



Alun Ffred Jones AM
Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

10 December 2014

Dear Alun Ffred,

Planning (Wales) Bill

Wales Environment Link has written to the Minister for Natural Resources, Carl Sargeant AM, to raise a concern about the statements he made when giving evidence on the Planning (Wales) Bill to the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee on 10th November and to the Environment and Sustainability Committee on 27th November. The Minister stated at both sessions that he intends to bring forward an amendment at a future point in the Planning Bill process, which would give National Parks the same regulatory power as other Local Planning Authorities. In the session on the 10th November, the Minister also suggested this might require an amendment of policy for National Parks.

WEL is extremely concerned that such a significant amendment could be made after the stage where the Environment and Sustainability Committee is able to fully scrutinise its implications. Whilst scrutiny of the Planning Bill is currently ongoing, the Independent Review Panel established to review the future role and governance of Designated Landscapes is also in the process of deliberating on matters which have a direct bearing on this issue. In this latter context, we understand that the Minister will make an announcement about the future status of National Parks as Planning Authorities before Phase 2 of the Panel's work commences, sometime prior to the end of February 2015.

The proposed timing of this announcement would be unfortunate, in that it would mean that a significant amendment to the Bill would be made almost immediately after the Environment and Sustainability Committee has completed its scrutiny of the Bill.

WEL, along with many others, strongly supports the continuation of National Parks as planning authorities. The evidence in the responses to the Positive Planning consultation clearly shows this view is supported by 67% of respondents to that document¹. Likewise, the Welsh Government's own research² provides ample evidence to confirm the benefits of NPAs retaining their planning powers within their respective areas.

¹ *Welsh Government : Positive Planning: Summary of Responses, Page 12 Q24 October 2014*)

² *The Delivery of Planning Services in Statutory Designated Landscapes (October 2012)*

We urge the Environment and Sustainability Committee to write to the Minister to ask that details of any proposed changes to the Bill in respect of National Parks' planning powers are brought forward so that the Committee can scrutinise the impacts fully.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, or our Policy Coordinator, Karen Whitfield, on Karen@waleslink.org or 029 2049 7509, if you require further information.

Warm regards,



Mike Webb
Chair of WEL Planning Working Group