



**NatureScot**  
**NàdarAlba**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Accompanying reports  
Findings from the surveys  
**Consultation analysis –  
freeform responses**  
Report number 2(e)  
May 2025

A report on the proposal for a national park in southwest Scotland

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## Introduction

This is one of 21 reports that accompany NatureScot's Reporter advice on the Scottish Government's proposal for a new National Park in southwest Scotland. The advice was submitted on 5 May 2025.

The report sets out findings from the freeform responses received during the consultation on a proposed national park in the southwest of Scotland, i.e. those not submitted in either the technical or summary survey formats. Quotes have been selected with the aim of presenting a range of views and topics.

## Summary

We received 32 freeform responses. These responses have been analysed separately as they do not follow a standard consultation format. We have applied the questions in the summary version of the consultation to do this as systematically as possible. This enabled the freeform responses to be analysed consistently with the consultation survey formats and allowed the data to be combined in the overall analysis. Findings from these responses have been included in the data presented from the surveys in our advice.

Most of the responses were submitted with little or no requested respondent data and do not align with our data policy for the survey. Often, it was not clear if permission to publish the response had been given. For the purposes of this report, all responses have therefore been anonymised.

The opinion split in favour or opposition remains broadly the same as the larger surveys, though the number of responses which opposed the proposal was less than 50% and the number we have coded as blank is larger.

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## Response profile

Number of responses received: 32

Number excluded: 0

### Consultation response publication preference

Table 1 - Breakdown of publish permissions

Preference	Count	Percentage
Do not publish response	0	0
Publish response only (without name)	1	3.12%
Publish response with name	0	0
Blank	31	96.88%

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## Survey Findings

### SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSAL

Q1a To what extent do you support the idea of a new National Park being established in the southwest of Scotland?

Table 2 – breakdown of responses by support or oppose preference

Preference	Count	Percentage
Support	11	34.38%
Oppose	15	46.88%
Undecided	2	6.25%
Blank	4	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>-</b>

### Sample quotes

#### SUPPORTERS

We are writing to express our enthusiastic support for the designation of Galloway Forest Park as a National Park, with particular emphasis on Option 1 – Hills and Coast. [Anon, FF10]

It is essential to build on existing designations, ensuring the National Park and Biosphere work together in an integrated way. While Scottish National Parks prioritise natural and cultural heritage, they also allow for economic and social development which is crucial to Galloway. [Anon, FF21]

With the basic reasons for, and principle of conservation, the national park should go forward with the means to enhance its true purpose. Therefore, the main means of accessing the countryside must involve developing public transport and reducing car use. The main means of travel needs to be on foot. Reasons for objections to road usage would diminish. [Anon, FF1]

#### OPPONENTS

Leave Galloway Alone – we can manage without this. [Anon, FF3]

I cannot think of any advantages that a National Park might bring to this area. [Anon, FF6]

We are supposed to be dealing, as a matter of urgency, with the climate crisis. Transport is the main contributor to climate change, so encouraging ever more tourists to make ever more plane and car journeys cannot be justified. [Anon, FF7]

The National Park designation inherently prioritises natural heritage over other land uses and our concern is that this designation will make planning very challenging for not only renewable generation but also additional critical grid infrastructure planned to connect the new renewable generation. [Anon, FF11]

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## UNDECIDED

A NP might result in better protection for the environment, although available evidence suggests this is not always the case. [Anon, FF13]

## POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR THE NATIONAL PARK AREA

**Q2b Would you like to make any changes to or comments on your preferred option (e.g. make it smaller or larger, add or remove particular areas, features or settlements)? If so, where and why?**

### Sample quotes

#### NON-AREA SPECIFIC

None of the three areas presented in the consultation as options for the GNP area meet the statutory criteria as stated. No part of Dumfriesshire or South Ayrshire should be included. To be cohesive the GNP should be Wigtownshire and Kirkcudbrightshire with the exception of the area to the east of Crocketford and the north of New Abbey. This area, although historically in Galloway, is close to Dumfries and nowadays is more part of it than it is of Galloway. We emphasise that Biosphere status is nothing more than a net thrown out to catch areas of internationally important habitat. It doesn't respect economic, administrative or natural boundaries. It cannot be used as a template for a Galloway National Park. [Anon, FF14]

The primary criterion for a National Park is defined as "outstanding natural landscape". This may have been true 30 years ago but currently the core area of the proposed NP is surrounded by numerous windfarms, with more in the pipeline, extending from Dalmellington down to Parton and Ringford on the east side of the Ken-Dee valley. There is a similar line of turbines along the northern side of the A75 from Dalmellington to Stranraer. Much of the lower ground has been developed as commercial and intensive silage ground with significant loss of natural habitats. The core area landscape is no longer outstanding and would not qualify for NP status. [Anon, FF17]

I'd like the boundary to be a bit bigger to be honest. Where we are in the Glenkens (the moorland and woods between Cairnsphairn and Moniaive, so areas including the peaks of Cairnsmore, Benniner, Manquhill Hill, the Lorg, and along the water of Ken and Dalwhat Water, to give you a rough idea) isn't in the current proposal, and it's a beautiful bit of countryside that could do with some extra protection. [Anon, FF26]

#### OPTION 1

The area described is ready made for a tourism economy based on walking rather than cars. The area described is symbiotically linked to the hills of the forest and should be included in option one as presented by NatureScot. [Anon, FF1]

Galloway is a unique and underappreciated region with outstanding natural beauty, diverse wildlife, and a rich cultural heritage. Designating it as a National Park under Option 1 would help preserve these assets while promoting sustainable economic growth. [Anon, FF10]

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## OPTION 2

No comments received

## OPTION 3

I support the NP covering the maximum area. **[Anon, FF13]**

The largest proposed option (option 3) would certainly provide more opportunity for the strategic leadership needed to manage land use pressures, drive nature recovery, and support economic development in the most deprived communities- many of which are excluded from the other options.

The park's boundary should reflect the region's diverse natural and cultural heritage, from the Galloway Hills to the Carrick and Solway coasts. A larger, cohesive area would allow for effective strategic planning, balancing tourism growth with community benefits. The Scottish Government's 2024 report highlights that a larger National Park would bring significantly greater environmental benefits compared to smaller options or maintaining the status quo.

What is crucial is that any boundary allows advantages to towns such as Castle Douglas, Dalbeattie, Kirkcudbright, Gatehouse of Fleet, Wigtown etc to be gateways to a National Park. **[Anon, FF21]**

Option 3 (Hills, Coast and Countryside) presents significant potential for place-based development by incorporating key settlements in East and South Ayrshire, including Dalmellington, Girvan, and Barrhill and in Dumfries & Galloway including Stranraer and Castle Douglas. In contrast, Options 1 and 2 focus predominantly on natural landscapes, with limited settlement inclusion beyond parts of Loch Doon in East Ayrshire. The inclusion of a higher proportion of settlements within Option 3 offers opportunities to enhance visitor experiences, attract strategic infrastructure investment, and grow the value of the regional visitor economy. **[Anon, FF28]**

Areas 1,2,& 3 should form the approximate boundary of the National Park, working with the GSA Biosphere, whose boundary (including the sea) should act as a buffer zone for wider strategic delivery of concepts and projects. REASON - a constrained boundary would cause greater pressure on communities and a bigger boundary with a buffer would allow for shared benefits & zoning of activities e.g. mountain biking, fishing, crafts, to further minimise pressures and maximise opportunities across the region on a 'working together' principle. **[Anon, FF9]**

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## PLANNING, FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

Q3 Please note any comments on these suggestions for planning, access, forestry and wind farms in the box below.

### Sample quotes

#### SUPPORTERS

One of the essential roles of a National Park is that it can co-ordinate specific strategies and policies within its boundaries, whilst working in partnership wherever possible with existing entities.

With this in mind, the National Park should operate in line with the Cairngorms National Park model, with the 3 existing Regional Councils retaining planning functions with the Park a statutory consultee and having the right to call in developments that might conflict with the Park/ Development Plan. To deliver its strategies, the National Park must have its own Development Plan to meet the functions of the Park.

For efficiency and to avoid duplicated bureaucracy, there could be a presumption that the National Park

- focus primarily on commercial applications, including farming, forestry, housing, quarries, infrastructure and renewables
- Have restricted Call In rights, e.g <10% of total applications a year, with periodic reviews up or down. [Anon, FF9]

I'd have made more of the access issues because of the rate at which less used paths get overgrown and blocked by fallen trees. I'd also like to see proposals include more mountain 'search and rescue' style training for people of all ages This is a vital part of building community resilience for anticipated increased frequency of future high impact weather events at a time when more inexperienced people will be using the outdoors in our area for a multitude of purposes including wild swimming. [Anon, FF12]

As long as there is a clear process and policy to support a successful and sustainable agriculture sector, there is a strong case for the National Park Authority to be a full planning authority with responsibility for development planning, development management and enforcement within the National Park boundary (ie option a under the Act) .However, operating under a bespoke arrangement similar to the call-in system operated in the Cairngorms National Park (a combination of options b and c under the Act) would be reasonable, ensuring that the Park has responsibility for development planning and the ability to call-in significant planning cases. [Anon, FF21]

In consideration of any functions that and powers within the National Park Authority, recognition must be given to the existing network of regionally led decision makers and partnerships, the functions that they fulfil and area already responsible for. [Anon, FF28]

#### OPPONENTS

In the event of a national park coming into being our household we would oppose the introduction of another key stakeholder in planning issues. By restricting development to be in keeping with the aims of the park and no

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doubt in keeping with some twee vision of what Dumfries and Galloway should look like you would be stifling innovation and limiting the evolution and improvements to the built environment; potentially condemning us to living in a museum. The existing planning restrictions are sufficient and our planning department adequate. The budget you propose to use to provide an enhanced level of planning (which already has a reputation in D&G for being onerous) could be better spent elsewhere or on supporting our existing planning team. [Anon, FF16]

Whilst we know there are other cases with a more positive experience and outcome, we believe the National Park will add another layer of complexity and confusion amongst planners and councillors, leading to uncertainty and unnecessary delays to the delivery of important infrastructure projects. [Anon, FF23]

Whether a proposed Galloway National Park would be a planning authority or statutory consultee working with existing overlaid planning authorities, a National Park will create additional bureaucracy within the planning system for any renewable energy project proposed within the boundary. [Anon, FF24]

## UNDECIDED

A NP board would be an alternative pathway to addressing some of the region's problems, eg low cost, sustainable housing, or a joined-up public transport system (as in the Lake District). [Anon, FF13]

We agree that the National Park should, in principle, become an access authority for its area, to ensure it can manage and resolve issues of public access in a balanced manner. [Anon, FF19]

## BOARD COMPOSITION

### Q4b What alternative options do you suggest?

#### Sample quotes

##### SUPPORTERS

I am comfortable with a Board of 12 (efficiency), equally split as noted in the consultation. Beneath this should be a much smaller Steering Group co-ordinating delivery, with sub-committees empowered and trusted to deliver solutions. Inclusive management & voting eg supermajority, sociocracy, should prevail (with the ability to adapt over time as lessons are learned). [Anon, FF9]

##### OPPONENTS

In the event of a national park coming into being our household we would oppose the proposed board membership. There are a number of professions or key stakeholders missing which would be key to running a sustainable modern National Park. I would suggest that you include Environmentalists, Farmers, Fishermen, a representative from Forestry and Land Scotland, Young People, a representative from SOSE and Subject Matter Experts on infrastructure, climate change, safety etc. Rather than having a number of members from the local council it should be sufficient to work collaboratively with the councils. You also appear to have a disproportionate number of Scottish Ministers appointed – given the number we send to the Scottish

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Parliament it seems odd to have so many on the board of the National Park. I feel that the board would work better with less councillors and politicians and more Subject Matter Experts and locals. **[Anon, FF16]**

## UNDECIDED

The board should include a majority of native Galwegians. A national park cannot thrive without local involvement and support. Indigenous peoples need to be at the heart of all discussions. Outside actors may have different agendas to the local population. The makeup of the GNP board has to respect that local people should be in control. **[Anon, FF14]**

Furthermore, the suggested options for make up of the Board in the official Galloway National Park consultation do nothing to alleviate concerns that the proposed authority will be top down, not community led. A further concern related to governance is the examples we see in other National Parks of budgets being swallowed up by inflated CEO salaries, bureaucracy and administration. **[Anon, FF29]**

## Q4c Please explain why

### Sample quotes

#### SUPPORTERS

There should be a principle that all decisions and project delivery should be devolved as far as possible e.g. to sub committees and project specific groups. These should be test beds for adaptive governance and voting models e.g. sociocratic, super majority, which should then be applied/adopted across the governance of the Park. REASON - trust, empowerment & to reduce the potential for top down control. **[Anon, FF9]**

The structure of governance for the National Park should include the use of 'Citizens Assemblies' using what is technically called 'sortition' (to ensure balance). The Citizens Assembly model for broad based public participation, accessing expertise and ensuring accountability is seen by a growing number of those disillusioned with conventional politics, elitist power structures, etc. as a way forward that maximises creative input and minimises the risk of 'corrupting' influences. **[Anon, FF12]**

As I have suggested the larger size option for the National Park, I can see the advantages of larger board, but it is important that it is no unwieldy. What is important is that the board has a majority of locally elected and appointed members, and the Chair is appointed by the board not the Scottish Government.

I welcome any proposal that increases the quota of directly elected members from the minimum set out in the Act but also recognise the importance of the Board having the necessary expertise. **[Anon, FF21]**

#### OPPONENTS

No comments received

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## UNDECIDED

We also note the intention to establish a dedicated Park Authority Board with at least 60% local representation. Representation of local people is imperative and again this should be reflective of the specific demographics and characteristics of the local communities. [Anon, FF25]

## BOARD EXPERTISE

**Q5b What other areas of expertise would the Board require, and why?**

### Sample quotes

#### SUPPORTERS

Members of the Board should be given a specific remit to speak on behalf of those unable to speak e.g. nature, the land, future generations (relevant expertise should be included in applications). REASON - balance is the key to a sustainable future and all voice should be heard. [Anon, FF9]

Whilst the park Authority structure may involve people with the necessary expertise, I believe it would be more useful to have specific representatives from the main sectors with a significant interest: farming, nature/environment, tourism. (One might also add forestry, housing, marine environment, fisheries, energy/wind.) These would need to be representatives from local organisations, not national appointees. [Anon, FF13]

The Scottish Government should ensure a well-balanced Board with expertise in nature, farming, forestry but also tourism, and economic development. Given the park's proposed boundaries, the Board should also include knowledge of coastal and marine environments, covering recreation, the blue economy, and conservation. Diversity and equality should be central to both the Board's composition and its practices. This includes engaging Disabled People's Organisations and Access Panels and creating opportunities for young people to have a voice through Youth Committees, Youth Councils, and the Scottish Youth Parliament. The National Park should prioritise accessibility, ensuring both affordable entry and inclusive physical access within the site. [Anon, FF21]

#### OPPONENTS

In the event of a national park coming into being each member of the board must live at least 60% of their time in the National Park. We would also like to see people engaged who have careers in industry that gives them the appropriate level of expertise with regards to managing or chairing a large public body (in the case of the chair), or working with or within a public body, providing advice on environmental, climate change or planning concerns, who have experience of the forestry, farming, utility or environmental sectors, who are willing to work collaboratively with the local authorities and local stakeholders and who will take a systems thinking approach to the management of the park area. They also need to consider the impact of Park authority decisions on neighbouring areas so as not to create disparity for those living either side of the boundaries. [Anon, FF16]

## UNDECIDED

No comments received

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## NAME OF THE NATIONAL PARK

### Q6b If not, what alternatives would you suggest?

#### Sample quotes

##### SUPPORTERS

In order to reflect this I am strongly opposed to giving the National Park a name like “Kingdom of Galloway...”. In Scotland: kings, nobility and the rest of the feudal system that they’re associated with, have all the wrong associations in peoples’ minds in relation to concentration of land ownership and use for the very wealthy at the expense of those historically cleared from those lands. What name is chosen needs to be associated with the kind of just, climate and nature friendly world that we seek for the future. **[Anon, FF12]**

The proposed name is daft - call it “Galloway National Park”. **[Anon, FF13]**

No. I do not believe the inclusion of Kingdom resonates locally and it is not a title I have heard used to describe a potential national park. I would suggest that Galloway National Park is widely recognised. I am also aware of proposals to call the park Galloway and Ayrshire National Park or Galloway and Carrick National Park. **[Anon, FF21]**

##### OPPONENTS

The name. Why on earth do you want to call this park a ‘Kingdom’. Quite aside from the fact that statistically speaking half the residents are likely to have republican sentiments, naming it after one part of the region is likely to alienate other parts. If you are really welded to the cap-doffing notion of a kingdom, then why not go with Rheged - historically accurate, in the heart of the park area, and with the bonus of associations with Merlin/Myrddin, a figure who would make a useful unifying icon. **[Anon, FF15]**

##### UNDECIDED

It cannot be the kingdom of Galloway. Galloway may have been a kingdom that had its own laws until the 15th Century, but no one ever refers to the Kingdom of Galloway. The Kingdom of Fife is the only part of Scotland that goes by the name of Kingdom. **[Anon, FF14 (contains collated responses)]**

It cannot be Galloway, for the simple reason that when Galloway is mentioned by a Galwegian to a non-Galwegian in any conversation anywhere in the world. The listener invariably thinks that Galloway is Galway and begins to chat about how much they love Ireland. **[Anon, FF14 (contains collated responses)]**

The name chosen should be Robert the Bruce National Park. Galloway is the cradle of Scottish independence. People throughout the world know of Braveheart and Robert the Bruce. It is a distinctive name and will attract people. The creation myth of any nation is vital to its sense of self. Glentroot in the heart of Galloway is where the idea of Scotland was born. The name, Robert the Bruce National Park, would acknowledge this. **[Anon, FF14 (contains collated responses)]**

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**Q12 Please add here any other comments that are relevant to the proposal.**

## **Sample quotes**

### **SUPPORTERS**

But without a National Park the issues facing the region remain, so any such entity would still require some form of forum of stakeholders and adequate funding, working together to deliver a common Vision for the Future, with community and nature at the core, working together to „...further the purposes of...” to achieve a series of common goals. Nothing comes for free. On balance therefore, This submission believes a National Park is the best option, if governance is done well, to deliver for the needs of all in south west Scotland. **[Anon, FF9]**

Becoming a National Park will mean that we will be able to reverse the marked decline in biodiversity in Borge, Galloway and Scotland. Becoming a National Park will mean that additional funding will be available for more nature-friendly farming practices and will also mean that the smaller farms in the area can be assured of their future. Becoming a National Park will give our children a reason to stay and the jobs to stay for. Funding will also be available for generating community wealth in the village (shop / hostel / cafe etc) so that jobs can be created in the village and wider area. **[Anon, FF13]**

Where National Parks have been established, they have helped to deliver a major economic boost to their areas, supported local businesses, generated jobs for young people, provided affordable homes, promoted investment in sustainable rural development and grew the tourism sector. They have also delivered an environmental boost, restore paths and peatlands, assisted with species recovery and, crucially, restoring and conserving native woodlands. I hope these advantages can be brought to Galloway, through a new Galloway National Park. **[Anon, FF21]**

### **OPPONENTS**

Our roads are totally inadequate to cope with the current increase in traffic, due to timber lorries & other heavy vehicles, already, the Council is clearly inadequate to deal with anything to do with the countryside. **[Anon, FF3]**

As a landowner, we have already, too many folk wandering about as if they own the place, wandering dogs, fouling the land and grass verges. **[Anon, FF4]**

Dumfries and Galloway has the third lowest unemployment rate in Scotland. It is already difficult to fill low paid posts in the hospitality and care sectors. **[Anon, FF5]**

In such circumstances, how can the cost of setting up and running a new National Park possibly be justified? **[Anon, FF7]**

All stakeholders need to have honest conversations together about the future of the area. **[Anon, FF13]**

### **UNDECIDED**

No comments received.

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