

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 10 September 2025
13th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2089: Stop More National Parks in Scotland

Introduction

Petitioner Deborah Carmichael on behalf of Lochaber National Park - NO more group

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

- 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.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2089>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 22 January 2025](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, and Dumfries and Galloway Council.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands and the No Galloway National Park Campaign which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. The response from Dumfries and Galloway Council directed the Committee to item 10 of the [Dumfries and Galloway Council meeting agenda for Thursday 12 December 2024](#).
5. Since the petition was last considered, the Scottish Government has announced that it will not pursue a proposal to designate Galloway and Ayrshire as a National Park. The full announcement can be found at **Annexe D**.
6. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).

7. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
8. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 22 May 2024.](#)
9. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 3,826 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

10. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

**Clerks to the Committee
September 2025**

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2089: Stop More National Parks in Scotland.

Petitioner

Deborah Carmichael on behalf of Lochaber National Park - NO more group

Date Lodged

12 March 2024

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

- 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.

Background information

Using the two existing National Parks (NPs) in Scotland as examples:

Over 10 years each new NP will cost the Scottish taxpayer £130m. Inappropriate use of money when public finances are weak. The new NP, will be bureaucratic, employing 100+ people, with a paid board of approximately 20, mostly unelected, directors.

The NP will not help with the major issues that already exist in rural Scotland, i.e. roads, medical services, schools needing urgent investment. In areas such as Skye & Lochaber, Small & Western Isles, there is already over-tourism in the summer period and poor road & ferry networks. A NP will only make this problem worse. The Scottish Government requires the local communities to be keen to have a new National Park in their region. It is felt locally that fewer than 10% of local people near Lochaber are engaged. At public meetings, radio phone ins, the response to press articles, & social media engagement the vast majority of people are not in favour of another National Park in Scotland.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2089 on 22 January 2025

The Convener: PE2089 was lodged by Deborah Carmichael on behalf of the Lochaber National Park—NO More group, which, as colleagues will remember, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to suspend any action to create more national parks in Scotland; to instruct an independent review of the operation of the current national parks, including an assessment of the economic impacts on businesses and industries within the two parks, including, but not exclusive to, farming, forestry, crofting and angling; and to conduct a consultation with representatives of rural businesses and community councils in order to help to frame the remit of the said independent review.

The committee considered the petition quite recently, on 27 November. To date, the committee has heard evidence from two panels of witnesses—NatureScot and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands. We have also received correspondence from our colleague Finlay Carson MSP, reiterating his support for the petition. We are now in a position to reflect on the evidence that we have heard and to consider our next steps. Have colleagues given any thought to suggestions for how we might proceed?

Fergus Ewing: We should write to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands to highlight the issues that were raised during the committee's consideration of the petition, including concerns about, first, the evidence base for designating a new national park, particularly regarding the impact of existing national parks; secondly, the lack of clarity and trust in the consultation process that is being conducted by NatureScot; and, thirdly, the need for an independent review of the existing national parks and their performance, which was what the petition called for *inter alia*.

During the committee's evidence session with the cabinet secretary, she indicated that she had ruled out—apparently absolutely—holding a referendum of people living within whatever boundaries were proposed to be set for the national park. However, since then, Dumfries and Galloway Council has held a vote, the result of which, by a very substantial majority, was that there should be a local referendum. Therefore, in the committee's letter to the rural secretary, can we ask whether she is aware of that vote, what her response is, and whether she will reconsider that decision in the light of the very clear expression of the opinion of local representatives.

Finally, out of respect, so that it is involved and given its knowledge of the area, could we write to the council to ask for the details of its decision and how it believes that matters might be progressed?

The Convener: The three areas that Mr Ewing identified prior to his suggestion to draw the cabinet secretary's attention to the vote in favour of a local referendum by Dumfries and Galloway Council were all apparent to her but were heavily reinforced by the majority of people from whom the committee has been fortunate enough to hear. I recall the cabinet secretary saying specifically in her evidence that she had

not come to any final decision and that, in her mind, there was no presumption as to where the evidence that was being gathered might lead. When we write to the cabinet secretary, we should say that we appreciated that point and should draw her attention to the significant representations that we have received, as well as Mr Ewing's point about the council's view that there should be a more widespread consultation via a referendum on whether the proposal should proceed. Are members content with that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submissions

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands written submission 4 March 2025

PE2089/H: Stop More National Parks in Scotland

Thank you for your letter of 31 January 2025 regarding the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee's further consideration of petition PE2089: Stop More National Parks in Scotland.

The impact of National Parks

As you have mentioned in your letter, I gave evidence to the Committee on 27 November 2024 which included information about the role, impact and benefits of Scotland's National Parks. In your letter you have indicated that the Committee is keen to better understand the impact of National Parks beyond the secure funding stream provided to them by the Scottish Government. Attached at Annex A is some detailed information about the wider impacts of National Parks. This is based on information provided by the two Scottish Park authorities, and I hope the Committee will find it helpful.

Independent Review

As I have made clear in my previous correspondence to the Committee, there are no current plans for the Scottish Government to conduct an independent review of the two existing National Parks in Scotland. That is because National Parks are accountable to their boards and to the Scottish Government. The Scottish Parliament can also scrutinise the Parks' performance directly.

Delivery is monitored and reviewed at regular meetings between the Scottish Government and National Park authority Convenors and Chief Executives. Park authorities are also required to report on their delivery and performance through their Annual Report and Accounts which are laid before Parliament and published.

Consultation process

In your letter you have raised the public consultation on the proposal to establish a new National Park. You have reflected on evidence that was presented to the Committee by a number of witnesses and you have highlighted the Committee's concerns that local people may have felt unable to meaningfully contribute to the consultation.

I hope that the Committee will find it helpful to receive an update on the consultation process, and the work undertaken by NatureScot, which has aimed to make the consultation as open and accessible as possible and to ensure that people living and working in the area have been given the opportunity to discuss the issues, consider the content of the proposal and make their views known.

Following an initial pre-consultation period, NatureScot launched the formal public consultation on 7 November 2024. The consultation period was extended by two weeks to take account of the festive period and it closed on 14 February 2025.

Over 1,000 people attended over 30 public consultation events, online sessions and drop in surgeries. The public consultation events were independently facilitated by an external organisation that has expertise in hosting and running public engagement events. Everyone attending the consultation events has been supported to share their ideas and opinions in a welcoming environment. The additional drop-in sessions hosted by NatureScot have enabled local residents to ask questions and discuss specific topics before completing the consultation survey.

Two versions of the consultation survey were made available on NatureScot's website and its dedicated online information hub. A summary version was designed for individuals and households. A longer, more technical version was designed for organisations and stakeholder groups. Respondents were asked to complete one survey and they could choose whether to complete the summary version or the longer version.

The online information hub provided information to the public about National Parks and the consultation process.

Paper copies of the survey were distributed to 52,000 households and businesses within the proposed area. Additional copies were made available to households on request. Print, audio and Gaelic versions were also made available on request.

Over 5000 consultation surveys have been completed and feedback from the consultation events and meetings has been reported on and returned to NatureScot in order to help shape their advice. NatureScot will analyse every consultation response and they will report to the Scottish Government on all views expressed during the consultation.

The consultation survey provided people with background information about the role and purpose of National Parks. It asked people whether they support or oppose the idea of new National Park being established in the area. It also asked them for their views on the possible area, powers, functions and governance of a new National Park, or any alternative suggestions that they wished to put forward.

The NatureScot reporter team has also held meetings with a wide range of local representatives, stakeholder organisations and interested parties. These include community councils, local authorities, business organisations, land managers, public bodies and third sector organisations including those representing people with protected characteristics. Input from these meetings has helped shape the options to be formally and publicly consulted on from November onwards e.g. the geographical area, functions and board membership of the proposed park.

In your letter you have noted that Dumfries and Galloway Council recently voted in favour of a motion calling on the Scottish Government to hold and finance a local referendum on whether or not a new National Park should be established in Galloway. You have added that the Committee is keen to understand the

Government's views on this motion and the level of support required for a new National Park.

As I explained when I gave evidence to the Committee, the public consultation that NatureScot has carried out asked local people whether or not they want a National Park within their area. It also asked for views on the more detailed aspects of the proposal such as the possible area, powers, functions and governance of the proposed National Park. We think it is very important for people to have their say on these issues too and it would not be possible to obtain this type of detail through a referendum.

NatureScot has now begun the process of analysing all of the consultation responses. In the Spring they will report to the Scottish Government on the findings of the consultation and the views of people that live and work in the proposed area will be clearly reported. The Scottish Government will carefully consider the outcome of the consultation before taking any further decisions.

Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill

The Committee has raised concerns about consulting local communities on the creation of a new National Park whilst simultaneously making changes to the National Parks legislation.

You will be aware that the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill was introduced to Parliament on 19 February 2025: [Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Bill | Scottish Parliament Website](#). The Bill amends the National Parks (Scotland) Act in order to:

- modernise the language of the National Park aims and elaborate on what is considered to be part of the aims;
- strengthen the existing duties on public sector bodies operating within National Parks so that these bodies must (i) have regard to the National Park aims and (ii) facilitate the implementation of National Park Plans; and
- introduce new powers for Scottish Ministers to be able to set up a fixed penalty notice regime for the contravention of specified National Park byelaws.

The Bill also amends the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to enable any future National Park to become the access authority for its area, should it be considered appropriate.

The existing powers to designate a new National Park under the 2000 Act and the designation process are not affected by the Bill. The proposed changes update the language of the aims, with the new subsection elaborating on what is considered to be part of these aims, reflecting the day to day work of National Parks and the existing duties on National Park authorities. Therefore we do not envisage any issues with the Bill being considered by Parliament at this time.

Residents and businesses operating within the existing National Parks and the area proposed for a new National Park now have the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the National Parks legislation. We will listen very carefully to any views that they express and we will continue to engage closely with all interested parties. If a designation order were presented to Parliament, there would then be a period of parliamentary scrutiny where individuals, stakeholders and organisations could ask questions and make representations to relevant Members of the Scottish Parliament.

Role of NatureScot as reporter

Finally, I would like to respond to the Committee's concerns and provide reassurance that NatureScot's role as the statutory reporter is being carried out with integrity and professionalism.

The reporter's role and who can take on the role of reporter is set out in the National Parks legislation, with NatureScot specifically named due to its expertise related to the National Park aims. NatureScot undertook the reporting role when Scotland's first two National Parks were established in Loch Lomond & the Trossachs and Cairngorms. NatureScot was once again asked to take on the reporter role for the proposal to designate a new National Park in the south west of Scotland.

The reporter team has completed a very thorough and comprehensive consultation process and they are now starting to analyse the responses. NatureScot has also commissioned an independent review of the consultation process and this will be presented to the Scottish Government alongside the consultation findings and the report on the proposal.

We have been clear within our published [requirement](#) that NatureScot must record, document and take into account the views expressed by all consultees when preparing their report to Ministers. We have also asked NatureScot to ensure that any views which are those of NatureScot as statutory adviser on natural heritage matters are kept clear and distinct.

I hope that I have addressed each of the issues raised in your letter and that the Committee finds this further information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

MAIRI GOUGEON

Annex A

Impact of National Parks – examples from Scotland's existing National Parks

Tourism and the visitor economy

- National Parks support the growth of sustainable tourism and the visitor economy through investment in visitor infrastructure and recreational facilities, leadership

and expertise in visitor management, the provision of ranger services and investment in sustainable travel and outdoor learning.

- For example, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs park authority employs 66 permanent and seasonal rangers and it supports 81 volunteer rangers. Between 2021-23, rangers carried out around 1300 patrols per year, engaging with tens of thousands of visitors to the National Park and helping to raise awareness of water risks, safety in the outdoors and the importance of preventing wildfires. The National Park attracts more than 4 million people each year and the latest STEAM¹ tourism report shows that in 2023, £540 million was generated in the local economy through visitor and tourism businesses. Tourism supports over 6000 jobs within the National Park.
- To manage visitors during the visitor season, Cairngorms park authority employs 21 rangers and works in partnership with a further 28 rangers across 14 partner ranger services. The park authority also supports a team of over 60 volunteer rangers and it logged over 4,000 hours of Volunteer Ranger activities in 2024 across 21 partner organisations and landowners. STEAM² data published by Cairngorms National Park shows 2.15 million tourism visits to the park in 2023 generating £419 million within the local economy through visitor and tourism businesses. Tourism supports over 5400 jobs within the National Park.
- Both existing National Parks secure investment for key visitor destinations, delivering multiple benefits for visitors, communities, and businesses. For example, in Loch Lomond & the Trossachs the park authority is supporting a £2 million project to transform a popular visitor area at Tarbet, on West Loch Lomond into a sustainable low-carbon visitor hub, supporting the local economy with expanded facilities for the community and visitors. The park authority is also upgrading the Conic Hill path, one of the busiest hill paths in Scotland, with an investment of over £900,000. In 2023/24 Cairngorms National Park authority provided £200,000 of grant aid to support infrastructure projects including public toilet and motorhome waste facilities.

Community development

- National Park authorities support their local communities by grant-funding community led projects and working with community bodies to prepare Local Place Plans and supporting renewable energy projects such as community hydro projects which generate both renewable energy and income for local communities.
- For example, the [Cairngorms 2030 programme](#) is supporting a range of community projects including the development of Scotland's first outdoor dementia centre near Aviemore. The new centre opened its doors in July 2022, giving more people with dementia and their families and carers an outdoor space

¹ [Global Tourism Solutions \(UK\) Ltd | Tourism Research | UK](#)

² [STEAM Infographic](#)

tailored to their needs and a refreshed sense of freedom to explore nature.

- Since 2003, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park has supported its communities to prepare Community Action Plans and Local Place Plans. It has also directly funded a wide range of community projects across the National Park, with approximately £1.2 million awarded between 2003-2024.

Leveraging investment

- National Park authorities attract and leverage external funding and investment into their areas.
- For example, the [Cairngorms 2030 Programme](#) is funding projects with a total value of £42.3 million that will deliver long term benefits for local communities and businesses across a range of areas including health and wellbeing, the transition to net zero and active and sustainable transport. The National Park authority is working with over 70 partner organisations and over £10 million of Lottery Heritage funding has been secured.
- In Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, a blend of public and private finance was secured to support the recent [Trossachs Explorer](#) sustainable transport pilot service. The service expanded public transport provision in rural areas of the National Park, enabling over 5,000 visitors and residents to access lower-carbon travel. This initiative was funded in part by BMW UK through its *Recharge in Nature* partnership with UK National Parks and supported by *Paths for All's Smarter Choices, Smarter Places* Open Fund, on behalf of the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland.
- Both National Park authorities are also actively piloting new approaches to responsible private investment in the Parks' natural capital.

Tackling climate change and restoring biodiversity

- Both National Parks provide a leadership role in addressing the biodiversity and climate crises.
- For example, Cairngorms National Park Authority is a partner in multiple landscape-scale restoration projects, supporting the protection of 25% of the UK's rare and endangered species. These landscape-scale projects include [Cairngorms Connect](#) (the UK's largest habitat restoration project) and the [East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership](#). Cairngorms Connect is a partnership of neighbouring land managers, committed to a 200-year vision to enhance habitats, species and ecological processes across a vast area within the Cairngorms National Park. Over 5000 species have been recorded within the area, around 20 per cent of which are nationally rare or scarce. Cairngorms Connect will restore habitats across 60,000 hectares within the National Park. The Cairngorms Connect partnership employs over 60 members of staff and has generated £3.9 million of investment, 70 per cent of which has been spent

within 50 miles of the project area.

- Cairngorms Park Authority also directly supports peatland, woodland and river restoration within the Park. 5500 hectares of peatland was restored by March 2024 (with a further 1500 ha under restoration this year) and the area of woodland has increased from 14% to 19% of the National Park over the past 20 years.
- In Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, the National Park authority is providing support and funding to three landscape-scale nature restoration projects (the Great Trossachs Forest, Wild Strathfillan and Lomond Rainforest), covering 130,000 hectares (70% of the National Park). The Great Trossachs Forest landscape project has run since 2007, having achieved National Nature Reserve status and created 2830 hectares of woodland and 3200 hectares of conservation grazing with native Luing cattle. More recently, the park authority has partnered with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs countryside trust on the Wild Strathfillan landscape project, securing £1.5 million for the first stage of its delivery.
- Over 1800 hectares of peatland has been restored within the National Park between 2015 and 2024.

Support to farmers and crofters

- National Parks support farmers and crofters within their area to help them deliver nature-friendly and carbon-neutral projects and practices whilst maintaining resilient and profitable businesses.
- For example, through the [Cairngorms 2030 Future Farming initiative](#), Cairngorms park authority is currently working with six farms within the National Park to identify ways to reduce carbon emissions and biodiversity loss whilst maintaining food production, profitability and resilience for farming businesses typical of the Cairngorms National Park. Over £400,000 has been allocated to support the delivery of the project, with additional funding for activities to share good practice, communications and knowledge exchange in order to widen the benefits of the project to other farms.
- In 2024, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park authority launched the [Resilient Farm Network](#), a five-year (2025-2029) programme to boost climate and nature-friendly farming in a way that maintains profitability and resilience for farmers. The network is supporting three farms within the National Park and it aims to provide practical tools, support for training and advice, on-farm meetings and peer to peer knowledge exchange.
- Land owners and managers also benefit from the significant investment made by National Park authorities to develop visitor facilities, provide ranger services and

improve path networks.

No Galloway National Park Campaign written submission, 18 April 2025

PE2089/I: Stop More National Parks in Scotland

At its meeting on 30 October 2024 the Committee heard evidence from Denise Brownlee of the No Galloway National Park campaign group. Subsequent to this the statutory consultation carried out by NatureScot regarding a proposed new National Park in Galloway has closed (14th February 2025) and the Natural Environment Bill³ has been published (19th February 2025.) The Committee has also received a written submission from the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands (PE2089/H - 4th March 2025)

The No Galloway National Park Campaign Group believes that subsequent to giving oral evidence, the situation regarding the proposed establishment of a new National Park has developed significantly. In particular, we wish to raise two issues:

- The implications of the Natural Environment Bill for the consultation process
- The response to concerns about the consultation and the Natural Environment Bill made in the Cabinet Secretary's submission (PE2089/H.) We believe this sidesteps genuine substantive concerns regarding the consultation and offers a specious response to the impact of the Natural Environment Bill.

We therefore wish to reiterate the numerous, significant concerns which have been raised about the current process to establish a new National Park, including the work carried out by NatureScot, in their role as Reporter. We believe this demonstrably falls short when reviewed against Scottish Government's own consultation guidance⁴ including the UK Government's 11 principles of good consultation⁵ and the second of the 'Gunning Principles'⁶ which are minimum legal standards for a consultation to be deemed a fair and worthwhile exercise. This principle states that there is sufficient information to give "intelligent" consideration. The information provided must relate to the consultation and must be available, accessible and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response. Many, including Dumfries and Galloway Council, believe that insufficient information has been made available. At the Council meeting on 5 February 2025, the Council worked to agree its formal submission to the consultation. The Council's response to question one, the extent of support for the proposed park, was "undecided." This was primarily due to the lack of information on several key issues. We also believe the consultation falls short of the National Standards for Community Engagement⁷. Taken together these failures seriously undermine the basis for the Reporter's advice to the Government arising from the process to date.

³ <https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/s6/natural-environment-scotland-bill>

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultations-in-the-scottish-government-guidance/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultations-in-the-scottish-government-guidance/>

⁷ <https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards>

We also believe these failures have been compounded by the publication of the Natural Environment Bill⁸ less than a week after the closing date for the statutory consultation. The consultation was based on the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and the new Bill proposes numerous changes to the Act, including the aims of National Parks and the way they are run. The consultation proposal clearly stated that the 2000 Act provides, “the ground rules for all Scotland’s National Parks.” So, in effect, the Government appear to have been consulting on the basis of an Act, at the same time as they were planning changes to it, and they did not publish those proposed changes until after their consultation closed. As part of her written submission (PE2089/H - 4th March 2025), Ms Gougeon acknowledged that the Bill proposes changes to the aims of National Parks and the way they are run. As detailed by the Cabinet Secretary the Bill amends the Act in order to:

- Amend and elaborate National Park Aims
- Strengthen the existing duties on public sector bodies operating within National Parks
- Introduce new powers to set up a fixed penalty notice regime for the contravention of National Park byelaws and
- Amend the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to enable any future National Park to become the access authority for its area.

She then goes on to state that the existing powers to designate a new National Park under the 2000 Act and the designation process are not affected by the new Bill. On that basis she states, ‘we do not envisage any issues with the Bill being considered by Parliament at this time.’ In other words, she is expecting your Committee and our community to find it acceptable that Government can, behind the scenes of a statutory consultation, change the legislative basis which sets out the ‘ground rules’ for the proposal under consideration.

Whilst the powers and process for designation may not be subject to change, much of the substance of what the community were asked to give their view on looks likely to. Indeed, some of these changes may well have influenced opinions had consultees been aware of them and their implications. However, there was no mention of the forthcoming Bill or the proposed changes in the original consultation document. Many feel the timing of the publication of the Natural Environment Bill, less than a week after the consultation closed, demonstrates how little regard the Scottish Government have for the views offered by the community.

⁸ <https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/s6/natural-environment-scotland-bill>

Annexe D: Scottish Government announcement on new National Park designation

New National Park decision – 29 May 2025

No designation for Galloway and Ayrshire.

Ministers have decided not to pursue a proposal to designate Galloway and Ayrshire as a National Park.

Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon confirmed that opposition to the nomination and the Reporter's recommendations against it meant that the region in southwest Scotland would not join the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond & the Trossachs as the country's third national park.

Speaking in the Scottish Parliament, Ms Gougeon said:

“While there is substantial support for a National Park and what it could deliver for the southwest of Scotland, there is also significant opposition. I realise that this decision will be very disappointing for those who have been campaigning for a new National Park in Galloway over many years.

“I also recognise the huge amount of work and time that has been invested by a great many people throughout this process. I would like to thank everyone involved, including members of the Galloway National Park Association and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere.

“I would also like to thank NatureScot for its work carrying out such an important and extensive public consultation in a robust and professional way that was commended in the review of the process carried out by the Scottish Community Development Centre. The consultation raised some really important issues that local people care deeply about and we now have the opportunity to look at how we can address these.

“The Scottish Government remains committed to our existing National Parks and the vital leadership role that they play in tackling the climate and biodiversity crises, promoting sustainable land management and supporting the economic and social development of local communities. Our National Parks are achieving for people and nature.”

Background

The proposal to designate a new National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire was jointly put forward by the Galloway National Park Association and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, in response to the Scottish Government's invitation to communities and organisations across Scotland to nominate their area to be considered for designation as a new National Park.

Five nominations were received through that process – from Galloway and Ayrshire, Lochaber, Loch Awe, Scottish Borders and Tay Forest.

