

**BRIEFING PAPER: SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS REGARDING NEW NATIONAL PARKS**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This aim of this Report is to raise awareness of the Scottish Government proposals regarding the selection and designation of a new National Park(s). The nomination process is proposed to be initiated in the summer 2023.
- 1.2 Points covered are:
- the role of National Parks;
  - information on the Scottish Government process for designation of a new National Park(s) (timetable Appendix 1);
  - potential issues related to the designation of a National Park (Appendix 2);
  - the potential role of the Council in this process.
- 1.3 Officers will publicise the opportunity for communities to develop their own proposals. If any come forward, the Council will be able to consider if it wishes to support them or not, at the appropriate time.
- 1.4 Recommendations
- It is recommended that PPSL consider and notes the information in the Report on:
- i) the role of National Parks;
  - ii) the Scottish Government process for selection and designation of a new National Park(s); and
  - iii) some of the potential issues related to the designation of a National Park.

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1. There are currently two National Parks in Scotland, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (partly within Argyll and Bute Council area) and Cairngorm National Park. The Scottish Government wishes to establish at least one new National Park by 2026.
- 2.2. This paper provides information on: the role of National Parks; the Scottish Government process for designation of a New National Park(s); potential issues related to the designation of a National Park; and the potential role of the Council in this process.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that PPSL consider and notes the information in the Report on:
- i) the role of National Parks;
  - ii) the Scottish Government process for selection and designation of a new National Park(s); and
  - iii) some of the potential issues related to the designation of a National Park.

## 4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The first two National Parks designated in Scotland were Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park in 2002 and the Cairngorms National Park in 2003. The aims of these parks are to:

- conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area; and
- promote the sustainable social and economic development of the area's communities.

It is important to note that the aims for the original parks are wider than just the natural environment, also covering cultural heritage and sustainable economic development.

4.2 The Scottish Government has announced its intention to designate a new National Park(s) during 2026. A new overarching purpose for Parks of *“leading nature recovery and a just transition to net zero”* has also been proposed. The process for this has already started with consultations looking at the future of National Parks in Scotland, the approach and criteria of these National Parks and developing an evaluation framework.

4.3 The first formal stage is proposed in the summer of 2023, with the Scottish Government seeking nominations for new National Parks from across Scotland. There is a commitment to an open, transparent and bottom-up nomination process for selecting new National Park areas. It is proposed that the nominations will be assessed through a non-statutory evaluation framework (this framework is currently out for public consultation and officers will consider an appropriate response in due course). The proposed, and relatively short timetable is at Appendix 1.

4.4 When the call for nominations is made by the Scottish Government, the Council will need to consider whether or not to propose, or support a local group(s) that proposes, a new National Park(s) within Argyll and Bute. Nominations will require supporting information and be able to demonstrate the level of local support. The Scottish Government would then consider the submissions and further consultation would take place on those areas selected to progress. It is noted that any proposal that receives insufficient local support will not be taken forward. The Scottish Government will move to designation in the winter of 2024/25 - spring 2026.

4.5 This process could provide an opportunity to raise the profile of Argyll and Bute by proactively entering in to the debate and considering options. There are a range of issues that need to be taken in to account, including social and economic factors. Some of these are highlighted in Appendix 2. The nature and location of a potential park(s) is also something to consider, for example the potential benefits and issues related to a marine or island based National Park or one with a strong focus on Gaelic culture.

- 4.6 It will be useful to raise awareness of the Scottish Government process and Officers will publicise the opportunity for communities to develop and pursue their own proposals. If any proposals come forward the Council will be able to consider if it wishes to support them or not at the appropriate time.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 It would be useful if the Council could raise awareness of this process prior to the request for nominations for new National Parks from the Scottish Government. It may also be beneficial to take wider views in to consideration.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy – None as a result of this paper, which raises awareness of the National Park designation process. However, the designation of a National Park would have policy implications.
- 6.2 Financial – None as a result of this paper. The designation of a National Park would have financial implications.
- 6.3 Legal – None as a result of this paper. The designation of a National Park would have legal implications
- 6.4 HR - None
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics - None
  - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - None
  - 6.5.3 Islands - None
- 6.6 Climate Change – None
- 6.7 Risk – Lack of an early briefing on the issues could result in a less effective response to the selection process when it commences in the summer 2023.
- 6.8 Customer Service - None

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**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 National Park Designation Timetable

Appendix 2: Summary of main points relating to National Park designation raised during the Proposed Local Development Plan 2 Main Issues Report consultation 2017

## Appendix 1 National Park Designation Timetable

New National Park(s) Indicative timeline	
Milestone	Timescale (indicative)
Public Consultation – (The Future of National parks in Scotland)	Late Spring 2022 – completed
Public Consultation – Approach and Criteria of National Parks in Scotland	Autumn 2022 – Winter 2022/3 – completed
Development of Evaluation Framework and any legislative changes required (including public consultation)	Winter 2022 – Summer 2023
Nominations and Assessment of proposals for New National Park(s)	Summer 2023 – Winter 2023/4
Reporter Investigation  (including public consultation on proposals for new National Park(s) and advice to Minister)	Spring 2024 - Winter 2024/5
Designation Order(s)  (including public consultation, parliamentary scrutiny and order coming into effect to designate the new National Park(s))	Winter 2024/5 – Spring 2026

## **Appendix 2 Summary of main points relating to National Park designation raised during the Proposed Local Development Plan 2 Main Issues Report consultation 2017**

- **Control and governance**
  - Island circumstances
  - Scale and nature of management required
  - Planning powers – different models
- **Other designations**
  - Regional Parks
  - Marine Protected Areas or other nature designations
  - Role of other agencies e.g. Argyll and the Isles Strategic Tourism Partnership
- **Need for further information to make an informed decision.**
  - Explore the potential/aspirations with key stakeholders and communities.
  - Understanding of the special qualities and needs of the area
  - Impacts on repopulation and tourism
  - Outcomes in current National Parks
- **Economy**
  - Potential for economic growth, including tourism
  - Potential impacts on existing economic activities; in particular distilleries, fishing, energy, farming, forestry, aquaculture and manufacturing industries
  - Fit with growth agenda e.g. Tobermory - Oban - Dalmally growth corridor
- **Renewables**
  - Impact on renewable industries
- **Environmental issues have been raised:-**
  - Environmental protections are already in place/additional safeguards
  - Argyll and Bute has internationally important marine and land environments
  - Impact of increased tourism on natural assets
- **Social**
  - Population impacts
  - Job impacts – growth some areas, restrictions others
  - Potential impact on affordable housing
  - Benefits of environmental management for local communities
  - Need for strong local backing
- **Finance**
  - Additional costs
  - Additional funding
  - Additional pressures on infrastructure