

# **PE2089/A: Stop More National Parks in Scotland**

## **Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands submission, 22 May 2024**

Dear Jackson Carlaw MSP (Convenor),

Please see below the Scottish Government's response to the petition:

### **PE2089: Stop More National Parks in Scotland**

- Suspend any action to create further National Parks in Scotland.
- Instruct an independent review on the operation of the current National Parks, including assessment of the economic impacts on businesses & industries within the two parks including, but not exclusive to, farming, forestry, crofting and angling.
- Conduct a consultation with representatives of rural businesses & Community Councils in order to help to frame the remit of said independent review.

### **Scottish Government response to the petition**

In May 2023 the Scottish Government invited expressions of interest in new National Parks and we received a positive response from communities and organisations across Scotland. In October 2023 the Scottish Government invited communities to explore, develop and submit nominations for their area to be considered for designation as Scotland's next National Park. This followed a number of public consultations on new National Parks and on the criteria for new National Parks that was set out in our published appraisal framework: [New National Parks: nominations guidance and appraisal framework - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-national-parks-nominations-guidance-and-appraisal-framework-2023/pages/1-to-4.aspx).

Five nominations were received by 29 February 2024 from Galloway, Lochaber, Loch Awe, Scottish Borders and Tay Forest.

The appraisal of these nominations is underway and the nominations are being assessed against the six published criteria in the appraisal framework: outstanding national importance; size, character and coherence; meeting the special needs of the area; strategic contribution; visitor management and tourism; and local support.

Nominating groups were asked to set out the rationale for a new National Park in their area and to demonstrate and provide evidence of how their nomination meets each of the criteria. In terms of the local support criterion, nominations were required to set out who has been involved with the development of the nomination and to demonstrate the level of local support for the proposal. They were also asked to explain how they have engaged with local communities and interest groups in the development of the proposal. This includes residents, community bodies, landowners and managers, businesses, third sector organisations, public bodies and relevant local authorities. The guidance also requires nominations to include details of any concerns and opposition from stakeholders and affected communities. We

recognise that within some communities there are concerns about the impact a new Park could have in their area.

The appraisal process is expected to conclude shortly and a report is to be provided to Ministers in the Summer.

Once an area or areas have been identified by Ministers, the statutory process for designating a new National Park will commence. This includes a formal 'reporter' process which will involve extensive, further engagement working with communities and businesses in the proposed area(s), including a formal 12 week consultation on the proposal. There would also be a further 12 week consultation of any draft designation order before being considered by Parliament.

With regard to the economic, social and environmental value of National Parks, evidence shows that our existing National Parks support thriving local economies, help to manage millions of visitors and protect the natural environment for the benefit of current and future generations. Our parks play a significant role in generating and leveraging investment, creating new employment opportunities and bringing communities together to address local priorities.

For example, the Cairngorms 2030 programme supports 25 projects across Cairngorms National Park. The total value of the programme is £42.3 million, including over £10m funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. These projects deliver benefits for rural communities and businesses across a range of areas including health and wellbeing, nature restoration, Net Zero and sustainable transport.

In Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, the Park Authority plays an important role in the experience of millions of visitors to the National Park each year through its investment in visitor sites and hubs, support for outdoor learning, investment in digital technologies, ranger services and investment in the Park's recreational facilities and path network. Nearly £450 million was generated in the local economy in 2022 through visitor and tourism businesses.

An overview of the performance of the existing two National Park Authorities in Scotland is provided annually through their published Annual Report and Accounts. These are available here for 2022-23:

[Microsoft Word - 231218 Final Accounts 2022-23 \(cairngorms.co.uk\)](https://www.cairngorms.co.uk/231218-Final-Accounts-2022-23)

[LLTNPA-Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2022-23.pdf \(lochlomond-trossachs.org\)](https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/LLTNPA-Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2022-23.pdf)

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