



The Potential for a Galloway National Park



MEMBER'S BUSINESS DEBATE 11 FEBRUARY 2020

PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

Summary

Scotland's National Parks lead the way in tackling the climate emergency and nature crisis, promoting mental and physical health and well-being, boosting rural employment and celebrating our world-class landscapes. They have built up substantial expertise in outdoor recreation and in sustainable economic and social development. New National Parks would therefore be ideally placed to kick-start the green future that remote rural areas now require. Scotland needs more National Parks, including in Galloway!

What are National Parks?

- National Parks are the means by which countries across the world draw attention to, protect and manage their most beautiful areas, notable for their natural and often cultural heritage – including landscape, wildlife, recreation, historic environment and cultural traditions
- National Parks are exemplars of 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 Scotland has only two: Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and Cairngorms National Park, both now nearly twenty years old
- Some National Parks are near-pristine wildernesses; many, including those in Scotland, are lived-in, working landscapes, where some of their special qualities derive from the ways in which generations of farmers and others have shaped and cared for the land over the centuries
- The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, which enables the Scottish Government to propose areas for designation, allows considerable flexibility in the design of National Parks
- The 2000 Act requires Scottish National Parks to pursue the sustainable economic and social development of local communities alongside conservation and recreation

Accountability and Powers

- National Parks in Scotland are governed by boards made up of directly-elected local people (at least 1/5 of members), local councillors and national experts, ensuring a local majority
- The 2000 Act enables the powers of individual National Parks to be tailored to the circumstances and needs of their areas, including in relation to planning

Why Should Scotland Have More National Parks?

- World class scenery: Scotland has some of the finest scenery in the world, so creating more National Parks is the obvious way to highlight and celebrate this fact
- Management and protection: areas with outstanding scenery and natural habitats require protection, management, sympathetic public access and development
- Climate emergency and nature crisis: Scotland's two existing National Parks already play leading roles here, eg through peatland restoration and species recovery programmes; creating more would greatly enhance the resources available for this crucial task
- Tourism: tourism is vital to the economy of Scotland's rural areas, but for long-term success must be sustainable; National Parks supply the required combination of a brand image that attracts visitors and their spending and the management needed to contain their impact
- Rural development: National Parks boost the economy, benefiting and attracting not only tourism-related businesses and small lifestyle companies based on the sustainable use of

natural resources such as timber, fish, wildlife or geology, but also mobile knowledge-based enterprises and the professionals needed in sectors such as health and education

- National identity: more National Parks would inspire pride and passion from local people and visitors alike, and would boost Scotland's global image by demonstrating positive action to protect and enhance the environment

Visitor Management in the Countryside

- The past year has revealed just how essential this is, with many reports of problems related to parking, toilets, litter, camping, fires and path erosion
- Managing access to the countryside and outdoor recreation are at the heart of a National Park's mission, so more National Parks could contribute significantly to resolving these problems, benefiting both visitors and local communities
- New National Parks in some of Scotland's less well-known scenic gems, such as Galloway, could relieve pressure on current hotspots, particularly when we are expecting more domestic visitors

The 30% by 2030 Campaign

- In December 2020 the Scottish Government announced its commitment to increase protected areas for nature from the current less than 23% to at least 30% of Scotland's terrestrial area by 2030, as proposed by the international [Campaign for Nature](#)
- The most realistic way to achieve this would be to designate more National Parks, as is already planned south of the border
- In some cases, as in Galloway, these could build on and complement the work of existing initiatives with compatible aims, such as Biosphere Reserves and Geoparks, but adding brand image, permanence, relevant powers and better resourcing

Unfinished Business?

- The Scottish Parliament always envisaged more than two National Parks and the Scottish Government has never stated that only two areas in Scotland merit National Park status
- The [Scottish Campaign for National Parks](#) (SCNP) and the [Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland](#) (APRS) have campaigned for more National Parks since 2010; our overall case is set out in our 2013 report [Unfinished Business](#)
- In 2015 we submitted a [Petition](#) to the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee; in 2015-16 we published four more detailed [topic reports](#) on specific aspects of our case
- We propose that at least [seven further areas](#) would benefit from being designated as National Parks: Ben Nevis/Glen Coe/Black Mount, the Cheviots, a Coastal and Marine National Park centred around Mull; Galloway; Glen Affric; Harris; and Wester Ross

Political and Public Support

- In a debate on 31/10/19 to mark the centenary of the Forestry Act, MSPs agreed to an amendment recognising National Parks' contribution to forestry, including: "the Parliament ... believes that new national parks should be designated"
- The SCNP/APRS campaign is supported by John Muir Trust, Mountaineering Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Ramblers Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Wild Land Group, Scottish Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust Scotland

Local Campaigns

- Two community-based campaigns are calling for National Parks in their areas
- The [Campaign for a Scottish Borders National Park](#) has published a comprehensive professionally researched and written [feasibility study](#)
- 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 requesting it to carry out a full official feasibility study

Further Information

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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 APRS promotes the care of **all** of Scotland's rural landscapes. APRS is a registered Scottish charity, No SC016139. www.aprs.scot