

The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland

Policy Case Study 1

2010: APRS Promotes Landscape Charter for Scotland

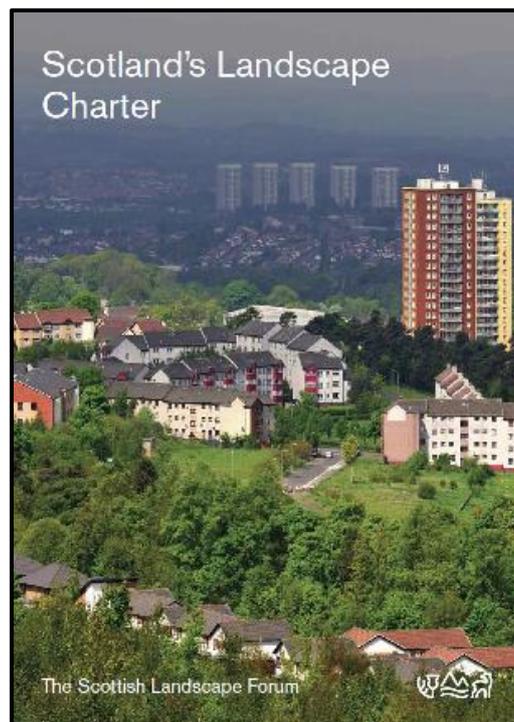
Background APRS played a major part in the production of *Scotland's Landscape Charter*, the key document which states clearly why our landscapes are so important and what we must do to protect and enhance them.

APRS Action In 2006 then APRS Director Bill Wright pushed for the establishment of the Scottish Landscape Forum, the first time all the public bodies and non-governmental organisations responsible for landscape sat round the same table to discuss a common agenda. *Scotland's Landscape Charter*, launched in October 2010, was the Forum's final publication, as the Scottish Government (SG) abolished it shortly afterwards.

Outcome *Scotland's Landscape Charter*:

- sets out how the principles of the European Landscape Convention should be applied in Scotland
- proclaims that Scotland's landscapes are of an unparalleled richness, diversity and distinctiveness
- stresses that all landscapes matter, including degraded or neglected ones in need of active improvement
- sets out a vision and principles for caring for our landscapes
- challenges local communities, land managers, developers and government agencies and departments to act to live up to its vision and principles.

Unfortunately, however, the SG refused to endorse it, raising serious doubts about its commitment to our precious landscapes. In January 2011 APRS signed a joint letter to the UK Prime Minister and the Scottish First Minister calling for greater government commitment to enhancing landscapes and for the full implementation of the Charter.



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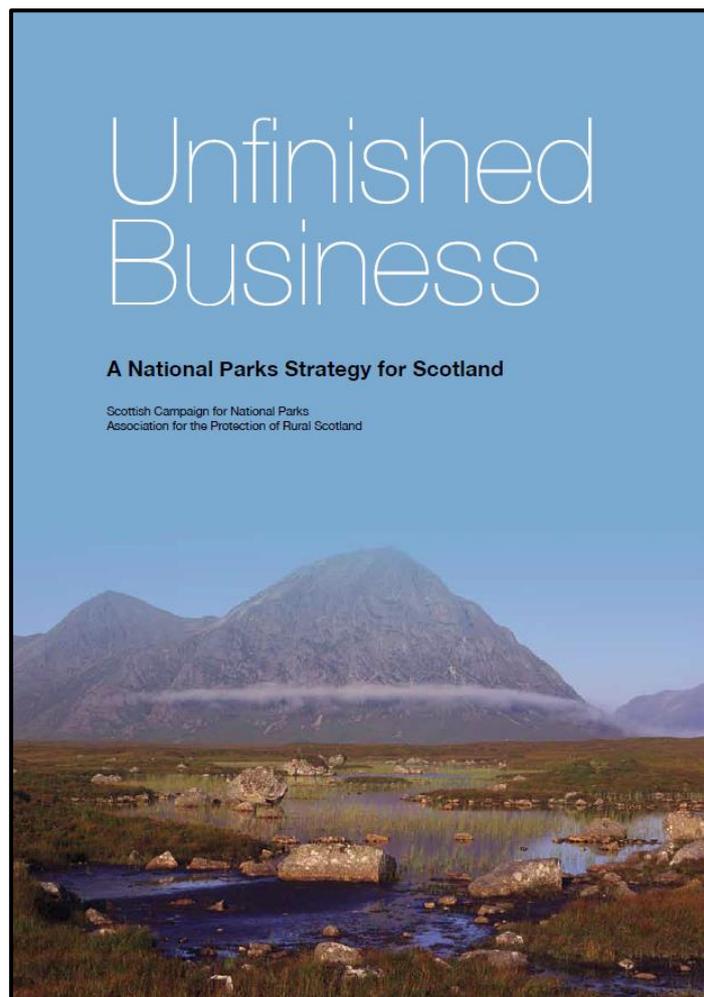
Policy Case Study 2

2010 – 2013: APRS Calls for More National Parks

Background Scotland has only two National Parks, yet the Scottish Campaign for National Parks (SCNP) and APRS believe that designating more would bring environmental, social and economic benefits to Scotland.

APRS Action Phase 1 of the joint *Scottish National Parks Strategy Project* ran from 2010 to 2013 as a joint initiative of SCNP and APRS. This culminated in the publication in April 2013 of *Unfinished Business*, which called on the Scottish Government to prepare a national strategy for the designation of at least a further seven National Parks in Scotland.

Outcome The report was widely well-received; for example Dave Morris, Director of Ramblers Scotland, described it as “the most important document about Scottish national parks in the last 10 years”. The conclusions of *Unfinished Business* have been formally endorsed by six other Scottish environmental non-government organisations, including The National Trust for Scotland and RSPB Scotland. However, the Scottish Government has not yet been persuaded to implement its proposals, so SCNP and APRS are currently planning a Phase 2 of the *Project*. This will campaign for the Scottish Government to establish a National Parks Strategy Group, prepare a National Parks Strategy and designate up to seven additional National Parks, and for all Scottish political parties to include a commitment to more National Parks in their manifestoes for the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections.



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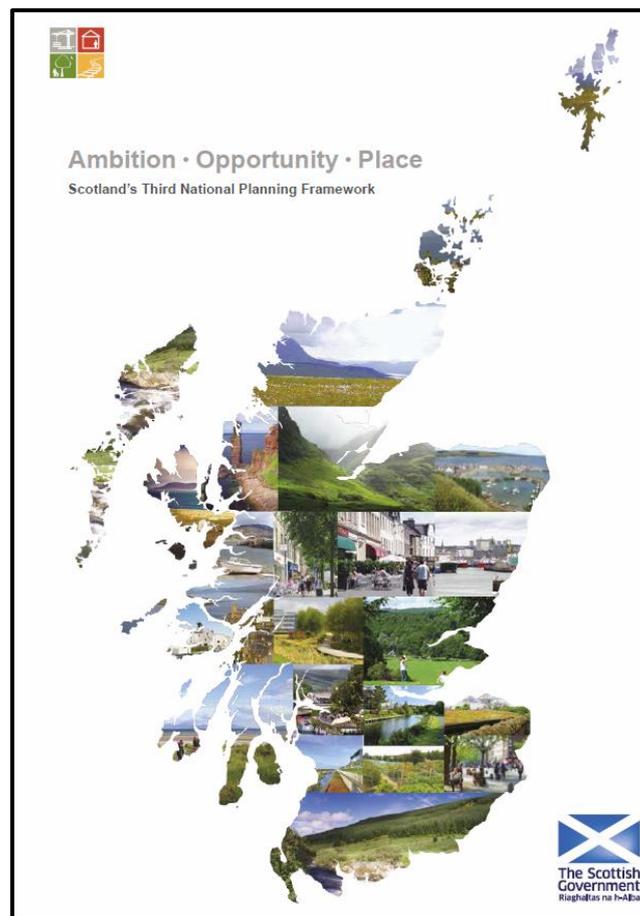
Policy Case Study 3

2012 – 2013: APRS Improves National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy

Background Scotland's town and country planning system is a key tool APRS uses to promote its aims. The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the strategic spatial plan for Scotland, setting Scottish Government's (SG) development priorities over 20-30 years and identifying national developments which support its development strategy. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) sets out the SG's national planning policies and its priorities for the development and use of land.

APRS Action Taken together these two documents are clearly of great significance for APRS and its objectives, so when the SG announced a review of both documents in 2012 it was important for APRS to engage fully. In January 2013 we responded to the initial consultation on SPP Priorities for Change and in July 2013 we responded to the Draft SPP and the NPF3 Main Issues Report. We also met key SG officials to press home our views on the key issues. Two of these proved to be most contentious: the SPP text on sustainability and the identification and protection of core wild land areas. This resulted in two additional consultations, to which we also responded in December 2013.

Outcome All of this effort ultimately paid off when the final versions of the new NPF3 and SPP were published in June 2013. The NPF3 excludes wind farms from National Parks and National Scenic Areas and gives strong protection to core areas of wild land, and the SPP has much improved wording on the promotion of sustainable development.



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Policy Case Study 4

2013 – 2014: APRS Achieves Greater Control over Hill Tracks

Background In Scotland land managers can construct private vehicle tracks for agricultural or forestry purposes (often referred to as 'hill tracks') under Permitted Development Rights (PDRs). As a result thousands of kilometres of such tracks have been built without planning permission, minimum standards of construction or consultation with government bodies or the general public. The legislation does not define agriculture or forestry, so these rights have often been used to build tracks for other purposes, notably field sports. There has been a rapid increase in the number of such tracks built in recent years, often to poor standards and inflicting substantial damage on landscapes and sensitive habitats. Successive Scottish Governments (SG) have acknowledged the problem but failed to tackle it. Other developments with similar impacts are carefully considered through the formal planning process, ensuring that any impacts are fully justified and mitigated as far as possible.

APRS Action In 2013 the SG considered withdrawing PDRs for private vehicle tracks, but changed its mind at the last minute. As a result APRS and eight other landscape organisations decided it was time for a high-profile campaign, so we raised funds and hired a consultant to set out our case for introducing planning controls. The resultant report, *Track Changes*, was published in October 2013 and makes a strong case for change, backed up by 11 detailed case studies and scores of photographs illustrating the damage caused by unregulated vehicle tracks.

Outcome In August 2014 the SG Planning Minister finally announced a 'prior notification' system, aimed at allowing control of tracks in areas where additional protection of amenity, landscape or environment is required. While falling short of what we had called for, this potentially significant step forward would undoubtedly not have occurred without the efforts of APRS and others.

