

ISLE OF HARRIS NATIONAL PARK: FEASIBILITY STUDY

**FINAL REPORT
SUMMARY, MAIN & APPENDICES**

for

ISLE OF HARRIS NATIONAL PARK STUDY GROUP

by

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FINAL REPORT

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SUMMARY REPORT

1. Introduction and Outcomes

- 1.1 This report summarises the key findings and conclusions of a feasibility study carried out for the Isle of Harris National Park Study Group which has investigated the general case for a National Park in Harris and the environmental, economic and social implications of National Park status.
- 1.2 The study involved background research, briefing from the Study Group, local consultation and contacts with representatives of relevant agencies.
- 1.3 Seven outcomes were specified in the feasibility study brief and Sections 3-8 of this Summary Report relate to these.
- 1.4 The Main Report gives the logic behind our conclusions and further detail is provided in Appendices.
- 1.5 The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 gives Scottish National Parks the following aims:
 - *to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage.*
 - *to promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area.*
 - *to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public.*
 - *to promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area.*
- 1.6 Of these, the second and particularly the fourth aim are distinctive: National Parks in England and Wales do not have these two aims. The fourth aim provides a more balanced approach for people and communities living within the Park.

2. Background and Context

- 2.1 The current process for establishing National Parks in Scotland is set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. Internationally, a range of different National Park models have been adopted. Currently, there are only two National Parks in Scotland: Cairngorms, which covers an area of 3,800km² and has a population of 16,000, and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, which covers an area of 1,865km² and has a population of 15,600. Each Park was set up under a Designation Order and has a National Park Authority with the status of a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB). The designation of a National Park does NOT require ANY transfer of privately owned land to state control or ownership and reinforces the need for a partnership approach to conservation and development.

- 2.2 It is the statutory function of the National Park Authority to ensure that the four aims are achieved in a coordinated way. Following extensive consultation, this is normally achieved through a five year National Park Plan. Other public bodies are required ‘*to have regard*’ to the Plan in exercising their functions in so far as they affect the National Park. Governance mechanisms and the powers of National Parks are detailed in Section 5.
- 2.3 A National Park, although national in status, can make a major contribution to regional strategies. The Board structure of a National Park encourages members to weigh local, regional and national interests when making a decision. **A National Park in Harris would contribute to the Western Isles Community Planning Partnership’s vision for “a revitalised Western Isles that is a net contributor to the national economy with confident communities and a distinctive Gaelic culture and heritage”.** It could also contribute to the Scottish Government’s National Performance framework targets in association with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s Single Outcome Agreement.
- 2.4 “Creating Communities of the Future” is the Partnership’s strategy for action. This Strategy is based on six linked economic drivers: renewable energy, broadband, tourism, culture and heritage, business infrastructure and job dispersal, and the UHI Millennium Institute. A Harris National Park could help deliver many of these aspirations.

3. The Case for National Park Status for Harris

- 3.1 **The feasibility study considers the case for National Park status for Harris against the three Conditions specified in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. The analysis demonstrates that all three Conditions are or could be met.**

Condition 1: The area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage.

- 3.2 Harris has outstanding concentrations of geology, landforms, habitats and species of high international and national value. In particular:
- The entire proposed area lies within a National Scenic Area
 - One special Area of Conservation (SAC) and one contiguous Special Protection Area (SPA) cover 32% of the area
 - Five SSSIs cover 36% of the area
- 3.3 The hills, moorland, beaches and offshore islands provide a nationally recognised land and seascape. The distinctive Harris hills form the largest area of wild land in the Western Isles, and in the dramatic transition from sea to mountain summit, climate and exposure can be extreme. The relationship of the rugged mountains and the deep incised fjord lochs to the machair and the peerless beaches of the west coast, when taken in conjunction with the classic cnoc and lochan landscape of the Bays area on the east coast, provide a diversity of landscape that cannot be matched in an area of comparable size anywhere in Scotland.

- 3.4 Human activity in Harris has been strongly influenced by the natural world. The area has been long-inhabited and settlements provide a strong human focus that contrasts with the landscape of mountain, moor, rock, loch and ocean. There is a strong relationship between the environment and Gaelic culture in Harris. Gaelic engenders an intimate ‘sense of place’, and Gaelic names aid landscape understanding.
- 3.5 The rugged environment and remoteness of Harris have created a unique cultural heritage over the last 9,000 years; much of which is relatively undisturbed. This authentic diversity is now very rare in an increasingly homogenous Britain. Several built heritage features can be identified as significant nationally, and some internationally.
- 3.6 The parish of Harris, with the second highest percentage of Gaelic speakers in Scotland (after Barvas), is a living component of Scottish cultural life. Harris retains many of the traditional industries of the Scottish islands: crofting, fishing and weaving. Collectively these create the unique community character of the islands of the Gàidhealtachd, although their long term sustainability is unsure.

Condition 2: The area has a distinctive character and a coherent identity.

- 3.7 Harris was administered separately from Lewis between 1889 and 1975 before being incorporated in the new Western Isles Council. Harris is divided from Lewis by the deep sea-lochs of Seaforth and Resort, and is connected by a landward link no wider than ten kilometers. This linkage is dominated by the northern edge of the rugged hills of North Harris. To the south, Harris is divided from North Uist by the Sound of Harris.
- 3.8 Separated from Lewis by the hills of North Harris, native residents (‘Hearachs’) have developed a distinctive character; distinguished from their neighbours to the north through accent, dialect and culture.
- 3.9 Of the four area options considered in the feasibility study, Option 2, the area comprising Harris “mainland” and the three most closely associated islands of Scalpay (connected by bridge), Scarp and Taransay (Map 1) best meets the Study Group’s mandate from the Harris community. This area includes the majority of the most accessible parts of the Parish of Harris and would be the most practical management unit. Option 3, comprising the parish of Harris (excluding Berneray) may be a viable option but the additional resource and cost implications of including remote uninhabited islands (St Kilda) would require further investigation.

Condition 3: Designating the area as a National Park would meet the special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the aims that are central to a National Park are collectively achieved in relation to the area in a coordinated way.

- 3.10 The special needs of Harris stem principally from cultural and socio-economic circumstances. In stark terms, if current population trends continue, Harris will be unable to sustain its present contribution to the natural and cultural heritage of Scotland. High

levels of out-migration and a low birth rate are leading to a continuing decline in the Harris population, particularly young people. For Harris to thrive, the area needs to retain, attract and nurture able and motivated people.

- 3.11 Addressing cultural and socio-economic circumstances in Harris is considered fundamental to achieving all four aims of a Scottish National Park, as argued below. The special needs of Harris require a long term sustained effort, and National Park status could provide that focused approach.

Fit with National Park Aim 1 – To conserve and enhance the natural & cultural heritage

- 3.12 The natural heritage of Harris needs great care as it reflects the legacy of human activity over generations. Longstanding low input husbandry through crofting is in decline. Recent years have seen significant shifts in land use and management accompanied by social change. Traditional activities of stock management and small scale cropping have all but disappeared as young people have left the land, skills have been lost and those who remain have aged.
- 3.13 In turn, species such as corncrake and corn bunting and habitats created through traditional land management have declined or changed, although reduced grazing pressure and mink trapping have helped maintain some aspects of the natural heritage.
- 3.14 The cultural heritage of Harris is at even greater risk, and does not have the statutory protection afforded to some elements of the historic environment and the natural heritage. National Park status could help nurture the culture in Harris in ways comparable to initiatives in the Welsh National Parks where the Welsh language plays a central role (through signage, interpretation, leaflets, etc).

Fit with National Park Aim 2 – To protect the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area

- 3.15 The natural resources of Harris have (in the main) been sustainably exploited by local residents, while CnES Development Control takes account of national and regional concerns and provides a framework for resource use. The challenging socio economic circumstance of an ageing and declining population in Harris, however, has made it difficult to ensure sustainability – a challenge that current policies are struggling to counter.
- 3.16 Renewable energy generation is clearly a major opportunity for the Western Isles. Large export scale energy developments would be unlikely to be compatible with National Park aims, and would conflict with existing designations for Harris. However, the Harris terrain is not suitable for large scale wind generation, and community scale renewable generation would normally be very acceptable within a National Park. At this smaller scale, renewable energy projects would enable communities and landowners to establish

long term income streams and for the area to make a contribution to climate change policy.

- 3.17 Resource use on Harris is not as complex as in existing Scottish National Parks, and extensive community ownership of land tends to make sustainable objectives even more achievable. A National Park Plan could provide integration, and would encourage other partners to deliver their services to better meet the needs of Harris, thereby also sustaining the contribution of Harris to the natural and cultural assets of Scotland as a whole.

Fit with National Park Aim 3 – To promote understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public

- 3.18 Outstanding natural and cultural attributes have attracted visitors to Harris over many decades. Currently, visitor numbers and recreational use are relatively low compared with other attractive parts of the Highlands and Islands, however, and there are few pressures or conflicts requiring special management. Harris remains a ‘hidden gem’, and National Park status would help promote awareness of what Harris has to offer visitors and would provide opportunities for visitors to gain increased appreciation of its distinctive features.
- 3.19 National Park status should give Western Isles tourism operators and other businesses that benefit from tourist spending a greater incentive to look after the natural and cultural assets on which so many businesses are based. Commercial or community businesses could be contracted by the Park Authority to provide information and interpretation – making the special qualities of the area more accessible. A planned approach to access networks is also desirable due to the challenging terrain in Harris to enable its special qualities to be experienced by all sectors of society.

Fit with National Park Aim 4 – To promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area

- 3.20 The most pressing needs in Harris are to reverse population decline and improve its age structure. This will only be achieved by economic development that will provide employment for young people, allied to sufficient affordable housing development.
- 3.21 The population of Harris Parish fell by 12% between 1991 and 2001, and by 24% between 1981 and 2001, following steady decline since 1921, and indications are that this decline has continued. 35% of Harris and Scalpay’s population in 2001 were aged 60 or over, compared with 26% of the Western Isles population and 33% were aged 34 or under compared with 39% in the Western Isles. Primary school rolls have fallen from 179 in 1998 to 117 in 2007 (-35%) and the secondary school’s roll from 141 to 109 (-23%).
- 3.22 Only 62% of Harris’s population aged 16-74 in 2001 was economically active, compared with 66% in the Western Isles and 44% had no educational qualifications compared with 38% in the Western Isles.

- 3.23 Critical to the future of Harris is a continuing need for resources to promote economic and social development that exceed its per head of population share. This public assistance is essential to counter the island's low GDP per head from local economic activity and to help provide services for a sparsely populated and remote area. National Park status could help Harris greatly in bidding for regional / national / EU funding from competitive sources across a wide range of Funds and Programmes, supplementing the limited funding that CnES is able to provide (given the high needs of other Western Isles rural parishes). The status could help unlock latent opportunities in meeting the special needs of Harris, working with existing mechanisms that include Harris Development Ltd, the new Landscape Partnership Scheme and community landowners.
- 3.24 Although there would be immediate and short term opportunities to foster sustainable development and provide local employment, much of the potential benefit from a National Park would be realised in the longer term.

4. The Potential Environmental, Cultural, Social & Economic Opportunities and Challenges of National Park Status

- 4.1 Realising National Park opportunities and mitigating challenges would depend on the Park Authority's role and how well it would work with other agencies (local and regional), community and other landowners, and the different Harris communities and groups.
- 4.2 Environmentally, the Harris area is outstanding. To capitalise on this environmental quality within a National Park, crofters and other land managers could be encouraged to apply individually and collaboratively for additional grant support from relevant programmes; while the Park Authority might have some funding of its own which could be used to support training, research or pump priming projects to encourage economic sustainability – potentially attracting additional external finance such as European Structural funding and Lottery funding. The key opportunity presented by Park status would be to allow the area to compete more effectively for public funding over and above that which would be allocated to Harris as one of Scotland's remote rural areas. Reduced attention by statutory agencies leaving the Park Authority to shoulder the burden of environmental care is a potential risk, but this could be avoided through developing joint projects with other agencies and allocating responsibilities through a National Park Plan.
- 4.3 Economically and socially, the area is fragile. Without Park status tourism may at best grow at a slow rate, but with Park status tourism could take advantage of the internationally recognised National Park 'brand'. Renewable energy could provide opportunities in the future, but much of the technology other than onshore wind could take a long time to deliver substantial benefits. In the meantime, Park status would be unlikely to preclude the development of small scale proven technologies in wind, hydro and biomass; and energy generation by communities for their own purposes would be likely to be encouraged. Information Technology applications and business opportunities

will continue to grow, and National Parks are seen by many as providing the high quality of life that can complement remote working. Crofting and other traditional activities in Harris would be supported by diversification into Park-related employment, tourism, IT and renewable energy, providing residents with the income required to pursue traditional activities part time or as personal interests.

- 4.4 Culturally, Harris is changing although it is still one of the most distinctive areas in the UK. Distinctiveness and cultural diversity are becoming more highly valued in an increasingly homogenous world, and National Park status offers a way of conserving and celebrating cultural diversity.
- 4.5 Conservation and enhancement of the social and cultural fabric is a core National Park objective, and crofting would be an important contributor to this in Harris. UK National Parks have a long track record in supporting traditional agricultural systems and practices that promote environmental and social benefits.

Potential Opportunities

- 4.6 These include the following, some of which would take longer to realise than others:

Crofting

- Crofting's key role in protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment through maintaining biodiversity (species and habitats) – strategies would be developed to meet local needs.
- Encouragement to crofters to apply individually and collaboratively for grants from the Scottish Rural Development Programme,
- Scope for crofts to diversify into environmental management with grant support through Park Authority and other partner initiatives.
- Through support for appropriate and sustainable economic development, National Park status helping Harris crofting communities to generate sufficient income to be able to afford to improve environmental stewardship.

Land Ownership and Management

- Re-use and refurbishment of under-used or derelict buildings and land as encouraged by policies in the Local Plan.
- Enhanced payments for habitat and species protection and provision of environment-related information and education.
- Scope to give environmental considerations a high priority when appraising Planning applications (subject to proposals meeting the three other National Park aims).
- Support for small scale renewable energy schemes that could create surpluses for environmental management and contribute to climate change mitigation measures.

- Scope for integrated deer management, especially if deer spread into areas previously grazed by sheep.
- Scope to contribute to wider agendas, including climate change, fossil fuel dependency and storm water management.
- Greater recognition of the public benefits that land managers already deliver, and wider support for this role.
- Added value to local produce through branding that would emphasise the landscape and culture of the area.
- Opportunities to increase economic capacity through training in management and practical skills.
- Increased scope to support and generate jobs in the land sector, including crofters, gamekeepers, ghillies, Rangers, stalkers, farmers and foresters; with indirect employment benefits for accommodation providers, food processors, game dealers, vets, contractors, advisors, builders, trainers, etc.

Housing

- Encouragement for developers, Registered Social Landlords and private landlords to bring forward plans for affordable rented and owner occupier housing, supported in appropriate cases by public funding. Local need is likely to be best met by a mix of sizes and tenures.
- More affordable housing which would enable the population to increase, helping to sustain school rolls and public and private rural services.
- Affordable housing provision helping to generate activities that would encourage more young people and families to relocate to Harris.

Community and Culture

- Use of Gaelic in the print, broadcast and online media.
- Promotion of Gaelic arts.
- Increased profile of Gaelic in the tourism, heritage and recreation sectors - bringing the relationship between Gaelic culture and the evolution of the landscape and the natural heritage to the visitor's notice.
- Opportunities for traditional music.
- Scope for artists and craft workers to capitalise on both the area's culture and the National Park cachet.

Tourism, Other Businesses and the Wider Economy

- Powers of the Park to provide information and education, countryside facilities (including toilets, car parks and picnic areas) and recreation and leisure facilities, and to protect and maintain path networks.
- Development of eco and activity tourism based on the special qualities of the National Park, which could be brought to the attention of more potential visitors through strong branding.
- Marketing opportunities for the tourism sector as a whole and other businesses through a Park brand.
- Attraction of larger numbers of tourists, increasing tourism-related employment and sustaining small scale tourism businesses and diversified profits.
- Spin-off benefits to other parts of the Western Isles through the attraction of new visitors to Harris (who would visit other areas while in or en route to Harris and might return for subsequent holidays).
- Additional direct and indirect employment created by the Park Authority and the projects that it would instigate and attract external funding for.
- Construction and maintenance work created by the new facilities and infrastructure that would be developed through Park Authority initiatives and increased tourism potential.
- Encouragement for sustainable practices in tourism and other economic and community activities.
- Raising awareness of the benefits of introducing greener working practices, over and above creating a competitive advantage in the market place.
- Developing skills and technology relating to community renewable energy schemes.
- New business development based on sustainable use of natural and cultural assets of the area – food, cosmetics, textiles, design etc.
- Support for training, apprenticeships, and other skills acquisition.
- Support for obtaining governing body recognised qualifications in sectors such as outdoor pursuits.
- Scope to support public transport initiatives in and around the Park.
- Scope to bring forward research and pilot projects (for partnership funding) that would improve understanding of environmental sustainability and to encourage UK and international institutions to undertake research projects in Harris (attracted by National Park status).
- Scope for partnership projects with a range of community organisations and social enterprises to help them to achieve their aspirations and to develop facilities and services that will improve their financial sustainability.

Potential Challenges

- 4.7 The challenges that National Park status might bring include repercussions from the expanding economy that would be expected.

Crofting

- Further reduction in livestock-related skills if new residents are not interested in agriculture and existing crofters divert their energies into tourism – mitigated by township and wider initiatives in which young people can take a leading role.

Ownership and Management

- Some pressure on the environment in particular locations through increased visitor numbers and activities – mitigated by sustainable land management and spreading activities throughout Harris, in particular through improved access.

Housing

- National Park status heightening demand for housing, placing further pressure on young people and those on low incomes – mitigated through affordable housing development initiatives.

Community and Culture

- Dilution of local culture through increased presence of visitors from other cultures and through more houses being bought or built by incomers – mitigated through encouraging young people from the community to stay through providing work opportunities and affordable housing, and through events and activities that introduce visitors and in-migrants to local culture (including Gaelic language classes, feisean, etc).

Tourism, Other Businesses and the Wider Economy

- Tourism and other new businesses (e.g. based on IT) replacing traditional crofting – mitigated by encouraging crofting diversification into such activities to generate new sources of income to sustain traditional land and sea based activities.
- Perception of the Park as another layer of bureaucracy – mitigated through efficient and speedy execution of their responsibilities by Park staff and directors.
- The Park Authority exercising its Planning powers to restrict residents in their choice of building materials and styles, using land for aesthetically unattractive activities, etc – mitigated through sensitive interpretation of Planning guidelines and zoning policies.

5. Governance and Powers Options

- 5.1 **Four models were examined, and the second option is preferred which would be for a Harris National Park to be established as an executive Non Departmental Public Body, with its own governance, and “call-in” Planning and access powers.**
- 5.2 This model would be established under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and a subsequent designation order. The Order would define the Park’s boundaries, the constitution and functions of the NPA and dates when the Park would become established and operationally functional. The NPA would work to a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum agreed with the Scottish Government.
- 5.3 It is the statutory function of a National Park Authority to ensure that the four aims are achieved in a coordinated way. Following extensive consultation, the collective approach is normally achieved through a five year National Park Plan. Other public bodies are required ‘*to have regard*’ to the Plan in exercising their functions in so far as they affect the National Park.
- 5.4 The Park Authority, after reviewing all Planning applications, would only ‘call in’ and determine those applications deemed to be relevant to the Park’s aims. Applications not called in would be determined by the Local Authority (CnES).
- 5.5 This is a proven model in the Cairngorms National Park. A staff complement of c60, including secondments, job-share and project posts, facilitate and enable rather than deliver or regulate. The NPA has no Rangers or Visitor Centres, but instead seeks to influence and provide incentives for others to deliver such services in the spirit of the four aims of the Park. This is a less expensive model than direct operation, and proportionately more resources are spent on projects – although there is less public visibility.
- 5.6 The National Parks Act places an upper limit of 25 members on a National Park Authority Board; the exact number is decided by the designation order. Both existing Parks in Scotland have a Board of 25 members. A difference between the Scottish legislation and that for England and Wales is that at least 20% of a Scottish Park Authority’s Board’s members must be elected locally by those on the electoral roll within the Park.
- 5.7 Scottish Ministers appoint the other members, half of whom are nominated by the Local Authority or Authorities that cover the Park. Local Authorities do not have to nominate councillors (Community Councillors for example could be nominated) but both existing Parks have done so. A secondary designation order could specify the proportion of the Local Authority nominees who live in the Park or represent an area within the Park. Appointed members will have satisfied Scottish Ministers that they have knowledge or experience relevant to the functions of the National Park Authority (or the National Park). The National Park directors elect a convenor and deputy convenor from amongst their number.

5.8 Board representation options might be:

	Total	Ministerial Appointees	Local Authority Nominees	Directly Elected	Comment
Option 1	15	3	3	9 (60%)	3 people from each Community Council area
Option 2	16	5	5	6 (40%)	2 people from each Community Council area
Option 3	15	6	6	3 (20%)	1 person from each Community Council area

5.9 **Assuming a Board of 15-16 members, Option 2 is considered the most balanced. Locally elected members are selected by their local community through a voting process. As noted above, Ministers and the Local Authority will seek to appoint/nominate those who can demonstrate they have knowledge or experience relevant to the functions of the National Park and/or the National Park Authority.**

5.10 Scottish National Parks are more concerned with encouraging positive management than imposing rules and regulations. Indeed, current powers offer little scope for new rules and regulations to be imposed by the Authority.

5.11 The rules, regulations and powers of SNH, SEPA, the Crofters Commission and other regulatory bodies would remain in force in Harris, although the Park Authority would become a statutory consultee on relevant issues.

Other models

5.12 Under the first of the four National Park governance models that were considered, the Park Authority would have “full” Planning powers, which is considered less efficient as CnES is well geared up to handle Harris applications – 85% of which have been delegated to officials in recent years and 99% of which were approved.

5.13 The third model, a “light touch” model without Planning powers, would have to establish very clear roles and purpose – for example, through a focus on training and development opportunities, sharing good practice, and networking. A small efficient group, properly constituted, could identify and tap into a wide range of funding opportunities and secure other help towards National Park objectives. Co-operative working at a regional and national level would be particularly important to maintain influence.

5.14 The major downside of this model is that the National Park Committee might be seen as toothless by the local community or as a duplication of Local Authority responsibilities.

5.15 A theoretical fourth model is “federal governance”. Under federal arrangements in other countries, National Park staff are all employed by a single employer, usually a

department of government. A “federal governance” model would be slim and staff efficient and could be established relatively quickly (if a suitable employer could be agreed). Scotland currently has no suitable federal employer, but Ministers may consider this option if more National Parks become established. The implications for Harris would be that power would be shared with a centralised body and there would be a risk of decisions not reflecting local needs. Arms-length management might not be effective and travel to mainland meetings would be time consuming and expensive. Also, additional direct employment creation in Harris would be lower.

6. The Scope to Generate Comparable Benefits without National Park Status

- 6.1 As well as National Park Authority models, the feasibility study considered a range of other mechanisms that are used elsewhere in Scotland, the UK and France to achieve natural environment-related sustainable development. These include Regional Parks, Geoparks, Biosphere Reserves, National Scenic Area management arrangements, partnerships (e.g. the Nevis Partnership, Nàdair Trust in Argyll, Sunart Oakwoods Initiative, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), and the French Parc naturel régional model.**
- 6.2 None of these other mechanisms appear suitable for Harris circumstances and some have long term weaknesses or would require legislative change. Only National Park status would raise the profile and importance of Harris and the wider Western Isles through active and continuing Government and Parliamentary involvement in the oversight of a National Park. The National Park brand has much greater public awareness than the other mechanisms and would clearly be a stronger tool in marketing the area.**
- 6.3 Core funding and other project or short term funding for these alternative mechanisms, especially from European and Lottery sources, tends to be more difficult to source than for a National Park. The challenges of achieving adequate levels of local control and consistent long term resource allocation, and the lack of statutory status, would be issues for an organisation in a remote, fragile location such as Harris. The annual Scottish Government grant-in-aid to a Harris National Park would in itself boost the economy. Businesses, agencies and community organisations, in the knowledge that National Park status would be continuous, could invest with confidence.
- 6.4 Also, as established through impact research, existing Parks generate employment benefits through their designation, both within their areas and in gateway communities and neighbouring areas through a “halo” effect.

7. Employment, Operating Costs, Funding and Impacts

7.1 On the National Park Authority model favoured above, direct staffing in Harris might be as follows (scaled down pro-rata from Cairngorms National Park):

Corporate Services	4
Heritage & Land Management	3
Visitor Services & Recreation	2
Economic & Social Development	3
Planning	2
Strategy & Communication	1

7.2 The total staffing of 15 full time equivalents (ftes) would include posts covered by core funding and project staff. The latter might be employed for up to three years, but continuity for individual employees (or self-employed contractors) beyond this could be provided through follow-on projects.

7.3 The staffing budget (plus employment costs and expenses) might be in the region of £500,000 per annum for these 15 fte's. A supplementary project budget of c£200,000 per annum (excluding an element for staffing already included above) and other costs of £100,000 (mainly for property expenses and overheads) would give the Park Authority a total annual core budget of £800,000, with scope to enhance this through applications for a variety of projects to a range of sources (on its own account or with partners). This order of magnitude of core funding might be an integral part of a bid by Harris to the Scottish Government for a National Park.

7.4 Adding “indirect” and “induced” employment through spending by the Park Authority and its employees on supplies and services might add a further 5 fte's through the multiplier to the assumed direct staffing given above of 15 fte's – giving a total of 20 fte's.

7.5 Very indicatively, if visitor spending could be increased after a few years by £2 million per annum (10,000 visitors x 3 days average stay x £60 per day plus 10,000 visitors x 1 day x £20 per day), this would support an additional 50 fte's in the tourism sector. This would be expected to be the main employment impact from the National Park, with scope for further growth in the future as the development of accommodation and other facilities and services is encouraged.

7.6 The other economic opportunities highlighted in the full study report might together provide c20 fte's, including house building, other construction work and other infrastructural development, and inclusive of the multiplier.

7.7 **On this scenario, the National Park would generate a total of 90 fte's per annum and £1.6 million of household income annually at an average of £18,000 per fte.**

7.8 The “light touch” or “federal” Park Authority model would require less direct staffing in Harris and might generate less employment impact through having fewer resources to

instigate new initiatives, co-ordinate collaborative effort, etc. The aggregate impact might be half to two-thirds of the preferred model's impact: i.e. 45-60 fte's.

- 7.9 The "full" Planning powers model would employ more direct staff, but, unless it had more core funding than the "call-in" Planning powers model, would have less scope to generate projects through match funding. Overall, its net employment impact might be lower.
- 7.10 A skills development programme – through customised training, work experience and placements – would be recommended to realise the potential local employment benefits estimated above.

8. Recommendation on the Best Option for the Future Heritage Management and Community Development of Harris

- 8.1 **The case summarised above for a Harris National Park, and the substantial and sustainable benefits that Park status with a Park Authority that would receive annual grant-in-aid from the Scottish Government would give Harris, argues a clear preference for a National Park as the ideal mechanism to help focus and encourage future heritage management and community development in Harris.**
- 8.2 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar already has the powers and functions to provide a range of services in Harris, but it is facing severe financial limits to its ability to deliver its policies. Similarly, other public bodies have limited ability to focus on anything other than core functions. These resource constraints are increasing at a time when there is a resurgence of community activity in Harris, including interest in the opportunities that would be offered by National Park status.
- 8.3 It would be critical for the Park Authority to work closely and build good relationships with other public agencies, businesses (especially in the tourism and land management sectors), community and other landowners and community groups. The Park Authority's Plan should dovetail with those of other organisations, and there would be a wide range of opportunities to devise and attract external funding for environmental, social, cultural and economic projects.
- 8.4 The critical objectives, if sustainability is to be achieved, will be to reverse population decline and improve the age structure of Harris. A National Park with an active Board and staff of 10-15 would have the resources to take the lead in new initiatives, or respond to ideas from other organisations, groups and individuals and exert influence.
- 8.5 The National Park as a brand would be strong, and Harris would have the opportunity to increase its employment and income from tourism significantly.

- 8.6 Increasing the supply of affordable housing would remain a strategic priority for Harris as demand pressures would grow through a rising population, and the Park could play a role in planning and facilitating the improvement in provision.
- 8.7 There are potential drawbacks to a National Park, as summarised in Section 4 above, but, as indicated, measures could be taken to avoid or mitigate these.

MAIN REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 gives Scottish National Parks the following aims:

- *to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage*
- *to promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area*
- *to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public*
- *to promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area*

1.2 The role of National Park Authorities is to secure the long-term interests of the Park by ensuring co-ordinated achievement of the four aims.

1.3 The formal process for proposing a new National Park in Scotland is set down in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. Formal proposals to establish a Park need to be considered by a reporter and should include a definition of the proposed Park area and evidence that the area meets the legislative conditions. The reporter will also be required to consider the desirability of designating the area as a Park, the functions a Park Authority might exercise, the likely costs and any other relevant matters. If satisfied, Scottish Ministers may then present a report to Parliament for its consideration.

1.4 **The residents of the Isle of Harris are currently in the first stages of considering whether National Park status for the island would be desirable. They have NOT entered into the formal process, although exploratory discussions with Scottish Ministers have taken place. The initiative to explore options came from the North Harris Trust (NHT). The Trust was established in 2002 to purchase and manage the 25,000ha North Harris Estate on behalf of the community and to secure its future sustainability.**

1.5 The NHT organised five community meetings around Harris, and the consensus from each of these meetings was to support investigating:

- The general case for a National Park in Harris;
- The environmental, economic and social implications of National Park status.

1.6 Subsequently, an Isle of Harris National Park Study Group (the Study Group) was formed, comprising Harris residents chosen by the community. As part of these investigations, the Study Group commissioned this ‘first stage’ feasibility study. The study brief specifically limited the study to land within the Civil Parish of Harris.

- 1.7 This feasibility study report is intended, initially, to help the local community to decide whether to make a bid to the Scottish Government for National Park status for Harris, and if so, which geographical boundaries, governance structure and management functions are preferred. If a proposal proceeds, the study will serve as an independent assessment of options, benefits and potential disadvantages.
- 1.8 **It is important to state at the outset that this study is NOT about a Coastal & Marine National Park but relates to a land-based National Park with a coast. Scottish Government policy is not to consider any proposals for Coastal & Marine National Parks until the Scottish Marine Bill become legislation. Consultation on the Marine Bill was launched on the 14 July 2008, and people and organisations in Harris have had an opportunity to make representations on the Bill. In January 2008, the First Minister stated that in order to better protect Scotland’s marine environment and streamline services that support vital Scottish industry, the Government intends to bring together marine management functions from across public organisations into a single body – referred to as Marine Scotland in the consultation document on the Marine Bill, “Sustainable Seas for All”. (See also Sections 5.26 to 5.35 below).**
- 1.9 The brief specified that key issues to be addressed by the study should include:
- The options for the area of a Park, including whether only a portion of mainland Harris would be viable as a Park and which (if any) offshore islands (including St Kilda) should be included in any National Park.
 - The size of a Park board and its level of directly elected representation, taking into account the requirements of legislation.
 - The impact that National Park status would have on crofting, tourism, housing supply and demand, planning controls, community and private landowners.
 - What new employment, business and training opportunities would be available to the local community.

2. Study Outcomes

- 2.1 The Study Group asked for the report to provide analysis and comment with respect to seven outcomes. The report was prepared in two phases.

Phase I

- 2.2 Phase I was principally a desk-based review that was informed by consultation and meetings with the Study Group, key partners and National Park specialists. This phase took place from July to August 2008, and an interim report was produced that related to the first four of the seven outcomes set by the Study Group.

1. A succinct statement of the rationale for whether Harris is worthy of National Park status when measured against the three conditions defined in the National Parks Act.
2. Identification of the environmental, cultural, social and economic gains and losses that may be experienced if National Park status is granted, with sectoral analysis where appropriate.
3. A series of options outlining different governance models and ranges of powers that could be exercised by a National Park in Harris.
4. An *indication* of the numbers and types of jobs and training opportunities that could be created by each model, the associated annual running costs and the funding required.

Phase II

- 2.3 Phase 2 related principally to Outcomes 5-7, with refinement of the Phase I work through feedback from the Study Group and the community and further research.
5. An *indication* of the economic impact of selected scenarios, both at the local (Harris) and wider Western Isles levels.
 6. A consideration of whether the gains identified through Outcome 2 above could be achieved without National Park status.
 7. A recommendation on the best option for future heritage management and community development on Harris.

Community Engagement

- 2.4 Community engagement was organised by the Study Group. All 840 households in Harris received a letter from the Study Group inviting them to attend a consultation event in either Tarbert on the 3rd or Leverburgh on the 4th of November 2008. People could drop in for one to one consultation and/or attend a more formal evening presentation – 105 people attended the two sessions taken together, with broadly the same attendance at each. The events were designed to increase awareness of National Park issues within the community and help to refine the seven Outcomes specified in the study brief. The events included presentations to the Harris community from people working and living in the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Parks. Information from the draft report of this feasibility study was made available for the events and to people not able to attend.

3. Harris as a National Park? – Analysing the Case

Clarifying the Case

- 3.1 This study will help the people of Harris to decide whether they believe that a National Park would enable the community to move towards a more sustainable future. It is clear from locally produced documents – in particular the successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Landscape Partnership Scheme – that the viability of the Harris community is facing serious challenges. However, until people work out and understand the possible contribution that a National Park could provide to Harris, they cannot be asked to make a decision. People are much more likely to be motivated to take action when they are clear what could change and why. Any effort to achieve a decision on change requires clarity about the needs or issues to be tackled and the appropriateness of the change being suggested.

Whose Case?

- 3.2 The Study Group is working on behalf of the Harris people in commissioning this National Park study, but it is important also to take account of relevant regional and national priorities.
- 3.3 Therefore, we have considered the different needs of individuals, groups and communities both locally and more widely within the Western Isles and Scotland to assess whether National Park proposals for Harris would be consistent with wider policies. Were a formal proposal to be made, Scottish Ministers would carry out their own consultations at local and national levels.
- 3.4 The agency representatives whom we have consulted (see Appendix 1) have tended to give personal views or have anticipated the response that their organisation might give if asked formally for its views on a Harris National Park. We have therefore not attributed comments to particular consultees.

Different Ways of Thinking about the Case

- 3.5 People are motivated to act on issues that matter to them, but this is not always in the interests of others. The implication of a chosen course of action needs careful consideration.

In particular, how do the concerns of the Harris community compare with those of others and how would a National Park complement other means that are already being employed (or are planned) to address the island's issues?

The Dimensions of the Case

- 3.6 Understanding the needs of Harris involves taking account of the circumstances that are immediately apparent and also exploring what lies behind them. The attitudes of others

are important where, for example, a service is being provided by an agency from outwith the area.

Is the National Park approach the best or the only way to bring about the changes that the people of Harris would like to see?

- 3.7 If a National Park is considered the most suitable structure, it is important for the major partners in the Park to recognise the requirement for a co-ordinated approach and to demonstrate a Scottish dimension. It will be important to engage with the people who could support the National Park to bring about change, others who might work in partnership, and indeed those who might actively resist attempts to achieve change. Understanding the nature and scale of this wider interest is crucial.

4. Background to National Parks

What is a National Park?

- 4.1 National Parks are now found in a large number of countries. In 1994, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)¹ established six categories of protected area. National Parks were defined as Category II, areas managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation. Across the world, however, there is a great variety of National Parks because each nation creates its own approach to suit its own needs. Under the IUCN categorisation, UK National Parks are equivalent to Category V Protected Landscapes/Seascapes.
- 4.2 The table below provides key statistics for Harris that are compared with the two existing Scottish National Parks and three selected Parks from other parts of the UK that are comparable in geographic scale to Harris.

¹ Founded in 1948 and based in Geneva the IUCN is a democratic membership union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists in more than 160 countries.

Table 1: Comparing Harris with Existing UK National Parks

Location	Area (sq km)	Population <i>Note 1</i>	Population km2	Visitor Numbers Per annum	% of Area Under Designations		
					SAC/SPA	SSSI	NSA
Harris	500	1,984	3.9	117,000	31.8%	36.3%	100.0%
Western Isles	3,268	26,400	8.6	195,000	18.5/27.7%	11.7%	36.5%
Scottish National Parks							
Cairngorms NP	3,800	16,000	4.2	1.2million	25.0%	39.0%	16.2%
Loch Lomond and Trossachs NP	1,865	15,600	8.4	3.0million	2.9%	8.6%	17.2%
Other UK National Parks							
The Broads NP	303	c5,000	16.5		23.8%	24.0%	N/A
New Forest NP	580	c34,400	39.3		48.0%	?	N/A
Pembrokeshire Coast NP	620	22,542	36.4		10.6%		N/A

Note 1 – Population figures are total population. Elected members are drawn from the electoral roll – this excludes those under 18 or who are not registered

Note 2 – Western Isles designation area percentages were obtained from the SNH website - as of July 2007.

National Parks in Scotland

- 4.3 Scotland came late to National Parks. Following the devolution settlement of 1997 the newly elected government made a commitment to the establishment of Scottish National Parks. England and Wales have had National Parks since 1949. Prior to 1997, and despite a range of committees and studies, including the Ramsay Reports in 1945 and 1947, and strong public support there was little progress. A lack of political will and patchy support for National Parks in the proposed areas, combined to prevent their earlier establishment (Warren²).
- 4.4 The current process for establishing National Parks in Scotland is set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. This legislation provides for two phases of public consultation on a formal Ministerial proposal, with the final decision to establish a National Park taken by the Scottish Parliament. The detailed purpose of a new Park is set out in a secondary Designation Order which follows Parliamentary agreement on the Park's establishment. **The designation of a National Park does NOT require ANY transfer of privately owned land to state control or ownership and reinforces the need for a partnership approach to conservation and development.**

² Warren C 2002, *Managing Scotland's Environment*, Edinburgh University Press

Aims of National Parks in Scotland

- 4.5 In the words of the 2000 Act, Scottish National Parks have the following aims:
- *to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage*
 - *to promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area*
 - *to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public*
 - *to promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area*
- 4.6 Of these, the second and particularly the fourth aim are distinctive: National Parks in England and Wales do not have these two aims. The fourth aim provides a more balanced approach for people and communities living within the Park.
- 4.7 The achievement of one aim should not undermine the achievement of another. All four aims are part of a common integrated purpose. Within the spirit of the legislation, the starting point in any decision making process must be to work towards a solution which achieves all four aims. However, where there might be irreconcilable conflict between aims, the legislation Section 9(6)) guides the National Park Authority to give greater weight to protecting the area's natural and cultural heritage (the first aim). This clause in the legislation is often known as the 'Sandford principle'. To date, the principle has not been invoked in either of the Scottish National Parks – where there have been contentious issues, consensus has been obtained.

The National Park Authority

- 4.8 In line with the legislation, the two Scottish National Park Authorities (NPAs) have prepared Park Plans and are responsible for their implementation through working with residents and other stakeholders – although it is important to understand that **the area is the National Park and not the Authority.**
- 4.9 It is the statutory function of the National Park Authority to ensure that the four aims are achieved collectively and in a coordinated way. Following extensive consultation, the collective approach is normally achieved through a five year National Park Plan. Other public bodies are required '*to have regard*' to the Plan in exercising their functions in so far as they affect the National Park.
- 4.10 The Park Authorities are categorised as executive 'Non departmental public bodies' (NDPBs). Examples of other NDPBs include HIE, SNH, SEPA and the Crofters Commission. NDPBs are normally established by statute such as an Act of Parliament. They carry out administrative, commercial, executive or regulatory functions on behalf of Government. They employ their own staff who are not civil servants. NDPBs manage their own budgets and receive annual Grant-in-aid from the Government. Their Board members are appointed by Ministers and meet at least quarterly

- 4.11 The Act places an **upper limit** of 25 members on a National Park Authority Board; the exact number is decided by the designation order. Both existing Parks in Scotland have a Board of 25 members. Another difference between the Scottish legislation and that for England and Wales is that **at least 20%** of the Park Authority Board's members must be elected locally by those on the electoral roll **within the Park**.
- 4.12 Scottish Ministers appoint the other members, half of whom are nominated by the Local Authorities that cover the Park. Local Authorities do not have to nominate councillors (Community Councillors for example could be nominated) but both existing Parks have done so. A secondary designation order could specify the proportion of the Local Authority nominees who live in the Park or represent an area within the Park. Appointed members will have satisfied Scottish Ministers that they have knowledge or experience relevant to the functions of the National Park Authority (or the National Park). The National Park directors elect a convenor and deputy convenor from amongst their number.

What Powers would a National Park Authority have?

Park Plan - The main purpose of the National Park Authority as set down in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 is to prepare and facilitate the implementation of the National Park Plan.

- 4.13 To do this, each Park Authority needs to work in close partnership with the many stakeholders in the Park, including its communities, its landowners and managers, and other organisations and individuals with an interest in the conservation, enjoyment, understanding and sustainable use of its natural and cultural heritage. Development of the Park Plan also has to be informed by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as defined by EC Directive 2001/42/EC and the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.
- 4.14 Section 14 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 places a duty on other public bodies to have regard to the National Park Plan in exercising functions in so far as they affect the National Park.

Planning - The secondary designation order may make provision for a National Park Authority to have appropriate functions under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, tailored to the needs of the Park area.

- 4.15 The Park Authority's planning functions and powers can range from being the Local Planning Authority, with responsibility for drawing up the Local Plan for the area and making decisions on development management, to such other functions as the designation may specify.

Access – The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003³ places duties on National Park Authorities as organisations responsible for the management of outdoor access within the Park

4.16 The Act provides everyone with access rights, as long as they are used responsibly. The Park Authority has a number of statutory duties relating to the Act and the associated Scottish Outdoor Access Code, including publicising the code, upholding access rights, establishing an Access Forum and preparing a Core Paths Plan.

Other Powers and Functions

4.17 As specified in the 2000 Act⁴, the Park Authority is able to:

- enter into management agreements, make bylaws and establish management rules;
- make charges for goods and services;
- provide advice and assistance and undertake or fund research;
- provide grant;
- purchase land;
- create nature reserves;
- provide information and education;
- provide countryside facilities such as toilets, car parks, campsites and picnic areas;
- provide sport, recreation and leisure facilities;
- make improvements to inland waterways;
- protect and maintain rights of way; and
- request traffic management schemes.

4.18 The precise scope of some of these powers is not self-evident, and the experience of the existing National Parks will be useful to draw on if a Harris National Park proceeds. The range of powers and functions can be varied according to the needs of a particular Park. However, none of these powers are unusual or draconian – the first five of these powers are common to all NDPBs and Local Authorities, whilst the others are available to Local Authorities.

5. The Context for National Park Status for Harris

Local Background

5.1 **The values and traditions of Harris which the people of the island and their ancestors have laboured over the centuries to establish and maintain through times of great hardship have forged a resilient community. The depth of social capital in Harris has been amply demonstrated in recent years by the work of Harris Voluntary Service and Harris Development Ltd, and the historic buy-out of North**

³ Section 32

⁴ National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 Schedule 2 - powers, Schedule 3 - functions

Harris Estate, which was supported by a three to one majority of the voting population.

- 5.2 This achievement and the subsequent work of the North Harris Trust provide evidence that Harris has both the ambition and probably the many skills and abilities to successfully lead, govern and manage a National Park. Despite community efforts, the area continues to face significant problems and has to keep moving forward. Gains through past short term funded partnerships have in some cases been difficult to sustain, and a National Park could be a route to long term benefits.
- 5.3 A strong community mandate would help pursuing a ‘bottom up’ approach to a Harris National Park. Were majority support to be forthcoming, Harris would have the opportunity to seek approval for a model designed to meet its own special needs. The socio-economic needs of Harris are quite clear, but they are similar to those of other parts of the Western Isles. Harris therefore would have to be unequivocal in articulating its case for a National Park.
- 5.4 Harris could make a strong case in terms of community involvement, motivation and capacity, sense of place and connectivity with culture and environment. The North Harris buy-out demonstrated a willingness to set aside the inherent caution present in many Hebridean communities and grasp opportunities. After five years, the pioneering spirit is still strong and is delivering tangible projects, including community scale renewable energy ventures and leadership on projects such as this National Park study – an investigation that no other Scottish community appears to have considered.
- 5.5 The above values, coupled with outstanding natural and cultural heritage resources and presented with consistency and clarity, could be used to good effect in satisfying the Conditions for achieving National Park status. Harris would be a new model for a National Park, but one that is clearly within the terms and the ethos of the Act. **Establishing a rationale for the applicability of National Park status to remote and economically fragile areas with strong community ethos and support would be a very significant evolution for Scottish National Parks.**
- 5.6 A National Park would be consistent with the aims of (i) the North Harris Trust, as expressed through its Land Management Plan, 20 Year Development Plan and 2007-18 Business Plan; (ii) the West Side Harris Steering Group’s priorities should a community buy-out proceed; and (iii) the recently approved Harris Landscape Partnership Scheme developed and led by Harris Development Ltd.
- 5.7 The Vision of the North Harris Trust is:
- “To achieve the regeneration and development of the North Harris community, by managing the North Harris Estate as an area of outstanding wild land and rugged beauty. We will achieve this by creating local partnerships and working with other partners where appropriate, all for the benefit of the local community and the wider public”.

- 5.8 Projects and themes in the Development and Business Plan include:
- Improving interpretation and footpath access.
 - Making Land and Environment pay.
 - Investment in key facilities, in particular a Harris Tweed Centre and the Whaling Station.
 - Improving access and facilities for visiting yachts.
- 5.9 The North Harris Trust has signed a Management Agreement with Scottish Natural Heritage which will provide financial and practical assistance to the Trust to help it care for the internationally important habitats, plants and wildlife that occur on the estate.
- 5.10 European funding approved towards the Western Isles Countryside Access Programme helped in the development of paths and other walking and cycling routes. Further opportunities are available through the SRDP.
- 5.11 The five key strands to the West Side Steering Group's Strategy are:
- Raising the profile of West Harris both within and without the area.
 - Attracting and encouraging businesses to start and to develop in the area.
 - Addressing the needs of people especially the younger ages in education and training.
 - Providing the right housing.
 - Safeguarding the natural environment and improving the social environment for both locals and visitors.
- 5.12 There are particular concerns that only one pre-school child is resident on the whole of the West Side and that 37% of the population are over 65. Of the 89 houses in the area, 41% are holiday homes or self-catering cottages.
- 5.13 Affordable housing development is a principal priority both for the West Side and for North Harris and community land ownership can encourage and facilitate this in a number of ways.
- 5.14 The overarching aims of the Isle of Harris Landscape Strategy developed to deliver the Harris Landscape Partnership Scheme are:
- To promote and provide interpretation on the landscape of Harris.
 - To promote and celebrate the Gaelic language and culture.
 - To promote understanding of the history of Harris.

- To encourage the revitalisation of the Harris Tweed industry.
- To safeguard and promote our built and archaeological heritage.
- To safeguard and promote our natural heritage.

5.15 A number of measures that will be carried out through the Landscape Partnership Scheme will protect and enhance the environment and introduce initiatives that will generate short and longer term employment and training – as expressed in the scheme’s Audience Development Plan and Training Plan.

5.16 With the time lag likely if Harris wishes to proceed with a bid for a National Park and is successful, the National Park Authority will be able to build on the progress made by the Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Regional Background

5.17 A National Park, although national in status, can make a strategic contribution to its surrounding region. The Board structure of a National Park encourages members to weigh local, regional and national interests when making a decision. An appropriately structured National Park in Harris would contribute to the Western Isles Community Planning Partnership’s vision for “a revitalised Western Isles that is a net contributor to the national economy with confident communities and a distinctive Gaelic culture and heritage”.

5.18 “Creating Communities of the Future” is the Partnership’s strategy for action, which is based on six linked economic drivers: renewable energy, broadband, tourism, culture and heritage, business infrastructure and job dispersal, and the UHI Millennium Institute.

5.19 The unique challenges of the Western Isles are recognised as follows in the Scottish Government’s National Planning Framework:

“They (the Western Isles) are the principal heartland of Scotland’s Gaelic culture and offer outstanding scenery and maritime habitats of international importance. There are large international markets for Celtic culture, built heritage and environmental tourism. There is considerable social capital, with high participation rates in community and voluntary activities.” (Section 177)

5.20 As demonstrated in Section 6 below, the National Framework and the regional strategy for the Western Isles have many links with National Park aims.

5.21 The Community Planning Partnership’s ambitions are that, by 2020, the Western Isles will be characterised by:

- A diverse and growing population with a balanced demographic structure allowing young people to move freely as lifestyles change and allowing effective public services.

- A dynamic renewable energy sector of international renown providing the base for new forms of economic activity.
- A high quality environment, which maintains bio-diversity.
- A private sector that is a high-level economic contributor.
- A tourism industry, which has developed the Western Isles as a world-class destination.
- A confident community, utilising new forms of land and sea ownership.
- Communities which are globally connected through a high quality transport infrastructure and leading-edge communications systems.
- Significant growth of Stornoway, which will have been developed as a world-class entry-point to the Western Isles.
- Provision by the UHI Millennium Institute of a university campus and a network of learning centres, and numerous students who are part of the community.
- A diverse range of quality, modern, social and leisure facilities, with a high value placed on Gaelic culture and heritage.

5.22 A Harris National Park could help deliver many of these Western Isles Community Planning Partnership aspirations.

5.23 The two existing National Parks in Scotland both support a growing resident population, who are attracted by the quality of life in the areas. Because both Parks are in attractive areas, growth might have occurred irrespective of the designation. However, designation has not hampered growth and both Park areas have an important socio economic regional role. Tourism businesses in the Parks are pressing to see a more co-ordinated approach and are grouping under the Park umbrella to form regional and national destinations for visitors.

5.24 Parks can also influence the economy beyond their boundaries through a ‘halo’ effect. For example, the Cairngorms National Park is an important regional resource for Inverness and Aberdeen. Accessible high quality recreational opportunities in the Park attract skilled labour and inward investment to these cities and their hinterlands; while the Parks themselves and places adjacent to their boundaries are good places to live and attract mobile, economically active people. The Cairngorms and Loch Lomond were well known and popular areas before National Park designation, but this raised profile has increased these beneficial impacts.

5.25 Both Scottish Parks contain a significant renewable energy generation capacity through hydro power, and have policies which support the development of appropriate future generating capacity and make contributions to national climate change measures. Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine are major sources of water for West Central Scotland.

Local Marine Issues

- 5.26 The brief for this study emphasised that it was not about a Coastal and Marine National Park. However, during consultation it became clear that certain regional/national coastal and marine elements have to be acknowledged. The setting of Harris and the outstanding natural and cultural values of the area are linked to the sea.
- 5.27 The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park includes 418 km of coastline and a number of offshore islands, but has no powers over the marine environment. This small Park (620km²) is one of the most densely populated in the UK and attracts over five million visitors annually. The Park incorporates seven SACs, three SPAs, the only Marine Nature Reserve in Wales, six NNRs and 75 SSSIs (all administered by the Countryside Council for Wales – the equivalent of SNH). The busy oil terminal and seaport of Milford Haven is located between, but not in, two sections of the Park. There is little experience of coastal margin issues in existing Scottish National Parks, however. The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park boundary extends to the mean low water spring mark as defined by Ordnance Survey along 62 km of the coastline around Loch Long, Loch Goil and the Holy Loch.
- 5.28 The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Plan contains strategic policies for safeguarding and enhancing the water environment. The Local Plan for the Park currently being developed contains draft policies for protecting the landscape features of the coastal marine area, protecting water quality from inadequate land drainage and sewerage and protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The Authority will look to the Marine Bill's proposals for a National Marine Plan and the regional marine plans for securing these policies.
- 5.29 Park Authority planning powers are not identical to those held by Local Authorities and do not extend beyond the Park's terrestrial boundary; hence Scottish National Parks currently have no powers over the marine environment. An extension of powers would require an alteration of the Park designation order.
- 5.30 Under current arrangements, a National Park in Harris could, nevertheless, similarly begin to address issues raised during the Harris consultation, including:
- Offshore islands as part of a Park
 - The extent of planning influence – mean high or low water for example
 - Access to the sea for launching craft and other associated land based facilities supporting marine activity
 - Drainage and sewage
 - Biodiversity protection
 - Promoting coastal recreation, enjoyment of the scenic qualities of the Park from the sea and opportunities for marine wildlife watching
- 5.31 Good working arrangements with bodies responsible for the marine environment around Harris would be essential for a Park. Of particular importance would be Marine Scotland,

a new body proposed in the recent Scottish Marine Bill consultations, Marine Scotland's purpose would be to deliver "sustainable seas for all" through a single door approach. Proposals also include powers for Marine Scotland to designate Marine Protected Areas. Coast Hebrides (the Outer Hebrides Coastal Marine Partnership), a local voluntary partnership led by CnES, has been put forward by the Council as the mechanism for the delivery of integrated coastal zone management around the Western Isles.

- 5.32 The Outer Hebrides would become a Scottish Marine Region with a Marine Plan. CnES argues that both the Local Authority and Coast Hebrides should have significant roles in the delivery of marine planning at local level, including integrated coastal zone management. Near-shore development management of marine aquaculture, elements of marine archaeology, harbours and navigation, and economic development including the promotion of marine renewables, which impacts upon the land/communities, it believes should remain the responsibility of the Local Authority as Planning Authority.
- 5.33 Based on its experience with landward designations, CnES considers that major conservation initiatives, for instance Marine National Parks or Marine Nature Reserves, could be used to constrain development such as renewable energy generation.
- 5.34 CnES supports the development of marine policy that aims to support economic development, e.g. tourism, as well as achieving conservation objectives. In its response to the Scottish Executive consultation on the proposal for Coastal Marine National Parks, CnES stated that it was not minded to support the establishment of a coastal marine national park for the waters around the Outer Hebrides.
- 5.35 CnES considers that the transitional zone between marine and terrestrial elements would best be managed by adopting the eight principles defining integrated coastal zone management (ICZM). In our opinion, ICZM could be a useful tool to bring together the work of Coast Hebrides with that of any terrestrial-based National Park structure. The content and detail of the Bill have yet to be agreed, but the proposals appear to provide some interesting opportunities.

National Background

- 5.36 The North Harris Trust approached Michael Russell MSP, Minister for Environment regarding a National Park for Harris. He expressed his support for a community-led investigation on the 13 March 2008 in remarks (below) to the Scottish Parliament while introducing a debate to set out the Government's thinking on the future of National Parks in Scotland.

"I stress that communities must be seen as central to the national park process. I am a strong supporter of community-led initiatives. It makes sense for the Government to consider national park designation where communities are supportive. Recently, I was approached by the community trust in North Harris, which believes that national park designation would benefit that island area. I believe that the North Harris Trust will announce today that it intends to consult the wider electorate in the area for its views on seeking national park designation and, if possible, to do more work on that. I strongly support that initiative."

“I have made it clear in a meeting with representatives of the North Harris Trust that I cannot give a commitment to any group that such a process will necessarily lead to a new designation. There are, of course, funding issues to be considered. My duty would be to weigh up the case that is made by the community, alongside the statutory considerations. In addition, we have a tight spending review. However, if the community trust moves forward in that way, by consulting the community, it will be a model for others to follow, in which community initiative drives forward the process of possible designation.”

Source: The Scottish Parliament – Official Report

Future Structures

- 5.37 There is neither a national strategy for establishing new National Parks in Scotland nor an established model for their delivery. The legislation allows for balancing structures, functions and powers to meet local needs. Both of the existing Parks are in their early development phase, having recently gained Ministerial approval for their first Park Plans in 2007. Both are yet to agree their Local Plans (Development Management Plans).
- 5.38 The two Parks have developed their own styles and processes. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority directly provide visitor services – Ranger Services, Visitor Centres etc – having taken over some functions of the pre-existing Regional Park. In the Cairngorms, aside from a commitment to planning and access, delivery is not by the Authority but is mainly carried out by others, guided through the Park Plan. That communities outside the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park are lobbying hard for the Park to be extended to include them and none are wish to be excluded is an endorsement of its efforts to-date.
- 5.39 After five years, the two Parks are being reviewed, following the change in Government administration.⁵ The Minister intimated *‘our openness of mind on future structures’* in his speech on the 13th March. Harris is therefore engaging with the National Park process at an interesting and opportune time.
- 5.40 This openness of mind is relevant for Harris because its prospect of designation would be low if the criteria were size, population, visitor pressure and proximity to urban areas.

Political Change

- 5.41 Scotland is now focussed upon achieving sustainable development through a smaller less complex public sector. In presenting the National Park review in Parliament in March 2008, the Minister expected the review *‘to look at a number of organisational options,*

⁵ The timing of this study is also intended to link to the strategic two part review of the two existing National Park Authorities in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and the Cairngorms as announced by the Minister for Environment on 13 March 2008. Part One released on the 20th November 2008 considers key questions on the organisation of bodies that run the Parks and considers what sort of body should undertake National Park functions. Part Two will consider more detailed operational matters such as the Park Authorities’ role in planning and housing.

including – centrally – the retention of the national park authorities as separate NDPB bodies’ and stressed ‘the primacy of the local democratic element;’

- 5.42 It is important to reflect Ministerial intimations that additional funds are most unlikely to appear in this spending round and possibly not in the next, especially given the current economic downturn. From June 2008, rural and environmental agencies, including the two National Park Authorities, have already agreed to work together to develop a single rural service – Scottish Environmental and Rural Service (SEARS) – helping land managers and communities by providing a single door approach to the seven year EU-funded Scottish Rural Development Programme. Combining corporate ‘backroom’ services and co-locating office space has already gathered pace, and the scope for this will be an important consideration in any new Park structure.
- 5.43 A requirement of the Grant-in-aid given to a Park Authority is for the Park to contribute to delivering the Scottish Government’s new National Performance Framework outcomes. Scotland Performs, launched in June 2008, has provided a public and transparent way to report on how Scotland is performing on a range of issues. All public bodies will have to take account of these outcomes. For example, the corporate plan for the Cairngorms NPA shows that its work can make a particularly significant contribution to nine of the fifteen national outcomes.
- 5.44 All public bodies, including CnES, are tied into the National Performance Framework, which provides a focus for all publicly funded activities. The outcomes represent a common approach for public bodies, and provide a means of reinforcing partnership working. This will be a core theme for any new Park.

6. The Case for National Park Status for Harris

Condition 1

The area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage.

- 6.1 In our opinion, Condition 1 is met.

Rationale

- 6.2 Harris has outstanding concentrations of geology, landforms, habitats and species of high international and national value. In particular:
- The entire proposed area lies within a National Scenic Area.
 - One Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and one contiguous Special Protection Area cover 32% of the area.

- Five SSSIs cover 36% of the area.
- St Kilda has dual World Heritage site status.
- Harris supports 6% of UK golden eagle territories.

[Greater detail is contained in Appendix 3 – Natural Heritage Assessment, and Appendix 4 – Landscape Assessment.]

6.3 The hills, moorland, beaches and offshore islands provide a nationally recognised land and seascape. The distinctive Harris hills form the largest area of wild land in the Western Isles, and in the dramatic transition from sea to mountain summit, climate and exposure can be extreme. The relationship of the rugged mountains and the deep incised fjord lochs to the machair and the peerless beaches of the west coast, when taken in conjunction with the classic cnoc and lochan landscape of the Bays area on the east coast, provide a diversity of landscape that cannot be matched in an area of comparable size anywhere in Scotland. St Kilda is the most spectacular of the many offshore islands, and in addition to its unique history of human occupation, bird and seal colonies, its marine life is amongst the best in the Europe.

The special qualities of St Kilda are summarised in its successful World Heritage Site application as:

5,000 years of history

- Outstanding preservation
- Survival of a complete system
- Dramatic landscape setting

Thriving subsistence based on birds

- Iconic story of sustainability

Divergent architecture and social system

- Isolation from the mainstream

Superbly documented social history

- Outside influence and tourism leads to abandonment

6.4 Human activity and culture in Harris have been strongly influenced by the natural world. The area has been long-inhabited and settlements provide a strong human focus that contrasts with the landscape of mountain, moor, rock, loch and ocean. There is a strong relationship between the environment and Gaelic culture in Harris. Gaelic engenders an intimate ‘sense of place’, and Gaelic names aid landscape understanding.

- 6.5 The rugged environment and remoteness of Harris have created a unique cultural heritage over the last 9,000 years, much of which is relatively undisturbed. This authentic diversity is now very rare in an increasingly homogenous Britain. The built heritage of Harris has received less attention than other parts of the Western Isles, and consequently Harris has a poorer representation of scheduled monuments, listed buildings and records on the CnES SMR. Despite this, several features can be identified as significant nationally, and some internationally.

[Greater detail is contained in Appendix 5 – Cultural Heritage Assessment]

- 6.6 Features remain from the Mesolithic Age, the Neolithic and Beaker periods into the Iron Age, and Norse times. The Church of St Clements, Rodal is considered to be one of the most outstanding buildings in the Western Isles and one of the finest examples of ecclesiastical architecture from the 16th century in Scotland. The former Whaling Station at Bunabhainneadar and the Eilean Glas Lighthouse on Scalpay are both considered of national importance.
- 6.7 The parish of Harris, with the second highest percentage of Gaelic speakers in Scotland (after Barvas), is a living component of Scottish cultural life. Harris retains many of the traditional industries of the Scottish islands: crofting, fishing and weaving. Collectively these create the unique community character of the islands of the Gàidhealtachd, although their long term sustainability is unsure.

Condition 2

The area has a distinctive character and a coherent identity.

- 6.8 In our opinion, Condition 2 is met, although it will be necessary to determine the most appropriate and practical boundaries. A range of options have been considered and are set out below. Option 2 best meets the Study Group's criteria.

Rationale

- 6.9 Harris is a coastal parish, which includes fifteen significant offshore islands plus many other rocks and skerries. It was administered separately from Lewis between 1889 and 1975 before being incorporated in the new Western Isles Council. Harris is divided from Lewis by the deep sea-lochs of Seaforth and Resort, and is connected by a landward link no wider than ten kilometers. This linkage is dominated by the northern edge of the rugged hills of North Harris. To the south, Harris is divided from North Uist by the Sound of Harris with its numerous islands and skerries. Several of these are part of the traditional Parish of Harris, including Pabbay and Berneray. Other islands, including St Kilda and Rockall, are part of the same parish although connections to the former are variable, whilst the latter is connected through its ownership by the United Kingdom.

- 6.10 The population of Harris (and Scalpay) was 1,984 people in 2001, resident in an area of approximately 500 sq km. In comparison, the entire Western Isles land mass covers 3,071 sq km and has a population of 26,400 people.
- 6.11 Over 50% of Harris is in community ownership, a proportion that could extend to over 60% if West Harris is transferred from the Scottish Government to community control. A recent vote achieved a 94% turnout, and 77% voted in favour. Present day culture retains local traditions and 69% of the population in 2001 were Gaelic speakers. Separated from Lewis by the hills of North Harris, native residents ('Hearachs') have developed a distinctive character; distinguished from their neighbours to the north through accent, dialect and culture.
- 6.12 The table below lists the land units that might potentially be included in a Harris National Park. They are delineated mainly through ownership, rather than through bio-geographic criteria – although historically for management reasons land division has taken account of physical features and conditions. *[Land Unit descriptions are provided in Appendix 6.]*

Table 2 – Land Units

Parish of Harris – Mainland areas			
		Area (ha)	Owner
1	North Harris Estate incl Soay Mor & Beg	24,844	North Harris Trust
2	Amnuinnsuidhe Castle Estate	450	Mr Ian Scarr Hall
3	West Harris (three separate estates)	6,604	SGRIPD
4	Bays of Harris (incl Stocknish Island)	10,688	Mr Rodney Hitchcock
5	Rodel Lands	810	Mr Donald MacDonald
6	Kyles	405	Mr Lomas
7	Kyles Lodge	10 (est)	Mr Tom Jourdan
Parish of Harris – Offshore islands			
8	Scalpay (linked by bridge)	703	Mr John Taylor
9	Scarp	1,045	Mr Anderson Bakewell
10	Taransay, Gaisgeir & Gaisgeir Beg	1,503	Mr John Mackay
11	Berneray (Part of Bays of Harris) (See Note 2)	1,011	Mr Rodney Hitchcock
12	Ensay (incl surrounding islets)	186	Mr Mackenzie
13	Killegray	176	Sir Harry Wolfe
14	Pabbay	820	Mr David Plunkett
15	Shillay and Little Shillay	55	Mr Andrew Johnson
16	Coppay	11	SGRIPD?
17	Small islands in the Sound of Harris	39 (est)	
18	St Kilda (Boreray, Soay, Hirta)	855	National Trust for Scotland
19	Rockall (incl Hasselwood Rock)	0.7	
TOTAL (CnES cites Harris as 50,090 ha)		50,250	

Note 1: Details sourced from Wightman A, 'Who Owns Scotland' 3rd edition 2000, Haswell – Smith H 1996 "The Scottish Islands A Comprehensive Guide to Every Scottish Island", Cannongate, "A Gazeteer for Scotland" website, and local sources on Harris.

Note 2: Berneray is included for completeness as it is technically part of the parish of Harris. However, recent infrastructural works have strengthened socio economic links with North Uist. For this reason the study group does not consider that Berneray can reasonably be included within a National Park unless the people of Berneray decide otherwise.

Options for the Geographical Area of a Harris National Park

- 6.13 The legislation requires a National Park to be an area that has a distinctive character and a coherent identity. **The boundaries of a potential Harris National Park have not yet been defined, and the options discussed below are indicative (other options are possible). Any final Park boundaries are likely to follow easily distinguishable and permanent natural features such as ridges, watersheds or coastlines. Villages are normally wholly included or excluded.** Boundaries that could change through changes in land ownership are normally avoided, although impacts on land management operations may be taken into account.

None of the options below refer to boundaries as such, but focus on the potential units around which boundary lines on a map would be drawn. [Maps 1 & 2 are included as separate files]

Option 1 – North Harris Trust Lands, Land Units 1 and 2

This land is already in community ownership, with a management regime sympathetic to Scottish National Park principles. However, it is a very small area in comparison with UK National Parks, and would be unlikely to meet Condition 3 set down in the Act because the management challenges of the area do not require the particular approach of a National Park.

Option 2 – Mainland Harris plus the Three Largest Islands, Land Units 1-10 – Map 1

Harris has a coherent historical and contemporary cultural and geographical identity which is embodied, for the most part, in the Harris ‘mainland’ and the three most closely connected offshore islands of Scarp, Scalpay and Taransay. The total land area of Option 2 is approximately 470 sq km. This is comparable to some of the smallest National Parks in England and Wales, and is 12% of the Cairngorms National Park area. The population density at 4.1 people per square km is lower than any existing National Park in the UK.

In our opinion, Option 2 most closely meets the Study Group mandate from the Harris community. It includes the majority of the most accessible parts of Harris and would be the most practical management unit.

Option 3 – The Entire Parish of Harris, Land Units 1-20 – Map 2

The Parish of Harris has a historical, cultural and geographical identity. It includes the Option 2 land units plus all of the offshore islands. Option 3 would have an even lower population density than Option 2, and an area just over 500 sq km (30 sq km larger), which is still small in comparison to existing UK Parks. As noted in Table 2 above, Berneray (Land Unit 11) is included for completeness as it is historically part of the parish of Harris. However, recent infrastructural works have strengthened socio economic

links with North Uist. For this reason the Study Group does not consider that Berneray can reasonably be included in Option 3 unless the people of Berneray decide otherwise.

St Kilda and Rockall, in particular, are a significant distance from the main part of Harris. Rockall, although technically in the parish of Harris, could be excluded on the basis of distance and the relevance of National Park status. St Kilda, with its unique cultural and natural heritage, presents a complex set of issues. There is no resident human population, and its outstanding natural and cultural heritage is already protected by a raft of national and international designations, including dual World Heritage site status (for both its natural and cultural features). Although historically part of Harris, St Kilda was mainly serviced over the past 50 years by boat from North Uist or air from Benbecula for military reasons rather than from Harris. However, the link to Harris was recently re-established. Two owner-operators based in Tarbert have invested heavily in vessels suitable for making day trips to St Kilda and have found a ready market for their services from island enthusiasts.

In our opinion, although St Kilda has iconic status and would add profile to a Harris National Park, its inclusion (plus the other smaller islands in the Sound of Harris excluding Berneray) could bring considerable practical challenges and possible additional costs to a Park Authority. St Kilda is already managed in the public interest, although the range of information about St Kilda available on Harris could be improved. If this Option finds favour, we would first recommend further investigation into costs and partnership arrangements, including those associated with offshore islands.

Other Options (4 and 5)

We considered areas to the north and south that share ecological, topographical and landscape characteristics and quality with Harris because Options 1 to 3 above are smaller than the existing Scottish National Parks (though not some English Parks).

NB: None of the communities in the areas to the north or south (as far as we are aware) are pursuing any National Park options. Through their community mandate the Study Group independently initiated this study for Harris alone.

Option 4 – Option 3 plus land units to the north and/or south of Harris (not fully defined)

Neighbouring areas which satisfy National Park status Conditions 1 and 2 might be considered as offering opportunities to strengthen the Harris case. A larger area would probably meet Condition 1, but further evidence would be required to show whether Condition 2 (a coherent identity) would be met by including only parts of Lewis and/or Uist.

However, shared landscape characteristics are recognised by the extent of the South Lewis, Harris and North Uist National Scenic Area which, at 1,096 sq km, is the second largest NSA in Scotland after Wester Ross.

Option 5 – A Larger Area of the Western Isles, including the Parish of Harris

It is important to consider this option since Scottish Ministers examining the argument for a National Park within the Western Isles would be likely to look at the case for areas beyond the boundaries of Harris. No specific consultation on this option has been undertaken, but some stakeholders have made the point that other parts of the Western Isles might also meet the Conditions set down in the Act.

Condition 3

Designating the area as a National Park would meet the special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the aims that are central to a National Park are collectively achieved in relation to the area in a coordinated way.

6.14 In our opinion, Condition 3 can be met.

Rationale

6.15 This is a complex condition which seeks to ensure that designating the area as a National Park will be the best means to meet **all** four overall aims (see Section 4.3 above) in a coordinated way.

6.16 The special needs of Harris stem principally from cultural and socio-economic circumstances. *[Greater detail is contained in Appendix 7]*. In stark terms, if current population trends continue, Harris will be unable to sustain its present contribution to the natural and cultural heritage of Scotland. High levels of out-migration and a low birth rate are leading to a continuing decline in the Harris population. For Harris to thrive, the area needs to retain, attract and nurture able and motivated people.

6.17 Addressing cultural and socio-economic circumstances in Harris is considered fundamental to achieving all four aims. The special needs of Harris require a long term sustained effort, and National Park status could provide that focused approach.

Fit with Aim 1 – To Conserve and Enhance the Natural & Cultural Heritage of the Area

6.18 The natural heritage of Harris needs great care as it reflects the legacy of human activity over generations. Longstanding low input husbandry through crofting is in decline. Recent years have seen significant shifts in land use and management accompanied by social change. Traditional activities of stock management and small scale cropping have all but disappeared as young people have left the land, skills have been lost and those who remain have aged.

- 6.19 In turn, species such as corncrake and corn bunting and habitats created through traditional land management have declined or changed, although reduced grazing pressure and mink trapping have helped maintain some aspects of the natural heritage.
- 6.20 National Park status could be used to encourage greater levels of research into natural processes and habitat management in key sites e.g. North Atlantic wet heaths in North Harris and Luskentyre to Corran Seilebost coastal evolution.
- 6.21 The Scottish Regional Development Programme (SRDP) provides opportunities to obtain further resources for appropriate land management to enhance biodiversity and to support diversification measures, such as improved access and small scale renewable energy generation. National Park status would strengthen the Harris case for additional SRDP support and could encourage people back onto the land.
- 6.22 The cultural heritage of Harris is at even greater risk, and does not have the statutory protection afforded to the natural heritage. National Park status could help nurture the culture in Harris in ways comparable to initiatives in the Welsh National Parks where the Welsh language plays a central role (e.g. through cultural events, activities signage, leaflets, bilingual official Park publications, etc).

Fit with Aim 2 – To Promote the Sustainable Use of the Natural Resources of the Area

- 6.23 The natural resources of Harris have (in the main) been sustainably exploited by local residents, while CnES Development Control takes account of national and regional concerns and provides a framework for resource use. The challenging socio economic circumstance of an aging and declining population in Harris, however, has made it difficult to ensure sustainability – a challenge that current policies are struggling to counter.
- 6.24 Renewable energy generation is clearly a major opportunity for the Western Isles. Large export scale energy developments would be unlikely to be compatible with National Park aims, and would conflict with existing designations applied to Harris. However, the Harris terrain is not considered suitable for large scale wind generation, and community scale renewable generation would normally be very acceptable within a National Park. At this smaller scale, renewable energy projects would enable communities and landowners to establish long term income streams and for the area to make a contribution to climate change policy.
- 6.25 Resource use on Harris is not as complex as in existing Scottish National Parks, and extensive community ownership of land tends to make sustainable objectives even more achievable. A National Park Plan could provide integration, and would encourage other partners to deliver their services to better meet the needs of Harris, thereby also sustaining its contribution to the natural and cultural assets of Scotland as a whole.

Fit with Aim 3 – To Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Special Qualities of the Area by the Public

- 6.26 Outstanding natural and cultural attributes have attracted visitors to Harris over many decades. Currently, visitor numbers and recreational use are relatively low compared with other attractive parts of the Highlands and Islands, however, and there are few pressures or conflicts requiring special management. Harris remains a ‘hidden gem’, and National Park status would help promote awareness of what Harris has to offer visitors and would provide opportunities for visitors to gain increased appreciation of its distinctive features.
- 6.27 National Park status should give Western Isles tourism operators and other businesses that benefit from tourist spending a greater incentive to look after the natural and cultural assets on which so many businesses are based. Commercial or community businesses could be contracted by the Park Authority to provide information and interpretation – making its special qualities more accessible. A planned approach to access networks is also desirable due to the challenging terrain in Harris to enable its special qualities to be experienced by all sectors of society.
- 6.28 Modern media technology is improving all the time. Advanced web design, web cameras and GPS tracking are just some of the developing technologies available to those unable to visit, those with a specific interest or those planning a visit or rekindling memories from previous trips. Ospreys and golden eagles born in the Cairngorms National Park and fitted with GPS tracking devices to gather scientific information have become natural celebrities as children and adults use the internet to follow the highs and lows of their previously secret lives.

Fit with Aim 4 – To Promote Sustainable Social and Economic Development of the Communities of the Area

- 6.29 The most pressing needs in Harris are to reverse population decline and improve its age structure. This will only be achieved by economic development that will provide employment for young people, allied to sufficient affordable housing development.
- 6.30 The population of Harris Parish fell by 12% between 1991 and 2001, and by 24% between 1981 and 2001, following steady decline since 1921, and indications are that this decline has continued. 35% of Harris and Scalpay’s population in 2001 were aged 60 or over compared with 26% of the Western Isles population and 33% were aged 34 or under compared with 39% in the Western Isles. Primary school rolls have fallen from 179 in 1998 to 117 in 2007 (-35%) and the secondary school’s roll from 141 to 109 (-23%).
- 6.31 Only 62% of Harris’s population aged 16-74 in 2001 was economically active, compared with 66% in the Western Isles and 44% had no educational qualifications compared with 38% in the Western Isles.
- 6.32 Critical to the future of Harris is a continuing need for resources to promote economic and social development that exceed its per head of population share. This public

assistance is essential to counter the island's low GDP per head from local economic activity and to help provide services for a sparsely populated and remote area. National Park status could help Harris greatly in bidding for regional / national / EU funding from competitive sources across a wide range of Funds and Programmes, supplementing the limited funding that CnES is able to provide (given the high needs of other Western Isles rural parishes).

- 6.33 One key socio-economic priority is for sustainable year round employment in Harris. Primary industries, including fishing and aquaculture, are unlikely to grow as employers, and could decline further. Increasing tourism is desirable (especially in a controlled way), but the summer / winter disparity will tend to widen as tourism increases without special initiatives.
- 6.34 The two existing Scottish Parks satisfied Condition 3 (a National Park being the best means of meeting their areas' special needs) because both are complex areas with outstanding special qualities that were previously managed by multiple Local Authorities, were busy visitor destinations with activities based on their special qualities, and were of longstanding national interest. Also, there were conflicts in the areas, whose solutions required an integrated approach. New resources to manage these issues and other local issues such as affordable housing came with National Park status. The Park Authorities are small organisations, nevertheless, with small budgets, and persuasive communications with partner organisations and the community are required for sustainable solutions.
- 6.35 Harris also requires new resources for different but equally valid reasons. Its future is precarious – culturally, socially and economically – and National Park resources would complement the resources currently being deployed. Park status could help unlock latent opportunities that would meet the special needs of Harris.

Conclusions on the Case for National Park Status for Harris

A succinct statement of the rationale for whether Harris is worthy of National Park status when measured against the three Conditions defined in the Act.

Rationale

- 6.36 Our analysis suggests that Harris could gain tangible benefits from Park status through a long term collective approach to socio-economic priorities that would also help to sustain the area's outstanding cultural and natural heritage.
- 6.37 Economic sustainability would be promoted through helping to ensure that the income and wealth that Harris is capable of generating would stay within the local community. An economically stable and diverse community is best placed to value and nurture the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of a National Park for its own benefit and that of the wider Scottish public.

- 6.38 National Park status could bring immediate opportunities to foster sustainable development and provide local employment, although much of the potential benefit would be realised in the long term. For sustainability, Harris has to take steps to provide future generations with enhanced prospects as well as improving the wellbeing of current residents. There is evidence of a growing motivation within the community to focus on addressing the needs of the area. Recent experience also suggests that the community has the capacity to address these needs and a willingness to explore new opportunities.
- 6.39 There would be scope in the future to ask for National Park status to be withdrawn should the community find that disadvantages outweigh advantages, e.g. through a convincing ballot.

7. Governance and Powers Options

- 7.1 This Section explores five different options for the types of governance, accountability and management that might be appropriate for a Harris National Park.
- 7.2 The proposed governance options range from a Park administered by a public body with full powers, including Planning – similar to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs – to a much ‘lighter touch’ approach, with the public body as a statutory consultee. The latter approach is included as an option even though such a governance structure would not readily meet the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 criteria. Governance arrangements would require further public consultation and consideration by Ministers.
- 7.3 Between these options lies a hybrid approach, comparable to the Cairngorms, with ‘call in’ planning powers. A further possibility that could emerge is the more ‘federal’ approach of a centralised National Park Service administering all of Scotland’s National Parks. The final option explores mechanisms other than a National Park that could possibly deliver comparable benefits for Harris. This review of options has been informed by the experience of current National Parks in the UK and comments from national and local stakeholders.

Governance and Accountability

- 7.4 Governance is about how an organisation makes its decisions and operates. It comprises the systems and processes, culture and values of the organisation and how it engages with its stakeholders.
- 7.5 The present governance arrangements for National Park Authorities are set out in Schedule 1 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. Significant changes to arrangements would require primary legislation to be altered. Governance of a National Park is a responsible role, and under current arrangements a Harris National Park Authority would be required to produce its own three year corporate plan and annual operating plan to the satisfaction of the Scottish Government. These plans are additional to the 5 Year National Park Plan and the Local Plan (in future to be called a Development

Management Plan). A National Park Authority Board is ultimately responsible to Scottish Ministers. The legislation requires a Chief Officer to be appointed. The Chief Officer is normally also the Accountable Officer who, on behalf of the Board, is responsible for internal control, including risk management, annual reporting, and submission of financial statements to Audit Scotland. Most National Park finance comes from the Government.

Accountability in National Parks under the present system is to:

- ***Scottish Ministers who are answerable to the people of Scotland.***
- ***Local people through elected Board members, and Local Authority appointed members***

- 7.6 In presenting the National Park review in Parliament the Minister stressed ‘*the primacy of the local democratic element*’. He said ‘*that element has served the parks well and it needs to come to the fore – indeed if anything, it needs to be strengthened.*’
- 7.7 As previously noted, the Act requires **at least** 20% of Board members to be directly elected; with half of the balance directly appointed by Ministers and half by Ministers on the nomination of the Local Authorities. The Act does not specify an upper limit on those directly elected – although it is perhaps unlikely that the Scottish Government would agree to a percentage much above 50% in a national organisation. Those standing for election must be on the electoral roll for the area, and elections are normally held alongside Council elections.
- 7.8 Board members receive remuneration for their time – normally two days per month – and expenses. Board Member remuneration is set by the Scottish Government. The Convenor and Vice Convenor may receive more than the other Board Members in recompense for additional time spent representing the Park.
- 7.9 All Board members are required to register their interests on a public website and are governed by the Code of Conduct for members of Devolved Public Bodies and subject to the scrutiny of the Standards Commission. They must declare any interests likely to be perceived as influencing their judgement.
- 7.10 Board members are required to attend meetings regularly to set strategic direction, and to play a full part in the activities of the NPA. They should have relevant skills or knowledge and act in the overall interests of the Park rather than those of a sector, interest group or geographical area.

Opportunities and Challenges

Potential Opportunities

Representation

- The Act allows for up to 25 Board members.
- Experience from UK National Parks suggests that any Board with fewer than 15 members will struggle to convince local communities that they are representative and accountable.
- Advice tends to suggest 15-18 members as an effective number for a smaller Park.
- A proposal for a Harris National Park could, for example, ask Scottish Ministers to approve a Board comprising 16 members made up of six locally elected members plus five from the Local Authority and five appointed by Ministers or eight locally elected members plus four from the Local Authority and four appointed by Ministers.
- Smaller executive style boards would be an option, but streamlining decision making would reduce representation. Two-tier Board arrangements could make some Board members feel ‘second class.’
- Currently, the Board Convenor and deputy are elected by the other Board members giving a degree of internal accountability. With smaller Boards, these posts could become subject to the approval of Ministers or appointed by Ministers more in line with other NDPB Chair appointments.

Enabling and Facilitating

- A key responsibility of an NPA is the National Park Plan.
- Through extensive consultation, the NPA would promote joint ‘ownership’ of the plan by the private and public sectors and the local community.
- The NPA facilitates the delivery of the Plan and the public sector as a whole is required to ‘have regard’⁶ to the Plan in delivering services.

Organisational Culture

- NPA Boards have to employ a Chief Officer and can employ suitable staff and establish structures, policies and ways of working that are closely tailored to local needs and issues.
- A new organisation can build its own culture, free from the influence of previous practices.

⁶ National Park (Scotland) Act 2000 – Section 14

Local Community Confidence

- A Park Authority could enhance local community values, and its activities should tend to enhance community assets, confidence, cohesion and engagement.
- Local Board appointees will have their own existing networks of contacts which will increase the reach of NPA networks, whilst advisory committees can be formed to widen the range of contributors.
- Local Board members should tend to have the greatest involvement in shaping the Park's strategic direction, and Board members in general could help in consultations and as members of advisory groups, etc – freeing staff to concentrate on core activities.
- The Park's activities can benefit local business through investment, market awareness and stimulating innovation.
- Openness and accountability are key principles and, to demonstrate this commitment, Boards can (for example) meet in different communities within the Park, have formal committee meetings open to the public and publish minutes on the Park's website.

Efficiency

- NPA Boards and staffing are small and can respond quickly to changes in either local circumstances or national policy.
- Harris has a strong voluntary sector, and some voluntary groups could assist a National Park Authority through their access to funding sources for projects and trading income normally unavailable to a public body.

Effectiveness

- Strategies and policies on biodiversity, land use, recreation, transport etc can be designed to meet local needs.
- Modern IT can connect a peripheral area to markets worldwide, with the National Park label a Unique Selling Point.
- Modern IT can also support local accountability through minutes and reports being posted on-line.
- The National Park brand would add value to the area's output without businesses needing to incur additional expenditure on marketing.

Value for Money

- The budgets of Scottish National Parks have been relatively modest to date, but there are opportunities to attract additional resources from other sources for particular initiatives. For example the operating costs of Cairngorms National Park are in the order of 56% of its overall annual expenditure of £5.4 million – which is funded from £4.6 million grant-in-aid,

with the balance from income and fees. Additional project funds have been in the order of £0.75m.

- Staff are required for a range of ‘backroom’ functions, even by a small organisation, but staff can be recruited to work across a range of tasks (e.g. bookkeeping and secretarial duties).

Inter-organisational Working

- Staff could be seconded for limited periods from other organisations, and services and backroom functions could be shared to increase efficiency.

Wider Benefits

7.11 As evidenced in impact studies of National Parks in the UK and overseas (see Section 11 below), economic benefits – in terms of employment, income and business development – tend to be generated outwith the boundaries of Parks as well as within. This is due to:

- National Park status raising awareness of the wider region in which it is located.
- Tourists visiting neighbouring areas en route to the National Park or taking day trips out of the Park if staying overnight.
- The “halo” effect of the Parks, due to their strong brand, especially in gateway towns and villages.
- “Indirect” and “induced” impacts through the multiplier – i.e. the Park Authority itself and businesses located in the Park and their employees spending money on supplies and services in the wider region.

7.12 Stornoway, in particular within the Western Isles, would be expected to benefit as a gateway for ferry and air passengers and the islands’ major retail and services centre.

7.13 Staff of organisations serving the Western Isles as a whole would be able to increase their time commitment to other areas to an extent if Park Authority and project staff in Harris were to play a major role in natural and cultural heritage management and in socio-economic development initiatives.

Wider Profile

- National Parks are international. Through the Association of National Parks Authorities, links could be made with other UK Parks that have extensive experience in protected area management, whilst partnerships with National Parks in other countries would improve the prospects of success in funding applications.
- The universal recognition of National Parks could be an important marketing tool for Harris.
- In Scotland National Parks have received cross party political support.

Potential Challenges

7.14 Within the local area, these could include:

- Uncertainty over the need for National Park status, perhaps stemming from limited knowledge of National Parks and the role of a National Park Authority.
- A perception of increased bureaucracy, even with a relatively small NPA, due to reporting requirements, staff responsibilities and budget controls.
- The vulnerability of a small organisation with statutory responsibilities to staff absences, staff turnover and local limits in certain skills.
- Confusion over who is responsible for Planning if full powers are not transferred from the Local Authority.
- Requirements for a higher quality of Planning application, which, if not understood by the applicant, could result in slower decision making as further information is sought.
- Grey areas if powers are shared with CnES and concerns that procedures could give rise to challenges and appeals over decisions.
- Establishing and maintaining quality control in the use of a Harris National Park brand, which would achieve a premium for businesses exploiting the brand.

7.15 More widely, issues could include:

- Elected members to a Board of a national body being drawn from a very small electorate (Harris residents on the electoral roll).
- A small pool of people who would meet the criteria for Board membership, and with the time to commit to a Board.
- A National Park Authority in Harris being overlooked by larger public bodies.
- The need for CnES to commit resources subsequent to planning decisions by the NPA (e.g. expenditure on improving access), reducing its discretion.
- Dilution of the roles of existing public service providers if some powers are transferred to a Harris NPA.
- A perception that the Western Isles would become less integrated.
- Possible reduction in financial assistance, staff time and interest in the area by public agencies currently providing services in Harris through the expectation that the NPA will take the lead and contribute funding (although, as noted at 7.13 above, staff time might be freed to focus on other needy areas).

- Concerns over duplication of functions and the cost/benefit of establishing an entire Planning section to cover new requirements in the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, especially as Harris generates comparatively few planning applications and most are minor in scale. CnES already has problems in recruiting and retaining planning staff and this is likely to be as difficult for a NPA.
- The view that the Harris environment is well protected by existing designations and that National Park status would add little.
- Fears that planning might become too sympathetic to economic interests at the expense of the environment and culture.

Harris as a National Park? Option 1: A Full Powers Model

A Harris National Park established as an executive NDPB, with governance, ‘full’ Planning powers and access powers.

- 7.16 This model would be established under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and a subsequent designation order. The Order would define the Park’s boundaries, the constitution, powers and functions of the NPA, and dates when the Park would become established and operationally functional. The NPA would work to a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum agreed with the Scottish Government. This model applies to the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

Full Planning Powers

- 7.17 Currently, Planning powers are conferred by the Town and Country Planning Act 1997 and other related legislation. In future, the main influence will be the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 which embodies the Scottish Government’s modernising planning agenda.
- 7.18 Development Control would become Development Management, and planning casework would be split into local, major and national applications. If the National Park were the Planning Authority, it would delegate local applications to a Planning Officer or a small group of Members. Major developments, e.g. more than ten houses or larger business developments, would be determined by a committee of Members. Decisions on national developments, e.g. large wind farms, major causeways and tidal generators, would be made by the Scottish Government – although the Park Authority would be an important consultee. The Planning Authority, rather than the applicant as at present, would be responsible for notifying neighbours.
- 7.19 The Park Authority would prepare a Development Plan for the Park, and its officials would carry out pre application discussions, neighbour notifications, local appeals and enforcements. Currently, the great majority of planning applications in Harris fall into the ‘local’ category. The new Act also introduces a formal mechanism to assess a Planning Authority’s decision making performance. Full planning powers would currently not

include control of coastal aquaculture developments unless they fell within any Park boundary.

Access Powers

- 7.20 In line with duties under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the NPA would become the Access Authority and employ staff to plan or oversee core path development, promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) and resolve access disputes through a Local Access Forum.

Comment

- 7.21 This is a proven model in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. A staff complement of c150 provides a wide range of services, including Rangers, water safety on Loch Lomond, Visitor Centres, a Community Future Scheme and a local apprentice scheme. This approach gives the NPA high visibility but is expensive. A high proportion of the core budget is allocated to staff posts and buildings, which limits the funding available for project work.
- 7.22 In Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, Planning is delegated to a committee of twelve members. Legislation requires half the committee plus one member to be elected members; while a full planning staff is also required.
- 7.23 The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park provides a lot of services and, although expensive, might be justified by the diverse needs of the area and different interest groups. This type of model could be applied in Harris, with possibly a Board of 16 Members and perhaps 10- 20 staff, including project posts.
- 7.24 Over the past 10 years (1998-2008), there has been an increase in the total number of Harris planning applications determined by CnES to over 717 – an average of approximately 70 per year. 85% of these applications have been delegated to officials, with just over 100 decided by committee – an average of ten per year. 99% of all applications have been approved (the Western Isles average, which is the highest in Scotland).

Harris as a National Park? Option 2: A ‘Call in Powers’ model

A Harris National Park Authority established as an executive NDPB, with governance, Planning and access powers. The key difference from Option 1 is that the NPA would have ‘call in’ rather than “full” Planning powers.

- 7.25 As for Option 1, this model would be established under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and a subsequent designation order. The Order would define the Park’s boundaries, the constitution, powers and functions of the NPA and dates when the Park would become established and operationally functional. The NPA would work to a Management

Statement and Financial Memorandum agreed with the Scottish Government. This model applies to the Cairngorms National Park.

‘Call in’ Planning Powers

- 7.26 The crucial difference from Option 1 would be that the Park Authority, after reviewing all Planning applications, would only ‘call in’ and determine those applications deemed to have general significance to the Park’s aims. Applications not called in would be determined by the Local Authority (CnES) in line with any Park specific policies.

Access Powers

- 7.27 In line with duties under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the NPA would become the Access Authority and employ staff to plan or oversee core path development, promote the SOAC and resolve access disputes through a Local Access Forum.

Comment

- 7.28 This is a proven model in the Cairngorms National Park. A staff complement of c60, including secondments, job-share and project posts, facilitate and enable rather than deliver or regulate. The NPA has no Rangers or Visitor Centres, but instead seeks to influence and provide incentives for others to deliver such services in the spirit of the four aims of the Park. This is a less expensive model than Option 1, and proportionately more resources are spent on projects – although there is less public visibility.
An issue, however, is that ‘call in’ is often wrongly seen by people as a step towards refusal, whereas closer scrutiny often results in an improved application, and the refusal rate by the Cairngorms National Park Authority for applications called in is small.
- 7.29 A Park Authority under this model would need fewer Planning staff, although a Development Management Plan for Harris, delivered through a Planning team might still be required. On applications not ‘called in’, CnES could make decisions for Harris, in line with the Development Management Plan and with the National Park Plan used as supplementary guidance. This type of model could also be applied in Harris with possibly a Board of 15 Members and perhaps 10-15 staff, including project posts.

7.30 Board representation options for the full and call in models might be:

	Total (up to 25)	Ministerial Appointees (Equal number with LA)	Local Authority Nominees (Equal number with MA)	Directly Elected (at least 20%)	Comment (Harris has 3 Community Councils)
Option 1	15	3	3	9 (60%)	3 people from each Community Council area
Option 2	16	5	5	6 (40%)	2 people from each Community Council area
Option 3	15	6	6	3 (20%)	1 person from each Community Council area

7.31 **Assuming a Board of 15-16 members, Option 2 is considered the most balanced. As noted above, Ministers and the Local Authority will seek to appoint those who can demonstrate knowledge or experience relevant to the functions of the National Park Authority. Directly appointed members might represent particular interests specified in the designation order.**

Harris as a National Park? Option 3: A ‘Light Touch’ Model

A Harris National Park established with a committee that would have local accountability, Planning and access consultee status. The key difference from Options 1 and 2 would be that the NPA’s role in Planning would be limited to statutory consultation.

7.32 This model would involve governance through a locally elected National Park Committee (NPC), perhaps with a constitutional status similar to a Trust, which would act mainly in a consultative, advisory role. There would be no National Park Authority, but the National Park Committee would still produce a Park Plan and require Government funding. Any staffing would be small, and could be provided by existing agencies. This model would be similar to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) approach in England.

Planning Powers

7.33 Statutory planning powers could probably not be awarded, and the Committee would predominantly function as a consultee in planning decisions. This could make it difficult to achieve the four National Park aims. Legislation would still require a Park Plan to be prepared, but CnES would need to play a stronger role in producing and delivering the Plan than under Options 1 and 2.

Access Powers

- 7.34 CnES would remain the Access Authority and oversee core path development, promote the SOAC and resolve access disputes through the Western Isles Access Forum. However, the Park's Committee would have a significant consultee function.

Comment

- 7.35 A light touch model with local accountability would be a new form of National Park, very different from the current models and currently outside the existing legislation. Staff could only be employed directly if the Committee had some form of constitutional status – otherwise they would be employed by other bodies but report to the Committee. This model would help to ensure that local voices are heard, and encourage action to address local concerns. The local Committee would have to work hard at promoting interest, understanding and involvement in the management of the area by the Harris communities.
- 7.36 Harris would still be recognised as a nationally significant landscape that should attract Central as well as Local Government resources towards its management. CnES and other public agencies would be encouraged to prioritise funding to ensure investment in sensitive management. Government would need to ensure co-operation between public bodies.
- 7.37 The NPC would influence Planning policies (eg regional spatial strategies, local development frameworks, and development management plans) and provide supplementary Planning guidance, such as design guides and development control guidelines, consistent with National Park aims.
- 7.38 The light touch model would have to establish very clear roles and purpose – for example, through a focus on training and development opportunities, sharing good practice, and networking. A small efficient group, properly constituted, could identify and tap into a wide range of funding opportunities and secure other help towards National Park objectives. Co-operative working at a regional and national level would be particularly important to maintain influence.
- 7.39 The major downside of this model is that the National Park Committee might be seen as toothless by the local community or as a duplication of Local Authority responsibilities.

Harris as a National Park? Option 4: A 'Federal Governance' Model

A Harris National Park which is one of a suite of Parks managed by locally based operational committees with staff employed by a 'federal' Scottish National Parks Service

- 7.40 The idea of a single ‘federal’ Scottish National Park Service Board acting as a single employer through operational committees in each National Park is only raised here in general terms. Other countries, including the USA and Canada, operate a federal National Park Service. Part 1 of the current review has discounted this approach for the two existing Parks but it may be reconsidered by Ministers if there are more Scottish National Parks in the future. Interestingly, there are some parallels with the possible future of the Crofters Commission.

Full Planning and Access Powers

- 7.41 As outlined for Option 1.

Comment

- 7.42 The local element is vital in National Parks, and this would especially apply in the Western Isles where the distance from centralised governance and fragile transport links would be concerns. Local people could lose confidence in the National Park if control appears to migrate and the Park becomes just another ‘branch office’ of a national NDPB, with decisions referred to a central HQ. This approach would perpetuate existing negative views expressed in the Western Isles of control by external public bodies.
- 7.43 Some elements of local control and influence would inevitably be lost if Harris were to be represented on any form of national board or committee, while there could also be a tier of centralised management between the main Board and any local committee or staff. Local Board Members can provide a valuable unpaid resource through attending events and sitting on committees and steering groups to support staff. With a centralised structure, Members might be less inclined to offer this level of support.
- 7.44 Achieving local commitment to a Park Plan would become more challenging. Bottom-up rural development and capacity building would be harder to nurture if people felt a lack of local control. A more centralised approach would be bound to affect organisational culture, especially if full control over recruitment and the work of staff were lost.
- 7.45 Under the Federal governance model, nevertheless, a new National Park in Harris could be set up quickly, with the centralised organisation providing support and backup. However, there would be greater reliance on good communication. Staff journeys to a central location would be expensive and time consuming; and arms length management arrangements are not always efficient as they rarely take full account of human factors.
- 7.46 A NPA is required to facilitate and enable. National bodies might more readily respond to an organisation representing all of the National Parks in Scotland. A centralised NDPB would enable specialist staff to be employed that no single NPA could afford, and could achieve economies of scale through centralised back room or corporate functions such as human resources and finance. This approach is in line with the SEARS model (see 5.42 above).

8. The Potential Environmental, Cultural, Social & Economic Opportunities and Challenges of National Park Status

Does National Park Status Mean More Rules and Regulations?

- 8.1 Scottish National Parks are more concerned with encouraging positive management than imposing rules and regulations. Indeed, current powers offer little scope for new rules and regulations to be imposed by the Authority. If (see Option 1 above) Planning and Access powers were to be transferred from CnES to a Harris National Park Authority, and it developed a different approach from the Council's on certain matters, conflicts could arise, although the National Park Authority approach would need to be approved and overseen by locally based Board Members, which should limit such conflicts. Rules, regulations and powers of SNH, SEPA, the Crofters Commission and other regulatory bodies would remain in force in Harris, although the Park Authority would become a statutory consultee on relevant issues and, despite being limited by legislation, would seek to ensure that these powers were used to deliver the Park's aims.

What Potential Economic and Social Opportunities would National Park Status provide for the Harris Community?

Crofting

- 8.2 The land in Harris provides the qualities that make the area special. The special qualities are a rich mosaic, derived in most landscapes from hundreds of years of management by traditional, mixed and extensive methods, often by individual crofters or grazings committees; although the number of active crofters is in steep decline.
- 8.3 Crofting's declining economic importance in Harris is illustrated by the reduction between 2002 and 2005 of 16% in sheep numbers and of 20% in cattle numbers. The decoupling of headage payments (allied to the ageing profile of crofters) has led to continuing decline in livestock, and decreases are expected to continue through removal of the minimum stocking density to claim full payment through the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme (LFASS) under the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP).
- 8.4 Within a National Park, crofting legislation and administration would still apply, and crofting rights would remain unchanged. Crofting greatly influences the natural and cultural heritage and landscape and settlement patterns of Harris, and a National Park would be expected to promote objectives that would support and sustain crofting as a unique way of life, a source of good quality food, and a key feature of the island's communities. Conservation and enhancement of the social and cultural fabric is a core National Park objective, and crofting would be an important contributor in Harris. UK National Parks have a long track record in supporting traditional agricultural systems and practices promoting environmental and social benefits.

8.5 Opportunities through tourism, and participation in land management, environmental and access projects would help to boost crofting, including:

- Crofting's key role in protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment through maintaining biodiversity (species and habitats) – strategies would be developed to meet local needs.
- Encouraging crofters to apply individually and collaboratively for grants from the Scottish Rural Development Programme,
- Scope for crofts to diversity into environmental management through Park Authority and other partner initiatives.
- Through support for appropriate and sustainable economic development, National Park status helping Harris crofting communities to generate sufficient income to be able to afford to improve environmental stewardship.

Land Ownership and Management

8.6 Land managers have a major influence on the delivery of all four National Park aims. Land managers include farmers, estate managers, foresters, gamekeepers and staff of public bodies and NGOs who would manage land in any potential Harris National Park. There is already considerable public sector support for land managers in Harris including schemes administered under the SRDP. Land management is also influenced by market and economic factors arising well beyond the boundaries of Harris.

8.7 The status of land not under crofting tenure would also remain unchanged with National Park designation, as would titles to land and resources (fishings, sport, mineral rights, wayleaves etc).

8.8 Within a National Park, land managers could be encouraged to apply individually and collaboratively for funds from the Scottish Rural Development Programme. The Park Authority might have some funding of its own which could be used to support training, research or pump priming projects to encourage economic sustainability and diversification – potentially attracting additional external finance such as European Structural funding and Lottery funds. Opportunities might include:

- Re-use and refurbishment of under-used or derelict buildings and land encouraged by policies in the Local Plan.
- Enhanced payments for habitats and species protection and provision of environment-related information and education.
- Scope to give environmental considerations a high priority when appraising Planning applications (subject to proposals meeting the three other National Park aims).

- Support for small scale renewable energy schemes that could create surpluses for environmental management and contribute to climate change mitigation measures.
- Scope for integrated deer management, especially if deer spread into areas previously grazed by sheep.
- Scope to bring forward research and pilot projects (for partnership funding) that would improve understanding of environmental sustainability and to encourage UK and international institutions to undertake research projects in Harris (attracted by National Park status).
- Scope to contribute to wider agendas, including climate change, fossil fuel dependency and stormwater management.
- Greater recognition of the public benefits that land managers already deliver, and wider support for this role.
- Added value to local produce through branding that would emphasise the landscape and culture of the area.
- Opportunities to increase economic capacity through training in management and practical skills.
- Increased capacity to help support jobs in the land sector, including crofters, gamekeepers, ghillies, Rangers, stalkers, farmers, foresters; with indirect benefits for accommodation providers, food processors, game dealers, vets, contractors, advisors, builders, trainers, etc.

Education

- 8.7 The new Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in Scotland will create a simpler single framework for the curriculum and assessment of children and young people aged 3-18 and older and will focus on: “successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors”. A key aim is to encourage more learning through experience. A National Park could be a catalyst for or coordinate CfE work with schools and young people – from Harris, the wider Western Isles or further afield.
- 8.8 Scottish National Parks are already working with a range of ages. Young children are involved in wildlife projects and healthy eating projects (e.g. venison from hill to plate). Secondary level children are involved in media projects on climate change, and entire year groups are going through the John Muir Award. Junior Ranger programmes are being developed, and some young people are involved in Rural Skills programmes at school to learn vocational skills, including livestock management and gamekeeping.
- 8.9 National Parks are reaching out to local young people through targeted training schemes, and can help vulnerable, at risk young people from other parts of Scotland to come to the Park to learn life skills, take part in confidence building activities and be inspired.
- 8.10 The North Harris Trust has been active in developing links with educational groups, developing partnerships with the Universities of Gloucester and Flensburg and the

Western Isles Vocational Education Strategy Group. New and existing links could be further developed under National Park status through research and educational programmes. A key role for National Parks is to trial new and innovative projects related to the Park and its features.

Information Management

- 8.11 Information and Communications Technology (ICT) will play a growing part in education in the future, and National Parks are already contributing to GLOW, the Scottish Schools Digital Network national database for schools. National Parks can help to make better use of physical and knowledge resources within their boundaries. For example, National Parks co-ordinate the collation of information, especially natural and cultural heritage information, and have a role in sorting, storing and dispensing information as required. In addition to managing information, many National Parks play an important role in promotion (marketing the special qualities of their areas), orientation (signage, waymarking etc) and interpretation (making information meaningful and interesting).

Housing and Community

- 8.12 The fourth aim of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 is promoting sustainable economic and social development of Park communities. Ensuring a supply of affordable housing in Harris will be important in helping young people and families to thrive and in encouraging others with useful skills and experience to relocate to the area. Recent increases in house prices have made purchasing a first property even more challenging. Harris needs a demographically diverse population with appropriate skills to meet the current and future needs of its communities and businesses.
- 8.13 Evidence from English and Welsh National Parks suggests that house prices tend to rise in response to demand to live in these special areas, and affordable housing remains a key issue, as it does in most of rural Scotland. Though it is still early days, SNH research⁷ suggests that this effect is less pronounced in Scottish National Parks at present, with prices affected more strongly by wider market trends. House price increases might take time to gather pace in Harris, but it is the other side of the coin to increasing tourism – people who have visited on holiday will be attracted to re-locate sooner or later in their life, and the publicity that attracts tourists will also influence people keen to move to an attractive rural area. There is quite strong evidence this is already happening in Harris, but as average property values fall throughout the UK as a result of the recession people might be less able to move.
- 8.14 A Local Development Plan prepared by a Park Authority with Planning powers might prioritise the allocation of sufficient land for housing to meet the needs of Harris communities – particularly for affordable housing. This could provide opportunities for:

⁷ SNH Commissioned report; Monitoring of Development Patterns in and Around National Park areas – July 2007 Update (ROAME No. R06AA504)

- Encouragement for developers, Registered Social Landlords and private landlords to bring forward plans for affordable rented and owner occupier housing, supported in appropriate cases by public funding. Local need is likely to be best met by a mix of sizes and tenures.
- More affordable housing which would enable the population to increase, helping to sustain school rolls and public and private rural services.
- Affordable housing provision helping to generate activities that would encourage more young people and families to relocate to Harris.

8.15 National Parks can provide supplementary planning advice to guide developers and applicants towards plans that will be sympathetic to their landscape and cultural setting. Use of local materials and high energy efficiency to reduce lifetime costs can be encouraged, for example. This could help local trades to develop skills in more sustainable building techniques.

Tourism

8.16 National Park status would benefit Harris through helping to raise awareness of the island as a destination offering outstanding heritage as part of the internationally known 'National Park' brand and through raising quality. To maximise benefits from National Park status, Harris businesses would best concentrate on quality, to improve the visitor infrastructure to match the island's special heritage qualities. Key opportunities would include:

- Powers to provide information and education, countryside facilities (including toilets, car parks and picnic areas) and recreation and leisure facilities, and to protect and maintain path networks.
- Development of eco and activity tourism based on the special qualities of the National Park, which could be brought to the attention of more potential visitors through strong branding.
- Creation of marketing opportunities through a Park brand.
- Attraction of larger numbers of tourists, increasing tourism-related employment and sustaining small scale tourism businesses and diversified crofts.
- Spin-off benefits to other parts of the Western Isles through the attraction of new visitors to Harris (who would visit other areas while in or en route to Harris and might return for subsequent holidays).

8.16 Between 2002 and 2006, Outer Hebrides visitors (including people on holiday, visiting friends and relatives, and business visitors) were estimated to have increased by almost 9% to 196,000, with an overall 27% increase in visitor expenditure. 117,000 people are estimated to have visited Harris in 2006, of whom 32,000 are estimated to have arrived by the Uig to Tarbert ferry link from the mainland between March and October. Others

will have arrived principally via the Ullapool to Stornoway ferry link, with some by inter-island ferry from North Uist and a small proportion by air.⁸

- 8.17 Assuming an average occupancy rate of 60% of the 741 beds identified in Harris in 2007 over the 210 days of the main season April to October (which would be consistent with occupancy survey data), Harris would have had 93,400 bednights during this period. The average length of stay per person in the Western Isles is just over 6 days. The average time spent in Harris by those staying at least one night is not possible to calculate from survey results, but it is likely to be less than 6 nights. Others visit Harris for a day trip, pass through en route to Lewis or the South Isles, or arrive by ferry at Tarbert and travel north without a significant stop in Harris. Park status could help extend the time that people spend visiting Harris.
- 8.18 National Park status could substantially boost tourism in Harris through attracting new visitors and would have a positive impact on neighbouring areas. Key issues would include infrastructure capacity and seasonality. The local tourism marketing group has 55 members and has already initiated a Winter Harris campaign (supported by the VisitScotland Growth Fund) to stretch the season, which has been helped by the improved ferry services (enhanced by Road Equivalent Tariff price reductions from October 2008). Distance and cost are barriers to many who might consider Harris for a holiday, but these disadvantages could be partly overcome through advertising, communication and stressing the Park's attributes. Climbing and other specialist interest magazines would be good media.
- 8.19 The second holiday market has helped to stretch the season in Harris, but this market is expected to decline for a period due to the national recession.
- 8.20 Although bed spaces in Harris increased by 11% between 2003 and 2007, local opinion suggests that B&Bs are being lost. Young people are less inclined to open their homes to visitors and cultural interaction is diminished. There is a perceived need to maintain a good level of serviced accommodation within the area as more accommodation becomes self catering to meet a changing market. Demand lies at the top end according to one local operator who has considered more than ten five-star self-catering cottages. In his opinion, more units across the spectrum could easily be accommodated in Harris, particularly on the west side. Visitors in self catering tend to stay longer than those in serviced accommodation, and experience in other areas suggests that Park status could help increase this market.
- 8.21 In existing National Parks, private sector led Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) have emerged. In partnership with National Park Authorities, DMOs have pioneered web portals, training, networking, quality enhancement and research on business confidence and visitor characteristics. Through DMOs there is an opportunity to establish leadership within the tourism sector. Other Scottish Parks have been awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas as a means of demonstrating their contribution towards a sustainable industry.

⁸ The Outer Hebrides Tourism Facts and Figures Update, Review of 2006 Season

- 8.22 The Outer Hebrides Area Tourism Partnership Plan (April 2006 - March 2009) includes a number of priorities and actions that a National Park and its partners could help to take forward. For example:
- Develop appropriate niche marketing in order to target and attract appropriate niches.
 - Support projects that seek to build on our environmental and archaeological heritage.
 - Engage with tourism business sectors in a drive for better quality and value.
 - Support the development of niche market products.
- 8.23 Tourism accounts for 9% of all jobs in the Outer Hebrides and helps to support many self-employed people and crofting families. In the short term, tourism could gain the greatest benefit of any sector from National Park status. 65% of direct tourism jobs in the Western Isles are part-time, and of those 65% are held by women. The accommodation sector is the main source of employment, especially in Harris, as there are as yet no major paying visitor attractions. There is already some employment based on wildlife tourism – for example, boat trips to St Kilda and the Shiants. Park status should encourage more niche operators to capitalise on the natural and cultural resources of Harris, especially if encouraged by a Park Authority through a marketing umbrella such as a Destination Management Organisation. Already, its natural environment is the most commonly cited reason for visiting the Western Isles.⁹ Park status could also help entice visiting cruise boat passengers to Harris.
- 8.24 As noted above, Harris would need to enhance its accommodation supply across the range of markets and develop other tourism infrastructure to capitalise fully on the scope for increased tourism. We believe that a 25-50% increase on current visitor levels could be achieved in the medium-to-long term through Park branding, enhanced provision, and business development – especially businesses that would market the Park experience individually as well as collaborating in joint marketing initiatives. A high proportion of visitors to National Parks in the UK and overseas will not currently be aware of Harris as a potential destination, and this type of visitor would be the main target for enhanced marketing. As facilities expand and visitor numbers build up, more operators would benefit from opening during the winter, and this would start a virtuous circle that would provide more year-round jobs and make tourism a better career choice for young people.
- 8.25 The proposed Harris Tweed Centre would be a great asset to Harris, and this building could also serve as a National Park gateway centre from the north, while a second gateway centre might be provided at the south end of Harris in Leverburgh. Administrative staff, however, could be based at another location (or locations) depending on office availability, staff availability, employment need within Harris and other factors. A joint community/landowner/ business venture is the type of Park gateway model proposed for Blair Atholl when it joins the Cairngorms National Park.

⁹ Source: Western Isles Visitor Survey 1999

Other Business Development and the Wider Economy

- 8.26 A National Park would help achieve and sustain a clearer focus on the “greener” side of the sustainable economy including:
- Encouragement for sustainable practices in tourism and other economic and community activities.
 - Scope to support public transport initiatives in and around the Park.
 - Raising awareness of the benefits of introducing greener working practices, over and above creating a competitive advantage in the market place.
 - Opportunities for skills and technology development relating to renewable energy.
 - New businesses based on sustainable use of natural and cultural assets of the area – food, cosmetics, textiles, creative design etc
- 8.27 There would be scope for partnership projects with a range of community organisations and social enterprises to help them to achieve their aspirations and to develop facilities and services that will improve their financial sustainability.
- 8.28 Additional direct and indirect employment would be created by the Park Authority and the projects that it would instigate and attract external funding for.
- 8.29 Construction and maintenance work created by the new facilities and infrastructure that would be developed through Park Authority initiatives and increased tourism potential.

Culture

- 8.30 The National Plan for Gaelic states that **‘Gaelic is a unique part of Scotland’s national heritage. It belongs to the people and it is our responsibility as a nation to maintain its existence in a modern, multilingual Scotland.’** A National Park in Harris could lead on Gaelic in Scottish National Parks. There would be scope for an increase in the use of Gaelic in:
- The print, broadcast and online media.
 - The arts.
 - The tourism, heritage and recreation sectors - bringing the relationship between Gaelic culture and the evolution of the landscape and the natural heritage to the visitor’s notice.

8.31 Enhancing cultural celebration and interpretation for the benefit of Harris residents, especially its younger population, would also appeal to visitors coming to the islands to experience a distinct culture and identity. As an example, cultural groups in the Cairngorms have come together to form Creative Cairngorms. Harris could exploit its potential through:

- Opportunities for traditional music.
- Initiatives between the creative industries in the area linked to local culture to create employment.
- Scope for artists and craft workers to capitalise on both the area's culture and the National Park cachet.

Training

8.32 National Parks in Scotland have boosted a range of non-tourism businesses and organisations from Chambers of Commerce to Farmers Markets. Small construction trade businesses in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park have been assisted to take on apprentices through the National Park Community Partnership scheme. In 2007, the Land Based Business Training Scheme in the Cairngorms National Park delivered over 50 courses to 800 people working for over 180 businesses. This equates to approximately 10% of the economically active population within the Park.

8.33 Opportunities in Harris would include:

- Support for training, apprenticeships, and other skills acquisition.
- Support for obtaining governing body recognised qualifications in sectors such as outdoor pursuits.

What Potential Economic and Social Challenges Would National Park Status Provide for the Harris Community?

8.33 Success in attracting funding to Harris could result in reduced attention by statutory agencies leaving the Park Authority to shoulder the burden of, for example, environmental care. This possibility could be mitigated through developing joint projects with other agencies and allocating responsibilities between agencies through a National Park Plan. New opportunities arising from National Park status may indirectly challenge long established land management and cultural activities that were once the mainstay of the Harris economy. As people seek employment in growing sectors such as tourism, IT or renewables, traditional activities such as crofting and weaving would tend to become less important as sources of family income, but would be sustained as part time sources of income or personal interests.

Crofting

- Further reduction in livestock-related skills if new residents are not interested in agriculture and existing crofters divert their energies into tourism – mitigated by township and wider initiatives in which young people can take a leading role.

Landowners and Managers

- Some pressure on the environment in particular locations through increased visitor numbers and activities – mitigated by sustainable land management and spreading activities throughout Harris, in particular through improved access.

Housing and Community

- National Park status heightening demand for housing, placing further pressure on young people and those on low incomes – mitigated through affordable housing development initiatives.
- Dilution of local culture through increased presence of visitors from other cultures and through more houses being bought or built by incomers – mitigated through encouraging young people from the community to stay through providing work and affordable housing, and through events and activities that introduce visitors and in-migrants to local culture (including Gaelic language classes, feisean, etc).

Tourism and Other Businesses

- Perception of the Park as another layer of bureaucracy – mitigated through efficient and speedy execution of their responsibilities by Park staff and directors.
- Tourism and other new businesses (e.g. based on IT) replacing traditional crofting – mitigated by encouraging crofting diversification into such activities to generate new sources of income to sustain traditional land and sea based activities.
- The Park Authority exercising its planning powers to restrict residents in their choice of building materials and styles, using land for aesthetically unattractive activities, etc – mitigated through sensitive interpretation of planning guidelines and zoning policies.

9. The Scope to Generate Comparable Benefits Without National Park Status

Types of Management Mechanisms for Organisations Other than National Parks

- 9.1 Across Europe, there are a number of models for managing special geographic areas with needs similar to Harris, although they tend to face significant challenges in maintaining sufficient core funding to operate effectively. Systems are necessary to maintain governance structures and processes acceptable to regulatory bodies and funding organisations. *‘It is also important to consider an organisation’s capacity to fund projects and manage and account for them properly throughout the auditable life of the*

project.¹⁰ Organisations such as National Parks, constituted as public bodies with a statutory purpose, receive Grant-in aid funding from Central Government; for others funding has to be sought elsewhere.

- 9.2 This Section considers alternative ways that Harris could achieve National Park goals. For example, Regional Parks are statutory but rely on funding from Local Authorities. Other management arrangements include partnerships and limited liability companies, possibly with charitable status, that tend to run on an uncertain mix of grant and project funding. Harris Development Ltd and North Harris Trust understand the crucial need to have sources of core income. The former will be able to enhance its role over the next three years through the recently approved Landscape Partnership Scheme, which will enable the employment of a Landscape Partnership Officer, whilst NHT will increase its economic and social contribution to the future of North Harris if renewable energy revenues can be achieved as planned. The Bays of Harris Association was unable to continue development work once Iomairt Aig An Oir status came to an end.

Regional Parks in Scotland

- 9.3 Regional Parks are large areas of countryside close to Scotland's larger towns and cities that are popular for outdoor recreation. These Parks often include landscapes of regional importance, and can also provide important havens for wildlife.
- 9.4 Regional Parks are designated under the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967, and are managed and funded by Local Authorities, in partnership with other national and local bodies. Direct support from Scottish Natural Heritage will end in April 2009 as part of the Single Outcome Agreement. The Parks have been created to provide co-ordinated management for recreation alongside other land uses such as farming and forestry. There are currently three Regional Parks in Scotland – Clyde Muirshiel and the Pentland Hills (both shared agreements between three Local Authorities), and Fife Regional Park (wholly within a single Local Authority area).

Geoparks

- 9.5 A Geopark is a relatively new label awarded by UNESCO for areas with a significant geological heritage and a sustainable development strategy. They can play an active role in economic development through enhancing the area's image through promoting its geological heritage and developing 'geotourism' and educational tours.
- 9.6 The two Scottish Geoparks, North West Highland and Lochaber, are managed by partnership committees, supported by the Local Authority. Funding is usually time limited and related to project work. Core funding is a significant issue for both of the Scottish Geoparks and cannot be guaranteed. Any staffing is fixed term project based, and limited continuity can be offered to management and staff.

¹⁰ European funding guidelines 2007 re: organisational structure for ERDF and ESF applications

Biosphere Reserves

- 9.7 Biosphere Reserves, designated by UNESCO, are not nature reserves as generally known in Britain. They are 'special places for people and nature'. A biosphere brings no new regulations or restrictions or funding. Biosphere Reserves aim to discover how people can enjoy a high quality of life based upon a superb natural environment. Linked to community planning, Biosphere Reserves can be places for testing out and demonstrating sustainable development on a regional scale. They have three functions: Conservation, Learning and Research and Sustainable Development. There are currently four Biosphere Reserves in Scotland, although their commitment to Learning and Research and Sustainable Development has been limited. South West Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway are considering a redesignation of a reserve in SW Scotland, while CnES has considered expanding the concept at Loch Druidibeg in South Uist, which is already designated as a Biosphere Reserve. St Kilda was removed from the Biosphere list in 2002.

National Scenic Areas Management Arrangements

- 9.8 Under a 2003 pilot project grant aided by SNH, non-statutory management strategies were prepared for four NSAs in Wester Ross and Dumfries and Galloway. Three strategies have been implemented in the latter area, providing a range of social and economic benefits to local people and businesses. At present, the Scottish Government is considering how best to progress with implementing the new legislation for NSAs contained in the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2007. The extra funding needed for the preparation and implementation of strategies for other NSAs has also still to be found.

Partnerships – Limited Liability Companies

The Nevis Partnership

- 9.10 The Nevis Partnership is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It was formed in 2003 to '*guide future policies and actions to safeguard, manage and where appropriate enhance the environmental qualities and opportunities for visitor enjoyment and appreciation of the Nevis area*'. Key partners include Highland Council, the local community, SNH, Sportscotland, John Muir Trust, Rio Tinto Alcan and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.
- 9.11 The Nevis area includes the highest mountain in the UK, is enjoyed by over half a million visitors each year and is adjacent to Fort William with some 12,000 inhabitants. The Trust is managed by a Board of Directors and currently only employs one full time manager and one part time administrator. The Partnership has been operating for several years and has recently reviewed its strategy to try to manage and deliver its basic operational requirements more effectively. It remains very dependent on financial input from its key public sector partners.

Solway Heritage

- 9.12 Solway Heritage is a company limited by guarantee, a registered charity, and a registered Environmental Body under the Landfill Tax Regulations. The Board of Directors is broadly-based and representative of the region's prevalent historical and environmental interests. Quarterly meetings are not open to the public. The company employs seven full time staff and some part time staff, although staff numbers have fallen significantly as project work has been completed.
- 9.13 Solway Heritage receives some public funding but must recoup almost three quarters of its costs from fee income. This income comes from offering professional project management and funding expertise and support to community projects in a way that statutory organisations (such as the Local Authority) and many voluntary organisations are not equipped to do.

The Nàdair Trust

- 9.14 This Trust is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Nàdair operates with a Board of Directors drawn from island community groups and regional agencies, a Steering Group of specialist advisers and staff based in Oban. Nàdair employs four staff and has set up a support service company as a trading arm. Funding has been heavily reliant on two successful Heritage Lottery Fund bids for project work in the Argyll islands and western seaboard.
- 9.15 The Nàdair Trust was formed in 2000 with support from RSPB Scotland, Argyll and Bute Council, Argyll and the Islands Enterprise, AILLST Tourist Board (now absorbed into VisitScotland), Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland. Membership of the Nàdair Trust is open to any community organisation in Argyll and Arran. Any interested individual may join as an associate.

Partnerships – Public Sector/Community Arrangements

Sunart Oakwoods Initiative

- 9.16 The Sunart Oakwoods Steering Group is currently a loose partnership of around 25 representatives from a number of different organisations. The Steering Group's membership is constantly evolving and is very inclusive. Chaired by the area's local Councillor, it meets quarterly to oversee the work of the projects that have been developed under the SOI banner. Individual projects are managed day-to-day by their sponsoring organisations, including Forestry Commission Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, SNH and Highland Council. Leadership and staff secondment from FCS has facilitated ten years of project work, including Millennium Forest Funding, EU LIFE funding and partnerships with Initiative at the Edge. The result has been increased community confidence, training leading to self employment, and tourism infrastructure.

Destination Management Organisations

- 9.17 DMOs involve pooling public and private sector expertise, resources and knowledge to streamline services, mainly in the tourism sector. The Aviemore and Cairngorms DMO start-up budget was approximately £150,000, of which 80% was public funding. Two staff are employed. DMOs help manage and market destinations effectively, and more importantly efficiently, through a partnership between the Local Authority and the private sector. A DMO can become the strategic arm for a destination's delivery plan – potentially capitalising on economies of scale, strong research data and increased quality in delivery.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 9.18 AONBs are set up under English and Welsh legislation which does not apply in Scotland. However, they are considered here included for reference and comparison. An AONB could be a possible model for Harris if appropriate enabling legislation were to be enacted in Scotland. AONBs are normally governed by a Joint Committee as defined in the 1972 Local Government Act. The Committee can have decision-making powers, but as a formal part of the Local Authorities for its area, it must abide by their rules and standards. The purpose of AONBs is to develop and promote the vision and management plan which distinguishes the AONB from adjacent countryside. It involves communities and advises, facilitates, co-ordinates and monitors implementation by others of the Management Plan. Most AONBs have a complex committee made up of many partners and a small staff, normally employed by one of the Local Authority partners. Funding from Local Authority partners is matched equally by funding from Natural England.

Regional Natural Park (Parc naturel régional)

- 9.19 As with AONBs, PNRs are derived from a different legislative structure and we also included for reference and comparison. PNRs in France are inhabited rural areas managed jointly by Local Authorities and the French Government, and have been established since 1968 in rural areas of outstanding beauty to protect and enhance the scenery and heritage, and to promote sustainable economic development (through agriculture, tourism, museums, etc). The territory covered by each PNR is decided by the French Government, and this is re-examined every twelve years in the light of community support. 50 PNRs have been created to-date. The PNR is protected, and support is provided by networking with other PNRs.
- 9.20 The PNRs are managed by an independent stakeholder organisation, a “syndicat mixte” (mixed authority) encompassing all the Local Authorities, Departments, Regions, town and village communities, and local trade groupings that support the Park Charter. The Charter forms a contract of agreement with the partners, who commit to specific management and protection measures. The Charter is negotiated, whereas other protected areas in France, such as National Parks, are subject to much more stringent regulatory protection.

- 9.21 A PNR is managed by a multi-disciplinary staff of 20-25 with skills in environmental management, spatial planning, economic and tourism development, cultural activities and heritage development. Funding is provided by partners for tourism and community facilities and by the government for managing nature reserves, Natura 2000 sites, river basin planning, etc.
- 9.22 The PNR model has some elements that could be applied in Harris but its effective delivery would require full stakeholder commitment and co-operation and there would be no help from a supporting PNR network as exists in France.

Conclusions

- 9.23 None of the alternative mechanisms summarised above appear suitable for Harris circumstances and some have long term weaknesses. NSAs and Biosphere designations provide some elements of a structured approach to management but bring no funding and have little public recognition. Core funding and other project / short term funding, especially from European and Lottery sources, tends to be more difficult to source than for a National Park. Some of these mechanisms have charitable status, which is not possible if the Park Authority is an NDPB. However, some National Parks support Park wide Trusts¹¹ that could have charitable status. The challenges of achieving adequate levels of local control and consistent long term resource allocation, and the lack of statutory status, would be issues for an organisation in a remote, fragile location such as Harris.
- 9.24 A National Park's public and political profile and brand image are much higher than any of these alternative models or any of the existing designations like World Heritage Site Profile raising is important to an area such as Harris as it is a place even within Scotland, which is little known.

10. Indicative Employment, Operating Costs, Funding and Impacts

Park Staffing

- 10.1 Park status would increase direct employment through new Park Authority staffing. The extent of a net increase in total employment would depend on the extent that staff of CnES and other bodies currently allocated to Harris would be transferred or seconded to a NPA. Additional employment could also be minimal if corporate functions (payroll, finance, information technology and human resources) were (for efficiency) contracted through another body.
- 10.2 Currently, the Western Isles only has one Ranger, one Access Officer and one Biodiversity Officer. A Park Authority could provide more of these types of jobs, and the new staff could extend their reach beyond the Park boundaries – working with schools in other parts of the Western Isles, for example.

¹¹ Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) and Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership

10.3 The extent of this non core employment would depend on the success of the NPA and its partners in making applications to Scottish, UK and European funding sources for projects that would employ local people (or people who might move to Harris to take up the work, possibly with a family). These projects would tend to be short term (up to 3 years), but there would normally be scope to draw up successor projects that would keep individual employees (or self-employed) people in work. Project workers could develop skills useful to the long term sustainability of Harris, especially if continuing professional development is budgeted.

10.4 Cairngorms National Park, an example of Governance Model 2, has a core staff complement of 52, plus project staff (recently totalling 8). The responsibilities of the 62 people employed (including project staff, job sharing and maternity cover) are as follows:

Corporate Services (15), includes Chief Executive, Human Resources, Finance, Information Systems and Administration.

Heritage and Land Management (12), includes Land Management, Biodiversity, Landscape and short term project staff.

Visitor Services and Recreation (8), includes Outdoor Access and Visitor Services.

Economic and Social Development (13), includes Economy, Social Inclusion, Housing, 2 staff on a training project and 3 on Leader Plus.

Planning (8), includes Development Management, Local Plan and GIS.

Strategy and Communication (6), includes Press, Communications and Policy and Planning

10.5 If a Harris National Park could achieve a staffing level of 15 through core funding and projects, pro-rata, this might comprise the following (assuming Model 2 were adopted):

Corporate Services	4
Heritage & Land Management	3
Visitor Services & Recreation	2
Economic & Social Development	3
Planning	2
Strategy & Communication	1

10.6 Subject to other considerations, there would be scope for these posts to be based in a part (or parts) of Harris where employment need is particularly high.

10.7 The staffing budget (plus employment costs and expenses) might be in the region of £500,000 per annum for these 15 fte's. A supplementary project budget of c£200,000 per annum (excluding an element for staffing already included above) and other costs of £100,000 (mainly for property expenses and overheads) would give the Park Authority a total annual core budget of £800,000, with scope to enhance this through applications for

a variety of projects to a range of sources (on its own account or with partners). NDPBs are not suited to charitable status. This order of magnitude of core funding might be an integral part of a bid by Harris to the Scottish Government for a National Park.

- 10.8 The “full” Planning powers model would employ more direct staff, but, unless it had more core funding than the “call-in” Planning powers model, would have less scope to generate projects through match funding. Overall, its net employment impact might be lower.
- 10.9 The “light touch” or “federal” Park Authority model would require less direct staffing in Harris and might generate less employment impact through having fewer resources to instigate new initiatives, co-ordinate collaborative effort, etc. The aggregate impact might be half to two-thirds of the preferred model’s impact: i.e. 45-60 fte’s.

Other Employment Impacts

- 10.10 Adding “indirect” and “induced” employment through spending by the Park Authority and its employees on supplies and services might add a further 5 fte’s through the multiplier to the assumed direct staffing given above of 15 fte’s – giving a total of 20 fte’s.
- 10.11 Very indicatively, if visitor spending could be increased after a few years by £2 million per annum (10,000 visitors x 3 days average stay x £60 per day plus 10,000 visitors x 1 day x £20 per day), this would support an additional 50 fte’s in the tourism sector. This would be expected to be the main employment impact from the National Park, with scope for further growth in the future as the development of accommodation and other facilities and services is encouraged.
- 10.12 The other economic opportunities highlighted in Section 8 above might together provide c20 fte’s, including house building, other construction work and other infrastructural development, and inclusive of the multiplier.
- 10.13 **On this scenario, the National Park would generate a total of 90 fte’s per annum and £1.6 million of household income annually at an average of £18,000 per fte.**
- 10.14 A skills development programme – through customised training, work experience and placements – would be recommended to realise the potential local employment benefits estimated above.

11. Impacts of Existing National Parks

- 11.1 Our research for this feasibility study included reviewing impact analysis that has been reported from existing National Parks in the UK and overseas.
- 11.2 Overwhelmingly, reports illustrate high impacts, but it is difficult to isolate the impact of National Park status from the impacts that areas with a high visitor and residential appeal would have achieved without the status. Also, the reports tend to have been commissioned by Park Authorities or other organisations with a vested interest.
- 11.3 A 2006 report on the Economic Impact of **National Parks in the Yorkshire & Humber Region** by Segal, Quince & Wickstead (SQW) attempted to identify the extent to which Park status affected businesses in the Parks and their gateway towns and looked at how NPAs and other organisations support business activity in the Parks. In summary, the study “provides robust evidence that businesses in the Parks – the Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors and the Peak District – and in towns nearby benefit from the quality of the protected landscapes and from the Park designation itself. It suggests that the Parks’ businesses generate £1.8 billion in sales annually, supporting over 34,000 jobs and around £576 million of Gross Value Added”.
- 11.4 “There is no evidence that businesses as a whole within the Parks are suffering from undue restrictions compared to those elsewhere. There is every reason to suppose that all existing English National Parks produce similar effects, as would any National Parks designated in future. These results deserve to be widely known and taken into account by all organisations and individuals with an interest in National Parks. The findings should influence policy-making in both the public and private sectors, reduce criticism of existing National Parks and allay fears, especially in the South Downs, about the creation of new ones”.
- 11.5 Particular points, included the following:
- Compared to both the Yorkshire Wolds and the region as a whole, the Parks have a slightly higher economic activity rate, lower unemployment rate and a higher proportion of self-employed.
 - The desirability of the Parks as a place to live is shown by higher house prices near to and within the National Park boundaries. Although the Yorkshire Wolds also attracts those in higher level occupations, house prices there are notably lower than in the Parks. This may imply that a premium is attached either to the very special landscape qualities of the Parks or to the designation itself.
 - 57% of businesses attributed no negative effects to Park designation. 21% were concerned about planning and development restrictions.
 - National Park status had been a factor in the re-location of three out of seven businesses to gateway towns.

- Businesses in National Parks and their gateway towns benefit from the activities of National Park Authorities and from the preferential treatment other organisations in both the public and private sectors give to National Parks.
- The Authorities employed 285 Full-time Equivalent staff in Yorkshire and Humber directly and their expenditure supported an estimated further 102 jobs, 57 of them in the region.
- The Authorities' statutory functions – the preparation of management plans, acting as the local planning authority, and managing access to open countryside – all bring benefits to business.
- The designation of the areas as National Parks is an important economic factor. It makes a major positive impact on 24% of Park businesses, estimated to support over 8,000 jobs.
- Extrapolating from very limited survey results, the National Park designation appears to have played some role in attracting around 100 businesses to the Park themselves, while others have been attracted to the gateway towns.

Research in 2001 valued the Economic Impact of the **National Parks of Wales**: Brecon Beacons, Snowdonia and Pembrokeshire.

11.6 The key employment findings were that:

- In the National Parks the percentage of jobs dependent on the environment is more than double the Wales average.

11.7 The following benefits beyond the Parks' boundaries were identified:

- The National Parks are icons for tourism inside and outside the boundaries.
- The Parks provide a strong brand image for Welsh goods and services.
- Much of the economic benefit of the Parks occurs outside their boundaries.
- The Parks therefore support not only their local economies but also the economy of Wales as a whole.

11.8 In **Austria**, as reported in the International Journal of Sustainable Development, May 2004, a survey of mayors as key actors in 46 National Park communities in the country was undertaken because the perceptions of communities is often left out in quantitative National Park impact studies.

11.9 The results of the survey showed that the economic impact of National Parks on communities is perceived as contributing to economic development. Economic successes lie mostly in tourism and in the primary sector, in new investments and the foundation of new enterprises. Furthermore, there are a number of crucial elements of the planning and decision process which contribute to the economic success of National Parks. The involvement of local and regional stakeholders is particularly important, as well as the co-operation between the National Park administration and the communities.

12. Looking to the Future

- 12.1 The short term future in Harris is likely to be dominated by pressures and uncertainties in the wider economy. Public sector spending will be closely managed and the National Performance targets will become the benchmark for grant settlements to public bodies.
- 12.2 The medium to long future of Scotland's hills and islands is under detailed scrutiny following reports and calls for policy change by the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), Scottish Agricultural College, National Farmers Union of Scotland and Professor Shucksmith's Committee of Enquiry on Crofting. Recommendation 38 in the RSE Report proposes that serious consideration should be given to further National Parks in hill and island areas.
- 12.3 In response, the Scottish Government is to launch a study early in 2009 to explore the current and potential capabilities and uses of rural land. Pressing issues of crofting and land use, and the wider strategic implications of a more integrated approach to sustainable development, could be explored within National Parks and pilot projects that would generate employment set up.
- 12.4 There is an opportunity to raise the profile of National Parks through these national debates, and for Harris (with a National Park) to be regarded as a place where solutions can be researched, trialled and developed.
- 12.5 Through science and technology, change is accelerating. New technology enables wireless communication and rapid information transfer, and interpretation through mobile telephony. In the future, maps will be digital, and hill walkers less often lost because they will be tagged by blue tooth technologies and tracked by satellite. A decade ago, Google did not exist. Type in the words "Isle of Harris" today and 439,000 English language pages instantly appear; while "National Park" brings up 46.5 million pages.
- 12.6 It is likely that more of tomorrow's tourists will seek genuine, simple, ethical, rooted and honest experiences that are a reflection of the destination. This is what sustainable tourism is all about: micro businesses focused on a niche environmental and cultural experience. A high proportion of future tourists will be in the older age categories, and their needs will have to be met in an increasingly competitive international environment.
- 12.7 Destinations have to be concerned about their environments, and National Parks, through their strong 'international' brand, will be better placed to distinguish themselves from the competition and to compete for public resources.

13. Recommendation on the Best Option for the Future Heritage Management and Community Development on Harris

- 13.1 **The case summarised above for a Harris National Park, and the substantial and sustainable benefits that Park status with a Park Authority that would receive annual grant-in-aid from the Scottish Government would give Harris, argues a clear preference for a National Park as the ideal mechanism to help focus and encourage future heritage management and community development on Harris. This is our recommendation.**
- 13.2 Other options would not provide the resources, profile and political support achieved by National Parks in Scotland and elsewhere in the world. Evidence from other areas that are not National Parks illustrates that, although Local Authorities might have comparable powers and functions, they are limited in their ability to deploy their resources in a coordinated way that reflects the national values of these areas. Nonetheless they still have vital role as a partner in service delivery.
- 13.3 It would be critical for the Park Authority to work closely and build good relationships with the local authority, other public agencies, businesses (especially in the tourism and land management sectors), community and other landowners and community groups. The Park Authority's Plan should dovetail with those of other organisations, and there would be a wide range of opportunities to devise and attract external funding for environmental, social, cultural and economic projects.
- 13.4 The critical objectives, if sustainability is to be achieved, will be to reverse population decline and improve the age structure of Harris. A National Park with an active Board and staff of 10-15 would have the resources to take the lead in new initiatives, or respond to ideas from other organisations, groups and individuals and exert influence.
- 13.5 The National Park as a premium brand would be strong, and Harris would have the opportunity to increase its employment and income from tourism significantly.
- 13.6 Increasing the supply of affordable housing would remain a strategic priority for Harris as demand pressures would grow through a rising population, and the Park could play a role in planning and facilitating the improvement in provision.
- 13.7 There are potential drawbacks to a National Park but, as indicated, measures could be taken to avoid or mitigate these.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Key Stakeholder Groups & Contacts

Public Sector	Contact
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Calum Iain MacIver, Head of Economic Development Keith Bray, Head of Planning Derek McKim, Head of Strategy Rhodri Evans, Access Officer David Muir, Integrated Coastal Zone Management Coordinator Mary Macleod, Archaeologist
CnES members	Cllr Morag Munro Cllr Phillip McLean Cllr Catherine MacDonald
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	Stuart Baird, Unit Manager Rachel Harding Hill, River Basin Planner
Scottish Water	Calum Mackenzie, Team Manager Malcolm MacPhail
Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)	David MacIennan, Area Manager Peter Rawcliffe, Quality of Life Unit Manager
Forestry Commission Scotland & SEARS	Bob Dunsmore, Conservator
Deer Commission	Graeme Taylor, Deer Officer
Bòrd na Gàidhlig	Peadar Morgan, Development Officer
Historic Scotland	Lesley MacInnes, Head of Strategy
RCAHMS	Jack Stephenson, Head of Survey and Recording
SportScotland	Lee Cousins, Head of Policy
VisitScotland	Graham Riddell, Director
Highlands & Islands Enterprise	Archie MacDonald, Area Manager
UHI / Lews Castle College	Frank Rennie, Professor
Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority	Willie Nisbet, Board Member
Cairngorms National Park Authority	David Green, Chairman
Pembrokeshire Coast NP	Nick Wheeler, Chief Officer
Europarc Federation	Carol Ritchie, Director
Scottish Council for National Parks	Robert Maund, Chairman
Scottish Government	Helen Jones, Rural Directorate
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	Jamie Ralston
Local Businesses	Point of Contact
Harris Tourism Association	Neil Campbell

Local Communities	Point of Contact
North Harris CC	Julian Ward
South Harris CC	Hamish Taylor
Scalpay CC	Morag Macleod
Local Outdoor Access Forum	Rhodri Evans, Access Officer
Land Management & Conservation Groups	Point of Contact
North Harris Trust	Duncan Macpherson
National Trust For Scotland	Alexander Bennett, Conservation Manager Susan Bain (St Kilda)
Galston Trust	Julie Sievewright, Ranger
Scottish Rural Property Business Association	Doug Maddon
Scottish Environment LINK	John Mayhew, Chairman
John Muir Trust	Nigel Hawkins, Director Mick Blunt, Area Manager
RSPB	George Campbell, Regional Director
Ramblers Association Scotland	Ian McCall, Campaign & Policy Co-ordinator
Mountaineering Council of Scotland	Chris Townsend, Chairman David Gibson, Chief Officer
Farming Wildlife Advisory Gp	Steve Hunt, Director
National Farmers Union Scotland	Johnnie Hall, Policy Officer
Archaeologist	John Hunter, Professor Birmingham University

Isle of Harris National Park Study Group

Member	Location	Note
Calum Mackay (Chair)	Ardhasaig	Depute rector, crofter
Cathy Morrison	Meavaig	Crofter, CAB worker
Katie Ann Mackinnon	Stockinish	CAB worker
Julian Ward	Leacklea	Freelance Editor
Coinneach Morrison	Tarbert	Wildlife Boat Trip Operator
David Cameron	Tarbert	Businessman
Gavin Scott Forrest	Northton	Crofter
John Alex Shaw	Grosebay	Electrician
Joan Cumming	Seilebost	Crofter, consultant
John Maclean	Strond	Crofter
Kenny Morrison	Scalpay	Assistant Harbour Master
Paul Finnegan	Scalpay	Fish farmer
Murdo Mackay	Luskentyre	Crofter
Steve McCombe	Tarbert	Crofter, Paramedic
Bob Chaffer	Leverburgh	Mink trapper
Chris Merlin	Quidinish	Crofter
Duncan MacPherson	Ardvourlie	North Harris Trust - Secretariat

APPENDIX 2

Frequently Asked Questions

Harris as a National Park

What?

(1) **What is a National Park?**

The term National Park has been used since the 1870s to describe a number of different protected areas around the world. New to Scotland in 2003, National Parks are taken to be areas of the very highest value to the nation for their natural environment and cultural heritage. National Parks in Scotland are unique in that they also actively promote sustainable use of local resources and encourage community and sustainable economic development.

(2) **What other NPs are there in Scotland?**

Currently, there are only two National Parks in Scotland: Cairngorms which covers an area of 3,800km² and has a population of 16,000, and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs which covers an area of 1,865km² and has a population of 15,600.

(3) **What are the benefits of a NP?**

They are popular with the majority of people in Scotland as beautiful places where they can enjoy outdoor activities, see wildlife and generally feel good. Because they provide these services to the Scottish people, the Scottish Government has agreed to provide extra money to help people living and working in the Parks – providing jobs and income to better support and look after these special places and their way of life.

(4) **What are the downsides of a NP?**

Some people see them as extra bureaucracy and red tape. Local people in popular Parks in England close to large cities have experienced problems in trying to get housing. Expectations can be high that things will change quickly and some people are disappointed when they change more gradually.

Why?

(5) **Why Harris?**

The natural and cultural heritage of Harris are nationally outstanding and pass the 'National Park criteria'. National Park status could bring extra money, jobs and people to Harris and demonstrate to the world that local people are looking after their own island in a sustainable way for the benefit of the nation. Harris is losing its young people, while Gaelic culture, crofting, and Harris Tweed are all under threat: National park status could help to tackle these issues.

(6) **Why bother with yet another designation?**

Existing designations will remain but they are rather passive and mostly about protection. National Parks in Scotland are unique in that they actively promote sustainable use of local resources and encourage communities and sustainable economic development. They are about encouraging opportunities, not about new rules and regulations. For example, community scale renewable energy scheme are being accommodated in other National Parks.

Where?

(7) **Where are the possible boundaries?**

The boundary could include the entire parish of Harris, including off shore islands in the Sound of Harris and St Kilda (but excluding Berneray which is now more strongly linked to Uist) – in total this area is around 500km². Alternatively, the Park could be limited to a smaller area including mainland Harris, Scalpay, Scarp and Taransay. A definitive boundary would only be drawn up following extensive consultation. Management of the sea or fisheries is NOT being considered.

Who?

(8) **Who owns a NP?**

National Park status does not mean any changes in ownership. In the Cairngorms, for example, the National Park Authority does not own any land or buildings. Harris is mainly either in community or private ownership – this situation will remain.

(9) **Who runs NPs?**

The Scottish Government has decided that a Board is put in place to oversee a Park Authority and employ staff to plan and then help run the Park. The Board is made up of people elected locally, people nominated by the Local Authority and people appointed directly by the Scottish Government. It is not about people on the mainland or people from conservation bodies deciding what local people should do.

(10) **Who pays?**

The Scottish Government would provide new money to run the National Park Authority. Applications for other funding for development and conservation projects can be made to Europe and sources like the Big Lottery.

Implications?

(11) **How will an NP change things?**

Overnight there will be relatively little change. However, National Parks are highly recognisable brands and the publicity for Harris will increase from the outset and put it on the international stage. The Government is very supportive of National Parks and the status may allow it to allocate more money to the area. The Park can help existing trusts and charities to deliver community projects.

- (12) **How will a NP help tackle local issues?**
National Parks allow a more detailed focus on both an area's strengths and weaknesses. In the case of Harris, National Park status would help tackle issues such as secure employment, affordable housing, tourism development, health and recreation. In the Cairngorms, up to 40% of new houses can be affordable for purchase or rent, and housing developers are encouraged to help with schools and community facilities.
- (13) **Will I still be able to croft in the same way?**
Yes. All the existing legislation and systems for crofting will remain in place and unchanged. National Park status could help to lever in additional money to help crofters manage their land in traditional ways.
- (14) **What are the job prospects?**
A Harris National Park Authority would employ an estimated 10-15 staff who would be based within Harris. Increased tourism and land management activities would support existing jobs and in time create new ones and new businesses.
- (15) **Will there be restrictions on houses and buildings?**
Any Local Plan will be subject to extensive consultation with local people. The decisions will be taken by a Board or committee made up of mostly local people. Hence any restrictions would be there to benefit the wider Harris community. Encouragement could be given to making houses cheaper to run through energy efficiency schemes.
- (16) **Will we get too many visitors?**
Getting to Harris will always be challenging. Accommodation is also limited. There will be opportunities to encourage visitors to come outside the main summer season. Any pressure is likely to be very localised. People like visiting National Parks and 99% will be respectful.
- (17) **How can I be involved?**
People are encouraged to read the summary and/or the main report about the potential for Harris to become a National Park, which includes much more detail than in these FAQs. For further information please contact Duncan MacPherson at the North Harris Trust office in Tarbert. (Tel: 01859 502222; email: duncan@north-harris.org).

APPENDIX 3

Natural Heritage Assessment

Habitats, Species and Earth Sciences

Important wildlife and habitats of international and national conservation importance exist throughout the Western Isles, and it is difficult to find an area that does not support conservation interests. Harris is no different, but it does display certain characteristics that set it apart from other areas within the islands.

Iconic Scottish wildlife species such as seals, otters and eagles can be found throughout Harris. The Hills of North Harris, the Machair and beaches of West Harris, the Bays area and the geology of South Harris all offer more specialist interests of national significance.

Habitats

North Harris

These hills are among the most rugged in Britain, despite their altitude, with a large extent of gently-sloping rock outcrops together with lesser extents of crags, scree and boulder fields. The landscape shows much evidence of glaciation in the well-developed corries, over-steepened slopes and truncated spurs with overhanging cliffs.

Most of this area is recognised as being of significance at the EU level as a Special Area of Conservation and a Special Protection area for birds. This represents 29.4% of the area of Harris. The main points of conservation interest of North Harris are the rich oceanic bryophyte flora, the development of internationally important oceanic plant communities and moorland breeding birds, notably golden eagle.

The designation specifically mentions that this area is one of the best areas in the United Kingdom for the following EU habitats:

- Natural peaty and highly acidic (dystrophic) lakes and ponds

One of only 10 top quality sites in Scotland. North Harris is representative of dystrophic lochans on blanket bogs and heathland in a mountain environment that experiences a strong oceanic influence. The naturally dystrophic waterbodies tend to be small unnamed dubh lochans which are highly acidic, of very low productivity and support an impoverished flora and fauna typical of this habitat. The lochans are also characterised by the presence of bog-mosses *Sphagnum* spp.

- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*)

One of only 10 top quality sites for this habitat in Scotland. North Harris provides examples of the most extreme oceanic forms of wet heath in the UK and possibly Europe. In the most extensive development of this habitat, woolly fringe-moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* is characteristically abundant, along with bell heather *Erica cinerea* (usually

characteristic of dry heath) and Atlantic mosses and liverworts. The latter are more prominent here than on any other wet heath site. Wet heath is one of the main elements in the vegetation cover, and is proportionally more extensive than anywhere else in the UK. Wet heath on Harris is not confined to wet hollows or gentle slopes but runs up moderately steep slopes to around 30° or more.

- Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands.

One of only 18 of top quality sites for this habitat in UK and the most N and West in the country. It is one of the few predominantly near-natural habitats remaining in the UK. The habitat is the most extensive type of vegetation in the high mountain zone. It characteristically forms large continuous tracts, covering summit plateaux and the tops of the higher summits and ridges. The habitat comprises a range of grassland types, often dominated by bryophytes and dwarf-herbs, whose composition is influenced by contrasting extremes of exposure and snow-lie.

- Fresh-water pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)

North Harris includes two rivers that support high quality, functional freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* populations. One of the rivers contains the most important Western Isles population and is therefore the most significant pearl mussel component of the site. The other river also has a significant functional population, but the relatively low number of juveniles indicates that recruitment may be limited. One of these rivers has been subject to human predation. The two rivers represent the north-western extremity of the species' range in the UK and Europe. Outside Britain and Ireland, recruiting populations of international importance survive in probably fewer than 50 rivers world-wide. Only a few viable populations survive in mainland Europe

North Harris supports a significant presence of 7 other EU habitats and 2 species of EU importance (salmon and otter)

Other Important Habitats

Northton Bay

The bay is a fine example in a series of sites in the Western Isles representing the transition from coastal habitats, through calcareous communities, to acid moorland. It is notable for botanical, ornithological and physiographic features. Lowland Grassland, Peatland, Open Waters.

Situated on an isthmus, the very large bay of shell sand, occasionally completely tidal, has a coastal lagoon at its inland apex. It grades into saltmarsh, brackish water fen, sand dunes and machair. Parts of the calcareous wet and dry machair are cultivated on a rotational basis, which increases the plant species diversity. The dry machair on the sand dunes merges into the acid moorland on the hillside above, where the influence of blown sand is apparent in the vegetation.

This is the best area in Lewis and Harris for breeding waders, and is a feeding area for wildfowl.

Luskentyre Banks and Saltings

One of the best transitional sequences in the Western Isles (and possibly in Western Scotland) from the coastal environment through calcareous grassland to acid moorland, which is reflected in the associated flora and fauna. The site is important for physiographic and botanical features. There is a distinct zonation from open shell-sand beach and intertidal sandflats, through areas of saltmarsh or sand dunes and dry machair to rough pasture and hillside moorland over granite. The water systems include running water, oligotrophic and dystrophic lochs with associated fens, and brackish water estuaries. A substantial estuarine Phragmites swamp grows at Liana Horgabost.

This is an important site for feeding, breeding, wintering and migrating birds, especially waders and waterfowl.

The following offshore islands, **Small Seal Islands, Pabbay, St Kilda and Berneray** within the Parish of Harris are also of significance for nature conservation with St Kilda being a dual World Heritage Site – one of only 24 in the world.

Species

Many of the species of importance in Harris are ubiquitous and are not confined solely to designated sites. Seals, otters and eagles (including the expanding sea eagle population) can be seen throughout Harris with the Bays area being notable for otters and common seals. Seabird numbers appear to be increasing, particularly terns, through the control of wild mink which began in 2001. The west coast of Harris is notable for a wide diversity of sub-species of orchids.

Additionally Harris has several designated sites where important species are notable. As mentioned above North Harris is noted for the following:

Salmon, Otter, Freshwater Pearl Mussel

North Harris is also an SPA for its Golden Eagle numbers. Based on a 2003 survey the whole of Harris has 23 territories, comprising almost 6 % of the GB breeding population

The Small Seal Islands, particularly Coppay and Shillay, hold significant populations of Atlantic Grey Seal, for which Scotland has a global conservation responsibility.

The Machair of the west coast supports significant breeding populations of ground nesting waders. In some places breeding densities are as high as anywhere in Europe

Other Key Biodiversity Species

The Western Isles Biodiversity Action Plan identifies the following species found in Harris as important

Great Yellow bumblebee – scope for improvement (pers comm. SNH)

Corncrake numbers up,

Corn bunting – RSPB support expected

Geology and Geomorphology

The great diversity of landscape types and their national significance inevitably results in several locations in Harris where the geology and geomorphology are of outstanding quality. Of special note are the Geological Conservation Review (GCR) Sites. The GCR was designed to identify those sites of national and international importance needed to show all the key scientific elements of the Earth heritage of Britain. These sites display sediments, rocks, fossils, and features of the landscape that make a special contribution to our understanding and appreciation of Earth science and the geological history of Britain, which stretches back hundreds of millions of years. After over two decades of site evaluation and documentation, there is now an inventory of over 3000 GCR sites, selected for around 100 categories (the GCR 'Blocks') encompassing the range of geological and geomorphological features of Britain.

Luskentyre to Corran Seilebost GCR

This site is an important locality for coastal geomorphology, containing a wide variety of beach, dune and machair landforms which together form a single geomorphological system of the highest importance. Luskentyre Banks and Corran Seilebost both provide unusual settings for machair development, on a promontory and peninsula, respectively. At Luskentyre Banks, the juxtaposition of erosional and depositional forms (including some of the highest sand hills in the Outer Hebrides) and active and mature forms makes it one of the most dynamic and geomorphologically interesting coasts in the Outer Hebrides. Corran Seilebost is significant for a dynamic spit and representative examples of Harris dune and machair landforms. However, it is the integral nature of the total landform complex, incorporating Luskentyre Banks, Corran Seilebost and the extensive intertidal sand beach of Traigh Luskentyre and adjacent saltmarsh that is of prime geomorphological significance. The total system appears to represent the reshaped remnants of a much larger area of machair fragmented by postglacial submergence and it has outstanding potential for studies in coastal evolution.

Additional GCR sites in Harris

Borve, Chaipaval Pegmatite, Loch a Sgurr Pegmatite, Loch Meurach, Roneval, South Harris Anorthocite, Sletteval Pegmatite Quarry

There is considerable geological interest in the Lewisian rocks and the rich mineralogy of this area. The Leverburgh metasedimentary belt offers, through a range of quarries and spoil heaps, the best British opportunities to study pegmatite mineralisation in a basement complex.

APPENDIX 4

Landscape Assessment

Harris falls within the South Lewis, Harris and North Uist National Scenic Area, Scotland's national landscape designation. The national importance of this designation is set out in the National Planning Policy Guidelines 14 on the Natural heritage (para 26-27). This states that 'National Scenic Areas (NSAs) are areas which are nationally important for their scenic quality..... as areas of "national scenic significance... of unsurpassed attractiveness which must be conserved as part of our national heritage".'

In the 2002 report 'a National Assessment of Scotland's Landscape' SNH identified a series of nationally significant landscape characteristics which go together to create Scotland's landscape diversity. These are: openness, intervisibility, naturalness, natural processes, remoteness and infrastructure. All of these, bar possibly the last, are fundamental components that create the landscape of Harris.

SNH is currently undertaking a review of the special qualities of Scotland's NSAs. Some of the work for the Lewis/ Harris/ Uist NSA has been undertaken, and the following outlines the key special features from this draft.

Note: This is an interim summary that has not yet been subject to wider views.

Summary of the draft special qualities:

A landscape of international renown

Harris is at the core of an archipelago, where the different island landscapes come together to create exceptional scenery that inspires both resident and visitor alike.

Rich, incredible scenic variety

A rich, incredible scenic variety results from the juxtaposition and intervisibility of the different landscapes within the NSA. Below the bold, rugged hills of Harris, different and contrasting lowland and coastal landscapes combine to provide scenery that is ever-changing and continually leads the eye to distant horizons.

Wild, mountainous character, with deep fjords that penetrate the hills

Although not particularly high on a Scottish scale, the hills give an appearance of considerable altitude, in many places plunging directly into the sea. Where they do meet land, they soar suddenly upwards from a low platform of gneiss. The general absence of development lends a wild character to this region of rocky hills and precipitous glens.

A prime feature of the NSA is the deep fjord-like sea lochs that penetrate the hills, sometimes incising them far inland. The fjords contrast with the softer, more open sea lochs and the lochans found within the cnoc and lochan landscapes.

Extensive machair and dune systems with expansive beaches

The western fringe of sand, dune and machair are a key component to what would otherwise be a stark and forbidding, rocky landscape. The area's beautiful beaches – wide, sandy and machair-backed – are renowned. The clearness and purity of the water and sands are marked. In good weather, the bright clear colours appear iridescent against the darker inland hills and moors.

The rockscapes of Harris

The bedrock rocks that forms 'The Bays' area, on Harris's east coast, is visible throughout and dominates the area. Huge exposed sheets of bare and bold Lewisian gneiss results in an extraordinary, unique rockscape.

Strong interplay between the natural world, settlement and culture

The physical character and location of human activity has been strongly influenced by the natural world, with settlement sparse in a landscape where nature comes across as the dominant force. However, the area has been long-inhabited and the areas of settlement do provide a strong human focus that contrasts with the outer landscape of mountain, moor, rock, loch and ocean.

Human activity has left subtle, yet perceptible traces that contribute to the landscape and give a strong sense of place. Sometimes, these traces are only obvious to the onlooker in terms of the varied texture that they add to the landform or vegetation – the *feannagan* beds being a prime example; elsewhere activity is more obvious as structures or features contributing to the scene – for example, crofts, dry stone brochs and duns, the Bunavoneader whaling station.

The environment and Gaelic culture are inextricably related, each emanating from one another. Greater distinction is made in Gaelic between types and categories of feature than are made in English. This is of practical use, so as to specifically name each location and make identification easy. But it also engenders an intimate 'sense of place', imparting a greater landscape understanding and informing life from the Gaelic perspective.

The very edge of Europe

The perception of remoteness is strong, the islands themselves being physically remote from the centre of Europe, and much of the NSA itself being remote from settlements and public roads. This marginality instigates a strong sense of identity, culture and social cohesiveness that in turn finds direct expression in the landscape.

Great diversity of seascapes

The sea is ever-present, even if invisible to view, or glimpsed through the mists. Sometimes, as from the summit of An Cliseam, there are vast seascapes, over moorland and archipelagos of islands, to the distant mountains of Skye, St Kilda, the mainland, and the Atlantic Ocean itself. From other places there may only a narrow view of the sea from an enclosed beach or bay.

Multitudinous islands

Many seaward views and vistas from the coastline, bays and beaches, and from the deeply indented fjords and sea lochs, are strewn with a multitudinous array of islands and islets. The islands provide elements in a complex interplay of land and water, accentuating the feeling of remoteness and adding to the visual interest – a sense of ever-receding oceanic backdrops.

Pattern of croft and bay

The crofting settlements are strung out along the coast in a rhythmic way, located at the heads of bays separated by rocky promontories.

Dominance of the weather

The ever-changing wind, cloud, sun and rain causes similar changes in the colour, pattern and visibility of the hills, coasts and sea. *'All four seasons in one day'* can be experienced.

Summary

Harris is a complex and diverse landscape containing examples of landscape types for which it can be seen to be nationally significant. The Machair and beaches, the rugged mountains and fjords, the cnoc and lochan landscape are all classic examples of these landscape types. When contained within such a relatively small area they represent elements of a landscape that is undoubtedly nationally significant.

APPENDIX 5

Cultural Heritage Assessment

The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 defines “cultural heritage” to include structures and other remains resulting from human activity of all periods, language, traditions, ways of life and the historic, artistic and literary associations of people, places and landscapes,

The following is divided into sections covering: archaeology, gaelic, genealogy, people and traditional industry. These describe the cultural heritage assets of Harris, as identified to date. Information has been drawn from a number of sources and is brought together as background and would form the basis of a cultural audit in the event of a successful Park bid.

Archaeology

The comprehensive Sites and Monuments Record of the Comhairle contains 13, 264 entries for whole of Western Isles, with an estimated additional 2000 still to be entered. The Parish of Harris has 1328 entries and Harris (island) 1037. As Harris makes up 14.5% of the area of the Western Isles it is under-represented on this Record as the listings only account for 10% of the total recorded sites and monuments.

The Record does reveal concentrations around the following locations:

Husinis (16 sites in sq km), Mhiabhaig (46) , N of Aird a Mhulaidh (28), Tarbert (17), Horgabost (64), Scarista (21), Leverburgh (10), Rodel (115), Berneray (28), S Taransay (9)

The total for the whole parish includes the following islands:

Berneray	143
Boreray St Kilda	3
Dun St Kilda	2
Ensay	16
Hirta, St Kilda	91
Killegray	6
Langay	3
Pabbay	10
Scalpay	29
Scarp	3
Soay St Kilda	2
Taransay	24

Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments

There are 213 scheduled monuments on the Western Isles, and 262 listed buildings

Within Harris Parish there are 22 scheduled monuments and 28 listed buildings as follows:

South Harris

Rodel

Scheduled Monument

St Clement's Church, Rodel	NG047832
Loch an Duin, Rodel	NG050832

Listed

Category A	St Clement's Church and graveyard
Category B	Building at NG 04618330
Category B	Rodel Harbour, quays, piers and crane
Category B	Rodel Hotel
Category C	Building at NG 04938286

Leverburgh

Listed

Category B	Leverburgh water tower
Category B	Leverburgh water reservoir

Northton

Scheduled Monuments

Traigh and Taoibh Thuath	Settlement	NF985926
Rubh an Teampull	Settlement	NF975912
Also	Chapel	NF970913

Scarista

Scheduled Monuments

Borve Lodge	Chambered Cairn	NG030949
Dun Borve	Broch, Rock carvings and sheilings	NG032940
Borvemore	Standing stone and Site of stone circle	NG020939
Loch Langavat	Dun	NG043916

Listed

Category B	Scaristamore, Harris Parish Church
Category B	Scaristamore, Scarista House and outbuildings

Horgabost

Scheduled monument

Coire na Feinne	Chambered Cairn	NG047966
Clach MhicLeoid	Standing Stone	NG041972

Horsacleit (nr Miabhaig)

Listed

Category B I listed building

Manais/Aird Shliebhe/Flèoideabhagh

Listed

Category B Manish school and schoolhouse

Category B Manish Free Church

Category C Manish Former Free Church Manse

North Harris

Huisinis

Scheduled Monument

Meilein Burial Cairn NB000145

Abhainn Suidhe

Listed

Category A Mansion House

Category B Screen walls, gates and gatepiers to E of Mansion

Category B Archway and adjoining buildings, including cottages

Category B Boathouse

Category C Former kennels

Tarbert

Listed

Category B Free Presbyterian Church

Category B Primary School and schoolhouse

Category C Church of Scotland

Category C Church of Scotland Manse

Category C West Loch, House at Pier

Category C West Loch, Pier

Morsgail Forest

Scheduled Monument

Both a'Chlair Bhig Beehive shileings NB117147

Bunabhainneader

Scheduled Monument

Bunabhainneadar Whaling Station NB131039

Ardvoulie

Listed

Category C Roadbridge over the Amhainn a'Mhuill

The Local Plan shows 2 other listed buildings but additional information could not be found regarding these.

Scalpay

Listed

Category A Eilean Glas Lighthouse, old lighthouse, cottages, outbuildings, jetty and foghorn

Scheduled Monument

Loch an Duin dun and causeways NG224966

Additionally within Harris Parish there are 4 Scheduled Monuments on St Kilda and 4 also on Berneray

Notable Buildings

St Clement's Church

Situated in the village of Rodel, three miles south of Leverburgh St Clement's Church at Rodel, on the Isle of Harris, was built in the late 15th century for the Chiefs of the MacLeods of Harris, who lived across the Minch at Dunvegan Castle.

In 1528, Alasdair Crotach Macleod, 8th Chief, prepared for himself a magnificent wall tomb. Above a carved effigy of the chief, four angels circle above the Virgin Mary and two bishops; the chief's castle at Dunvegan and his galley; below is the scene of the Chief hunting stags; the weighing of his soul and an inscriptions.

The arch of the tomb carries carvings of the twelve apostles; two angels and God the father holding the cross and surrounded by the beasts of the four evangelists. This is the finest late mediaeval wall tomb in Scotland.

The church became ruinous in the 18th century and was restored in 1784; it was accidentally burned and restored again. In the 19th century it was used as a cow byre before being restored by Lady Dunmore in 1873.

(<http://www.leverburgh.co.uk/stclements.htm>)

Bunabhainneadar Whaling Station

The whaling station was established by a Norwegian company in 1904. A fleet of 90ft whaling vessels operated from here each summer and autumn, catching whales as far afield as Rockall and St Kilda. Whales were harpooned and, once dead, inflated with compressed air to keep them afloat, then towed by the whalers back to Bunabhainneadar for processing, primarily into cattle feed and fertilizer.

The whaling station was purchased in 1922, together with three whalers, by Lord Leverhume, at the time the owner of Lewis and Harris, and the man who gave his name to Leverburgh. His plan was to process whale carcasses to produce oil for soap, and meat which he planned to turn into sausages for consumption in Africa. It was already clear that the idea was a failure by the time of his death in 1925, and the whaling operation at

Bunabhainneadar ceased almost immediately afterwards. The whaling station was reactivated by Norwegian interests in 1950 to support a single whaler, the *Empire Unitas V*. In the first year of operation 33 whales were killed and brought back to Bunabhainneadar for processing, plus 25 in the second year. The whaling station then closed for good.

(<http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/harris/bunabhainneadar/index.html>)

Eilean Glas Lighthouse

Built 1789 by Robert Kay, with Thomas Smith; remodelled in 1824 by Robert Stevenson. This is one of the four earliest lighthouses constructed by The Northern Lighthouse Board (established in 1786) and for many years the only lighthouse in the Western Isles. William Daniell, who stayed a night here in 1818, described Kay's original tower (which survives as a stump) as 'extremely well constructed'. It was installed with Smith's new purpose-built light reflector (now in the National Museum of Scotland). Of the simple stone cottage, Daniell wrote: 'few abodes, it may be imagined, can be more lonely and dispiriting'. These early structures were succeeded by a tapering, five-stage column and pair of flat-roofed, granite keepers' cottages, with prominent chimney stacks and bold Greco-Egyptian detail in the manner of Alan Stevenson's Ardnamurchan and Barra Head Lighthouses. A parallel concrete range comprising principal keeper's house, radio and engine rooms, was added to the north-west in 1901. Although the lighthouse is no longer manned and Eilean Glas is inaccessible by vehicle, its pier and outbuildings, and the neat stone walls traversing the salty, sheep-cropped grass, are well-maintained. (Taken from "Western Seaboard: An Illustrated Architectural Guide", by Mary Miers, 2008. Published by the Rutland Press)

Amhuinnsuidhe Castle

A large private country house built in 1865 for the 7th Earl of Dunmore, the then owner of the island. Amhuinnsuidhe was designed in the Scottish baronial style by architect David Bryce. In 2003 Amhuinnsuidhe Castle Estate purchased the castle and the fishing rights. The castle is now operated as a venue for shooting parties and other events. (Wikipedia)

General Archaeology

The following have been identified by Professor John Hunter and Kevin Colls, University of Birmingham as archaeological features of national significance

- Northton, a prehistoric site of international importance is a multi-period site consisting of impressive prehistoric structures and assemblages ranging from the Mesolithic (7060-6650 before present), through the Neolithic (3000BC) and Beaker period (2090-1890 BC), into the Iron Age and beyond. The site has produced some of the best preserved evidence for structures associated with Beaker settlement in Western Europe.
- Three standing stones, broadly dated to the later Neolithic, are situated along the west coast of south Harris at Horgabost, Scarista and Borvemore, the latter

forming part of a collapsed stone circle. Other putative sites dating to this period all suggest this region was of great importance to Neolithic communities, both in terms of settlement and ritual. Together they form an important ritualistic landscape that covers much of the west coast of south Harris (as it exists today). This represents an incredibly important area that, after further study, will be of regional and national, and even international significance.

- At Rodal the Church of St Clements, dating to 1528, is considered to be the most outstanding building in the Western Isles and one of the finest examples of ecclesiastical architecture from this period in Scotland. Eleven other teampull (temple) and chapel sites exist of a similar date. Only two of these are situated on mainland Harris (An Teampull at Northton and Teampull Bhrigid at Scarista) with the others being on Scarp, Taransay, Ensay, Pabbay, and Berneray.
- The mountains of North Harris are substantially unspoilt, undeveloped and undisturbed since prehistoric times. As a result they provide an enviable (and attested) survival of human activity in the outer isles spanning 9000 years.

The general archaeology of Harris has recently been described in a paper by Professor John Hunter of Birmingham University. The following is a précis of this paper:

Summary:

The archaeological heritage of Harris is as rich as elsewhere, and in some instances (eg at Northton) unparalleled. But this archaeological heritage it is not always obvious and needs to be searched for. This effort should engage the local community in a range of activities to record elements of Harris life and traditions before they are lost to the passage of time. The local Harris Archaeology Group (HAG) has a key role in all the field activities.

The Western Isles has evidence of human occupation over a period of 9000 years. Early interest by archaeologists has inevitably focussed upon the prominent upstanding remains of brochs, duns and standing stones. Over the last 30 years there has been considerable activity from a range of archaeologists from Scotland and England and they have undertaken excavations to try to understand the relationship of these remains to the communities that lived on these islands for over nine millennia.

Harris contains fewer visible and recognisable archaeological monuments than either Lewis or the Uists, and has therefore received proportionally less attention. For this reason there can be the impression that Harris is less archaeologically rich than other surrounding areas. This is partly due to the extreme topography that Harris offers – from steep mountains to machair – in which earlier settlement remains may have been subsumed under blanket peat or sand blow respectively; part of the reason is also simply that little attempt had been made to undertake a systematic analysis or interpretation of the current Harris landscape.

However, recent seasonal survey work during 2004-06 through Professor Hunter at Birmingham University has sampled differing transects of the island's landscape and

revealed a wealth of archaeological remains. Much of this relates to the 18th and 19th centuries, but it speaks volumes about the people who lived in Harris at these times, and of their ancestors. Several key locations have been identified during the sampling:

In the fertile south of the island, **Rodel** appears to have been a location of high status from prehistoric times onwards, probably in view of its safe harbourage. It displays a prehistoric boundary complex, at least two promontory-type monuments of the Iron Age, medieval(?) and later settlement remains, and pre-improvement house foundations, some of which were excavated. The architecture of some agricultural buildings is of an unusually sophisticated style, and the enclosed area adjacent to the late medieval church also contains additional unusual features. St Clement's church itself is often described as the greatest medieval architectural jewel within the whole Western Isles.

In north Harris, in the mountain glen sampled at **Meavig** there is a concentration of remains representing evidence of different periods from prehistory onwards. Shieling sites are located in clusters along the glen sides, some almost complete with turf roofs on the higher ground, others surviving only as stone shells. Towards the sea, there are also concentrations of features that reflect a former intensive use of the shoreline for boats, transport, communication and kelp harvesting and burning. Further north, on the higher slopes at **Vigadale**, clusters of stone buildings (shielings) have been recorded even in the remoter mountain areas several kilometres from the coast. Most of these belong to the 18th or 19th century, but some seem to have utilised stone from earlier remains and sit on low mounds representing the remains of earlier dwellings from Viking times onwards.

In the machair on the west coast there is considerable evidence of concealed history where sample excavations at **Borve** uncovered a rare pre-improvements building of some size, and at **Scarista** where a henge-like construction, associated with the visible standing stone has been identified together with components of a prehistoric ritual landscape.

Also on the west coast, surveys at **Northton** have revealed the area to be probably of national importance; this is one of the few places in the west of Scotland to be able to claim to have been populated continuously from the Mesolithic (c.9,000 years ago) with evidence for Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, early Christian and modern occupation.

In 2007 a detailed survey was undertaken of past evidence of the fishing activities in the area, with a particular focus on **Scalpay**, **Strond** and the **Bays**. Over 150 sites were identified on Scalpay alone and, when taken in conjunction with modern reminiscence studies, placenames, and local history, represent a unique (bilingual) record of 20th fishing life in the Western Isles.

Harris contains a varied archaeological landscape which reflects most periods of past settlement and land use from early prehistory through to 20th century fishing activities. Dominant among these are the remains of 19th century farming and maritime regimes, although traces of earlier landscape organisation are also visible. Harris does not possess as many large visible monuments as in some other parts of the Western Isles, but this is

compensated for by the apparent integrity of concealed monuments within the sand and machair and accessible through erosion, excavation and geophysical survey.

There is a current archaeological strategy for the island which engages with the local community and schools in a range of activities, as well as using interviews and research, in an attempt to record elements of Harris life and traditions before they are lost to the passage of time. The local Harris Archaeology Group (HAG) has a key role in all the field activities with the aim at boosting membership and allowing professional archaeologists the chance to give training in field techniques to HAG members as part of a long term management strategy for the island's heritage.

Future archaeological plans for Harris include:

- **Ritual landscapes.** Fieldwork at Scarista will investigate the extent to which the site may have been a focus for a wider ritual landscape.
- **Shieling settlements.** Several building clusters in the mountains appear to have utilised stone from earlier (underlying) monuments. A small number of these will be targeted for excavation.
- **Placenames.** The placenames of Harris have been partly collated by the University of Edinburgh, but there is considerable scope for collection of local (Gaelic) unwritten names to complement the archaeological data. Much of this is held in oral tradition and may need to be targeted through the older community.
- **The Mesolithic.** Harris is one of the few locations where this earliest period of occupation has been found. With changes in sea level, geomorphology and land use, appropriate research would be needed to target excavations.
- **Northton.** This is a site of national importance and work is already underway to clarify the nature of settlement and landscape use over the last 9000 years.

The Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) also summarised the archaeology of the area and this is given below. It should be noted that the Commission has not surveyed on Harris since 1928. In those days they would only have recorded the obvious upstanding features and virtually nothing post medieval. They recognise that this is a very big gap in their knowledge, which they wish to rectify when resources allow.

A number of archaeologically significant areas are found, such as a burial ground on Scarp.... In cultural terms the area constitutes part of the heartland of Gaelic language and culture. Various aspects of Highland life are visible in the crofting landscape, and there is also evidence of the Highland Clearances.

A marked concentration of prehistoric, early medieval and post-medieval settlement sites is situated in the coastal zone. Of particular note amongst the rich range of sites are unenclosed and defended settlements (forts, duns and brochs) of later prehistoric date. The Machair is particularly rich in archaeological remains and the alkaline shell-sand preserves the vestiges of old land surfaces of many periods, as well as a range of artefacts that do not normally survive in Scotland's predominantly acid soils.

There are likely to be Neolithic and Mesolithic sites on the coast underwater, due to sea level rise. There are various aspects of medieval highland life visible on the coast such as small harbours, fish traps and bothies and archaeology is continuously being exposed in various places as the coast erodes

Additionally the offshore islands are outstanding and represent a continuum with the mainland due to sea level rise. They are relatively undisturbed (pers. comm. Mary MacLeod, Comhairle archaeologist)

Gaelic

The National Plan for Gaelic states that ‘Gaelic is a unique part of Scotland’s national heritage. It belongs to the people and it is our responsibility as a nation to maintain its existence in a modern, multilingual Scotland.’

According to the 2001 Census there were 58,652 Gaelic speakers aged three or over in Scotland, representing 1.2% of the country’s population.

In Harris the following numbers spoke Gaelic:

Year	Number	%
1991	1861	81.7
2001	1447	69.9

Although showing a sharp fall Harris has the second highest percentage of Gaelic speakers of any Parish in Scotland. It is the same percentage as Uig parish and only Barvas has higher with 74.7%. The island of Scalpay has the highest percentage of the population speaking Gaelic, for any island, at 86.2%. The Western Isles as a whole averages 61.1%.

Despite the importance of the language within the community the numbers within Gaelic Medium Education are small. Only 2 of the 5 schools on Harris have Gaelic Medium Facilities with only 15 pupils out of a total 117 primary age children learning through this medium (CnES website September 2007)

The National Plan for Gaelic identifies the fact that the communities themselves are shrinking as a significant challenge. This effectively means that opportunities to use Gaelic across a range of activities in daily life are reducing. The Plan also identifies that as the opportunities for Gaelic increase, so too will the confidence of speakers and learners to use, learn and pass on the language.

The 2005 Act offers significant new opportunities to mainstream Gaelic, and provides a mechanism through which to ensure that key public bodies engage with the language in a meaningful way and create practical opportunities for people to use the language on an everyday basis.

The Plan has a vision to create a sustainable future for Gaelic in Scotland in which the language will be

- the preferred language of an increasing number of people in Scotland
- the mother tongue of an increasing number of speakers
- supported by a dynamic culture in a diverse language community

This recognises Gaelic as a national asset and responsibility of Scotland

The following priority areas are of relevance to the potential for a National Park in Harris.

1. an increase in the use of and confidence in Gaelic in communities

The most valuable resource we have is the communities where Gaelic is spoken and is still used in a range of everyday situations. In such communities, Gaelic has been used for generations and has profoundly shaped the identity of those communities and defined their outlook and forms of expression. It is essential that we take steps to promote and encourage Gaelic in these communities.

2. An increase in the use of and confidence in Gaelic in the workplace

The workplace represents an environment in which those in work spend a significant period of their time, and for many it is an important place of community life. It is therefore an important arena in which they should have the opportunity, where appropriate, to express themselves in a language with which they are comfortable and/or to develop their own language skills.

3. an increase in the presence of Gaelic in the print, broadcast and online media
4. an increase in the promotion of Gaelic in the arts

5. an increase in the profile of Gaelic in the tourism, heritage and recreation sectors

Gaelic is a significant aspect of the heritage of many areas and communities. An understanding of this is vital to enable individuals and communities to have an accurate sense of their identity. This also has important appeal in terms of tourism and can make a vital contribution to the confidence of speakers and the profile of the language. Gaelic has significant potential in marketing Scotland as a tourist destination.

Gaelic Language Plan for the Western Isles 2007-2012

'Gaelic has a very special place in the life of the people of the Western Isles. Indeed, it permeates every facet of life there, from cultural activity to crofting, and from the croileagan to the Church.'

The Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan for the Western Isles will focus on three Strategic Objectives, which will underpin it:

- To strengthen Gaelic as a language in the family;
- To strengthen Gaelic as a language in the community;
- To increase the number of Gaelic speakers in the Islands.

Gaelic and the Western Isles Economy

There are three distinct areas of activity with enormous potential for job creation, and for helping to revitalise Gaelic in the Western Isles. These areas are Culture and the Arts, Gaelic Media, and Heritage and Local History Societies.

The key document, “Creating Communities of the Future” 2002, identifies six inter-related key “drivers” for revitalising the Islands economy, creating jobs and generating economic prosperity in line with other parts of the Highlands and Islands, and Scotland as a whole. The “driver” identified which specifically related to Gaelic, involved the regeneration of the distinctive culture and heritage of the Islands in terms of Gaelic language and culture. The Western Isles, as the Gaelic heartland of Scotland, is uniquely placed to take advantage of the significant development potential of Gaelic.

Heritage, Local History and Tourism

Local history and heritage provides a unique and important resource for the development of Gaelic with associated employment opportunities. The 2005 Gaelic Links Conference highlighted the development potential of local Comuinn Eachdraidh, and the opportunities to develop cultural tourism. The Plan identifies the following outputs from a heritage and local history partnership:

- a) To begin to establish a model of good practice that sets the Gaelic language and culture at the heart of heritage activities, that can be transferred to other areas;
- c) To enable Comuinn Eachdraidh throughout the Western Isles to achieve their full potential as custodians of the social heritage of the area;
- d) To enable full participation by members of local Comuinn Eachdraidh, and to promote positive collaboration between Comuinn Eachdraidh throughout the Islands.
- e) To provide the opportunity for cultural employment opportunities, recognising the special part played by volunteers and young people.

The recent establishment of “Cearcaill na Gàidhlig”, (the “Gaelic Rings” Project), a tourism marketing initiative which seeks to create an integrated Gaelic-based cultural tourism experience throughout the Hebridean Islands and the West Coast Mainland of Scotland, is an example of the promotion of the Gaelic language within the sphere of tourism in the Western isles. This initiative promotes Gaelic, Gaelic cultural events, and accommodation owned by Gaelic-speaking proprietors, along specified itineraries, based on Caledonian MacBrayne’s “Hopscotch” routes.

Genealogy

Genealogy is an increasingly important aspect of cultural tourism and the Western Isles has seen an increase in the numbers visiting to explore their family history. Harris is particularly well served with Seallam! as the main Visitor Centre on Harris. This provides exhibition facilities to suit a range of interests. It was opened in July 2000. There is a main static exhibition for the first-time visitor and changing displays for the many return visitors. There are also visiting exhibitions at times through the year.

Within the Centre is located the genealogical resource, *Co Leis Thu?* This is based on research carried out over many years by Bill and Chris Lawson, who are internationally known as authorities on genealogy on families from the Western Isles of Scotland.

Virtually every household in the Outer Hebrides in the last 200 years has been researched, and a resource bank of over 30,000 family tree sheets has been gathered, together with details of many families who emigrated to Canada, USA, Australia and elsewhere. The staff advise on the availability of material from the resource as a professional service to genealogists and researchers. Oral tradition has always been strong in these islands, and since it is preserved in Gaelic, which is still in normal usage here, it is more comprehensive and often much more reliable than many written sources in English.

People

Harris has associations with several well known individuals, as listed below:

William MacGillivray (1796 – 1852), naturalist and ornithologist. MacGillivray was a leading Scottish naturalist, an expert on birds and a gifted artist. He wrote many scientific papers and books, and revolutionised the teaching of natural history. He also produced a small but wonderful collection of watercolours depicting birds, fish and mammals. Despite his enormous contribution to the life sciences and art, circumstances conspired to leave this genius largely unrecognised.

He was born in 1796, in Aberdeen, the son of a surgeon in the army, who lost his life at the battle of Corunna in January, 1809, when William was thirteen years old. His boyhood days were spent with his uncle on Harris, returning to Aberdeen for his further education when twelve years old, and after finishing his course at King's College began the study of medicine, he graduated in 1815. In 1823 he became assistant to the Professor of Natural History at the University of Edinburgh. He was Curator of the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh from 1831, and Professor of Natural History at Marischal College, Aberdeen from 1841. He was a friend of American bird expert John James Audubon, and wrote a large part of Audubon's *Ornithological Biographies* from 1830-1839. Audubon named MacGillivray's Warbler for him.

(from Wikipedia and Natural History Museum website)

J. M. Barrie was a guest at Amhuinnsuidhe Castle around 1920 when the Scott family 'fishing and shooting' house parties were legendary. He was absolutely mesmerised by Loch Bhoisimid and its island. This inspired his play, *Mary Rose*, a romantic Hebridean ghost story in which he describes a fishing trip on the loch, "a blessed spot ... the island that wants to be visited" His initials, which he himself etched, can still be seen in the dining room window of the Harris Hotel

Lord Leverhulme purchased the South Harris estate for £36,000, in 1919. He planned to turn Obbe into a major fishing centre and with this in mind he purchased his first shop in a chain of 400 fish shops throughout the UK. They were given the corporate identity 'Mac Fisheries'. His plan was to have fish landed at Obbe and then distributed to his shops.

In December 1920, the village of Obbe was officially renamed 'Leverburgh'. Work began on the pier and surrounding area. A stone pier, with two wooden piers which would provide enough room for fifty herring drifters to berth, were constructed, an accommodation block, curing sheds, smoke houses and a refrigeration building were all erected. Work huts, store sheds and a twenty car garage added to this development and houses were built for his team of mangers. He had planned a second phase of development that would have seen the inner sea loch converted into a harbour that would take up to two hundred boats, a channel was to be blasted between the inner loch and the open sea and fitted with lock-gates to maintain a constant depth of twenty-five feet of water in the inner sea loch. Roads were upgraded to withstand the volume of increased traffic. With the economic decline of 1920 -21 Lord Leverhulme's project suffered with some of the work having to cease and men were laid off. But by May 1924 Leverburgh was ready to receive its first landing of herring. Twelve Great Yarmouth registered drifters landed a quantity of herring that was so great that extra girls were taken in from the mainland to handle the catch. He made his final visit to the Western Isles in September 1924 for in the spring of 1925 Lord Leverhulme developed pneumonia and died on 7th May.

His executors and the Board of Lever Brothers ordered the work to cease and the work force were laid off. They put the South Harris Estate up for sale and in October 1925 the pier site at Leverburgh was sold for £5,000 and the 33,000 acres of land in South Harris sold for a mere £900. Apart from some of the houses that were built for his managers very little remains to suggest that such a great development ever existed. His entire venture in Leverburgh cost an estimated £500,000.

(Source: <http://www.leverburgh.co.uk/history.htm>).

Martin Martin wrote one of the earliest accounts of Harris in his book 'A description of the Western Isles of Scotland' published in 1703. Martin was from Skye and a Gaelic speaker. From 1686 to 1695 he was tutor and governor to Ruaraidh Òg MacLeod of Harris, but much of this time was spent in Edinburgh. Following the young chief's death he travelled to Lewis and Harris in 1696 and wrote extensively about Harris, the people, their lives and beliefs. This is a classic reference to a largely lost way of life.

Traditional Industry

Harris Tweed

Harris Tweed is synonymous with the island. This is the cloth that, by law, has been handwoven by the islanders of Lewis, Harris, Uist and Barra in their homes, using pure virgin wool that has been dyed and spun in the Outer Hebrides. This can carry the famous Orb symbol and represents the world's only commercially produced handwoven tweed. The majority of weavers live on Lewis and the actual numbers based on Harris is currently thought to be 7. There are well advanced proposals for a Harris Tweed Centre in Tarbert.

Crofting

Crofting has a vital contribution to make in sustaining a well populated and well-managed countryside. One that has a diverse and innovative economy, attracts visitors, cares for natural habitats, biodiversity and carbon stocks, and sustains distinctive cultural practices. A crofter is seen as someone who works the land, resides and is active in a crofting community, and has a range of jobs or sources of income.

(Committee of Inquiry into Crofting 2008)

There are 563 registered crofts on Harris of which 15.8% are held by absentees.

APPENDIX 6

Sub Areas

Land Sub-Units (areas given in hectares)

The relative contribution of the sub units to the overall character and identity of Harris is briefly described. Contributions expressed are in terms of local traditions and languages, sense of community identity, social linkages, community building blocks and historical and artistic associations.			
Parish of Harris – mainland land sub units			
1	North Harris Estate Incl Soay Mor and Soay Beg North Harris Trust	24844	Following overwhelming community support, the Trust successfully bought the 55,000 acre North Harris Estate in 2002. In 2004 the people in the three townships, Scaladale, Maraig and Rhenigidale decided that it would be feasible to purchase their estate. This sale was concluded in 2006, bringing the North Harris Estate up to 62,500 acres. The Estate includes approx 130 crofts and 17 townships, including the main population centre Tarbert. It is the most mountainous region in the Western Isles and includes the famous Sron Ulladail overhang and the highest hill Clisham (2622ft). Notable structures include Amhuinnsuidhe Castle and the old whaling station at Bunavoneader.
2	Amhuinnsuidhe Castle Estate I Scarr Hall	450	Includes Amhuinnsuidhe Castle and fishings sold to Ian Scarr Hall during the community purchase of North Harris estate
3	West Harris SGRIPD	6604	A land unit owned by the Scottish Government, who are in discussion with the local community over ownership possibilities. Includes the iconic sand beaches of Scarista and Luskintyre
4	Bays of Harris R Hitchcock	10688	A land unit with several owners but covering much of the east and south end of South Harris. Includes the settlements of Leverburgh, Strond and those townships in the Bays area. The Bays area is the rugged coastline of East Harris, stretching from the village of Dieracleit at its most northerly point, including all the bays, to Rodel village at its southernmost point. Notable buildings include St Clements church and the social engineering legacy of Lord Leverhume is still evident in some settlement patterns.
5	Rodel Lands D MacDonald	810	
6	Kyles Lomas	405	
7	Kyles Lodge T Jourdan	10 est	
Parish of Harris – Offshore islands as sub units			
8	Scalpay (incl Scotsay, Stiughay, Eilean na Praise, Fuam an Tolla, Stiguhay na Leum, Rossay, Hamarasay, Greinem) JTaylor	703	A centre of population in Harris with a long tradition of fishing. Scalpay was connected to the mainland by a 300m bridge in 1997. A number of other small uninhabited islands are also included.
9	Scarp A Bakewell	1045	Once supporting a population of over 200, Scarp was often cut off when poor weather and tides prevented boat travel. Scarp was the location for the 1934 Rocket post experiment by German scientist Gerhart Zucker. The last families left in 1971.
10	Taransay Gaisgeir &	1503	Taransay had population of 76 in 1910 but was largely abandoned by 1942. The island was the setting for the BBC series Castaway in

	Gaisgeir Beg J Mackay		2000. Gaisgeir & Gaisgeir Beg are designated as an SSSI
11	Berneray R Hitchcock	1011	Berneray is the only inhabited island in the Sound of Harris. Although connected to North Uist by a causeway it is in the parish of Harris and is associated with the Macleods. The island was the birthplace of the Cape Breton Giant, Angus MacAskill who was said to be the world's tallest and strongest man of his time; also born on Berneray was Gaelic scholar, Norman Macleod. Antiquities include the Chair stone, a place of execution and Clach Mhor – links with St Columba.
12	Ensay Mackenzie	186	A significant island in the Sound of Harris, occupied until the 1970s. The island has a small renovated 12 th century chapel.
13	Killegray Sir H Wolfe	176	A significant island in the Sound of Harris occupied until the 1930s. An ancient chapel and graveyard lie on the north coast.
14	Pabbay D Plunkett	820	Designated as an SSSI
15	Shillay A Johnston	55	A breeding grey seal colony of international importance. Designated as an SSSI
16	Coppay SGRIP	11	Designated as an SSSI
17	Groay, Gousman, Lingay, Gilsay, Scaravay and other small islands and skerries in the Sound of Harris	39 estimate	Small uninhabited islands in the Sound of Harris.
18	St Kilda National Trust for Scotland in partnership with SNH and MOD	855 The SAC extends to 25468 ha as it includes a large marine element	The St Kilda archipelago, the remotest part of the British Isles, lies 41 miles (66 kilometres) west of Harris. The islands with their exceptional cliffs and sea stacs form the most important seabird breeding station in north-west Europe. The evacuation of St Kilda's native population in 1930 brought to a close an extraordinary story of human occupation and survival lasting several millennia. Heavily protected the islands are covered by designations including 1957 National Nature Reserve 1976 Biosphere Reserve - UNESCO 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1981 National Scenic Area 1984 Site of Special Scientific Interest 1986 Scotland's first World Heritage Site 1992 European Community Special Protection Area 2003 World Heritage Site Revised Nomination 2004 World Heritage Site Status Extended 2005 European Community Special Area of Conservation 2005 Dual World Heritage Status Awarded – natural and cultural
19	Rockall and Hasslewood Rock	0.7	Lies 300km west of St Kilda. It is the furthest outlier of the British Isles and gives its name to a shipping forecast area. Designated as an SSSI
TOTAL			CnES cites Harris as extending to 50,090

APPENDIX 7

The Special Needs of Harris

Harris occupies the central part of the Western Isles and covers an area of nearly 500 sq km, including the most remote and mountainous part of the Western Isles. Travel to Harris from the most populated parts of Scotland requires a four to five hour journey by road and then a two hour ferry crossing.

Most people in Harris live on the 'mainland'. Only two offshore islands, Scalpay and Berneray, in the Harris parish are inhabited although they are now connected by a bridge to Harris and causeway to North Uist respectively. The Parish of Harris contains a large number of uninhabited offshore islands: Scarp, Pabbay, Ensay, Killegray, Shillay, Coppay and a range of other small islands, notably including St Kilda and Rockall.

The most recent population figures show that Harris has 1,924 residents, 69.9% of whom speak Gaelic. The population has shown a steady decline due to out migration and a declining birth rate over many years. Like other Western Isles communities, high quality schooling has educated large numbers of young people who have then had to leave the area for employment elsewhere. The local population is regularly boosted in a modest way, by people moving into the area from elsewhere in Britain, attracted by what they perceive as a high quality of life. Tarbert is the main settlement and ferry port and is situated centrally within Harris. The cost and frequency of ferry travel impose a particular challenge. The road network is fragile and public transport limited.

Despite the extent of private housing in Harris and a declining population, it is recognised that like many other rural areas there is a lack of suitable homes for young people: homes that are affordable and close to essential services or employment. The result is that young single people and young couples, possibly with young families, have to re-locate outwith the area. Additionally, young economically active people are often dissuaded from returning after tertiary education or training or migrating to Harris because of a lack of appropriate housing.

Residents in general care about their local environment and many families have lived and worked in Harris for centuries. Others have moved to Harris and put their skills to work in the economy or as part of the local community. Thus the resident population are best placed to make decisions on the area's future.

The economy of Harris is dominated by public services, care services, construction work, fishing, fish farming, and tourism. The GDP per head of the Western Isles is only 65% of the UK level and the GDP of Harris is unlikely to be higher than that of the Western Isles as a whole. Over half of those registered as out of work are long-term unemployed. Crofting and traditional Highland estate management are the principal land management

activities, and the last decade has seen significant changes in land management practices, including a 55% reduction in sheep numbers. Limited capital and the high cost of materials and some services constrain entrepreneurial activity.

The community in Harris has a strong track record in community-led initiatives from a range of organisations including the North Harris Trust, Harris Development Ltd, the Harris Voluntary Service, the Bays of Harris Association and the Bays of Harris Charitable Trust established as part of Iomairt aig an Oir (Initiative at the Edge) which finished in 2004. Half of the area of Harris came into community ownership when the North Harris Trust successfully bought the 55,000 acre North Harris Estate in 2002. In 2006 the three townships of Scaladale, Maraig and Rhenigidale also came into community ownership, bringing the North Harris Estate up to 62,500 acres (25,294 ha). Additionally, the western part of South Harris (6,604 ha) is owned by the Scottish Government, who are in discussion with the local community over ownership transfer.

Consultations suggest that, while there are already a range of measures in place to help in meeting the special needs of Harris, there are gaps including;

- Mechanisms to better integrate conservation of the area's special qualities with a sustainable socio economic future. In particular, the consultation revealed a perception that the existing natural heritage and landscape designations have not been used proactively to support the sustainable development of Harris. However, National Park status would not alter the underpinning legislation defining existing designations. The new Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 has provision for both the designation and cancellation of National Scenic Areas;
- The mechanisms that promote sustainable use of the islands' natural resources through the plans and policies of public bodies, including CnES and increasingly through community ownership, may not fully reflect socio economic needs specific to Harris;
- Public and private sector mechanisms to promote understanding and enjoyment (including recreation) of the area's special qualities, which are limited. Given the remote nature of Harris and the infrastructure for all-ability access and social inclusion for people whatever their circumstance or means, this will continue to be challenging;
- Measures designed to promote the sustainable social and economic wellbeing of Harris communities, such as those that were instigated through Iomairt aig an Oir. Significant economic and social challenges remain, including sufficient affordable housing provision.

National Park designation could help to meet the special needs of the area through a Park Plan which would set out the necessary mechanisms, and with the National Park Authority employing its powers (principally Planning powers, if that option were selected).

However, it is important to note that while the National Park Authority has a duty to prepare a Plan, it has no powers of enforcement. Section 14 of the Act requires public bodies to ‘*have regard to*’ the Park Plan but there are no specific powers of enforcement contained in the Act. There is a mosaic of public bodies already operating within Harris, each with a specific and sometimes narrow remit. Under the four aims the National Park Authority has a cross sectoral remit but with limited powers and resources. It has to rely on persuasion, encouragement and limited incentives to coordinate and lead other partners to deliver.

The powers and mechanisms that existing public bodies have, notably CnES, could in theory already be applied to meet many of the special needs of Harris. The challenge facing Harris includes demonstrating that Park status will add value and focus and not merely substitute, displace, duplicate or confuse existing arrangements.

Summary Assessment of How Harris Meets the 3 National Park Conditions

Legislative Conditions	Questions to test if the area meets the conditions	Possible indicators showing the conditions have been met
Condition 1 Natural and cultural heritage importance	Does Harris contain nature conservation, landscape or cultural heritage interests of the highest national significance, extent and quality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area contains habitats, species and earth science interests of national importance • The area has landscape qualities of national importance • The area has a range of cultural heritage interests of national importance
Condition 2 Distinctive character and coherent identity of the area	What contributes to the distinctive character of Harris?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high mountainous interior of Harris juxtaposed with its diverse coastline provides a distinctive physical character; • Harris retains the essential community characteristics that epitomise the Western Seaboard of Scotland • The island status of Harris has given the area a long and rich history protected in part by its relative isolation. • Worldwide knowledge of Harris Tweed has given the island a distinct international identity
	What is the contribution to the coherent identity of the area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area is divided from Lewis by deep sea-lochs and is connected by a landward link no wider than 10km, which is dominated by the northern edge of the rugged hills of North Harris. The area administratively has been separate from Lewis since 1889. The native population of the area is distinguished from their neighbours to the north through accent, dialect and by the collective name of locals as ‘Hearachs’. • To the south, Harris is divided from the main mass of North Uist by the Sound of Harris with its numerous offshore islands and skerries. Other offshore islands including St Kilda and Rockall are part of the same parish although connections to the former are variable, whilst the latter is connected for quasi-political and economic purposes only.

<p>Condition 3 Special needs of the area</p>	<p>Are there threats to the natural, cultural heritage, recreational and socio economic special needs of Harris, or opportunities for their enhancement, sufficient to merit national effort and enhanced resources?</p>	<p>The area possesses outstanding natural and cultural resources of national importance. The principal threats to these lie with;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gradual demise of Gaelic as a community language. • An ageing and declining population • The loss of active crofting with resulting land abandonment and reduction in grazing resulting in habitat and species deterioration • Reduced communal land based activities • The decline in Harris Tweed weaving • Lack of suitable housing to accommodate changing social needs • Reduction of serviced tourism accommodation associated with ageing population <p>There are opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigorously promote the use of Gaelic by the younger generation • Make the natural environment more accessible for enjoyment and recreation through improving visitor facilities, interpretation and web based resources
	<p>Does the management to collectively achieve the four aims in Harris require the more integrated and specialised approach of a National Park?</p>	<p>Evidence from the two current Parks suggests a NP approach can bring a greater collective focus and achievement than was previously the case. However, both existing National Parks are on a different scale of complexity, scale and geographical size from Harris and direct comparisons may not be entirely valid.</p> <p>The circumstances of Harris require a different model and indicators. Park status has to add value to what is currently being delivered through the existing public agency partners. National Park principles of focus, integration, facilitation and advocacy do provide an established long term mechanism which, if established correctly, could help a faltering community in an outstanding location.</p>
	<p>Do the special qualities of Harris provide opportunities of national importance for enjoyment and understanding of the cultural and natural heritage?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area offers outstanding opportunities to enjoy and understand key components of a cultural and natural heritage that is truly representative of the Western Seaboard of Scotland. • Currently, the area is relatively remote and has a low visitor use over a relatively short season. A significant increase would still give the area relatively low visitor numbers by Highlands and Islands standards. • The special qualities are enhanced by this remoteness and lack of recreation and visitor pressure. For those who make the effort to visit, the area offers outstanding opportunities for enjoying the cultural and natural heritage. • Some opportunities for promoting understanding have been taken but much is left to the individual visitor to seek out • Many of the special qualities are most easily accessed by more able members of society and opportunities for all ability access and wider social inclusion benefiting more of the Scottish people are limited. However, given sufficient resources, there are excellent opportunities to use digital media and internet technologies to take the natural and cultural heritage of Harris to the classrooms and homes of those who are not able to experience the unique culture and landscape directly
	<p>Are there likely to be specific social and economic benefits for Harris if designated as a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The establishment of the NPA will provide significant high quality job opportunities in the local context • Potential grant schemes to care for the heritage will contribute towards preventing the abandonment of crofting and the decline of

	National Park?	<p>crofting communities across the island</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital values of land and property in the existing National Parks have increased year on year since their establishment. Even in the current economic downturn there is evidence that prices remain above national averages. • The contrasting impact of this rise is the growing lack of affordable properties for local people • There is little evidence yet that suggests Scottish National Park status is a primary motivation in attracting new visitors to areas that are already popular. But there is evidence that businesses are using Park status and values to promote their businesses. • Even a small increase in visitor numbers or spend could make a significant difference to the fragile economy in Harris.
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