



Scottish National Parks Strategy Project



Frequently Asked Questions

What are National Parks?

'National Park' is the leading internationally-recognised designation for places of the highest national importance for natural or cultural heritage – including landscape, wildlife, recreation, historic environment and cultural traditions. National Parks can be exemplars of sustainable rural development which help to create jobs in remote rural areas alongside best-practice custodianship of natural assets. There are over 3,500 National Parks in the world, including for example 29 in Norway and 14 in New Zealand, but only two in Scotland: Cairngorms; and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs. Some are truly wild places; many, including in Scotland, are working landscapes, where some of their special qualities derive from the ways in which land managers have cared for the land over the centuries.

The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 gives four aims to National Parks in Scotland:

- a) to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area,
- b) to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area,
- c) to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public, and
- d) to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

Why should Scotland have more National Parks?

Scotland has some of the world's finest scenery, so would benefit if more of its countryside was recognised with the National Park brand and accolade. Areas with significant natural beauty and habitats need protection, appropriate management, sympathetic access and sustainable development if they are to make optimum contributions to our country. Sustainable tourism is vital to Scotland's rural economy; the National Park brand attracts visitor spending, so more National Parks would boost the rural economy. National Parks promote rural development by encouraging small businesses based on the sustainable use of natural resources such as timber, fish, wildlife or geology. More National Parks would boost Scotland's global image and national identity by demonstrating positive action to protect and enhance the environment. SCNP and APRS have campaigned for more National Parks since 2010. Our overall case is set out in our 2013 report [Unfinished Business](#).

Where should they be?

In 2013 we proposed at least [seven further areas](#) as National Parks: Galloway; the Scottish Borders; Ben Nevis/Glen Coe/Black Mount, a Coastal and Marine National Park centred on Mull; Glen Affric; Harris; and Wester Ross. Since then lively local campaigns have developed in the Borders and Galloway. The [Campaign for a Scottish Borders National Park](#) has published a comprehensive professionally-researched [feasibility study](#) and

responses to a recent Scottish Borders Council planning consultation showed clear local support. The [Galloway National Park Association](#) has carried out extensive local consultation demonstrating widespread public support, and has submitted a [detailed report](#) to the Scottish Government calling for a full official feasibility study.

How much do National Parks cost, and who pays for them?

The two existing National Parks cost the Scottish Government about £13m per annum; they are Non-Departmental Public Bodies funded 100% by the Scottish Government. Another seven National Parks could therefore be created for about £45m per annum, probably substantially less than this as most of them would cover smaller areas and fewer local authorities. To put this figure in context, it represents around 20% of the Scottish Government's average underspend over the last decade. This would represent a highly effective investment of public funds; for example, US National Parks [return over \\$10 for every \\$1 invested](#) by central government in the National Park Service.

Who runs National Parks?

National Parks in Scotland are governed by boards made up of directly-elected local people, local councillors and national experts. They employ staff with professional skills in areas of expertise relevant to the National Park's aims, such as land management, sustainable tourism and rural development. They work with many other organisations to produce an agreed National Park Plan and review it regularly.

Are National Parks locally accountable?

Yes. The National Parks (Scotland) Act prescribes the membership of National Park Authorities as 40% councillors appointed by local authorities, 40% national experts appointed by the Scottish Government and 20% directly-elected local residents. In effect this means that local people have the ultimate say over what happens in National Parks; there is local democratic control over a nationally important area. Further information is set out in our report [Future National Parks in Scotland – Possible Governance Models](#).

What do National Parks mean for farming?

Designating a National Park brings no additional rules or restrictions over agriculture. Existing National Parks in Britain are predominantly in upland areas, but some, such as the South Downs, include areas of intensively farmed agricultural land. Indeed, the special qualities of an area which led to its designation sometimes result at least partly from the way in which the land has been farmed for generations. National Park Authorities (NPAs) aim to reconcile farming and sporting estate objectives with other local and national interests so that these special qualities are safeguarded for future generations. Several examples of how this works in practice are given in our [Support for Farming in National Parks](#) report.

NPAs generally aspire to ensure high-quality location and design of development, including farm buildings. They seek to achieve this both by issuing general guidance and by working closely with anyone planning a development. National Park staff also play an active role in ensuring that any recreation undertaken by visitors is achieved in ways that are compatible with land managing interests. They invest in physical facilities such as paths, bike routes and car parks and in countryside rangers and other staff on the ground, a particularly valuable service when so many local authorities are cutting back on such work.

As for any other local residents, farmers and other land managers can stand for election to the NPA and thereby seek to influence its policies and approach; this has regularly happened elsewhere.

What do National Parks mean for forestry?

Both Scotland's existing National Parks have extensive areas both of natural and semi-natural woodland and of large commercial forestry plantations. Both have actively encouraged further woodland expansion, for example through the Great Trossachs Forest and Cairngorms Connect projects. Both National Park Authorities (NPAs) have sought constructive relationships with Forestry Scotland and with the timber industry. Any future National Parks would also contain forests and woodlands to a varying extent.

Brexit is casting doubt over the future of upland agriculture, and climate mitigation policies are encouraging more tree planting. The expansion of forestry brings benefits including employment in planting, felling and timber processing. However, it can also have adverse impacts on the environment and communities, such as acidification of water bodies, increase in flash flooding, loss of landscape diversity and damage to narrow roads by timber trucks. Recent years have witnessed efforts to make forestry more environmentally benign, to invest in recreational provision and to involve local people more in decision-making about future plans and forest management.

The future of land use, including forestry, would be central to any National Park's agenda. NPAs have a crucial role in seeking to foster improved mutual understanding and dialogue between all parties in the land use debate, as part of efforts to generate a shared vision for the future of the area and to secure better integrated land management. Forestry in a National Park should adhere to the highest standards, demonstrate multiple benefits, seek integration with other land uses and engage and involve local communities, aiming to demonstrate responsible land stewardship.

Would National Parks stop field sports?

No. Designating a National Park brings no additional rules or restrictions over stalking, shooting or fishing. The legislation regulating field sports and associated activities applies in National Parks the same as it does elsewhere. National Park Authorities (NPAs) frequently seek to resolve any tensions which may arise between sporting and conservation objectives. For example, the Cairngorms NPA is bringing together relevant parties to try to reconcile commercial deer stalking interests with those of land managers seeking to expand woodland cover, whether for timber production or environmental reasons.

Would a National Park lead to more livestock being harmed by dogs?

National Park staff and facilities can play a major role in reducing dog attacks on livestock, by educating dog owners and by physically separating regular dog exercise routes from fields used for livestock. Farmers are understandably concerned about the harm that uncontrolled dogs cause to livestock, leading some to worry that National Parks could exacerbate this problem by encouraging more walkers and other visitors. However, the evidence suggests that most livestock worrying involves unaccompanied dogs, either on the loose from their homes or escaped from commercial dog walkers.

What are National Parks doing about the climate emergency?

Scottish National Parks have statutory aims to promote sustainable use of resources and sustainable social and economic development, and both existing National Park Authorities (NPAs) have made explicit commitments to tackling climate change in their National Park Plans. They are therefore ideally placed to demonstrate innovative solutions to the climate emergency and are actively doing so, particularly through nature-based projects including large-scale peatland restoration, woodland regeneration and river restoration. This type of work is aimed both at adapting to those changes which are already inevitable and at

helping to reduce the likelihood of future impacts such as high temperatures, heavy rainfall and more frequent flooding. A great deal of this kind of conservation work is already taking place across both existing National Parks by many different land managers, communities and conservation organisations. More National Parks in Scotland would undoubtedly mean more of this forward-looking type of work being carried out.

Both NPAs encourage new development to take place in locations near to existing facilities and have invested considerably in developing walking and cycling networks within and between local villages and towns. The aim is to encourage both local people and visitors to use zero-carbon modes of transport while also improving health and well-being. NPA planning departments actively encourage low-carbon design of all developments, for example the use of low-energy building materials and the siting and orientation of new buildings to maximise solar gain and shelter from winds. Local Development Plan policies require sustainable drainage systems, low or zero carbon technology on all new buildings and replacements for any trees removed through development. NPAs have also sought to demonstrate good practice by reducing their own CO₂ emissions, for example through cutting vehicle usage, switching to low-carbon heat and electricity sources and maximising recycling. For further information see:

[Planning for Climate Change – Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority](#)

[The Climate Emergency – Cairngorms National Park Authority](#)

How does planning work in National Parks?

The town and country planning system operates in the same way in National Parks as elsewhere. However, the two existing Scottish National Parks operate different planning régimes. Both are responsible for 'development planning', ie preparing the Local Development Plan which gives spatial expression to the ambitions set out in the National Park Plan. However, whilst the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (NPA) is also responsible for 'development management', ie determining all planning applications in its area, the Cairngorms NPA only determines those it assesses to be of particular importance to the National Park's purposes. All planning applications are submitted to local planning authorities as normal, but the CNPA has powers to 'call in' some of them if it decides to do so.

To be effective, NPAs need to have planning powers to pursue some of their objectives and to give them standing and authority in the community. A unified system avoids confusion and duplication of effort. In England, several decades of experience in operating a variety of different arrangements eventually resulted in all National Parks being given both development planning and development management powers.

Would National Parks prevent new wind farms?

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) states that wind farms will not be acceptable in National Parks. However, it is likely that a National Park established in either the Borders or Galloway would include existing wind farms within its boundaries. This issue would undoubtedly need to be debated and settled during the process of establishing such a National Park. SPP does not define the term 'wind farm', but it generally refers to large-scale commercial energy developments; for example, small wind turbines and hydro-electric schemes have been permitted in the two existing National Parks.

The long-term fate of existing developments would need to be addressed by the National Park Authority (NPA) and the Scottish Government in the context of long-term policy options for energy generation as well as for conservation and rural development. It will

be crucial that this is done in a way that recognises the complex nature of the rural economy and the potential interactions between different elements within it. A NPA would be expected to set an example in seeking to reconcile all of these various interests so as to ensure that any development, including for energy generation, is genuinely sustainable from an environmental and social as well as an economic perspective.

Would National Parks prevent new pylon lines?

Companies which build power transmission lines are expected to exercise particular care when planning and constructing power lines in protected landscapes such as National Parks. Electricity regulator Ofgem accepts that higher costs may be justified to reduce damaging impacts in such areas. Ofgem funds are available on a competitive basis to help grid operators to reduce the impacts of existing lines in protected landscapes. However, this is likely to apply only in areas which have already been designated, not in ones which might be in the future.

Do National Parks prevent development?

No. National Parks seek to guide and manage change in the public interest, rather than to prevent it altogether. National Park Authorities (NPAs) bring together all relevant interests to agree and deliver a shared National Park Plan, hoping to set a good example for others to follow. They then actively promote types of development which are appropriate according to that Plan, particularly ones which bring environmental and social as well as economic benefits. There is no evidence that NPAs are more restrictive than other planning authorities; for example, in 2016-18 Loch Lomond & the Trossachs NPA approved an average of 97% of planning applications against a Scottish average of 94%.

Who are SCNP and APRS?

The Scottish Campaign for National Parks (SCNP) promotes the protection, enhancement and enjoyment of National Parks, potential National Parks and other nationally outstanding areas worthy of special protection. SCNP is a registered Scottish charity, No SC031008. www.scnp.org.uk

The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS) promotes the care of all of Scotland's rural landscapes. APRS is a registered Scottish charity, No SC016139. www.aprs.scot

The Scottish National Parks Strategy Project is a joint project between SCNP and APRS.

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