

Section 5: The consultation exercise in towns and cities

This section of the report summarises the information we received from a series of events, which were organised in six Scottish towns and cities. The purpose of these events was to provide an opportunity for individuals outwith the proposed Park area to discuss and comment on the proposal for a National Park. Copies of the full reports are available, as described in Section 1.

Six evening meetings were organised in central locations and advertised in local and national press and with posters in locations throughout each City (Table 5-1). People travelled a considerable distance to attend the meetings, with only around half of the participants residing in the town or city where the event was located. The vast majority had not previously contributed to the debate about the proposed National Park in the Cairngorms. Information displays were also placed in the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh and the Kelvingrove Centre, Glasgow for one week preceding each meeting. The consultation document, summary leaflet response-forms and information packs on National Parks in Scotland were also made available at these venues.

Table 5-1: Details of evening meetings

Location	Venue	Facilitator	Number of participants
Aberdeen	Jarvis Aberdeen Hotel	Steve Robertson	39
Inverness	The Palace Hotel	Alex Downie	24
Perth	Dewars' Centre	Alex Downie	7
Dundee	The Queens Hotel	Alex Downie	12
Edinburgh	The Braid Hills Hotel	Steve Robertson	57
Glasgow	The Royal Concert Hall	Alex Downie	8
Total			147

The programme for each of the evening meetings involved a short introductory presentation by SNH staff and then an opportunity for discussion in small groups on each of the issues. The facilitator recorded comments in an open session. Participants were encouraged to submit further written comments directly to SNH following the meeting. The facilitators submitted a written report to SNH for each of the meetings.

Comments generated

The comments generated at the meetings are summarised below.

Should a National Park be designated?

Seventy-nine separate comments were made about the general principle of a National Park in the Cairngorms. The consensus at each of the six meetings was in favour of designation, with only three individuals explicitly stating they were not in favour of the proposed Park. Five individuals remained undecided. 94% of recorded comments were in favour of the designation of a National Park.

What area should a National Park cover?

Eighty-two comments were recorded about this theme. Where possible these have been allocated to either Options A, B and C from the consultation document or an area in between these.

Smaller than Option A	Option A	In between	Option B	In Between	Option C	Bigger than Option C
1	18	10	31	7	14	1

For a Park smaller than Option A, the suggested area was:

- Option A but with nothing North west of the Spey.

For a Park intermediate between Option A and B, the suggested modifications and comments were:

- Western area around Laggan has more in common with Rannoch/ Ft William/ Lochaber than the Cairngorms
- Extend north and west to Great Glen (Loch Ness)
- Extend NW to Loch Ness
- Option A with extension to include more of Deeside
- Why does Option A not include Beinn a' Ghlo (mountainous)? It should be included.
- Option B minus Angus Glens and Ben Rinnes
- West of Loch Ericht should be a Ben Nevis National Park
- Should include the Forest of Atholl, Drumochter, Beinn a Ghlo
- Unsure that the eastern areas are relevant, much afforestation.

For a Park intermediate between Option B and C, the suggested modifications and comments were:

- Exclude built up areas
- Option B plus Spey catchment, plus all Angus Glens to Cairngorms Partnership boundary
- South east area not Cairngorms. Also Tarland area
- Option B but include the Aboyne/Tarland area (4)
- Include Glen Tilt - it's an access way to the Cairngorms
- Include Glen Clova on southern side as under pressure
- Stick to SDD 1967 boundary plus Angus Glens, as they are nationally important.

For a Park larger than Option C the suggested change was:

- Why leave out Schiehallion on the widest area option?

A further suggestion made was zoning a Park of Option B or C size, with A being the core where protection and conservation are critical and the additional area being a buffer/ transition zone where social and economic development might be more important.

What Powers and Functions should the National Park Authority have?

Seventy-six comments were made. Of those who specifically recorded a view on whether the Park Authority should have responsibility for the statutory planning functions most were in favour of the Park Authority taking on this role. There was a feeling that the existing arrangements with planning in the hands of five local authorities was not as effective as it should be. Having more than one local authority with control of planning might mean differences across the Park in the application of

controls, not for sound strategic reasons, but for operational and political differences between the authorities.

There was also significant interest in sharing of the planning function as long as there was clear responsibility between Local Authorities and the Park Authority. The two main views were:

- Local Authorities should retain development control responsibilities for the main settlements (e.g. Aviemore, Grantown on Spey) with the Park Authority responsible for the rest of the area. The distinction was based on a greater need for landscape and heritage conservation and management in the rural area.
- Local Authorities should retain control of structure plan preparation, with the Park Authority taking responsibility for the preparation of local plans and development control.

Other powers and functions were suggested for the National Park Authority. Suggestions included support for ranger services, improvement of services such as litter collection, powers to use incentives rather than regulation, or transfer of functions from other public bodies.

Membership of the Board of the Park Authority?

Eighty-six comments were made about the membership of the Board. The key points on which there was general agreement were:

- Appointments must be on the basis of knowledge and expertise and not for political reasons.
- There is an under-representation of directly elected local people in the Ministers' proposals. Suggestions were made to increase this representation to 33% or 40%.
- Any division into sub-areas for electoral purposes should be on the basis of land area or land with a slight population weighting and not exclusively by population. Such an approach would help to diminish any 'urban' or western bias on the Board.
- Local Authority nominations need not only be councillors.
- The type of expertise required on the Board should include teachers, rangers, recreation, ecologists, conservationists, land managers, planners, farmers, community development.
- There must be transparency and accountability.

Further points of note are the need for a gender balance, to consider language interests (is there a difference of, Gaelic, Doric, Scots) and to ensure the Board is not over represented with a particular skill or interest. To achieve this, it was suggested that local authorities might nominate more numbers than the number required to give Scottish Ministers a choice, and that the process of direct elections, Local Authority nominations and Scottish Ministers' appointments be staggered. Again this would allow Ministers flexibility to ensure the balance on the Board is appropriate.

Name of the National Park and other issues?

Twenty-one comments were recorded. The majority who commented on the name were in favour of "Cairngorms National Park". There was a suggestion at two of the

meetings that Cairngorm would be more appropriate, the single mountain being a focal point. Alternative suggestions included:

- Cairngorms Wilderness Park
- Caledonian National Park
- Land of Hills and Rivers (in Gaelic)
- Grampians National Park.

Seventy-six comments were recorded about how the National Park should be managed once it is established. There was a wide variety of views but some common themes which emerged including the following:

- *Finance*: The budget must be appropriate to all the responsibilities and aims.
- *The National perspective*: It is a National Park and we must not lose this important consideration.
- *Land-ownership*: Co-operation and involvement of private landowners will be important. The Park Authority should promote partnerships with them and with local communities.
- *Interim period*: Existing agencies and organisations must not take decisions or commit expenditure to projects which might prejudice the Park meeting its aims in the future.
- *Marketing of the area*: An important consideration.
- *Culture/Language/Education*: Must not forget these aspects of the proposed Park.
- *Communities just outside the Park*: Important to monitor the impact of the proposed Park on the surrounding area and to encourage appropriate action, if required.