

Report of Democratic Services Manager

Subject: General Update on Member Support and Development

1. Purpose of report

To provide an update on matters relating to Member support and development.

2. Arrangements for Evaluating Individual Member Performance in Welsh National Park Authorities – Stage 1 report

As reported to the National Park Authority in July, a report has been received from Welsh Government regarding development of an accountability framework for all Members of NPAs; this is in response to a recommendation in the Audit Wales report “[Governance of National Park Authorities](#)” considered by the Authority in June 2024. A copy of the Stage 1 report is appended for Members’ information.

The report was discussed by the Task and Finish Group set up in July of this year to consider implementation of the Wales Member Support Self Evaluation Framework for National Park Authorities, which also has within its remit consideration of the recommendations set out in the Welsh Government Stage 1 report and provision of feedback to proposals emerging from Stage 2 of the process.

3. Training

Training activities in the financial year to date have consisted of:

- LDP and Budget workshop
- St Davids Recreation Pressures Study Tour
- Code of Conduct Training
- TAN 15 and Design for Health Workshop
- Standing Orders Workshop
- Marine National Parks Workshop
- Welsh Members’ Seminar in Eryri
- Study Day – Planning Developments in Saundersfoot
- 6 Month review of financial performance

Any feedback from Members regarding these sessions is welcomed. An updated version of the Workshop Plan for the remainder of the year is also appended to this report.

4. Member attendance

Member attendance in the current financial year at meetings has been 87% (target 75%), while Member attendance at training events has been 69% (target 65%). This is a much improved figure for training attendance compared to last year (58%) which was due to lower attendance at relatively small number of events. However it is noted that of these, poor attendance at the Welsh Government organised training events was a significant contributing factor. As noted in my email to Members on 6 October, Welsh Government have now included an indicator in the [National Park Authority Strategic Grant Letter 2025-26: Reporting Framework](#) to measure the % of Members who have attended all four Governance online training sessions or watched the recordings, and all Members are therefore asked to ensure they have done so.

Risk considerations and compliance

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 places increased requirements on all local authorities in Wales in relation to corporate governance and Member support and development. The Authority has developed a strong ethos of Member development over the years, ensuring that it continues to have informed Members who can make decisions based on understanding, skills and experience. Building upon, and developing, the good work carried out to date will re-emphasise the fact that the Authority works to a high standard of governance.

The Authority is also committed to encouraging individuals from all walks of life to become involved in public life and will continue to introduce measures to enable everyone to take part.

5. Recommendation

Members are asked to comment on and note the report.

(For further information, please contact Caroline Llewellyn, Democratic Services Manager by e-mailing carolinel@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)

Arrangements for Evaluating Individual Member Performance in Welsh National Park Authorities – Stage 1 report

1. Introduction

1. Members of National Park Authorities (NPAs) in Wales are appointed through a dual system designed to ensure both local democratic representation and national strategic perspective. Each NPA is composed of two-thirds (12) local authority-appointed Members, who are elected councillors nominated by constituent local councils, and one-third (6) Welsh Ministers' appointees, who are selected to provide specific expertise and a national perspective. Local authority appointments must generally reflect the political balance of the nominating council, in line with the Local Government Act 1972, while Ministerial appointees are chosen through a public appointments process. This structure is intended to ensure that NPAs benefit from both local knowledge and a broader national perspective in fulfilling their statutory purposes.
2. This report examines the current arrangements for evaluating the performance of individual Members of Welsh National Park Authorities (NPAs). It compares practices across the three Welsh NPAs and with those in other parts of the UK, and identifies opportunities for improvement. The report will not examine or question the model for appointing members set out above, but will focus on understanding how expectations for Member conduct and contribution are defined and measured for all members, and whether existing mechanisms support effective governance.
3. The report is the first stage of a three-stage project that has been initiated to address the Audit Wales recommendation contained in their April 2024 report 'Governance of National Park Authorities':

To provide assurance on members' contribution to the governance of NPAs, and to help inform future training and development provision, we recommend that the Welsh Government, NPAs and constituent local authorities work together to develop an accountability framework for all members of NPAs that:

- *evaluates their contribution to the NPA; and*
- *can be used to help to target support and development to enable NPA members to be effective in their role.*

4. High-performing governance structures are vital to ensuring that National Park Authorities deliver their statutory purposes: conserving natural beauty, promoting public enjoyment, and fostering the economic and social well-being of local communities. Members are central to this work; making strategic decisions, representing stakeholders, and holding senior officers to account. Evaluating Member performance is therefore a key aspect of governance, ensuring Members are engaged, informed, and fulfilling their duties. Strengthening performance frameworks contributes to developing leadership, improving decision-making and promoting public confidence in governance.
5. Unlike staff performance, which is typically supported by well-established HR frameworks, the performance of individual Members who are appointed or elected for public service, often lacks consistent evaluation mechanisms. Establishing or refining performance expectations and review systems can enhance transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

2. Current Arrangements in Welsh NPAs

2.1 Member Expectations and Role Clarity

6. Welsh National Park Authorities share similar codes of conduct and ethical standards, and each has produced Member role descriptions outlining key expectations, including:
 - Preparing for and attending meetings regularly;
 - Contributing constructively to discussions and decisions;
 - Acting in the public interest and upholding the values of integrity, accountability, and openness; and
 - Participating in relevant training and development.
7. All NPAs have taken some steps to clarify expectations. The approaches vary, but examples include: Member induction materials; governance handbooks; Member charters; and development programmes. All NPAs are working with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) on a “Member Support Self-Evaluation Framework”, having previously worked with them on its predecessor “The Wales Charter for Member Support and Development”.
8. A protocol for local authorities on the selection of councilors to serve as members of National Park Authorities has been developed by the Welsh Government with the WLGA, the Independent Remuneration

Panel for Wales (IRPW) and the three NPAs (updated in 2021). It advises local authorities to consider:

- The nominee's commitment to National Park purposes.
 - Availability to attend meetings and engage in training.
 - Skills, experience, and interest in environmental and community issues.
9. The protocol also recognises that the IRPW determines the annual payments made to NPA Members based on an input from them of 44 days, and that there is an expectation that all Members achieve, at the very least, attendance of 75% at Park Authority meetings.
 10. Welsh Government appointed Members receive a letter of appointment and are asked to read and sign a set of terms and conditions. The terms and conditions usefully set out the expectations of the role in terms of the types of activity expected along with standards of conduct. They also set out the expectation of a minimum 44 days contribution, the requirement to undergo necessary training, and to participate in an annual Performance and Development Update. It is noted in the terms and conditions that by accepting the appointment they confirm that they are able to allocate sufficient time to meet the expectations of the role. However, beyond issues of misconduct or complete absence for 6 months or more, both the letter of appointment and the terms and conditions are silent on the consequences of underperformance.
 11. In contrast, Local Authority appointed Members do not receive a formal letter of appointment from their Local Authority, as the appointing body, setting out the expectations of serving on the NPA. They do though receive documentation and advice relating to serving on outside bodies more generally. On appointment, Local Authority Members receive a less formal 'welcome letter' from the NPA, but it does not set out any detailed expectations and does not have terms and conditions attached. Member induction materials include role descriptions 'and in some cases reference is made to "involvement of typically three or four days per month". There is no requirement to sign to formally accept these expectations.
 12. This inconsistency in the way that Members' terms and conditions are formally set out and accepted between Welsh Government appointees and Local Authority appointees weakens performance accountability of the membership as a whole and raises questions as to why Members are treated differently in this regard. Role expectations are also not routinely reinforced, and performance objectives or competency frameworks are largely absent. As a result, Members may lack a clear understanding of what is expected and how they will be held accountable.

13. The sample of Members spoken to during this review indicated a general lack of clarity of expectation and very few opportunities taken to reinforce expectations after first being appointed. Welsh Government appointed Members generally felt that on appointment expectations were reasonably set out, whilst Local Authority appointees felt that there was very little clarity.
14. To address these issues, expectations for all Members (regardless of their appointing body) should be standardised, formally communicated, and actively reinforced through induction, training, and regular performance discussions. This would provide a solid foundation for feedback and development, enabling Members to improve their contribution while ensuring fairness and transparency.
15. There is also a case for revising some appointment processes so that NPAs and the appointing Local Authorities could jointly issue formal appointment letters with terms and conditions. This would mirror the Welsh Government's more structured process, creating parity and promoting consistency in expectations, performance, and accountability.
16. It is essential to be clear about the expectations placed on Members of National Park Authorities (NPAs) in order to evaluate their contributions effectively and guide their development. Clearly defined expectations establish a common standard that underpins accountability, ensures consistency in evaluation, and supports fairness in performance assessments. They also provide a foundation for identifying training and development needs, enabling Members to grow in confidence and competence in their roles. For Chairs and senior officers, these expectations offer a constructive framework for giving feedback and supporting Members' ongoing development. Ultimately, clarity of role and responsibility contributes to strong governance, enhances collective performance, and helps maintain public trust in the integrity and effectiveness of the Authority.

2.2 Evaluation arrangements

17. There is currently no consistent or formalised system in place for evaluating the performance of all individual Members across the three NPAs. Existing arrangements differ significantly depending on the appointing body, with Welsh Government appointees subject to a more structured process than those appointed by Local Authorities.
18. Since 2021, Welsh Government-appointed Members have participated in an annual Performance and Development Update. This involves completing a self-assessment pro-forma prior to a meeting with the

Chair (or Vice-Chair) of the Authority. The pro-forma prompts reflection on various aspects of their contribution, such as engagement in meetings, involvement in strategic discussions, and stakeholder engagement and invites Members to identify areas for development or set future objectives. Although this process aims to support both performance evaluation and development planning, its purpose is not always clearly understood. Some Members believe it is a Welsh Government-driven accountability tool, while officials maintain that it is for the benefit of the Authority itself. This lack of clarity can undermine its effectiveness and lead to confusion over ownership and follow-up actions.

19. For Local Authority appointees, two of the three Welsh NPAs have introduced an optional Personal Development Review (PDR) process. However, these are explicitly focused on training and development, not performance assessment. For instance, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's guidance clearly states that PDRs are not evaluations of how well Members are fulfilling their duties. Participation in these reviews is not mandatory, and uptake is generally low, further weakening their potential as a governance tool.
20. Beyond these formal processes, some NPAs have experimented with optional self-assessment templates and informal conversations with senior officers or the Chair. While these initiatives can be helpful, they are inconsistently applied and are not embedded in formal governance frameworks. As such, they do not form part of a structured or routine approach to performance management.
21. No Welsh NPA currently conducts formal 1:1 appraisals of every Member's performance, and there are few mechanisms in place to address underperformance where it occurs. While training is offered and encouraged, much of it remains optional, and there is no systematic link between training, performance evaluation, or Member effectiveness. Members feel that whilst there may be opportunities to get more feedback on contribution and performance, they are rarely taken up in any meaningful way and need to be formalised and universally adopted.
22. Although attendance at formal meetings is recorded and reported to the IRPW, these figures are not systematically reviewed or discussed as part of any development or performance process. Furthermore, there are no arrangements for recording or evaluating wider Member contributions, such as time spent on working groups, stakeholder engagement, or leadership roles. Nor is there clarity in any of the existing documentation regarding consequences for failing to meet expected standards of performance.
23. This was echoed in the Audit Wales report 'Governance of National Park Authorities' (April 2024), which found that:

“There are no clear arrangements in place to oversee the effectiveness of NPA members’ contributions and how they perform in their role.”

And that:

“This risks undermining good governance through members not having a clear understanding of their roles and not being equipped to effectively carry out key functions.”

24. In summary, Local Authority appointees are not routinely asked to reflect on their own effectiveness, and where PDR processes do exist, they are optional, narrowly focused, and inconsistently applied. In contrast, Welsh Government appointees do participate in an annual review process, but its purpose and outcomes are not always clear, and its impact on performance management is uncertain.
25. These inconsistencies point to the need for a single, coherent approach to Member performance evaluation, applicable to all Members regardless of appointing body. Such a system should be proportionate and developmental in nature, and must clearly define its purpose, processes, and outcomes.
26. To gain a full and meaningful understanding of a Member’s contribution, performance should be considered as part of broader development arrangements. Embedding performance discussions into personal development conversations allows for a forward-looking and supportive approach that encourages openness, helps identify strengths and areas for improvement, and promotes a culture of continuous learning. Done well, this can enhance individual and collective effectiveness and ensure that all Members are equipped to respond to the evolving challenges and expectations of National Park governance.

3. Comparison with Scottish and English NPAs

3.1 Scottish NPAs

27. Scotland’s two NPAs, Cairngorms and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, operate under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. Evaluation arrangements emphasise collective Board effectiveness and Ministerial accountability rather than the performance of individual Members. Although no formal appraisals exist for individual Members, both NPAs conduct annual governance self-assessments. These are formal exercises carried out by Board Members usually using structured self-evaluation pro-formas that address:
 - Board effectiveness;
 - Strategic oversight;
 - Member conduct and contribution; and
 - Decision-making processes.

28. The outcomes are compiled and reviewed by the Chairs of Governance Committees and often inform future training priorities. Summaries of the assessments are reported in Annual Governance Statements or Board reports, but are not routinely published. There is a stronger emphasis on collective rather than individual performance and evaluation of individual contributions is generally limited and non-systematic.

3.2 English NPAs

29. As with Scotland, most focus in English NPAs is on collective governance. However, some NPAs, including the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales, and The Broads Authority, provide more developed examples of Member performance evaluation.
30. The Broads Authority in particular has developed a structured and supportive system for evaluating individual Member performance. Its approach centres around annual appraisals for all Members, conducted by the Chair, using a standardised pro-forma that supports both reflection and forward planning.
31. The appraisal covers multiple aspects of a Member's role, including:
- Attendance and contribution at formal committee and Board meetings;
 - Participation in working groups, workshops, and strategy sessions;
 - Engagement with both mandated and discretionary training;
 - Representation at stakeholder and community events;
 - Adherence to codes of conduct and governance standards; and
 - Reflection on understanding of strategic issues and the setting of future objectives.
32. Attendance records, covering meetings, workshops, and training, are formally tracked and used as part of the evaluation process. The Broads Authority links Member evaluations to its strategic objectives, ensuring that performance reviews support wider governance and policy priorities. Qualitative dimensions of Member performance, such as collaboration, advocacy, and relationship-building, are also considered. While these are harder to quantify, they are addressed during appraisal conversations and via informal feedback arising from site visits and workshop participation.
33. The system includes mechanisms for Members to request development opportunities. These are often identified during appraisal meetings and may also arise from informal discussions during Authority activities. Members are encouraged to set personal development objectives for the following year.

34. When concerns arise regarding underperformance, the Authority's approach prioritises early intervention. This may involve mentoring, additional support, or a conversation around re-engagement. Persistent non-engagement is more challenging and is handled under the Authority's Standing Orders or governance code, although limited recourse exists without formal participation requirements for all appointees.
35. Despite its structured approach, the Broads Authority acknowledges challenges in ensuring full engagement and ensuring that the exercise doesn't become "tick-box" in nature. Suggestions for future improvement include enhancing Member ownership of the process and demonstrating meaningful outcomes and value from the review conversation.
36. Nonetheless, the Broads Authority's system is an example of how tailored, supportive evaluation can combine accountability with development. It provides a clear framework for setting expectations, monitoring performance, and supporting continuous improvement.

4. Summary Conclusions

37. The following summary conclusions are drawn from the evidence presented above and based on document reviews and feedback from Heads of Democratic Services and a selection of NPA Members.

- 1. Expectations placed on NPA Members are not consistently set out or reinforced.**
- 2. There is a clear disparity in the formality with which Welsh Government and Local Authority appointments are made and accepted.**
- 3. There is no consistently formalised system in place for evaluating the performance of all individual NPA Members.**
- 4. There is a lack of clarity over the purpose and accountability arrangements of the Performance and Development Update used with Welsh Government appointed Members.**
- 5. Local Authority appointed Members' performance is not evaluated to the extent that Welsh Government appointed Members' is.**
- 6. The optional nature of PDRs undermines their usefulness and credibility.**
- 7. Welsh NPAs can learn from elements of the approaches taken by Scottish NPAs and by the Broads Authority in England.**

5. Recommendations

36. By tightening their own arrangements and by adopting elements of the systems used by Scottish NPAs and the Broads Authority, Welsh NPAs have an opportunity to strengthen accountability and support continuous improvements in governance. The introduction of clear role expectations, regular appraisals, and development-focused feedback processes would help ensure that Members are well-equipped to contribute effectively to the challenging and evolving work of National Park governance in Wales.

37. Based on the current situation, the following areas offer potential for improving the evaluation of Member performance:

1. **Formalising expectations;** by:
Standardising role-specific descriptions and protocols and consistently promoting and reinforcing them across all NPAs.
2. **Aligning appointment practices across Local Authorities and Welsh Government;** by:
Issuing formal appointment letters and ensuring all appointees accept the same terms and conditions.
3. **Introducing a single, consistent performance evaluation framework for all Members;** that:
 - Clarifies its purpose and associated accountability arrangements;
 - Includes self-reflection, feedback from the Chair, and development planning;
 - Utilises an enhanced level of data e.g. attendance at meetings, working groups, training and stakeholder events;
 - Uses standardised annual review pro-forma;
 - Is developmental rather than punitive in focus;
 - Defines responsibilities for acting on outcomes;
 - Includes feedback to the appointing body; and
 - Is mandatory for all Members.
4. **Developing more formalised supportive intervention mechanisms;** such as:
 - Clear thresholds and consequences of persistent underperformance;
 - Mentoring and targeted support for struggling Members; and
 - A referral process back to the appointing body.
5. **Introducing annual governance self-assessments;** that:

- contribute to periodic (e.g. every 4/5 years) formal reviews of collective Board effectiveness; and
- inform Annual Governance Statements.

6. Next steps – Stage 2

38. Following consideration of this report, its conclusions and the opportunities for improvement, it has been agreed by National Park Authorities and Welsh Government to proceed to Stage 2 of the project. This will involve:

- Setting out some suggested steps for NPAs to take forward recommendations 1,2 and 4.
- Developing a proposed evaluation framework for recommendation 3.
- Further examining the potential to introduce annual governance self-assessments in relation to recommendation 5.

39. A draft stage 2 report will be provided to NPAs and Welsh Government by the end of October 2025.

PEMBROKESHIRE COAST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY



TRAINING/WORKSHOPS 2025/26

Date	Meeting
25 June 2025	Code of Conduct
16 July 2025	Good Design and Health and TAN 15
30 July 2025 pm	Standing Orders
10 September 2025 pm	National Marine Parks
30 September – 2 October 2025	Welsh Members Seminar Eryri
08 October 2025	Study Day – Planning Developments in Saundersfoot
22 October 2025 pm	6 Month review of financial performance
05 November 2025	Conservation Areas - Manorbier
19 November 2025	LDP/Off shore wind
17 December 2025 pm	Budget Workshop
04 February 2026 am/pm	Candidate sites – all Councillors with wards in the Park to be invited
11 February 2026 pm	Workshop – Public Health Wales Socio Economic toolkit??
18 March 2026	PCF Workshop
25 March 2026	Income Diversification Working Group
29 April 2026 am	Workshop TBC
20 May 2026 pm	LDP – growth/spatial options/second homes
17 June 2026	Study Day – Nevern Castle
24 June 2026 pm	Workshop TBC
8/9 July 2026	Welsh Member Seminar – Bannau Brycheiniog