

## **Flintshire County Council's response to the consultation to create a new National Park for North East Wales**

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to respond to your consultation to create a National Park in North East Wales. The Council acknowledges the positive aspects that such a designation may bring to the area in terms of the protection and enhancement of the natural environment plus the increased opportunities which may arise for the tourism sector. However, at this stage and on the basis of the information available at present, we cannot support the proposals.

To inform this view, the Council's Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the consultation and provided their views at the meeting on 12th November 2024. The Committee voted in favour of not supporting the proposed National Park based on the currently available information.

The Council has the following concerns in relation to the development of a National Park:

The potential future short and long term costs to the County Council of establishing and operating the National Park. At this stage there are no details of how the establishment of the Park will be funded, nor how it will be maintained in the longer term. This Council is already under pressure in relation to its revenue budget and has made no provision for the establishment of the National Park.

The potential future costs to individuals living in and outside the proposed National Park. Again, there is a paucity of detail in relation to the financial burden which may be placed on existing Flintshire residents both inside and outside the proposed Park boundary.

The National Park introducing another level of bureaucracy. When Councils and the public sector generally are experiencing increased pressures, it is not considered that the creation of another public sector body with its own governance structures, staffing and capital budgets and overview and scrutiny arrangements is prudent use of public money.

The current National Landscape of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley are already doing an effective job of protecting the landscape and natural environment of the area. This body is well-established and has historically done an excellent job of protecting and enhancing the landscape of the area. If the areas to the south within Wrexham and Powys are lacking protection from inappropriate development, the extension and re-naming of the existing National Landscape would seem like a pragmatic mechanism to achieve those aims without introducing and funding another public body.

The National Park placing more burden on the remaining areas of Flintshire outside the Park to provide land for employment and housing. The National Park Authority will have limited aims, mainly to protect and enhance the natural environment. This constraint on growth will place an increased burden on areas within Flintshire but outside the boundary to meet the County's growth ambitions. Meanwhile, within the Park the level of development will be restricted. The establishment of the National

Park would inevitably trigger an immediate review of our, recently adopted, Local Development Plan.

The potential to reduce the value of existing National Parks in Wales. Whilst we are aware of the beauty of the candidate area, we would question its intrinsic value when compared to other national parks already in existence within Wales.

I would stress again that the opinions set out above are the Council's initial views based on the information available to us at this time. We accept that further consultations will take place on the National Park project and would welcome clarity on the matter raised above prior to the next stage of consultation.

Thank you again for allowing us the opportunity to comment on your proposals and we would happily meet with you to explain these concerns further.

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