Welsh language due to the influx of visitors and an increase in second homes.

A NP would be able to address some of the concerns and provide opportunities to conserve and enhance cultural heritage.

The primary purpose of NPs includes the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage. Through the Management Plan and related Action Plans, NPs can provide focus for projects related to the historic environment, and promote community involvement, education, understanding, and enjoyment of the cultural heritage of the area. Bannau Brycheiniog NP has produced a Historic Environment Action Plan for the park which includes measures to promote the Welsh language and place names (Bannau Brycheiniog NP 2023). The recent promotion of the Welsh language names for Eryri and Bannau

Brycheiniog reflects a growing trend to promote the language and the sense of identity it brings.

NPs include many heritage assets within their boundaries and often overlap with World Heritage Sites and Registered Historic Landscapes. They can draw in funding, in partnership with other bodies such as Cadw and the Archaeological Trusts to carry out heritage projects and promote traditional crafts such as hedge laying and drystone walling. For example, Pembrokeshire Coast NP runs a traditional boundaries grant scheme (Pembrokeshire Coast NP 2023) and Bannau Brycheiniog NP runs the 'Explosive Times' project focussed on Glyn-neath Gunpowder works (Bannau Brycheiniog NP 2023).

### **Theme 9: Planning implications and renewable energy**

The ninth most mentioned theme related to the role of the land use planning system in a NP.

Some respondents were of the view that a NP would provide a positive opportunity for better planning in the area and protection from unsympathetic development.

Other respondents were concerned that a NP would introduce additional restrictions on land and homeowners and requested information on how planning services would be delivered in a NP.

The need to provide clarity on the relationship with the existing planning service in the area was raised together with information on how future transitional arrangements would operate.

### **NP Authority**

An area designated as a NP would have a NP Authority and would be the Local Planning Authority for the NP Area. It would be responsible for the preparation of a Local Development Plan, a Management Plan, and for the Development Management System.

A NP can implement detailed policy and guidance to improve the quality and design of buildings and other developments. Integrating the NP Management Plan and the Local Development Plan provides an opportunity to address the climate and nature emergencies together.

### **Policy**

The policy framework for designated landscapes in Wales is set out in Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, 2023) and Future Wales: The National Plan 2024 (Welsh Government 2021). Both NPs and AONBs are of equal status in terms of landscape and scenic beauty and must both be afforded the highest status of protection from inappropriate development. Major development should not take place in NPs or AONBs except in exceptional circumstances where an overriding public need can be demonstrated after rigorous examination.

## **Planning Permission**

Planning permission is required to build something new, make a major change to a building or change the use of a building.

In some circumstances, permitted development rights allow certain types of work to take place without the need for planning permission, these do not always apply in NPs or AONBs.

To assist with providing an overview and clarity for stakeholders and members of the public regarding the implications of a designated landscape on planning we have prepared a Briefing Note-Implications of Designated Landscapes on Planning (which can be found on our project website).

It is important to note that, whilst there may be additional restrictions in terms of permitted development rights, this does not necessarily mean these associated developments are unacceptable. Where these additional provisions are in effect this will require a full planning application to be made to the NP Authority and, subject to appropriate and constructive discussions being held, it is still possible to achieve a successful outcome for those proposed developments in a NP.

Comparison of statistics between Welsh Local Planning Authorities and NP planning authorities between 2016-2022 indicates that NP Authorities had a slightly higher approval rate (91.4%) compared with the Welsh average during this period (90.1%) (Welsh Government Planning Services Reports 2020).

## **Transitional Arrangements**

The implications of a potential new NP Authority on the services currently provided by Local Authorities, specifically land use planning, will be discussed and considered throughout the designation process.

## **Renewable energy**

Many respondents felt that a NP could be positive in restricting the number of wind energy and solar farm developments and wanted to see the area protected from this type of development and from large-scale pylon lines to improve the National Grid. Others felt a NP should not prevent this type of development as green energy is needed, but it should be carefully planned.

A NP would be able to address some of the concerns regarding planning for major renewable energy projects and provide opportunities for small-scale renewable energy schemes.

In NPs “special considerations apply to major development proposals which are more national than local in character” (Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 2023).

As outlined above, major developments should not take place in NPs except in exceptional circumstances. Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (Welsh Government 2021) sets out the policy approach to renewable and low-carbon energy. Large-scale wind and solar

developments will not be permitted in NPs and AONBs. Pre-assessed areas for Wind Energy are identified, where, in principle, large-scale wind energy development and associated landscape change would be acceptable. Outside the Pre-Assessed Areas and everywhere for all other technologies, proposals should not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding landscape (particularly on the setting of NPs and AONBs).

NPs can provide guidance through their planning policies on the appropriate scale and type of renewable energy in their areas. Pembrokeshire Coast NP Authority has produced Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Guidance to their Local Development Plan, including guidance on landscape sensitivity to field scale solar PV and wind energy developments (Pembrokeshire Coast NP 2014). NPs can also promote sensitive small-scale green energy schemes and building efficiency by drawing in grant aid within their area. An example of this is the Bannau Brycheiniog NP Community Buildings Energy Audits and Grants scheme to support managing community buildings in an energy-efficient way (Bannau Brycheiniog NP 2024).

### **Theme 10: Boundary Queries**

Comments about Boundary changes to the Area of Search was the tenth most mentioned theme in the questionnaire. Responses included requests to extend the Area of Search to include landscapes currently outside the study area; and the exclusion of areas within the study area.

We requested people support their submission with evidence as to how the area they were interested in met or did not meet natural beauty and recreation criteria (the NP designation criteria). This, alongside defining an 'extensive tract of land that meets the criteria', is how we carried out the analysis in determining the Area of Search.

There were several themes associated with the Area of Search:

- Support for additional areas based upon personal views about landscape, wildlife, cultural heritage, and recreation value.
- The need to conserve landscape from inappropriate development.
- The exclusion of areas because of concerns of social and economic impacts on local communities.
- The exclusion of areas because of concerns about physical impacts upon wildlife, farming, and visitor destinations.
- The Area of Search should be drawn around water catchment areas.

Below, we set out the specific areas that people raised with us, our review, and decision as to the study area that will be considered at the next project stage, - the evaluation of a NP Candidate Area.

**The following areas will be taken forward for evaluation at the next project stage:**

**Halkyn Mountain**

Comments raised at the engagement events included leaving Halkyn Mountain as it is, to avoid a NP designation generating additional interest and pressure. Concerns were raised about more visitors with impacts on communities, impacts on wildlife, heritage, and sheep grazing. The NP project requires NRW to assess the Desirability to Designate. This stage will evaluate the benefits and disbenefits of designating and new NP.

### **The landscapes within Powys**

Comments raised at the engagement events included excluding the landscapes within Powys due to concerns about impacts upon local communities and farming. The NP project requires NRW to assess the Desirability to Designate. This work is programmed for next year. This stage will evaluate the benefits and disbenefits of designating and new NP.

### **The area north of Hope Mountain**

The Area of Search was previously drawn to closely follow the most intact areas of Natural Beauty in the landscape around Hope Mountain and along the Nant y Ffrith Valley. The area north of Hope Mountain has some notable natural beauty elements but also some landscape detractors:

The wooded river valleys are a strong visual landscape characteristic and function as a habitat network. Priority habitats and species are present. The hillslopes that extend North Westwards from Hope Mountain towards Mold along the A541 include the parkland of Lees Wood Hall. Parkland's character is particularly evident and distinctive.

400KV overhead lines and pylon towers cross part of the area. Some of the villages are urban in form and prominent in the landscape. These areas of development have some effect on landscape distinctiveness and scenic quality.

This area warrants further assessment to judge whether an intact and cohesive area of landscape with Natural Beauty can be identified.

### **Clywedog Valley – Bersham**

The Area of Search was previously drawn excluding this small valley due to development influences (400kv overhead powerlines and pylons and the settlement edge of Coedpoeth) on landscape integrity to the west where the valley meets the existing AONB.

The valley contains notable Natural Beauty elements - woodland gorge, river and cascades, priority habitats, and species; Ironworks heritage at Bersham and lead mining heritage at Minera; and opportunities for outdoor Recreation - Nant Mill visitor centre, Plas Power wood, and Nant Mill wood are a Woodland Trust Sites, and the Clywedog Trail follows the valley linking the AONB to Erddig Estate (National Trust) and Wrexham. This area warrants further assessment.

### **Park in the Past**

This is a former sand and gravel quarry site, with a lake and evolving semi-natural habitats. It is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (Fagl Lane Quarry SINC) containing protected and priority species and priority habitats. Site access is conditional,

but it provides opportunities for quiet outdoor recreation including walks, swimming, canoeing, and fishing. Whilst the visitor facilities, parking, and buildings are functional and rudimentary the site contains elements of Natural Beauty and open-air Recreation. The site warrants further assessment.

### **Caer Estyn hillfort**

The close proximity of Caer Estyn hillfort to Caergwrle Castle and Hope Mountain prompted the suggestion of including this area. It's a small area of woodland with a scheduled monument and is more a local scale of landscape than areas typically identified for inclusion within NPs. There are however natural beauty elements and some heritage significance here. Caer Estyn hillfort and Caergwrle Castle sit opposite each other at a crossing point of the river. A section of Watts Dyke converges towards this location. The Caergwrle Conservation area includes Caergwrle Castle, the river valley, and the settlement that lines the river. The Conservation Area abuts the woodland site of Caer Estyn hillfort. This justifies extending the study area over an area of settlement to include Caer Estyn hillfort.

### **Mynydd Mynyllod and the Dee Valley at Llandrillo**

Based upon evidence submitted during the engagement period, we have reviewed the case for including the Mynydd Mynyllod and the Dee Valley at Llandrillo in the Area of Search.

We received evidence about protected species, the importance of this area for Curlew, and the location of heritage features.

Questions about LANDMAP were raised. Site visits have led to the re-evaluation of the visual and sensory assessment. Several aspect areas have subsequently been amended with some Moderate overall evaluations assessed to be High overall evaluations. This indicates Mynydd Mynyllod, the wooded hillslopes, and the Dee Valley floor at Llandderfel have notable character and scenic quality. Collectively, these areas connect with the Area of Search near Llandderfel.

The combination of the additional information received and LANDMAP re-evaluation points to Natural Beauty elements being present within a wider area of the Dee Valley than previously assessed. To allow this area to be assessed within its logical topographical extents, the study area will include the valley floor between Llandderfel and Corwen and the hillslopes and ridge to North West.

### **Parklands of Bryn Gwyn Hall and Rhug Estate**

A minor adjustment to the study area has been made to fully include the Bryn Gwyn Hall parkland setting. The Rhug Estate has notable parkland character and heritage value. The parkland area has been included and coexists with amendments made for Mynydd Mynyllod and the Dee Valley at Llandrillo.

**The following areas will not be taken forward for evaluation at the next project stage:**

### **Denbigh Moors**

The Moors have a close geographical relationship with Eryri. The landscape between the moors and the NP Area of Search includes a large tract of land with scattered Natural Beauty elements. Clocaenog Wind Farm has a major effect on perceptions of scenic quality and tranquillity (key components of the Natural Beauty assessment criteria). From our analysis, we conclude that the tract of land between Denbigh Moors and the Area of Search does not meet the Natural Beauty assessment criteria to a sufficient degree. This area will therefore not be taken forward for evaluation at the next project stage.

### **Llyn Brenig and Clocaenog Forest**

There are pockets of important habitats and heritage in the vicinity of Llyn Brenig and opportunities for open-air recreation are available. Major wind farm development within Clocaenog Forest however affects perceptions of landscape distinctiveness, scenic quality, and tranquillity (key components of the Natural Beauty assessment criteria). Whilst the area meets the Recreation assessment criteria, the Natural Beauty assessment criteria must first be met before it can be considered for potential inclusion within a NP. This area will therefore not be taken forward for evaluation at the next project stage.

### **The Vale of Clwyd**

The central and eastern areas of the Vale have a strong visual and geographical relationship with the Clwydian Range and have heritage and wildlife features, historic settlements, and limited modern-day influences. The western extent of the Vale is more influenced by settlement, roads, and activity and the landscape is less distinctive. We therefore do not propose including the full extent of the Vale of Clwyd within the next assessment stage.

### **Pantasaph**

The A55 forms a barrier to linking Pantasaph with the Area of Search. The road affects landscape character, integrity, and tranquillity, so negatively affects perceptions of Natural Beauty. In this situation, the Natural Beauty assessment criteria is not satisfied.

### **Wepre Park**

Wepre Park lies at some distance from the existing Area of Search. Linking these areas would entail including an extensive area of landscape that does not meet the Natural Beauty assessment criteria.

### **Parklands of Nerquis Hall, Tower and Wynnstay Hall**

Nerquis Hall and Tower have not been included. Their heritage value lies within the site with limited influence on the character of the wider landscape. The sites are private and do not provide opportunities for public access and outdoor recreation. Whilst being sites of important heritage value, the open-air Recreation assessment criteria is not satisfied.

Wynnstay Hall lies at some distance from the existing Area of Search. Linking these areas would entail including an extensive area of landscape that does not meet the Natural Beauty assessment criteria.

## **Ruthin**

The town includes a Conservation Area, 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century housing, commercial and industrial areas. The open countryside sections of the Conservation Area at Ruthin Castle are included in the Area of Search. A NP designation is primarily concerned with landscapes, but settlements and buildings of notable heritage, character, and/or a positive interrelationship with landscape can be included. The location of the town on the edge of the study area calls for a decision on whether to fully include, or fully exclude it. Only a small area of the town is of built conservation value and character. The Area of Search was therefore drawn to exclude the town.

## **Extend the Area of Search to include the Cambrian Mountains and Pumlumon**

The NP project is focusing on landscapes within and adjacent to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB. The AONB includes the northern edge of the Berwyn. Our evaluation of Natural Beauty and connection with the AONB gave reason to include the Berwyn uplands and intersecting valleys within the NP Area of Search, to a point where the Berwyn Range finish and the Cambrian Mountains start. We do not propose assessing landscapes further to the South as part of this project.

## **Powys Castle**

Whilst Powys Castle contains important heritage and the surrounding wooded valleys are notable for wildlife and scenic character, the landscape between the current edge of the Area of Search (Meifod Valley) and Powys Castle is an extensive area, with some variability in Natural Beauty. From our analysis, we conclude that the tract of land between Powys Castle and the Area of Search does not meet the Natural Beauty assessment criteria. This area will therefore not be taken forward for evaluation at the next project stage.

## **The Area of Search should be drawn around the River Dee catchment area**

The Area of Search was drawn to include a landscape that meets the Natural Beauty assessment criteria, which is concerned with landscape distinctiveness, scenic quality, wildlife, and heritage. An area of search based upon water catchment areas would result in very different geographical extents and include landscapes of varying conditions that don't meet the Natural Beauty assessment criteria. The Dee River Basin Management Plan also provides an existing mechanism for protecting the water environment. We therefore do not propose extending the study area to include the River Dee catchment area.

## **Theme 11: Need for more information**

There were 109 comments asking for more information. Some of these gave the impression that respondents felt it was the only opportunity to respond. That the early engagement was in fact *the* consultation. In this context, they understandably felt that the notification and supporting information was inadequate.

Other comments suggested that there was not sufficient public awareness.

Most of the comments spoke of a desire to better understand the facts and gain context upon which to form an opinion.

To better explain the engagement and consultation timeframe, the table below summarises the main opportunities for participation throughout the multi-year process.

*Table 7. Engagement and consultation milestones*

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
NRW is commissioned by Welsh Government and a team is assembled.	2022
Local Authority and other stakeholder engagement.	Ongoing throughout 2023 & 2024
<b>Public engagement period</b> (To inform the assessment)	Autumn 2023
Advisory groups established with key stakeholders.	Spring 2024
Engagement report	Summer 2024
<b>Public consultation</b> (For feedback on NRW proposal following assessment)	Autumn 2024
Consultation report	Spring 2025
<b>Statutory consultation</b> (For reactions to the finalised proposal)	Summer / Autumn 2025
Welsh Government decision.	Early 2026

There were multiple comments suggesting that more clarity is needed regarding exactly what a new NP would mean, and this is acknowledged and accepted. This is difficult to do prior to a park authority or management plan being created. Also, Welsh Government commissioned NRW to assess the case for a new NP, and we cannot presume the outcome of that process. There remain other possibilities besides NP status such as no change, or another type of landscape designation. We therefore felt that in October and

November of 2023, it was not appropriate for NRW to present the case for or against options yet to be fully assessed. However, it is quite correct and encouraging that many people were asking for more facts and analysis before formulating their opinions. The assessment procedure is designed to establish those facts ahead of a public consultation in 2024. It will also take account of further feedback in 2024 ahead of a statutory consultation in 2025. It was not logically possible to both engage very early in the assessment procedure *and* present the facts emerging *from* that procedure before they are established. It would, however, have been possible to better outline the broad options being considered, and their *expected* strengths and weaknesses in a general sense. We will clearly articulate the key elements of the assessment procedure that deal with these points ahead of the consultation in 2024.

We hope that our information webpage, this report, and subsequent summaries of the technical assessment work will all contribute to an increasingly well-informed discussion during the public consultation in 2024 and afterwards.

## 7. Summary

During the seven-week engagement period in 2023, we ran 11 online and in-person drop-in events. 619 people attended in-person, 105 attended online and we received 966 questionnaire responses. These showed a narrow overall support for the prospect of a new NP but with a significant proportion having concerns. A minority of respondents were undecided.

The most common responses were organised into eleven themes and put in order of most to least frequently mentioned. These themes were:

1. Landscape conservation, Recognition for the area, Tranquillity.
2. Wildlife, Agriculture and Land Management, Environment and Sustainability.
3. Tourism, Public services, and infrastructure.
4. Necessity for change, Management and Controls, Costs, Funding, Bureaucracy.
5. Local people & Communities, Local Economy.
6. Access issues & Outdoor recreation.
7. Housing.
8. Culture and Heritage.
9. Planning implications.
10. Boundary queries.
11. A need for more information.

The assessment procedure is designed to assess if a NP is appropriate or if another option would be better. This report and further publications will progressively explore this and the 'pros and cons' of establishing a new NP. This work will be shared as part of the consultation information in the autumn of 2024.

Following your feedback, based on evidence and further assessments, we have made decisions regarding various areas suggested for inclusion or exclusion. Halkyn Mountain, the landscapes within Powys, the area north of Hope Mountain, Clywedog Valley – Bersham, Park in the Past, Caer Estyn hillfort, Mynydd Mynyllod, and the Dee Valley at Llandrillo and Parklands of Bryn Gwyn Hall and Rhug Estate will all be taken forward for detailed evaluation. This does not imply that they will necessarily progress further or form a part of any proposed boundary (if one is found to be appropriate). However, it does mean that these areas will be assessed in detail when making the decision.

We would like to thank everyone who has participated in our early engagement and hope that you will also participate in the public consultation in 2024. The feedback we have received and will continue to seek is an important part of the decision-making process. We will share further information and continue to listen as the project progresses.

## 8. Next steps

We will consider and account for the feedback provided as we work through a series of technical assessments and prepare our informed recommendations. Efforts will continue to engage with those least engaged in this process to date and there will be a full public consultation on a proposed boundary in 2024.

Following the consultation, all responses and any amendments to the boundary will be considered before presenting a recommendation to Welsh Government. If there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the statutory criteria relating to natural beauty and opportunities for open-air recreation are met and that the area is of such national significance that NP purposes should apply, a Designation Order will be submitted to Welsh Government. Ministers will then consider this and decide whether to confirm, refuse, or vary the Designation Order. If there are objections from a statutory Local Authority not withdrawn prior to submission of an Order, Welsh Ministers must hold a Public Inquiry. Welsh Ministers may also choose to hold a public inquiry to provide alternative ways to

allow people to make full representations on the proposal. If confirmed, Welsh Government will establish a new NP.

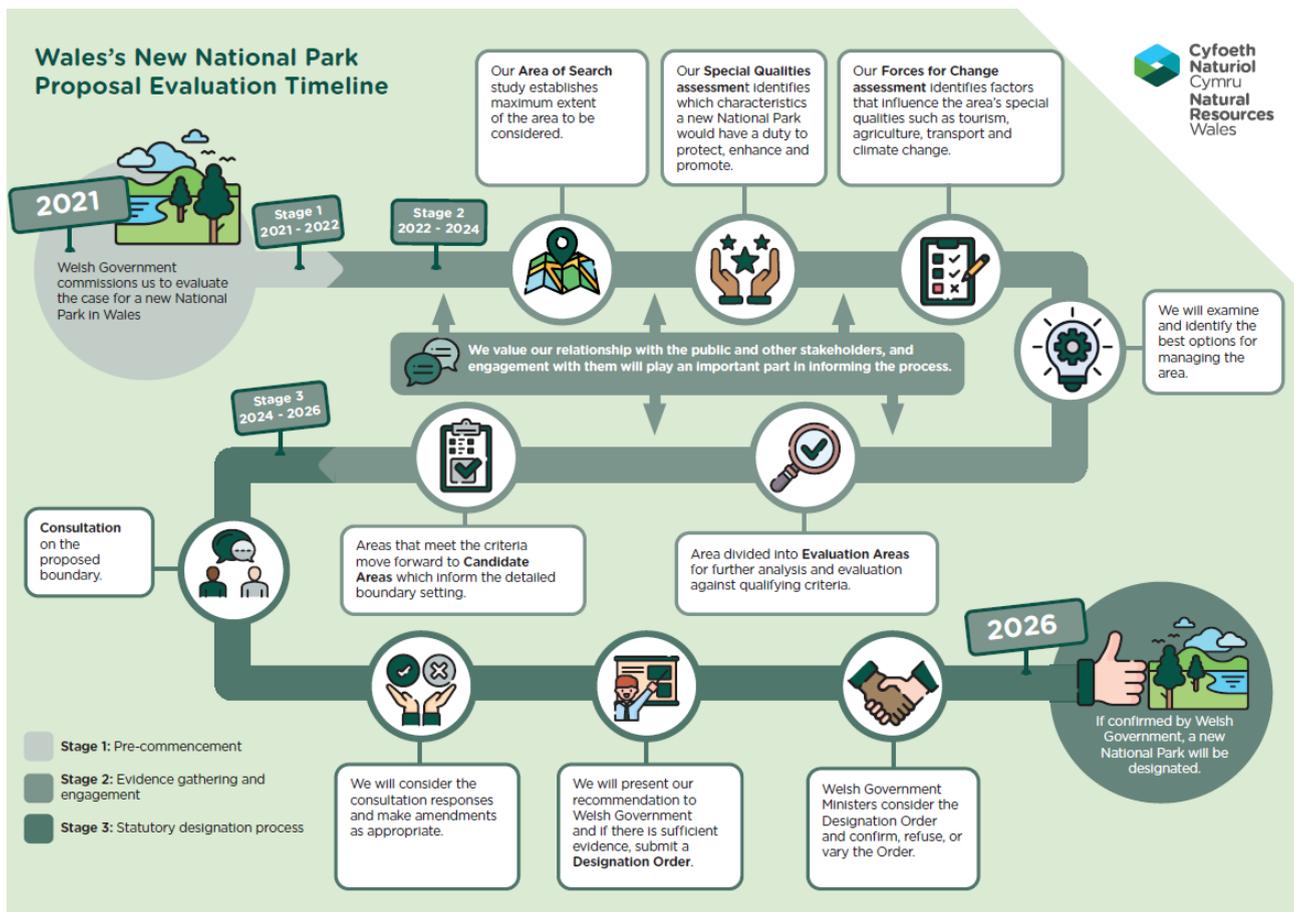


Figure 9: Wales's New NP Proposal Evaluation Timeline

## 9. Other resources / stay in touch

We will update our project website as the proposal progresses:  
[bit.ly/NewNationalParkProposalWales](https://bit.ly/NewNationalParkProposalWales)

In addition, the project inbox  
[designated.landscapes.programme@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:designated.landscapes.programme@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk) is available for any further questions. This will be monitored by the project team.

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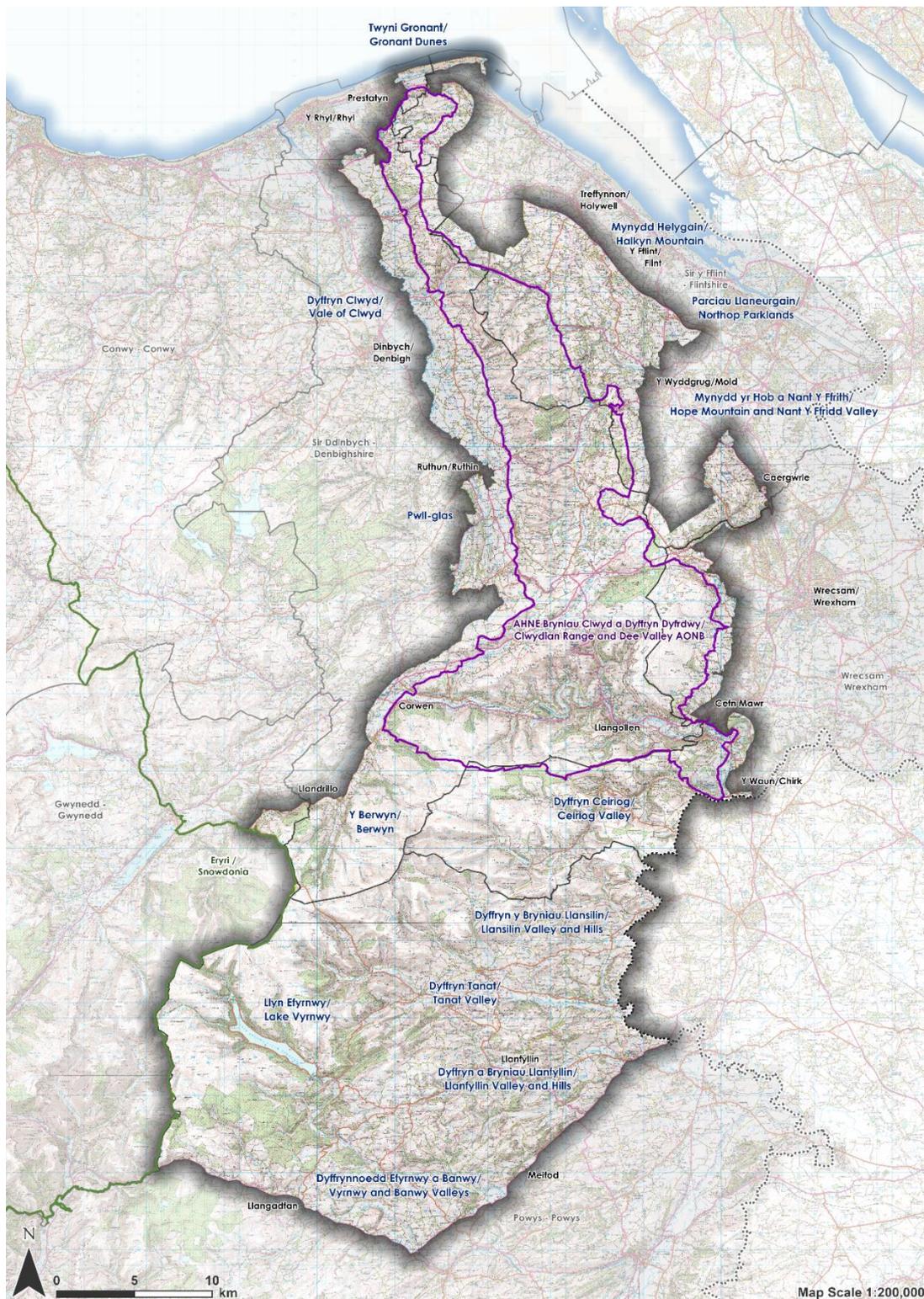
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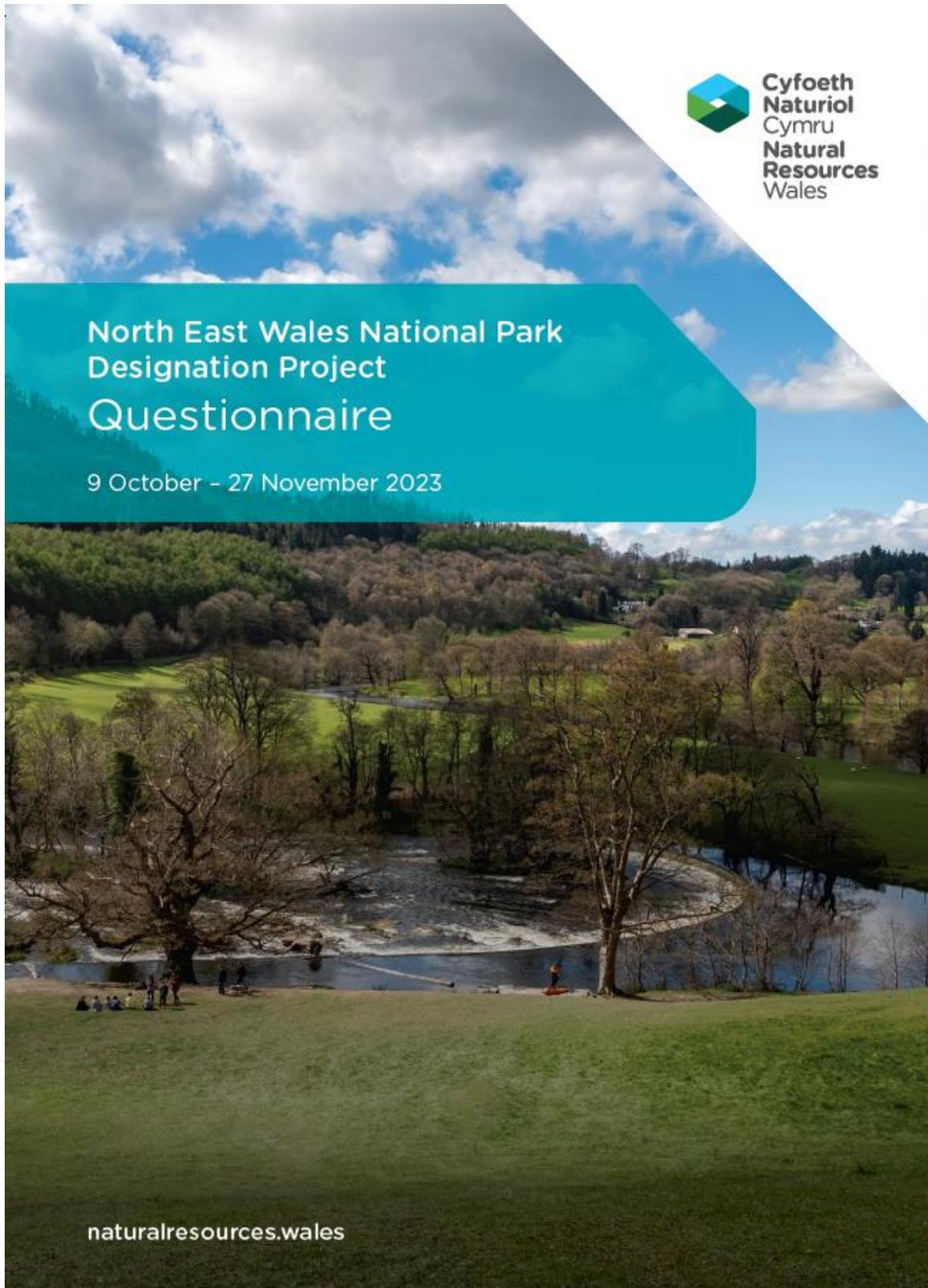
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# 11. Appendices

## 11.1 Appendix A: Area of Search Map



## 11.2 Appendix B: Questionnaire



Thank you for completing and returning this questionnaire.  
Your views form an important part of the assessment process.

**Q1 Are you responding to this questionnaire as:** Tick one only

- An individual?
- On behalf of an organisation?  
(please specify which):
- On behalf of a group or community?  
(please specify which):

**Q2 Which of the following best describe you?** Tick all answers that apply

- Local resident
- Visitor/tourist
- Other (please specify):
- Farmer/landowner
- Business owner

- Organisation/group representative  
(please specify your role):

If representing the views of your organisation or group please describe how the views of the people you represent were collected and how many contributed.

Any further comments

**Q3 What is your postcode?** Please provide your postcode in full or the first three digits.  
We would like to capture how many interested respondents live within the Area of Search or outside.

Postcode

**Q4a Which option below best describes your feelings towards the proposed new National Park?** Tick one only

- Very positive/optimistic
- Neutral
- Very negative/concerned
- Somewhat positive/optimistic
- Somewhat negative/concerned
- Don't know

**Q4b**

Please expand on your answer/explain why you feel this way

**Q5a What part or parts of the area being considered are you interested in and responding about?** Tick all that apply

- Within the existing Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gronant Dunes               | <input type="checkbox"/> Halkyn Mountain             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vale of Clwyd North         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hope Mountain               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pwllglas and Vale at Ruthin | <input type="checkbox"/> Ceiriog Valley              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tanat Valley                | <input type="checkbox"/> Llanfyllin Valley and Hills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Llyn Vyrnwy                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vyrnwy and Banwy Valleys    |
- Other (please specify):

**Q5b What is special to you about this place/these places?**

For example landscape, wildlife, heritage and culture.

**Q5c Do you feel this place/these places need conserving and enhancing?**

For example landscape, wildlife, heritage and culture. If so, how?

**Q6 With what you currently know, can you foresee any potential benefits from this proposed new National Park?**

Tick one only

- Yes       No       Maybe
- Unsure at this time - need more information to decide

Please describe any potential benefits

**Q7 With what you currently know, do you have any concerns or issues that you feel are important to be considered?**

Tick one only

- Yes       No  
 Unsure at this time - need more information to decide

Please describe any concerns or issues

**Q8 Are there any other comments you wish to add?**

**Q9 How would you like to be involved in our future work to develop the proposal for the project?** Tick all that apply

- Receive email updates  
 Attend events to contribute thoughts on the project  
 I don't want to get involved

If you are happy for us to contact you, please add your email address (or other contact details) here:

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire**

Please send this form back to us using our Freepost address, all you need is an envelope.  
Freepost Plus RTJJ-AAKE-HKKU, North East Wales National Park Designation Project,  
Natural Resources Wales, Maes y Ffynnon, Penrhosgarnedd, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2DW