



NatureScot
NàdarAlba

Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Accompanying reports

**An overview of
correspondence
received via the
online community
information hub**

Report number 5(a)

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 feedback received on the six surveys that were run during the engagement or 'conversation' stage of the reporter investigation.

A dedicated online information hub was set up, using the Commonplace platform. This was done to provide information and also, importantly, the opportunity for interested parties to share issues and concerns. In total, 1,044 respondents contributed a total of 2,951 comments to the six surveys hosted on the information hub in the pre-consultation phase between August and November 2024. When the formal consultation went live, the online information hub surveys were closed, to avoid the risk of confusion, and the hub became solely a source of information, not of interactive debate.

The following six surveys were posted during the three months of the engagement phase. They are outlined below, and more detail on each of these forms the bulk of this report.

Survey 1: What is special about this area? (Map survey)

Survey 2: If a National Park went ahead in Galloway, what should its priorities be?

Survey 3: What is your preferred way to respond to the formal consultation?

Survey 4: Have your voice heard

Survey 5: Tell us your key concerns

Survey 6: How are we doing?

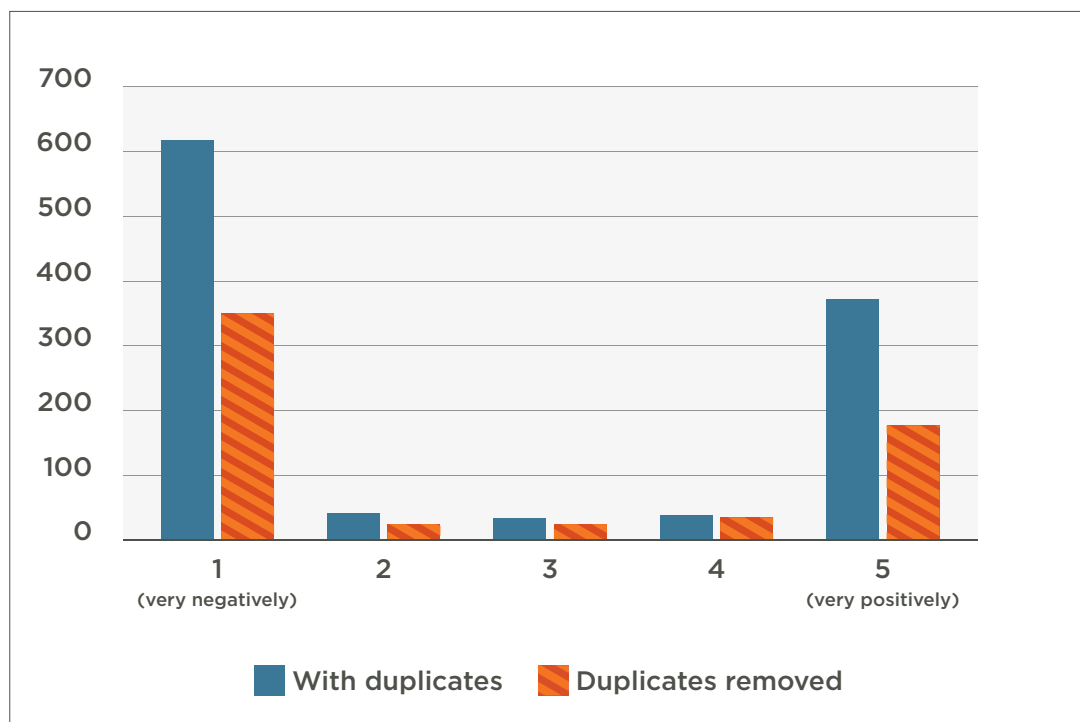
Survey 1: What is special about this area? (Map survey)

This was a map-based survey where participants were encouraged to drop pins on specific areas of the map; describe the area and the top issue affecting it; and indicate whether they think a national park would positively or negatively impact this issue.

Figure 1 summarises the overall negative and positive sentiments provided in response to this survey. Note that the sentiment expressed pertains to whether the respondent thinks that a National Park would positively or negatively affect their identified issue. The survey does not ask specifically about support for or opposition to the National Park.

Since the Commonplace platform allowed the same users to respond more than once, the results are split into two columns - one represents the total including duplicate answers from the same respondent, the other represents the total when only considering one answer per respondent. Note that for this survey respondents were encouraged to provide multiple responses on different points within the map.

Figure 1 - Overall negative and positive sentiments provided in response to the map-based survey. Do you think a national Park would positively or negatively affect the issue?



Survey 2: If a National Park went ahead in Galloway, what should its priorities be?

Figure 2 summarises the responses to the survey question: **'If a National Park went ahead in Galloway, what do you think the top priorities should be?'**. Respondents could then select multiple responses from a list and add additional responses under 'Other'.

Figure 2 – Summary of results to the survey 2 question: **If a National Park went ahead in Galloway, what should its priorities be?**



If respondents selected 'Other' they had the opportunity to provide a free text response. The themes raised in these responses and the number of times they occurred is summarised in Table 1. Note that many responses were not addressing the question asked, but the theme is still included below.

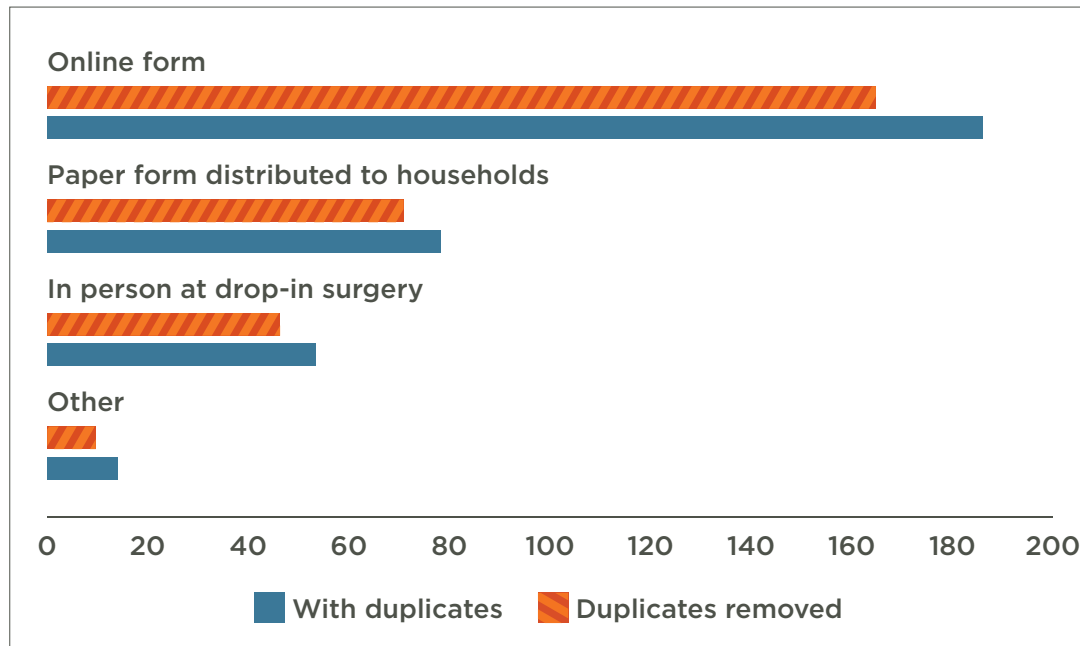
Table 1 - Summary of themes raised in the free-text responses when respondents answered 'Other' to question: If a National Park went ahead in Galloway, what should its priorities be? in survey 2.

Theme	Occurrence
No national park	94
Complaints about process	8
Improve infrastructure	8
Stop wind farms	4
Continue with traditional farming	3
Sustainable transport	3
Affordable housing	3
Protect wildlife / nature (with specific suggestions)	2
Supporting existing businesses and initiatives	3
Community-led	1
Food self-sufficiency	1
Reduce farming	1
Limit tourism	1
Have planning powers	1
Sustainable farming	1
Education	1
Create jobs	1

Survey 3: What is your preferred way to respond to the formal consultation?

Figure 3 summarises the responses to the survey question: ‘**What is your preferred way to respond to the formal consultation?**’. Respondents could then select from a list of 3 choices and add additional responses under ‘Other’.

Figure 3 – Summary of responses to survey 3 question: ‘What is your preferred way to respond to the formal consultation?’



If respondents selected ‘Other’ they had the opportunity to provide a free text response. The themes raised in these responses and the number of times they occurred is summarised in the table 2.

Table 2 – Summary of themes raised in the free-text responses when respondents answered ‘Other’ to question: ‘What is your preferred way to respond to the formal consultation?’ in survey 3.

Theme	Occurrence
Referendum / vote	6
Social media polling	2
Direct feedback to ministers at public meetings	2
Telephone survey	1

Respondents were then invited to provide free text responses to the following prompt: ‘**We welcome further suggestions on how we can make the consultation as accessible as possible.**’ The themes raised in these responses and the number of times they occurred is summarised in table 3.

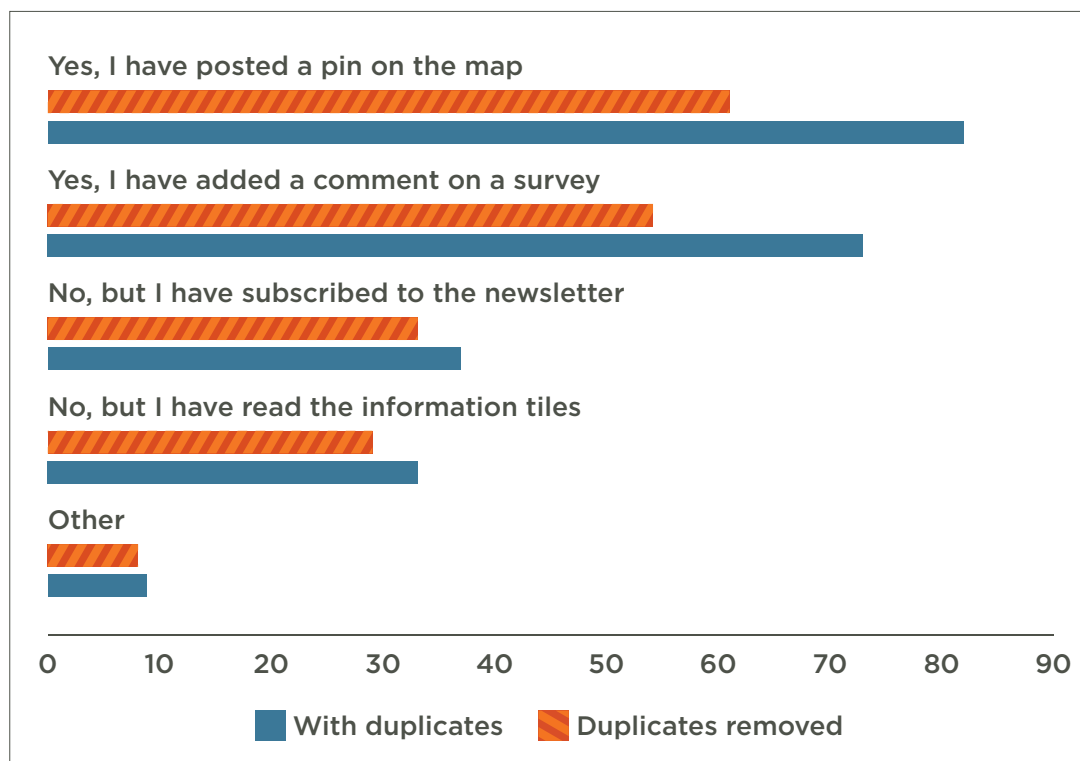
Table 3 – Summary of themes raised in the free-text responses to the prompt: ‘We welcome further suggestions on how we can make the consultation as accessible as possible.’ at the end of survey question 3.

Themes	Occurrence
Vote / Referendum	23
A better online hub	7
In-person meetings	7
Longer consultation period	6
Support residents who feel intimidated	5
Increase awareness of consultation	3
Write to all households	3
Meetings at more varied times	2
Additional support for specific needs	2
Telephone survey	2
Reach out to businesses	1
Engage with agriculture	1
Better online Q&A opportunity	1
Leaflet to be in Auld Scots and Galloway Doric	1
Screening and moderation of comments and responses on the hub	1
Independent consultation body	1
Better youth engagement	1
Consult tourism industry	1
Online events	1
Information / QR codes in local areas	1
Provide accessibility info ahead of in-person meetings	1

Survey 4: Have your voice heard

This survey asked respondents about how they had interacted with hub so far. The first question asked: ‘**Have you previously contributed to this information hub?**’, the results are summarised in Figure 4. They were provided with a list of answers to choose from and an ‘Other’ option.

Figure 4 - Summary responses to the question ‘Have you previously contributed to this information hub?’ in survey 4



Those who gave an ‘Other’ response indicated that they had sent an email directly to NatureScot.

The survey then asked: ‘**If you answered ‘no’ above, can you please tell us why you haven’t commented?**’. The themes raised in response and the number of times they occurred is summarised in the table 4.

Table 4 - Summary of themes raised in free-text responses to the question: ‘If you answered ‘no’ above, can you please tell us why you haven’t commented?’ in survey 4.

Theme	Occurrence
Issues with using the hub	12
Undecided / want to learn more	9
Just found out about the proposal / hub	8
Not aware they could input	5
Had not had time	5

Theme	Occurrence
Felt like it would not make a difference	2
Concerned about bias	2
Platform is too public	2
Surveys too complicated	1

The survey then asked: **‘Would you like to share any information with us which may help us to reach some quieter voices?’**

Most responses were not relevant to the question and reiterated the concerns summarised in other surveys on the portal. Some people also expressed that they felt the conversation was being dominated by a vocal minority, however they did not provide examples on how to reach ‘the majority’. The relevant themes raised in these responses and the number of times they occurred is summarised in the table 5.

Table 5 – Summary of themes raised in the free-text responses to the question: ‘Would you like to share any information with us which may help us to reach some quieter voices?’ in survey 4.

Theme	Occurrence
Referendum	15
Make hub easier to use	8
Share more information	6
Posters in local areas - GP surgeries, post offices	5
More presence in area	5
Public meetings	5
Enable anonymous feedback	4
Local media	3
Postal campaign	2
QR code on posters	2
Prevent intimidation	2

Survey 5: Tell us your key concerns?

The first question in this survey asked: **‘What are your top three key concerns regarding the proposed new National Park at this stage?’**. The themes raised in these responses and the number of times they occurred is summarised in the table 6.

Table 6 – Summary of themes raised in the free-text responses to the question: ‘What are your top three key concerns regarding the proposed new National Park at this stage?’ in survey 5.

Theme	Occurrence
Pressure on infrastructure and services	158
Housing (including availability, affordability, rise of second homes)	110
Overtourism / irresponsible tourism	82
Democratic concerns	38
Nature / climate not prioritised	38
Bureaucracy	34
Waste of funds	27
New restrictions / regulation	25
Community not prioritised	24
Low quality of employment created	24
Increased litter / waste	20
Negative economic impact	18
Need more information	16
Misinformation / intimidation impacting the process	14
Boundary concerns	14
That it won't stop wind farms / other developments	9
Lack of referendum	8
Bias consultation	7
That the park will not go ahead or will be watered down	7
Area inappropriate / not natural	5
No concerns	5
Negative cultural impact	2

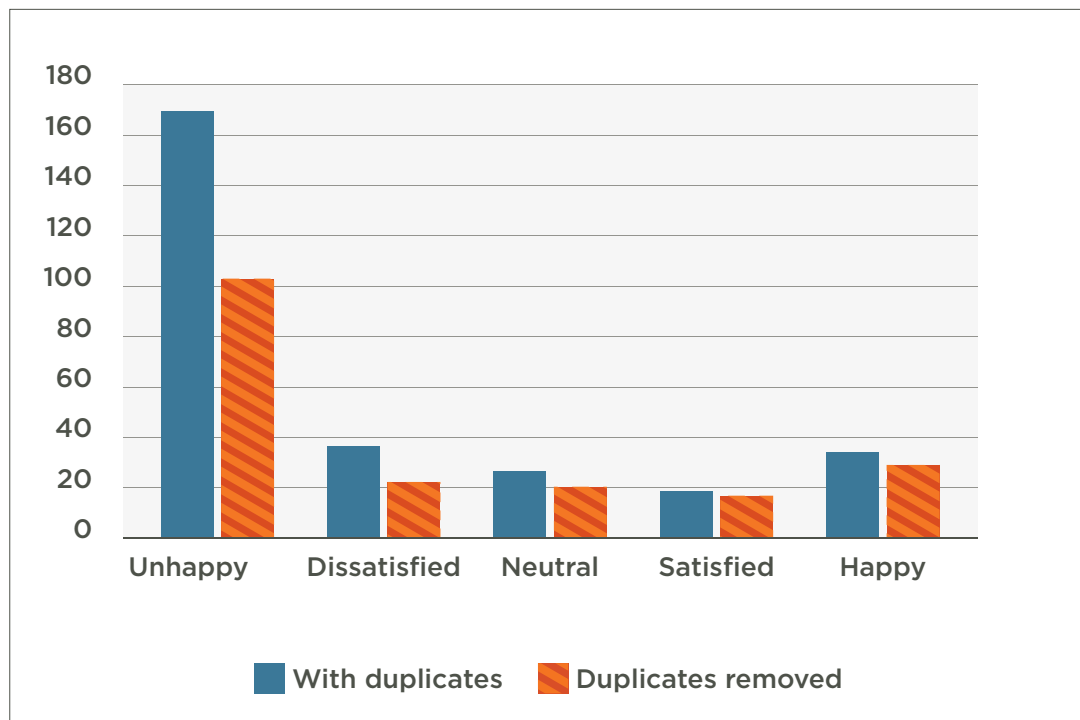
The second question asked: **‘Why are these issues of particular concern to you?’** The themes raised in these responses and the number of times they occurred is summarised in the table 7.

Table 7 - Summary of themes raised in the free-text responses to the question: 'Why are these issues of particular concern to you?' in survey 5.

Theme	Occurrence
Fear of negative impact on life and livelihoods of residents	99
Care for local environment	37
Care about democracy	30
Worried about not being able to live there anymore or young people not being able to stay / move there	29
Wanting it to stay quiet	22
Don't want to miss this opportunity to improve the area	19
Not having enough answers to questions/concerns	19
Too many competing needs for funds already	17
Don't want more wind farms	6
Don't want 'outsiders'	4
Care about local economy	3

Survey 6: How are we doing?

Figure 5 – Summary of responses to the survey 6 question: ‘Are you happy with the information being provided by NatureScot through this platform and our website?’.



Respondents were then asked: ‘If not (happy), what else do you need?’. This was followed by a free text response, the themes raised and the number of times they occurred in the responses is summarised in table 8.

Table 8 – Summary of themes raised in the free-text responses to the question: ‘If not (happy), what else do you need?’ asked in survey 6.

Theme	Occurrence
Bias / Lack of trust	62
Issues with platform	50
More information needed	42
Lack of referendum or Yes/No question	33
More/different engagement e.g. in-person, longer consultation time, engagement started earlier	29
No National Park	18
Other issues in area should be addressed first	6
Unhappy with demographic questions	4
Concerns about no campaign flooding platform	3
Information not concise enough	2

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