



NatureScot
NàdarAlba

Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Accompanying reports
Findings from the surveys

The Technical Consultation

Report number 2(b)
May 2025

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

Introduction

This report sets out findings from the analysis of responses to the Technical Consultation survey received during the public consultation on Scottish Government's proposal for a new national park in the southwest of Scotland. Separate reports provide the findings from the other survey formats: Summary Consultation (online and paper) and freehand responses. They are part of the set of 21 reports that accompany the advice provided by NatureScot as Reporter, submitted to Scottish Government on 5 May 2025.

Quotes have been selected with the aim of presenting a range of views and topics.

The Technical Consultation survey was hosted online on the Smart Survey platform and was intended to allow participants to respond in detail to all aspects of the proposal.

Summary

Engagement was variable across the survey. Some participants provided highly detailed and cogent answers throughout, while others skipped over the majority of questions or provided minimal responses. A degree of participant drop-off, where participants gave fuller answers to earlier questions, was also noted.

Contents

A report on the proposal for a National Park in Southwest Scotland

2 Introduction

2 Summary

3 Contents

6 Response profile

6 Survey Type Response Rate

6 Breakdown of responses by identity questions and the capacity of response.

7 Open question response rate

9 Consultation response publication preference

10 Survey Findings

10 Support for the proposal

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

10 Q1b Please tell us the main reasons(s) for your opinion

14 Alternatives to a National Park

14 Q2a Are there any alternatives to a National Park in Galloway that you would support? Please explain your answer.

17 Q2b What are the main advantages of your preferred alternative(s) over a National Park?

20 Possible options for the National Park area

21 Q3a If a National Park was to be designated, which of the three options presented in Map 4-1 and Table 4-1 would you support?

22 Q3b Please give your reasons

24 Q3c Do you have comments on the extent of the area in your preferred option? Would you add or remove particular areas, features or settlements to make the option smaller or larger? And if so, why?

28 Q4 Is there another option for the area of the proposed National Park which should be considered? If so, what do you suggest and why?

31 Legislative conditions for designation

31 Q5a Looking at the description of the options presented in Table 4-1, do you think they meet the legislative conditions for designation?

31 i. that the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or its combination of natural and cultural heritage

36 ii. that the area has a distinctive character and coherent identity

40 iii. that designating the area a National Park would meet special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the aims of the National Park are achieved in a co-ordinated way.

44 Q5b Do you have any additional comments on Table 4-1 which might be relevant to the consideration of the geographic area?

45 Boundary considerations

45 Q6a Do these principles provide a reasonable basis for drawing up a detailed National Park boundary for the area?

45 Q6b Do you have any suggestions for changes to these principles which

would be specifically required for drawing up a boundary for a National Park in this part of Scotland?

49 Functions and powers

49 Q7 Are there any further existing functions and powers from recent legislation that would be beneficial for this Park Authority to be able to draw on and why?

52 Town and country planning

52 Q8a Do you agree with the need for a bespoke approach suggested for the planning function for a National Park authority in Galloway?

52 Q8b Looking at the possible options in Box 5-2, how do you think this should work in practice?

56 Q8c What alternatives should be considered and why?

60 Access, recreation and visitor management

60 Q9a Do you agree that the National Park should in principle become an access authority for its area?

60 Q9b If not, what other options could be considered and why?

62 Q9c Do you agree with the suggested approach to core path planning?

62 Q9d If not, what other options could be considered and why?

64 Q9e What are the strengths and weakness of these options for access and other fora?

65 Q9f Are there any other options you would want to see considered?

67 Q10a Do you think that the new National Park should establish its own ranger service?

67 Q10b What are the strengths and weakness of this approach?

70 Q10c Are there any other options which should be considered and why?

72 Forestry and wind farm development

72 Q11a Do you agree with these possible arrangements?

72 Q11b If not, what alternative approaches should be considered and why?

77 Size and make-up of the National Park Board

77 Q12a Do you support these proposals for the potential size and composition of a National Park Board in the Galloway area?

77 Q12b What do you think would be the advantages or disadvantages of these suggested arrangements?

81 Q12c What alternative options could be considered and why?

85 Areas of expertise required by the National Park Board

85 Q13a Should Scottish Minister appointments to the Board include expertise on nature, farming and forestry?

85 Q13b What other areas of expertise would the Board require, and why?

88 Q14 Do you have suggestions for the topics that National Park sub-committees and advisory groups should be created for?

93 Q15 What steps could be taken to ensure a new National Park operated in ways which are inclusive of ethnic minorities and other protected characteristics?

95 Q16 Views are sought on the timing of the direct elections in respect to the selection of other elements of National Park Board.

97 National park staffing

- 97 Q17a What options for using the existing public sector staff and resources to undertake the work of the National Park Authority should be considered and why?
- 99 Q17b Are there any benefits or drawbacks to these options which need to be considered?
- 101 Q18a What level of staffing do you think is appropriate for the area, powers and functions and governance arrangements being considered?
- 103 Q18b What other areas of work would require further staffing and why?

106 Name of the national park

- 106 Q19a Do you agree that - if designated - the National Park should be called the 'Kingdom of Galloway National Park'?
- 106 Q19b If not, what alternatives would you suggest?

107 Other issues

- 107 Q20 Do you have any other comments you wish to make here which are relevant to the proposal?
- 110 Q21 Is there further evidence and information you want to provide on the potential positive or negative environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposed National Park?
-

Response profile

In total 449 responses to the Technical Survey were received, of which 4 were excluded from quantitative analysis following validation (see Table 1). Tables 2-4 outline the numbers and categories of respondents.

Survey Type Response Rate

Table 1 - Responses received and validation outcome - All surveys

| Survey Type | Total received | Invalid duplicate | No contact information | Test responses | Total excluded | Valid responses |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Paper | 341 | 1 | 32 | - | 33 | 308 |
| Summary | 4597 | 100 | 17 | 3 | 120 | 4477 |
| Technical | 449 | - | 2 | 2 | 4 | 445 |
| Total | 5387 | 101 | 51 | 5 | 196 | 5230 |

Breakdown of responses by identity questions and the capacity of response.

Table 2 - Breakdown of responses received by capacity of response and identity questions - Technical survey

| Relationship | Business | Household | Individual | Organisation | Total |
|--|----------|-----------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Live in proposal area | 60 | 54 | 227 | 10 | 351 |
| Work in proposal area | 65 | 34 | 118 | 12 | 229 |
| Farmer or forester, or work in these sectors | 48 | 8 | 41 | 2 | 99 |
| Landowner/land manager | 47 | 11 | 47 | 5 | 110 |
| Local councillor or other elected representative | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 9 |
| Business owner | 62 | 12 | 47 | 2 | 123 |
| Retired | 3 | 19 | 83 | 1 | 106 |
| Student/in full-time education | - | 3 | 2 | - | 5 |
| Frequent visitor to the area | 9 | 2 | 24 | - | 35 |

Fewer stakeholder organisations responded to the Technical Survey than might have been expected.

Open question response rate

Table 3 – Free-text question response rates

| No. | Question Description | Average response length (words) | Non-responses |
|-----|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Q1b | Please tell us the main reasons(s) for your opinion | 203.73 | 35 |
| Q2 | Are there any alternatives to a National Park in Galloway that you would support? Please explain your answer. | 53.87 | 85 |
| Q2b | What are the advantages of your preferred alternative(s) over a National Park? | 23.24 | 198 |
| Q3b | Please give your reasons. | 44.93 | 91 |
| Q3c | Do you have comments on the extent of the area proposed in your preferred option? Would you add or remove particular areas, features or settlements to make the option smaller or larger? And if so, why? | 26.27 | 219 |
| Q4 | Is there another option for the area of the proposed National Park which should be considered? If so, what do you suggest and why? | 13.59 | 281 |
| Q4a | that the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or its combination of natural and cultural heritage - Why? | 27.33 | 191 |
| Q4b | that the area has a distinctive character and coherent identity - Why? | 17.44 | 211 |
| Q4c | that designating the area a National Park would meet special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the aims of the National Park are achieved in a co-ordinated way - Why? | 26.25 | 201 |
| Q5b | Do you have any additional comments on Table 1 which might be relevant to the consideration of the geographic area | 12.1 | 339 |
| Q6b | Do you have any suggestions for changes to these principles which would be specifically required for drawing up a boundary for National Park in this part of Scotland? | 21.45 | 269 |
| Q7 | Are there any further existing functions and powers from recent legislation that would be beneficial for this Park Authority to be able to draw on and why? | 23.56 | 237 |
| Q8b | Looking at the possible options for the bespoke planning function, how do you think this should work in practice? | 39.2 | 194 |
| Q8c | What alternatives should be considered and why? | 17.71 | 265 |
| Q9b | If not, what other options could be considered and why? | 17.57 | 263 |

| No. | Question Description | Average response length (words) | Non-responses |
|------|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Q9d | If not, what other options could be considered and why? | 14.09 | 271 |
| Q9e | What are the strengths and weaknesses of these options for access and other fora? | 17.4 | 261 |
| Q9f | Are there any other options you would want to see considered? | 5.11 | 344 |
| Q10b | What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach? | 27.21 | 196 |
| Q10c | Are there any other options which should be considered and why? | 5.99 | 338 |
| Q11b | If not, what alternative approaches should be considered and why? | 29.83 | 243 |
| Q12b | What do you think would be the advantages of disadvantages of these proposed arrangements? | 25.49 | 196 |
| Q12c | What alternative options could be considered and why? | 11.86 | 265 |
| Q13b | What other areas of expertise would the Board require, and why? | 24.98 | 173 |
| Q14 | Do you have suggestions for the topics that Park sub-committees and advisory groups should be created for? | 13.70 | 257 |
| Q15 | What steps could be taken to ensure a new National Park operated in ways which was inclusive of ethnic minorities and other protected characteristics | 16.5 | 258 |
| Q16 | Views are sought on the timing of the direct elections in respect to the selection of other elements of National Park Board. | 9.47 | 283 |
| Q17 | What options for using the existing public sector staff and resources to undertake the work of the National Park Authority should be considered and why? | 22.89 | 230 |
| Q17b | Are there any benefits or drawbacks to these options which need to be considered? | 10.07 | 305 |
| Q18 | What level of staffing do you think is appropriate for the area, powers and functions and governance arrangements being considered? | 16.62 | 262 |
| Q18b | What other areas of work would require further staffing and why? | 10.83 | 297 |
| Q19b | If not, what alternatives would you suggest? | 15.26 | 161 |
| Q20 | Do you have any other comments you wish to make here which are relevant to the proposal? | 69.49 | 198 |

| No. | Question Description | Average response length (words) | Non-responses |
|-----|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Q21 | Is there further evidence and information you want to provide on the potential positive or negative environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposed National Park? | 35.75 | 310 |

Consultation response publication preference

Table 4 - permission to publish responses

| Permission Level | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Do not publish response | 52 | 11.69% |
| Publish response only (without name) | 255 | 57.30% |
| Publish response with name | 138 | 31.01% |

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 5 – details of stance of respondent – oppose or support

| Stance | Count | Percentage |
|------------------|------------|------------|
| Strongly support | 119 | 26.7% |
| Tend to Support | 50 | 11.2% |
| Tend to oppose | 22 | 4.9% |
| Strongly Opposed | 229 | 51.5% |
| Undecided | 20 | 4.5% |
| Blank | 5 | 1.1% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q1b Please tell us the main reasons(s) for your opinion

Summary

A significant majority of respondents (56.4%) were opposed to a new National Park, and the overwhelming majority of these were strongly opposed. A little more than a third of respondents (37.9%) supported a new National Park, with about two-thirds of these strongly in support. A small minority of respondents were undecided or did not offer a view.

Responses to this question reflected the polarised positions held by supporters and opponents of the proposal. The main points in favour were as follows:

- National Park status was seen as an opportunity for regeneration of the area, including benefits to business, job creation, opportunities for young people, and local investment.
- Closely linked to this theme were the benefits of increased tourism, cited by around a third of supporters.
- Many supporters pointed to the need for natural and cultural heritage protection in the area, including protection of local landscapes, improvements to ecosystem health, and preserving local cultural heritage. Some also linked designation with a need to respond to climate change and the biodiversity crises.
- With economic recovery, many people hoped this would also bring improvements to local infrastructure as well as investments in services and housing.
- Raising the status of the area, putting Galloway ‘on the map’, was also commonly cited as a benefit of National Park designation.

Opponents of the park largely focused on a small number of key issues.

- Over half of opponents argued that local infrastructure was in poor condition and was unsuitable for the increased traffic volumes that a National Park might bring.
- Many raised concerns around the potential for increased numbers of tourists, pointing to a lack of existing capacity, irresponsible behaviour, pollution, and overcrowding in the area.
- More regulation, perceived as placing onerous restrictions on farming and other industry, was also a leading concern.
- People also felt worried about the impact on housing and the potential for rising house prices and greater numbers of holiday lets and second homes.
- Some argued that national park status would generally change the character of the area
- Scepticism over the cost of a National Park, both in terms of running costs and setup costs, was common, with many people arguing that they funds would be better spent improving local services or infrastructure.

Although opponents and supporters of the proposal generally agreed over the economic and demographic challenges currently faced by the area, many of those in opposition felt that National Park status was unnecessary or that it would not be effective in addressing these issues.

Some people expressed uncertainty over what National Park status might deliver, highlighting also a perceived lack of specificity in the proposal and a desire for more information. These points were particularly made by people who were undecided about the proposal.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

A National Park is a progressive and forward-thinking opportunity for Galloway. It allows the region to look out with its own borders for new opportunities. This feels like a once in a lifetime opportunity to create a more dynamic and progressive region and not one beholden to the burden of history. **[Anon, business, 258478739]**

I believe that a National Park conveys an internationally recognised status. Properly managed it could provide a cohesive strategic plan for the area which is sadly lacking at the moment. **[Christopher Shaw, individual, 258116244]**

My main interest is biodiversity. The most successful way of reversing the nature emergency is to have large areas that are in some way protected and to link these areas up. with national parks in England you have four national parks in the north which are relatively close together but there is a large area between the Lake district NP and the first park in Scotland at Loch Lomond. A national park in D&G/Southern Ayrshire would dramatically reduce that gap. the new park could then be the centre for a large landscape scale conservation initiative like in the Cairngorms that then would have the possible to spread out beyond the parks borders to link up with the northern England national parks. **[Anon, individual, 258830504]**

Our first choice is dual designation for SW Scotland with a fully integrated National Park and UNESCO Biosphere that shares staffing and working practices. The combination of the two designations would make a compelling offer for SW Scotland building on the international brand and identity of UNESCO and the greater public awareness of National Parks. There would be challenges in exploring how best to bring together the different governance models of both designations with one being recognised as a statutory body and the other a third sector organisation, but these are not insurmountable and there are examples from continental Europe of Biospheres and National Parks having shared approaches and closer to home of the relationship between the Lake District NP and the Lake District World Heritage designation. **[Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, organisation, 263696458]**

The current proposal offers a chance to bring wider benefits - environmental, social and economic - and to speed up the shift to a greener more diverse economy across an area with very different characteristics to the two existing Scottish National Parks. However, a new Park could build on the two decades of experience of the existing Parks and learn from that - e.g. the importance of planning for sustainable transport from the start, and the need to stimulate the availability of affordable and social housing. The Galloway proposal offers the opportunity to have a very different National Park for Scotland - in the South, with a different landscape of hills, rich farmland and an extensive, beautiful coastline and a clear connection to the marine environment. **[APRS and SCNP, organisation, 264341544]**

Our primary reason for our response to this consultation and supporting the Galloway National Park proposal, is the timely opportunity for inclusion of the coast and potentially marine environment. **[Blue Marine Foundation, organisation, 264634947]**

We also support an assessment of the extent to which the two existing national parks have delivered against statutory aims, in order to strengthen the preparation for and early delivery of a new national park. For clarity, this is to provide additional insight not to delay or in any way affect the timescale for a new national park. This potential is seen at its highest level in the four statutory aims of national parks, one of which is “to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public”. With the best will in the world, a local authority, as access authority, would never have this as one of its 4 top aims - quite understandably, given the sheer range of responsibilities and pressures councils have. **[Rambles Scotland, organisation, 264442262]**

OPPONENTS

We have no information to hand what will change if it gets the go ahead. **[Anon, business, 261013389]**

The existing road network struggles to cope with the current volume of traffic, this includes both the minor roads (B & C class roads) as well as the major link roads, the A75 being the most notable example of this. Before beginning to consider introducing/encouraging additional visitors to the area the road network must be upgraded not allow to cope with the current volume of traffic but to take consideration of projected traffic if a national park or similar were to go ahead. **[Anon, organisation, 261416269]**

National Parks distort - often disastrously - the availability and affordability of the housing stock (rental and owned). They put huge pressure on infrastructure without appreciable mitigation accruing from the supposed status. The aimed for sustainable tourism is a pie-in-the-sky misnomer, without evidence of effectiveness. Land managers/farmers are subjected to further layers of bureaucracy, when farming generally is under greater and greater pressure and distortion. **[Julian Watson Consultancy, business, 262709061]**

Having had direct and relevant business experience of existing National Parks in Loch Lomond and the Cairngorms, I can confirm that the exercise of power by the NP administration has created only frustration, costs and delays, holding back progress and offering no discernible enhancement to the protection of the natural environment. **[Anon, individual, 258770881]**

Unless the Scottish Government decide to hold a referendum on the proposed National Park for all eligible residents in the affected area with clearly defined boundaries, an indicative budget and a governance model, it is not clear whether the majority of local residents support the principle of a National Park being established or oppose it. **[Kirranrae Farm/Scar Park Aire, business, 264481990]**

This polarising debate has been conducted in the absence of any actual facts about the way in which this park may differ from others and so we have had unsubstantiated claims for huge benefits from the Yes lobby and understandable but possibly equally unfounded scare stories from the No lobby. At the very least this process needs a reset and much more considered approach if it is to go forward. **[Anon, individual, 264435641]**

UNDECIDED

We welcome any development or initiatives that will boost the economy both for tourism and in the business community. However, any proposal that may restrict our ability to maintain and operate our port and allow our business to remain sustainable now and into the future would cause real concern. **[Anon, business, 264648536]**

It is evidentially clear on studying the demographics for our region that something needs done to curb its socio-economic and environmental decline. A National Park could be a mechanism to achieve this growth provided it fully represented the views of business and individual resident in the region. Renewable generation is fundamental to sustainability. In the two current National Parks in Scotland there are no windfarms. Not only does this restrict inward economic development it is also contradictory to our Net Zero aspirations. Renewable generation should be allowed in a modern national park. Farming as with forestry, and renewables needs a voice in a national park. **[Anon, business, 264569282]**

ALTERNATIVES TO A NATIONAL PARK

Q2a Are there any alternatives to a National Park in Galloway that you would support? Please explain your answer.

Summary

Around 20% of responses proposed no alternative to a National Park and this was the most common category of response overall.

Opponents of the proposal, as might be expected, offered more alternatives than supporters. Opponents especially favoured direct investment in local infrastructure and services, as well as supporting existing bodies currently doing the job of a national park and forming multi-agency partnerships to build on the existing framework.

Two-fifths of supporters argued that there was no alternative available as strong as a National Park.

Nearly 20% of both opponents and supporters were in favour of a stronger role for the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

None of the suggested alternatives were (or are) set up to achieve the holistic environmental, social and economic aims that would be possible in a national park. The only possible alternative to a national park would be to radically modify national agricultural and forestry schemes. To date these have had very limited success in environmental matters and would need to be completely re-focussed, completely moving away from support for production, in order to achieve greater environmental benefits. **[Peter Norman, individual, 264272169]**

A stronger role for the Biosphere is a realistic and genuine alternative. It has a long standing track record of delivering many similar and complimentary objectives to those of a NP and doing it in enduring partnerships that have been embraced by local communities, businesses and public sector partners. The Biosphere operates at a fraction of the cost of a NP but suffers from insecure funding. **[Anon, individual, 264470959]**

A tripartite organisation between Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire that could truly prioritise the unloved upland and coastal areas that represent so few votes and who currently get so little resource and attention. **[Anon, organisation, 264466464]**

OPPONENTS

The work of Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere offers a positive alternative. Their governance model is progressive, aiming for bottom-up collaboration between the people who live and work within their area, alongside public sector partners and other organisations who have a strategic interest in and commitment to the region. Within their partnership the balance of decision-making is at a local level, and this grouping meets regularly in southwest Scotland to discuss sustainability issues. With a reinvigorated

leadership and long-term funding the Biosphere, could in partnership with other existing organisations, be a suitable delivery mechanism for environmental objectives. **[Ann Purvis, individual, 264458493]**

Rather than designating a National Park, we would support enhanced investment in existing regional designations and partnerships. This could include:

- Strengthening the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere Reserve to deliver enhanced conservation and sustainable development outcomes.
- Expanding financial and policy support for nature recovery initiatives to deliver biodiversity and climate resilience goals without imposing additional regulatory burdens.
- Encouraging targeted investment in sustainable tourism infrastructure, which could deliver economic benefits without the need for National Park status. For example, Government could explore developing partnerships with developers whereby wind farms are used for educational and/or recreational opportunities. An approach like this has the potential to solve various key issues including resourcing the planning system and builds on the collaborative approach taken through the Onshore Wind Sector Deal. **[Anon, organisation, 265116273]**

We could combine these organisations under a marketing umbrella - called The Galloway National Parks. This would not be a National Park in terms of the National Park legislation - there would not be an organisation as such - but the collective could market itself in a similar way. This would be a brand building exercise and as such place marketing experts are required. Perhaps the South of Scotland Destination Alliance would take the lead on that. **[Anon, business, 263860141]**

- I want to see really economic and social benefits but by powering up the Regional Council, SOSE, Biosphere Reserve. Give them the money and approval to make their systems work properly.
- Bring in new business by offering 5- or 10-year Business Rate relief (depending on sector and number of good jobs for local people)
- Appeal to young families to move into the region for quality of life and reasonable housing costs. Many people work from home, so why not in DG?
- Incentivise property owners to refurbish and let, preferably long lease but holiday let where appropriate. There are too many derelict cottages.
- Support the volunteer-run Visitor Info Centres.
- Encourage environmentally sensitive visitor attractions - not honey pots.
- Raise awareness of regional needs in Holyrood. They don't care about the A75 because it is 'just' an England-Northern Ireland link road. **[Eileen Johnson, individual, 261393631]**

UNDECIDED

The GNP proposal is very thin on detail and with only a sentence given to the alternatives it is impossible to support another idea at this stage. Appreciative of the methodology of this consultation I believe there is a need for true local representation and wonder if the restoring of local government districts such, as the Stewartry, might be worth considering alongside reviewing the performance of the current bodies? Evidently what we are doing isn't working so current practices need reviewed. Funding is however key, and it is very unclear as to where the finance will come from to

support the growth of our region. Instead of throwing capital at another body lets identify why the current bodies aren't delivering and ensure taxpayers receive value. **[Anon, business, 264569282]**

Dumfries and Galloway Council believe that an alternative approach could be to develop a new national park model, through collaboratively working with key stakeholders in the South West of Scotland to create a new and innovative model that creates a regionally dynamic National Park that addresses local concerns, issues and priorities and places the local communities at the heart of decision making to maximise the local benefits that an National Park could bring to the area. The Council would be willing to work with the Scottish Government and other key stakeholders to develop an approach that is regionally unique and that would create a new National Park model that is fit for the future, without diluting the ability of the Council's to deliver their core business effectively.

Another possible alternative to the development and establishment of a new National Park could be the reinvigoration and funding of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere. The main aims and objectives overlap, and the Biosphere could be a suitable delivery mechanism if long term funding was put in place to support the delivery of the environmental objectives. However, there are limitations with this approach due to lack of potential powers, remit and scope of the Biosphere. Since its creation in 2012 the GSA Biosphere has delivered programmes that support sustainable development such as Biosphere Proud Supporters over 675 charters have been signed by local people committed to the future sustainability of their local area.

The Biosphere Certification Mark – a first for UNESCO in the UK, launched in 2018, this is a pioneering business accreditation scheme that helps local businesses reduce waste and carbon emissions and operate in a nature-friendly way, more than 55 independent businesses and social enterprises have been accredited through the Biosphere Certification Mark scheme. Biosphere Communities, 14 villages across three local authority areas have joined the Biosphere Communities scheme, giving more than 10,000 residents access to the GSA Biosphere Partnership's learning and activity programme.

The D&G Climate Hub, since 2023 the hub has supported 66 communities which have been given grants totalling in excess of £45,000 to support community led climate action in D&G. UNESCO Trail linking together thirteen UNESCO designated sites in Scotland and promoting them as a sustainable tourism experience that has won multiple international awards. A 2024 survey of 3,000 people registered on the Visit Scotland database regarding Scotland's UNESCO Trail, found that the UNESCO association was "a very important or quite important" factor for 39.6% of people visiting the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere region.

The Biosphere is unlikely to deliver the breadth of economic benefits of a National Park as it doesn't have the same brand recognition and brand power to attract additional visitors to the region and the area would not benefit from the National Park status and all that comes with it. The GSA Biosphere however is important to the region and consideration to its future operation and delivery needs to be linked to the potential of any new National Park.

A final option that would require further assessment would be around the development of new regional growth deals to increase the resources to key agencies in the South West of Scotland to focus on economic development and tackle rural deprivation and depopulation, whilst this may address some key sectoral development it would require further assessment and would not deliver the wider range of benefits associated with a National Park designation. [Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]

Q2b What are the main advantages of your preferred alternative(s) over a National Park?

Summary

Proposed alternatives were seen as offering various opportunities and benefits, including:

- building on the work of the Biosphere though increased funding or new roles;
- improving the management of the Galloway Forest Park;
- developing management strategies by local authorities for the coasts;
- less need for consultation and thus less conflict and aggravation locally;
- avoiding promoting of unsustainable tourist development; and
- requiring less bureaucracy (a key concern among opponents of the National Park).

Local control over decision making and increased community involvement in the protection and regeneration of the area were also commonly cited. More funding for infrastructure, support for existing agencies and more of a focus on local initiatives were seen by some as more desirable than achieving full National Park status.

Several responses, primarily supporters of the proposal, highlighted that alternatives to the National Park should be treated as fallback positions should the proposal fail to proceed to designation. Many felt that only National Park status, with its profile and long-term funding, could deliver the protection of the natural and cultural heritage, or bring substantial benefits to the area.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

The main difference between the preferred alternative option (Biosphere) and designation of a National Park is that more of the powers of the three constituent local authorities (including planning) would remain within the remit of those Councils.

This would have both advantages and disadvantages for Councils: from a land use planning perspective, not having a National Park Plan may simplify decisions on planning applications as planners would continue to refer to their own Local Development Plans, and internal resource management would not be affected by decisions that could be made at a National Park level (such as introducing Short-Term Let Control Areas, for example).

However, the main disadvantage is that the overall approach to decision-making for the Biosphere area may be more disjointed and ultimately require greater input and support from the three Councils. **[Anon, organisation, 265106653]**

This suggestion is not a preferred alternative per se, rather it is a fallback position that should be given fair and balanced consideration. The GSAB is already well networked with a local, national and international track record that has been developed over the past 12 years and more.

It is leading on the delivery of community-based responses to climate change, is a key partner in delivery of the Natural Capital Innovation Zone, has an existing structure, existing staffing. With a secure level of funding, aligned to greater recognition of the international significance it brings to the region, it could develop further to become an agile and cost-effective alternative with the potential to deliver some of the benefits associated with National Park designation. **[Anon, household, 264387240]**

The advantage of the status quo, with enhancement of the role of the GSA Biosphere, is that this would continue to provide a focus upon conservation of biodiversity and the natural environment, and upon sustainable use of the region's natural resources. An undesirable focus upon increases in tourism and the leisure industry, and upon unsustainable 'development' and land use, that characterises the advocacy of the National Park by both the GNPA and DGC, would be avoided. **[Anon, individual, 258788307]**

Anything less than National Park status simply won't bring the benefits to the area. Galloway has such a rich culture and some of the best of what Scotland has to offer. It is only right that it gets awarded National Park status. **[Anon, individual, 257651957]**

They aren't preferred alternatives - just a backstop. One advantage would be that the alternatives would cut through the polarity around the idea of a park. On the negative side any of these alternatives run the risk of inadequate or short-term funding. **[Anon, individual, 263919807]**

OPPONENTS

The National Park plan focuses too much on tourism and ecology, and missed the point of protecting the (in relative terms) tiny population and failing road network, driving house prices up too quickly, removing housing stock for more holiday rentals and pushing local people out of genuinely good (non-tourism) related jobs. A Welcome to Galloway organisation, paired with the Biosphere and Galloway Forest Park, plus the Council and NSA, gives the best of all worlds without the label and bureaucracy for planning and similar that an NP adds. **[Anon, household, 263946498]**

This could be implemented without the requirement for extended public consultation, saving an untold sum of public money and I would venture that the vast majority of locals (whether landowners or users) would be in support of this. **[Anon, individual, 261416269]**

We believe that working with established organisations is preferable. They are already known and trusted by the community, and the limited resources we have would not need to be allocated to their set up, recruitment of staff and management, etc. We believe that this would provide greater value for money for the region.

Respondents to our survey displayed a sense of mistrust toward a new 'quango' being established and feel that this would divert resources and money to civil servants who do not have a direct connection or interest in the area. Our members do not feel that this would result in an improvement to people's lives. We feel that local people should have more of a say over how money should be spent, and budgets should be focused on key, targeted initiatives for the area.

The alternatives our members suggest are less drastic and therefore would be more acceptable to a greater majority of people. It would also have less impact on livelihoods, including food production and agriculture. We believe supporting the GSA Biosphere would allow collaboration and may be more acceptable to the farming community.

We also believe that our alternatives would avoid the oversaturation of tourism and the access-related issues that are recognised by other National Parks in Scotland and beyond. **[NFUS, organisation, 264371455]**

If local people manage their own projects than the money should be better targeted on what is needed and more efficiently spent. Money wouldn't be going to support management and administrative costs, and local people could apply to other organisations if they were to have a pool of initial funding to start with. Other organisations are always willing to invest in a project where a portion of funding is already in place **[Anon, household, 260552158]**

- Allows the government to walk before it runs - change is always better implemented piecemeal.
- As highlighted above it will have a reduced negative impact in aggregate on the regions inhabitants as it is a less densely populated area.
- It builds on an existing government responsibility. I believe the government would be better to do a better job of what it already has to manage rather than taking on more responsibility. **[A Lindsay & Co, business, 264197396]**

UNDECIDED

We recognise the challenges and benefits that a National Park could bring to our region, Dumfries and Galloway Council previously agreed that a National Park would be welcomed in principle, however we believe that this need to be innovative and locally focused to ensure that our regions residents and communities are able to maximise the economic opportunities associated with the designation. Having the opportunities to collaboratively develop a new national park model could create a regionally unique National Park with the appropriate powers, governance, boundary and staff, enabling the region to maximise the benefits associated with the development and implementation of a National Park whilst mitigating and considering the concerns outlined above.

An alternative model has the potential for greater local and community buy in, can build on existing initiatives and partnerships, could address issues of local democratic accountability and control, and offer a "light touch" management and governance regime that avoids introducing new statutory controls over local activities. Building on existing activity such as the Biosphere and the recently established Natural Capital Innovation Zone and strengthening existing partnerships rather than creating a new statutory body along the lines currently proposed could enable a more flexible approach responsive

to the needs and aspirations of the region. [Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]

Advantages centre around being 'community based'. It is very likely voluntary help (e.g. under the general idea of rewilding (though I admit the term might be misunderstood) which is much more likely to come in response to local projects.

Whether true or false, there is perception that Nationally determined outcomes for very rural areas such as Galloway are not always made with the understanding of local communities (a trivial perhaps recent example being that although we need to move away from 'burning' things to supply our heating, because power cuts are frequent in severe weather (within a few miles out for five and a half days within 6 miles of here) we need (modern) wood burning stoves even if only as an emergency). [Geoff and Cath Monk, household, 264380226]

POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR THE NATIONAL PARK AREA

Q3a If a National Park was to be designated, which of the three options presented in Map 4-1 and Table 4-1 would you support?

Table 6 – selection of which option the respondent preferred

| Option | Count | Percentage |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| Option area 1 | 30 | 7% |
| Option area 2 | 37 | 8% |
| Option area 3 | 123 | 28% |
| Other | 30 | 7% |
| None | 200 | 45% |
| Blank | 25 | 6% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q3b Please give your reasons

Summary

Almost half (45%) of responses reiterated a preference for no National Park (note that more than half of respondents to this technical survey oppose a new National Park, as per Q1a above). Of those expressing a view on the three options presented, almost two-thirds preferred Option 3. A significant number of respondents either preferred an alternative option, or did not offer a view.

Unsurprisingly, opponents of a new National Park offered more concerns about the various Area Options than did supporters, who offered more benefits and suggestions.

Several responses highlighted the lack of an option within Q3a to reject the national park, with some fearing that to select any of the proposed Area Options would be interpreted as a tacit endorsement of the Park in principle.

A quarter of responses pertained to specific area or boundary suggestions, such as including or excluding certain settlements, communities or industries. Supporters were nearly twice as likely to provide a detailed suggestion. Nearly a fifth of responses who had stated a preference for Area Option 1 felt that a smaller Park area would reduce the negative impacts on the surrounding area.

More than a third of participants who preferred Area Option 3 felt that the larger area would maximise the landscape and habitat diversity within the park and extend the benefits of National Park status to more people and places. Around a quarter also felt that Option 3 offered the greatest potential economic benefits and offered more opportunity for conservation and efforts to tackle climate change.

Option 2 was favoured by some who felt Option 1 was too restrictive, but that the expansiveness of Option 3 might e.g. prove costly to administer, excessively restrictive on development, or lack a clear identity.

Sample quotes

OPTION 1

Love the hills and coastline... option 3 would cover an extensive area of proposed and consented wind farms. Options 1 and 2 appear to have little impact to this industry. **[Anon, individual, 262923488]**

There appears to be more vocal resistance to the Galloway National Park from intensive farming interests in South Ayrshire and from the dairying areas around Castle Douglas and Dumfries. If they don't want it then leave them out of it. **[Anon, business, 260519865]**

I strongly oppose a national park in Galloway but if there must be one, make it the smallest area possible and do not include Stranraer and the Rhins, as this area was added late in the proposal and residents were not consulted. **[Anon, individual, 264106314]**

Option 1 contains the scenic parts of Galloway. **[Anon, individual, 262816363]**

If a suitably tailored National Park was created, I would suggest that it initially concentrated on a more restricted area such as the Galloway Forest park. As progress was made, learning from experience, and phased funding was released, it could then be extended to encompass larger parts of the area. **[Anon, business, 260199676]**

OPTION 2

If it went ahead I'd prefer the Galloway Forest Park, Stewartry, Machars, The Rhins, Stranraer & South Ayrshire. **[Anon, individual, 263958971]**

We believe that Option 1 is too narrow, isolated and uniform in nature. It also cuts out critical tourist attractions like much of the Solway, Criffel, Caerlaverock, the Mull of Galloway and it would do less to make Dumfries its natural hub and leave the efforts to revive Stranraer outside. We selected option 2, but our arguments would also support option 3, though we do not know the extra northwest area to make sensible comments. We cannot comment on whether straying further across existing local authority boundaries creates any particular problems. **[Arbigland House and Gardens, business, 263836786]**

OPTION 3

Our members tend towards Option 3 - Hills, Coast and Countryside. While we acknowledge the challenge posed by overlapping three local authority boundaries, it was agreed that this combination best reflects the aspects of Galloway's landscape that makes it unique. "Scotland in miniature" is often how Galloway is described so a mixture of coast, countryside and forestry is an apt reflection of this. Given the emphasis on economic development, it was also felt that it is important to include communities that could most benefit from additional funding [**Dumfries & Galloway Greens, organisation, 264386378**]

For a NP to succeed in delivering multiple benefits to society it needs to be covering as large an area as is practical. Option 3 enables it to build on the good work of the Biosphere, offering opportunity for partnership working both inside and outside the NP area. Scot Gov own Strategic Environmental Assessment has noted that this give the maximum benefits to the region. [**Anon, individual, 264470959**]

Options 1 and 2 are absolutely essential to represent the area properly and Dalmellington and Straiton communities should be included as well as Cairnsmore of Carsphairn and the Nith estuary and Criffel. The countryside of the Machars and Rhins should be included to facilitate landscape wide habitat restoration. The addition of the area in option 3 would mean that more forestry areas would be included, allowing the National Park to have more influence on the management of these areas. This would also allow the addition of any new windfarm developments to be contained in the more remote parts of the park in the north of the area which would make for more efficient developments which would negate the need for unpopular and inefficient new developments elsewhere. The inclusion of the long distance paths in option 3 would be a bonus. [**Anon, individual, 260586396**]

Option 3 best covers the area written about by SR Crockett. This is a great unifying factor for the park. I wasn't too sure about going across the Nith, but it helps to includes the river, it's bore and rich mudlands. At Caerlaverock was recently discovered the Tadpole Shrimp found only in the New Forest and predating the dinosaurs.

At this stage the Council is unable to provide views on a preferred model for a New National Park in the region without knowing the full details of the powers and responsibilities of the new body. Options 1 and 2 would fragment the region and this would cause issues in terms of coherence and the ability to align service provision for our citizens and communities. Option 3 embraces the best technical scenario considering the ICUN nature classification descriptions which would include the Nith Estuary National Scenic Area. The wider geographic area also maximises the opportunities for wider economic benefits through the inclusion of gateway towns such as Dalbeattie and Castle Douglas, as well as key areas in South and East Ayrshire which would align with the opportunities to enhance areas of deprivation through the National Park designation.

The proposed Galloway National Park option 3 boundary covers areas of Dumfries and Galloway and the Southwest of Scotland which have performed worse in economic terms compared to the rest of Dumfries and Galloway and Scotland in recent years. There is persistent poverty and deprivation, including a low wage economy in places including Stranraer and Girvan, but the area also includes Wigtown and Whithorn, with 3 of 5 towns selected for

the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal Place Programme falling within the option 3 boundary area. There are 82 data zones within the proposed option 3 area, with 9 data zones within the proposed Galloway National Park option 3 boundary which fall within the 20% most deprived in Scotland according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The 2 most deprived data zones in Dumfries and Galloway (Stranraer West 05 and Stranraer West 06) are within the option 3 boundary, with both falling within the 10% most deprived in Scotland in 2020 (Source. The Scottish Government. Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020). It is recognised that SIMD does not always capture the true extent of rural deprivation and as such deprivation is likely to exist out with these data zones. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

I think the Machars and East Ayrshire are the areas that would use it the most. I would actually say the priority of areas is wrong for me as area 1 would benefit the least amount of people and includes some significant areas of wildlife conservation value but much of the area is nonetheless commercial forestry and as such of less wildlife value. I would actually more actively support area 2 and 3 combined without area 1 as these areas are of more diverse wildlife value overall. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

General

The opening commentary to this section is absolutely right in reflecting on international experience on the too small/too large spectrum. However, it gives no indication of why any of these boundaries have been suggested, in other words what is the issue that current mechanisms do not solve, and the GNP idea will. That is why I have indicated none. **[Roger Crofts, individual, 264104472]**

There is no option for rejecting a national park? **[Anon, business, 261900571]**

We believe that our reasons mirror those echoed throughout - that a National Park should not include any major population centres or concentration of agricultural businesses. There were some responses to our survey that commented positively about opportunities for community, nature, visitors, tourism and wished to see the inclusion of rural areas most in need of investment, for example, Wigtownshire. **[NFUS, organisation, 265115530]**

Stranraer is dead on its feet since the ferry port closed, and it could benefit from an increased number of visitors. Also, it has a railway station, which is a plus if we're serious about cutting vehicle emissions. Councils would need to design a decent public transport infrastructure with integration of rail and coach. Kirkcudbright is already a twee sort of tourist town and is geared for visitors.

The A77 and A714 are certainly not up to an increased volume of traffic, and Girvan is already suffering from intolerable ferry traffic and heavy goods vehicles, so any new park should stop well South of there. Also, Girvan becomes a parking site for camper vans in the season, and parking for locals has been given over to them. This is to the detriment of hotels and B&B, in fact it's to the detriment of everybody except Asda. **[Anon, individual, 259047323]**

Q3c Do you have comments on the extent of the area in your preferred option? Would you add or remove particular areas, features or settlements to make the option smaller or larger? And if so, why?

Summary

The response rate to this question was low. Answers overlapped with the previous question, with several participants referring to their answer to Q3b. Opponents of the proposal were considerably less likely to engage with the premise of the question, with many choosing not to answer the question or simply reiterate their opposition to establishment of a new National Park.

16% of responses offered specific boundary or area suggestions, particularly in relation to expanding or modifying Option 3. Boundary suggestions were more likely to come from supporters of the proposal than opponents.

Although many opponents chose not to answer this question, many suggested that, if a Park were to go ahead, Option 1 offered the area with the fewest issues in terms of land use, population and impact. Supporters of Option 1 generally tended to state a preference for focusing on areas with the highest quality of landscape and development, as well as avoiding conflict with other land uses, notably farming and wind power.

Supporters of Option 3 sometimes argued that a larger area would further extend the benefits of the Park and maximise the landscape and habitat diversity contained within it. A number of responses recognised the need, within Option 3, to include areas that may not have obvious nature value, due to land management, either for historic and cultural value or for efficiency in administration where splitting the Park area or removing areas would present difficulties over management of the Park.

Some supporters of Option 3 also advocated for the inclusion of coastal and even marine areas.

Advocates of Option 2 made various geographical suggestions, including the exclusion of Ayrshire, the inclusion of settlements like Castle Douglas or Dumfries, and the exclusion of areas with windfarms.

Sample quotes

OPTION 1

None of the options are preferred by me. If anything, Option 1 without the coastal strip (i.e. the Galloway Hills and Forest Park) would be the closest area of acceptability for me. **[Anon, individual, 263406528]**

Remove all farmland and most of the towns and villages. If you must designate a park then it should be located in our wilderness, not in our working landscape and varied towns and villages which do not fit the ethos of a National Park in the preservation of nature. Such boundaries conflict greatly with a NP's primary aims and are therefore likely to cause a lot of problems under NP status. **[Anon, business, 264482156]**

I find it astonishing that Cairnsmore of Carsphairn was not included within the original GNPA bid's boundary – it is the 3rd highest hill in the south of Scotland

(mainland). Likewise a lot of land between Dalry and Sanquhar is not intensively used and given the Southern Upland Way runs through this area, would have been a sensible option for inclusion within the proposed boundaries.

The inclusion of the Rhins of Galloway and the southern section of Machars peninsula is a strange choice. I see little benefit for these areas, as both of them are very successful in attracting tourists, and infrastructure in the area is fragile. The land in these areas are being managed perfectly fine by those who live and work on the land at present and have shaped the scenery around for centuries.

Designating such a large area raises questions over how this area could be managed, given the current financial challenges the Scottish Government faces. Which areas will receive the most funding? Do tourist hotspots get targeted the most?

The proposed National Park being bigger than the entire country of Luxembourg shows that little thought has been given to the extent of its boundaries. **[Kirranrae Farm/Scar Park Aire, business, 264481990]**

Of the suggestions made for Area 1 in Table 4-1 of the consultation paper, extending to include Dalmellington and Straiton would have two key benefits:

- The two settlements would be gateway settlements at the northern edge of the National Park, fulfilling a role which would otherwise be absent for visitors coming to the National Park from the north, and local communities would be able to take better advantage of the tourism benefits that would bring.
- It would provide a clear statement of intent in terms of the role and compatibility of the national park with respect to renewables development by including a cluster of wind farms, otherwise the northern boundary would be drawn to almost entirely exclude wind farms.

There is no clear advantage or rationale to including Cairnsmore of Carsphairn.

Inclusion of the NSAs would be beneficial **[Abseline LLP, business, 263558927]**

OPTION 2

If the park is to be a genuine driver of inclusive and sustainable growth it is essential that it is not restricted in area to those areas which are currently most popular (i.e. option 1). Otherwise the benefits will not be felt by remoter, poorer areas which are of equal landscape and natural heritage value. Worse, by protecting only a central core largely comprising the Galloway Forest Park and a portion of the eastern coast, it could be seen as a green light to unsympathetic or unsustainable development or practices out with this area.

Therefore it is absolutely essential that option 2 is included in the park boundary. The Rhins and Machars peninsulas are arguably of as great landscape and natural heritage value as anything in option 1. The park, with an entrance through the Irish ferry has significant potential to help Stranraer's regeneration, linking to proposals such as the Rhins coastal path. **[Andrew Fraser, individual, 262399248]**

OPTION 3

Supportive of the most expansive option (including the Nith estuary) but restricted to D&G Council area only.

Would also be supportive of the boundary following the Nith's west bank up to Thornhill and then following the A702 across to Dalry/New Galloway. This would include classic sheep moor uplands -- and includes wind farms and tree plantations. Socially/culturally, people (myself included) who stay in this area feel like they are part of Galloway -- and so this would make for a more coherent national park (re the coherent identity requirement).

Either that or take the national park out to the easternmost parts of the Galloway & West Dumfries Scottish Parliament Constituency (minus west Dumfries itself).

But with this more expansive option in D&G only, I'd prefer a lighter/less onerous version of a park. **[Anon, individual, 264061477]**

It should extend further E along the main boundary, where neither 2 nor 3 extends 1. There is no landscape reason not to include the area around Moniaive or the Urr valley (Corsock and surroundings); there are good governance reasons to include both of these, as there are existing arrangements for community-level planning (supported by windfarm community benefit arrangement) which span the Glenkens, Corsock/Kirkpatrick Durham and Glencairn. **[Anon, individual, 261907192]**

Whilst our preferred option is along the lines of option 3 we have the following comments, some of which suggest that potential amendments could be considered.

We can see good arguments given the spectacular coastline scenery and importance for biodiversity (including seabirds and migratory birds) for the inclusion of the Mull of Galloway and the Machars (and Whithorn) as proposed in options 2 and 3. Including consideration of cultural heritage too strengthens the case further.

Whilst we recognise that there are some parts of the area under consideration in option 3 that may not merit National Park status on landscape grounds alone (e.g. the extensive windfarm areas on the Wigtownshire Moors south of the Stinchar valley and west of the A714; and areas in the hinterland of the Rhins under intensive dairy farm management) their inclusion should still be considered if it makes more strategic sense and with an awareness that more sensitive future management is possible and that environmental enhancement of 21st century landscapes and habitats should be very much the goal.

Some of the uncertainty about the inclusion, or not, of areas with large windfarms comes from the Scottish Government having stated that it will develop bespoke planning guidance for new National Parks with regard to wind farms, but not yet intimated what this will say. The extent to which the Wigtownshire moors should be considered for inclusion might depend on precisely how that policy guidance is phrased. However, because of the size and long-distance visibility of modern turbines, it is essential that wind farm development both within and in the vicinity of a National Park is exemplary in its sensitivity to landscape and other environmental impacts.

We would support the inclusion of the Nith Estuary NSA, with Caerlaverock as an obvious visitor gateway, and the inclusion of the area around Threave Gardens and Nature Reserve and Threave Castle which respectively are excluded from option 1, and options 1 and 2.

Based on quality of the landscape, there are arguments for including more of the headwater valleys in Dumfriesshire (along and to the north of the A702), up to the spine of the Southern Uplands (but probably excluding the windfarms on the watershed itself). It might be worth considering including more ground to the east of New Galloway, including perhaps the whole River Urr catchment? Whilst it might be possible to exclude “gateway” communities such as Girvan and Dalmellington, and possibly even Stranraer, and rely on Biosphere designation for them, (especially if the two designations were tightly integrated, with a planning regime that reflected that symbiosis), on balance we would much prefer their inclusion so that the new NPA is better able to work with and influence the gateways.

We think that giving consideration to maps of multiple deprivation is a helpful pointer as to where there is greatest need and merit in potentially broadening the economy with more diverse and ‘greener’ jobs and improving wellbeing. For the smallest option (option 1) we note that it excludes many of the areas most in need of such a boost (e.g. coastal areas to the west and north).

We note that the consultation document indicates that the coastal boundary could be set at the Mean Low Water Spring (MLWS) mark as suggested by the Galloway NPA Bid document. Given the four aims of Scottish National Parks and the potential to encompass marine areas in the legislation, we see no reason why the coastal boundary couldn’t extend further into the marine environment. This is given weight by the number of national and international designations for both natural heritage and landscape that extend further into the sea, as does the extent of the Biosphere.

[Redacted] is opposed to all 3 proposed boundary options for the reasons set out. However, [Redacted] is particularly opposed to Option 3, which covers a vast sprawling area of varying character and identity. We do not consider that Option 3 clearly would meet the high bar set by the legislative conditions for designation set out in section 2 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act2000 (the Act) **[Anon, business, 264459949]**

General

I do not have definite opinions on this but think that very careful consideration should be given to excluding areas on the edges where the character of development is already of a poor quality. A lot of farm and other development is of poor quality and very unattractive.

Traditional building materials, details and designs are often ignored and there are not enough of the traditional skills needed to give the area a distinctive but attractive character. There are exceptions, such as Kirkcudbright and Gatehouse of Fleet and a large number of fine old country houses.

Castle Douglas has some very good Victorian buildings and even some houses over 200 years old, but the lack of insistence on and encouragement of high-quality maintenance of these calls into question whether much of the area is suited to be within a National Park. On the other hand the creation of a

National Park might create the opportunity to raise standards of appearance and maintenance. [Anon, individual, 260472174]

I'd like to see more thought given to the marine environment. Not a huge swathe of offshore areas but do include sea grass areas e.g. off Kirkcudbright; Loch Ryan with its oysters; River Cree with its sparkling fish smelling of cucumbers and the River Cree again with its thriving salmon hatchery. I'd like to see all of these features 'exported' to other Galloway estuaries and shores. [Anon, individual, 264096328]

Q4 Is there another option for the area of the proposed National Park which should be considered? If so, what do you suggest and why?

Summary

The overall response rate was quite low, possibly owing to a perceived overlap with the previous question. The responses received were nonetheless quite wide ranging, with a higher number of all responses favouring an extended Option 3 but with widely differing views over where the extension should be.

Of the alternative suggestions presented, the main themes were enlarging the park area to include areas to the north and/or east, extending the marine area further offshore, or greatly reducing the extent to focus on the existing Galloway Forest Park area. Proposed extensions to Option 3 included marine areas (shoreline and offshore), the river valleys of Nith, Fleet, Dee and Cree, Annandale and Eskdale, Moniaive and the Shinnel and Scour Valleys. However other responses sought the exclusion of forestry and/or farmland, to exclude certain settlements, to include more coastal areas, and to reduce the area to match the Dumfries and Galloway Local Authority area. Some suggestions would entail a non-contiguous National Park (i.e. one including multiple geographically separate areas).

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Areas where there may be strong opposition from current land managers, e.g. dairying areas around Castle Douglas, some commercial forestry areas, areas suitable for wind farms etc could be left out. [Anon, business, 260519865]

Other than enabling the arterial routes and related upland and coastal areas, the status of Gateway towns as a potential separate status is important. For any National Park to succeed based on UNESCO pillars of Economy, Community and Environment, we need

1. successful business focus to create resource
2. Community-driven focus
3. Environment that is protected by our communities

For this to succeed our Gateway towns need to feel involved and to benefit from visitor economy and to absorb visitor pressure. Our Park needs to be Our Park to our Gateway towns, and it has to be Our Park to the southern facing communities of the Central belt. [Anon, organisation, 264466464]

The only option that should be given further consideration is the ability to include the regions marine environment, I would propose that consideration should be given to extending the national park boundary out to 3 nautical miles from the mean low water mark and include all of the Luce Bay and Sands SAC and Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve. Given the invaluable role that the marine environment will play through blue carbon capture and biodiversity uplift as well as managed coastal realignment the inclusion of the marine environment within the designation is critically important to allow a whole ecosystems approach to managing the area. The inclusion of the marine environment would make the new National Park a first for Scotland. **[Anon, individual, 264267994]**

Based on quality of countryside, there are, as indicated in my previous answer, strong arguments for including more of the headwater valleys in Dumfriesshire (along and to the north of the A702), up to the spine of the Southern Uplands (but probably excluding the windfarms on the watershed itself). On the other hand, the hinterland of most of the Rhins is very much “dairy prairie” and on landscape grounds could be excluded. Similarly, much of the extensive windfarm-dominated areas on the Wigtownshire Moors south of the Stinchar valley and west of the A714 could be left out. Even here, though, care would be required: there are, for example, some very attractive landscapes mixing lochs, woodland and open ground along and to the east of the B7027 which should ideally be included. But from a broader strategic planning standpoint such exclusions would be problematic, so a better solution might be to accept that these are areas where environmental enhancement of 21st century landscapes and habitats should be very much the goal. **[Anon, individual, 263548711]**

OPPONENTS

As stated in my comments on the boundaries in Question 1b, instead of selecting a much larger park for all 3 options, opting for a core area centred around Galloway Forest Park is an option which should be considered.

This option has been publicly supported online by writer and journalist Patrick Laurie in his ‘Bog Myrtle and Peat’ blog, with a proposal map drawn by Matt Cross on Twitter. The main advantage of my preferred alternative is that it would be popular, whilst the current proposals are not. **[Kirranrae Farm/Scar Park Aire, business, 264481990]**

Better not to have one, or to have the whole of the region included to mitigate damage/impacts. **[Anon, household, 263964001]**

Thought should be given to the Pembrokeshire model, where the park is non-contiguous, this delivers many benefits but also excludes areas which are not suitable for a national park. This could be useful to exclude some of the major food producing areas of the South West. This may also allay many of the fears around ability to undertake productive agriculture in the area.

This also enables areas of high population or that are not likely to deliver the greatest value for money outcomes can easily be avoided.

Similarly the Northumberland National Park, is positioned inland – which means that the most productive and populous areas are not included within the park boundary. **[Scottish Land & Estates, organisation, 264482166]**

If a National Park is created, it should encompass all of Dumfries and Galloway: Option 3, minus any of Ayrshire but extended East across to the M74 and beyond to include Sanquhar, Moffat, Langholm, and Annan. It should include all of the western part of the Southern Uplands.

The reasons are that it shows the whole landscape diversity of the region and does not create inequalities (in economic terms) across the region. **[Anon, individual, 264122681]**

Firstly, I oppose the need for a National Park. But were it to be forced upon us, I would opt for Option 1 without the coastal strip (much of which is either a MoD Range or already a protected area). In essence, the Galloway Hills and Galloway Forest Park. **[Anon, individual, 263406528]**

UNDECIDED

Consideration could be given to focussing more on scenic beauty and the coast, encompassing the NSAs with a boundary that focusses primarily on option 2 and including the option 1 and 3 areas southeast of the A712. Wild Land should not be deliberately included in a National Park - it needs to remain relatively free of people in order to retain its wild character, and a lack of provision for visitors would conflict with National Park status, although the Merrick is a relatively frequently climbed peak and is in the Wild Land Area. The inclusion of land to the north of the A712 should take this into account and seek a boundary that includes the key recreational area of Glentroot. It could also potentially extend northwards to include Loch Doon (though it may be beneficial to avoid the complication of crossing administrative boundaries). See file uploaded in response to Q21. **[Abseline LLP, business, 263558927]**

NP should encompass the biosphere area and all historic Wigtown and Kirkcudbrightshire/Stewartry. This will simplify administration - much D & G council work is split in regions. The NP 'authority' should replace all council functions in the area, thus reducing D & G to the historic county of Dumfriesshire and separately the NP area of Galloway.

Thinking of 'wild land'; the present area encompasses only a small area - Rhinns of Kells/Merrick and south to Cairnsmore of Fleet, although assuming the Glenkens boundary includes each community council parish immediately east of the valley, it would extend to Cairnsmore of Carsphairn. But why exclude the broad zone either side of the Southern Upland Way toward Sanquhar; and the lands south of Dalry to Moniave?

This area is large enough for an NP to work on conservation/restoration of environments yet should also be an enabling vehicle to maximise the use of renewables. At scale the NP can be an exemplar in using natural resources such as wind and hydro, whilst learning how with this increased manmade footprint to actually conserve the land - lower substantially the net carbon footprint.

I would also like to see a NP going out into the Solway; again a possible exemplar in conserving/improving the maritime environment. **[Geoff and Cath Monk, household, 264380226]**

We believe there is a case to be made for extending the boundaries to include Mabie Forest. The Mabie Forest reserve is home to twenty out of thirty-two of Scotland's resident butterfly species, including a number of Scottish

Biodiversity List species, such as the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Partnership working between Butterfly Conservation and Forestry & Land Scotland have significantly increased the species' abundance in this area, whilst it has suffered significant declines in distribution across the rest of Scotland over recent decades. **[Butterfly Conservation, organisation, 264453002]**

In my view a national park for Galloway should have the boundaries limited to the Galloway portion area of the Dumfries and Galloway Council local authority boundary area. Including South Ayrshire and other local councils within the national park area would add unnecessary complexity to an already complex issue. In my experience the culture and economy of Galloway have very little in common with the culture and economy of Ayrshire with little connection or movement between the two areas other than on the borders. **[Anon, individual, 264386039]**

LEGISLATIVE CONDITIONS FOR DESIGNATION

Q5a Looking at the description of the options presented in Table 4-1, do you think they meet the legislative conditions for designation?

i. that the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or its combination of natural and cultural heritage

Table 7 – listing whether respondents agreed or disagreed that the area was of outstanding national importance

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 210 | 47% |
| No | 111 | 25% |
| Partially | 58 | 13% |
| - | 66 | 15% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Why?

Summary

Almost half of respondents considered that the area meets the legislative conditions for designation, while a quarter of respondents felt that it does not. Of the remaining respondents (just over a quarter of the total respondents), roughly half felt that the area partially meets the conditions for designation, and the others offered no view.

Those who agreed that the area held outstanding national importance typically cited the examples of ancient cultural heritage and the historical mix of cultures in the area. Many people, including a roughly equal number of opponents and supporters of the proposal, also suggested that region's agricultural heritage contributed significantly to its national importance.

The natural beauty of the area, including aspects of its landscape variety, sense of 'wildness', dark skies, geological significance, and species and habitat

diversity were widely held to contribute to the area's national importance.

On balance, most of the reasons cited in support of meeting the conditions related to cultural heritage, although the aesthetic beauty and ecological value of the area were also widely referenced.

Several responses nevertheless suggested that Galloway was no more distinct than other areas of Scotland, a view much more widely held among opponents of the proposal than supporters.

Those who disagreed that the area meets the criteria for designation cited the impact of farming, forestry and the renewables industry on both the landscape aesthetic and the ecological integrity of the area, with some arguing that the area was too depleted of its natural heritage to warrant designation as a National Park.

Sample quotes

YES

The region benefits from nationally and internationally recognised landscape designations across the South of Scotland. The percentage of designations across all 3 options presented highlights the region's natural capital attributes and that they would meet the expectations of combining its natural and cultural heritage to meet the prescribed legislative conditions for designation. Whilst option 3 presents the largest geographic size and therefore some dilution of the natural characteristics it creates more opportunities for exploring landscape scale solutions through sustainable land use to maximise the benefits locally. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

Yes, but we don't require National Park status to tell us this. **[Derek Marlborough, individual, 261879064]**

The area has a more independent attitude than many other parts of Scotland, being based on a population of yeomen farmers, rather than large estates and tenants, small independent businesses and professionals. **[J and R Green, business, 263851372]**

Some parts already rightly designated as national scenic areas. Geology, wildlife, natural resources, dairy farming, forestry and wind resources all make it important, quite apart from the natural beauty of the area. **[Anon, individual, 263946389]**

Over a sixth of the area is already designated for nature conservation at a national or international level with a third of Scotland's salt marsh. Over half of the area is recognised for its landscape quality through National, regional or local designations. It contains a distinctive historical record from the neolithic period through to the artists and creators of today. It has some of the earliest sites for Christianity in Scotland and a rich sea-based history from the iron age, through the Viking period to the coming of the railways. **[Anon, organisation, 265105801]**

The close and longstanding relationship between landscape, nature, land use and community development, together with almost continuous habitation of the coastal strip for at least 6,000 years, have intertwined to create a unique identity in Galloway. This is evidenced by the overlap within the proposed

boundary of natural and cultural designations, contrasting sharply with the areas outside. **[Anon, organisation, 264672763]**

Yes overall, despite recognising a degree of variability of quality inevitable in such an extensive area. The combination of cultural and natural interest is very important. Also the sheer diversity of interest and the range of challenges makes the area an excellent testbed for developing responses to the nature and climate crises. **[APRS and SCNP, organisation, 264341544]**

It is unique, but under such pressure from renewables and agriculture. I hate to imagine how many archaeological sites are damaged every year here. **[Warren Sanders, business, 260671471]**

Yes, I do think the options presented in Table 1 meet the legislative conditions for designation for the following reasons:

- i. The Galloway Hills are of exceptional landscape and scenic quality, and the views on a clear day from the summit of The Merrick or any other of the high Southern Upland range, give breath-taking expansive views of seemingly almost endless mountain and hill ranges disappearing far into the distance, giving the scale and enormity of the Southern Upland hill range an incredible perspective, and this is rightly expressed by Mountaineering Scotland as “Nationally significant and popular Merrick range, and other Galloway Hills to its south”;
- ii. The Southern Upland Way long-distance coast to coast walking route navigates from Portpatrick on the west coast of The Rhins, through and over the Southern Upland range and is rightly heralded by NatureScot as “one of Scotland’s Great Trails”. To have this included in the Galloway National Park is a real bonus;
- iii. A large part of the region is designated as UNESCO Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, exemplifying the natural and cultural heritage of the region. However, this designation does not bring with it the same level of landscape protection and guaranteed annual funding that National Park designation will bring, but with UNESCO Biosphere being significant partnership to the bid, is another real bonus to National Park status;
- iv. Coastal footpaths have also already been established around The Rhins and are in the process of consultation extending along the Solway Coast. These will be another bonus for the National Park with stunning scenery, amazing wildlife and distinctive history, a benefit the local economy by bringing visitors;
- v. The whole region, from the Ayrshire coast, The Rhins, Loch Ryan, the Solway Coast, the Galloway Hills Regional Scenic Area and Wild Land Area, the wooded valleys and glens are all rich in birdlife, wildlife and natural beauty. There are at least five RSPB reserves in the region, National Nature Reserves, the UK’s biggest Local Nature Reserve at Wigtown Bay, Scottish Wildlife Trust reserves, community and privately owned nature reserves, and numerous other places where wildlife finds a niche. The latest State of Nature report reveals catastrophic declines in wildlife across Scotland are ongoing.

At present, one in nine species are threatened with national extinction. In recognition of this, the Scottish Government has outlined its ambition to “strengthen the leadership role of Scotland’s National Parks for nature recovery

and just transition to net zero”. RPSB Scotland strongly supports the creation of this overarching purpose for Scotland’s National Parks. RSPB Scotland are also urging the Scottish Government to bring forward National Park reforms while fulfilling its commitment to designate a new National Park before the end of this parliament in 2026. In doing so, building on the positive direction our National Parks are moving in, these areas can play a significant role in halting biodiversity loss, tackling the climate emergency and making a significant contribution to meeting the international 30 by 30 commitment;

- vi. The region is rich in cultural, historic and archaeological interest too, from headland lighthouses, World War II historic relics, historic stone circles and cairns, Neolithic remains and archaeological remains;
- vii. The Galloway International Dark Sky Park is Scotland’s and the world’s first ever designated and is a Gold Tier status. This is of national and international importance, and the DSP have recently announced plans for a new DSP Visitor Centre at Clatteringshores in the heart of Galloway. This is yet another bonus for National Park designation. **[Anon, individual, 258788307]**

PARTIALLY

The outstanding national importance of Galloway’s natural and cultural heritage – as highlighted in the appraisal report and consultation paper – is not in doubt and is a crucial part of why the area has been successfully selected as the preferred candidate for new national park status. However, many areas of Scotland could make a similar claim and whether the importance is outstanding is subjective. **[Scottish Land & Estates, Organisation, 264482166]**

The natural heritage of the area is quite unique within Scotland. The coastline and marine areas are particularly rich and scenic. The Machar however is severely depleted and requires restoration. The hills, due to their exposure and low snow fall, have rare and unique plant assemblages only found elsewhere in much higher mountains further north. These hill habitats are however depleted and require large scale restoration. The area has native wooded river and burn valleys and loch edges which are important habitats. These are however fragmented and require landscape scale projects to reconnect them.

The cultural heritage of the area is also quite unique for Scotland but does require coherent policies to emphasise and promote. **[Anon, individual, 260586396]**

The area proposed for designation is of national importance; however the natural heritage and scenic landscape quality of the area is currently vulnerable to commercial pressures of intensive dairy farming and forestry activities. Some action is necessary to conserve these which needs to be backed up by legislation and finance. **[Anon, household, 262827034]**

The combination of cultural and natural interest is strong, and National Park designation should encourage land management practices that improve the natural interest of some areas e.g. commercial forestry. The sheer diversity of interest and the range of challenges makes the area an excellent testbed for developing responses to the biodiversity and climate crises. **[Scottish Countryside Rangers Association, organisation, 264174541]**

Most or all of Scotland is of ‘outstanding national importance’. It is perhaps

only the choice of UNESCO that separates Galloway from other areas of beautiful Scotland. **[Geoff and Cath Monk, household, 264380226]**

NO

I do not see this area as being any more significant than other areas of Scotland. **[Anon, individual, 261150880]**

More than half (52.75%) of respondents said no, while 24.18% said yes, and 23.08% said partially. There were several different comments to the question. Overall, we feel that this question is misplaced and misleading. Where respondents have said no, it is clear that it is because they are against the proposal of the National Park, and not because they feel their area does not have strong natural and cultural heritage.

Most respondents commented that they believed the natural and cultural heritage of Galloway was one of the most diverse in Scotland and that this did in fact make it distinctive.

But this was followed by many comments stating that this heritage was a result of its reputation as an area of agricultural production, that produces much of our dairy, beef and lamb and which is well looked after by farmers and land managers. **[NFUS, organisation, 264371455]**

It may be that Galloway National Park could meet the criteria for designation, but this isn't in itself a reason for doing so. **[Anon, business, 263860141]**

[Redacted] does not consider that any of the three options meet the stringent legislative conditions for a National Park designation as set out in the Act. We do not believe that the totality of the area encompassed by Option 3 can all be characterised as of "outstanding national importance" as required by condition 2(a) of the Act. Turning to condition 2(b) of the Act, locations within the region, particularly areas within Options 1 and 2, undoubtedly have distinctive character and identity, but these generally coincide with existing designations and the area(s) proposed to be designated as National Park do not have a distinctive character and coherent identity as a whole. The larger area(s) encompassed by each of the 3 options are disparate, consisting of urban hubs and townships, high and low intensity farming, forestry, existing and consented commercial development, including a number of wind farms, and various natural and cultural designations. These numerous, varied and separated designations highlight the disparity and mixed character of the region. **[Anon, business, 264459949]**

There are certainly individual features across each of the three areas identified that are of national importance and which are already protected by existing policies and designations, however it is difficult to make a case that the importance of these individual features define any of the areas identified as potentially being part of a new National Park. With particular regard to Area 1, a significant portion of the land is comprised of the Galloway Forestry Park, a commercial forestry plantation. The population density may be small but as an active commercial forestry plantation it is not wild, distinctive or generally remote. While the consultation document notes that a significant proportion of Area 1 is covered by local landscape designations these are clearly not of national importance nor constitute a case for designation as a National Park. **[Anon, business, 264653661]**

There are some superb genuine natural bits of landscape - Silver Flowe, the Mull, Rhinns west coast geology, Cairnsmore of Fleet; cultural heritage obviously focuses on Early Medieval religious sites - Whithorn, New Abbey, Glen Luce Abbey and the like. Each is outstanding in its own right and groups of some can be seen as of national importance. Outstanding National importance? Knowing just how much had to go into designating Hadrians Wall for WHS status I'm not sure that realistically we can boast ONI. Sorry. However, there are thousands (certainly several hundreds) of designated prehistoric sites especially around the coast - the probable Iron Age forts.

Many of these are already under serious threat from both natural coastal and human erosion, the latter especially on the south Machars where caravan sites also favour coastal areas. Primarily it's a landscape of heavily farmed or afforested ground. Whilst these should be being better managed for nature it is not likely to lead to the area being considered as of 'outstanding national importance' - there remains little genuine natural heritage. What we have that is should be better cared for, and farming especially needs to give more to nature. I know farmers say that they know their land best. True but best to them is most likely to reflect profit in monetary terms not environmental or climate related. There are a few exceptions, the others need encouragement and funding to change and, more likely, governmental legislation not NP advice. **[Anon, individual, 261704617]**

ii. that the area has a distinctive character and coherent identity

Table 8 - responses to whether the area has a distinctive character

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 203 | 46% |
| No | 93 | 21% |
| Partially | 74 | 17% |
| - | 75 | 17% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Why?

Summary

A little under half of respondents agreed that the area has a distinctive character and coherent identity, with around a fifth of respondents disagreeing. Roughly a further sixth of respondents felt that the area partially fits this description.

Some people suggested that the character of the area had changed or was changing as a result of people (primarily younger people) leaving and others, largely retired people, moving in. Others pointed to a diversity of identities within the proposal area, rather than a single unitary identity – although this point was made both in favour of and against the area meeting the legislative conditions. Several opponents argued that the larger proposal area was too big to contain a coherent identity.

Many responses, particularly among those who partially agreed, pointed to commercial forestry, renewables, and farming as being significant influences over the area's identity.

Those in agreement argued that the area had a clear cultural history, citing in evidence a range of factors including local industry, literary figures, archaeological features, historical monuments, dialects, and vernacular architecture. The diversity and beauty of the area's landscape was also prominent, featuring in roughly a quarter of responses.

Sample quotes

YES

[Redacted] considers that the area(s) identified, particularly Option 3, all have a distinctive character and coherent identity. **[Anon, organisation, 265106653]**

The distinctive character and coherent identity of Galloway depends on its cultural heritage. As a geographic area, Galloway is diverse with hills, coasts, and farmland, with a large variety of settlements. What links the area is the historic identification of the area as Galloway, and that this has been somewhat separate from the rest of Scotland. This sense of a Galwegian identity has deep historical roots but is very much still evident today. **[Historic Environment Scotland, organisation, 264449918]**

Local Scots is still widely spoken, and I believe that there is distinct local humour and way of expressing ideas. Part of this curiously is reflected in the fact that there are still very local differences - yet within this overall frame. Socially, the importance of agriculture, traditional pursuits and common history (including the importance of military service) brings rich and poor together. This is under threat for various reasons, including the loss of attachment to the Kirk, the decline of traditional pursuits and the loss of local opportunities for the rural young. **[Anon, individual, 260472174]**

The area forms a coherent biogeographic unit influenced by underlying geology, topography and river drainage systems, with a rugged mountainous core, an extensive periphery of forest, woodland, arable land and pasture, and a varied coastline. It is a region often overlooked from much of the rest of Scotland. This has led to a distinct cultural and historic tradition of independence. **[Anon, household, 264387240]**

Yes it has, but within the areas, there are differences, for example the Rhinns is very different in terms of character, from, say New Galloway. We think people are surprised with the range of offerings, physically, economically, socially and structurally. Making it a diverse, fascinating place to visit. **[Brian Henderson, household, 261217253]**

Having been to all the national parks in the UK I can say that each has something to offer that the other do not. The distinctiveness that the proposed area (particular area three) offers is the opportunity to experience the wild coastline with its sheltered bays, its gentle countryside over the Machairs to the rolling Galloway Mountains. This combination of landscapes is not found elsewhere in other national parks. The range of biodiversity from the flocks of Geese on Wigtown Bay, the sea duck on Loch Ryan to the cliffs at the Mull of Galloway full with birds in the spring is not found in other national parks and not to forget the

enchancing woodlands of oak filled with the sounds of Pied Flycatcher, Wood Warbler and Redstarts in the spring. **[Anon, individual, 258830504]**

The areas presented are steeped in history with a distinct cultural characteristic. Options 1 and 2 provide the best coherence in a more traditional sense blending the uplands to the coast, however option 3 does not detract from the overall value and provides a broader geographic inclusion as well as settlements and opportunities to address some of the deteriorated natural habitats and communities from past industrial activities. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

Both the people and landscape are as varied as the seasons with each area having their own local culture and geography in their own right. I would say that the area is not entirely coherent in identity as there are many distinct communities in each parish and it would be a slight shame to brush the whole area with such a broad brush when each individual communities identity deserves to be recognised in their own right. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

PARTIALLY

The region is so large that I don't believe it is right to claim there is a 'coherent identity'. Rather, there are a myriad of amazing identities within each community, village and town of Dumfries and Galloway. We are a map of distinctive characters, rather than one alone, which I believe is all the more reason for the National Park to be built here. **[Anon, individual, 261310025]**

The contradiction is that this is a very diverse area both culturally and naturally, but it is this mosaic of ecosystems and culture that makes it a unique entity. **[Anon, business, 264355477]**

The area comprises a very wide variety of landscapes, although these are all unified by their proximity to, and relationship with, the Solway and the wider Irish Sea. It could be considered as a large landscape unit encompassing the south facing slopes and summits of the Galloway hills, which gives it a coherent geographic logic, albeit one that includes very varied landscape types. **[Anon, household, 262827034]**

In addition to our cultural and natural heritage the identity of the area is built upon farming and forestry which has been ignored. **[Anon, business, 264569282]**

NO

I think there are areas within Galloway which have a distinctive character, but collectively this area is far away from the 'coherent identity' claimed. The statement for Stranraer from the Option 2 column sums this up. It is being included within the proposed boundaries not because of its outstanding cultural identity or character, but because its inclusion 'could help support economic recovery'. The worst possible outcome for any area would be to include it in a National Park (a permanent designation) not because of its key cultural attributes, but because it needs cash chucked at it. **[Kirranrae Farm/Scar Park Aire, business, 264481990]**

As the consultation document identifies in the range of suggested areas which the National Park could cover, the area proposed does not have a single, distinctive or coherent identity. With regard to the larger Area 3, the Draft

Dumfries and Dumfries and Galloway Wind Energy Landscape Sensitivity Study Assessment of Larger Wind Turbines (2024) which identifies 25 different landscape assessment units, which points towards a geographically diverse area, rather than a coherent or distinctive identity that is specifically sought. **[Anon, business, 264653661]**

Mixed wetland, raised beach, planted forestry and ancient forests plus close to 70 % MIXED farmland. That's not a cohesive identity. **[Anon, household, 263480643]**

The area is of distinctive character, largely due to the high quality land management practices undertaking, making Galloway one of the most productive areas of Scotland, both in terms of food and timber production. Similarly the coast line is of distinctive character, along with the climate, which is ideally suited for milk production and grass growth.

While this character is clear, it is less clear that there is a coherent identity. The consultation document itself describes a wide range of land types and use, from the lowlands to the uplands.

In terms of coherence, the mere fact that three proposals are put forward, strongly suggests there is not a clear identity for a specific part of the area. The descriptive wording for each of the three options does not make a clear case for any of them **[Scottish Land & Estates, organisation, 264482166]**

No as anywhere beyond the core area lacks coherence, naturally, socially and economically. The difference e.g. between Castle Douglas, Stranraer, Ballantrae are substantial as is the difference between the more isolated communities in e.g. The Glenkens from those on the Rhinns of Galloway. **[Roger Crofts, individual, 264104472]**

The area has many very different characteristics (large scale farming; hill farming; mass afforestation, coasts, sea, mountains, uplands) which need different strategies and managements. As such there is no single distinctive characteristic or coherent identity - particularly when considering such a large area as proposed. To pretend otherwise is disingenuous. **[Anon, individual, 263406528]**

In my view Galloway definitely does not have a distinctive character and coherent identity. It may have done so historically, perhaps 1500 years ago, but since then many peoples have moved into the area and are still doing so. People living now in the Stewartry have little in common with people living in The Rhins, or the Machars. Long distances mean that people in Dalbeattie will rarely go to Newton Stewart, or New Galloway, or Portpatrick. There is now no longer such a person as a Gallowegian. Tourist visitors from the South of England, the United States or China will see farms, industrial forestry trees, small towns and a mixture of different peoples. With one exception being the Belted Galloway cow, although the many Highland cows may cause confusion... **[Anon, individual, 264386039]**

iii. that designating the area a National Park would meet special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the aims of the National Park are achieved in a co-ordinated way.

Table 9 – responses to whether designation would meet the special needs of the area

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 147 | 33% |
| No | 203 | 46% |
| Partially | 32 | 7% |
| - | 63 | 14% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Why?

Summary

A little under half of respondents felt that designating a National Park would not meet the special needs of the area or be the best way of achieving National Park aims, while one-third felt that it would. A small number of respondents (less than 10%) felt that designating the area a National Park would partially meeting the special needs of the area and achieve the aims of a National Park.

Those who agreed that designating the area as a National Park would meet the special needs of the area argued that Park status would enable more coherent coordination of existing services and administration, particularly over a large area and across administrative boundaries. The need to attract inward investment and sustainable economic development in the area were also identified as being important priorities.

Those who disagreed primarily cited the possible negative impacts of increased tourism and concerns around the administrative arrangements in the area. In particular, opponents argued that the area was already being managed by a collection of existing bodies that could themselves meet the stated aims of the National Park without the need to establish a new entity in the area. Concerns around infrastructure and bureaucracy were also repeated here. Some responses weighed up the potential economic stimulus Park status could bring against possible disruptions to the area's existing businesses and way of life.

Others felt that a National Park would partially meet the special needs of the area, but were concerned that it may not be able to effectively manage what were seen as often competing drivers of economic development, tourism and nature protection.

Sample quotes

YES

Because of the diversity of the area and the complexity of its make up effective planning and a coordinated approach to management is in my view essential.
[Anon, household, 263563138]

Coordinating the Economy Community and Environment strategies across all the upland areas included within the boundaries of arterial routes A76 A77 A713, A75. allows for a community-driven modern National Park that can revitalise upland and coastal areas and also benefit from Gateway towns as well as bringing benefit to Gateway towns as well as coordinating visitor economy based on Day visitor, staycation and worldwide visitors. **[Anon, organisation, 264466464]**

If anything the degree of concern raised during the consultation by the No campaign, if anything further justifies the reasoning for a National Park. The addition of a level of strategic management and co-ordination through a National Park Plan would be a forum for resolving some of these conflicts and encourage different sectors to work together in a co-ordinated manner. This opportunity simply doesn't exist at the moment and there is no reason to suppose that any other mechanism would step in to provide a similar opportunity that carried at least a small element of compulsion for different parties to work together. From being involved in this kind of partnership plan the reporting mechanisms ensure that partners from various sectors contribute to the plan because if not that are held to account in a public forum and to some extent can be 'embarrassed' into contributing to the whole plan. It also creates an opportunity for different sectors to work together in away that they wouldn't do normally to the same extent. However, there has to be some element of compulsion in the form of action planning, apportionment of work and assessment of progress that is compulsory in the way it is reported to Scottish Ministers. A voluntary approach just would not produce the same levels of co-ordinated working and it would be preferable to do nothing than to create false expectations through some form of voluntary partnership. At all costs the thing that must be avoided is a talking shop. **[Anon, individual, 260989174]**

I believe the aims of the national park would consider the existing work which has been done with relevant organisations and create additional capacity to work more closely together. **[Anon, business, 262020877]**

At present the area is fragmented, whilst the work of the GSA Biosphere has started a process of recognising and valuing the wider geographic area it would benefit from an additional designation that coherently drew together all the individual assets that we have in the south west of Scotland under one designation that could maximise the appeal and benefits not just for local residents and communities but for visitors and businesses. the area and its landscape and nature desperately need investment to avoid deterioration and loss. A national park would bring this focus and investment. **[Anon, individual, 264267994]**

Being designated a National Park will provide funding which will support a skilled workforce who can coordinate and put into practice the aims of the National Park offering a range of environmental, social, and economic benefits. These should include enhanced conservation efforts, promoting sustainable land management, raising awareness and education both within local communities and by promoting sustainable tourism and providing economic development including jobs for local people and an enhanced economic environment for business in a managed and sustainable way. **[Anon, individual, 259755497]**

This area is currently subject to the most intense pressure for large-scale land use change (afforestation, agricultural intensification, renewable energy development) anywhere in rural Scotland. This process desperately requires steering in a direction that maintains and if possible enhances its remarkable and under-appreciated qualities and reverses much of the damage already inflicted. Local communities want, and deserve, more of a say in the way that the area evolves. A national park and associated statutory NP Plan is the only available means through which to ensure that multiple public sector partners can agree a binding shared agenda which, in cooperation with private land owners, businesses and communities, can address these challenges and bring people together to help shape the region's future. **[Anon, household, 264387240]**

PARTIALLY

If the designation does indeed bring in money, whilst supporting local wildlife conservation and communities as promised then I would agree. There is much need for local income generation to support the increasing infrastructure and care costs the region has experienced. If it could also provide long term jobs (Not just seasonal) for local people to begin saving up money to buy their own place that has been protected for them then that would also be great.

None the less I could not say that it would be the best option. As that entirely depends on the execution and long term funding of the park. If the Park fails to meet the needs of local people or bring in the promised revenue then I would have to disagree and say that the GNPA could accidentally be to the detriment of the areas specific needs. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

Environment, biodiversity and climate change needs can be a focus of a national park, but my concern is that the 'easy win' of further development in tourism visitors and the consequent negative impact on salaries and house prices will be the actual economy driven priority of a national park authority over and above the environmental needs. **[Anon, individual, 264386039]**

National Parks focus on conservation and tourism. The latter being the only real income generator. As stated in 1b the economic engines of our region are being overlooked. The consultation has not truly articulated the special needs of our region. Socio-Economic development is required and seasonal income created through tourism is only part of the solution. We also need to encourage professional businesses to establish in our region and I share the concern of some that a National Park, if established incorrectly, could inhibit growth. **[Anon, business, 264569282]**

NO

No, I do not believe that the traditional focus and activities of National Parks are what this region needs. We would like the National Park brand, for economic reasons, but we need a much more economically based delivery model than that which is provided via the National Park framework. **[Anon, business, 263860141]**

Absolutely no. I think this has been ill conceived. As a student of Rural Economics there are so many ways of stimulating the rural economy in this area, some of which is already happening. The sustainable energy production in the area means that there are long term job roles in technical subjects giving

good wages. Constrain this ability to diversify business or employment and you stifle any areas ability to recover itself. **[Anon, individual, 264477446]**

Although there needs to be some co-ordination, special needs can be very local and might be ignored in the interests of a national agenda. **[Anon, individual, 263946389]**

A NP is not a single issue designation. A NP can be designated for natural heritage, landscapes or cultural/historical heritage. All worthwhile. But sadly, all of the aims and objectives surrounding these qualifying interests are compromised once economics comes into play. And because the economic opportunities arise on the back of a NP designation, these opportunities are not developed thoughtfully or in a considered manner - they are kneejerk. The whole project becomes a gold rush. It happened in the Cairngorms, it happened at Loch Lomond and it happened in the Lake District. **[Ed Robinson, individual, 261716180]**

The majority of the proposed park is already managed by Dumfries and Galloway Council. While areas to the north are located in East and South Ayrshire, all three local authorities have a long history of working together, notably with the establishment of the Biosphere and identification of the Dark Sky Park. The stated aims of the National Park designation can already be adequately met by the authorities that already exist and the powers that they already hold. The formation of a new body could potentially increase costs and undermine existing working relationships. **[Anon, business, 264653661]**

Please see my previous answers. The special needs of the area are great but the proposals for this Park involve, as I have explained, too many contradictions, not least between the desire to retain its special but undramatic character and to increase substantially the number of tourists, and between increasing tourism based essentially (even in the case of people using cycles) on car use. The opportunities envisaged for tourists (e.g. cycling), camping and walking would not allow real economic spending or the creation of many permanent, skilled jobs. The proposals for a National Park do not seem to recognise the importance of improving the towns, especially Castle Douglas and Dumfries (and perhaps Stranraer), in their appearance and facilities (including the quality of their hotels) so as to be attractions in themselves (as well as jumping off places into the countryside) so as allow a longer tourist season and create skilled employment. To achieve this, without depending entirely on cars and heavy goods vehicles, also requires rail communication. It also requires the avoidance of appalling and irremediable planning errors, such as the building of a gigantic, late-night Tesco's on the edge of, and main point of entry into, the "Food Town". This is the sort of development which is incompatible with a National Park. **[Anon, individual, 260472174]**

Q5b Do you have any additional comments on Table 4-1 which might be relevant to the consideration of the geographic area?

Summary

This question received notably limited engagement and as such few themes can be drawn from the responses. Many participants chose to reiterate points made in response to previous questions.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

I would support a very small park to begin with: just the Galloway Forest Park and the Cairnsmore of Fleet NNR, and the rivers and lochs (and their floodplains and buffers) which flow from here. (i.e. the GSAB core). But also map the GSAB buffer as being a zone where National Park funding could be used.

Galloway needs serious investment in the areas surrounding the National Park, (improving roads, bus transport, footpaths, carparks etc; and enforcing environmental regulations on pollution and those damaging rivers) before a National Park is announced. **[Anon, individual, 264255261]**

The contribution of cultural heritage, and the historic environment within that, to the significance of the area is not adequately addressed in Table 4-1. This suggests that it is not a significant part of the evidence for the creation of a new National Park in this area. However, it is our view that cultural heritage significantly contributes to the area's outstanding national importance and its distinctive and coherent character and identity. **[Historic Environment Scotland, organisation, 264449918]**

We agree that including Stranraer would be helpful for economic regeneration. We are unclear as to the logic of including Dalbeattie in Option 2 but not Castle Douglas. Both towns are in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbrightshire. **[The Southern Uplands Partnership, organisation, 264362329]**

OPPONENTS

The intention to contemplate the inclusion of THREE Local Authorities seems questionable **[Alan Johnson, individual, 261391885]**

Again I stress that Girvan and ideally SA be excluded. And none of this "Gateway" nonsense. More confusion. **[Bill Matthews, individual, 257592443]**

UNDECIDED

It is important to recognise the rich diversity through the ages. From pre-Roman 'Iron Age' identities, newly discovered Roman influences around Ayrshire, the Viking and Brythonic/Gaelic influence, Celtic Christianity and its links with Northumbrian monasteries at Lindisfarne and Durham, the Dark Ages and Arthurian context of Strathclyde and Rheged, and finally the part played by Robert the Bruce (born in Turnberry, baptised at Crossraguel) as he waged his early guerilla warfare from a base in the Galloway hills. A supportive National Park, and a comprehensive LIDAR survey could lead to more amazing discoveries raising the tourism potential even further. **[Scotia Sea Planes Ltd, business, 264688078]**

Only to reflect the points highlighted about the inclusion of the Marine environment and the necessity to reflect these within the table for further consideration. The inclusion of the marine 3mile limit would add a new element to the new national park and provide a focus and raise awareness of the importance of the Solway Firth and its habitats. [Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]

BOUNDARY CONSIDERATIONS

Q6a Do these principles provide a reasonable basis for drawing up a detailed National Park boundary for the area?

Table 10 – breakdown of responses relating to the detailed boundary

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 183 | 41% |
| No | 149 | 33% |
| Partially | 51 | 11% |
| - | 62 | 14% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q6b Do you have any suggestions for changes to these principles which would be specifically required for drawing up a boundary for a National Park in this part of Scotland?

Summary

Respondents were presented with a set of principles which would govern boundary definition for a National Park, e.g. a boundary would seek wherever possible to follow easily distinguishable and permanent natural features, using existing administrative boundaries where these align with such features, and should either wholly include or wholly exclude settlements.

Several responses focused on landscape features and their suitability for use developing a boundary. Such responses were primarily made by supporters of the proposal. Several participants suggested that rivers and watersheds would make logical landscape boundaries, however some also cautioned against using rivers due to their propensity to move over time. The complexity of drawing up a Park boundary at the coast or foreshore was a particular focus. In particular responses touched on what agreed reference points should be used at the coast, as well as the merits and practicalities of extending the Park extent further into the marine environment.

Several responses suggested that boundaries should avoid splitting communities, farms, land parcels, and other smaller administrative units such as school catchments and council wards. Others also proposed that the Park utilise existing designation or administrative boundaries in drawing up its extent.

A number of alternatives to a rigidly bounded, contiguous Park area were proposed, including developing interlinked but separate areas, extending Park

operations beyond the boundary (or using a ‘fuzzy’ boundary), and allowing the Park extent to develop over time.

Some specific boundary recommendations were put forward, such as including or excluding certain settlements or features.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Where the extent of a unit of land management is clear, and reasonably permanent, e.g. a parcel of semi-natural woodland or saltmarsh, it should be clearly either included or excluded from the designation area. **[Anon, household, 262827034]**

Principles bullet point 4 makes no reference to community land ownership or that held by third sector organisations. For consistency, the principle should only refer to land ownership or tenure “... generally not be a determining element for the National Park boundary because this may be subject to change.”

Principles bullet point 6 seems to assume that the feature should lie within the National Park. However, that could lead to features being included within the Park which contextually may be more appropriate to be out with the area. For example, a stretch of road may be suitable for defining part of the boundary but at either side of that stretch be out with the Park. At some time in the future, issues of maintenance of the road or its verges may subject to debate. Similarly, a hedge or fence which constitute a boundary of a field may be the responsibility of the manager of that field who otherwise has no land within the Park.

We note that no reference is made to the definition of the coastline within the principles. Whilst recognising that the proposal is for a terrestrial and not marine park some reference to how the coastal boundary would be delimited, and reference to the adjacent mud and sand flats, would be appropriate. **[James Hutton Institute, organisation, 264562120]**

Concern has been expressed locally that, particularly with option 1, some communities may be cut in half or left on the periphery. I acknowledge the principles outlined above seem to preclude this but nevertheless, the concern remains. Care should be taken to prevent this and any boundary should take into full consideration any existing boundaries. For example, the “Glenkens” area around New Galloway, Balmaclellan, St Johns Town of Dalry and Carsphairn. I doubt very much that this area would appear on any administrative map, but it does have local significance. Bodies such as Glenkens and District Trust (a locally well-regarded body run entirely by volunteers) that administers community benefit funding from windfarm projects operates with the boundaries of the Glenkens. It would be absurd if the National Park boundary transected existing boundaries such as this. I imagine there are other similar locally significant boundaries. **[Anon, individual, 264235377]**

It should not divide primary school catchment areas unless there is some other overwhelming reason. **[The Doune of Rothiemurchus, business, 264643529]**

We generally agree that these principles provide a reasonable basis. However, the “easily distinguishable” feature of the first one would seem

more difficult to apply in the marine sphere if interpreted as meaning easily visually distinguishable.

A critical issue not addressed in the consultation questions is the drawing of a coastal boundary. Whilst MLWS is tentatively put forward, this is not fully explained given the range of boundaries in place for existing designations (see the Scottish Government's amended SEA, December 2024). A justification might be that a low water mark is where a local authority's administrative boundaries extend, though in a small number of cases in Scotland, a local government area has been extended by legislation around a port or harbour into the surrounding sea beyond the low water mark.

Selecting the MLWS mark also sits uncomfortably with the three NSA boundaries which extend further out and it seems hard to say why those boundaries might not be matched by that of a National Park. The marine boundaries of other designations could also be considered for application within the new National Park, for example the Solway Firth SPA. A report published by BMF proposes being ambitious on boundaries and taking opportunities to unite the land and sea and bring more cohesion. Whilst designation requires a mapped boundary, in practice, fuzzy 'Management' boundaries often do a good job for the vast majority of interests and an NPA should be able to engage with marine issues beyond the low water mark that affect the coast. **[APRS and SCNP, organisation, 264341544]**

OPPONENTS

It would if it was clear that it had been used. I would have thought clearly defined boundaries might have corresponded more to main roads (which the Galloway Forest Park broadly does?) That would be essentially north of the A75, from the Dee to the Cree, north to Clatteringshaws and Glentroll. An international route through a park of any sort seems incongruous to say the least.

In reality, as the area doesn't need a national park, the question of boundaries is invalid. We know what is where without boundaries. **[Anon, business, 258896360]**

This principle is geared towards a one-off designation of an encompassing area. This does not allow the flexibility of creating a group of interlinked but separate areas as a National park with a boundary that may develop over time. **[Anon, business, 260199676]**

The boundary should also take account of differing needs and industries/ economic activity. If large scale efficient farming is to lie outside the Park then that should be a boundary consideration. Similarly, how to consider afforested areas, areas for future large-scale renewables etc. The boundary cannot simply be geographic (human and physical) as suggested in the bullets above. **[Anon, individual, 263406528]**

Ownership should not be a consideration as long as all of a land holding is either in or out.

Problem of having watercourses as boundaries - apart from naturally moving water courses are you talking of the line of river/stream or the catchment? **[Anon, individual, 261704617]**

UNDECIDED

Point 1 - wherever possible the boundary should follow an easily distinguishable and permanent natural feature.

Agree with point 2 - where administrative boundaries follow such features, they should be adopted. This should reduce confusion over what areas are under which control.

Agree with point 3 - towns and villages and, where possible, their surrounding communities, should normally either be wholly included within or excluded from the National Park.

Disagree with point 4 - the nature and location of public or private land ownership in the area should generally not be a determining element for the National Park boundary because this may be subject to change, but consideration should be given to the potential impact of the National Park boundary on land management operations. Although land can and does change ownership many landowners will retain land for generations. And if it was sold land agents tend to group land into blocks that have the same access and designations for easier management. Splitting land ownership so one owner is both in and out of the park causes administrative difficulties for no need.

Disagree with point 5 - transient features such as field boundaries, paths or roads, all of which could change in the future, should be avoided, where possible. Roads are NOT transient features. In the proposed area there has not been a permanent major road change. Roads are fixed points given that the land either side usually has different owners and therefore even simple passing places, or more complex widening schemes require a compulsory purchase act to achieve. Roads are the best feature to use as they are easy for everyone to identify, and it requires little map reading knowledge.

Disagree with point 6 - where watercourses are used, they should be wholly included in the National Park although consideration should be given to the dynamic nature of many watercourses which generally make these features unsuitable for the definition of legal boundaries. Water courses throughout the world are used as legal boundaries. The only land border that Scotland includes the Rivers Tweed and Esk as part of the defined area. Using water courses as a legal boundary may have problems when there is large scale shift in the water course, but these are unusual in the UK. Water courses in the UK unlike many Africa countries have year-round water flow and as such make them a permanent natural feature. Landowners that use water courses as legal boundaries are accustomed to ebb and flow of small areas of bank and accept that over time the losses can be as great as the gains. Traditionally the legal boundary would only extend to the centre of the water course and that should be same here.

Disagree with point 7 - the boundary should be prepared on Ordnance Survey maps at 1:10,000 scale and should be accompanied by a written description. The scale should 1:5000 or smaller so that exact details can be made out and easy to follow features are not used. **[Anon, business, 264569282]**

The area is really divided historically and culturally by rivers and seas so it would make the most sense to use these features for the final boundary. If the view is to either include or exclude towns then I would support including them so that local communities can best benefit but also to help absorb the influx of

visitors which much of the area will struggle to accommodate in terms of food and amenities. [Anon, individual, 257733205]

FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

Q7 Are there any further existing functions and powers from recent legislation that would be beneficial for this Park Authority to be able to draw on and why?

Summary

Respondents were presented with a summary of the general functions and powers available to National Parks through existing legislation.

Those in support of a National Park focused on the opportunities around partnership working, influencing policy frameworks and nature-based solutions. Some suggested giving priority to protecting the natural environment over promoting tourism, while others noted the importance of effective governance and clear mission parameters. Many were supportive of the powers as stated in the proposal, including enforcement of EIA and SEA, windfarm proposal, and development controls. Several respondents also sought specific powers relating to visitor management and irresponsible behaviour.

Those who opposed focused on the duplication of powers, concerned that a Park was unnecessary, increased regulation and would result in a disconnect between the National Park Authority and local input or management. The desire to rework and innovate existing agencies was seen as more preferable than creating that innovation through a National Park.

Several respondents (including some in favour of, as well as opposed to, a National Park) highlighted the Regional Land Use Partnership as an important mechanism for facilitating better landuse planning.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

A new National Park should be involved in the further development of Regional Land Use Frameworks and the role that these might play in targeting future public support for agriculture and forestry and potentially private “green finance” and the deployment of nature-based solutions in tackling environmental challenges. This could be linked to the development of the Park Plan for the whole National Park area... [APRS and SCNP, organisation, 264341544]

For the new National Park to be successful, strong governance, expert land management, and a joined-up design approach are essential. Strengthened landscape management plans will play a critical role, bringing together key stakeholders and setting a clear framework for shared objectives. While the National Park Authority has a statutory duty to prepare a Management Plan, there is currently no legal requirement for implementation and as a result, often these plans fail to drive meaningful action. If Management Plans became the statutory framework for all public investment in National Parks, it would ensure more commitment from landowners and public bodies, enabling real delivery without requiring additional funding... [Landscape Institute, organisation, 264374808]

It would be useful for a NP to have a clearly demarcated role in supporting the RLUP and to be encouraged to expand the South of Scotland RLUF developments into Ayrshire.

The NP should be a consultee able to advise on the content of the whole farm plans that will be required as a condition of future agricultural support payments. This would help to encourage and embed a more consistent approach to nature friendly farming, ensuring compatibility with delivery of the NP Plan and creating opportunity to link activity between neighbouring landowners.

The NP should also be a consultee for Scottish Forestry in determining future forestry proposals in the area, helping ensure a balanced approach is taken in considering social, economic, environmental and cumulative impacts.

Estate Land Management Plans are proposed for ownership transfers of over 1000 ha under the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill 2024. Whilst changes of ownership on this scale are not a common occurrence within the proposed area, GSABP would like to see the NP being recognised as a consultee in the development of such plans.

Within the NP area the NP Authority should be given a clear role in working with communities in the development and implementation of Place Plans. **[Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, organisation, 263696458]**

I do think that the first and foremost priority of National Park designation is that of protecting the natural environment (as advocated by support by the John Muir Trust) and livelihoods of the local communities, and that mention of 'providing recreational, sporting activities in the National Park' should not detract from the prime purpose of designation. It is unfortunate that the name 'Park' is often misconstrued as a play park, and I think it is important to keep this differentiation in mind when defining purposes of the National Park and ensure that any requisite 'sporting activities' are the likes of appropriate quiet recreational activities such as cycling, mountaineering, swimming, sailing, rather than speed-boats, zip-wires, off-road motor sport, scrambling or 4x4 driving, which have posed problems and conflict of use in other UK NP's. **[Tony Riden, individual, 263028113]**

As the proposed National Park includes an extensive coastline it would be appropriate for the Park to be a key consultee for the purposes of marine planning. The development of Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs), and the potential role of RLUFs in directing both public funding and private investment, has a clear link to the role of a National Park in developing a Park Plan. Scottish Environment LINK recently published a report prepared by SAC Consulting which outlines how RLUPs could develop following the pilot partnership. **[Scottish Environment LINK, organisation, 264570047]**

Forestry legislation; Nature conservation act; Better enforcement of EIA regulations; Oversight of SEA on relevant plans, policies, strategies, projects etc; Future content of Natural Environment Bill/Act **[Anon, individual, 257560143]**

OPPONENTS

The Regional Land Use partnership, currently being piloted in the South of Scotland would be important to ensure it ties in with other objectives. Many of the aims of the RLUP and Regional Land Use Framework are in line with

National Park aims, therefore it is important not to simply add complexity to this, potentially causing confusion as to which plan has primacy. **[Scottish Land & Estates, organisation, 264482166]**

We believe that the functions and powers that a National Park Authority is striving for can already be found within existing organisations and bodies operating in the region, including the local authority. We strongly believe that a National Park should not have statutory powers of Compulsory Purchase. **[NFUS, organisation, 264371455]**

No. Remember there are already bodies with some or most of these powers, such as SNH under the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act so the proposals will result in overlap and duplication which will waste public bodies time and money. **[Roger Crofts, individual, 264104472]**

I am uncomfortable with the designation of a National Park Authority (NPA). Why is a separate authority necessary when the development of the Park must inevitably cut across the functions of many existing organisations including the local Dumfries and Galloway Council. If an NPA is to be created under Option 3 boundaries for the Park, will D&G Council cease to have any Planning and Building Control department? If not, the work is just being duplicated, and more civil servants are being employed at a time when it is blatantly obvious that the public purse is empty!

Again, this is a restriction of the Government designation of National Parks - they have to be run by an NPA. Wholly new and innovative thinking is required in so many areas of Government and Local Government. With an ever-decreasing proportion of the population actively working and paying taxes, the UK cannot continue to sustain the vast and increasing number of civil servants currently employed.

Perhaps Dumfries and Galloway could break the mould with a completely new and more suitable type of National Park designation, criteria and management structure. That would certainly put the area on the map! **[Anon, business, 260199676]**

UNDECIDED

The powers outlined in 5.1 within the consultation framework provides a suitable breadth of indicative powers and functions that could be utilised by a New National Park. However, the Council recognises that an assessment of the functionality delivered through the local authorities would be required initially to ensure any proposed powers or functions does not duplicate, remove or dilute, conflict or confuse the current statutory powers of the Council.

In addition any powers or functions should align with local aspirations and maximise the benefits for our local communities, businesses and stakeholders. To ensure that any powers assigned align with the emerging legislation around the European Charter of Local Self Government and the proposed Natural Environment Bill. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

I would like to see all local Council admin become the NP administration, together with suitable input from scientists involved in conservation/climate change adaptation etc. It needs to be a NP with a difference - the structures of previous NP's may well be largely inappropriate for the emergency action required. **[Geoff and Cath Monk, household, 264380226]**

If a National Park boundary is adopted which encompasses most or all of the Biosphere area, it would be beneficial if the Park Authority was also the managing body for the Biosphere in that area and the purposes of the Biosphere were also addressed within the functions and powers. Otherwise there is the potential for the Biosphere and National Park aims to conflict – particularly in relation to the encouragement of visitors and provision of facilities. [Abseline LLP, business, 263558927]

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

Q8a Do you agree with the need for a bespoke approach suggested for the planning function for a National Park authority in Galloway?

Table 11 – breakdown of responses relating to the need for a bespoke planning approach

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 148 | 33% |
| No | 158 | 36% |
| Maybe | 45 | 10% |
| Don't Know | 34 | 8% |
| - | 60 | 13% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q8b Looking at the possible options in Box 5-2, how do you think this should work in practice?

Summary

Respondents were provided with a summary of the range of functions and powers available to National Parks in relation to development planning and management. The functions and powers of the two existing National Parks were highlighted, and options presented for bespoke suites of functions and powers that could be maintained by a new National Park.

Responses to this question were highly polarised, with some of those in support of the proposal fearing that without full planning a National Park Authority would be unable to meet its aims. Others in support felt that without some defined planning authority input issues would arise between the local authority plans and the Park plan. Several respondents were in favour of the National Park performing a strategic coordination role in bringing together the local authorities' Local Development Plans (LDPs) or being a statutory consultee on the LDPs.

Those opposing felt strongly that due to the diverse land use and population numbers, moving planning away from local authorities would be unworkable at best, creating more regulation, bureaucracy and costs. They were in favour of the local authorities retaining full planning control.

Those who were undecided echoed the National Park having some planning role, whilst being concerned over complexities of how planning would work within a National Park.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

I think the NPA should be the planning authority, as at LL&T. Otherwise there are overly complex coordination problems between the Park Plan and the local authority LDPs, and then Park objectives are also put at risk by any/all of

- a. local authority failure to complete LDPs
- b. local authorities having differing objectives to the Park's (I have researched in the Peak District NP, and have observed this major problem) and so creating LDP vs NP Plan conflicts
- c. the Park Plan only being one material consideration, to be taken account of, amongst many.

Given the purpose of local authorities - which are not the same as a national park's - the need for a full planning function seems to me very clear. **[Anon, individual, 261907192]**

Strong representation from local people. Sub committees and working groups to inform, involve and to include locals to mitigate risk, manage change and to allay fears. **[Anon, individual, 257567481]**

...Not being the planning authority has specific disadvantages in addition to not being in control of giving guidance and adjusting local policy. It would mean, for example, that the NPA would not have direct control over short term let control areas, nor would it be able to prepare masterplans which can then be approved formally with the intention of speeding up the development process. Also potentially negatively, it would not be able to engage as the planning authority with communities preparing their Local Place Plans, which would be somewhat ironic given that early versions of these were developed in the Trossachs largely supported by LL&T NPA before being incorporated into the Scottish planning system.

The work done by both existing Scottish National Parks on affordable housing has relied heavily on the Park's planning powers to ensure the flow of sites, and the proportion of affordable housing in new build can be properly controlled; only as a planning authority would the new NPA have the ability to set targets above those in NPF4. **[APRS and SCNP, organisation, 264341544]**

I would give Development Plan making powers to any new Park body to ensure without doubt that the two plans are consistent and compatible... If some form of 'call-in' procedure was thought appropriate this would function much better if only non-domestic (e.g. non householder) applications only were subject to the call-in power. This would significantly reduce the administrative burden. There is no need for a National Park Authority in Scotland to end up holding a database including what could turn out to be thousands of records of proposals for house extensions.

A liaison forum would be required to meet with constituent local authority planners on a bi-monthly basis. If the National Park were to have no planning powers I would argue that this would be worse than doing nothing and not having a Park. It would undermine the credibility of the National Park from the very beginning. **[Anon, individual, 260989174]**

For any of this to be effective will require a culture change within the local authority. Having had dealings with one of our MSPs regarding planning issues, they advised me that around 50% of their time is spent trying to resolve problems with local authority planning. From my perspective it appears that because of the existing culture withing planning, that the planning rules are there for those who wish to comply with them. If a developer chooses not to comply, nothing happens. The National Park authority will need the power to act as a strong rudder for the planning process - not simply an opinion that can be ignored on a whim. **[Anon, individual, 264235377]**

We would envisage local authorities retaining most planning powers but that planning decisions would be taken in accordance with the National Park Plan. Local planning authorities would also need to have a positive working relationship with the National Park Authority. We would also expect local communities to have a significant input through the Local Place Plans. **[Anon, household, 264387240]**

It would be helpful if the Park Authority could have an active a role as possible in planning for the area, whilst working in consultation with local planners and other interested parties. This would ensure the aims of the Park are upheld and may put some controls on large scale industrial farming planning, where aims may be at odds with interests of a National Park. **[Anon, individual, 261497122]**

OPPONENTS

As already acknowledged the Galloway region has a hugely different mix of land use and productivity to that of other parks. The need to ensure that agriculture and forestry in particular can continue to deliver economic benefits for the area should be recognised and be paramount in the thinking behind this.

Similarly, as outlined in previous answers the scale and population of the proposed park could be significantly larger than others, with different needs across areas. This is likely to result in a higher burden on planning authorities than has previously been seen.

There are already concerns in rural areas of the suitability of the National Planning Framework (4) for rural settings, it is vital that there are not more barriers to development, which are required in the area to create the jobs and houses which are needed.

Planning is accepted to be an expensive and at times slow process. Additional requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments and other costly reporting could lead to less development if not handled well. Similarly a second authority being involved in the process could make it cumbersome and slow down development, adding to cost and reducing the attractiveness of development. **[Scottish Land & Estates, organisation, 264482166]**

I do not agree with a National Park Designation. Planning already exists at the Local Authority level and if it is not working then that is where effort and

funding should be directed to ensure that planning and development are dealt with efficiently and fairly. Creating another tier of bureaucracy would certainly not be to the benefit of Galloway or anywhere else for that matter. Or an efficient user of public monies. **[Andrew McCornick, individual, 262920479]**

The idea of a parks authority comprised of central belt politicians having statutory consultation powers over my forest management practice is horrific. They do not live here, they do not understand the area, and they should not get a say in what I do. Coming in and managing from the outside is shameful. only emphasised by the fact that local members of the NP committee have to leave the room to discuss planning decisions. The NP certainly can advise if it likes but to say they should have such direct and inscrutable influence over all over organisations and process is just a no go. **[Peter Roe, individual, 259712688]**

We are extremely concerned that a National Park Authority having control over planning would only lead to more difficulties, more bureaucracy and more delays within the system. This is the opposite of what is needed in the area. We do not feel that this is justified in a time of constrained public finances. Instead, planning should look to become more efficient and enabling.

We would prefer if planning was retained within the local authority, but that local planning departments get more resource so they can deliver the needs and aims as set out in their Local Development Plan.

We do believe there are opportunities for the local people and businesses of Galloway to be able to influence decisions on large-scale or significant developments. Overall, we would be concerned that that if planning was to come under the remit of the National Park Authority, that it would not benefit the farming industry and lead to extra cost, delays and regulation. **[NFUS, organisation, 264371455]**

We welcome the recognition in the consultation document that wind farms can play a major role in meeting the aims of the national park. If the Scottish Government remains committed to designating a national park in Galloway, a tailored approach to planning will be necessary to reflect the complexities of managing development within the park boundary while supporting Scotland's net zero ambitions. **[Anon, business, 265116273]**

I strongly believe that there should be no split in planning function between D&G Council and any other body. And that there should be no additional planning restrictions as a result of the National Park branding exercise. The region needs to be encouraged through a period of essential economic growth, particularly in the agricultural and energy industries, and so additional planning delay should be avoided at all cost. The region already struggles to attract development - whether in the form of investment in industry, housebuilding etc. We cannot add another level of complexity to doing business in D&G, which might hinder these opportunities further. **[Anon, business, 263860141]**

UNDECIDED

It should be easy to understand and not overly complex or bureaucratic. The last few years have seeded a lot of mistrust locally in government and statutory power. Whilst I largely agree with the policies as listed above the GNPA must make strides to be open and fair as that is essential for the NP to work. If the policies are felt to threaten the local farming communities in

particular that would create a difficult situation that would only depend local socioeconomic and social divides. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

Given the existing work on the preparation of the Council's next Local Development Plan (LDP3), and to avoid conflict between the Council's LDP3 and any National Park Local Development Plan, the Council proposes that it may not be workable in practice for the proposed National Park to create its own Local Development Plan.

However, the Council would recommend that it works collaboratively with the National Park (and any other Councils within its boundaries) to produce and adopt appropriate planning guidance to allow the land use aims of the National Park to be set out and used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. This could avoid confusion among planning applicants and duplication of services and activities and continue to deliver the planning functions locally with no interruptions on service delivery for customers. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

We need to 'placate' the concerns of NFU/farmers and their legitimate worries regarding planning - albeit change is inevitable as we deal with environmental concerns. Via the NFU it must be possible to bring a significant number of farmers on board with the proposal. **[Geoff and Cath Monk, household, 264380226]**

The park authority should be a statutory consultant for local authorities and not decide planning on its own. **[Anon, household, 264524150]**

Q8c What alternatives should be considered and why?

Summary

Respondents were asked to suggest possible alternative approaches to the functions and powers of a new National Park.

Opponents largely argued that the local authorities should retain full planning control, with a smaller proportion of supporters arguing for the opposite: that the NP become the full planning authority. Some suggested that, if not possessing full planning powers, the Park should be a statutory consultee or have call-in powers over planning applications, or else provide strategic coordination of the LDP and/or Park Plan. There was some consensus over the need to overhaul the planning system more generally, with many suggesting that control at a local level was decreasing. There was a desire to see more collaboration, more joined up working and localised input rather than, as they see it, top-down government control.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

The Galloway National Park proposal offers a unique opportunity to devolve planning decisions to the scale of the landscape and seascape and achieve stronger place-based governance which is less dependent upon historical administrative boundaries.

However, we would support the need for a bespoke planning function if the NPA cannot become the main planning authority. The possible options

for the bespoke planning function (Box 5-2) could easily include links with marine planning through cross-referencing with the Scottish Marine Plan in the National Park Plan; the Park Authority being a key partner and statutory consultee for marine development planning; and the NPA becoming a statutory consultee for marine development management. **[Blue Marine Foundation, organisation, 264634947]**

We feel that the NPA should EITHER be a full planning authority with responsibility for development planning, development management and enforcement within the National Park boundary (i.e. option a under the Act) OR operate 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). In the latter case the NPA would have responsibility for development planning and the ability to call-in significant planning cases.

All existing UK NPAs are planning authorities, and as stated in the consultation document a mechanism to prevent significant negative impacts of development and land use proposals is a requirement of park status. Historically National Parks in the rest of the UK were found to be less effective when they were not planning authorities, leading to changes starting under the Local Government Act 1972, that gave all National Parks in England and Wales full planning powers. **[APRS and SCNP, organisation, 264341544]**

Noting the issues that all three planning authorities have in recruiting planning officers a more integrated and collaborative approach is required that would be good not just for the local authorities but also for the National Park.

A corner stone of this approach could be the NP having a bespoke planning team that both enables it to comment as a statutory consultee but also more importantly a team that covers some of the special functions of a National Park such as biodiversity, landscape, archaeology and place planning. These staff would cover areas that in recent years have been lost by our LA's but are essential if we are going to have a planning system that is about more than just the built environment.

With sufficient capacity the officers employed by the NP could be called upon by LA partners to give professional input to LA planning decision strengthening the partnerships between the different public sector bodies and giving consistency of approach over three planning authority areas. They could also be available to support local planning applicants by doing site visits, that would lead to high quality application, that a more likely to succeed, a service that is largely no longer available. **[Anon, individual, 264470959]**

I would support the National Park Authority recommending a plan and courses of action to local authorities -- but keeping this purely as recommendations rather than requirements. This would help local authorities to think along the lines of the national park but retaining maximum local accountability and freedom. **[Anon, individual, 264061477]**

It might, as suggested, be possible for the National Park to rely on a statutory consultee role, where necessary triggering Ministerial call-in, for development management purposes. How far this would in practice reduce the risk of friction with individual local authorities is unclear.

Even to play the statutory consultee role effectively, the Park Authority would however require the in-house expertise to properly assess the proposed developments. This underlines the need for the planning function (in its broader as well as specific sense) within the National Park to be adequately resourced. In these circumstances it may well be that cost considerations, as well assurance about the achievement of Park purposes, point towards concentrating more of the activity and skills within the Park Authority, and perhaps making at least some of them available to the local authorities on a need basis, as suggested at 8b above. No doubt funding arrangements to permit this could be devised, probably codified through service level agreements. **[Anon, individual, 263548711]**

Regarding the point:

"The large-scale energy and forestry proposals in the area are currently determined by the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit and Scottish Forestry respectively, with the local authority as consultee. These arrangements would not change if the proposed National Park became the planning authority."

...this needs to change; the National Park authority needs to be able to over-rule (and change the grants/tax incentives for) inappropriate Scottish Government determinations on large scale energy and forestry proposals. At present, Galloway's natural environment is being damaged by Scottish Government's strategy. **[Anon, individual, 264255261]**

OPPONENTS

We believe that a more efficient and streamlined planning system must be considered. Anything that adds an extra tier or layer of bureaucracy would not be acceptable to our members. We feel strongly that an unelected board of a National Park Authority should not be able to determine planning applications and should only be a consultee at best.

There should be a stronger focus on using existing frameworks to achieve goals. We think planning applications should be decided on by the local authority and led by the Local Development Plan.

However, we do recognise that the current planning system and department is overburdened and under resourced. This must be rectified. But we do not believe that a National Park would alleviate these problems. **[NFUS, organisation, 264371455]**

A national park should not impose additional, costly planning laws onto farms. Farms grow our food and have enough red tape and costs as it is without a national park imposing more. Further restrictions could put smaller farms in particular out of business. Then what we are left with is big factory farms which goes even more against the key aim of a NP to preserve nature. We should be doing everything we can to support smaller farms, not adding more obstacles, making it harder and harder for them to farm. **[Anon, individual, 264482156]**

The NP just does not need that much power. Galloway is not a playground it is a highly functioning rural economy of forestry and farming. This will not be understood by the NP (I guarantee this) and their views and policies will almost certainly function to reduce the economic potential of Galloway by trying to turn it into something it isn't. **[Peter Roe, individual, 259712688]**

drop the proposals - fund Local Councils properly, including reversing the shortfall of the last few years. The Scottish Government denying the Local elected Councils funding in favour of an unelected quango is just wrong.. Reverse the local council funding cuts No New National Park **[Alan D Brown, individual, 257683801]**

The national planning framework, coupled with local development plans should be sufficient to ensure the planning authority has correct authority to ensure the regions interests are protected. A new local development plan is currently in progress. **[Anon, business, 263860141]**

There are more than enough layers within the local councils. As a refreshing alternative why not make planning much simpler. Give funding to local councils and lobby the Scottish government to change all planning laws **[Shona Wilcock, individual, 261172848]**

None - Planning must continue to be operated by D&G council and MUST NOT be interfered with by additional bureaucratic functions. This will add time and cost to all planning activities, which will burden the local community and businesses. **[Anon, individual, 261150880]**

UNDECIDED

Our preferred options for implementation have been outlined in 8b, but we would reiterate that there is a necessity to ensure that effective collaboration at a local level is critical to ensure the inclusion and prioritisation of local delivery issues. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

Landowners should be met with individually by the GNP authority and given a due chance to express their concerns and have the new policies explained to them to reduce the risk of misinformation and confusion. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

ACCESS, RECREATION AND VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Q9a Do you agree that the National Park should in principle become an access authority for its area?

Table 12 – breakdown of responses relating to the National Park becoming an access authority

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 163 | 36.63% |
| No | 183 | 41.12% |
| Maybe | 35 | 7.87% |
| Don't Know | 17 | 3.82% |
| - | 47 | 10.56% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q9b If not, what other options could be considered and why?

Summary

Noting that the two existing National Parks function as access authorities, respondents were asked to consider whether a new National Park should also have this function. Responses were fairly evenly split between those who favoured a National Park being an access authority and those against, with a smaller number undecided or not offering a view.

Many responses, particularly from those opposing a new National Park, focused on conflict between visitors and land management. Some confusion was evident between the role of access authority and the “right to roam”. Opponents were largely in favour of leaving access issues to existing organisations or local authorities. However, the challenge of resourcing these roles was highlighted by several responses.

Supporters of a new National Park were generally in agreement that the Park should become an access authority, with several responses highlighting the opportunities to promote outdoor recreation, support core paths, and encourage active and sustainable travel. The need to actively manage visitor pressures and have input from local communities was acknowledged by both sides.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Access is a challenge for the existing Local Authorities in the NP area following year on year budget cuts, reduced staffing and increase in issues due to extreme weather events and/or changing land use. National Parks have the potential to play a key role in supporting the public’s access to and enjoyment of nature within Parks. As such, increasing access to nature while ensuring its continued recovery should be a key responsibility of the National Park Authority. Coordination of this by a single body is sensible and will promote a strategic approach to access across the National Park. **[Anon, household, 264387240]**

Important aspects would be:

Promoting recreational access and creating good path infrastructure throughout the new park - this is a key part of public enjoyment.

Promotion and enhancement of active and sustainable transport.

Promotion and enhancement of active travel routes to and within the park. The extent to which this is practical might be a consideration in designation. Support for management through, e.g., sufficiently funded ranger services. **[Paths For All, organisation, 264627239]**

None. The National Park has to be the access authority if it is properly to discharge its statutory purposes. Two considerations are conclusive in this respect:

- i. if part of the intention in designating the Park is to increase visitor numbers, this expansion must be proactively planned, provided for and managed (thereby averting the problems that have arisen through inadequately planned growth in tourism elsewhere); and
- ii. concerns about the potential impact of increased recreational access are fundamental to many farmers' hostility to the National Park proposal. Assurance that the Park would actively manage access (both through infrastructure provision and rangers on the ground) is vital if this anxiety is to be assuaged and at least some of the resulting resistance overcome. The fact that local authorities are currently too stretched financially to play this role must make the prospect of having a body committed to doing so genuinely appealing to all but the most die-hard access resisters. **[Anon, individual, 263548711]**

OPPONENTS

The Southern Upland Way is already managed jointly by the local authorities it sits in. Why add another level to it? Surely this would just give the local authorities another excuse to cut jobs and put more people out of work? **[Anon, business, 264482156]**

As a substantial part of the area is farmed I think there will be an increase in conflict between planning and farming, the notion that opening up our area as amenity land will do nothing for our wildlife and food security. **[Anon, household, 263552810]**

We already have the right to roam. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code should be homogeneous throughout Scotland and not differentially applied in specific areas. **[Anon, individual, 261179313]**

Only if this is done through proper local accountability, through the regional authority, albeit to a national standard for similar parks across the country. **[Anon, individual, 264435641]**

UNDECIDED

Ownership should not be a consideration as long as all of a land holding is either in or out.

It should be an advisory to local authorities. [Anon, household, 264524150]

This could be divisive for the farming community (and others). Nobody wants decisions on core paths/extended camping being thrust on them without approval. But existing core paths work well so it depends how the board react to local sensitivities. [Anon, business, 264060553]

Q9c Do you agree with the suggested approach to core path planning?

Table 13 – breakdown of response relating to the approach to core path planning

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|------------|-------|------------|
| Yes | 145 | 33% |
| No | 173 | 39% |
| Maybe | 46 | 10% |
| Don't Know | 25 | 6% |
| Blank | 56 | 13% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q9d If not, what other options could be considered and why?

Summary

The survey noted that the three local authorities each has prepared a core path plan, and suggested that these could be reviewed jointly with a new National Park Authority, potentially with the National Park Authority developing a new core path plan if the largest option for the National Park was chosen.

A third of respondents supported the suggested approach, with nearly two-fifths opposed, and the remainder undecided or not offering a view.

The main alternative proposed by opponents of a new National Park was to maintain core path arrangements as they are and for responsibility to remain with local councils or other organisations.

Supporters of a new National Park generally had less to offer in terms of alternatives, with some responses suggested that core path planning was a natural role for the National Park Authority an inherent aspect of an access authority. A need to improve maintenance and signage, as well as involving local communities in core path planning and strategy was recognised.

Some confusion was in evidence regarding existing legislation and the Outdoor Access Code.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Whether through joint review or the development of a new plan, the National Park Authority should have a clear strategic role in shaping and implementing access management to ensure that core paths contribute to both public enjoyment and long-term landscape stewardship.

If the largest boundary option for the National Park is chosen, we agree that the National Park Authority should create a new, integrated core path plan. A park-wide approach could help ensure coherent management of access, improve connectivity across the landscape, and better align with the park's objectives for sustainable tourism, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and protection of sensitive landscapes/environments. **[Landscape Institute, organisation, 264374808]**

We are not sure what is meant here. If the park is the access authority it should be responsible for the core path network. Our two existing national parks were set up before core path plans were developed so the situation facing Galloway is different in that there are core path plans in place for the three local authorities. However, a number of local authorities are reviewing core paths so the new park could have a lead role in that with a view to establishing a single park wide core path plan with consistent signage and mapping. The aim should be for the park to have a new core path plan building on that previous work. **[Ramblers Scotland, organisation, 264442262]**

For the National Park to succeed the Core Paths must be developed into a strategic network which both covers recreational needs and better connects centres of population to assist healthy travel initiatives. Currently the Core Paths of each community have little connection with each other thus precluding through routes. **[Anon, individual, 263560832]**

A new core path plan should be prepared whichever geographical option for the Park is chosen. Existing plans do not provide the scale and nature of path provision appropriate to a National Park. In particular they do not provide the joined-up, medium length routes that are sought by visitors, as opposed to the shorter, more local ones often most highly valued by residents. Any Park straddling local authority boundaries also needs to make sure that the networks on each side are adequately linked. **[Anon, individual, 263548711]**

OPPONENTS

The creation of a new Regional Spatial Strategy could set out a new core path plan, potentially incorporating the paths and tracks created by existing renewable energy projects which could enhance access to the countryside across the region. If established, a National Park Authority could develop a new core path plan should the larger area be identified however, as with other responses there is no explanation in the consultation document to explain why this function can't be provided by the existing local authorities, particularly three which have already shown to be able to work strategically on a variety of different proposals for the wider area. **[Anon, business, 264653661]**

Let's make the current Core Path Plan work - I cannot see how a single National Park Authority could improve this. Having had core path management responsibility in the past, the issue is not who controls the process, the issue

is lack of maintenance funding once the path has been created and there is nothing a National Park could do to alter this fact other than to make it worse. **[Anon, individual, 263406528]**

UNDECIDED

Whilst we acknowledge that the development and oversight of core path planning is critical to the functionality of the proposed National Park, there needs to be consideration of the timing of any developments. The Core Paths Plan for Dumfries and Galloway is about to be reviewed and as such careful consideration on the next review iteration should be considered now to avoid duplicating and wasting public resources within the proposed Park boundary. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

Each local authority has approached core path planning differently and as a result there is significant variation in the depth, scope and ambition of core path plans from different local authority areas. If the new National Park area extended beyond Dumfries & Galloway, it is likely a new core plan would be needed to provide a consistent, unified plan across the whole area. **[The British Horse Society, organisation, 264603970]**

I do support the idea of creating safe access for all local communities so if funding can be delivered to improve access for the locals and visitors alike on a small scale I would agree with this. So long of course that there is local support and good use of the paths. I do not however support the creation of core paths for the sake of core paths. Path creation and maintenance is expensive and if locally communities do not feel they will use the path then the GNPA should not create them for the sake of visitors. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

Q9e What are the strengths and weakness of these options for access and other fora?

Summary

Among supporters of a new National Park, many highlighted the strategic advantages of the proposals, particularly in allowing a consistent approach across a wide area, providing a coordinated forum for raising concerns and sharing knowledge, and having a single controlling body overseeing access issues.

Opponents of a new National Park typically favoured a decentralised approach and emphasised the importance of local community input and control. As with other questions, many expressed a concern over increased bureaucracy.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Important to make fora accessible to all. Local issues should be aired and local expertise/knowledge exploited. This would greatly strengthen decision making. Issues of self-interest may dominate as well as some apathy when there are no visible signs of benefit. **[Anon, household, 263563138]**

A local access forum can draw on local knowledge of the land and land ownership, and both formal and informal existing routes, helping to identify problems, and the potential for creating new routes. Access fora based on local authority areas have the greatest potential to enrol and use local knowledge

and would be preferable to an overall forum created by the NP Authority. However visitor management and recreation opportunities are things that needs NP input. **[Anon, household, 262827034]**

Coordinated authority will relieve LA of cost and responsibility but also focus on the marketing and access of the NP as a whole. **[Anon, organisation, 264466464]**

Strengths - cohesive

Weakness- large area with very different landscape maybe best managed at local forum level across each region with an overarching forum for arbitration. **[Anon, individual, 258158939]**

OPPONENTS

The strength is it provides a route for those who do not know the area. Weakness is people do not use most of them and they are forced on a few 'hot spots' **[Anon, business, 264472552]**

There needs to be one controlling body with responsibility. **[Anon, individual, 257690300]**

There could be an all-park forum, but there is room for more local forums too with representation on the whole park forum. **[Anon, individual, 264435641]**

UNDECIDED

The role of Local Access Forums, as set out in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2023 is to advise their access authority on local access matters. In our view, if the new National Park Authority is to become the access authority, there will need to be a corresponding Local Access Forum, as is the case in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and Cairngorms.

Although access, recreation and visitor management are often closely linked, not all access is recreation and/or undertaken by visitors and we would not endorse a remit beyond outdoor access for the forum. We would be concerned that local access issues, that affect local residents and their daily lives, would be overlooked or drowned out by tourism and visitor management issues. **[The British Horse Society, organisation, 264603970]**

Weaknesses: It is not clear what an active local access forum actually is and does. An advisory forum with a wide remit on recreation and visitor management plays to concerns that a National Park Authority will prioritise its actions on being a tourist board to significantly increase visitor numbers to the area and therefore negatively impact housing prices and salaries. Strengths: None **[Anon, individual, 264386039]**

Q9f Are there any other options you would want to see considered?

Summary

This question received limited engagement and there was little consensus among the responses. Some of the other options put forward were that the National Park Authority should take responsibility for Rights of Way, promotion of cycle routes,

increased path information, and development of a local access advisory forum.

Opponents of the proposal re-emphasises the importance of local views and the need for improved resourcing for access and path networks under existing arrangements.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Establish an advisory forum with local experts (they live their now) balancing Marine livelihood (fishing), ecology, wind farms, tourism, farming practice - not just recreation, visitors and access. Paid roles for 1-2 days a month. **[Anon, household, 264664510]**

Comprehensive information on the access and core paths throughout the NP, accessible in one place, would make a valuable resource for locals, visitors and tourists. **[Anon, household, 282627034]**

Core paths often look only at walkers: a joined-up network of (off road) cycle routes with local support services should be an important consideration. **[John Higgs, household, 264426174]**

Paths should be graded and passed with reference to accessibility. Risks from Lyme Disease, for example, should be assessed as part of the design planning. **[Anon, organisation, 264666799]**

As above, not establishing an access forum for the proposed boundary could create conflict in the proposed National Park boundary if access issues are retained by the individual local authority access forum as processed could differ authority by authority creating an inconsistent approach. **[Anon, individual, 264267994]**

OPPONENTS

A complete re-think of the management structure for National Parks so that it is fully integrated with local Authorities. **[Anon, business, 260199676]**

National Government could promote public transport as a means of getting to path networks, etc. That would help grow the current abysmal levels of public transport in rural areas. **[Anon, household, 263480643]**

If local access forums are needed then these should be provided by funding for existing local authorities in partnership with FLS and NatureScot. **[Euan Hutchison, individual, 264472311]**

UNDECIDED

The Council is clear that creating a consistent approach across any proposed boundary is essential to removing any confusion or different approaches that may create conflict or contradiction across the three local authorities, as such should a National Park be established then it would be sensible to establish a single Access Forum for the park boundary creating consistency and reducing uncertainty and bureaucracy, this may include areas outside a park boundary if it is prudent and economical to do so. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

Perhaps funding and administration could be handled by local community councils which may have better ties with landowners and access issues than the GNPA. Of course they will need to follow agreed upon guidelines as set down by the GNP. The GNP can simply offer support and guidance when called upon or when the authority feels it must step in. [Anon, individual, 257733205]

Q10a Do you think that the new National Park should establish its own ranger service?

Table 14 – breakdown of responses relating to establishing a ranger service

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 171 | 38% |
| No | 151 | 34% |
| Maybe | 35 | 8% |
| Don't Know | 18 | 4% |
| Blank | 70 | 16% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q10b What are the strengths and weakness of this approach?

Summary

Respondents were fairly evenly divided over the establishment of a ranger service, with a modest majority of those expressing a view being in favour. Almost a third of respondents were unsure or did not offer a view.

There was some degree of consensus among both supporters and opponents of a new National Park that implementing a service to support visitor management in some capacity would be beneficial, however clarity around funding (particularly in the long term) would be welcome. Clarity is needed on the role Rangers would play and what their remit would be.

Several responses emphasised the need to integrate Park Rangers with existing services to get the best of local knowledge. Similarly, some suggested that Rangers could provide some element of outreach and education.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Existing ranger services have been stripped to the bone in current financial difficulties. Existing or former rangers could be consulted/re-employed where possible. The whole project is only worth considering if it can be adequately funded from the start and with sustainable long term prospects.

there will be a need to control dogs in the area both for wildlife protection and that of farm livestock. [J and R Green, business, 263851372]

Rangers help to educate visitors and tourists, resolve conflicts and help

manage visitor pressure. NP rangers would need to work with existing rangers, e.g. Forestry and Land Scotland and Loch Ken Trust, complementing their work and local knowledge. **[Anon, household, 262827034]**

An effective Ranger Service is essential to the successful delivery of positive outcomes for nature and within National Parks, with rangers well placed to identify and address emerging issues. Rangers also have an important role to play in increasing public understanding of the aims and land management requirements within National Parks. A Ranger Service can also help to promote volunteering within a National Park which in turn can help to offset the cost of providing the Ranger Service. **[Anon, household, 264387240]**

The National Park should have its own Ranger Service which should be properly financed and develop good partnership working with existing ranger services.

A National Park Ranger Service would enhance existing provisions and give a degree of certainty into the future. Rangers could play an important role in helping to achieve the right balance between access, public understanding, land management requirements and nature restoration interests.

The Ranger Service often acts as the public face of a National Park and are the only contact many people will have with park personnel. They have the advantage of being able to act quickly to identify and defuse potential problems and help develop solutions to issues that arise. Their effectiveness is increased with support from the NPA for example over provision of legal, financial and training advice.

An additional benefit of a Ranger Service is that it can be the focus of the creation, management and promotion of volunteering in a National Park. The costs of providing a Ranger Service can be offset many-fold by the value of the volunteer work that is carried out and the benefits to the volunteers themselves and the wider population. **[John Muir Trust, organisation, 264438151]**

The ranger service should also co-ordinate with existing ranger services and not compete with local businesses looking to offer outdoor experiences. Collaboration and synergy are essential. Potential for short-term low paid jobs as opposed to year-round long-term jobs. **[Anon, organisation, 264666799]**

OPPONENTS

If it goes ahead it will need rangers with powers to give fines. **[Anon, business, 263833661]**

Ranger services are not there simply to “police” visitors but also to enhance awareness and knowledge. Often issues arise due to ignorance of the situation and the impact actions can have on others. There is a deficit in knowledge of responsible access, through the misnomer of “right to roam”. This can be greatly helped by a ranger service which is well trained. **[Scottish Land and Estates, organisation, 264482166]**

This cannot be answered without an identified budget and a calculation as to how many rangers would be required for any new park. The difference in area between proposals 1,2 and 3 is vast therefore one would extrapolate that the number of rangers employed would be larger with option 3 than with option 1. Current parks have number of seasonal rangers - although this offers

mainly students seasonal employment it does not meet the GNPA of providing meaningful jobs to attract young people into the region and reverse the age demographic. **[Anon, individual, 263041116]**

Workers and guides with learned extensive knowledge of the area to provide info to tourists on where best to go and what to discover there **[Stuart Paterson, individual, 257637864]**

Having a professional ranger service would ensure cross compliance within the area. One set of rules and service objectives and deliveries across the whole area. **[Anon, individual, 257690300]**

If an NP established, please not, then yes as it seems the only likely possibility of getting funding for what I consider to be core work. They could complement those of NatureScot and, don't forget Historic Environment Scotland as cultural heritage should be being included in a National Park. The NP could bring in funding for these people to provide the much needed education to visitors and farmers as to the benefit of sustainable and sensitive management as well as providing much needed help to record the various sites - be they natural (quality/nature of flora and fauna) or cultural (quality and nature of the asset).

Currently there is far too little knowledge or understanding as to what SSSIs/SAMs have, are being managed or not, their state and are they still 'good' sites. Many of the cultural heritage sites haven't been checked for decades and I suspect that SSSIs are probably in a similar state. Thus the strengths of this would be enhanced knowledge and understanding of what is already designated - and judge then manage accordingly. The weakness is that other things are seen as more important and such core work is pushed to one side. Even back in the 1970s when I applied to be a Ranger in the Yorkshire Dales NP I was told that a ranger dealt mostly with unblocking toilets, car parking problems, litter etc rather than anything botanical or educational for the visitors. This might get partly done in the winter months!! **[Anon, individual, 261704617]**

UNDECIDED

Coherence, brand identity and a resource to support responsible access. **[Anon, business, 264569282]**

Rangers are already for example working around Loch Ken; it may not be necessary to introduce more rangers - they may already be emerging from within communities - but I maintain that the NP should be the authority. **[Geoff and Cath Monk, household, 264380226]**

It was a great loss when the local authority cut its ranger service. The strengths this could bring would be vast. They would facilitate greater engagement with the local communities with the natural environment, support local education and conservation actions and foster a wealth of knowledge in a group of individuals of the local area that is close to being lost. They can also play a role in preventing antisocial behaviour and ensuring the rights of access are properly adhered to. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

Q10c Are there any other options which should be considered and why?

Summary

This question attracted few responses. Those in support of a new National Park generally agreed that a ranger service was an important service, and that a National Park would be best placed to provide this service. It was suggested that an alternative would be to contract out the ranger service role to existing bodies e.g. NGOs. Another suggestion was to expand the role of the ranger service to include the wider Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere.

Those opposed to a new National Park expressed a preference for the ranger service function to be delivered by the existing local/access authorities or other bodies.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

No. In my view an effective Park Ranger Service would be the best way of dealing with the concerns the 'No' campaign have with regard to visitor management. In my view (and in the view of rangers that I have worked with) visitors who are camping by roadsides, starting fires and leaving litter are there because they see a pleasant beach, lochside location or layby that provides a good view where they can set up camp and set out about making a fire and drinking.

The fact that this might be in somewhere designated as a National Park is largely irrelevant to them- again places such as Skye experience much worse problems. Ironically I think NatureScot helped with funding rangers to help deal with this on Skye, but I understand this has been curtailed because the funding ran out.

A National Park could manage visitors in a consistent and ongoing manner responding to problems and offering advice and the ranger services I know establish good links with local communities and landowners. **[Anon, individual, 260989174]**

It could extend into the water to have maximum benefit, as exemplified by Sea Rangers (searangers.org.uk) who are doing amazing work to support people and nature through monitoring, increasing access to the sea, and encouraging ocean stewardship **[Blue Marine Foundation, organisation, 264634947]**

Options to sub-contract ranger services from existing NGOs should be considered, so that these posts can sit within the community rather than statutory sector. This sector has consistently demonstrated its ability to be innovative, flexible and responsive to local needs in a way that statutory services are often not. **[The Southern Uplands Partnership, organisation, 264362329]**

Part funded part time community rangers; youth rangers and youth guides and apprenticeships and community-based functions and events that support rangers and visitor management initiatives. Involving schools and starting tours from gateway towns makes sense **[Anon, organisation, 264466464]**

OPPONENTS

We do think some improvements could be made in terms of clearer signage for visitors and improved parking in busy areas, however we do not think there is a clear and affordable business case for full time ranger service within a National Park or otherwise. We would much rather see additional resource go to the local authority so it can deliver what is needed in the area. **[NFUS, organisation, 265115530]**

There are existing initiatives which you could fund without additional layers of corporate governance and cost. The better value option would be to fund additional rangers via those existing organisations. **[Anon, individual, 264477446]**

I do not support the creation of a national park for Galloway and Ayrshire. Fund the council access departments properly. One officer in the whole of D&G is not sufficient for the number of issues already. **[Anon, individual, 261575239]**

Opportunities for local school children to go and volunteer and PAID work. Apprenticeships for only LOCAL young people. Accommodation for locals who work at the park and NOT seasonal or temporary contracts. **[Anon, household, 257575953]**

Give Councils extra funds to open toilets for the tourists we do have. Instead of cutting off their funding for such to fund a vanity project. **[Colin Vance, individual, 264040919]**

UNDECIDED

Another option would be that additional resources for a ranger and access service be made available to a local authority or third-party such as the GSA Biosphere to organise and implement. Whilst this would establish a Ranger Service, this may be limited through the organisational capacity and not create the wider range of benefits of being associated with a potential National Park Service. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

There are a number of existing organisations such as Freelance rangers, SWSEIC, RSPB, GSAB, WWT & NTS that do work locally that is akin to rangers and so the authority should make strides to support local initiatives without displacing them. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

FORESTRY AND WIND FARM DEVELOPMENT

Q11a Do you agree with these possible arrangements?

[This is with regard to a Park's potential role in consultation on forest management, regulation and funding; and energy development proposals.]

Table 15 - breakdown of responses relating to forestry and wind farm development

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 134 | 30% |
| No | 184 | 41% |
| Maybe | 50 | 11% |
| Don't know | 20 | 5% |
| Blank | 27 | 13% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q11b If not, what alternative approaches should be considered and why?

Summary

This question prompted some highly detailed responses from all sides, although participants expressed some concern over lack of firm details regarding the implications of designation on these industry sectors.

The importance of forestry to the region was recognised. Several responses called for stricter controls over forestry within the proposal Park area, and raised concerns over single species forestry, the lack of diversity in commercial plantations, and the need to protect and preserve native woodlands. Those in support of the proposal largely gave the view that a NPA should work with FLS on a management plan, be that either as a Statutory consultee on forest management plans or on forest management directly.

Responses offered less detail on how renewables should be handed within a National Park. Several responses called for tighter control of wind farm development in the area. Those opposed to the proposal, in considerable majority, felt that existing agencies should retain their current roles with respect to planning and the administration of forestry and renewables. Undecided participants gave far fewer responses overall and raised concerns over the uncertainty of Scottish Government's position on renewables within a National Park.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Scotland's National Parks must be exemplars of how to manage trees, woods and forests for nature, climate and people. As Scotland already produces as much wood as it uses, the priority within National Parks should be to address the nature and climate emergency while showcasing how trees can contribute to a nature positive, net zero future. This does not stop timber being produced – rather, it recognises that where places have high conservation, carbon or community value, maintaining and enhancing these public benefits is the priority.

Consequently, we would prefer an alternative approach where a National Park designation means decisions on the trees, woods and forests within it to fall under the Joint Working Agreement between Scottish Forestry, Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot, and Scottish Environment Protection Agency. The aim of this is to “promote a more integrated approach to creating and managing Scotland’s forests and woodlands ensuring this takes account of other important factors and assets whilst contributing to economic growth, social wellbeing and environmental improvements. **[Anon, household, 264387240]**

Yes. We welcome a joint management plan but please see our comments relating to this under question 8. It’s important that the National Park is empowered to protect existing ancient woodland and seek to develop the rainforest remnants that survive in the area.

The National Park Authority could also improve or expand restoration proposals for wetlands and help to shift the emphasis away from commercial cash-crop Sitka forestry to the mixed native forestry, in line with more recent planning guidance.

We’d also like to see the National Park and FLS work together on the challenge of timber transportation in the region, in particularly looking at options to move timber transport onto rail. Working together to look for potential local markets for timber and its by-products would also be welcome. **[Dumfries & Galloway Greens, organisation, 264386378]**

There are none. It is essential that there is a cohesive plan, what we have now is a disaster with diverse interests pulling in different directions and Forestry and Land Scotland behaving like they are above the law. There is a fundamental concept here: The right development in the right place AND the right trees in the right place, along with protecting existing valuable bog-land, watercourses and agricultural land. **[Christopher Shaw, individual, 258116244]**

Another eye on these developments could be useful. Forestry and Land already has some regard to the preservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage in its management plans, but private forestry is the sector which is expanding commercial forests and has in the past paid, and to a large extent still pays, little attention to biodiversity or landscape diversity.

Solar farms, which are now in the process of planning applications, should be considered as well as wind farms. As long as Scottish government continues to ignore local democratic decisions and to push through destructive and

excessive agglomerations of renewable developments another local layer of input is unlikely to make much difference to the outcomes.

Serious consideration should be given as to whether commercial forestry plays the role its proponents claim in carbon sequestration. Ground preparation for coniferous forestry and harvesting releases much stored carbon and produces a thirty-year rotation of ecological destruction, for which the country is paying 80% of woodland aid. Current commercial forestry lacks climate resilience, as has been shown by recent storms.

The disruption to roads, electricity supplies and field boundaries by poorly sited forest windthrow is costly and inconvenient. If carbon sequestration is an aim of the National Park more attention should be paid to encouraging long standing broadleaved schemes or peat land restoration, both of which would be far better for restoring biodiversity than more coniferous forests. There is much to be done in improving the quality, design and resilience of commercial woodland in the area, work in which the National Park could play a significant part. **[J and R Green, business, 263851372]**

We broadly support these proposed arrangements, as they would enable the Galloway National Park Authority to play a meaningful role in shaping the future of forestry and renewable energy in the region while recognising that primary policy and regulatory responsibilities remain with the Scottish Government and its agencies.

Becoming a statutory consultee on forest management plans, Scottish Forestry decisions, and energy developments would ensure that the National Park's objectives such as landscape conservation, biodiversity enhancement, sustainable land use, and responsible visitor management are fully considered in decision-making. This would allow for a more integrated and place-based approach, helping to balance the needs of timber production, renewable energy, and conservation while supporting Scotland's climate and biodiversity targets.

We also welcome the proposal for the National Park Authority and Forestry and Land Scotland to jointly produce a management plan for Galloway Forest Park. This would provide a long-term, holistic vision that aligns the priorities of nature recovery, recreation, and sustainable forestry, ensuring that Galloway Forest Park functions as an asset for the National Park while continuing to support economic and environmental resilience.

The inclusion of the National Park Authority within these decision-making processes, would help secure a well-managed landscape that supports both people and nature, reinforcing the principles of sustainable land use at the heart of Scotland's National Parks. **[Landscape Institute, organisation, 264374808]**

It is essential for a Galloway National Park Authority to become a statutory consultee for these areas. Wind Factory proposals and projects have proliferated across Galloway with limited benefit for the local community. Further developments will not only continue to modify the landscape of specific sites but add pressure on authorities to permit the development of battery sites and transmission pylons across the district to feed the National Grid. **[Anon, individual, 264468812]**

OPPONENTS

Land and Forestry managers in both the CNP and LLTNP find it impossible to manage their woods sensibly because they have to consult both the park authority and Forestry and Land Scotland who both have different approaches and give different advice. It is very frustrating for them. **[R H Gladstone & Co, business, 261174898]**

The forestry sector in Dumfries and Galloway is a well-established, interconnected industry that supports thousands of jobs, contributes millions in wages, and drives billions in investment. Scottish Woodlands Ltd.'s Dumfries office, with 21 staff, plays a key role in managing and developing forestry projects while supporting 100 contracting businesses employing over 1,000 people. Despite the clear economic and environmental value of the sector, the proposed National Park (NP) has yet to provide any evidence that it would support or encourage forestry in the region.

During the last UK Forestry Standard review, Dumfries and Galloway Council proposed significant restrictions on species composition, reducing the proportion of the main productive species from 75% to 50%. This change would render many forests commercially unviable. At best, this demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding of the economic and environmental importance of commercial forestry. At worst, it suggests an active move to undermine the industry. Given that the NP board will be made up of local authority councillors, there is a serious concern that any NP forestry policy will follow a similar restrictive approach, threatening jobs, investment, and sustainable forest management.

The forestry sector already engages with a wide range of regulators and stakeholders before carrying out operations. Adding another layer of oversight under the NP would be an unnecessary burden, introducing bureaucracy without any clear benefit. Scottish Forestry is already well-equipped with trained professionals who make evidence-based decisions. There is little reassurance in the prospect of NP staff and board members—who may lack forestry expertise and potentially hold anti-forestry biases—becoming involved in the decision-making process.

Forestry in Dumfries and Galloway is a thriving, sustainable industry that supports local communities and businesses. Any new policies must recognise its value rather than hinder its future. **[Scottish Woodlands Ltd, business, 264133936]**

For forestry - why create a new public sector consultee to help manage Scottish Ministers own forest estate when this could be achieved by Ministers altering the management of their own land or changing the rules for private sector forestry funding.

It is a completely misleading for Scottish Ministers to suggest that a new National park could accommodate large scale renewable energy development. Even if NPF4 was amended to allow this any future park authority would be bound by the aims of the Act to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area legally trumping any policy change. CGNPA routinely objects to wind farm development on its periphery, whilst NatureScot/SNH already objects to wind farms within the proposed GNP are due to impacts on existing designations.

Given the extent of existing designations, that most of the support for the GNPA to date has come from anti wind farm development and FLS has previously ruled out developing wind farms within the Galloway Forest Park it is complete fantasy to assume any future GNP authority would be willing to support the development of the proposed park areas renewable energy potential. **[Euan Hutchison, individual, 264472311]**

There are many forest owners other than FLS within Galloway and many forest management plans prepared by others - including myself - my experience of statutory consultees is that they tend to grind their own axe rather than look at the actual proposal.

This proposal simply amounts to another layer of bureaucracy. I note that there is nothing specified or proposed on how the National Park Authority will “work with” farmers - there is reference elsewhere in this document to “landscape scale change” - I would be interested to hear how this is proposed to be achieved without major interference with the farming industry. **[Brian McAllister, individual, 264201203]**

I am not sure what the solution is but from what I have seen over the last twenty years the forestry and wind farm proposals are foisted onto the communities and landscape whatever objections are made to them, even if these objections are valid. Any arrangement that gives more power to the Scottish government to push these things through (even if under the veil of a NP authority) should be avoided. Land management needs to be put back into the hands of the local communities and local authority that represents them. **[Anon, household, 263964001]**

UNDECIDED

In this section, ‘Forestry and wind farm development’, we commend the assurance that “farming, forestry and renewable energy are important land uses which will play a major role in meeting the aims of the National Park”. We agree that the National Park Authority must work closely with the Scottish Government and, for example, the Energy Consents Unit, to develop a Park Plan that jointly supports the long-term success of all stakeholders and in alignment with NPF4.

We note the mention, in Paragraph 5-13, regarding the approach for Galloway National Park Authority to become a statutory consultee on energy development proposals dealt with by the Energy Consents Unit. Although we consider that the Galloway National Park Authority are also be a consultee for other renewable energy planning developments within the National Park, at the Town & Country level, handled by Dumfries & Galloway Council.

In relation to S27 applications to the ECU for grid infrastructure applications, the Galloway National Park Authority should be a statutory consultee for this as well. We cannot agree or disagree with these proposals due to the remaining high levels of uncertainty at this time, due to the fact that the D&G LDP2 includes only brief references to the possibility of designating Galloway as a National Park. With the next D&G LDP, LDP3, currently at the Gate Check stage with the Scottish Government, we have no current guidance on how a possible Galloway National Park Authority would interact with planning matters or LDPs. We would urge that as much detail as possible is included in the future LDP3 to elucidate on how the

Galloway National Park Authority would act in planning matters. [Anon, business, 263985865]

Forestry, renewables and farming are strong mature connected industries that provides thousands of jobs, £millions in wages, and £billions in investment. So far, the proposal for NP has provided no evidence that it would either support or encourage these sectors.

During the last UK Forestry Standard review Dumfries and Galloway Council proposed that all new planting and restock sites should have their species composition changed to such an extent that it would render many forests unviable. D&G council proposed that the main productive species on any site be reduced from 75% to 50%. At best, this shows a clear lack of understanding of commercial forestry and its significance to the local area, at worse it appears to be a desire to cripple the sector. As the NP board will be made up of local authority councillors it would be expected that any NP forestry policy would likely follow this direction.

The forestry and renewable sector already has a wide range of stakeholders to consult before operations take place, adding another level is just bureaucracy for no benefit. Asking NP staff and board who may have little to no forestry knowledge and potentially a bias against forestry to be a stakeholder brings no comfort to the sector. [Anon, business, 264569282]

SIZE AND MAKE-UP OF THE NATIONAL PARK BOARD

Q12a Do you support these proposals for the potential size and composition of a National Park Board in the Galloway area?

Table 16 – breakdown of responses relating to the suggested board size and composition

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 98 | 22.02% |
| No | 213 | 47.87% |
| Maybe | 66 | 14.83% |
| Don't Know | 17 | 3.82% |
| Blank | 51 | 11.46% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q12b What do you think would be the advantages or disadvantages of these suggested arrangements?

Summary

Respondents were presented with summary proposals for the size and composition of a National Park Board, with greater or fewer members depending on the size of the National Park (12 Board members for Option 1, and 15 for Options 2 and 3) and the Board composition divided into three equal groups of 4 or 5 members, each comprising, variously, one third of

members directly elected by those living in electoral wards within the Park, a further third of members nominated by the local authorities, and the final third of members directly appointed by Scottish Ministers.

Of the roughly 70% of respondents who expressed a clear view, only about one-third supported the proposed size and composition of the Board, with about two-thirds opposed.

Most supporters of a new National Park felt that the proposed size and composition of the board was broadly acceptable, with several responses highlighting the need to balance a smaller board with the need to appropriately represent skills and interests.

Those opposed to a new National Park largely questioned the need for a board and expressed some scepticism about the knowledge and biases board members might possess. Many felt that a board would be costly, wasteful and undemocratic.

Both sides emphasised the importance of local representation in order to ensure that the needs of the area are understood and prioritised by the board. Many responses sought to reduce the influence of Scottish Government appointees, although some acknowledged the necessity of certain skillsets and accountability to government.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

There is a real need for local representation on the Board, but how the balance of the Board should be drawn is hard to pinpoint. Partly this is because it is possible for Government to appoint local people as national members if they have the expertise most sought after, but the specification for local members is geographically based, so the onus is on LAs and Scottish Government via nominations and appointments to ensure that the necessary range of expertise is available to the Board at any time. Whilst LAs have generally nominated local councillors for National Park boards, they could nominate candidates for their specific expertise instead (who need not be councillors) and this might be more appropriate if directly elected local members are more numerous on a new Board.

There is also a point of accountability at the National level given that the Scottish Government is committing funding over the long-term.

On overall size there is a balance between the efficiency of a smaller board and the need to ensure that that the right range of expertise is available. **[APRS and SCNP, organisation, 264341544]**

The only thing I would add (and it is something that is not always readily apparent if you have not worked in National Parks) is that in reality Scottish Ministers appointees while being expert in a particular subject if at all possible tend to be drawn from in or near the relevant National Park in any case. Ministers are well aware of the criticisms of central appointees being parachuted in from elsewhere, but the truth is that they are often from the home region of the Park in any case, providing a filter of local expertise as well as subject based expertise.

Ironically, running counter to much criticism from the farming lobby, most Park Boards and certainly in my experience with the Yorkshire Dales, Cairngorms, Lake District and Dartmoor is that many of the members, potentially including appointees are farmers or from a farming background. **[Anon, individual, 260989174]**

In the early days of the NP and developing its vision, a larger Board may be seen to be more democratic, particularly if the NP area is extensive. However in the long term the proposals for a Board of 12-15 would be workable if there was significant involvement of others through topic based Advisory Committees and Work Groups. **[Anon, individual, 263697598]**

Given that some English NPs have Board of 30 members, I don't understand the argument about the size of the proposed board. I think 17 is a bare minimum. There is an implication in the question that expertise only comes from outside the area, and all the community offers is the democratic function. This is, for the Glenkens at least, completely untrue - we have retired planners, an ex-head of SNH (!), corporate lawyers from the energy business, an ex-leader of a local authority etc. etc. all active in local issues. So what matters here is a balance between local and national interests - expertise is a red herring. The SG appointees need to act to sustain the national interest in designation, to balance local (and local authority) interests. **[Anon, individual, 261907192]**

We agree with the principle of aiming for smaller and more efficient boards, as long as doing so does not sacrifice the crucial expertise required to fulfil the National Park's nature protection and restoration remit. Alongside the critical need to have relevant expertise on the Board, it is crucial to have local representation as well. Local Authorities and the Scottish Government should work together to find an appropriate balance that ideally would result in local nominations of people with the required expertise. There is also a point of accountability at the National level given that the Scottish Government is committing funding over the long-term that justifies national nominations. **[John Muir Trust, organisation, 264438151]**

My main concern is that you have a Board that is open and transparent in the way that it operates and has some element of members who have expertise in relation to the operation of a National Park. Perhaps this could come through Scottish Government rather than simply adding MSP's who have been unsupportive of the process publicly aligning themselves with farmers and landowners. **[Anon, individual, 264475488]**

OPPONENTS

I have answered this concept at the outset as a concern - if a designation is to be made, and referencing the oft heard rhetoric "this park will be different" - I contend 60% of any board be directly elected by residents. If it's "by Galloway, for Galloway", why would this not be agreeable? Expertise/appointees may make a balance thereafter, but only with consent of the initially elected local residents. I do not agree with the apparent statement in the question about a much larger board size - this is about proportions. If it's 25 maximum, 60% would mean 15 directly elected local reps, and allows for up to ten subject matter experts to be invited (not appointed) **[William Moses, business, 264223741]**

We do not support the proposal for a National Park in Galloway. A key concern is the governance structure, particularly the appointment of board members

from local authorities. This risks important decisions being influenced by traditional party-political divides rather than being based on expertise and balanced representation. **[Scottish Woodlands Ltd, business, 264133936]**

the Park area is very large and diverse. The needs of the people in south Ayrshire are quite different from those on the Solway coast in the option 1 area. The makeup of the Park board would have to ensure that each area had at least 1 representative. I would like to see a greater number of locally elected members on the board to represent the local population. It should not be assumed that locally the range of skills and expertise required to run the park is not available. If the Park is to succeed it must have the backing and support of the local population. **[Anon, individual, 264375745]**

I think the board is actually my main issue with a National Park. It is a layer of bureaucracy that is totally unwarranted, and costly. This unelected, undemocratic board would cost large amounts of money, and i still think there are existing organisations whose remit could be widened to carry out many of the tasks which you are mentioning. The board sucks up an absurd amount of the funding. Spend the money on supporting the area not the cronies that majority of the time won't be here. **[Anon, individual, 264477446]**

This is exactly what I've been talking about all through this response. It is simply jobs for the boys. It means a diminution of money for the local authorities but more for those co-opted onto these boards. It will do precisely nothing for Galloway and South Ayrshire. There is nothing in these proposals that makes any sort of sense other than empire building by governments with too little to do. Please explain why any board members should be appointed by Scottish ministers? What interest have they got in Galloway other than the extra money they will earn at everyone else's expense. **[Barlocco, business, 259632931]**

It is disingenuous to say that this would be local representation as most of the posts are public appointments from the Scottish Government and Local Authorities. There needs to be much stronger local representation through the elected process and the skills should be taken from any designated area from people who are living and working in the area and understand its people, businesses, and needs. **[Andrew McCornick, individual, 262920479]**

UNDECIDED

The options presented within the consultation conform to the statutory prescriptive model. The Council would welcome the opportunity to suggest board make up is reviewed to allow local accountability to be at the centre of its creation...

...The local Authority would be willing to work with the Scottish Government and other key stakeholders to develop a governance approach that is regionally focussed and ensures that the range and scope of powers and functions is able to be utilised locally to maximise the benefits from any designation. To ensure that any powers assigned align with the emerging legislation around the European Charter of Local Self Government and the proposed Natural Environment Bill. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

The People of Galloway will be unlikely to accept any board that is not a majority overseen by local people. I personally prefer that the board is at

least 60% local as suggested but anything less or even this will likely incite much distrust and anger locally. If it is possible for the board to have a higher percentage of locals that would be much preferred. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

The use of appointed members from the local authorities mean that important decisions could be split by traditional party divides. While forestry makes up a third of each NP option there is no guarantee that forestry would have a third of the seats, so this would mean that the sector would be under (if at all) represented. The existing NPs have larger management boards than proposed for the GNP and, to date, none have included a voice from the forestry industry. The potential for damage to the forestry by elected people with their own agenda is very real and unlike central government which has specialist support, local authorities tend to favour those who shout loudest to the press. It has been made clear that the proposed Galloway NP has the ability to be different, yet this proposed board is very similar to the other NP in Scotland. **[Anon, business, 264569282]**

The Scottish government has shown time and again that it doesn't care about this region, so we don't want interference from them. It is very important that board members are local people elected by the public. **[Anon, household, 264524150]**

Too many elected representatives could lead to a lack of business expertise and empathy. More entrepreneurial members could be very beneficial and lead to more dynamic balanced decisions. **[Scotia Seaplanes Ltd, business, 264688078]**

Q12c What alternative options could be considered and why?

Summary

20% of all respondents felt that a greater proportion of board members should be locally elected and a spread of knowledge, expertise and skills was the next most important element highlighted.

Some respondents felt that a larger Board would be costly and inefficient, while others felt a larger Board could bring a greater range of experience. There was consensus over the view that Scottish Government appointee numbers should be reduced, in order to balance in favour of local representation. Some acknowledged that Scottish Government appointees provide value to a Board and to the decision-making process, but added the caveat that they must have local knowledge. Those in support did underline the need for 'industry' representation namely agriculture, forestry and renewables. A number of respondents suggested that young people ought to be represented on the Board.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Far smaller board with far higher proportion of local representation. There is little understanding in the Scottish government of rural issues and potential benefits to biodiversity. The costs of such a large board would be higher than necessary for effective management. **[Gavin King-Smith, individual, 257548965]**

I favour reducing to 20% the proportion of directly elected members. For

a membership of fifteen this would mean three elected members, plus six directly appointed by Scottish Ministers and six nominated by the local authorities. The balance amongst the latter would be dependent upon the eventual area of the National Park, although three for Dumfries and Galloway, two for South Ayrshire and one for East Ayrshire would seem appropriate if the largest area were to be adopted.

Such a composition of the Board would be much more likely to ensure that the full range of essential skills and expertise is present amongst the Board membership.

Furthermore, given that the strategic aims of National Parks in Scotland are determined by the national government, it seems to me that ensuring that 40% of the Board members are ministerial nominees is much more likely to ensure that the Board adopts an appropriate strategic direction for the Park, given that this may not always align fully with the direction favoured by locally-elected representatives and Councillors who are less likely to see the Park in its national context. **[Anon, individual, 258788307]**

The above model would point towards quite a large Board, especially (but by no means exclusively) if the Park is large. Potential disadvantages of such a big Board include unwieldiness, difficulty in engendering a sense of common purpose, and high cost. Possible ways of mitigating such drawbacks include:

- keeping the Board smaller but bringing in additional expertise and perspectives by supplementing the Board with advisory groups, which could be either standing bodies or temporary task-specific ones
- paying only Board members who specifically request remuneration (or alternatively applying a means test)
- encouraging local authorities to nominate staff (who would then be attending meetings in paid hours) rather than elected members to fill their places on the Board (and any advisory groups) - a move that might also help in securing the necessary blend of skills. **[Anon, individual, 263548711]**

Any National Park is going to significantly overlap with the geography of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere. The GSAB Partnership Board Trustees are currently made up of public, private, eNGO and community representation drawn from local people living and working within the Biosphere. Membership of the Board is voluntary, open to all, and publicly advertised.

The Partnership Board is supported by officers in attendance from some of the public agencies such as NatureScot, Scottish Forestry etc that help ensure the Trustees take account of regional and national policies. Clear consideration needs to be given to the relationship between the two designations (NP & GSAB) taking account of duplication of representation, as well as experiences elsewhere in the Europe and the UK where options range from shared governance to permanent sub committees. **[Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, organisation, 263696458]**

I would favour a larger board (I have worked with management boards of a number of organisations in the charitable and educational sectors, and boards of 20+ are perfectly manageable if roles are properly defined). The important matter to get right is the representation. Local concerns could largely be allayed by including a larger number of directly elected members. There are also important local interest groups that should be directly represented - for

instance perhaps FLS, the NFU and representatives of wildlife conservation bodies. **[Anon, individual, 260780964]**

In the early days of a new NP it would be better to have a larger Board that offers more opportunity for a diverse range of local representation than a smaller board where the decision making is in the hands of a few. However, balanced against that is the cost of having paid Board members and so the size of the Board should be reviewed after the first term of office for Board membership. **[Anon, individual, 261459646]**

A management structure strongly based on some form of ‘citizens’ assembly’ or ‘sortition’ would hopefully proof against partisan domination and bring in common sense. Such a structure would have to be able to call in the various necessary expertise as advisors. **[John Higgs, household, 264426174]**

OPPONENTS

A skills-based metric to ensure a mix of the right skills and abilities are in place on the board. There are currently no criteria for a range of skills, just that they must have knowledge of or experience relevant to the functions. Given the breadth of the functions and scope of a park, this is a very broad parameter. There may be a case for there to be “reserved” roles, such as land management skills/experience or similar in planning or economic development.

There is also a danger that while local the board may not be representative of the area with the skills and knowledge to do the role. Extensive training should also be given, not only on governance but also the sectors which would be impacted by the park. **[Scottish Land & Estates, organisation, 264482166]**

It is disappointing that there is no proper review of Scotland’s National Park experience over the last two decades. The 2000 Act provided a fair starting point, but an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the Board arrangements (in the light of two decades of experience) is long overdue.

Some of the earlier National Parks in England and Wales (e.g. Northumberland) were governed by a committee of the relevant local authority, but these proved problematic and have been replaced with structures rather similar to those proposed here. How have these overcome the unwieldy nature of large Boards?

What is required is some mapping of the confusing plethora of public bodies with responsibilities impinging on the functions of the National Park. Where (if at all) would a National Park Board best fit in, and how would this add value? Further work is required. **[Alan Mowle, individual, 263779268]**

I do not agree with a National Park Designation. A 50% plus one should be elected from any designated area to ensure local understanding and needs are met. Expertise already exists in our area and should be utilised fully any additional expertise can easily be acquired on a consultative basis in special cases. **[Andrew McCornick, individual, 262920479]**

We should continue as we always have done. Planning is managed by our locally elected councillors, farming and forestry is managed by local managers in consultation with Forest and Land Scotland. Tourism and other businesses should be allowed the freedom to continue as they think best. **[R H Gladstone & Co, business, 261174898]**

Scottish Government to correct the funding deficits of the last few years, Scottish Government to increase the local councils and allow them to operate properly for the benefit of the local community. No New National Park **[Alan D Brown, individual, 257683801]**

We need young people to represent youngsters in the community. We need to encourage younger working age people. A spread of knowledge and expertise across the board is essential. **[Kate Adamson, individual, 258999873]**

UNDECIDED

It is a little insulting to suggest that locals do not have the range of skills and expertise needed to run the board. There are the skills locally and I would strongly impress getting as many skilled native folks on the board as you can with as wide range of backgrounds and experiences as can be found. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

Proportionally more representation for Ayrshire is required. After all, we Ayrshire folk will suffer from tourists everywhere like fleas, increased traffic with the accompanying pollution, whether we're in your park area or not. **[Anon, individual, 259047323]**

There could potentially be an option to increase local membership and support through reducing the number of direct appointments made by the Scottish Government or by ensuring that those appointed are based within, directly adjacent to or operate within the proposed new National Park boundary. This would reflect and provide reassurance that the Board would be locally focused, accountable, and support activities that would align and support the local priorities as well as providing a better link with local stakeholders and groups. Our preference would be for a light touch governance and management regime which is not prescribed by the current legislation. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

In order to provide full democracy all Board members should be elected even those proposed by Scottish Ministers to avoid party political bias. **[Anon, individual, 264386039]**

The board is key to the success of a national park. Key industries need to be professionally represented, and all members should be elected with a weighting to those living in the National Park. **[Anon, individual, 264569282]**

AREAS OF EXPERTISE REQUIRED BY THE NATIONAL PARK BOARD

Q13a Should Scottish Minister appointments to the Board include expertise on nature, farming and forestry?

Table 17 – breakdown of responses relating to board expertise

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 211 | 47% |
| No | 109 | 24% |
| Maybe | 54 | 12% |
| Don't Know | 9 | 2% |
| Blank | 62 | 14% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q13b What other areas of expertise would the Board require, and why?

Summary

Nearly half of respondents agreed that the Scottish Ministers' appointments to the Board should require expertise on nature, farming and forestry, with only a quarter disagreeing, and the remainder undecided or not offering a view.

A number of responses highlighted the potential value of Board expertise in areas such as cultural heritage, environmental education, community engagement and tourism, among others.

Many responses were concerned about the balance of interests on the board and looked to a membership which was proactive in delivering long term benefits. Some respondents opposed to a new National Park nonetheless made suggestions around board membership, highlighting local membership, sourcing expertise from local businesses and communities, as well as recognising the value of cultural as well as commercial input.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

On the inclusion of nature, farming and forestry we have responded 'maybe' for the following reasons:

Maybe. However, if there was strong representation on the Board of some or all of those sectors from locally elected or local authority representatives this may not always be necessary. Ministers should be obliged to ensure the overall balance of skills, experience and backgrounds with specific attention given to nature, farming and forestry.

Given the skills and expertise of directly elected and LA nominated members will vary over time it is important that Scottish Government has

the ability to balance the skills set and is not locked into appointing specific types that could reinforce an imbalance if not required. It must always have an eye to delivering the wider aims of National Parks. **[APRS and SCNP, organisation, 264341544]**

A Board with expertise across landscape, ecology, land management, and rural industries would strengthen decision-making, enhance stakeholder trust, and foster collaborative, innovative solutions. Embedding landscape expertise alongside farming, forestry, and conservation voices will ensure the National Park delivers long-term benefits for people, nature, and the wider landscape in a sustainable, multifunctional, and forward-thinking way. **[Landscape Institute, organisation, 264374808]**

Expertise and experience in visitor and tourism destination management and National Park Visitor Centre provision and resourcing, to ensure that public understanding, awareness, information and appropriate use, access, enjoyment and participation are all part of the provision in the National Park... Expertise and experience of the aims and targets given in the latest 'State of Nature' by the State of Nature Partnership 2023 and how these can be effectively achieved...

Expertise and experience of good environmental management and low-carbon emission systems, to ensure best practice and means of achieving holistic climate net zero targets...

Expertise and experience of sustainable regenerative soil cultivation and management... An awareness of Rewilding and opportunities that could be applied to appropriate areas of the National Park... **[Tony Riden, individual, 263028113]**

In addition to those mentioned (which in the case of nature should also include landscape), cultural heritage, outdoor recreation, environmental education, tourism, community empowerment and business are obvious fields where expertise is highly desirable. A diverse age range is desirable and young people's perspectives in particular should also be sought, whether through membership of the Board or by other means. The same applies to ethnic and other minorities.... **[Anon, individual, 263548711]**

Community development, energy, local economic development. But see above on the nature of local expertise. I think this consultation is confusing the issues of interests and expertise - while the Board definitely needs forestry expertise, for instance, it is not obvious that it needs a representative of forestry interests. Or, if this is what is being considered, it would be necessary to balance e.g. a commercial forestry perspective with a more balanced approach to woodland creation and management. **[Anon, individual, 261907192]**

The NP will require a Board with a range of knowledge and understanding of key aspects of a GNP. That will include strategic planning, natural heritage, agriculture, forestry, tourism, recreation, community engagement SMEs, climate emergency and communications. These should be provided in an integrated way and not by single sector interests (which may be better contributing to Advisory Forum/Work Group discussions). The appointments should reflect the gaps in any elected/appointed Board to achieve a balance of expertise.

Council nominated representatives should also reflect the balance required by the Board (and may include Professionals as well as elected members especially if regular decisions on planning applications are retained by the Councils). **[Anon, individual, 263697598]**

OPPONENTS

ScoGov experts tend to be experts in a very specific way...they aren't necessarily the same as actual industry experts. I have seen what ScoGov has done to Crown Estate in Scotland and have no faith in their appointments. **[Anon, individual, 264680919]**

Scottish Government Ministers may not have the best interest of any Designated area needs at heart and may make political appointments rather than what is necessary for the good of any designated area. This applies to the current or any future Scottish Government. The 60% figure is disingenuous as the Local Authorities could appoint anyone from anywhere should they so choose to do so and claim that it is a local appointment. **[Andrew McCornick, individual, 262920479]**

If you are going to have a board of course it need include nature, farming and forestry - fyi those three things are not separate matters. If you are talking about protecting the cultural heritage of the area it needs to include those and renewable energy. We have been producing hydroelectric power in this area since the early 1900's. Our very souls are linked to the land and how humans interact with it. **[Anon, individual, 264477446]**

No and none - if you don't have a park authority you don't need appointments at all. There might have been more traction with this proposal locally if it'd had a more clearly open, researched, forward planned and factual approach from the start. Detail and targets matter, and the proposal seems based on wishful thinking alone. Local communities and businesses do have wide range of expertise. As for expertise on the proposed Board, this is already applied through all of the current active local organisations. Local community councils, D&G Council particularly Planning, Scotgov Rural Affairs, Forest Scotland, South of Scotland Enterprise, SEPA, Scottish Water, RSPB, NatureScot and other groups have their own governance, specialisms on local matters, and work jointly already. It is excessive to suggest that another layer is needed to oversee them. **[Anon, business, 258896360]**

These, and other, areas of expertise must be available to the National Park, but further work is required to establish whether Board appointments is the best or only way to achieve a balanced perspective. For example, such work would establish and map out the various ways (Board appointments, staffing, retained consultants etc) the National Park can access the range of expertise it needs, with associated costs and benefits. **[Alan Mowle, individual, 263779268]**

If there's to be a park then farming and food production should be at the heart of it there's far too much importance put on wildlife to the detriment of farmers. On my farm there is plenty of wildlife and when a public body intervenes in wildlife it is usually to the detriment of some other type of wildlife. **[J&J Strain, business, 258951291]**

UNDECIDED

The legislation also provides for directly elected local representatives and our preference is that appointment would be from local sectors and groups rather than Scottish Government appointing directly to these roles which may include people from out with the area with limited or no knowledge of the local situation or priorities within these important sectors of our region's economy. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

- **Infrastructure:** To offer guidance and advice on this subject
- **Communication:** so as to carefully word and accurately represent the activities of the GNP
- **Community outreach:** vital for gaining local support and feeding back intel
- **Financial:** someone to critically scrutinise the books and provide viable financially backed decisions
- **Access:** to steer and provide guidance on this subject
- **Law enforcement and legal issues:** to provide legal counsel
- **Funding experts:** to help oversee and administer local funding to local communities and groups
- **History:** for someone on the board to understand the local history and historic features in the region and give them equal value and merit on the board. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

Environmental protection, climate change mitigation and net zero carbon planning may not be included in nature so these need to be included. Also growth of the economy and GDP providing well paid skilled jobs aligned with the farming industry are essential. Forestry should be guided away from industrial monoculture spruce developments. **[Anon, individual, 264386039]**

Landscape; commercial aspects of tourism; planning and/or renewables. So that board discussions and decisions are informed by practical knowledge and experience of these matters. **[Abseline LLP, business, 263558927]**

Outdoor access, including access rights under the terms of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, Rights of Way and the benefits of an inclusive, multiuse access approach. **[The British Horse Society, organisation, 264603970]**

Business development and marketing. Self-explanatory. **[Stuart Littlewood, individual, 264236871]**

Q14 Do you have suggestions for the topics that National Park sub-committees and advisory groups should be created for?

Summary

Those who oppose a new National Park gave much less detail other than stating their opposition, although there was value to be had from those who took the opportunity to give detailed responses. Those responses, alongside those in support of or undecided about a new National Park, offered very similar views around community, infrastructure, innovation, and more emphatically over partnership working and collaboration.

Some responses suggested that a National Park Authority could be a catalyst for engagement and relationship building, helping to achieve positive outcomes across a broad range of concerns.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

We favour working groups over sub-committees - groups that have a clear remit, produce a tangible output and encourage delivery against specific goals.

Our priorities for these would be: Housing, Climate Change, Biodiversity and Transport. Again, to reiterate our comments above, if young people are not represented on the Board through other means, a standing “future generations” sub-committee should be formed. **[Dumfries & Galloway Greens, organisation, 264386378]**

Increased support and capacity for landscape scale collaboration from source to sea, particularly around water quality, reducing the impacts of run off on coastal and marine habitats.

Branding and ‘ownership’ of coast and sea alongside the landscape: the development of National Park ‘branding’ including the seascape which clearly showcases the physical and mental health and well-being benefits of including the coastal/marine seascape.

Marine renewables: Under current UK arrangements, National Park status may also open up opportunities for funding the re-routing, redesign or undergrounding of existing and new grid infrastructure. This is important in relation to offshore wind deployments and infrastructure which could impact dark skies. **[Blue Marine Foundation, organisation, 264634947]**

Rather than formal old school divisions like farming and forestry it might be better to have cross cutting groups such as nature-based solutions, farming diversification, sustainable forestry etc **[Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, organisation, 264443262]**

As per the existing Scottish National Parks, there will be a requirement for committees and Advisory Groups for certain topics. However, the remits of additional sub-committees and advisory groups should take account of the complex structures and intersecting responsibilities which are evident across much of rural Scotland. Where possible, it is worth considering aligning with existing structures, or negotiating modifications to remits to reduce risks of duplication and participation fatigue.

One topic for an advisory group is to address the contribution a National Park can make to a nature positive economy, as envisaged in the Scotland’s Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: Tackling the Nature Emergency in Scotland and prospective Environment Strategy (e.g. see Martino et al., 2024).

Such a grouping would require representation from business, policy, communities and research, perhaps including international participation to provide insights to what might be achieved based upon lessons learnt elsewhere.

Such a topic would also be of direct relevance to the development of Innovation Hubs within the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, and local expertise and providers of training and skills development to develop local resources through venues within or close to the Park area (e.g. SRUC Barony, peatland restoration training at the Crichton Carbon Centre, Kirkgunzeon). It could also contribute to the development of the human capital and skill base of residents and workers within the area of a National Park, and in its vicinity. **[James Hutton Institute, organisation, 264562120]**

1. A land use advisory group is essential with membership not only from the land managing sector but from the wide range of interests with a stake in how land is managed, including businesses and organisations involved with, and often dependent upon, not just primary products but the much broader spectrum of ecosystem services that the terrestrial environment provides.
2. An access, recreation and visitor management forum
3. A coastal and marine forum
4. A Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve/GNP joint committee **[Anon, individual, 263697598]**

Having operated as a member of a National Park Partnership Plan group for the Lake District I would recommend the following (though this is dependent upon the powers granted to the Authority - there may be less need for and access and recreation and planning groups depending on the parks powers)

- National Park Plan Group
- Natural Heritage
- Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere (GSAB) Liaison Group- or a member of GSAB would sit in on all other groups.
- Planning Liaison Group (depending on the nature of planning powers awarded- though this simply could be a technical group)
- Forestry and Farming (drawn together to deal with issues relating to afforestation of agricultural land).
- Recreation and Access (Access forum to feed into this).
- Community Council Forum- like the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils - (GSAB with particular expertise here in terms of Biosphere Communities).
- Tourism/economic development
- Potentially infrastructure and renewable energy.
- Possibly archaeologist/cultural heritage

In essence each of the subgroup areas would have a member on and feed into the National Park Plan Group who would be liaising with Park officials responsible for drawing up the National Park plan. **[Anon, individual, 260989174]**

OPPONENTS

This question is difficult to answer. There are many topics and issues that require greater attention, and some have been suggested in response to our survey. But the overall sentiment is that a National Park is not required to do this.

In response to our survey, people suggested groups for local farming organisations, particularly nature or environmentally friendly farming. Tourism and recreation, transport and infrastructure, young people, heritage and culture, economic development, environment and energy, housing, forestry, marketing and PR, education, healthcare, retail, coastal environment, archaeology and architecture, were also all noted.

However, a couple of comments important to note stated that sub-committees and advisory groups rarely consider the interests of those who have to live with the consequences of the decisions. Secondly, that a board should consider the greater public good and should not see themselves as delegates for one sectoral interest of geographical area. **[NFUS, organisation, 264371455]**

There's already a plethora of national and local bodies with an interest in this geographical area. Any new sub-committees or advisory groups must not add to the resulting confusion of overlapping interests. From a practical perspective, it is increasingly difficult to populate additional groups; relevant expertise and experience is at a premium. How is this best brought together? **[Alan Mowle, individual, 263779268]**

There would be a need for specialist groups to be convened to discuss technical issues. Such as the Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group. This discusses issues such as wildfire management and deer management. This cannot be done by generalist groups fully and therefore needs to be handled separately.

Again, this is a level of detail not available within the consultation in terms of the powers of the proposed park.

SLE would envisage a need for agricultural and forestry advisory groups, alongside, tourism, access (as outlined in previous questions), again this would need a high level of knowledge and engage a range of stakeholders to test the thinking of the authority and ensure practical solutions. discussion if and when the need arises. **[Scottish Land and Estates, organisation, 264482166]**

More bureaucracy! How will any real work get done by the organizations and businesses that currently exist in Dumfries/Galloway/Ayrshire if they are to be slowed down by a Park Board and sub-committees. All costs more money, with no real results. Real working life in a living landscape will come to a halt. **[Anon, individual, 26177488]**

...there should be roles for training local people who don't already have the perceived required qualifications- and for people who are in posts, to mentor and support training roles. Health Psychology, teaching, ways to keep local young people here. **[Anon, individual, 262920862]**

-
1. Environmental protection
 2. Species Management
 3. Planning
 4. Monitoring (environment, economic and socio economic) and reporting - setting baselines for these are critical. **[Anon, household, 263964001]**

- Brand Marketing
- Agriculture;
- Energy
- Tourism
- Hospitality
- Manufacturing
- Nature
- Environment
- Sustainability **[Anon, business, 263860141]**

UNDECIDED

Farming and Landowner subcommittee is vital for landowner cooperation and to feel the GNP is taking their views seriously.

Environment and Wildlife subcommittee to help support and monitor wildlife locally and plan says to mitigate disturbance and pollution

Community Liaison subcommittee: necessary to regularly meet with communities to discuss issues and offer support

Outreach and visitor subcommittee: to work with the ranger service to create ideas to encourage tourism and brainstorm activities to support both local communities & education. Whilst providing interesting activities and events to attract tourists to the area. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

These would be focused on the remit and role of the National Park and would reflect the focus of the park's operation a directives, but examples should be

- Tourism and Visitor Management
- Biodiversity and natural capital
- Transport and Infrastructure
- Fisheries
- Rural Poverty and Equality
- Climate Change mitigation and adaptation
- Access and recreation
- History and Culture
- Farming
- Forestry
- Marine and Coast
- Communications and Community Engagement - including the establishment of a Panel of people with lived experience **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

A renewable energy advisory group or committee, perhaps encompassing renewable energy developers with existing and future commercial interests in the area, would in our opinion be a positive inclusion. [Anon, business, 263985865]

Promotional strategy. Environmental protection and policing. [Stuart Littlewood, individual, 264236871]

Q15 What steps could be taken to ensure a new National Park operated in ways which are inclusive of ethnic minorities and other protected characteristics?

Summary

Whilst there was general recognition from all respondents that the park should give positive encouragement to under-represented groups as well as proactively engage and consult with community organisations, a higher proportion of those opposed to the National Park felt the existing approach and protections are fine and that no additional measures were needed to ensure inclusivity of ethnic minorities and people with protected characteristics. All ability paths and accessible facilities were highlighted, as was Board membership having Equality, Diversity and Inclusion expertise.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Work carried out on behalf of NatureScot in 2022 produced some helpful recommendations about the development of new National Parks and inclusivity that should continue to be borne in mind. In summary these were:

- Proactively engage with a range of Disabled People's Organisations and Access Panels (Access Panels being groups of disabled volunteers who work together to improve physical access and wider social inclusion in their local communities throughout the process of designating new National Parks).
- At future stages of National Park development, consider the following aspects of accessibility and inclusion for disabled people: pathways, seating, buildings, toilets, transport, information and signage.
- Create opportunities for young people to have influence over the way National Parks are managed through the use of Youth Committees or Youth Boards.
- Prioritise the accessibility of National Park sites in terms of affordable physical access to the site, physical accessibility within the site, and making visitors feel welcome to visit that place.
- A National Park has to take a holistic view, accounting for its contributions to net zero, biodiversity, the circular economy, employment opportunities, and access to nature for people.
- Communication is essential to explain the benefits for everyone.
- As part of this work, Disability Equality Scotland (DES) polled its members with the question "Do you support proposals to establish a new National Park in Scotland by 2026?" To which 88% said yes. [Anon, household, 264387240]

We support the national park being a pioneer of access for all, going beyond the framework of access rights to address physical and societal barriers that lead to unequal take up of access opportunities. That could include

- Development of barrier-free infrastructure
- Promotion of recreational access for target groups
- Programmes of support for people to have the skills and confidence to take up walking and other outdoor activity.

As above, a staff team which itself showed diversity, would send an important signal. **[Ramblers Scotland, organisation, 264442262]**

I was involved in the Glover Review of English National Parks, and this was a grave concern for the review- in that to be truly national parks had to have more diverse representation. This can be a difficult area, and I would completely agree that National Parks need greater diversity and representation, but this is something that will take time. Some analysis was critical of the makeup of the NP Boards. However, ethnic minorities and people with protected characteristics must be able to get involved in the entry points to this work in the first instance if they are to be empowered at a more senior level.

Marginally related to this is what I think is an oncoming crisis with regard to voluntary work and membership of organisations like National Parks. This is because I think fewer people will be willing and able to contribute voluntary time to such positions given the ever increasing retirement age and how much work younger people are going to have to do to make ends meet in their daily lives. This should be something that a Park Authority should be thinking about from the start, and it is starting to creep onto the agenda of some organisations. **[Anon, individual, 260989174]**

NP areas should be accessible to everyone, with provision for those from ethnic minorities with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. There should be advertising showing these groups and plenty of activities which don't require a lot of money. **[Anon, individual, 259755497]**

OPPONENTS

Everyone should be working with same standards so that no group is excluded as that builds a balanced inclusivity. **[Anon, business, 263284799]**

I really don't get this inclusive of ethnic minorities nonsense and have no idea what other protected characteristics are. There is nothing stopping anyone visiting the countryside at any time of year other than themselves. The countryside is open to everyone, nobody is barred from visiting the countryside and anyone who says otherwise is just trying to stir up division and hatred. There may be barriers which affect everyone in terms of lack of access due to poor public transport or affordability, but these are issues which affect the whole of the population it has nothing to do with race or anything else and this divisive rhetoric needs to stop immediately. **[Anon, household, 260552158]**

We do not believe we can fully answer this question. We believe that existing policies and legislation should provide for this throughout the whole of Scotland and not just within a proposed National Park. Inclusivity and equality

should also be factors in board governance and representation. **[NFUS, organisation, 264371455]**

We already have legislation to protect people in ethnic minorities and with these characteristics. We all need to be vigilant to make sure the law is upheld, and all organisations have a duty to provide training and information to support activity that is not discriminatory either directly or indirectly. However, the needs of different protected groups do sometimes conflict, so it important to allow free and fair debate. **[Anon, individual, 263946389]**

Any National Park should be operated in ways that welcome all people without making special provision for minority groups except for people with physical disabilities. **[Anon, individual, 262512304]**

UNDECIDED

Promote through TV/print/social media the part that the different languages have played over the ages in forming place names. And create educational resources to teach the link between these languages and the modern names. **[Scotia Sea Planes, business, 264688078]**

In relation to its appointments, information should use inclusive images and language; promotion through local equality representative groups; and also ensuring that the operating arrangements e.g. timing and location of meetings and there is support available if required will assist in attracting participation from a wide range of Characteristics. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

Provide accessible paths, wildlife hides, disabled parking, toilet facilities and networks that are accessible to wheelchair users and those with access difficulties. Volunteering opportunities possibly managed by the ranger service and local partners that provide a meaningful role for local elderly, disabled and mentally challenged volunteers. Direct engagement with populations from areas of deprivation to increase their appreciation and awareness of the outdoors. Particularly important for young people in this demographic. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

Q16 Views are sought on the timing of the direct elections in respect to the selection of other elements of National Park Board.

Summary

Responses to this question were limited with little substantial comment generated from it. There were a few suggestions offered, with directly electing members first and appointing local authority and Ministerial members later being the most widely held position. A smaller number of responses suggesting that elections should happen after appointees are publicised. Others suggested that elections should take place at the same time as local or national elections or at the same time as the other two National Parks. The vast majority of those opposed to the National Park reiterated their view that they are opposed to a new National Park.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Holding the direct elections before the local authority and ministerial nominations are made seems to me to be the best option, as it allows those making nominations to take into account the skills and expertise of the directly elected members. This is much more likely to be effective in gaining the required range of skills and expertise than if the direct elections overlap with or follow the nominations. Bluntly, the electors are much less likely to take into account the skills and expertise of the nominated members when casting their ballots, than are the nominators to take into account the skills and expertise of directly elected members when making their nominations (or at least one would hope that the latter would be the case!) **[Anon, individual, 258788307]**

Should the region progress forward as a potential National Park following this consultation process, I would support the necessity to have appointments in place for the proposed board structure prior to its first scheduled meeting. After which point I would support a staggered replacement of board members on a rotational basis to provide continuity through Board Members and the inclusion of a limit on duration of representation by individual members to facilitate greater inclusion and representation of stakeholders. **[Anon, individual, 264267994]**

Local elections should be held first, then locally nominated positions and Scottish Government appointments last ensuring that there is the balance required to cover all areas of expertise required of a National Park. **[Anon, individual, 264470959]**

I think the local elections should happen before the ministerial appointments to ensure any knowledge gaps can be effectively filled. **[Anon, individual, 263919807]**

OPPONENTS

Unless all the members are elected by the people of Galloway the rest of this is irrelevant as the vast majority would be appointees. If we have to have a NP then in my view all the members should be elected and none of them should be appointed. Also they should all have their main residence within the park area and have lived there for at least 10 years. If they move away for any reason they should have to resign! **[Nick, individual, 259632931]**

UNDECIDED

No further detail was added other than 'unsure' or 'I do not know enough about this subject to have an opinion'.

NATIONAL PARK STAFFING

Q17a What options for using the existing public sector staff and resources to undertake the work of the National Park Authority should be considered and why?

Summary

Those in support felt sharing corporate functions with the public sector in general may prove cost-effective, with a National Park perhaps giving funding to existing agencies (or NGOs) to help with the work of a National Park. Integrating the Park with the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere was also suggested. There were questions raised as to why existing agencies, being properly funded, were not used for achieving the aims of a National Park in place of any designation. The risk of duplicating effort was highlighted by some, while others suggested that a National Park's role in liaising, collaborating and joint working with many diverse agencies would produce a more focused and coordinated approach.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Galloway and the Ayrshires are in a unique position within the GSAB area in that there are a number of specialist staff, board members and a wide network of community networks that should work together with any new National Park body. There will be significant opportunities for both organisations to work together, in some instances be interchangeable and share resources and facilities to the extent that this is practical.

The key point is that GSAB have, strong, key connections with communities across the area and that relationship would be a critical bridge during any designation process and beyond in helping any new organisation to 'bed' into the area. Given that any new body would be unlikely to have full planning powers the sharing of some planning team resources could also be considered, though it would be crucial that any plans produced by the Park body have a clear and independent ethos grounded in the aims of the National Park. **[Anon, individual, 260989174]**

Option, for the public sector to sponsor a percentage of the park staff wages. Call centres and mobile network could be used **[Robert McGoldrick, business, 264477140]**

If there are budget cutbacks, then can the Public Sector cope with the workload? Also, Public Sector does struggle to employ and retain personnel. It has to look closely at these issues and make working for LA's more appealing. **[Brian Henderson, household, 261217253]**

Many good organisations are already active in the area, care should be taken to integrate and complement rather than overlap, duplicate and compete. Many of these organisations are also under-resourced and this should be addressed by seeing where NP can help plug gaps, particularly with respect to biodiversity.

We should adopt a new approach for the areas: encourage and resource the regional NGOs to lead and deliver the environmental actions; Meanwhile, ensure the government agencies enforce regulations.

The structure should be strongly focused on local communities with support from the public sector. It should be community led as much as possible and develop a constitution that is bottom up more than top down. **[Anon, organisation, 264666799]**

OPPONENTS

The statement above is full of meaningless jargon. What really is a 'place-based approach'? Are you proposing to move staff around, combine roles or just have meetings with colleagues from other departments? As above if all the other groups involved in nature, economy and tourism stepped up then no need for a NP. The alternative is that some are disbanded if a NP arrives. **[Anon, business, 258072512]**

No, if you're coming you have to create jobs. Do not take away people who already have jobs and diversify their current roles. Do not make seasonal jobs, do not employ from out with Dumfries and Galloway. **[Anon, household, 257575953]**

However there is potential for cross over between a National Park and a wide array of existing bodies such as, SOSE, Biosphere, NatureScot, FLS, Scottish Forestry, SEPA, Local Authorities, Regional Land Use Partnership, Historic Environment Scotland, Existing National Parks, Scottish Land Commission, Visit Scotland, Zero Waste Scotland, Scottish Water & Crown Estate Scotland This does highlight the number of public bodies which already have a locus on the proposed outcomes of a park and does beg the question as to why no assessment seems to have been made as to how these organisations could work better to meet the needs of the area. **[Scottish Land & Estates, organisation, 264482166]**

I believe existing bodies like Local Authorities, Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspectorate, SOSE, South of Scotland Destination Alliance all have the resources and administrative capabilities to deliver the ambition and any additional funding that is on offer without creating a National Park body with all the costs and burdens that it would need. **[Andrew McCornick, individual, 262920479]**

UNDECIDED

Dumfries and Galloway Council does not have budget to incur any additional costs or see a reduction in relation to existing funding if the Council retains the relevant functions attributable to certain services in relation to the establishment and ongoing delivery of a National Park Authority, regardless of model. Resources needed to deliver any national park model will need to be in addition to existing resources allocated by public bodies across Dumfries & Galloway for delivering existing services. The Council's position is that there must be no diversion or reduction of existing funding which the Council receives from Scottish Government or other sources.

The Council recognises that if a National Park was established in the region, those areas adjacent to the National Park boundary may see an increase in visitor pressures, any financial funding for the proposed National Park should be flexible in order to address and support visitor management and infrastructure improvements in those areas adjacent to the National Park as the Council does not have budget to incur any additional costs.

Dumfries and Galloway Council experience challenges with recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff, particularly but not exclusively to professional roles in areas such as planning, legal and finance. Therefore, careful consideration is needed to ensure new resources are attracted to the area to avoid organisations competing for these roles.

The existing economic and environmental landscape across Dumfries and Galloway is heavily populated with a range of organisations that bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, expertise to the region through a range of delivery models. An alternative approach could be for Local authority and other public sector staff to work collaboratively with the proposed National Park team to deliver projects ensuring that this avoids duplication and focuses the correct skills and expertise on areas that will release the greatest range of benefits for the local communities, visitors, biodiversity, businesses etc.

The local Authority would be keen to work with the Scottish Government and other key stakeholders to develop a delivery model that is regionally unique and ensures that the resources work collaboratively to maximise the benefits from any designation.

It is anticipated that volunteers could make an important contribution to the work of the new National Park and the region has an extensive network. Dumfries and Galloway Council is the first local authority in Scotland to achieve 'Investing in Volunteers' accreditation and our Third Sector Interface supports volunteers as well as public bodies to recruit and support volunteers. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

If this is considered does it suggests that proper funding may not be available? I suggest properly funding existing staffing, facilities and services. **[Anon, individual, 264380039]**

Q17b Are there any benefits or drawbacks to these options which need to be considered?

Summary

The responses for this question were less forthcoming, and were essentially split between the importance of having a core of National Park staff creating the relationships and developing strategies, and those in opposition feeling that funding existing agencies was the priority.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Having an in-house team of National Park officers would offer a ready opportunity for partnership working with other public sector agencies in the region in areas that are often difficult for them to resource these days. **[Anon, household, 264387240]**

Having National Park staff on the ground in the National Park, with continuity of personnel, is absolutely crucial, with that presence reflecting that the new National Park is run by staff and a Board based largely in the region on behalf of the Nation. Any reduction of physical presence of staff in the area (e.g. if some backroom services were carried out by other National Parks) might mean

the new National Park would be less effective as part of a wellbeing economy underpinning organisation, due to bringing fewer new jobs directly. **[APRS and SCNP, organisation, 264341544]**

However, most existing staff do not have experience working for a National Park. Therefore, dedicated park staff will likely be required. Preference should be given to local people in the selection process (provided other requirements are satisfactorily met). **[David Coates, individual, 259056407]**

Existing staff in agencies/local authority will be working to their organisation's priorities. Care will be needed to ensure coherence across the NP area, and to reduce conflict/contradictory aims. **[Anon, individual, 257560143]**

OPPONENTS

Fund existing local authorities rather than taking their staff. Dumfries and Galloway Council remains one of the biggest if not the biggest employer in the area. Yet successive local government cutbacks have seen this reduce significantly over the last 30 years to the point where many of its key services are barely functioning. The same goes for the NHS and other public sector organisations such as SEPA and NatureScot. It is also the case that many of these organisations have struggled in recent years to recruit council workers (including planners), doctors, dentists and teachers to live and work in the area.

Assuming that recreating jobs which are already available and unfilled in the area under a national park banner is completely flawed.

Rather than creating a new organisation with additional costs to compete with existing organisations for limited staff and resources - just fund the ones which already exist to do the job they are already supposed to do. **[Euan Hutchison, individual, 264472311]**

Some of the details of these options sound like cost cutting measures or doing things on the cheap. What matters more than this is where people are based. I have deep concerns that the majority of public authority 'stakeholders' giving an opinion on this proposed National Park are based out with the proposed area. Having opinions foisted upon us from Edinburgh and Dumfries does not demonstrate to me this is a park in Galloway, for Galloway, made by the people of Galloway, to coin a phrase GNPA like to use. **[Kirranrae Farm/Scar Park Aire, business, 264481990]**

The biggest drawback is that a National Park will divert vital resources away from other essential areas. Our members would rather see the increased funding go towards schools, hospitals and upgrading road infrastructure. As well as this, there are a number of existing organisations and bodies who could deliver on the National Park aims without the need to create a new one.

One such area which would be greatly affected by this proposal is planning - this is an area that is subject to many delays and already has an impact on farmers in the area. We fear that the designation of a National Park would lead to further delays and hinder the progress and development of agricultural businesses in the area.

Overall, at this time of an extremely constrained national budget, it is not appropriate to proceed with this designation that would bring little benefit over and above what already exists. **[NFUS, organisation, 264371455]**

Reference to creating a single National park agency and shared corporate functions and staff between National Park bodies, NatureScot and other public bodies is deeply concerning. It is horrifying to contemplate the extent of centralized groupthink and dangerous separation from the ground level communities which this administrative imposition would introduce. The public sector needs to understand just how self-referential, divorced and out of touch they are from the lives and priorities of normal people. **[Anon, individual, 262408609]**

UNDECIDED

Economy and need for prompt action at all times. **[Stuart Littlewood, individual, 264236871]**

The potential impacts on the Council relating to financial, TUPE, Pension admission and capacity will need to be considered when proposing the use of existing staff to deliver a wider range of functions than their initial remit and role, and the likely impacts on their ability to provide the existing level of service and commitment in a significantly wider role, bearing in mind the Council has a continued statutory duty to deliver services and its statutory functions. To avoid a reduction in existing services, additional resources may be required for backfilling of roles.

It is important that volunteering is complementary and additional to the work of staff and are not used as replacements for paid posts. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

Q18a What level of staffing do you think is appropriate for the area, powers and functions and governance arrangements being considered?

Summary

Respondents were asked to consider a proposed staffing of around 25 staff plus a CEO, with roles divided among several key Park functions.

A significant majority of respondents felt they had not enough information, or did not know enough to comment on the suitability of the suggested staffing, due to a lack of detail in the National Park proposal, including over the size of the proposed National Park.

Of those who responded with an opinion, those opposed to a new National Park felt that Local Authorities should receive the funding and staffing, with a number expressing concern over the funding of a National Park. Those expressing a staffing number, were equally split between those who felt 25 staff was too many and those who felt 25 staff was too few. A number recommended a needs-based assessment to determine the staffing.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

This is difficult to answer as it depends on the size of the park, the functions it has and budgets available. More information is needed, and we would be happy to provide more comments further down the line. We would support 'partnership' staffing arrangements, utilising existing expertise, including in the private and community sectors. This is in contrast with a 'displacement' model, which we are concerned is a risk to existing local jobs and expertise. **[The Southern Uplands Partnership, organisation, 264362329]**

1. Dedicated CEO, plus 2 essential. Opportunities for sharing with others.
2. Work should be leadership, learning, consensus building and other facilitation and communication; team of 3 to 5 supported by contractors.
3. This should be happening already, support the public bodies to fill the gaps and coordinate. **[The Doune of Rothiemurchus, business, 264643529]**

It is very difficult to suggest a figure at this stage without understanding the full range of powers and functions that a National Park may be given. Through experience of working with the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere (which covers a slightly larger area than option 3) we know that at peak staffing of 17 employees during summer 2024, their team was still spread extremely thin. A National Park in southwest Scotland will require a staff resource that enables it to engage with a wide range of diverse user groups, across a large geography, to tackle the unique issues faced in the region. **[Anon, household, 264387240]**

So much depends on the area, powers, functions and modus operandi of the National Park that it is impossible to estimate with any precision the level of staffing that it will require. Moreover, given the innovative flexibility in deploying public and other resources envisaged under Q17 above, it would probably be better to think in terms of the net increase in resources needed, rather than of the staffing of the NPA itself.

Given the experience in running the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, however, the figure of 25 staff mentioned looks to be distinctly on the low side, especially now that the number of local authority staff operating in cognate fields has been so seriously depleted. The scope for operating with and through local authority partners is in consequence much diminished. One key aim, however, should be to ensure that the resource demands of servicing the organisation itself are kept to the necessary minimum. This may well involve the kind of resource sharing arrangements discussed above and already to some extent in place between the two existing National Parks in Scotland. **[Anon, individual, 263548711]**

OPPONENTS

Why are you proposing planning, access, and land use functions of a board and staff body, in advance of receiving the views of this consultation? In good faith, may I suggest you wait for responses to this process before designing a cart to go in front of a horse, if indeed, “this park will be different”? **[William Moses, business, 264223741]**

This is impossible to know as the powers, locations and scale of any park is not clear. It does however seem unrealistic that a national park could be run covering the full range of powers and outcomes suggested with 25 staff. Currently the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority has around 175 staff, the Cairngorms National Park Authority has 102 and the UKs smallest national park in the New Forest has 80.

We would assume that any staffing would be closer to the real-life figures of other parks mentioned above, even if there were changes to powers. The smaller the staff team the more likely it is to have a heavier weighting towards management and support of the board, and therefore proportionately less in delivery of any benefits. Also given the proposed scale of the park and the population within the area, any new park would need to be sufficiently resourced, if not then there is the worst-case scenario of all of the deemed negative issues, but unable to offer the deemed benefits. **[Scottish Land & Estates, organisation, 264482166]**

I think there really need to establish a ranger led team first before all the funding is swallowed up by a top heavy management structure. **[Anon, individual, 267690300]**

UNDECIDED

To achieve the four aims of a national park a comparable staffing level compliment to the other two national parks would be expected for a southwest Scotland national park. The local Authority would be willing to work with the Scottish Government and other key stakeholders to develop an operating model that is regionally unique and ensures that the range and scope of powers and functions is able to be utilised locally to maximise the benefits from any designation. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

What you have suggested seems reasonable. Although if you go with boundary three I expect your on the ground staff may be a little stretched. At the end of the day it is hard to say until it happens. You will need to decide once it happens whether the staff are over stretched or under applied. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

Q18b What other areas of work would require further staffing and why?

Summary

There was consensus that a new National Park should establish a ranger service, whilst those in support of a new National Park felt communications, community engagement and access should feature alongside biodiversity conservation, planning and education.

Others mentioned marine and coastal management, as well as economic development and tourism.

Among those opposed to a new National Park, staffing in support of infrastructure improvements was mentioned as important. The use of staff from existing organisations was also recommended.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

The Park authority can be expected to have a central role in collating and reporting on metrics relevant to its remit to enable monitoring and the development of strategies for achieving its aims. Such a requirement will include a need for appropriate information systems (e.g. Geographic Information Systems, database management) which will support strategic and operation planning.

The Park Authority will have responsibilities to ensure open access to data it collects, and prospective increases in demand for uses of such data by businesses, NGOs, communities and citizens. The occupants of such roles will also have to engage with relevant authorities (e.g. intersecting local authorities; Biosphere; public agencies) in the exchange of information.

It can be foreseen that such roles will be engaged in discussion of wider public sector initiatives (e.g. Public Sector Geospatial Agreement), and consultations or activities relating to contemporary environmental and socio-economic data. Staff will also be expected to undertake formal or informal Continuing Professional Development and possibly be invited to contribute to stakeholder groups for initiatives or research projects (e.g. Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme). These types of roles require time allocated.

An estimate of staffing levels for these types of responsibilities is of two FTE and associated infrastructure (i.e. hardware, software, data). **[James Hutton Institute, organisation, 264562120]**

The National Park requires staffing with expertise in marine and coastal conservation, and engagement with both commercial and recreational users/stakeholders. While we do not expect the National Park Authority to take on full responsibility for regional marine planning in the area (noting that only a portion of the North Solway coastline may be included in the National Park), we do expect that the Park Authority must play a key role in the Solway Regional Marine Plan. **[Anon, household, 263563138]**

An enhanced ranger service, outdoor education providers, housing specialists, transport specialists and community development specialists could all add to the National Park's offer. **[Dumfries & Galloway Greens, organisation, 264386378]**

The scale of land use change (change both between uses but also at least as much in practices within them) envisaged over the coming two or three decades makes it particularly important to have a corpus of staff in a position to engage authoritatively and productively with land managers as they work through the adjustments in their thinking, practices and business models required. This is a crucial aspect of the leadership role that the Scottish Government is looking to National Parks to play.

Ideally it should involve the Park running a service closely resembling the sorely missed Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). Once again, there is a need to consider how this could best relate to other existing agricultural advisory services, as well as to the processes put in place for identifying objectives and priorities, such as Regional Land Use Partnerships. Very much the same applies in the realm of climate change mitigation and adaptation, where communities require similar assistance in mapping out and implementing the necessary changes.

The National Park may or may not be the right body to provide the advice needed but as part of its engagement with its communities (which may also involve helping them with place-planning) it should certainly contribute to the overall enterprise. **[Anon, individual, 263548711]**

OPPONENTS

Where does all this staffing exist in other national parks? Is it productive in terms of outcomes for the local community? According to the CE of Cairngorm in his presentation it's pretty minimal after 20 odd years. Local job creation the same. New affordable housing the same. It seemed most things - minimal benefit. **[Anon, business, 258896360]**

- Police
- Mountain rescue
- Fire
- Coastguard
- Planning and Building warrant department
- Hospital staff and capacity

All of these would first need investing in to have any hope of ever welcoming a nation park. **[Anon, household, 257575953]**

UNDECIDED

As per our response to Q10b, the provision of a ranger service should be a priority. A team comprised of both year round and seasonal rangers would offer continuity and consistency, whilst also allowing for the deployment of additional rangers a busier times of year. **[The British Horse Society, organisation, 264603970]**

Footpath management. Boots on the ground. Fund raising. **[Anon, individual, 264096328]**

NAME OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Q19a Do you agree that – if designated – the National Park should be called the ‘Kingdom of Galloway National Park’?

Table 18 – breakdown of responses to the suggested name of the new national park

| Response | Count | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 29 | 7% |
| No | 322 | 72% |
| Maybe | 36 | 8% |
| Don't Know | 10 | 2% |
| Blank | 48 | 11% |
| Total | 445 | - |

Q19b If not, what alternatives would you suggest?

Summary

The suggested name “Kingdom of Galloway National Park” was highly unpopular. Many responses questioned the rationale behind this proposed name, arguing that it was geographically and historically tenuous. By far the most common alternative suggestion was “Galloway National Park” which was seen to be simple and memorable. Longer, more geographically representative, names were also proposed (such as “Galloway and Ayrshire National Park”), but many acknowledged that these would ultimately be shortened by people referring to the Park.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Galloway National Park seems adequate to me, but I’m not overly concerned about the name. [Anon, business, 258129618]

The feudal reference is not helpful. Either ‘Galloway National Park’ or ‘South-west Scotland National Park’ [John Higgs, household, 264426174]

Galloway Ayrshire to cobrand the strengths of our arterial routes, cultural and natural heritage. [Anon, organisation, 264466464]

A bit complicated/too long, also mixed evidence that there was ever a Kingdom of Galloway?, historically there were the medieval Lords of Galloway who ruled as independent rulers with the local Gaelic kindreds who supported them? A better name would be simply Galloway National Park, short sweet and accurate, or possible the People of Galloway National Park. [Ms Hollie McCulloch, individual, 264675999]

OPPONENTS

Galloway National Park. Born and bred in Galloway, I have never heard of it referred to as the Kingdom of Galloway.

The Kingdom issue is at best questionable and is a long look back to a historical time of no relevance to Galloway today. The key feature of the National Park (should there be one) is its natural resource - not its ancient history. We should be looking forward and not backwards and it should have name recognisable to those from and visiting Galloway today. Keep it simple - that name is 'Galloway' and not 'the Kingdom of Galloway'. **[Anon, individual, 263406528]**

How can it be Kingdom of Galloway if it takes in Ayrshire. **[Anon, business, 263284799]**

Have to admit it, but kinda cool name. **[Anon, household, 257575953]**

If you must have a National Park at least call it Galloway National Park as is currently being used. **[Anon, organisation, 261937692]**

UNDECIDED

The suggested name has no local significance, "Galloway National Park" makes much more sense. **[Anon, household, 264524150]**

Whilst historically the region was known as the Kingdom of Galloway, this was for a relatively short period of time and the title does not reflect the identity of the area now. Also it could be potentially confused or conflict with the Kingdom of Fife. So, we would suggest Galloway National Park would be a preferable title to highlight the geographic area where the park is located. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

All too 'clunky' and invites long explanation as to what exactly the Kingdom is/was. Whether it has any marketing value has yet to be discussed. **[Stuart Littlewood, individual, 264236871]**

OTHER ISSUES

Q20 Do you have any other comments you wish to make here which are relevant to the proposal?

Summary

A huge range of topics was highlighted in this section, with many comments reiterating those made in response to earlier questions.

Those opposed to a new National Park expressed concern over the costs involved in a National Park, the lack of funding for infrastructure and a dissatisfaction with the consultation itself. They felt that a National Park would not create sustainable jobs but would produce greater bureaucracy.

Those in support of a new National Park reiterated their support for the establishment of a new National Park, many seeing the opportunity to develop a novel National Park model as well as the chance for the Park to work closely with other organisations. Positive economic impacts and the opportunity to influence policy in the area were cited as potential benefits.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

We think that if more infrastructure investment was promised from Central Government, for example, for roads in conjunction with the NP designation, then the NP designation would attract more support. A common complaint is that our roads are already insufficient, and the designation would only make matters worse. So let's deal with this issue. **[Anon, business, 262346712]**

A Galloway National Park must operate in the context of Galloway's existing problems, and work in such a way that these are at least not made worse, and at best, are improved. These are the big three of housing, employment and transport. If the NP exacerbates any one, or all of these, then the worst fears of opponents of the NP proposal will be realised and any public support for the Park will disappear.

It should be possible for the development planning and management functions of the NP to address these problems and frame policy in such a way that affordable, social, rental housing and housing for purchase for local and returning individuals and families is prioritised over second homes and holiday lets.

The transport infrastructure in Galloway is poor, especially public transport and infrastructure for active travel. If the anticipated increase in visitor numbers occurs, this infrastructure will need considerable investment and expansion. Reinstating the rail link between Dumfries and Stranraer would be transformational for both visitors and local residents. Safe, pleasant active travel routes would reduce the number of short car journeys and provide tourist attractions in themselves - but I guess you know that! **[Anon, household, 262827034]**

National interests have to be equally important balanced against community interests in any National designation.

Certain LA elected representatives are laying down conditions for support that have no relevance to the benefits to either Nation or community.

Verity house agreement and LA powers related to any designation do not seem logical

Proposal should respect other legislation but LA elected members laying down non NP conditions for their support do not make sense to our communities Small upland and coastal communities have low populations and therefore diluted elected representative power. Part of the point of NP is to redress this balance, and this can be protected and reflected by having upland and coastal electorates and Gateway town electorates, separate and working together So 7 elected from upland coastal and 3 from gateways.

To have urban elected representatives refusing to support NP unless conditions are met; often conditions not related to the upland and coastal areas, would seem to contradict some of the Ministers objectives in looking to designate an additional Scottish National Park. **[Anon, organisation, 264466464]**

I would ideally like to see an innovative and different style of national park that is potentially quite different to the existing ones in Scotland. I would like

to see it focus on biodiversity, natural capital and the sustainable relationship between these and local communities. I would like the focus, while encourage local people and visitor to explore and benefit from the natural environment, move away from tourism and the attraction of ever more visitor. This is where a lot of the conflicts and negative aspects of national parks emerge. **[Anon, individual, 264267994]**

OPPONENTS

The lack of detailed info to make the case for a 'different' national park by the GNPA as the proposers other than unverified spin has been unconvincing. Quite opposite. The inherent risk to the many positives of Galloway from the proposal should be avoided for if it goes wrong, as such expensive projects sometimes do, then the damage to the environment and what we take pride in about Galloway likely be irreparable. Tourism locally will already have had enough gratuitous publicity from this process so far anyway to satisfy that sector, positively or otherwise. **[Anon, business, 258896360]**

A board won't encompass the views of your average person. I am 25, I have a baby that will grow up here and need housing, school and a job. My views will never be heard. We can't afford housing as it is, please don't do this. **[Anon, household, 257575953]**

Only my point made at the beginning in that it has been hugely unhelpful to have caused so much unnecessary community upset and division over this idea - it should have been much better handled. Some political sensitivity, if such exists in the current government, a rethink and a complete reset for the process is needed. If it is worth pursuing, hearts and minds need to be won over and strong support for a clear model needs to be demonstrated across our communities. People need to be persuaded that this is right for the area, for their communities, their ways of life and for the economic future of Galloway. This government has made much of their frustrations that things that Scotland hasn't liked or voted for, have been forced on the country by the Westminster government. They would lose all moral right to complain about this again if they are content to force through this proposal on an unpersuaded Galloway. **[Anon, individual, 264435641]**

UNDECIDED

Overall, we urge NatureScot and the Scottish Government to work closely with representatives from the onshore wind/renewable energy industry, and members of the public, to ensure the bespoke planning policy is formulated efficiently and effectively. This will ensure that the bespoke policy is deployed quickly in a manner that jointly achieves the aims of the National Park, the aims of NPF4, and fulfils the Scottish Government's ambitions for onshore wind & green energy deployment. **[Anon, business, 263985865]**

There has been discussion regarding tourism. May I proffer this to be a 'red herring'. We hear of proposed city 'tourist taxes' the north coast 500 being a super van circuit. Whether a NP or not, tourism is with us and will be minimally impacted (My job, taking me in an out of UK mountains NP's and non NP mountain areas observes little difference between Lochaber and Cairngorms (A82 can be nose to tail Glencoe to Fort William), albeit more tourism from start within Cairngorms). In Wales, really quiet areas S Snowdonia and in (often sleepy Brecon). Surely Galloway is not going to be additionally affected by tourists by

declaring itself to be a NP. Camper vans travel everywhere (and overall apart from Tesco probably don't put a lot into the economy - not will they do in the future. Demographically we are an 'old' population, increasingly challenged by caring/health related impacts. Also trades people few and far between. A thriving community which in turn will encourage a positive economy must be the first outcome of a NP. **[Geoff and Cath Monk, household, 264380226]**

There would be an expectation that any New National Park would embrace and promote Fair Work Principles whilst discharging its operational duties to align with the commitments already made by the Council and other regional stakeholders. **[Dumfries and Galloway Council, organisation, 264626658]**

The consultation and supporting information so far provides an impression that a national park in Galloway is an inevitability driven by the political need to fulfil a commitment by the end of this parliament in May 2026. However all this information, or 'blue sky thinking' does not demonstrate or explain the actual realities of what will happen to the Galloway are in the next 5-10 years. The expected, or desired, increase in tourism numbers and consequent negative impact on the natural, economic and built environment has not been articulated which makes it impossible to objectively make a decision whether to support the proposed national park in Galloway or not. **[Anon, individual, 264386039]**

Q21 Is there further evidence and information you want to provide on the potential positive or negative environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposed National Park?

Summary

There was a split between the positive and negative impacts of a National Park, those opposing a new National Park seeing negative impacts on communities, infrastructure, housing and tourism and those supporting a new National Park feeling that it could have a positive impact especially when working with existing agencies and taking lessons learned from existing National Parks.

Sample quotes

SUPPORTERS

Little is made in this consultation about how these losses might be ameliorated or whether this can be achieved to any significant degree. The overall impression given is that of a Park which will be second class with declining areas of natural and scenic qualities. Whilst we wish to see the Park come to fruition without more detailed information we are not able to provide a view either way on this current consultation. **[Rosemary Green, business, 263851372]**

The GSAB State of the Biosphere 2012-2022 summarise the key environmental, economic and societal changes that have taken place in the UNESCO Biosphere during that decade. With the Biosphere overlapping significantly with the proposed NP area its findings are very relevant to the NP discussion. It highlights the decline in traditional employment particularly mining and agricultural, and how a high proportion of remaining employment in the region is in the land-based sector, energy and tourism.

It discusses how primary production industries have led to comparatively few well paid jobs in the region, and how professional jobs are often difficult to

fill. The pressures of land use change in the region are discussed along with negative impacts on biodiversity due in part to climate but also aligned to changes in agricultural and forestry practices. The need for a more strategic spatial assessment of land use change is highlighted as a priority. **[Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, organisation, 263696458]**

To summarise, we feel that the joint nature and climate emergencies should be the key drivers for the National Park Plan. **[Anon, household, 264387240]**

The issues of perpetuating a low wage economy and aging demographic could be exacerbated by a traditional national park approach built on tourism, wealthy retirees, high housing costs and over stretched infrastructure. However if we look to build on a new approach and recognise and address these potential negative impacts a national park could be very good for the region which certainly needs increased investment. **[Anon, individual, 264267994]**

I just want to maximise the economic investment in our region and minimise external control. All other considerations, for me, are secondary. **[Anon, individual, 264061477]**

OPPONENTS

Unlike other National Park areas, Galloway is an area known for productive farming and beef/dairy operations are typical. This means that farmers regularly have a need to use/expand/adjust their steadings to meet their needs. In other national park areas, large sections of the land within the parks are farmed for sheep, which carries much less infrastructure requirement. This is an important distinction that needs to be recognised. The land in this region is much more productive than in other national parks and we continue to have a moral responsibility to use this productive land to sustainably grow good quality food and to grow as much of this as we can. This is a USP of the region, part of the culture. **[Anon, business, 263860141]**

The area needs well-funded long term small business development with good well paying jobs for all living in Dumfries and Galloway along with affordable housing for those requiring it. A national park creates none of this and only leads to negative impacts and an ever burgeoning level of administration and bureaucracy where nothing gets done and taxpayers money is wasted. **[Anon, household, 260552158]**

The proposed designation of a Galloway National Park raises concerns about potential negative impacts. Environmental challenges may arise from overlapping management goals between the new park and the existing Galloway and Southern Ayrshire (GSA) UNESCO Biosphere, risking confusion over spatial boundaries and conservation priorities.

Socially, the National Park could create tensions with local communities, especially regarding potential increases in housing prices and bureaucratic controls, as raised by stakeholders such as the National Farmers Union Scotland.

Economic impacts could include pressure on rural economies, with concerns that national priorities may overshadow local initiatives, limiting the flexibility of the Biosphere Partnership's successful sustainable development efforts.

Additionally, while the Biosphere focuses on conservation and community engagement, a new National Park designation may introduce broader development pressures that could disrupt local priorities.

Careful planning and further consultation are essential to address these concerns and ensure that any new National Park complements, rather than competes with, the existing Biosphere initiatives. **[Scottish Land and Estates, organisation, 264482166]**

I think that too much of the ‘popular’ discussion about the NP is based upon tourism and increased ideals for jobs in an area that is, to be fair, rather suffering from neglect. Part of the neglect is national and not just our area - few jobs so youngsters move away, traditional jobs gone (manual farming work - ditching, hedge laying, for example). These are not going to return should the area be designated an NP. I find it hard that the thrust for a National Park in the popular press focuses so much on additional tourism bringing in jobs but with so little emphasis on the natural environment and its enhancement.

Reports from several other existing NPs suggest that more tourists add to the problems of jobs, housing etc; however, again few of these other reports emphasise the natural or even traditional landscapes. What jobs that do arise simply reflect rather casual/short term cleaning/catering and the like - low skilled and temporary. Lack of suitable, sustainable, low cost housing is not going to be within the remit of an NP and the cottage in the countryside would still be bought up as holiday/second home properties. **[Anon, individual, 261704617]**

UNDECIDED

People’s health across the region is under constant threat from pointless industrial developments including wind, solar and battery storage sites, it is about time someone or potentially the new national park stood up the Scottish government’s destructive fake environmental policies. **[Anon, household, 264524150]**

...focus should be on growing the economy of a national park based on high skilled well-paid jobs in low carbon advanced light manufacturing, farming aligned biotech engineering businesses, net zero renewables and carbon reduction engineering such as storage batteries, wind farm manufacture supporting business. Outside this also a focus on media film and animation industries. **[Anon, individual, 264386039]**

Social: it is important that the consultation directly approaches the different community groups as not all of these will be enthused to join in town hall style events where they may feel threatened or attacked. The consultation should therefore directly reach out to farmers, areas of deprivation, young people and conservationists directly as otherwise not all viewpoints will be heard. **[Anon, individual, 257733205]**

NatureScot
Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
Inverness, IV3 8NW

www.nature.scot

Published: May 2025



NatureScot
NàdarAlba

Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba