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Gillian Martin MSP
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Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
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6 August 2026

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

RE: Commencement of Natural Environment Act, Part 2 National Parks

Thank you for alerting Action to Protect Rural Scotland to the Scottish Government's plans for implementing the Natural Environment (Scotland) Act, as set out in your letter to the Conveners of the relevant Parliamentary committees about the commencement of its provisions.

As you will no doubt appreciate, the provisions relating to National Parks are of particular interest to APRS, and to its recently established Mayhew committee whose work focuses on protected landscapes. We welcome commencement, and are keen to see early action to implement the new Section 1A of the National Parks (Scotland) Act, which requires Scottish Ministers to prepare a National Parks policy statement.

We hope that the policy statement when finalised will represent a widely agreed platform upon which Scotland's National Parks can build with confidence to play a major part, not only in tackling the climate and nature emergency but in achieving the best possible future for the country as a whole.

Setting out Scottish Ministers' policy direction and vision for National Parks alongside anticipated outcomes, if they are developed in an inclusive and transparent manner, will be a big step towards redressing any ongoing confusion and misunderstanding about the remit, role and powers of Scottish National Parks. These were exposed during the consultation on the proposed Galloway National Park, and then to some degree exploited by the opponents of the Scottish Government's proposed park.

APRS is also keen to see guidance on how the new and existing duties on public bodies in relation to National Parks are expected to operate, produced as soon as reasonably possible.

The widespread sadness over the impacts of the latest wildfire in the Cairngorms National Park has emphasised the high regard in which Scotland's finest landscapes are held and the support for their stewardship. We hope that you will share our conviction that the early production of a policy statement, building on the useful discussions that took place during

the Parliamentary scrutiny of the then NE Bill, is urgently needed. APRS will gladly provide whatever help we can in making the development of it as constructive and productive as possible and would be more than happy to meet you and/or your officials to discuss how best to initiate and conduct the necessary dialogue. We hope that a commitment to launch it will appear in the forthcoming Programme for Government.

Yours sincerely,

John Thomson,

Chair, APRS Mayhew Committee

APRS (Action to Protect Rural Scotland)
www.aprs.scot

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Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs
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Our Reference: 202600532086
Your Reference: Commencement of Natural Environment Act, Part 2 National Parks

2 September 2026

Dear Nikki,

Thank you for your letter of 6 August regarding the commencement of Part 2 of the Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2026 relating to National Parks.

I welcome your support for the commencement of these provisions and agree that the National Parks Policy Statement has an important role to play in establishing a shared vision for Scotland's National Parks, enabling them to contribute fully to tackling the climate and nature crises.

I understand that you have been in contact with my officials regarding a meeting. As this work is being taken forward at official level, they will be in touch shortly to agree a suitable date to meet with you and discuss the next steps.

Yours sincerely

GILLIAN MARTIN

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Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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