

# The Report on the proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms

*'a new way of caring for a special place'*

This Report has been published on behalf of the Scottish Executive  
under Section 3 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000

Working with Scotland's people to care for our natural heritage

**SCOTTISH  
NATURAL  
HERITAGE**



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Lorne Gill/SNH  
George Logan/SNH

## Foreword

When, last year, the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the legislation that laid the basis for National Parks in Scotland, not with a vote but with a round of applause, our staff and Board members were very proud to have been a part of the process. So we were delighted when Ministers decided to appoint us as the reporter on their proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms. This has given us the opportunity to progress our work still further.

The consultation process which we have undertaken over the last nine months has been the most comprehensive ever undertaken by SNH, involving around 30 of our staff. During the process I have been most impressed with the energy and commitment shown by so many people to make their views known about the management of this special part of Scotland. It can be invidious to single out any particular group but I believe the Community Councils and Associations in the area, with whom we have worked very closely, deserve special mention. A considerable number of these groups took on responsibility for the management of the process in their communities and sought the views of their neighbours who live and work in the area as they saw fit. Many new and varied techniques were used from mobile post-boxes to telephone surveys. A great number of people were involved and we have all learned a tremendous amount. I hope that this experience is something which the Park Authority can build on in future years. Can I pass on my personal thanks to all those who were involved throughout Scotland.

We have analysed the responses we received most thoroughly. Anyone who knows the history of the Cairngorms will appreciate that there is a wide range of views about how best to manage the area and we did not always find consensus about the key issues. This was particularly true when it came planning matters. In these circumstances we have reported to Ministers the range of views expressed and who holds them. In coming to our advice we have explained our reasoning so that Ministers may decide if the balance we have struck is the right one.

If Ministers accept our advice about the area of the proposed National Park the designation will cover the two principal mountain massifs and the surrounding straths that are most closely associated with them. This mountain core has few permanent residents but those who live in the surrounding glens are deeply dependent on its continued care and well-being.

I commend this report to Ministers and hope that it will be of assistance in framing the draft Designation Order and that we shall soon see the establishment of the Cairngorms National Park.



John Markland  
Chairman  
Scottish Natural Heritage



## Executive Summary

In September 2000 Scottish Ministers made a formal proposal under Section 2 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 to establish a National Park in the Cairngorms area. Ministers asked SNH to be the statutory reporter under Section 3 of the Act and to consult widely on the proposal and to make our report in the light of responses to this consultation. This report contains our findings and also SNH's own views as statutory adviser on the natural heritage.

### The consultation exercise

SNH consulted on the proposal for a period of 20 weeks, from December 2000 to April 2001. We received around 850 written responses from individuals and organisations throughout Scotland and beyond, including the five local authorities in the area, Community Councils and Associations, businesses, national and local agencies and special interest groups. A further 3000 people are estimated to have participated in other elements of the consultation exercise, including the community-led consultation events within the area.

A great range of views were expressed about many of the key issues and it was not always possible to provide a concise summary of these. To support consideration of our report by Scottish Ministers, we have therefore prepared a comprehensive analysis of the views expressed and this is published separately along with preliminary evaluation of the effectiveness of the consultation exercise.

### Reporter's advice

On the basis of the consultation we have undertaken we conclude that

#### General

- The Cairngorms area meets the conditions for the establishment of a National Park as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, and Ministers should proceed with the designation of the area as a National Park.

#### Area

The Park area should include:

- the central Cairngorms and Lochnagar/White Mounth massifs and the straths which immediately surround them including:
- in Badenoch and Strathspey the communities of Dalwhinnie and Laggan in the west and Carr-Bridge, Grantown, Cromdale and Advie in the north;
- in Glenlivet and Strath Avon the communities of Glenlivet and Tomintoul,
- in Donside and Deeside the communities of Strathdon, Bellabeg, Braemar, Ballater and Dinnet;
- in the Angus Glens the heads of the glens Esk, Clova, Prosen and Isla; and
- in Highland Perthshire the community of Blair Atholl.

If designated as described above the Park would have an area of 4580Km<sup>2</sup> and is estimated to have a resident population of around 16000 people.

#### Powers and functions of the National Park Authority

- The National Park Authority should have:
  - the general powers as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000;
  - the responsibilities and powers for access proposed for local authorities under the draft Land Reform (Scotland) Bill; and
  - statutory consultee powers on all matters affecting the area dealt with by local and national roads authorities, transport operators statutory undertakers and other relevant public bodies.
- The planning function within the Park should operate as follows:
  - the National Park Authority should be a joint structure plan authority with joint responsibility for the preparation of the structure plans covering the area.

- a joint committee of the five local authorities and the National Park Authority should prepare a single local plan for Park area.
  - local authorities should retain responsibility for development control decisions with the National Park Authority becoming a statutory consultee on applications, with reference made to Scottish Ministers when disagreement between the Park Authority and the local authority arises;
  - the National Park Plan and local plan for the area, together with any revisions required to the existing structure plans, should be formally approved within three years of the National Park being established; and
  - Scottish Ministers should provide firm direction and guidance on the working of these new arrangements, and on the importance of the National Park Plan in shaping the development plan policies for the area.
- The National Park Authority should be given the powers to protect wildlife and landscape interests from damage. A special agri-environment and woodland grant scheme should also be developed for the Park.

#### *Membership of the governing Board of the National Park Authority*

- The size of the governing Board of the National Park Authority should be 25 members, of which five should be directly elected by people living in the Park area.
- On the basis of the area proposed, the share of the 10 places on the Board to be filled on local authority nomination should be:

Aberdeenshire	3
Angus	1
Moray	1
Highland	4
Perth and Kinross	1.

- The areas of knowledge and experience of the whole Board should cover the four aims

of National Parks and in making their appointments Ministers should seek to ensure that a balance is achieved between these aims.

- Areas of knowledge and expertise should be drawn from the following list: biodiversity; earth heritage; landscape conservation; built heritage and archaeology; history, traditions and language; water and woodland management; deer and field sports management; fisheries management; countryside recreation and access; active outdoor pursuits; environmental education; tourism; commerce and business; community development; and planning and transport.
- Young people should be represented on the Board and youth groups actively encouraged, and at least one member of the Board should have an understanding of the Gaelic and Doric culture of the area, including its language.
- Places on the Board should not be reserved for specific public bodies or interest groups, but the National Park Authority should consider setting up a series of representative and advisory groups. This will ensure that the Board is drawing on the local and national knowledge and expertise necessary to manage the area.
- In addition to the directly elected members at least five other members of the Board should be local members.
- Direct elections should normally proceed the selection of the non-directly elected members of the governing Board of the Park Authority

#### *Costs of the National Park Authority*

The cost of the National Park Authority in the Cairngorms area in year three of its operation will be in the region of £4.1 to £5.5 million per annum at 2000/01 prices (comprising £2.5 to £3.1 million core operating costs supporting some 80 FTE staff, and £1.6 to £2.0 million programme costs supporting a total spend of £4.5 to £5.5 million). After year three, we expect these programme costs to increase as the Park Authority gain experience in managing this part of its work and also becomes more effective in securing external sources of funding.

## Name

The name of the National Park should be the Cairngorms National Park: *Pàirce Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh*. In considering the management of its area, the Park Authority will need to be sensitive in their use of Gaelic in, for example, signs and leaflets particularly in areas other than the north and west of the Park.

## SNH advice as natural heritage adviser

As the Government's adviser on natural heritage issues, SNH strongly supported the reporter's recommendations on most issues. However, SNH argued that the case for the inclusion of the Strathdon, Glenlivet and Strath Avon and parts of the south western area of the Park area were not strong on natural heritage grounds alone. As natural heritage adviser we also advised that:

- the Park Authority should itself be provided with effective last resort powers (suggesting that the land management order contained in the recent 'Nature of Scotland' proposals could be adapted for this purpose), and;
- consideration should be given to passing the management of public land held by other bodies in the Park to the Park Authority where this would provide the best means of securing appropriate management, consistent with Park aims.

## Next steps

In addition to being published and being placed on SNH's web-site ([www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)), this report is being sent to all the individuals and organisations who took part in the consultation exercise and wanted to be sent it. Copies of the supplementary reports on the consultation process will also be made widely available, and will be distributed to community councils, local authorities, public bodies and other groups who contributed to the consultation process. The publication of this suite of reports will conclude SNH's formal role as the reporter for the Cairngorms National Park proposal.

Scottish Ministers will now consider SNH's advice. Comments on any aspects of these Reports and the process of consultation that underpinned them should therefore be sent to Scottish Ministers as they consider their next steps. If they decide to proceed with the designation of the Cairngorms National Park, they will be a further formal period of consultation on the draft designation order which provides for the National Park to be legally established by the Scottish Parliament.

