**SAG 4-1 - Key elements of a vision and mission for Scotland’s national parks**

**Purpose**

This paper explores the possible contents of a “vision and mission” statement for Scotland’s National Parks building on the refreshed role proposed in the current consultation.

**Background**

While, we are currently consulting on the merits and possible contents of having a vision and mission for all of Scotland’s National Parks it was suggested at the last meeting of SAG that it would be useful for the group to collectively discuss the possible scope and contents of such a statement in more detail.

Such a vision and mission statement could be particularly useful to give direction to the proposed new overarching purpose “**to lead nature recovery and a just transition to net zero**” including the following elements of leadership and action required

* Promoting the need to do things differently and at greater pace if we are to make the changes needed to address the climate and nature emergencies;
* Recognising that change is inevitable and that nature restoration should be inspired and informed by the past but not seek to simply replicate it;
* Accelerating the transition in land and marine use needed to deliver climate mitigation and adaptation and nature recovery;
* Testing and embedding natural capital approaches to growing a well-being and sustainable economy;
* Generating opportunities for greater private investment in natural capital;
* Realising the just transition by championing reskilling and new employment opportunities to help ensure that no local community in the Park area is left behind;
* Leading on improving ways of design and place making that achieve optimum outcomes for people, nature and landscapes.

**Experience from other countries**

Vision and mission statements can be found in many of the National Park plans for specific areas, but are much rarer at the national level. We have previously shared with the group an example of a vision and mission statement for Austria’s National Parks and this and further selected examples we have found are provided in Annex A.

Many of the statements that do exist are generally limited to the traditional role of National Parks in terms of the conservation and enjoyment of areas of outstanding national importance for their nature and landscapes. Some of the examples are also concerned with National Park Service that manages the areas rather than the National Parks themselves. From our quick review, surprisingly few vision and mission statements contain timelines.

In Germany, a more systematic approach has been taken which emphasises the criteria and quality standards that a National Park must meet to deliver the countries vision and mission for National Parks. These criterial and standards are grouped under eight thematic areas: 1 - legislation and policy; 2 - Organization; 3 - Protection of natural biodiversity and dynamics 4 - Management 5 - Cooperation and sustainable regional development 6 - External communication 7 - Education and nature experience and 8 - Research and monitoring).

While itself only a review, the recent Glover report in England also contain elements of a vision for protected landscapes, including the creation of a more unified and integrated system of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A bold vision for marine national parks has also been set out recently by the Blue Marine Foundation which places at it centre communication, connectedness and shared opportunity.

**Key elements of a Scottish vision and mission**

All these examples illustrate the range of approaches to developing vision and mission statements for National Parks as well as some of the key components of them. Most reflect a traditional role for National Parks. The proposed refresh of the role for Scotland’s National Parks means that we will need to develop an approach that meets our needs. A vision-mission statement should also set out the role and contribution that our National Parks play nationally as well as locally.

Key elements of this approach could include the following.

Timelines

To fit with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, we suggest a Scottish version could include two end points

To 2030 (SBS – nature protected)

To 2045 (SBS – nature restored, climate - net zero delivered)

**Contents**

*Key Elements to 2030*

* A suite of national parks in place representing some of the best of Scotland’s nature and heritage and our ambitions for it
* National Park Partnership plans provide green prints for nature recovery and a just transition to net zero
* Peatland is restored, native woodlands have expanded and the health of other natural habitats on land and sea is improving allowing more species to recover
* Land management practice and sea use has begun to move towards net zero
* Significant parts of land and sea in National Parks contribute to 30x30 and Nature Networks
* The suite of National Parks is playing a key role in conservation priorities, including species reintroduction
* The well-being of Park communities is increasing – people are healthier and the Park economy provides opportunities for all
* National parks are recognized as places of education, experience and recreation for all of Scotland’s people
* Visitors to National Parks leave no trace and travel-related carbon emissions are reducing
* The public and private sector play a key role in delivery of Park Partnership Plans
* Synergy and collective work between National Parks and with NatureScot has increased to strengthen protection and restoration of biodiversity

*Key elements to 2045*

* Nature is thriving in and around Scotland’s National Parks
* National Parks are significant carbon sinks for Scotland
* National Parks are a core part of Scotland’s nature, active travel and public transport networks
* All of Scotland’s people have opportunities to visit; learn about and care for Scotland’s National Parks
* Scotland’s National Parks are recognised as a role model in nature recovery and a just transition to net zero for Scotland and elsewhere in Europe

**Discussion**

SAG members are asked to discuss these early proposal for a vision and mission statement and specifically

* Consider the appropriate timelines for such a statement
* Comment on the possible contents
* Comment the level of detail such a statement should get into
* Suggest other vision and mission statements that it would be useful to review (including ones from different sectors)

**NatureScot**

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**Annex A – Some examples of vision and mission statements**

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| English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 | By 2030 English National Parks and the Broads will be places where:   * There are thriving, living, working landscapes notable for their natural beauty and cultural heritage. They inspire visitors and local communities to live within environmental limits and to tackle climate change. The wide-range of services they provide (from clean water to sustainable food) are in good condition and valued by society. * Sustainable development can be seen in action. The communities of the Parks take an active part in decisions about their future. They are known for having been pivotal in the transformation to a low carbon society and sustainable living. Renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, low carbon transport and travel and healthy, prosperous communities have long been the norm. * Wildlife flourishes and habitats are maintained, restored and expanded and linked effectively to other ecological networks. Woodland cover has increased and all woodlands are sustainably managed, with the right trees in the right places. Landscapes and habitats are managed to create resilience and enable adaptation. * Everyone can discover the rich variety of England’s natural and historic environment, and have the chance to value them as places for escape, adventure, enjoyment, inspiration and reflection, and a source of national pride and identity. They will be recognised as fundamental to our prosperity and well-being.   <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221086/pb13387-vision-circular2010.pdf> |
| National Parks England | Priorities   * Wildlife and Nature Recovery * Climate Leadership * Sustainable Farming and Land Management * Landscapes for Everyone   <https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/home/about-national-parks-england/national-parks-collective-vision-and-priorities> |
| Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism -  National Park Strategy Austria 2020 | National parks represent the preservation of national natural heritage and are part of Austrian identity. In politics and society, national parks have a very high value. All involved parties and the entire population identify with the national park idea. All types of natural ecosystem are protected by national parks. The national park surroundings take into account national park objectives.  In Austria, a coherent network of protected areas exists in which each national park acts as the centre of an ecological network and plays an active role. The national parks help to increase the long-term survival chances of species and ecological communities; they also help in achieving national biodiversity targets under the Austrian Biodiversity Strategy 2020+. National parks are a role model for modern protected area management.  The people living in national park regions are committed to nature conservation and benefit from it. Sustainable tourism development and the special image of regional products contribute significantly to regional value creation. National parks are recognized as places of education, experience and recreation for people throughout Austria.  Cooperation between the national parks under the brand ‘Nationalparks Austria’ has been successful. Synergies are also used from an economic point of view.  There has been intensive cooperation with selected protected areas in Austria, across Europe and beyond. Nationalparks Austria is a partner in protected area networks at an international level and represents the interests of the Austrian national parks, e.g. in the field of quality standards. Austria sets international benchmarks for protected area management, capacity building for protected area administrations, and many other fields. Austrian national parks successfully contribute to the development of solutions for current challenges such as climate change, species loss, invasive species, fragmentation, and protection of the large predators, namely lynx, bear and wolf. National parks are innovative places to enable natural processes, preserve evolutionary potential, and maintain intact natural ecosystems and their services.  The development of national parks is never finished. National parks are subject to constant change and new challenges. Future generations should also be able to experience nature in this original form. National parks guarantee high quality nature conservation.  <https://www.nationalparksaustria.at/files/NPA_Download/English/NPA_strategy_English_2020.pdf> |
| German National Parks | Germany’s national parks are natural landscapes largely unaffected by human activity; their protected areas allow nature to be undisturbed to a particularly large extent for present and future generations, so that we humans are aware of the beauty and the value of life on our Earth and preserve the diversity of nature.  <https://nationale-naturlandschaften.de/wp-content/blogs.dir/29/files/2022/01/2021_NNL_Qualitaetskriterien_und_standards_fuer_deutsche_Nationalparke_2.0_EN.pdf> |
| National Parks Austria | **Our Vision:** We aim to anchor the Austrian National Parks as a shared heritage in people’s hearts and minds and thereby to strengthen the desire for a life more in tune with nature.  **Our Mission:** Through far-sighted vision, expertise, strength of character and passion, we will ensure that future generations will also take pride in our natural resources.  <https://www.nationalparksaustria.at/en/nationalparks-austria.html> |
| US National Park Service | The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.  <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm> |
| Glover Land-scapes review – England | Our system of national landscapes should be a positive force for the nation’s wellbeing. Big ambitions are made possible by these 44 areas working together in new ways to become more than the sum of their parts.  We want this to happen not as an end in itself but because more must be done for nature and natural beauty. More must be done for people who live in and visit our landscapes. And a lot more must be done to meet the needs of our many fellow citizens who do not know the countryside, or do not always feel welcome in it, but should be able to enjoy it. Our landscapes are open and free to all, but can seem exclusive  We want a new commitment to recovery which puts natural beauty as it core to make all these places special. They should be exemplars of the very best, improving not degrading. They should look and feel special.  <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf> |
| Blue Marin Foundation | National Marine Parks would be about shared opportunity. About the recognition of what is precious to us all. About conserving and enhancing our rich coastal waters in a way that people understand. We want coastal communities to feel pride in their marine environment  An idea is a powerful thing. One day, we hope that National Marine Parks will support health and wellbeing around the coastlines of Britain. That they will give people a sense of purpose and renewed identity with the sea. That they will deliver benefits to coastal communities, raise awareness of the marine environment and its role in supporting our lives on land. We believe that stronger and simpler communication holds the key to all of these things and more.  <https://www.bluemarinefoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/National-Marine-Parks-Vision.pdf> |