

Report 4

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

An independent assessment of the consultation on the proposed National Park for the Cairngorms

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Kathy Rettie
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Preface

Kathy Rettie is an employee of Parks Canada who had come to the University of St Andrews on a career break to study for a PhD in the Department of Social Anthropology. She made an early contact with SNH, a public agency in Scotland with conservation and recreation functions closest to her employer, because of her interest in National Parks and the communities who live in and depend upon them. She has taken a close interest in the evolving debate about the development of National Parks in Scotland.

SNH invited Kathy to act as independent observer of and commentator on the consultation process for the proposed National Park in the Cairngorms, the results of which could form part of her research. SNH had also commissioned consultants to coordinate aspects of the consultation process and their contract also included the submission of a report on how the consultation process had worked. But Kathy's role was more independent: she played no formal part in the process and, while SNH gave her open access to meetings and papers, she was free to pursue her assessment as she saw fit. SNH did assist by meeting travel and subsistence costs and, in return, a report of her findings was required. This publication is a slightly reduced version of Kathy's report, excluding only some descriptive text about the Cairngorms and the background to the designation. Otherwise the views expressed here are entirely Kathy's own.

SNH is grateful to Kathy for the efforts she made and for the measured and professional way in which she acted as an observer and scrutiniser to the consultation. We hope the others will find her account of interest.

Executive Summary

A National Park in the Cairngorms has been under discussion since 1928. With the passage of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, there is now provision for the designation of National Parks throughout Scotland. Two proposals have been put forward: for Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and for the Cairngorms. As required under Section 5 of the Act, these proposals are subject to a minimum of 12 weeks' public consultation. This report provides an assessment of the consultation exercise undertaken by Scottish Natural Heritage for the Cairngorms proposal.

The consultation officially commenced on 11 December 2000, and closed on 30 April 2001. The consultation process was designed and implemented by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Reporter appointed under Section 3 of the Act. The process was unique; several options for the format of consultation were offered to each of the communities within the proposed National Park area. Community Councils could manage the process themselves using Community Councillors or appointed facilitators (Options A and B) or they could choose to rely upon the more conventional approach to consultation with one open public meeting facilitated by an outside professional (Option C). The majority of the communities selected Options A or B. In addition to the community events, there were numerous other avenues for participation including the think-net discussion web-site supported by SNH, a summary consultation document with mail-in response form, and written responses to the full consultation document. SNH also hosted numerous events for national and special interest constituents.

The consultation process was evaluated using benchmarks and comparisons. Interviews were conducted with 32 study participants who were directly involved with the process. They included facilitators, Community Councillors, staff from SNH and the consultants involved with the process. Twenty-six events, selected to represent a fair representation from each Option, were reviewed. Questionnaires aimed at determining the opportunities for participation and the quality of the information provided were completed by 52 participants in public meetings. The process was measured against the recommendations provided in *Best Practice for Community Participation in National Parks* (Govan *et al* 1998). Following the close of the consultation period, 532 people from five towns in and around the area were surveyed to learn more about why many residents did not participate in the process.

Participation in the consultation increased by over 250% in comparison with a previous consultation exercise on National Parks in Scotland, undertaken in 1998 (hereafter referred to as the 1998 Consultation). There was unanimous agreement, via the questionnaire, that residents had a fair opportunity to register opinions. Of the three options for consultation, Options A and B, where the communities fostered the methods used, proved more productive than Option C.

Option A and B communities utilised a variety of means to connect with residents. This proved to be a highly effective manner in which to achieve greater participation amongst the residents and to build upon the consultative skills within the communities. By 'taking the issues to the people', there was a greater sense of direct involvement and responses were more meaningful. Other benefits were accrued such as new skills in consultation at the local level, and active involvement of communities and Community Councils in the National Park initiative. In future, all communities in the area should be strongly encouraged to engage local facilitators.

From their experience gained during the consultation process, facilitators possess valuable information on what works and what does not. This constitutes an important contribution towards best practice. This experience should be built upon and utilised in future consultations. Facilitators, Community Councillors, consultants and members of SNH staff provided a number of recommendations that also contribute to best practice.

Efficiency can be improved by addressing a number of important factors during the pre-consultation stage of the process. Facilitators felt they could have done a better job with more and earlier training. Engaging professional consultants as trainers during the pre-consultation phase, and providing enough lead-time for facilitators to learn the issues and to focus on various ways and means of engaging with the public would prove beneficial. It was suggested that the issues need to be approached from the local level up, tailoring the approach to the audience. Local facilitators can provide valuable input into the design of communication materials. During the planning period, resources should be objectively reviewed and matched to the tasks.

During the consultation process, ongoing collaboration amongst community facilitators would provide extra support and maximise resources and talents. There is a valuable opportunity for SNH to build a relationship with community members by consistently sending the same personnel to provide the necessary technical information, and by encouraging local SNH staff to attend events. SNH can benefit from experiences in the communities by copying techniques that work in the events that they host.

Surveys conducted following the official consultation period demonstrated that nearly 50% of the residents were unaware that a National Park consultation process had been undertaken in the Cairngorms area. Low attendance in the city centres was another indication that people were unaware of events being staged. This suggests that publicity needs to be dynamic, repetitive and diverse.

Events staged at secondary schools in the area were very successful. Students confirmed they had a sound background in the issues and responded to the consultative exercises with enthusiasm. Here is a valuable opportunity to foster a productive medium for consultation with the future National Park constituents and managers. An increased focus on school events and involvement of youth in the consultation processes would be mutually beneficial.

In conclusion, success was achieved through innovative processes that increased participation and contributed towards the accumulation of social capital in the communities. Best practices will benefit from the recommendations put forward by people directly involved with the process. This, in turn, will contribute towards an innovative and productive model for collaborative management. The benefits of taking facilitation to the local level are best summed up by the following quotes from community facilitators:

'Residents feel they have been truly consulted.'

'This was educational for all.'

'We've done a better job so far than has ever been done in the past. The people are more aware; this is part of a continuing process.'

Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2000, Scottish Ministers made a formal proposal under Section 2 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 for a National Park in the Cairngorms area. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) was appointed as the statutory reporter on this proposal, under Section 3 of the Act, and was required to consult widely on the proposal and to report in the light of the responses to the consultation.
- 1.2 The following report is an independent assessment of the public consultation undertaken on the proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms. As announced on the BBC news on 27 April 2001, this was the most extensive consultation exercise ever undertaken by Scottish Natural Heritage. There are several unique aspects to this consultation process, perhaps the most interesting being the delegation of control to local communities and the involvement of residents as facilitators. While this proved to be time consuming and perhaps more expensive than traditional consultation methods, its benefits are manifold. In some cases, this resulted in a divergence from 'continual' procedure; however, the effectiveness of this process cannot be questioned. It is readily apparent that community residents know the most productive means for connecting with the members of their community and creating an atmosphere for productive consultation.
- 1.3 This report is an independent assessment of the consultation on the proposed National Park for the Cairngorms and contains a summary of the background to the consultation process, including a brief history leading up to the potential designation of the Cairngorms as a National Park. The report outlines the methodology used to collect and analyse data for the evaluation and subsequent recommendations and conclusions.
- 1.4 The purpose of the independent assessment was to:
 - determine the quality and success of the public consultation process;
 - acquire information which can be utilised by SNH in their efforts to incorporate 'best practice' in future public consultation exercises; and
 - compare the community-led public consultation (Options A and B) with the independently facilitated public meetings (Option C) and additional peripheral meetings taking place in communities adjacent to the potential Park area.
- 1.5 This report is one of a series of reports submitted to Ministers on the proposed National Park. Other reports in the series are as follows:

Report 1: A report on the proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms

This report, submitted to Ministers on 21 August 2001, contains SNH's advice to Ministers which was based on the views heard during the consultation exercise. As instructed by Ministers, the report makes clear and distinct the views of SNH in its role as advisers on the natural heritage. Section 2 of the report contains a description summarising how the consultation exercise was mounted.

Report 2: An account of the information received during the consultation exercise

This report contains a summary of all the information received by SNH during the consultation exercise, including article extracts from written responses and reports of the events and initiatives held throughout Scotland.

Report 3: A description of the consultation exercise in the local area, concerning the proposed National Park

This report was produced by the facilitators who were contracted to co-ordinate local aspects of the consultation exercise. It presents an account and a commentary on the effectiveness of the local consultation exercise.

Section 2: Background

Physical and social environment

- 2.1 The area of the Cairngorms is the largest area of roadless terrain and high alpine plateau in Britain. It is an area of high natural heritage value readily accessible from Scotland's central belt and hence greatly valued for its opportunities for open-air recreation. The area is administered by five local authorities covering Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire, Angus plus Perth and Kinross. These areas are further subdivided into districts and individual community council areas.
- 2.2 The Cairngorms area supports a human population estimated at 18,000¹. Some 65% of the population live in Badenoch and Strathspey (Cairngorms Partnership 1996:42). The area provides a livelihood for shepherds, stalkers, farmers and foresters (Balharry 1990:11) but these primary land-uses have been overtaken in the local economy which is now heavily dependent on the tourism industry and public sector employment. This makes the area vulnerable to downturns in these key sectors (Cairngorms Partnership 1996:34).
- 2.3 There has been long debate about the management of the whole area and recognition that a more integrated approach is needed due to problems and issues such as:
- lack of regeneration of native pine forests due to high populations of red deer;
 - the application of modern forestry techniques on native pinewoods including the planting of exotic species, mainly North American conifers;
 - attrition of the remote and wild mountain areas due to improved access caused by new public and private roads;
 - bulldozing of hill tracks and unchecked erosion of footpaths;
 - the lack of a coherent strategy for visitor services;
 - shortage of low cost housing for year round residents due to the influx of second home owners;
 - tensions over expansions of downhill skiing facilities;
 - a poorly built development in some communities;
 - poor public transport;
 - recent drastic declines in farm incomes; and
 - a lack of co-ordination between government departments and local authorities with a role in development and/or land use.
- 2.4 The last problem listed refers to policy differences between government agencies such as the Deer Commission for Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, and differences between local planning authorities with different development policies (Countryside Commission for Scotland 1990:49); and divergent policies between central Government departments for agriculture and forestry for development and conservancy.

¹ Based on the 1991 census plus 4.3% growth rate as predicted by the Cairngorms Partnership (1996: 43).

History of National Parks in Scotland

- 2.5 Charles Stewart raised interest for National Parks in Scotland in 1904 in the journal *Nineteenth Century and After*. He stated that “the government that has the courage and the spirit to undertake and carry through on this accomplishment will deserve and receive an ample mead of gratitude” (Lambert 1998:23). The notion of a National Park in the Cairngorms surfaced in a 1928 edition of *The Scots Magazine*. This was prompted by a persistent view in Highland Scotland that absentee land ownership in the Highlands had created a private park, with public access limited to the fringes. Ernest A Baker and others supported opening up the area as a pleasure ground for the urban population of Britain, as no other area offered the charm and untouched solitude that could meet the purpose of a National Park like the Cairngorms. To ensure proper access, the area was to be nationalised, becoming a ‘useful’ possession. Letters from readers showing support for and of opposition to the concept of National Parks appeared regularly in *The Scots Magazine*.
- 2.6 The first proposed boundaries for a Cairngorms National Park (called the Cairngorms National Domain) were drawn in 1928. The rivers Dee, Geldie, Feshie and Spey bounded the area of 173,000 acres. Eight estates, in patriotic spirit, were expected to contribute lands to this national sanctuary. In September 1929, the Addison Commission was established to further investigate the possibilities of National Parks in Britain.
- 2.7 The first public consultation exercise directed at a proposed National Park in the Cairngorms was undertaken in June 1929 in Glasgow. Invited participants included the Cairngorm Club, the Scottish Mountaineering Club, the Dundee Ramblers, the Glasgow and West of Scotland Ramblers Federation and the Scottish Rights of Way Society. Public and private landowners were represented and the Royal Scottish Geographical Society sent a delegate. The result was general agreement that a National Park should be supported with the Cairngorms seen as the first choice (Lambert 1998: 326). The Scottish Forest Reserve Committee, with Sir J Douglas Ramsay as chairman, was appointed to inquire into the matter of a National Park in the Cairngorms. A proposal for a 282 square mile Park costing £345,000² was submitted to the Addison Governmental Committee in 1930. It is notable that Aberdeenshire Council refused to contribute financially since the Park area was considered not close enough to Aberdeen to be of local benefit. Throughout the 1930s support continued to grow for the creation of a National Park in the Cairngorms.
- 2.8 The Estate owners in the area, led by JP Grant of Rothiemurchus, resisted the idea of a National Park with vigour because it was proposed that the area be managed along the lines of the North American model. Their concern was that this would lead to the devaluation of their lands due to severe restrictions on sport hunting. While few in number, landowners’ influence was strategically placed, and they were able to stall progress on the creation of a National Park.

² The Committee proposed to manage the Park according to the North American model. Land would be purchased and converted to public lands.

- 2.9 The debate ensued well into the 1940s, when the mood shifted to one of post-war reconstruction. Once again the Cairngorms was identified as a potential National Park, this time along with several other scenic areas in Scotland. A Scottish Council for National Parks was formed in 1943, succeeded by the Scottish National Parks Committee in 1945. Survey and site visits continued to various potential Park areas in Scotland. In their final report in 1947 the Committee concluded that five Parks should be created within ten years of National Park legislation.
- 2.10 A Scottish National Park Working Party was formed and discussion continued, but no positive action ensued in Scotland beyond designation under Town and Country Planning legislation of the five areas as National Park Direction Areas. This designation allowed for some oversight of development in these areas and it continued until 1982 when it was overtaken by the National Scenic Area designation. In 1951, with the election of a Conservative government, "the heart went out of the National Park movement in Scotland" (Mackay 1995:145). The core of the area was declared a National Nature Reserve in 1952 and, progressively, further conservation designations were applied.
- 2.11 Throughout the 1950s and 60s recreation rapidly gained in importance as a source of income for the area. Development of the Cairngorms into a viable recipient of tourist income was undertaken by public bodies with the involvement of volunteers and landowners. In turn, debate began to arise between development and conservation interests, primarily over the development and expansion of facilities for downhill skiing at Cairngorm. During the 1980s and 90s some parts of the Cairngorms area were notified or re-notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and later, provision was made for incorporation of many of these sites in the Natura 2000 network under the EC Birds and Habitats Directives.
- 2.12 Following a review of popular mountain areas by the former Countryside Commission for Scotland, government established the Cairngorms Working Party which reviewed the needs of the area in great depth, and subsequently published a report called *Common Sense and Sustainability: A Partnership for the Cairngorms (1992)*. The report recommended that a Partnership approach was required in the Cairngorms; bringing together public agencies, local authorities, landowners, communities and special interest groups. In response, the Government established the Cairngorms Partnership. This initiative was designed to draw together the work of a wide range of organisations and individuals, co-ordinated by a company limited by guarantee. Funding for the Partnership was channelled through SNH.
- 2.13 But the debate about National Parks in Scotland continued and in September 1997, Donald Dewar, then Secretary of State and later First Minister of the Scottish Parliament, stated:

I believe that National Parks are the right way forward for Scotland. It is important that the structure of the National Parks and the powers available to them are designed to meet the particular needs of Scotland. We are looking for a unique Scottish solution to meet a particular requirement. We are looking for a sustainable approach, where the requirements of economic and social development are balanced with those of conservation.

- 2.14 Ministers indicated that they considered that Loch Lomond and The Trossachs should be Scotland's first National Park and suggested that the designation might also be appropriate for the Cairngorms. SNH were asked to consult widely and to advise on the way forward for National Parks in Scotland.
- 2.15 In February 1998, SNH commenced their work by releasing a pamphlet entitled *National Parks for Scotland: An Invitation to Contribute* giving notice that early views were welcome on the creation of National Parks in Scotland. Responses indicated that National Parks promote conservation and are a tool for management that ensures guardianship and stewardship of natural heritage (SNH 1998: 6-7). Later the same year, a more comprehensive consultation document entitled *National Parks for Scotland* with more specific proposals was published and circulated widely throughout Scotland. SNH paid particular attention to local consultation in the two areas identified as potential Parks; more than 23 public open meetings were held in the Cairngorms area. Several research reports were also commissioned³ and five conferences and seminars on cultural heritage interests, planning, land management and rural development were staged to gather background information about how Scottish National Parks might operate. These particular pre-National Parks Act activities are referred to throughout the remainder of this report as the '1998 Consultation'. The results of this consultation exercise were incorporated into Scottish Natural Heritage's Advice to Government (1999a), which subsequently provided the basis of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.
- 2.16 A conference staged in August 1998 heard from local authority representatives that the consultation on National Parks "should be as wide-ranging and as informed as possible" (SNH 1998:10). It was recommended that information be distilled and made available in a form so that the wider community could make judgements. The need for a variety of forms of consultation, meeting the diverse needs of the communities was also recognised. A representative of Rural Forum made a key point that the people who live in potential National Parks have different ideas and priorities from the people who visit these areas. The representative from the Scottish Landowners' Federation cited several potential disadvantages of Parks, based on experiences in England's National Parks. He concluded, however, by stating that "if it must happen, then include the people who are already living in these areas. Speak to the local land users first, not last".
- 2.17 This respect for local residents was echoed by the environmental sector, who felt that the activities of local people are very much a part of the landscape. This sector also expressed hopes that the National Park would be a modern mechanism that would achieve the highest quality of management for the area. In summary, key issues were the integration of conservation and development, representation of local interests in decision making and the capacity for the Park to make a difference to the care of the natural resources of the area (SNH, 1998).

³ Recommendations put forward in the report *Best Practice in Community Participation for National Parks* (1998) are used as a tool for evaluating the success of the 2001 public consultation process (see Section 4).

2.18 Highlights from autumn 1998 consultation meetings in the Cairngorms included the following (SNH, 1998).

- The need for Park staff to work on the ground with communities. Communication skills are at least as important as technical skills.
- The need for the Park to develop a strong conciliation ethos. Tensions arising between conservation and development will require skills to bring people together and to promote mutual understanding between different interest groups. This will be essential for the smooth operation of the Park.
- The need for the Park to focus on young people, recognising and raising their awareness of the opportunities presented by the National Parks, as well as increasing their understanding of the value of the Park.
- The need to examine ways in which the Park could contribute expertise and experience to help meet the special needs of the area.
- The need for the Park to engage with practical issues facing local communities. These include housing and rural depopulation.
- Finally, the need to build a process of engagement that goes beyond consultation to continuing dialogue.

2.19 The Government subsequently accepted the broad thrust of SNH's advice and introduced legislation for Paths in the first legislative programme of the new Scottish Parliament. Following consultation on the draft Bill which was led by the Scottish Executive, the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 was passed in August 2000, only the 10th Act of the new Parliament.

2.20 The four aims for National Parks in Scotland as set out in Section 1 of the Act are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- to promote sustainable use of the natural resources in the area;
- to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public; and
- to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

Section 5 of the Act sets down the provision for public consultation subsequent to a proposal by Scottish Ministers to move to the establishment of a Park.

Consultation on the National Park proposal in 2000/2001

2.21 Once the Act was passed, the Government proceeded, on 19 September 2000, to make two formal proposals for Scotland's first National Parks: in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, and for the Cairngorms. At the same time, Scottish Ministers asked SNH to take on the formal role of Reporter for their proposal to establish a National Park in both these areas. As Reporter, SNH must report to the Scottish Executive on the views held on the Executive's proposal. In broad terms, the main themes for consultation were the principle of the designation, the geographic area of the Park, the powers of the National Park Authority, and the membership of the governing Board of the Authority.

- 2.22 This was a national consultation exercise for both Park areas and, in various ways, SNH sought to capture the views of all organisations and individuals who might have an interest in the creation of a National Park. A comprehensive description of the consultation programme for the Cairngorms is given in *The Report on the Proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms* (SNH, 2001).
- 2.23 SNH prepared a consultation document for the Cairngorms proposal in which the issues were presented and views sought on the following key points:

The principle of the designation

- whether the area meets the criteria for National Park designation as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000⁴

The area of the National Park

- the appropriate size of the National Park which would allow for its effective and efficient administration by the National Park Authority;
- the preferred option for the area, and the reasoning for this choice;
- the approach developed to assess the area against the criteria set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000;
- any social, economic or environmental information about any of the sub-units within the general area being considered for designation, that might be relevant to the assessment exercise; and
- the principles which should be used to establish the boundary of the Park.

Powers and functions of the National Park Authority

- whether there are any further powers to those in Ministers' proposal which a National Park Authority in the Cairngorms might need;
- the merits of Scottish Ministers' preferred option for the planning function remaining with the local authorities;
- the alternative option under which the Park Authority would become the planning authority with the local authorities as statutory consultees, and any other options which could be considered;
- the possibility of establishing a single local plan for all or part of the area;
- whether the local authorities should be required to consult the Park Authority on all development proposals or just those which have particular importance to the special qualities of the Park; and
- whether local authorities should be required to notify Scottish Ministers of all development proposals on which they give planning permission or just those which have particular importance to the special qualities of the Park.

Representation on the National Park Authority

⁴ a) area of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or a combination of its cultural and natural heritage, b) area has distinctive character and coherent identity, and c) designation would meet special needs and would be a best means of ensuring National Park aims are achieved.

- the size of the governing Board of the Park Authority and the number of its directly elected members;
- the approaches proposed for the allocation of membership between local authorities and on alternative approaches that could be envisioned;
- the potential areas of knowledge and expertise of those nominated by local authorities and directly appointed by Scottish Ministers;
- the total number of local members on the Park Authority and the number of these who should be nominated by local authorities and appointed by Ministers; and
- the timing of the direct elections with respect to the appointment of other members of the Park Board.

The name of the Park

- the name of the National Park proposed for the Cairngorms area.

Views were also welcomed on any other aspect of the consultation paper, including the supporting material contained in its annexes.

Approach to community consultation⁵

2.24 In line with various recommendations made and lessons learned during the 1998 consultation and as a result of the on-going work of the Cairngorms Partnership, it was identified that special efforts should be made to get the views of people living and working in the communities within the Cairngorms area.

The inclusion of local knowledge into decision-making is essential. Methods for accessing that information and involving locals in the process start at the consultation stage. It is therefore important that the consultant accesses the right people, provides a true representation of their views, builds trust through comprehensive and accurate reporting, and sets the stage for an inclusive model of management that is responsive and flexible to adapt to each community (Govan et al 1998).

2.25 There was clear recognition that the local consultation in the Cairngorms had to involve more than a standard round of facilitated meetings and presentations. Not least is the reality that communities had been on the receiving end of a sequence of consultations going back to the Cairngorms Working Party, to actions under the Partnership designed to involve local people and to the 1998 Consultation. A degree of consultation fatigue might be said to have persisted.

2.26 SNH initially approached the Community Councils Group to ask their advice about the best way of conducting the consultation. The group supplied SNH with a range of advice including a matrix indicating the interest groups they considered should be consulted and the methods that might be appropriate for each group.

⁵ This was a national consultation and, in various ways, SNH sought to capture the views of all organisations and individuals who might have an interest in the creation of this national Park. This wider process is described elsewhere.

2.27 As plans advanced, a meeting of the Community Councils Group was held in Tomintoul in June 2000 to review the community representatives' experience of previous consultation exercises and to discuss the way forward. It was identified that there may be benefits in passing control for the running of the consultation in the individual communities from SNH to the communities themselves. This was considered to have advantages because the methods used would then be appropriate to local circumstances. There would be further advantages in that the experience of the communities in running the consultation exercise in their own areas would build their capacity to respond to similar initiatives in the future.

2.28 Subsequently three choices were offered to the 28 Community Councils and Community Associations within and adjacent to the Cairngorms area.

- Option A: Community Councils opt to manage the consultation themselves using a community councillor as a facilitator.
- Option B: Community Councils opt to manage the consultation through a paid facilitator whom they identified.
- Option C: Community Councils opt for a single open meeting at a local venue with an independent facilitator.

2.29 The time commitment envisaged for the communities choosing Option A or B was as follows:

	Larger settlements *	Smaller settlements
Preparation	1 day	½ day
Consultation	2 days	1 day
Drafting a report	1 day	½ day
Total	4 days	2 days

* For example Aviemore, Kingussie, Mid Deeside, Grantown-on-Spey

2.30 It was agreed that facilitators would be paid a flat rate.⁶ It was suggested that Community Councils endorse the approach to be adopted in each community, which in the case of the communities choosing Options A and B, would mean endorsing the facilitator's plan for carrying out the consultation. Letters were sent to each community in the Cairngorms on 26 October, 2000 outlining these options and requesting notification of the model chosen by it by 15 November, 2000.

Co-ordination of the community consultation

2.31 Although at one stage it was anticipated that staff from the Cairngorms Partnership would co-ordinate the local community consultation, once SNH had been formally appointed as Reporter, it was decided that they co-ordinate all aspects of the consultation. SNH identified consultants to provide training for community based

⁶ A rate was calculated using the projected amount of time required for each community and the hourly wage of six pounds per hour paid to local community agents.

facilitators, to deal with administrative aspects of the community-led consultations, and to facilitate Option C meetings within and outside the Cairngorms area.⁷

2.32 Along with overseeing the consultation process, SNH assumed responsibility for the following aspects of the process:

- publicity for the consultation exercise, via local, regional and national newspapers and on the SNH website;
- mailing of a summary leaflet about the consultation to all households in the Cairngorms Partnership area (around 30,000 copies were distributed);
- production of an information pack and leaflet of Frequently Asked Questions;
- production of support displays to be placed in public venues;
- provision of an on-line website discussion forum;
- meetings with school pupils throughout the area;
- meetings with local authorities, public bodies and local and national interest groups and representatives of social and economic interest in the area; and
- provision of a National Park telephone help-desk for the duration of the consultation exercise.

2.33 Upon completion of the process, facilitators' reports were to be endorsed by Community Councils. Final reports were submitted to the consultants who in turn were required to prepare a comprehensive summary of the comments received. A formal feedback system, instituted by SNH, involving meetings and mail-outs was to be implemented once SNH's report had been submitted to John Hali at the Scottish Executive.

2.34 A local consultation Steering Group was formed to oversee the consultation at local level. The members of this group were the Convenor of the Community Councils Group, a representative from the Cairngorms Partnership, two representatives of SNH, and the consultants co-ordinating the consultation process.

The Cairngorms Partnership and the Community Councils

2.35 Since 1995 the Cairngorms Partnership has played an important role in promoting partnership and consensus building amongst the wide range of interests in the area; with special emphasis on the role of local communities. In 1997, following a public consultation the Partnership published *Managing the Cairngorms: The Cairngorms Partnership Management Strategy*. This document forms the basis for co-operative working agreements and actions by key players in achieving a vision for a revitalised approach to natural heritage management and community development. It provides an important platform upon which to advance initiatives for the proposed National Park.

2.36 The Partnership is a limited company whose members represent the local, regional and national interests in the area. Members of the Partnership meet quarterly through the Advisory Panel to "sustain the effort to ensure that the Cairngorms

⁷ As mentioned previously, this was a national consultation hence public meetings were staged in various centres outside the Cairngorms. The consultants facilitated these more traditional Option C style meetings.

area receives the share of national resources to which it is entitled” (Cairngorms Partnership 2000:24). Four Peer Groups operate under the umbrella of the Cairngorms Partnership, namely the Recreation Forum, Landowners’ Cairngorms Liaison Group, Councillors Group and Community Councils Group. The Partnership and its small staff serves as a resource for the communities in the Cairngorms area.

2.37 Early in this round of National Park discussions, The Cairngorms Partnership formed a group to focus on key issues affecting young people in the area. Several events were organised, often in association with SNH, including: a young people’s survey, a youth conference, visits to the other potential National Park area in Scotland, school workshops, information exchanges with young people from National Parks in Europe and attendance at a youth forum in Italy to produce a youth charter for National Parks and protected areas.

2.38 On 29 January 2001 the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce, assisted by the Cairngorms Partnership, the Highland Council and Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise hosted a conference in Aviemore. The conference was designed to give local businesses the opportunity to develop their vision for a Cairngorms National Park. Around 160 delegates attended the conference where Sam Galbraith, then Minister for Environment, Culture and Sport, delivered a keynote speech. One of the several points he raised was the “significant amount of consultation ahead”, saying:

I welcome the extensive process which SNH are putting in place which is offering plenty of opportunity for people to get involved and to express their views. Make no mistake – this is a time-consuming and expensive process but it is right that everyone should have the chance to express their views, and this extensive consultation reflects the many calls made during the passage of the Bill (on National Parks for Scotland) (Cairngorms Partnership 2001:16).

2.39 The Community Councils Group forms the bridge between the Cairngorms Partnership and the local communities. Comprised of members drawn from community councils and associations in the region, this group is responsible for translating the management strategy into action at the community level. A priority for this group was the ‘installation of effective community consultation’ in the 26 community councils and associations in the proposed Park area. During the consultation period, the size of the Group was expanded from 15 to 28, including most of the communities in the largest of the potential areas to be designated as a National Park. Early in the consultation process, the Cairngorms Community Councils Group published a manifesto outlining what they hoped would come out of the proposed National Park. A copy of this manifesto is presented in Annex A of Report 2; the account of the information received during the consultation exercise.

Section 3: Methodology

- 3.1 Research was designed to draw upon the knowledge and experience of the people directly involved with the consultation process. This chapter outlines the techniques used to collect primary source and secondary source data. It also describes how the data were analysed.

Data collection

- 3.2 Primary source data were collected using recognised social science techniques: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and surveys.
- 3.3 A cross-section of 26 public meetings and events were attended. Data were collected on the level of participation; participants' comments with respect to the facilitation; the location and timing of the public meetings; facilitators' delivery of information and capacity to answer participants' questions; the general tone of the meeting.
- 3.4 Interviews were subsequently conducted with 32 people closely associated with planning and facilitation of the consultation process. Facilitators, Community Councillors, SNH staff, and the consultants involved in this and the 1998 Consultation exercise were interviewed. Views were sought on the effectiveness of the process and in particular on its efficiency. Study participants were asked to comment on techniques that worked for them, barriers encountered and ways in which the process might be improved. They were also asked if, based on this experience, they would 'do it again'. Notes were taken during interviews and on several occasions, with the informant's permission, the interview was recorded on tape.
- 3.5 Quantitative data were collected via a questionnaire that was completed by participants attending public meetings (see Appendix A). Fifty-two participants completed the questionnaire.
- 3.6 A survey was conducted in five of the larger towns in and around the area of the potential National Park at the close of the consultation period (see Appendix B). The survey was prompted by questions about why more residents did not participate in the consultation events. Local Secondary School pupils conducted the surveys which took place in Banchory and Kirriemuir on 5 May, in Grantown-on-Spey on 8 May and in Aviemore and Aberlour on 12 May. In total, 532 people were surveyed.
- 3.7 The research reports commissioned during the 1998 consultation and various publications produced by public sector agencies and groups in the area provided good secondary source data. Historical resources from libraries provided background information.
- 3.8 During the evaluation, it came to the author's attention that environmental groups were not visible at public meetings. Members of this sector were contacted to get their views on the process. It was learned at the time that they had mainly

responded directly to SNH via letters both individually and as members of their organisations.

Analysis

- 3.9 Comparisons are made between the processes used by communities choosing the Option A or B format for consultation and those who chose the Option C format, the purpose being to determine which were most effective. Option A and B meetings and events are evaluated together; those involved in the consultation regarded Options A and B as one type of process, Option C being the other. Numbers of participants, the diversity of events, the atmosphere at events and productivity are also compared.
- 3.10 A comparison is also made between the consultation exercises in 1998 and in 2000/01, (hereafter referred to as the 1998 consultation and the 2001 consultation) with regard to numbers of participants and the number of events. Included in the analysis of the 2001 consultation is a review of the accomplishment of the consultants and SNH.
- 3.11 Information gathered via the questionnaire was used to measure effectiveness against the following benchmarks:
 - 1) was there comprehensible and available information on the National Park proposals under consideration; and
 - 2) were there reasonable opportunities for members of the public to register comments?
- 3.12 Analysis of the efficiency of the process relied mainly on information gathered through interviews with those closely associated with delivering the process. Study participants were asked whether they thought the process was efficient and for their views on ways in which efficiency might have been improved. Views on techniques and tools that worked are considered next to techniques and tools that did not work, barriers encountered and subsequent unproductive time and energy expended. Unsolicited concerns and opinions expressed by study participants were grouped under a heading 'particular concerns'.
- 3.13 Rating the overall performance against best practice was undertaken using the recommendations provided in the research paper commissioned by SNH in 1998: *Best Practice in Community Participation for National Parks* (Govan et al 1998).
- 3.14 Finally, the data collected via the surveys conducted following the close of the consultation period were analysed by social science students at the University of St Andrews.

Section 4: Evaluation

Comparison between Options A and B and Option C meetings

- 4.1 At Option A and B meetings, where the community members or local facilitators were engaged, there was a sense of mutual participation and the atmosphere was informal. More information was exchanged than is typical at a presentation facilitated by an 'outside' professional. Some facilitators, particularly those who were also Community Councillors were very well versed in the issues and presented them in a clear, understandable way. The friendlier atmosphere meant that some meetings ran on past the allotted time but participants did not seem to mind. When an awareness session had been held prior to the meeting, participants were informed and discussion was productive. While not all communities were able to attract a large percentage of the population, the smaller meetings were for the most part very effective, due to the quality of the opinions expressed and the opportunity to speak freely. In some cases a staff member from SNH was invited to attend; they played a valuable role in clarifying technical information contained in the consultation document.
- 4.2 Many facilitators used break-out groups where key issues were addressed by groups of four or five participants. Working in smaller groups meant that each member of the group was liable to express a view. The rebounding of ideas likely caused some members to think further about their original opinion and to see things from different perspectives. Participants who might otherwise not have spoken up were able to contribute through the smaller break-out groups. This was a very productive approach.
- 4.3 Community residents often experienced chance encounters with facilitators through everyday activities within the communities. This medium of access to information and opportunity to express opinions was very valuable. It meant the process did not end when the scheduled public meeting was over. Many facilitators made a concerted effort to contact specific groups within their communities through special meetings and events, expanding opportunities for residents to express views and learn more about the National Park proposal.
- 4.4 At Option C meetings, the participants were generally not as well informed. The interaction was not as friendly, and there was a stronger sense of a 'typical' top-down formal presentation. Participants felt they were being 'talked at' and some showed up more to gather information than to comment or offer views. SNH staff and the consultants reinforced the various avenues for comment that existed outside the meeting, hence giving participants other opportunities to make an informed view. At one meeting the participants asked if another meeting could be staged, as they would like to return after thinking about the presentation and reading the documents handed out during the meetings. They were advised to respond via other avenues such as the mail-in response form and the National Park consultation website. As a rule, a smaller proportion of members of the community were contacted by Option C meetings. But in Newtonmore, where there is a higher degree of interest in the National Park proposal, the turnout was comparatively large.

Comparison between the 1998 and 2001 consultations

4.5 The chosen benchmarks for comparison between these consultations are levels of participation and the type and number of community events. It should be noted that this comparison does not discount the value of the earlier community consultation. The 1998 consultation had a wider national focus and a local focus that also included Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. The process used in 1998, similar to the Option C format used in the 2001 consultation was, at the time, more extensive than many such exercises undertaken by public agencies. Locally, however, it took a more formal top-down approach.

Table 1: Overview of the 1998 and 2001 consultations

1998 Consultation on National Parks in Scotland		2001 Consultation on a National Park in the Cairngorms	
	Participation		Participation
Responses to <i>National Parks for Scotland: An Invitation to Contribute</i>	240	Summary leaflet responses:	452
Responses to consultation paper <i>National Parks for Scotland...</i> (1999b)	451	Full written responses:	396
Total of all written responses	691	Total of all written responses:	848
Meetings/events held in the Cairngorms area	23 with around 700 attendees ⁸	Meetings/events in the Cairngorms area	143 events with 1914 attendees

4.6 The 1998 consultation fuelled interest in the National Park concept and set the stage for a more comprehensive consultation process in 2001. Many of the lessons learned at that time, and the points raised at seminars and conferences, provided a sound footing upon which to design an improved style of consultation for communities in the area in later years. The research reports commissioned during the 1998 consultation provided valuable advice and served as resource documents.

4.7 A summary of the methods used and overall participation at community-led events (Option A or Option B) for the 2001 consultation is compared to participation at the 1998 consultation events in Table 2 below. If a number is not entered, an event was not held that year, mainly because the 2001 consultation was on a specific proposal and required a more inclusive approach to engage communities within the proposed National Park area.

⁸ This number, which is greater than the number of participants listed in the tables, was provided in a report summarizing the 1998 consultation process. It is used here to give the most conservative comparison.

Table 2: Comparison between 2001 community-led and 1998 consultations

Community	Events	Overall number of participants ⁹	
		1998	2001
Aviemore	Questionnaire Awareness-raising at TESCO supermarket Meeting with Rotary club Drop-in Evening public meeting	46	85
Ballater and Crathie	Meeting with Probus Club Evening public meeting Meetings with landowners Meeting with the Banchory Bards Association	42	44
Blair Atholl and Struan	4 public meetings 1 meeting for shepherds and keepers	20	74
Ballogie and Birse	Telephone survey Meetings with farmers and businesses Public meeting	-	120
Boat of Garten	Primary School meeting(73 children) 8 coffee party meetings Meeting with WRI Public meeting	28	73
Braemar	Day-long drop-in Public meeting	34	76
Carrbridge	Meeting with craft group 5 neighbourhood focus groups Meeting with Tourist Association Meetings with individuals Public meeting	20	97
Cromdale and Advie	Meetings with Badminton Club, WRI, Pensioners' Lunch Club, Bowls Club, After Church Group Interviews with businesses Questionnaire Public meeting	8	118
Dalnain Bridge	Meetings with WRI and the Over 50 Club Meeting with the business community Questionnaire Public meeting	10	62
Finzean	Meetings with Community Association, WRI, PTA, Church Elders, Under Fives Group Public meeting	16	114

⁹ Numbers recorded were supplied to the author by local facilitators and correct at the time of writing. Where a number is not entered, the number of contacts was not recorded or an event was not held in that community. Furthermore * indicates where the total number of people involved was later clarified to be more than the original number supplied to the author.

Grantown-on-Spey	Meetings with groups, businesses, tourist group Drop-in event Questionnaire Public meeting	34	114
Kincraig	Meetings with businesses 9 group meetings Questionnaire Public meeting	65	70
Killiecrankie	Questionnaire to every household	-	50
Kirkmichael and Tomintoul	Displays Community Association meeting 2 public meetings	36	11
Kingussie	Questionnaire 2 drop-in events 3 public meetings	18	10*
Kirriemuir	Meetings with youth and community education groups Meetings with women's groups Drop-in event Public meeting	-	155
Mid-Deeside/Aboyne	2 awareness-raising events Displays 2 public meetings	40	65
Laggan	Questionnaire 5 meetings with special interest groups	38	56
Nethy Bridge	School competition, 6 meetings with community groups 2 drop-ins Questionnaire Public meeting	40	200
Rothiemurchus & Glenmore	3 focus group meetings	-	43
Total		495	1637

As discussed elsewhere in this report, the diverse community-led approaches were significantly more successful in reaching a larger community audience.

4.8 Upon completion of the consultation process in each community, the facilitator compiled a report that was endorsed by the Community Council. In some instances the facilitator posted the summary report in a public place, such as the community library or Post Office, giving local residents the opportunity for a final review. Changes were made according to comments received. Following final endorsement, the reports were submitted to the consultants.

4.9 Participation at meetings held in communities who opted for a single open meeting (Option C) for the 2001 consultation is shown in Table 3. The number of participants is compared to the number who participated in 1998. If a number is not entered, an event was not held. As mentioned previously, the 2001 consultation was on a specific proposal for the area; it was important that all

communities within the potential boundaries of the proposed Park be targeted for consultation.

Table 3: Comparison between Option C and 1998 consultations

Community	Participation	
	1998	2001
Dalwhinnie	11	13
Donside	8	7
Glenlivet	14	7
Grandtully		24
Kirriemuir Landward East		35
Mount Blair		8
Newtonmore	22	32
Pitlochry		17
Rannoch and Tummel		12
Totals	55	155

Activities of the consultants

4.10 The consultants who co-ordinated the local consultation exercise played a significant role in managing the Option C meetings along with their other duties. The consultant facilitated these meetings along with an SNH staff member who presented information from the consultation document and answered technical questions. A meeting with the Pitlochry Tourism Council was organised in addition to the Option C community meetings, the meetings held in the periphery of the area and six meetings held in a total of six towns and cities across Scotland.

4.11 At the start of the process the consultants organised two one-day training sessions for facilitators, one in Braemar and the other in Grantown-on-Spey. They also administered payment to facilitators and held two half-day meetings during the process and two half-day meetings at the conclusion of the process to discuss problems and emerging issues. They provided support and distributed materials to facilitators during the process and, when requested, they attended Option A and B meetings to provide advice and support. Upon completion of the process, they compiled the facilitators' reports into a summary document submitted to SNH.

Activities of Scottish Natural Heritage

4.12 Three full-time staff members were dedicated to the consultation process and approximately 30 other SNH staff were involved as part of their work. Local SNH staff contributed by attending the events in their areas. To ensure the larger constituency was included in the process, meetings were held in peripheral communities and major cities in Scotland. Participation in these events is illustrated in Tables 4 and 5, and was co-facilitated by the consultants and SNH staff dedicated to the consultation process.

Table 4: Meetings on the periphery of the proposed boundaries

Community	Participation	
	1998	2001
Aberfeldy		9
Aberlour		2
Alford		8
Blairgowrie		16
Laurencekirk		8
Strathdon	8	
Tannadice	30	
Total	38	43

Table 5: Meetings in city centres

Community	Participation	
	1998	2001
Aberdeen	-	39
Dundee		12
Edinburgh	-	57
Glasgow	-	8
Inverness	-	24
Perth	-	7
Total	-	147

4.13 A number of extra events were hosted by SNH as part of the consultation exercise including:

- ✓ Aberdeen University Law Department Seminar
- ✓ Local Enterprise Company Workshop
- ✓ Centre for Ecology and Hydrology Seminar
- ✓ Presentation for the Aberdeenshire Council
- ✓ Presentation for the Angus Council, Planning and Transportation Policy Committee
- ✓ Universities Event at Aberdeen University
- ✓ Meeting with the Cairngorm Club
- ✓ Presentation to the Cairngorms Partnership Agriculture Forum
- ✓ Think-net discussion day
- ✓ Presentation at the Rannoch Enterprise Group Annual General Meeting
- ✓ Presentation to the Joint Areas Board and Cairngorms Project Board
- ✓ Meeting with the Royal Scottish Geographical Society
- ✓ Presentation to the Moray Council Environmental Services Committee
- ✓ Presentation to the Cairngorms Partnership Recreation Forum
- ✓ Presentation to representatives of the Tourist Boards in the area
- ✓ Presentation to 'Born in Born' 2001 International Environmental Student Conference
- ✓ Meeting with representatives of sportscotland

- ✓ Meeting with Rural Land Use/Countryside Management Students, Elmwood College
- ✓ Presentation to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- ✓ Presentation to the Aboyne Rotary Club
- ✓ School events:
 - Charlestown Academy, Inverness, Geography Class
 - Aboyne High School, Geography Class
 - Pitlochry High School Youth Consultation
 - Websters High School, Kirriemuir, Geography Class
 - Brechin High School, Geography Class
 - Kingussie High School, Geography Class
 - Gordon's School, Huntly, Geography Class

The city and peripheral meetings were generally poorly attended because of difficulties with publicity; Edinburgh was an exception with 56 participants.

4.14 The school events were very successful and may have opened doors to new opportunities. Students had a solid background on National Park issues and responded enthusiastically to the consultative exercises. Other special events, such as the Cairngorm Club meeting, allowed participants to focus on mandated views and to put forward strong opinions on a particular subject.

Publicity

4.15 In December 2000, an initial press release announcing the consultation process on a National Park in the Cairngorms was sent to national and regional newspapers and the weekly newspapers published in the area. Throughout the consultation period various forms of publicity were used, some planned and some spontaneous. Letters to the editor in several newspapers served to remind readers that National Park issues are important and somewhat controversial. An article in *The Scots Magazine* also drew readers' attention to the controversial aspects of the proposal. These contributions by residents and interested parties, along with feature articles in the press, helped to maintain interest. Advertisements for public meetings provided information and contact names for individuals interested in voicing their views. On 6 March 2001, Grampian Television hosted an evening broadcast with a Community Councillor, a facilitator from the River Dee side of the area and a representative from SNH. A final broadcast on BBC Television announcing the close of consultation included an interview with a Community Councillor from the River Spey side of the area. Local radio stations and BBC Scotland broadcast programmes also focused on the major issues, and the merits of the National Park proposal.

4.16 SNH recorded the media coverage during the period and a summary is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Media coverage during the consultation period

Media Type	No of Articles/Items
National Press	9
Local Press	74
Radio	9
Television	2
Magazine	7
Other	4
Total:	105

Other communication materials

- 4.17 An impressive inventory of documents was produced as part of the consultation process.¹⁰ Between January and March 2001, a copy of the summary consultation document was mailed to all households and businesses in the Cairngorms area. This A5 document summarised proposals for the area, powers and representation for the National Park. The document included a pull-out response form to be mailed to the SNH office in Aberdeen. Over 25,000 summary documents were delivered via mail and another 9,000 were displayed in racks at sports centres and other public venues in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness, Dundee, Perth and Aberdeen. A special 'Think-net' website also provided a forum for discussion on the proposed Park, generating 940 pages of 'chat'.
- 4.18 The larger consultation document, 44 pages with extra maps, was available free to anyone who requested it and was sent to all Community Councils, facilitators, schools and libraries in the area. These were also freely available at the public meetings; Information sheets, pamphlets and newsletters were available free of charge to members of the public.

Questionnaire on effectiveness

- 4.19 As part of this study, a short questionnaire was distributed to participants during public meetings and a copy is presented in Appendix A. The distribution of these surveys sometimes seemed to detract from the main purpose for the meetings, and in more than one instance participants expressed frustration at having to do yet another questionnaire. The 52 questionnaires completed are, therefore, only a

¹⁰ A complete list of documents is available from the Scottish Natural Heritage office in Aberdeen.

small percentage of the total number of participants in the process. However, some of the results are still significant as there is overwhelming agreement on two subjects:

- 1) Is the information on the proposed Cairngorms National Park accessible and easy to understand?

Yes 12 No 40

If not, are knowledgeable staff available to provide assistance?

The few who answered this part of the question unanimously agreed that staff were helpful.

- 2) Did you have a fair opportunity to register your opinion?

Yes 52 No 0

- 3) How could this process be improved to better suit your needs?

The following selected quotes illustrate the range of opinions expressed:

The information should be simpler.

We need to see the information ahead of time.

Tell us how living in a National Park has affected other people.

We want more answers.

- 4.20 It is unanimous that there was a fair opportunity to register comments. Information provided on the proposed National Park was not always easy to understand; a sentiment echoed by community facilitators and discussed further in this report (see Table 7: section on comments on the consultation materials). Other suggestions for improvement were provided during interviews with the study participants and are presented in Table 7 and in Section 4.

Interviews with study participants

- 4.21 The study also included semi-structured interviews with 32 participants who were selected for their first-hand experience with the consultation process. Study participants included community facilitators, Community Councillors, SNH staff and the consultants. Special effort was made to conduct as many interviews as possible at the community level and the majority of the comments quoted in Table 7 reflect the views most frequently expressed by local community facilitators and Community Councillors. There was insufficient time to interview all the local community facilitators. In the event that a facilitator was not interviewed, a meeting hosted by them was attended. In each case, the level of skill and knowledge demonstrated by the facilitator was exceptional.

Table 7: Quotes from study participants

Comments on the overall approach to the consultation

This time there is more energy being put into getting the communities' views.

Trying to take it to the local level showed knowledge of the regretfulness of previous consultation that was not even intended to be genuine. Local people are impressed with the serious effort.

We have done a better job so far than has ever been done in the past. The people are more aware; this is part of a continuing process.

Comments on the use of local facilitators

We know how to translate the expressions and decipher. This is needed to extract and interpret responses.

We know the people, their work, and their interests. People will not talk very much to outsiders.

Attendance was based on support for us.

Participants left more enthusiastic than when they arrived.

We are getting across to more people and people appreciated it. They feel they have been listened to, some returned for a second meeting and changed their views.

It is important that the facilitator lives in the area they are responsible for because this gives them increased contact and daily spontaneous opportunities to contact people.

We were able to identify the interest groups: farmers, estate agents, forestry, youth clubs and seniors' groups.

Facilitators comments on some of the difficulties encountered

The difficulty of raising interest in the consultation:

There is a lot of apathy. A lot of people felt it (the National Park) was coming anyway but do not really want it or feel the need for it – it is just another layer of bureaucracy.

They are inundated with consultation in this community. People are interested but cannot take the time.

There is a notion that the agenda is already set and they are sceptical about whether the consultation is worthwhile. The decision to have a Park has already been made.

I cannot see any reason for us having a National Park and what is the point – they have made their minds up. This is not apathy, it is a statement.

The Park is a big subject and it takes time to deal with it. There is no tangible picture of what it will be like. When we are asked specific questions we do not have the answers.

It is tough to keep people interested when there are so many unknowns. We were not familiar with National Park principles and I found it difficult to comment because I did not know enough about it.

Non-participants need an example that the consultation works.

The impact of foot and mouth disease:

Foot-and-mouth did cause a hiccup. I hope the farmers do not feel left out.

I was not able to meet with the National Farmers Union because they were too busy with foot-and-mouth and other things more important than a National Park.

The challenge of being unbiased:

It was hard to report back without slanting the issues.

It is hard to be un-opinionated as a presenter.

Comments on techniques that worked

Small groups work well, new ideas are introduced and participants often shift ideas as they become more knowledgeable.

Invitations to every meeting worked very well.

I employed childcare workers to look after the children so the mothers could participate more easily.

I personally delivered the blue folder and the questionnaire. The personal touch makes the difference.

Advertising in the local paper helped – we had a decent turnout at the public meeting. We advertised that an SNH staff member would be present to answer questions. That helped too, I think.

Questionnaires worked well, we had 250 returned to us.

Controversy works. I put up the poster about 25 people from Edinburgh running the Park, and it created a reaction. I had 21 additional individual responses through people talking to me in the street, in the shop and three even phoned! I felt that there could have been a message about more controversy being a good thing - but the facilitators did have to stay neutral.

I think my only success was when I handed people the information and spoke to them directly.

I trained three assistants myself - this helped the networking at the local level.

Small meetings were the best; the public meetings were hijacked by the usual suspects.

I sent a flyer to every household telling them what was happening, who we were and inviting them to a meeting. Then I did a telephone survey and got 60% of the households, this took three and a half hours to complete. The summary of the phone survey was at the public meeting. This gave me useful background information to build upon. We had a good turnout in spite of foot-and-mouth.

We delivered the information by hand with the assistance of the Community Council.

I did not need to check many things because the community councillor here is very knowledgeable.

Being a Community Councillor and a facilitator gave me a chance to better understand the issues; I have been in touch all along.

Comments on the consultation materials

The document was daunting but the FAQs (the 20 Questions leaflet) were good and the blue package went down well.

I did not use the (consultation) document – it does not work. There were too many key issues.

The Youth Manifesto was very useful in raising issues.

The A4 poster is not big enough; no room to write.

There was too much information, you had to read reams before answering a question.

The (consultation) document is unreadable. Joe Public could not understand it so I did a questionnaire.

The document is too vague, you need to decide what you are about, and the proposal has no teeth and diligently avoids addressing the problems in the area.

The blue information pack and the FAQs (20 Questions leaflet) were very good.

Comments on the support given by SNH and the consultant

SNH staff were helpful and gave us support when we needed it.

The local SNH staff and the consultants were great. Any time we asked for more information it arrived by the box soon after.

Local SNH staff were very helpful.

I never got a response so I quit asking.

Comments on training

We were too rushed, you had to hit the ground running, and information was still arriving after we were on the run.

The training was too rushed. We needed more on how to write a report. How do we convert the information? What do they want back?

The workshop was not useful. It was better to feed off each other. SNH and the consultants should have sat down and sorted this out.

It was good to know I was not on my own; others were out there doing this too, but the workshops were more for interest.

Taught me how to run a meeting and help me identify the pitfalls.

There was not enough time spent on training, just because of the volume of information.

Consultation is a highly skilled business. They took people in too late, we should have been on board during the design stage.

Particular concerns

We are inevitably accountable to our communities when the report comes out and their comments are not in there. If nothing else we need to be in a position to understand why our advice was not taken.

It is easy to bias the report but at least if you are aware, you can watch out for it and try to avoid it.

If people think they have not been heard no one will come out again.

We have sold it this time on the strength that they (residents) are going to be listened to.

We are the ones on the ground floor, people see us as being responsible.

Teenagers were missed - a huge mistake.

We should have done more with the young people in the communities.

The attitude towards consultation needs to change. The best place to start is with young people, through education.

SNH should not have been the Reporter and provided advice. They are seen as a conservationist organisation. How can they be impartial?

There is still a view in the communities that SNH should not be the Reporter.

Would you do it again?

I would do this again if we get positive feedback from the Scottish Executive, if not then no. If no notice is taken of our comments then it is not worth it.

Future success will hinge on the evidence of input in the report and decisions.

I would do it again but not for this money.

I would happily do it again, for more money.

How do you think the process can be improved?

Better planning, they put resources into this part of the process (meetings and events) but no resources into the thought.

It was not very well organised.

We are clearing the barriers but we are not flying over them. With better planning we (SNH) could stay ahead of the game and give better support to the facilitators.

We could capitalise on the opportunities to build a relationship with the people in the communities.

We needed more time for training. It was too rushed and there was too much to digest.

You need to address the issues in a more engaging way; what would it be like to be in a National Park - what happens to sheep dipping for farmers, for example.

You need two people minimum per community.

We (SNH) should have one more dedicated staff member.

We need better equipment to make better presentations.

The publicity could have been improved. Permanent displays would have helped.

We should have had more Grampian coverage and more on Radio Scotland.

4.22 Summary issues raised in responses from the study participants:

- ✓ local facilitators do a better job;
- ✓ it was difficult to raise interest;
- ✓ knowing all the issues and coming up with answers was difficult;
- ✓ the outbreak of foot and mouth disease caused some problems;
- ✓ it was difficult to be unbiased;
- ✓ Community Councils and Associations provided valuable assistance;
- ✓ facilitators found a number of innovative techniques that improved participation;
- ✓ some communication materials worked, others did not;
- ✓ SNH and the consultant provided good support, but it could have been improved;
- ✓ training could have been better;
- ✓ the facilitators feel accountable to the participants in their communities;
- ✓ the focus on youth should be increased;
- ✓ facilitators will continue to be part of future consultation processes if they are paid more and if they can see that their input makes a difference;and
- ✓ better planning and more resources and publicity would improve the process.

Implementation of best practice

4.23 Recommendations in the report commissioned in 1998: *Best Practice in Community Participation for National Parks* (Govan et al) were used as benchmarks to evaluate whether or not this consultation process incorporated best practices. The recommendations from the report are shown in italics.

- ✓ *Primary legislation must clearly define and prioritise the social and economic remit of the National Park and guarantee stated levels of community participation.*

One of the four aims listed in the National Parks (Scotland) 2000 Act is “ to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area’s communities.”

The consultation document stated that Scottish Ministers have proposed that the National Park Authority should be as large as the Act allows, with 25 members, five of whom would be directly elected by the people in the area. It further stated that approximately 60% of the Park Authority could be made up of people who are elected representatives, either by direct election to the Board or through local authority nomination. The National Park Authority will also be able to establish Advisory Groups to help it address specific issues and there will be a strong role for further community representation in the work of these groups.

- ✓ *The implementing agency and any agency partners must clearly define their broad objective commitment and parameters for maximising social and economic benefits as well as environmental benefits of National Parks.*

This broad objective is defined in the Act. However, the specifics which are of interest to the consultees, were not spelt out in detail in the consultation documents. More detail on commitments and benefits may be a matter for the National Park Authority once it is established and may appear in the draft National Park Plan.

- ✓ *Local communities and other stakeholders should be involved at as early a stage as possible ideally prior to nomination and designation.*

Communities were involved in previous consultations that addressed broad issues such as the need for and purpose of National Parks in Scotland. Through this subsequent round of consultation, communities were asked to give their views on whether there should be a National Park in the Cairngorms, what the boundaries should be and the membership, structure and powers of the Park Authority.

- ✓ *Processes adopted for community involvement should be innovative and distinct from current established practices relating to consultation and participation.*

As one facilitator remarked, "This was a brave step by SNH to localise the process". This process was unique in that the facilitation was taken to the community level and left, to some degree, to design by each community.

- ✓ *The first step in any potential National Park area should be an immediate programme to revitalise and enhance the functioning of local representation, most likely the existing system of Community Councils, in order for local interests to be adequately represented.*

The Cairngorms Partnership established a foundation upon which to expand National Park initiatives, in particular within the local communities. The Cairngorms Community Councils Group was formed early in the consultation process and later expanded to include all the communities in the potential National Park area. Jointly, they produced a manifesto that set down their vision of the National Park. Community Councils were actively involved in designing the community-led consultation models, Options 'A' and 'B' and continued their involvement throughout the process.

- ✓ *In order to maintain and enhance the natural capital of the National Park it will be necessary to invest in the social capital of the areas, reinforcing local institutions structure and cultures in the short to medium term.*

The consultation exercise in 2001 was intended to be a capacity building exercise, ideally contributing to the community assets via the residual effect that the training and involvement in the process provided. As expressed by a community facilitator and echoed by Community Councillors and SNH staff: "This (consultation) process was a learning experience for us all."

4.25 Overall, the 2001 consultation process adhered to the best practices outlined in the report commissioned in 1998. The recommendations provided in Section 4 will serve to further enhance the regime for best practices for future consultations.

Survey on reasons for non-participation

4.26 As the consultation period progressed, Community Councillors and facilitators expressed concern about the small percentage of the local population who participated in the consultation process, in particular at the public meetings. In response to their concerns, a survey was conducted to identify the reasons for the apparent lack of response.

4.27 Following completion of the formal consultation process on 30 April 2001, surveys were conducted in five of the larger communities in and around the Cairngorms area. Communities with supermarkets attracting residents from smaller outlying communities were selected for the surveys. Two centres, Banchory and Aberlour, were outside the more intensely targeted consultation area and the results are presented accordingly. The survey question was very simple: Did you participate? If the answer was “No” then the second question was, Why not? (see Appendix B). The surveys were conducted on Saturdays at popular locations that typically attract residents from in and around the towns concerned. Students from local secondary school geography classes conducted four of the surveys and the fifth survey, conducted on a weekday outside the Post Office in Grantown-on-Spey, was conducted by a student from the University of St. Andrews. In total, 532 people were surveyed. The responses were coded and analysed by students at the University of St Andrews.

Table 8: Summary of responses to the survey

Did you participate in the National Park consultation?	Number of responses	% of total responses
Yes	65	12
No, because I had not heard about it	234	45
No, because I'm not interested	81	15
No, because I'm too busy	50	9
No, because no one asked me	13	2
No, I was away or I am a tourist	31	6
No, for other reasons	34	7
Invalid responses	24	4
Total:	532	100

Table 9: Individual community responses to the survey

	Number of responses	% of total for survey site
Aviemore:		
Yes	35	27
No, because I had not heard about it	30	23
No, because I'm not interested	21	16
No, because I'm too busy	15	11
No, because no one asked me	4	3
No, I was away or I am a tourist	15	11
No, for other reasons	12	9
Grantown-on-Spey:		
Yes	7	8
No, because I had not heard about it	40	48
No, because I'm not interested	15	18
No, because I'm too busy	16	19
No, because no one asked me	2	2
No, I was away or I am a tourist	1	1
No, for other reasons	3	4
Kirriemuir:		
Yes	4	8
No, because I had not heard about it	26	53
No, because I'm not interested	7	14
No, because I'm too busy	6	12
No, because no one asked me	0	0
No, I was away or I am a tourist	1	2
No, for other reasons	5	10
Aberlour:		
Yes	12	11
No, because I had not heard about it	73	64
No, because I'm not interested	17	15
No, because I'm too busy	6	5
No, because no one asked me	0	0
No, I was away or I am a tourist	4	4
No, for other reasons	2	2
Banchory:		
Yes	7	5
No, because I had not heard about it	65	50
No, because I'm not interested	21	16
No, because I'm too busy	7	5
No, because no one asked me	7	5
No, I was away or I am a tourist	10	8
No, for other reasons	12	9

As discussed further in the next section on conclusions and recommendations, many people were unaware of the consultation and hence did not participate.

Section 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1 Success was achieved through innovative processes that increased participation and contributed towards the larger goals for capacity building in Highland communities. Best practice will benefit from the recommendations put forward by people directly involved with the process. This, in turn, will contribute to an innovative and productive model for collaborative management of the Park.
- 5.2 While the following recommendations are reported by the author, they originate with the study participants and therefore include the views of local facilitators, Community Councillors, consultants and SNH staff members. These are valuable recommendations that should be carefully reviewed and, whenever possible, incorporated into future community consultations in the Cairngorms.

Becoming more effective

- 5.3 It is recommended that efficiency be increased through the continuation of the community facilitated process, deriving benefits from experience.
- 5.4 It is recommended that more time and energy be spent on pre-consultation preparation. As capacities increase at all levels of involvement, including communities, local government and the Reporter, the planning phase can be shortened. A thoughtful review of the resources at hand, including personal skills, equipment, time and finances, should be undertaken at the earliest stage. Compile an objective inventory of the talents amongst the facilitators, Community Councillors and Reporter's staff and fit the resources to the task. During the consultation exercise time was spent by local facilitators and Community Councillors redesigning materials, usually in the form of questionnaires. As well, time outside the allotted days for training was spent learning about the issues involved in National Parks. Training, event organisation and production of appropriate consultation materials should be undertaken early in the pre-consultation planning stage, and more lead-time should be provided for facilitators to fully understand all the issues.

Communication

- 5.5 Materials were not always appropriate for all audiences and in some cases were late in arriving. Recommendations were made by study participants from every sector of the consultation process with respect to the types of materials that could be used to improve communication. In designing the materials it was suggested that the issues be viewed from the local level first; tailoring the approach to this audience. Local facilitators should be brought in at the design stage to review the materials and make suggestions for improvements.

Publicity

- 5.6 The study participants regularly made comments regarding the nature of the publicity associated with the consultation process. While coverage appeared to be

comprehensive, nearly 50% of the people surveyed said they did not know about the National Park consultation. Recommendations for improvements include:

- publicity needs to be repetitive and designed to reach a variety of audiences;
- communities should collaborate and expand their publicity campaigns;
- nationally, articles should be run in magazines directed at the typical National Park 'user' audience for example hill walkers, skiers and birdwatchers; and
- the local radio and television networks (Grampian) should be better utilised.

Focus on youth

5.7 Many of the study participants recommended better contact with young people in the communities; for the most part this was the responsibility of SNH who planned a series of events, some of which were cancelled due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Some view youth involvement through schools and colleges as an opportunity to develop the knowledge and culture needed for successful collaborative management of the National Park in the future. Recommendations for increased involvement include:

- building upon the work with youth previously undertaken by the Cairngorms Partnership group; the momentum created should be picked up and advanced;
- involve students through their schools and colleges; and
- whenever possible involve them as facilitators to help in the facilitation process.

General recommendations

5.8 Events facilitated by local facilitators, (Options A and B) proved to be most successful. Therefore, while professional consultants should continue to provide training and backroom support, the communities should be encouraged to engage residents as facilitators. It is recommended those facilitators' views on 'what worked and what did not' be incorporated into best practice for future consultations.

5.9 A significant amount of volunteer time was devoted to this process. The workload was, in some instances, unevenly distributed. It was suggested that a minimum of two facilitators are needed even in the smaller communities. Collaboration between facilitators should be encouraged, as this will provide support to those facilitators who lack support from their Community Councils and Associations. Resources and remuneration should be reviewed; for Parks in the 21st century, the engagement of local people costs money.

5.10 The Reporter assumes an important role in the outcome of the consultation process. An SNH staff member viewed public consultation as an opportunity for SNH to build stronger relations with members of the Cairngorms communities. Demonstrating trust in community-led processes, promoting innovations at a local level and involving local staff at consultation events will continue to have a positive effect. It was recommended that SNH build familiarity in the communities and build capacity within their own organisation, by repeatedly assigning certain staff members to work on consultation events.

5.11 The ability to carry out a productive consultation is essential in garnering local support for the National Park and securing a positive long-term involvement of communities in management of the area. Consultation must be viewed as an

evolving process and innovative techniques, such as the involvement of community facilitators, should be encouraged. The special circumstances surrounding National Parks in Scotland will lead to specially targeted Scottish solutions.

5.12 Quantitative data support the conclusion that this consultation process was better than previous consultations. Participation increased by over 250% over the 1998 consultation. Data also confirm that there were fair opportunities for the public to register their opinions. The benefits of Options A and B over Option C are visible in the light of the increased numbers of local people included in the process.

5.13 The benefits of taking facilitation to local level are best summed up by the following quotes from community facilitators and residents:

Residents feel they have been truly consulted.

This was educational for all.

We have done a better job so far than has ever been done in the past. The people are more aware; this is part of a continuing process.

There is more to this than just consultation. In the end you have built capacity, you have a running investment and increased value in your asset (local skills).

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Annex A

Questionnaire

Dear Community Resident:

This questionnaire is being presented to you in the hope that you will find time to complete it during this evening's meeting. I am a Parks Canada employee and resident of Banff National Park. Currently, I am on education leave while completing a PhD at the University of St Andrews. My work at the university focuses on the role of residents in National Parks; one important aspect is the opportunity for residents to voice local concerns. I have had the good fortune of being invited by Scottish Natural Heritage to complete an independent assessment of the public consultation process concerning "*A Proposal for a Cairngorms National Park*". The information you provide will be used to measure the success of this process. In August, a final report will be submitted to SNH. Copies of the report will be distributed to Community Councillors.

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Is information on the proposed Cairngorms National Park accessible and easy to understand? If not, are knowledgeable staff available to provide assistance?

2. Do you have a fair opportunity to register your opinions?

3. How could this process be improved to better suit your needs?

Thank you for spending some of your valuable time on these questions. I will be collecting completed questionnaires at the door once the meeting has concluded. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or further comments. My email address is kmr3@st-andrews.ac.uk. My home phone number is 01334 473 710.

Sincerely,

Kathy Rettie

Annex B

Local participation during the consultation on the Cairngorms National Park proposal

Did you participate in the consultation process for the proposed National Park in the Cairngorms?

Yes	No	If no, then why not?

For information on this survey contact K Rettie at the University of St Andrews.
Phone: 01334 473 710 email: kmr3@st-andrews.ac.uk