Confirmed minutes

Title of meeting:	**NRW Board meeting (Public)**
Location:	Teams
Date of meeting:	12 January 2026
Members present:	Neil Sachdev, Chair Prof Steve Ormerod, Deputy Chair Ceri Davies, Interim Chief Executive Karen Balmer Dr. Hushneara Begum Dr. Pete Fox Dr Rebecca Colley-Jones Prof. Calvin Jones Lesley Jones Prof Rhys Jones Mark McKenna Helen Pittaway Adam Taylor
Executive Team members present:	Prys Davies, Executive Director of Strategy, Policy and Evidence Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services Dominic Driver, Acting Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting Lyndsey Rawlinson, Acting Executive Director of Place and Service Meinir Wigley, Head of Communications and Digital Transformation (Deputising for Sarah Jennings, Executive Director of Communications, Customer and Commercial)
Attendees present:	Phil Williams, Head of Governance and Board Secretary (All items) Yvonne Burson, Corporate Communications Manager - Keith Davies, Principal Advisor, Protected Landscapes – Item 2 Ash Pearce, Team Leader, Designated Landscapes Programme – Item 2 Bill Cordingly, Brown Jacobson – Item 2 Jessica Bannon, Brown Jacobson – Item 2

Observers present:	Richard Sumner, Lead Specialist Advisor, Landscape and Natural Beauty Ffion Roberts, Senior Communications & Engagement Officer Rosie Plummer Julie James Martin Glyn Murray
Apologies:	Sarah Jennings, Executive Director of Communications, Customer and Commercial
Secretariat:	Natalie Williams, Deputy Board Secretary and Board Secretariat Team Leader Rhiannon Spencer, Board Secretariat Team
Declarations of interest	Karen Balmer – Lives in the proximity of the National Park proposed designated area (Attended the meeting for Item 2 as an observer)

Item 1. Open meeting

Sponsor and Presenter: Neil Sachdev, Chair

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Declarations of interest and apologies were noted as above. It was confirmed that the previous NRW Chair and CEO both resided in the proposed National Park designation area and had been recused from the discussions and evidence gathering throughout process. Karen Balmer recused herself from the decision on item 2 as she lived in the proximity of the proposed National Park and attended as an observer only.

Item 2. National park decision

Sponsor: Dom Driver, Acting Executive Director of National Operations
Presenters: Keith Davies, Principal Advisor, Protected Landscapes; Ash Pearce, Team Leader, Designated Landscapes Programme; Bill Cordingly, Brown Jacobson; Jessica Bannon, Brown Jacobson; Richard Sumner, Lead Specialist Advisor, Landscape and Natural Beauty; Ffion Roberts, Senior Communications & Engagement Officer

2. The Interim Executive Director of National Operations introduced the item and highlighted the recommendations for the Board. The Principal Advisor, Protected Landscapes presented an update on the Designated Landscapes Programme. Bill Cordingly, from Brown Jacobson, provided the legal context and the relevant considerations. The decision had been governed by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and offered opportunities for open-air recreation.

3. The background to the Programme was outlined, including the stages within the designation process with both NRW and Welsh Government (WG). NRW had

produced and followed a clear guidance note outlining each statutory step. The Evolution of the Boundary was presented, which included the areas that had been added into the process when formally assessing the landscape. The team had evaluated and analysed the evidence and details and created a formal map in 2025.

4. An overview of the consultation and stakeholder responses was presented, followed by the sector's perspectives in relation to farming and land use; renewable energy; minerals; environment; and recreation. The feedback provided included challenges to the assessment and changes to the boundary, on both additional areas and to protect the landscape from development. Other concerns raised by the Local Authorities included long-term funding concerns, planning service implications and affordability. NRW had reiterated that these were WG considerations, not statutory designation tests, and the wider considerations not related to the statutory tests were outlined.

5. The recommendations and the next steps were presented. The team were recommending that the Board make the Glyndŵr National Park (Designation) Order 2026 under legal powers provided by and, in accordance with the procedures set out in the 1949 Act. Should the Board approve the recommendation, the formal statutory notices in specified publications would be published; and the Order and Map would be made available for inspection in the locality, prior to submission of the Order to Welsh Ministers for confirmation.

6. The Chair thanked the team for their work on this Programme. In response to a query, it was confirmed that the consultants were considered to be independent, as NRW had been through the procurement process. The Board discussed the recommendation, and it was suggested that the gathered evidence should also be shared with WG, including the additional evidence that Board had not been involved in. The Board recognised the risks around public misunderstanding of NRW's role.

7. The name of the proposed National Park was also discussed. There had previously been some negative responses around the name, however, this had gone through a thorough process that had been summarised within the Report. Legislation would allow WG to confirm the order, with or without modifications, and should they wish to change the proposed name, NRW would need to be consulted. It was confirmed that the consultation feedback would not warrant the reopening of a debate around the proposed name.

8. It was agreed that the following should be emphasised to WG: the need for longterm sustainable funding; a clear plan to address public concerns; and the need to ensure future governance supports the modern Welsh legislation, as well as climate and nature priorities. The Board approved the recommendations for the National Park Designation Order.

DECISION: The Board approved the recommendation for the National Park Designation Order.

Item 3. Internal Drainage District (IDD) budget decision

Sponsor: Rachael Cunningham, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Presenter: Pete Fox, Chair of FRMC

9. The Chair of the Flood Risk Management Committee (FRMC) introduced the item provided an update on the IDD Budget and commended the budget for approval, following discussions with FRMC. It was confirmed that this was an annual requirement for NRW. The average proposed increase was 5.5%, which reflected inflationary pressures. The challenges during the consultation with farmers were outlined, however it was agreed that NRW delivered value for money.

10. The Board discussed and approved the IDD Budget.

DECISION: The Board approved the IDD Budget.

Close public meeting