**Protected Areas Committee**

**10 February 2023**

**Open session**

Attendees

Committee: David Johnstone (chair), Aoife Martin, Jill Robbie, Nikki Yoxall

Staff: Nick Halfhide, John Kerr, Dave Mackay, Sarah Hutcheon

Apologies: Jaboury Ghazoul

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies from Jaboury Ghazoul were noted.

1. Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands – extensions to protected areas – confirmation of eight sites

John Kerr introduced the paper on the proposed extension to eight sites which underpin part of the extension to Caithness and Sutherland SAC, SPA and Ramsar site (Ben Griams SSSI, East Halladale SSSI, Forsinard Bogs SSSI, Loch Caluim Flows SSSI, Shielton Peatlands SSSI, Sletill Peatlands SSSI, West Halladale SSSI, and West Strathnaver SSSI). We have carried out a consultation and have received no objections to the extension of these eight sites. The extensions would need confirmed within the year. There has been a scientific objection made to the extension of two other sites which the PAC will deal with separately.

The PAC agreed to confirm the notification of the eight sites where no objections have been received.

The committee discussed when we would publicise the notification of these extensions. We agreed not to send the formal confirmation out yet but wait until we have a decision on all ten sites and can tie it in with the subsequent decision from Scottish Government on the European sites.

1. Indicative work plan

The committee noted the indicative work plan for the year.