**National Park Stakeholder Advisory Group – 3rd meeting –**

**1 September 2022 -online via Teams**

**Note of meeting**

**Present**

| **Organisation**  | **Name** | **Organisation**  | **Name** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland /Scottish Campaign for National Parks  | Nikki Sinclair | NatureScot | Heather Reid (chair)Pete RawcliffeLaura CampbellCeara WebsterJennafer Rodgers |
| Cairngorms National Park Authority | Grant Moir | Ramblers Scotland  | Helen Todd |
| Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations | Aekus Kamboj | Scottish Renewables | Marcus Trinnick |
| Europarc Federation  | Carol Ritchie | South of Scotland Enterprise  | Jayne Ashley |
| Forest and Land Scotland  | John Mair | Scottish Environment LINK  | John Thomson, Aedan Smith  |
| Heads of Planning Scotland | Ian Aikman  | Scottish Government  | Lisa McCann,Brian EardleyTariq NabiNicholas Breslin |
| Highlands and Island Enterprise  | Neil Ross | Scottish Land and Estates  | Karen Ramoo |
| Historic Environment Scotland  | Dara Parsons | Scotland’s Landscape Alliance  | Rebecca Hughes  |
| Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority | Gordon Watson | Trees for Life (Affric Highland)  | Steve Micklewright |
|  |  |  |  |

**Apologies -** organisations unable to send representatives to this meeting:

Community Land Scotland COSLA Disability Equality Scotland

Land Commission Scotland Marine Conservation Society Marine Scotland

National Farmers Union Social Inclusion Scotland

**Agenda**

1. Welcome, introductions and notes of last meeting

2. Reflections from the last meeting – open discussion

3. Update on plans for consultation events (paper 3-1)

4. Developing the draft consultation paper (paper 3-2)

· Introduction

· World café online session

5. AOB and DoNM

**1. Welcome, introductions and notes of last meeting**

* This is the third stakeholder advisory group meeting to support NatureScot in providing advice to Scottish Government on the role and purpose of national parks here in Scotland and how areas for new national parks can be selected. Today we are looking at the first draft of the consultation document, which we're hoping to launch in mid September running though to early November.
* Some good progress has been made to date. Thank you to all of those who have submitted written thoughts and some background papers and information, and also offered to host and support the consultation process.
* *Introductions* included noting one word on the process. These are shown as a word cloud:



*Notes of the last meeting.*

* It was noted that it had been quite a tricky note to put together, given the length of the meeting and the nature of the discussion. The minister’s and the Parks’ CEO’s comments are also attributed so we need to check that is acceptable.
* It was agreed to make the following two changes to the note in response to the following comments.
* The need to emphasis the important role that Scotland’s framework for access rights can play in management and education, and we should not need to require blanket exclusions of people from the nature protection zones referred to the aims and powers section.
* The CEO comments were accurate but were personal reflections and should be attributed as such.

**AP1 NatureScot to revise the minutes to include these points (actioned)**

**2. Reflections from the last meeting**

***Open discussion***

* NatureScot provided some initial reflections on what they had taken away from the discussion with the Minister at the last meeting
* The voice of nature was in the room but clearly, the Minister did not feel she heard it very loudly. We need to explore some of that to tease out how significant the differences are in practice.
* There was a strong and exciting consensus about the role of national parks as exemplars of best practice covering a range of geographies across Scotland. If we designate one or more new National Parks of similar size to the first two, they could cover between 10 and 20% of Scotland’s land area overall (even without considering coastal and marine areas). There is potentially a transformational leadership role that we can see national parks playing collectively.
* There was quite a lot of discussion about the cultural heritage – this policy area has moved on since the first two Parks were created and we need to think more about what this means for national parks.
* We should not “scare the horses”: the current campaigns are based on an understanding of the model that we have. We are now thinking about how we improve on that model, and we want to a nomination process that is open and inclusive and allows places from across Scotland to put themselves forward. We will need to get the balance right between the commitment to designation by 2026 and the ambition to improve on the approach to National Parks we have.
* We have not yet talked about some of the policy areas that interact with national parks around land use and planning frameworks – such as renewables commercial forestry or fishing. Perhaps we won't get to that level of detail in this first phase of the stakeholder group, but it's a discussion that will be required over the next few years as we move towards new national parks.
* The following observations were made by SAG members
* It's increasingly recognized that we're in a nature and climate emergency and there are very welcome commitments from Scottish ministers to try and turn things around to try and make Scotland nature-positive by 2045. There are also welcome ambitions to protect 30% of Scotland by 2030. Both of these key commitments will be very difficult to achieve if the national parks do not delivering significantly towards them.
* We consider, though definitive evidence is hard to obtain, that things are better for nature in the existing national parks than it is elsewhere. It is a very good starting point, but the national parks including additional ones will need to do a significant amount of the heavy lifting. We need to build on that and progress things and it seems right that we should revisit the approach used to set them up after twenty years.
* The twin underpinning forces for any new National Park must be the crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. This must be explicit throughout. It can be accommodated in terms of the aims - we don't need to change anything, but it has to be a true partnership because reversing nature loss and promoting greater diversity has to involve and benefit people. It also require significant investment.
* The relationship between national parks and 30x30 is where part of the problem may arise – and it applies to the “scaring the horses” point. The phrase “nature protection” sounds very much like traditional biodiversity designations, which have tended to be seen as very negative by most land managers (if not the public). Whereas what we are probably talking about in Scotland, is not just protecting the best of what we've got but also recovery and restoration. It's a much more dynamic concept that we're looking for and that's where national parks come into their own because they can perform an exemplar role to show what it means to actually try and restore or recover nature in a landscape that is continuing to serve a whole range of human purposes. If we can see it in those terms, then I think it will break down many of the barriers that might otherwise begin to appear - not just the biodiversity issues but the climate issues as well. In relation to that, this is also where the link with broader initiatives on regional land use planning come.
* Across the country, we're trying to find a way in which we can reconcile and optimize the outcome of all the demands that we place upon land. It's noteworthy that we have already taken the two national parks as leaders in that arena through National Park Plans; they are also two of the five pilots for regional land use partnerships. They should be blazing the trail in terms of integrated land use - which obviously allows for different degrees of nature protection in the in the traditional sense.
* There is a lot of talking about protection and protected areas. But a new National Park has to be about restoration as well as protection, which is very different to protecting what you've got. The more you talk about protection, the more it becomes exclusive. The new National Park needs to hit the ground running in terms of climate and nature. Therefore, we need to make sure it has the powers and terms of reference that enables it to do that.
* In a previous meeting, there was a comment that you should not be able to notice a difference when you enter a National Park. In fact a difference *should* be noticeable because they need to move at a faster rate and because they should be leading the way for the rest of the landscape to follow.
* Obviously, biodiversity and climate change are high up in terms of the reasoning behind a new National Park. But we need to be careful that we don't leave people behind. A new National Park is likely to consist of a substantial amount of private land. We need to highlight the opportunities that sit around a new National Park for those landowners, and to do that we need to start talking about the social and an economic importance of a new National Park as well, and ensuring that there is a just transition. We could be asking them to do things slightly differently, and there will need to be support mechanisms. We're going to need to see integrated land use policy but we still have policies for land use that work against one another. Landowners can only do the best that they can do with the policies and the support systems that are presented to them. Also, in terms of some of the messages, it's a little bit unfair to not to recognize some of the really great work that's taking place outside national parks. Again, there's a risk of isolating some audiences as we establish a new National Park. Private land owners will be key to delivering on some of our native woodland creation and peatland restoration targets, so let's not switch that audience off.
* One other key thing which we need to consider is all the other inter-related consultations that are out at the moment, including the Agriculture and Land Reform Bills. In terms of new national parks, how the money flows through agri-environment schemes for basic payments etc. is incredibly important as to whether we can do some of the things that people here are talking about. The Bill covers lots of things that are not agriculture. If we want national parks to do certain things in the future, we need to avoid an agricultural bill that works against these - we need to join up these conversations.
* Our approach to Just Transition is also crucial in terms of just making it clear what a green nature-based economy could look like, and how we do these things together with the national parks.
* To hear a different perspective from the last meeting, contributions were specifically requested from representatives from CEMVO and YoungScot and covered the following points.
* One of the points about cultural heritage is, when we use words like that, it is very important to have clear yet open enough definition so that we all know where we're starting from and what our end goal will be. Going through some of the SAG papers, there isn’t a definition: a recommendation would be to sit down and think philosophically about what are we talking about with cultural heritage? Especially if we're talking about national parks, are we trying to restore communities and restore community interest and social interests back into nature? Are we talking about Gaelic imagination? Are we talking about newer communities that inhabit Scotland now? Defining the parameters of cultural heritage would be helpful.
* There is not enough in the consultation on restoring community systems, access to land for new growers and smaller farmers, reintegration of farmers into community or a wider sense of collective ownership and responsibility to land. These are huge topics that are difficult to summarise, but this strategy will start to feel a bit more tangible to people when we have painted a picture of how this can happen. We also have to be sure whether we're actually going to be addressing this or are we tokenistic about accessing land and making links between housing, food, energy and nature-based solutions? The other consultations on Just Transition and biodiversity strategy could relate to thinking on this and cultural heritage in broader terms.
* We know that young people are passionate about the environment, around biodiversity, around nature. We also know there is a busy range of consultations at present, so we should think about what young people have already told us about some of these areas and issues.
* We are finding for young people that there is quite a lot of consultation fatigue, particularly when they're being asked to talk about the same things all the time. There are some key themes that emerged about what young people want to use spaces for in terms of well-being, physical exercise, culture, heritage - a lot of the things that we've spoken about today.
* The meetings have discussed planning and land use - we have not asked young people about these because maybe planning isn't as attractive to young people to talk about. But there's a role for us there in how we do that. In addition, it's valid for us as a stakeholder group to draw on recent insight and not have to go out and ask again, and to work with what we already know.
* So what's missing and what haven't we spoken to young people about? There are some things around infrastructure, transport and accessibility to explore. We need to think about the ways that we can do this that engage young people. It is also wider than nature and biodiversity, and about all these other areas that we've talked about.
* It was noted that Disability Equality Scotland were not able to be here today, but they have agreed to provide some observations. Their feedback will be added as an annex to the meeting notes.

**AP2 NatureScot to add additional material from Equality Scotland to meeting notes when submitted**

**3. Update on plans for consultation events (paper 3-1)**

* Thank you for the very helpful feedback at the last meeting and in subsequent discussion with several SAG members on the proposals for the consultation. As a result, we are planning more online events which will allow wider attendance from stakeholders, e.g. from islands together with stakeholder specific meetings and one to ones. We are very mindful of the other consultations over the same time and the need to dovetail around the half term holidays.
* Thank you also for some useful pointers about the potential format of those meetings, and corrections to the names of the key stakeholders in the table at the end of this paper. Please continue to forward ideas and comments.
* We intend to develop a communications plan for the whole process. There are two challenges: how we can engage the public more constructively in this discussion, given there are more discussions to come next year around the evaluation framework and the nomination process - and that might be when to reach out more to the general public. That is partly because the immediate challenge is to engage with stakeholders, and we've had some really interesting discussions. Moreover, across Scotland there are new councillors who are just taking up the reigns. Simply communicating the process better is the number one goal during our consultation process.
* The following points were made in discussion
* For the north, we are helping to collate representative organisations. We need to consider how best to include the various island groups. Could do one mainland (possibly with Argyll and Bute) and repeat it for the three main island archipelagos. They are used to working together on things like the islands deal, so Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles could share an event.
* The Key Agencies Group might fit in there quite neatly, and there could be a separate discussion on the cultural heritage remit.
* There seems to be a move towards organisational representation – what is the place for the public? A well-structured, short questionnaire that people can access to express a view would be useful. In addition, need to think about the communications that go alongside this, which needs to be well targeted and accessible, and creative in its use of social media. This is important as well as the consultation itself because if we don't hit the right audience we won’t get the right content. Again, we would be keen to help arrange a meeting with some European contacts who could offer an external perspective on the proceedings.
* Is there any published timeline for the processes between now and 2026? Obviously, it is draft and it can vary as time goes on. But it would be useful.
* There is an issue about any potential coastal and Marine National Park, but I'm not sure that the consultation as it has currently planned adequately explores that. Any coastal and marine park would raise slightly different questions from a purely terrestrial one. In the sectoral breakdown, for land and sea use there is a huge number of organisations; although obviously any coastal part would involve land use issues as well as sea issues, would it be helpful to break it down a bit both in terms of the sort of local authorities who get involved, and in terms of the organisations and sectoral interests that are represented. It could make it clearer that it is not a firm proposition, but highlighting the fact that a coastal and marine National Park does raise quite a range of different issues.
* In response, NatureScot noted the following
* There is some reference to the time scale in the previous online consultation call for ideas, but the consultation paper will be the first time we're actually committing to a timeline. There are some risks, of course, in the event of not being able to fulfil that timeline, so we need to carefully coordinate that with Scottish Government colleagues. We will be looking at any opportunities to put out the message in terms of progress and the key milestones of the nomination process and then the statutory processes as well.
* Regarding marine and coastal, we haven't had all the voices around the table that we would have possibly wanted. We are planning a bespoke meeting with coastal and marine interests - going back to 2006 we ran a whole stakeholder process with about 40 marine and coastal organisations. We need to make sure those are aware of what's going on and have a chance to input. We need to map this through and make the connections with those authorities to make sure they understand the opportunities to engage and work out what makes the most sense for them.

**4. Developing the draft consultation paper (paper 3-2)**

* NatureScot introduced the paper and outlined the plans for the discussion through the world café session.
* A number of general observations were made on the draft paper
* Is a glossary planned for this paper? Explaining, e.g., nature protection zones might be helpful depending on the audience.
* There probably needs to be a bit of thought in terms of some of the language, definitions and clarity. If you look at aims and powers in table one, and were reading it without technical knowledge, it would not be clear. There is more clarity required in some areas so people can understand what's actually being asked in the question. While accepting it is a first draft, there are points where the language needs sharpened.
* Well done on bringing together the paper in such a short period. But, for example on table one; there is a lot in there for a wider audience. Section 3 is good in terms of the wider context – for table one, it's also about explaining what the potential options mean and how they might loop back to Section 3 in terms of why we are we proposing this. Without wanting to make it a long paper, there's a danger that people will struggle to digest what's being said there. It perhaps needs a bit more narrative and link back to the context section.
* Picking up on trying to engage a wider audience, it feels a bit dry at the start. We probably need a compelling mission statement to get people engaged. We can almost be assuming that people are behind the idea, but it could help have something that gets people excited and it might help get them feeding into the process in a more engaged way.
* Having read quite a lot of Scottish Government consultation papers recently, would it be helpful to adopt the format that they adopt in terms of the answers, namely agree, disagree, don't know - plus, obviously, a ‘supporting’ option? Whilst wary of oversimplifying consultations, this could be a prompt for the sort of questions posed because we will need to be careful about the neutrality of the questions.
* There are potentially two purposes of the consultation. One about communicating that this process is ongoing and getting people engaged, and the consultation can do that as well as providing clear public support for the action. While most people engaging in the detail might have technical knowledge, that may not be the best starting point or assumption. Therefore, quite a simple consultation with clear questions that we can also get data from, as well as the nuance, may be needed. It is a balance between the two types of things and it should be possible to do both in the same process.
* From experience with consulting on the Biodiversity Strategy, breaking down the barriers of policy talk is needed. If the language is too technical it will be a great struggle to understand for normal people. Even words such as biodiversity and ecosystems are extremely complex. There is an inclusive community communications group of the Scottish Government, with a duty for all consultations to have easy-to-read versions of all public policy consultations. This is absolutely necessary when engaging with wider communities.
* One other thing we need to remember is that people have an emotional essence and connection with nature, but those living away from nature can lose this on a day-to-day level. But there is a sense of loss and it can be worked through and explained well when evidence is provided properly – preferably in a diagrammatical way – so that people can feel that sense of loss of nature. We should use presentations and methods to communicate the issues, such as ‘this is where Scotland was twenty years ago, this is where we are now’; and talking about ecosystems very simply e.g. explaining why insects and spiders are necessary, and birds coming from Scandinavia in the migration season and why they might not have enough food. Explaining this in those sorts of words is when people start to understand and relate with these things more, and then you will be able to grasp the emotional connection people have with nature so they are able to feed into the strategy as well.
* Agree; the paper is almost there in terms of what is needed for getting technical responses from those who know what they are talking about. It is more about spending the time on the summary documents to make them clear. It is good to see that was mentioned in the introduction. Experience has shown we have had to produce our own summary for some consultation documents to help our supporters respond. We would be happy to help with that in due course and very happy to publicise it. There are quite a lot of consultations happening at the moment, so trying to cut through amongst them all, and when they are overlapping,
* We need to improve the current draft from both the technical perspective and the plain English version – they are probably separate and we need to think quite hard about how we produce that. The summary version also needs to hit the box about emotional connection and making it real.

***Summary of plenary feedback from group discussions***

***Aims and powers***

*Separate aims and powers*

* The main thing for us was the need to separate out the aims and the powers and governance. As an initial question, ask if the aims are fit for purpose, or if they need to change, before getting into the powers. Anything more technical could be put in an appendix for those who really want to get into it, rather than in the main consultation.
* The consultation is to find out what people want to see in our national parks, rather than focus on the mechanics. Does this apply to all national parks or just new ones – be clear if this is part of what we are asking.
* Maybe we do not need to change aims but could change powers to help more effectively deliver on current aims. This is missing as an option, and related to the idea that more context and justification is needed for the table of options provided.
* A question to ask: what are the key things that could change in terms of powers? The role of other public bodies in a national park needed to be explored further.
* More explanation needed, e.g. around one-size might not fit all in terms of the aims, powers and governance.

*Simplify presentation*

* The way to present this is as a ‘funnel’, starting with the policy, then the aims, then down to the powers rather than them all being put together into a table. Separating them into different sections, and having fewer questions in general, otherwise it might put people off with loads of questions. Perhaps have just two or three key questions and a free text box that people can put other thoughts into rather than closing things down.
* There was a reflection on the complexity of what was contained in the consultation document overall. It would be helpful to be quite focused on what it is that we're going to ask, the reasons that we're asking questions, and the outcomes that we're seeking to achieve from asking those questions. We can deal with the detail and the process further down the line. This is about asking the key questions at this stage to try to get a sense of direction.

*Assumptions in options table*

* There are quite a lot of assumptions being made and perhaps too strong a steer, or it is too prescriptive, as well. Are the three options appropriate at this stage of engagement? Why are the options being suggested and what does this mean for our existing national parks? There could be more explanation around that and context around increasing powers. Strengthening and rebooting do not necessarily relate to powers and functions.
* Labelling the three options is a bit pigeonholing. More useful to look at spectrum from very little change to changing the Act itself. There were some concerns around option three almost being not really our definition of a National Park but more protected areas and quite exclusive. Perhaps there should be some room for option three to exist within a National Park but not be a National Park. There is room to accommodate variety, rather than a new park being either/or.
* Also consider the effectiveness of national parks in targeting other Scottish Government programmes and priorities. For example, Just Transition, Biodiversity Strategy and looking at land use more generally. That is maybe not coming through in the crossover and enabling role that national parks can play. More integrated positive changes are not reflected in the table.

*Communities*

* Something stronger around communities and making life better for communities, linking it to powers and governance as well. Making people’s lives better, as well as nature, is missing.

*Land management*

* Also explaining how there have been some challenges for our existing national parks in terms of influencing Land Management and linking that to increasing power. So really giving more backgrounds around why and what it means to increase the power rather than just the table.

*Issues and opportunities of National Park mechanisms for new areas*

* This also came out of the alternative mechanisms discussion. A National Park designation differs from others is it comes with a dedicated organisation to manage the particular landscape designation. The paper points to the tailored approach of not all the parks need to be the same in terms of their powers. But in terms of the questions we're asking people, there would be issues and opportunities of a particular candidate area. Would it need a dedicated organisation to realize them and manage them? If so, what issues and what powers would be needed? Does this need to come out more clearly, because otherwise it is a bit abstract for people to engage with. A question could be, is a new national park enough to tackle nature and climate change crises?

***Criteria***

*Definitions*

* Good to see cultural heritage on the list. But a lot of these terms need defining. If we were to put these out to consultation, how many people would actually understand? They might mean different things to different people. Another thing to consider is that it might make a longer document that people might not want to read. ‘Nature recovery potential’ is not clear to general audience.

*Simplify the questions*

* Some of the questions are quite chunky and that could switch people off. Where there are a couple of questions being asked within one question, these probably need to be divided.

*Clarification*

* The question around degrees of support - what does it mean in practice? Preferable to avoid using certain terms like local community, and instead use terms like communities, groups. Is any weighting of criteria planned? Need to consider whether to include things like natural capital assets. However, that language can get quite fuzzy quite quickly. So definitions and some examples needed.

*‘Outstanding’ ‘Potential’ ‘Coherence’*

* ‘Potential’ is key as well - what is it going to be like in 20 years’ time? This could be used as part of the mission statement to try and really enthuse people, but framing it can be quite difficult. Just Transition to net zero is not a tested journey, and trying to use criteria to decide that, without ending up with a lot of aspirational places that might not make it in the in the current round, could be quite tricky.
* Looking ahead and looking forward was also something that was considered in terms of coherence. What happens in a National Park now might not be what is happening in 20 years’ time. It is important to consider this, for example, about wind energy.
* Some interesting issues that might arise with the maximum or minimum percentages of things; also chunky infrastructure - does that rule out places that might be up for consideration and what kind of time scale are you looking for? So some interesting tricky points to get through in this consultation. Should there be consideration of impacts of national park, positive and negative (e.g. any tensions between nature recovery and cultural heritage)?
* Potential aspect: focus on what difference a National Park could make to places and how that could be worked through. Is ‘need’ a good criterion, given this needs tackled everywhere? Need to explain criteria when asking about them. Where does sustainable economic development fit in?

*Co-design or not*

* Talk about co-design and bottom-up but that is not coming through in how the technical side of the consultation paper is presented.

*Cultural heritage*

* This is a welcome inclusion, but the point was made that that can sometimes be tricky or misused - it can be used to try to justify some aspects of things such as, abroad, hunting of endangered bird species.
* Defining cultural heritage would be helpful. One way of thinking of this could be as physical landscape manifestations rather than intangible; and these intangible aspects would then be included by National Parks in their dealings with communities.

***Alternative mechanisms***

*Exclude as separate section*

* There was clear consensus that we do not need this section in the in the consultation paper. It is too confusing and complicated. However, elements of it need to be built into the section on criteria and possibly the section on powers. We need to give some thought to that. We also need to provide some background or context which includes reference to some of the material in this section and in the background paper.

*Explain the context and provide a narrative*

* It was suggested that we need a nice, simple graphic to explain this complicated landscape of designations that we have, which include both nature and landscape and recreational elements, but also cultural heritage ones.
* There is a narrative Scottish Government need to develop, with help from NatureScot, in setting context for this and work on 30x30 (and SBS). Having this would help consultation on NPs (and 30x30).

*Nominated areas that don’t make the cut*

* Do we include an open question about what should happen to the areas which are nominated but don't proceed to selection or designation as a National Park? Would a general open question be helpful to get people thinking about those sorts of things?

*Vision and mission statement*

* Does the vision and mission statement of national parks need to include some reference to other designations because these sort of designations occur within national parks? To what extent should that vision and mission statement talk about other these mechanisms when they occur outside national parks?
* Do not include this in this consultation because it is focused on national parks. But let's not forget the opportunity to think about these mechanisms, some of which are suffering because of lack of resources and commitment to them. We need to come back to this discussion at some point when the 30x30 and National Park work is at a different stage.

**AP3 All –provide any additional comments on the consultation paper as soon as possible**

**AP4 NatureScot – will see if the concept board can be left open; if not, it will be provided as word document and circulate with the meeting notes. (Word document circulated with draft notes.)**

**5. AOB and DoNM**

* This is third of the originally intended four meetings; the next one being scheduled for November. We are now thinking of an additional meeting in October. This could:
* Explore the content of the suggested vision or mission statement.
* Consider next steps for the national park work in 2023 and beyond
* There was general agreement that an additional meeting in October, online, would be useful to discuss these issues. There would be opportunities to feed in, via other routes, if attendance at that meeting was not possible for any members.

**AP5 NatureScot to arrange future meetings in October and November**

**NatureScot**

**September 2022**