Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: PE01655

Main Petitioner: Christine Metcalfe on behalf of Avich & Kilchrenan Community Council

Subject: Scotland's National Scenic Areas

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the process for designation of National Scenic Areas (NSAs) and consider increasing the number of NSAs in Scotland to protect the natural landscape and support the tourism sector.

Background

National Scenic Areas (NSAs) are areas which are nationally important for their scenic quality, and were first identified in 1978 by Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH) predecessor, the Countryside Commission for Scotland.

There are 40 NSAs mainly in the more remote and mountainous areas of Scotland e.g. Loch Shiel in Highland, and the Fleet Valley in Dumfries and Galloway. The Scottish Government states that they “represent the best areas of the type of scenic beauty popularly associated with Scotland and for which it is renowned”. No new areas have been identified since 1978. An overview map of Scotland’s NSAs is available from the Scottish Government.

Scottish Government action

The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) gives a statutory basis to NSAs by adding a new section to the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. This defines them as areas of “outstanding scenic value in a national context” for which special protection measures are required. The new legislation was brought into force in December 2010 through The Town and Country Planning (National Scenic Areas) (Scotland) Designation Directions 2010.

Part 10 of the 2006 Act also sets out the decision making process as follows:

In deciding whether to designate an area as a National Scenic Area, the Scottish Ministers are to take account of:

- whether the area is of outstanding natural beauty,
- the amenity of the area, including
whether it is of historical, cultural or environmental importance; and

- the nature of any buildings or other structures within it, and

- any flora, fauna or physiographical features of the area, whether or not to any extent the product of human intervention in the landscape.

Before issuing a direction Ministers are to consult with SNH, and other persons as prescribed. No new areas have been identified since 1978.

**Scottish Parliament action**

The following PQ was asked in late 2016:

**Question S5W-05139: David Stewart, Highlands and Islands, Scottish Labour, Date Lodged: 28/11/2016** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to review national scenic areas in the Highlands and Islands.

**Answered by Roseanna Cunningham (08/12/2016):** There are no current plans to review National Scenic Areas in the Highlands and Islands or any other part of Scotland.

Alasdair Reid  
Senior Researcher  
17 May 2017

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