



NatureScot
NàdarAlba

Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Accompanying reports

**A report on the
bespoke engagement
with Equality Diversity
and Inclusion groups**

Report number 4(b)

May 2025

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

Introduction

This is one of 21 reports that accompany NatureScot's Reporter advice on the Scottish Government's proposal for a new National Park in southwest Scotland. The advice was submitted on 5 May 2025. This report outlines the work done to engage with as wide a group as possible of people with protected characteristics. Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. It is illegal to discriminate against someone based on these characteristics.

NatureScot created an engagement plan which we followed throughout the process. It is attached at Annex 1.

The list of organisations we reached out to and offered bespoke consultation events to including Disability Groups and Ethnic Minority Groups is attached at Annex 2.

NatureScot staff did an interview with RNIB radio to promote participation in the consultation, and explaining its accessibility, and how to get involved. This is available as a podcast – link provided: [The Happy Hour/A National Park In Galloway?](#)

We wrote a news piece that the Health and Social Care Alliance shared with their membership. This is attached at Annex 3.

The Health and Social Care Alliance also put us in contact with many related stakeholders, most of whom did not respond to our offers of discussions or bespoke consultation events. The recipients are included in the list at Annex 2.

We had one taker - The Dumfries and Galloway Council's Equality and Diversity working group and we held an event on 4 February 2025. This meeting was attended by 6 working group members, representing SOSE, Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway, Prisons Scotland, Fire Scotland, Deaf Children's Society and Over 50s Group. The report of that event is attached at Annex 4.

The template email for contacting stakeholders is in Annex 5.

Annex 1

Protected characteristic groups engagement strategy

Drawing on the recommendations from [National Parks Advice to Ministers: Views of Young People, People with Disabilities and Ethnic Minorities](#), the following issues were considered through the course of the engagement strategy:

- Plain English, as little jargon as possible
- Clearly communicate the proposal for a National Park, especially relating to the cost.
- Consider opportunities for young people to have influence over the way National Parks are designated and managed, through Youth Committees or Boards.
- Clear communication of what National Parks are, their potential value, and their powers and functions.

NOTES TO CONSIDER

- Inclusive messaging throughout
- Different formats? – consider colour schemes, languages, large text
- Accessibility of commonplace platform
- Accessible venues for consultation events
- Consult with CEMVO, Disability Access Panels, Young Scot and other key groups on engagement strategy.
- Identify barriers – time, travel

EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVE MESSAGING:

‘It is important for the consultation to be inclusive, and we welcome participation from ethnic minority communities, disabled people and other underrepresented groups’

‘We want to make it easy for people to engage, therefore if you require anything to make this consultation easier to participate in, contact x’

Engagement

METHODS:

Online:

- Email all relevant stakeholders – include briefing and possibly education pack.
- Ask people to spread the word
- Bespoke consultation/drop-in café/open event
- Online consultations over Teams etc.
- Make sure online portal is user friendly, accessible language.

Physical:

- Inclusive messaging on posters
- Posters and community hubs, places of worship
- Other locations??
- Leaflet – inclusive messaging, accessible language etc.

Key groups (see list at Annex 2)

- Ethnic Minority groups
- Multicultural associations
- Interfaith groups
- D&G Equality and Diversity Working Group
- Older adults
- Disabled groups
- LGBTQ+ groups
- Single parent households
- Low-income groups
- Carers

Action Plan:

ENGAGEMENT:

Scope key stakeholders

- Demographic data of proposed area
- Scope organisations, community groups, charities
- Add contacts to stakeholder spreadsheet:

Accessibility of online portal

- discuss online portal accessibility
- Inclusive messaging
- Accessible language, limited jargon

Leaflet

- Inclusive messaging
- Large text/different languages

Engagement prep

- Draft email template for stakeholders: see Annex 5
- Draft Briefing: see Annex 5
- Education pack tailored for PC groups
- Start contacting all relevant groups

CONSULTATION:

Prep

- Identify barriers and explore alternative ways for groups to input e.g. online for those with limited time and capacity
- Explore appropriate consultation formats for different groups (e.g. in-person workshop, online consultation, drop-in event etc.)

Annex 2

List of groups contacted

LIST OF YOUTH GROUPS CONTACTED:

- Annandale Young Farmers Club
- Ayr Young Farmers Club
- Borders Youth Local Action Group (closest geographically)
- Boy's Brigade
- Children and Young People's Cabinet (EAC)
- Children's Parliament
- Children's Parliament - LfS project
- Dalbeattie Youth Club
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Dumfries and Galloway - Youth Work Services
- Dumfries and Galloway Befriending project
- Dumfries and Galloway Deaf Children's society
- Dumfries and Galloway OWL group
- Dumfries and Galloway Multicultural Association Youth Group
- Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council
- East Ayrshire - Community Learning & Development
- East Ayrshire Council - Youth Worker
- East Ayrshire Youth group
- Education Scotland - Community Learning & Development
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Lower Nithsdale Young Farmers Club
- Machars (Wigtown) Young Farmers Club
- Mauchline Young Farmers Club
- Nest Nurturing Futures
- New Cumnock Young Farmers Club
- RH Youth organisation
- Scottish Youth Parliament
- Scottish Youth Parliament - LfS project
- Scouts - Dalbeattie
- Scouts - Dalmellington
- Scouts Scotland
- Solway Firth Partnership
- South Ayrshire - Community Learning & Development
- South Ayrshire Youth Council
- South of Scotland Enterprise Youth Advisory forum
- South of Scotland Enterprise Youth Employability Manager
- Southwest Scotland Scouts
- Species on the Edge - Engagement Manager
- Species on the Edge - Solway - Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
- Species on the Edge - Solway - RSPB
- Stewartry Young Farmers Club
- Stranraer & S Rhins Young Farmers Club
- Thistle foundation
- Thornhill Young Farmers club

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- What We Do Now
 - Wonder woods education
 - Xcel Youth Trust
 - YMCA - Gatehouse
 - Young Carers - D&G NHS
 - Young Scot
 - Young Sea Changers Scotland
 - Youth Enquiry service
 - Youth Link

LIST OF OTHER PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC GROUPS CONTACTED:

- A' the Airts
- Age Scotland
- Aberlour Family Outreach - Dumfries and Galloway
- Active Communities
- Big DoG Children's Festival
- Borders Forest Trust
- Boots and Beards
- Better Lives Partnership
- Black Environment Network
- Black Scottish Adventurers
- Capability Scotland
- Carers centre project for D&G
- CEMVO
- Change Mental Health
- Church of Scotland
- Community Enterprise in Scotland (CEIS) - Dumfries and Galloway
- Crossroads Care for Carers
- D&G Active Communities
- D&G Climate Action Network
- DFN Project Search
- DG Voice
- Disability Access Panels
- Disability Equality Scotland
- Dumfries and Galloway Carers Centre
- Dumfries and Galloway Council - Equality and Diversity working group
- Dumfries and Galloway Interfaith Group
- Dumfries and Galloway LGBT Plus
- Dumfries and Galloway Multicultural Association
- Dumfries and Galloway Participation and Engagement Network
- Dumfries and Galloway Resettlement Project Board
- Dalbeattie Community Initiative
- Dumfries and Galloway Advocacy Service
- Dumfries and Galloway Care Trust
- Dumfries and Galloway Hard of Hearing Group
- Dumfries and Galloway Interfaith Group
- Dumfries and Galloway Multicultural Association
- Dumfries and Galloway Multicultural Association International Women's Group

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- Dumfries and Galloway Over 50s Group
 - Dyslexia Southwest Scotland
 - Enable Scotland (Wigtown branch)
 - Ethnic Minority Environmental Network
 - Galloway Action Team
 - Galloway Talking Newspaper association for the blind
 - Health and Social Care Alliance
 - Hollywood Trust
 - Inclusion Scotland
 - Islamic society Dumfries
 - LBGY Youth
 - Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network
 - Men's Shed
 - MOOL (Massive Outpouring of Love)
 - Promoting a More Inclusive Society
 - Poverty Alliance
 - Quarriers
 - Safe & Healthy Active Partnership
 - Sight Scotland
 - Scottish Disability Sport
 - Talking News Federation
 - Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway
 - Together Scotland
 - The Food Train
 - User and carer involvement
 - Who cares Scotland
 - Wigtownshire Women's aid

Annex 3

Health and Social Care Alliance – Scotland – News Piece 15 October 2024 Proposed National Park – Galloway, South and East Ayrshire

Background

The Scottish Government has proposed a new National Park in Scotland. After gathering nominations to help identify an area, they made a formal proposal for a new National Park to be created in Galloway. The proposed boundary takes in parts of Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire.

NatureScot has been asked to be the Reporter for this proposal, which is a role that involves engaging and consulting with everyone who has an interest in the proposed National Park and how it might operate. We are committed to doing this in a fair and transparent manner, inclusive of all interests.

No decisions on designating a National Park have yet been made. As part of our advice to Ministers in April 2025, we will provide a full account of all views expressed during these engagement and consultation stages. Following consideration of our advice, the Scottish Government will then take the decision on whether to proceed or not with designating a Galloway National Park.

Target audience

NatureScot has committed to ensuring that people with protected characteristics are not discriminated against in the engagement and consultation process, particularly due to race, colour, religion, belief or disability. It also outlines how we will be proactive in engaging and consulting protected characteristics groups through bespoke communications and targeted events.

Aims

- To provide information on the proposed National Park that is easy to access and understand.
- To provide a range of accessible opportunities to consider the potential implications of the proposal.
- To provide a range of user-friendly methods to respond to the formal consultation.

The formal Consultation will run from early November 2024 for 12 weeks, ending in Jan 2025.

Key areas of the consultation are:

- if the area should be given National Park status,
- what geographical area it should include,
- what form its governance should take (e.g. number of board members),
- what powers it should have (e.g. planning, access),
- its likely structure and operation.

We will use a variety of promotion and communication methods and identify and develop opportunities for proactive media coverage with relevant partner organisations where appropriate. This will include local radio, newspapers and other printed media; social media; relevant newsletters and blogs; and our

[Information Hub](#). We will also be hosting public consultation meetings which will be publicised widely in local newspapers and radio, relevant partner social media and through posters and displays.

We have appointed contractors, Outside the Box, to facilitate the public consultation meetings. They are experienced in engaging with people and communities that are more likely to be excluded or are harder to reach and involve. They have experience and understanding of working in remote rural communities and understand the issues they often face (such as transport, lack of access to services including healthcare, education or shops, lack of affordable housing, effects of extreme weather events). They use a range of approaches to encourage people to participate, which allow people to share their full response, without any influence from other people in the room, and provides a layer of anonymity to their contributions.

NatureScot are looking to hear from you – people within the proposed boundary and communities.

The formal consultation is your chance to share your opinion on how the proposed park might be managed and what powers it could have.

We also want to hear your thoughts about the process of the consultation, and value any input or feedback that help us develop our process.

We can be contacted on email at nationalparkreporter@nature.scot and you can also see updates and complete surveys on our online platform - <https://newnationalparkgalloway.commonplace.is/>

Annex 4

Dumfries & Galloway Council – Equality & Diversity Working Group Proposed new National Park Consultation meeting 4 February 2025

Attendees:

3 members of NatureScot staff
1 member of Dumfries and Galloway Council staff

6 Working Group members: Representatives from SOSE, Third sector Dumfries and Galloway, Prisons, Deaf Children’s society, Over 50s group, Fire Scotland.

This consultation event took place over Teams and gathered views on the proposal for a new National Park in Galloway from attendees via topic prompts and discussions.

To facilitate an interactive consultation event, an online concept board comprising five different activities was created to gather and collate attendees’ views.

1. Opportunities and Threats

The first activity sought to gather information about the opportunities and threats of a National Park in Galloway. The discussion revolved around existing concerns and scope for improvement, raising valuable points that a potential Park in this area must consider. This included consideration of both the opportunities and potential threats a National Park might imply for the region.

Opportunities

SOCIAL

- Improved facilities; “Lack of facilities will have a knock-on effect on visitors”; “Improve transport links and roads”; “Infrastructure and facilities need to be accessible for all”; “Infrastructure needs to be in place to cope with additional people”
- Third Sector organisations and Communities; “There is a huge range of third sector organisations that can contribute to the development of a new National Park – this sector should not be overlooked in terms of impact”; “It is essential to work with communities – a NP should be for communities by communities”
- Housing; “Lack of housing in the area; Will housing stock be reduced for locals?”; “There needs to be proper consideration on housing not just for visitors but for people working in the area as well”
- Repopulation of area; “There is a need to increase the number of people living and working in the area, not just those visiting”; “Repopulation of the area can/must bring employment opportunities and support people to come and work in the region”; “Opportunities for young people to stay for”
- Depopulation; “There are significant issues around depopulation. What opportunities would a national park provide to keep young people within the region”
- Schools and Young Families; “Schools are being mothballed. There is a need to encourage and support young families into the area, including looking at affordable housing opportunities.”
- Prisons; “There is potential to build employment and skills development

opportunities, and create routes for offenders to safely enter back into their communities”

- Tourism; “National Park authority should have the main responsibility in managing visitor numbers”

ECONOMIC

- Impact; “Consider the economic impact of tourism with the impact to infrastructure”
- Public facilities; “Council is currently proposing to close public facilities as a cost saving measures. Consider the impact of public toilet closures – these facilities are key for disabled and older people”
- Tourism; “National Park would increase tourism which would revitalise the life of local businesses.”; “More visitors bring with them the capacity to spend in the local area”; “Support local businesses to build and implement tourism strategies”; “Create employment and local business opportunities”
- Partnerships and collaborations; “Economic opportunities for the third sector are very important”; “Support regional economic plans and partnerships”
- Community and renewables; “Opportunity to work alongside community to support them to use renewables and funding to best effect.”

ENVIRONMENT

- Just Transition; “Dumfries and Galloway has an ambition towards Net Zero. A National Park can help D&G lead the way to a just transition”
- Water safety; “Water safety must be a priority”
- Wildlife and biodiversity; “Declining numbers of red squirrels and other animals. There is a need for rewilding projects creating safe habitats for species reintroduction. How can we work with farmers and landowners to enrich biodiversity.”; “Currently, there are minimal conservation measures implemented on farmland, there is a need to work with farmers to collaboratively support local wildlife and sustainable farming”
- Balance; “Balance the need for more tourism and economic regeneration while protecting and preserving a hidden gem”
- Environmental projects; “Potential rewilding projects”; “Working with agriculture to enrich nature”; “Developing community green spaces”
- Health and Wellbeing; “Opportunity to support mental health and well-being through improving and encouraging access to greenspaces. Work with the NHS.”

ACCESS AND RECREATION

- Information and signage; “Access to information is just as important as access to the environment”; “There are few tourist information centres that provide information, there is a need for better signage and digital information. There is an opportunity and necessity to make these accessible – video captions, BSL translations, etc.”
- Outdoor activities; “Opportunities for more outdoor activities for young people and families. Like in Lake District – Go Ape, Gruffalo trails etc.”
- Tourism; “Tourism must not impact on responsible outdoor access”

OTHER

- COVID impact; “Communities stepped up and saw economic opportunities during the pandemic, opening up village halls, car parks and facilities to welcome visitors and incomers safely”; “Lack of facilities after COVID”

Threats

SOCIAL

- Housing; “Frequently seeing, especially in smaller communities, a large percentage of second homes and buy to let properties – how can this be managed?”; “Attracting professionals is difficult due to housing availability and affordability – will a National Park further impact this?”
- Community; “A National Park needs to promote community/local ownership and belonging for the sustained success of an NP in this area to be possible”
- Health and Safety; Health and Safety checks are necessary”
- Tourism; “Increased number of people, lack of existing facilities”

ENVIRONMENT

- Littering
- Wildfires; “Risk of increased fires – measures need to be taken by a NPA to avoid these as much as possible through promoting responsible access, and ensuring available resources to mitigate fires)

ACCESS & RECREATION

- “Responsible access and behaviour must be promoted and prioritised by a National Park authority”

2. Powers and Functions

This activity sought to understand what attendees think the priorities should be for a National Park Authority. A list of 13 aims and priorities were presented, and attendees were asked to rank their top three. The following priorities were considered to be the most important for a National Park Authority. The number in brackets indicates the number of attendees who placed this priority in their top three. A list of all priorities presented to attendees can be found at the end of this note (p. 15).

1. Benefitting the economy (5)
2. Support skills and jobs for Young People (and all) (5)
3. Benefit the local community (5)
4. Building community capacity and resilience (2)
5. Protecting biodiversity and landscape (1)
6. Helping nature recover (1)
7. Protecting cultural heritage (1)

Attendees preferred Option 2 noting that it is worth starting small and expanding depending on success of a National Park.

Attendees who preferred Option 3 noted that a bigger option will facilitate inclusivity and mobility across the area. They also pointed out that a larger area has a lot more cultural and natural heritage to preserve. The large catchment area is useful for prison services to access opportunities for skills development.

Other comments:

- Consideration of the impact on MOD sites
- Role of Dumfries as a gateway from the East

4. Board size and composition

Attendees favoured Option 1 – a Board of 12 members. They noted that it would be worth starting with a smaller board and expanding if the need arises.

Comments on Board composition:

- Make sure the skill set on the board represents the key sectors in the region
- Should incorporate at least one farmer
- Emergency services should have a seat at the table (Mountain Rescue, Fire Scotland and other)

Other comments:

- Learn from what works in existing parks.
- Whichever option goes forward, it is important to ensure that direct community representation from all backgrounds. It should not be a repeat of representatives who are part of already established structures such as the Regional Economic Partnership as they have a voice elsewhere

5. How would you like to see Galloway flourish?

- Tourism boost
- Better transport and digital connectivity
- More family friendly activities
- Protecting our “hidden gem”
- Economic opportunities
- Sustainable communities
- Sustainable and active travel
- Raising the profile and being recognised as a world class standard. International people coming over to visit Dumfries and Galloway.

List of priorities presented to attendees.

- Benefitting the economy
- Improving outdoor access
- Supporting skills and jobs for young people and all
- Building community capacity and resilience
- Nature friendly farming
- Benefit the local community
- Protecting biodiversity and landscape
- Tackling the climate emergency

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- Helping nature recover
 - Increasing responsible tourism
 - Sustainable use of land
 - Restoring peatland, native woodland and other degraded habitats
 - Protecting cultural heritage
 - Other

Annex 5

Email template for contacting stakeholders

Can you help us raise awareness of the proposals for a new national park with young people, particularly those in or near the suggested boundary (which takes in parts of Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire)? Can you help us engage and consult them on the proposals?

This is not a done deal. NatureScot has been asked to investigate the proposal. We are encouraging conversations and listening to opinions and during November, December and January everyone will have a formal opportunity to have their say. We welcome and support participation from young people, minority ethnic groups, disabled people and other people with protected characteristics.

We are keen to work in partnership with secondary schools, further education settings and youth groups in or near the proposed area to engage young people and support them to take part in the consultation in ways that best suit them. We are creating an e-resource to support educators and leaders, including primary teachers, to help their learners and groups consider what a national park could mean for the area. Please let us know if you would like to be sent this resource and if there are any relevant existing events, gatherings or projects that we might collaborate with to engage local young people and involve them in the consultation.

Please also let us know of any others you feel should receive this message. Our [Information Hub](#) will be regularly updated with new opportunities to learn about the proposal, get involved and feed back.

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