

Scottish Government submission of 19 October 2023

PE1966/H: Formally recognise and incorporate local knowledge in Scottish Government policy

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to formally recognise local knowledge and ensure it is given full consideration alongside scientific knowledge throughout consultation, decision-making processes and in policy development, specifically within the conservation arena.

- The Committee is keen to know, in light of the [petitioner's submission of 12 April 2023](#), whether the Scottish Government will consider revising its consultation guidance to ensure that it is consistent with the Convention on Biodiversity.

There are no plans to revise the Scottish Government best practice handbook on consultations. As stated in the response to the petitioner's previous question, we do not take a one-size-fits-all approach, and engagement methods are tailored towards the audience for each consultation. As previously stated, *For consultations that actively seek public opinion there may be greater emphasis placed on local knowledge or local opinion when considering responses to a question.*

- The Committee is keen to receive information about whether the needs of NatureScot's board includes local knowledge and if so, what weight is given to this knowledge in the determination of whether an applicant is appointed.

As NatureScot is a national agency operating across Scotland, local knowledge although valuable in some instances, is not a requirement for NatureScot Board members. This is slightly different, for example, from the National Parks which operate within a geographically specific area and appoint locally elected and nominated members to their board in addition to those Ministerially appointed.

However, NatureScot offices are spread throughout the country and the organisation employs staff from across Scotland who bring valuable local knowledge to the organisation and their job specific roles.

As set out in [NatureScot's response](#) to the petitioner on 3 February 2023,

The board has demonstrable practical experience of land management, as well as members who come from policy development, scientific and academic backgrounds in relation to this area. This includes members who are land managers, farmers, rural business owners and members who have represented or worked alongside communities across Scotland to deliver sustainable nature-based projects. The same applies to water management, with a range of knowledge represented across the board, including with respect to fresh water ecology and the sustainable management of water systems. This broad range of professional and personal experience provides the Board with a variety of expertise and the means by which to ensure that both scientific and local knowledge is applied to our work.