

# PE2089/E: Stop More National Parks in Scotland

## Scottish Campaign for National Parks written submission, 12 November 2024

### Benefits of National Parks

1. The Scottish Government note on “The Value of National Parks in Scotland” from February 2024 gives a succinct overview of many of their benefits:-

<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/national-designations/national-parks/value-national-parks-scotland>

2. Scottish Campaign for National Parks and Action to Protect Rural Scotland recently produced a short [briefing paper for MSPs](#) summarising benefits of National Parks with a particular focus on social and economic benefits, as set out in two recent reports from Scottish Environment LINK.

3. On 30 October John Mayhew mentioned that the visitor economy alone in Scottish National Parks returns far more than the Scottish Government investment in both Scottish National Parks annually. The figures he referred to are quoted in the Scottish Environment LINK report on “[The Social and Economic Benefits of National Parks](#)” (September 2024). The “STEAM” analysis figures given for the overall value of the visitor economy in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park in 2018 is £418.5 million and in Cairngorms National Park from 2019 is £308.5 million.

4. Cairngorms National Park Authority have more recently published the equivalent [STEAM analysis looking at the year 2023](#) when that figure rose to £419 million. The 2023 analysis also highlighted that ongoing partnership work to stabilise tourist numbers in the peak season and to spread visits across the quieter months has started to pay off with an [18% increase in off-peak visitors compared with 2018](#).

### Agriculture in National Parks

5. To supplement the brief discussion of agriculture on 30 October, we would emphasise that the regulatory system for agriculture and government funding for agriculture operate in the same way within Scotland’s National Parks as outwith them. National Park authorities do offer additional support schemes to farmers which are tailored to local conditions and which help achieve the statutory aims of the National Parks too. The types of support are highlighted in the Scottish Environment LINK report from October 2024 “[Farming benefits of National Parks](#)”. More recently, in a further example of the sort of support National Parks can coordinate and help deliver, the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority has invited farmers to join a [Resilient Farm Network](#), a five-year (2025-2029) programme to boost climate and nature-friendly farming in a way that is profitable for farmers.

### The Planning System and National Parks

6. We noted that in the first panel discussion on 30 October it was suggested that there had been a “withdrawal of permitted development rights” in National Parks. We do not think this has been the case. Permitted development rights for agricultural buildings in Scottish National Parks have generally been rather less restrictive compared with those in English National Parks eg in allowing conversion of farm buildings to other purposes. The Scottish Environment LINK report “[Social and economic benefits of National Parks](#)”

explains that “Since National Parks were established in Scotland there have been Permitted Development Rights (PDRs) for agricultural buildings with a ground area of up to 465m<sup>2</sup>. However in 2021 the Scottish Government increased this threshold to 1,000m<sup>2</sup> outwith National Parks, National Scenic Areas and some other designated areas. In other words PDRs remain as they were in National Parks, but have been partly relaxed elsewhere. The full wording of the current guidance is in the [Scottish Government’s Consolidated Circular on Non-Domestic Permitted Development Rights 2021](#).”