

# PROTOCOL ON THE SELECTION OF COUNTY COUNCILLORS AS MEMBERS OF NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES

## Introduction

1. This protocol provides a recommended framework for the selection of County Councillors by the Unitary Authorities as members of the National Park Authorities (NPAs).
2. Its contents have been subject to consultation with those 10 County Councils which make appointments to the NPAs, as well as with the Welsh Local Government Association and the three NPAs themselves.
3. The protocol identifies key principles of selection for the appointing authorities to take into account in selecting Councillors to serve as members of the NPAs. With County Council Elections scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government hopes that the protocol's contents will be of assistance to the appointing authorities in making their next round of appointments to the NPAs.

## Legal framework

4. Under Schedule 7 (paragraph 1.4 b) of the Environment Act 1995, two thirds of the members of the NPAs are appointed by the unitary authorities to represent local interests. The other third are appointed by the Welsh Assembly Government to represent the national interest in the Parks. Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 also require the unitary authorities to appoint County Councillors according to the political balance of the individual unitary authority. In addition, Schedule 7, paragraph 2 (4) requires them to have regard to the desirability of appointing Councillors to NPAs with wards wholly or partly situated within the relevant Park. These legal provisions need to be kept in mind in undertaking the selection process.

## Key principles of selection

4. In considering County Councillors for appointment to the local NPA the following key principles of selection are recommended :
  - a. Merit – all selections should be based on merit with individuals chosen on the basis of their abilities, experience, qualities and commitment in relation to the strategic work of NPAs and with full regard to the NPA member role description at Annex A [as developed within the WLGA's Wales Charter for Member Support and Development];
  - b. Equal opportunities – selection should be fully in line with the principles of equal opportunities, noting that there is currently an imbalance of men compared to women on the NPAs;
  - c. Transparency – the unitary authorities should be prepared to share information on the selection process followed with key stakeholders;

- d. Commitment to National Park purposes – in addition to being committed to the overall values and principles of conduct in public service in performing their duties, Councillors being considered for selection should be committed to the two statutory purposes of the NPAs and aim to perform their duties in the interests of the National Park as a whole;
- e. Electoral wards – in accordance with the legislation the aim should be to give priority in selection to those Councillors who have wards wholly or partly within the relevant National Park boundary. Selection of Councillors with electoral wards some distance away from the Park should be avoided where possible, subject to the political balance requirement, and in line with their role in representing overall local county level interests in the National Park.
- f. Main Park communities – in considering candidates for appointment, account should also be taken of the desirability of achieving equitable representation from across the Park area, including seeking to ensure that main communities within the Park are represented on the Park Authority.

#### **Application of the key principles**

5. In selecting Councillors to serve as members of the local National Park Authority, the appointing authorities will need to balance the overall weight to be given to the individual principles. The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that it may not be possible in every case to meet the recommended principles in full – for example a new Councillor may lack experience in National Park Authority business but nonetheless have other experience and qualities that would make that person to represent the County Council on the Park Authority. Equally meeting the political balance requirement may constrain how far the principles can be fully applied.

#### **Review of protocol**

6. The contents of this protocol will be reviewed by the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and the 3 NPAs in 2011 – ie one year before the 2012 County Council Elections. Any proposed changes will be subject to consultation with the relevant Unitary Authorities.

April 2008

Access and National Parks Policy Team  
Welsh Assembly Government

## Annex A

### National Park Authority Member Role Description

#### 1. Accountabilities

- To the full National Park Authority.
- To the public.

#### 2. Role Purpose and Activity

##### (a) Representing the national interest

- To apply the principles and purposes of National Parks to all decision making.
- To bring the national context to bear in decision making.
- To be an advocate for the National Park Authority and its purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

##### (b) Representing and supporting communities

- To represent the interests of the population of the whole area of the National Park Authority.
- To liaise with other members, principal authorities, officers and partner organisations to ensure that the needs of the National Park Authority are identified, understood and supported.
- To be a channel of communication to the community on National Park Authority strategies, policies, services and procedures, promoting wide public understanding and enjoyment of the Park and with others to foster the economic and social well being of communities in the Park in the pursuit of its statutory purposes.
- 

##### (c) Making decisions and overseeing National Park Authority performance

- To participate in National Park Authority meetings, reaching and making informed and balanced decisions, and overseeing performance.
- To participate in informed and balanced decision making when appointed to National Park Authority committees and panels.
- To support the principles of democracy and collective responsibility in decision-making.

- To promote and ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of National Park Authority services.

**(d) Representing the National Park Authority (subject to appointment)**

- To represent the National Park Authority on outside bodies.
- To represent the National Park Authority on local partnership bodies, promoting common interest and co-operation for mutual gain.
- To represent and be an advocate for the National Park Authority on national bodies and at national events.

**(e) Internal governance, ethical standards and relationships**

- To promote and support good governance of the National Park Authority and its affairs.
- To promote and support open and transparent National Park Authority services.
- To support, and adhere to respectful, appropriate and effective relationships with employees of the National Park Authority.
- To adhere to the Members' Code of Conduct and the highest standards of behaviour in representing the National Park Authority.

**(f) Personal and role development**

- To participate in opportunities for development provided for members by the National Park Authority.

**3. Values**

- To be committed to the values of the National Park Authority and the following values in public office:
  - Openness and transparency
  - Honesty and integrity
  - Tolerance and respect
  - Equality and fairness
  - Appreciation of cultural difference
  - Sustainability.

## Person Specification for Members of National Park Authorities

**To fulfil his or her role as set out in the role description, an effective Member requires:**

### Fulfilling National Park Purposes

- The ability to champion and represent the Authority as an effective mechanism for promoting conservation of the Park's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, increasing public understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities and fostering the social and economic wellbeing of local communities.

### Fulfilling the role

- Involvement for typically three or four days per month.
- Attendance and contribution to meetings of the Authority, its committees and the working groups, and raising issues of concern through the established procedures and mechanisms adopted by the Authority.
- Reading and understanding, and the responsibility to seek clarification where necessary from Lead Officers, of briefing material provided for meetings so that you will be properly prepared for any debate on issues across the full range of the Authority's responsibilities.

### Internal governance, ethical standards and relationships

- A commitment to working in the best interests of the National Park and the Authority itself.
- Compliance with Standing Orders and respect for the democratically determined decisions of the Authority.
- Adherence to the Standards of Conduct, Accountability and Openness of the National Park Authority.

### Personal and role development

- Attendance at appropriate training courses, briefing sessions and events arranged or sponsored by the Authority and partner organisations.