

**SCOTTISH COUNCIL
FOR NATIONAL PARKS
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NEWSLETTER
WINTER 2003**

We had quite a good response to our Hon. Treasurer's invitation to you all to pay your subscriptions for the coming year and many are helping to lighten the administrative load by setting up standing orders. Our thanks to you all.

We are now writing again to those who have supported us in the past but have fallen by the wayside, so to speak, in the hope that they might rejoin and contribute again to the efforts to ensure that all those areas worthy of National Park status in Scotland achieve designation.

If you know of anyone in this position or know of anyone who is interested in the future well-being of the National Park movement in Scotland, please encourage them to join us. It is so important to secure a broadly based membership with a good geographical spread if we are to impact positively on the decision makers in the Scottish Parliament and elsewhere.

You can contact us through Brian Parnell, Vice-Chairman and Hon. Secretary or via our web site. The addresses are at the end of the news letter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours

Robert Maund - Chairman

Cairngorms National Park

The Cairngorms National Park is up and running and SCNP is keen to make a positive contribution. We are trying to establish regular meetings (two per year) as we have done with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NP, to discuss matters of mutual interest and draw attention to any issues of concern.

We are already on the mailing list for planning applications, but because of the complexity of the arrangements on Planning between the Local Authorities and the Park, consultees are only given a very short time in which to express a view i.e. two weeks.

Allowing for the vagaries of post etc., it is no time at all.

We shall however, do our best to respond by the deadlines but it would obviously help if we had Members and Friends who lived in the area (and preferably with some knowledge of Planning) who could monitor the situation on our behalf and feed information through on a regular basis to aid the assessment of particular Applications. If you are willing and able to participate in this way, please contact Brian Parnell. Similarly, if you know of somebody who might be persuaded to help, speak to Brian and we will take it from there.

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park

Since the Autumn Newsletter, we have been involved in further contentious Planning Applications. They are, if you like, echoes from past history in the area where, in our view, the standards were not as high as we have a right expect now that the area is a designated National Park.

At Lochgoilhead, a chalet park, established more than twenty years ago, was the subject of a planning application to replace the chalets with the same number of much larger caravans or mobile homes. The original development was in a prominent location and would not have been consistent with current policies. Landscaping was 'modest'.

To replace the chalets with much larger caravans, would leave even less opportunity to create a good landscape setting to lessen the impact. SCNP recognised that because of the history, it would not be possible to turn the clock back but considered that it should be possible to require a scheme with fewer units and better landscaping in order to mitigate the adverse impact in a sensitive location.

Unfortunately, the Park Planning Committee did not share our view and consent was granted subject to conditions.

SCNP is concerned that the Park's response to some of these inherited problems has not been sufficiently robust. We have consistently advocated adopting the highest design standards, consistent with the Scottish Executive's policy documents on 'Architecture for Scotland' and 'Designing Places'.

There have been applications, however, where we have felt able to lend support such as the tourist related proposals at Mid Ross on the west bank of the loch. This should help to resolve the dereliction created by mineral workings from many years ago whilst at the same time being consistent with the policies advocated by the inherited Loch Lomond subject plan.

There is a judgement to be made about the extent to which SCNP should involve itself in Development Control. The Executive's view is that, recognising that there is a vigorous Friends of Loch Lomond body with each body represented on the other, SCNP should confine itself to the major development proposals and leave the more local issues to the Friends. This will enable us to make the most effective use of our scarce resources secure in the knowledge that the local issues are in safe hands.

The other danger is that SCNP could gain a reputation for being negative by opposing developments which in our view are either not consistent with the National Park concept, or are not of a sufficiently high standard. It is a risk we will have to take in the hope that when the Park Plan is in place, the policy context and the standards expected will be clear and will be promoted and defended robustly. In the meantime, we will continue to give what we hope will be accepted as sound professional responses to proposals.

SCNP Executive

Since the Autumn Newsletter, the Executive has met on two occasions, 30 October and 27 November. The next meeting is scheduled for 9 January 2004.

The next meeting with SNH will be in April 2004 and with Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park in March 2004.

We have approached Cairngorms National Park about establishing similar liaison but so far without success. We'll keep trying.

Planning Ahead

Our draft document on the need to develop a Strategy for National Parks in Scotland has been 'bounced off' a few well chosen people to try to get some reactions before we start a more formal campaign. The document

anticipates the possibility of a Coastal Marine National Park as mentioned in manifestos in the run up to the last Scottish Parliamentary elections. We hope to get our document out to you for comment with the first communication of 2004.

The Minister, Allan Wilson has announced that there will be a consultation on a Coastal Marine National Park in the New Year and therefore, the timing is opportune.

Scotland's Future Landscapes

Scottish Natural Heritage has launched a discussion paper to encourage wider debate on landscape in Scotland which they refer to, quite rightly, as a national treasure. Responses are requested by 13 February 2004.

SCNP regards this as a very important and often neglected area and vital to the consideration of existing and future National Parks. It is also clear that SNH would welcome a widespread response from across Scotland. We hope to finalise SCNP's response in January next and we would encourage as many supporters as possible to access the document via SNH's web site or by getting the printed version from their headquarters. If you decide to respond to the consultation we would appreciate it if you could let us have a copy so that we can get a feel for members views.

Communication with Members and Friends

This is our third and final, news letter of 2003. Next year there will be four. They will all be put on our web site as well as posted to Members and Friends.

In 2004, we intend to make our AGM in April, a more significant event with guest speakers, discussion papers and a well produced Annual Report giving a Scottish 'state of the nation' appraisal for National Parks. **Your thoughts are always welcome - please get in touch.**

SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL.

**SCNP 15 Park Terrace Stirling FK8 2JT
Tel: 01786 465714
E-mail info@scnp.org.uk
web site <http://www.scnp.org.uk>**