

# Title: Protected Areas Committee Annual Report 2021/2022

**Date: 18 May 2022**

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| **Purpose:** | For information. |
| **How does this link with our corporate priorities of improving biodiversity or delivering nature-based solutions to climate change:** | The work of the Protected Areas Committee (PAC) is relevant to both improving biodiversity and delivering nature-based solutions to climate change. In particular this year the PAC have been working on next steps in the commission from the Board on our work on protected areas. They have also considered advice to Ministers on a possible Marine Protected Area. |
| **Summary:** | This paper presents a summary of PAC activities from April 2021 to March 2022.The PAC met three times during this period. All meetings were closed session.  |
| **Recommendations:**  | Note the contents of the paper reflecting the work undertaken by the PAC during the past year. |
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| **Sponsor:**  | Aoife Martin |

## Purpose

1. This paper has been prepared to update the Board on the activity of the PAC since the last annual report. This update covers the period from April 2021 to March 2022. The previous Annual Report was submitted to the Board in May 2021.
2. Over the past twelve months the PAC has focussed on:
	1. The Work of the Protected Areas Committee
	2. Protected Areas Review
	3. 30x30
	4. Red Rocks and Longay Possible MPA
	5. Terms of Reference

## New Committee Members

1. The PAC met informally on 2nd August 2021 to run through ways of working with new Committee members. Three new members were selected for PAC this year: Pete Higgins, David Johnstone and Nikki Yoxall who will all serve as Board members of NatureScot until March 2025. Background information on each member is detailed below. Full biographies can be found [on our website](https://www.nature.scot/about-naturescot/board-directors-and-committees/our-board/board-members).
2. Professor Pete Higgins is Professor of Outdoor, Environmental and Sustainability Education at the University of Edinburgh, and Director of the United Nations University Recognised Centre for Education for Sustainable Development (Scotland). He Chaired the Scottish Government Ministerial Advisory/Implementation Groups on Learning for Sustainability, was a Member of the National Parks Act Review Group (2008) and of the SportScotland Trust Company Board.
3. David Johnstone runs a family estate just south of Moffat covering enterprises from the traditional agricultural, forestry, residential and commercial property, through to renewables, tourism and everything that a mixed diverse business covers. He was chairman of Scottish Land and Estates for seven years stepping down in March 2020 and is a board member of South of Scotland community housing, and chairs the local Johnstonebridge community development fund.
4. Nikki Yoxall currently farms with her husband in the North of Scotland and holds roles with the Nature Friendly Farming Network, Pasture Fed Livestock Association and the Landworkers Alliance promoting and facilitating agroecological research and education. She has worked in the tertiary education sector both in Scotland as Director of Learning and Teaching at Moray College UHI and in England as Head of Learning, Land-based Studies at Chichester College. Mrs Yoxall is currently a Farmer Ambassador for the Soil Association.

## The work of the Protected Areas Committee

1. The Committee reflected on the role of the PAC and on NatureScot’s work in this area. Committee members discussed the importance of engaging with the public to secure buy-in for decisions and to develop productive and collaborative relationships so that outcomes would be realised. The aim should be to encourage voluntary compliance with managing protected areas for nature, followed by assisting people to comply and finally then using enforcement powers as a last resort.
2. The Committee discussed future areas of work and progress to date on designating and managing MPAs. The Committee was advised that NatureScot will be involved in developing guidelines on Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs), and the Chair confirmed that the PAC would be available to assist with this task as required.

## Protected Areas Review

1. The Committee considered the next steps in the Protected Areas Review (PAR). Discussion included the following topics:
	1. The importance of support mechanisms for landowners to manage for nature for long-term or permanent changes
	2. Better brokering between land-managers and other parties
	3. The significant role that Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) are likely to play in delivering 30x30
	4. The need for improved nature management across protected areas and the wider countryside i.e. an integrated approach.
	5. The risks of target setting driving perverse behaviours and not delivering the overriding objectives.
	6. The need for shifting societal norms and behaviour change
	7. The need for clarity in the ‘ask’ of land-managers in terms of what they are aiming to achieve and the support to help them achieve it.
2. Committee members agreed that while the recommendations from the PAR overlap with other NatureScot priorities it is important that these are progressed.

## 30x30

1. The 30x30 initiative sets out to protect 30% of land and 30% of sea by 2030. One third of these areas are to fall under the ‘strict protection’ status. NatureScot are working with Scottish Government on the 30x30 commission.
2. The Committee discussed the importance of connecting initiatives such as Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, the Programme for Government commitment on Nature Networks, the National Planning framework and the work on Scottish rainforests, as well as connecting to other policy areas such as agricultural support.

## Red Rocks and Longay Possible MPA

1. The Committee was asked to approve advice on the designation of this possible Marine Protected Area (MPA). The Committee approved the advice drafted by NatureScot staff, confirming that it was based on robust science and had been subject to appropriate scrutiny, including by the SAC MPA subgroup. They approved submission of the advice to ministers.
2. The Committee clarified the respective roles of NatureScot and Marine Scotland in general and specifically to this case. It was confirmed that NatureScot advises Marine Scotland on the science on how the site compares with selection guidance and on the sensitivity of features. Marine Scotland then considers management measures. Both NatureScot and Marine Scotland are involved in stakeholder engagement events.

## Terms of Reference

1. The Terms of Reference for the Committee need to be reviewed every two years. They were reviewed last year but the next review has been brought forward to bring it in line with the SAC review timeline.
2. The Committee discussed the Terms of Reference and considered minor revisions. The revised terms of reference were signed off at the March Board meeting.