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NàdarAlba

Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

An overview report by Outside the Box of the six consultation hubs

Report number 3(b)
Dalmellington Hub

outsidethebox



Dalmellington Hub

Introduction

NatureScot commissioned Outside the Box (OTB) to work with them to design a consultation process and materials to gain community views on the proposed National Park for Southwest Scotland.

Between November 2024 and February 2025 Outside the Box facilitated and hosted community drop-in events across Southwest Scotland. Individual reports collating all the comments from the activities have been produced separately.

This is a report of the Dalmellington Hub. It uses the H diagram activity as a way to illustrate the key themes and views from the Hub.

The community drop-in events were scheduled for two hours with a range of different days, times and locations to allow people to choose the event that suited them. The events also had to fit in around existing local bookings in venues.

Dates and week

The events in the Dalmellington area were carried out over three days:

Date	Location	Time
Monday 25 November	Bellsbank Education Centre	1.00-3.00pm
Tuesday 26 November	Carsphairn Lagwyne Hall	10.30am-12.30pm
Tuesday 26 November	Dalry Town Hall	2.30-4.30pm
Wednesday 27 November	Straiton McCandlish Hall	12.00-2.00pm
Wednesday 11 December	Dalmellington Community Centre	6.00-8.00pm

Attendance

In total 165 people signed into the events in this area. People were invited to sign into the events, give their connection to the area and postcode. Not everyone signed into the events, either because it was busy at the sign in desk or because they didn't wish to.

- Local resident - **115**
- Local resident & farmer - **3**
- School children - **4**
- Farmer - **19**
- Local interest - **2**
- Business/Landowner - **11**
- Local group - **1**
- Works locally - **2**
- Councillor - **4**
- Holiday house - **1**
- No category given - **3**

The postcodes given in this hub area were:

- DG8 - **1**
- DG7 - **79**
- KA6 - **39**
- KA3 - **1**
- KA19 - **22**
- KA5 - **2**
- KA26 - **21.**

Consultation activities

At the community drop-in events there were a series of activities for people to participate in. People chose which activities they wanted to participate in. Some people completed all the activities and some just chose a few. OTB staff members facilitated some of the activities. NatureScot staff were also in attendance to answer questions from the community.

The aim of the activities was to share information about the proposal and to gain people’s views and ideas about the proposal and the area.

H diagram

One of the key activities was the H diagram where people were given the opportunity to indicate how they felt about the proposal. They did this via placing a red sticky dot. There tended to be two approaches to this activity. Some people arrived at the event knowing how they felt and wanted to immediately put their dot down. And others spent time looking at the other activities before deciding where to place their dot.

Table 1 - collates the H diagrams from each event in this hub.

Scale	0 (Negative)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 (Positive)
Indication of feeling about proposed National Park	42	6	2	2	4	9	6	9	7	9	17

50 people indicated they were ‘very negative’ towards the proposal and 33 people indicated they were ‘very positive’.

The H diagram activity also gave people the opportunity to say what they liked about the proposal, things they didn’t like and any changes they would like to see.

What do you like?

Employment

Comments focused on bringing more local employment and a boost to the local economy and establishing a local ranger service. People also said that it would help sustain the area by bringing people of working age to stay and contribute their skills.

Tourism

Comments focused on the extra opportunities to bring people to the area and to boost the local economy.

Nature

People liked the idea of preserving the area and environment and tackling climate change.

Investment and planning

People said it would bring recognition for the Doon Valley, bringing opportunities and investment to the area.

Future and young people

Comments focused on the opportunities a National Park could provide for young people to live and work in the area. The opportunities included within the school curriculum, connection to nature, alternatives to higher education, training and employment.

What do you not like?

General

Comments focused on the costs of setting up and running a National Park and not seeing what benefits a Park would bring to the area and local population. Concerns were expressed about the impact on dairy farming in the area.

Employment

People were concerned that a National Park would not bring an improvement in quality of life for residents. People said local businesses already struggle to find staff and asked who is going to work and provide the services needed for an area with increased population and visitors.

Tourism

The comments focused on the negative impact of extra visitors in the area with more rubbish and litter, car parking, public toilets, and lack of holiday accommodation. Concerns were also expressed about livestock: gates being left open and irresponsible dog owners.

Housing

Concerns about housing focused upon the lack of housing for people who want to live in the area now. It also included the lack of affordable housing and long-term rented housing, and a concern about house prices increasing and pricing local people out of the local housing market.

People said they wanted families moving into the area and not wealthy outsiders buying second homes and undermining the viability of local communities.

Roads and infrastructure

Comments expressed concern about lack of road infrastructure, current state of repair, and the negative impact increased visitors will have on traffic. People said that the current infrastructure across the region can't support a National Park; there needs to be investment in roads. And that healthcare services are not adequate to deal with increased numbers of tourists.

Bureaucracy

Comments focused on a National Park adding a costly and additional layer of bureaucracy, governance and decision making which does nothing for the benefit of local people. Concern was also raised about local people and groups losing control over what happens in their community. People were also concerned about Loch Doon not being fairly represented in the decision-making process.

What changes would you like to see?

The comments included the need for:

- better infrastructure, especially the two main roads from Newton Stewart and Castle Douglas
- more information about the proposal and how it would work in real life and how it would be run
- information on how local people will be involved in decision making
- a budget to show how a Park will be paid for and the additional infrastructure costs to support it
- a plan for how a National Park will work and value the Biosphere.

Overall

People who attended the Dalmellington hub told us that they want to see investment in the local area, an improved infrastructure, growth in communities with stable, meaningful employment opportunities and sustainable, quality housing for young people and families; that the local environment and nature, including farmland and livestock, is respected and cared for.

Comments in favour of a National Park focused on the boost it will provide to the local economy through an increase in employment, tourism and investment. There are hopes that it will bring a new ranger service to the area and have a positive impact on education, connecting young people to nature and providing nature-related employment opportunities for them in their local area.

Comments not in favour of a National Park show that many people think a National Park will not only fail to deliver the positive changes they want to see but will negatively impact the local community and environment for the foreseeable future.

Concerns focus on how a National Park will place extra demands on the local infrastructure that it will be unable to cope with, particularly in terms of roads and healthcare provision which are already struggling to cope with current pressures. There are worries that local communities will deteriorate if a National Park brings low-paid seasonal work in tourism, rather than stable, meaningful employment, causing young people and families to leave the area. Another concern for communities is that a National Park will bring an increase in second homes and holiday lets, raising house costs thereby pricing young people and families out of the local housing market. In terms of the environment, concerns are that an influx of tourism will negatively impact nature, farms and livestock through an increase in traffic, litter, and disrespect for the land and those who live there. A key concern overhanging all of this is that local people will lose control over the future of their communities if a National Park adds more layers of bureaucracy and excludes them from decision-making.

People told us they need more information about how a National Park will be run and funded and that they want to be more involved in ongoing decision-making and planning for the local area.

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