

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

**Securing the Future for SCNP**

Since taking on the Acting Chairmanship of SCNP, as well as being involved in specific issues such as the Cairngorms boundary and powers and development control problems in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, much of the Executive's time has been spent addressing ways of securing our future both functionally and financially.

As you know, we are a small charitable organisation set up to promote the case for National Parks in Scotland. We endeavour to influence those with the responsibility for establishing the Parks so that Parks will be created with rational boundaries based on consistent criteria, the necessary powers and adequate resources in terms of personnel and funding. We also wish to be in a position to monitor and make an input to the Park Plan making process and the decisions that flow from the Plans. We see the future for SCNP as performing a similar role to that of the Council for National Parks south of the border.

To be able to perform these functions, SCNP needs to be accepted more formally as an official consultee in the process. To this end we have set up meetings with Scottish Natural Heritage and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, which we hope will be the forerunners of regular get togethers to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern.

Finance is also critical - whilst we are still solvent, the margin is too tight for comfort and gives no room for manoeuvre. At last year's AGM we adopted a Strategy and Business Plan. This has been used as a basis for approaching possible funding organisations for support. We are indebted to the Council for National Parks for their guidance and positive help. We should know sometime in June whether or not we have been successful. In the meantime, we have made an application to SNH for what might be described as bridging revenue support.

The public and publicly funded bodies such as

SNH, have to decide whether they wish to see a Scottish equivalent of CNP south of the border, supporting the National Park movement in Scotland and protecting the principles upon which they depend for their success.

Yours

Robert Maund  
Acting Chairman

**Cairngorms National Park**

The Designation Order due to go before the Scottish Parliament demonstrates all that is wrong with the political process here in Scotland. The decisions taken on the boundary (leaving out the Perth highlands) and Planning powers (leaving an unworkable mishmash split between the Park and the Local Authorities) owe more to political expediency than any rational consideration of the issues needing to be addressed.

Perth and Kinross Council is understandably upset at the decision and is working with others to get the situation reversed. It seems likely that if the currently proposed boundary is accepted by the Parliament, it could be many years before legislative time will be found to correct the error. This has tended to overshadow the similarly bizarre decision on Planning Powers. The Executive has merely said that matters can be reviewed in 5 years time. A lot of damage can be done in 5 years!

However, the Planning system is to be the subject of legislation in the not too distant future and we shall take whatever opportunities arise from that process to seek a better solution.

SCNP is lending its support to those still seeking a last minute change and failing that will continue to advocate a rational boundary and effective powers for the Park.

**Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Park**

The main issues in recent months have been concerned contentious planning applications, the first for a hospice for very sick children on farm land east of the Balloch Castle Country Park and the second for chalets at Balmaha. Both were the subject of Hearings at which SCNP was represented, before the the Park

Planning Committee deliberated and reached decisions.

Both were approved. The Hospice decision, against officials advice, was reached after much emotional rhetoric but as it was clearly contrary to Development Plan policy had to be referred to the Minister. Whether he will have the will to put his head over the parapet on such a sensitive matter in the run up to the elections remains to be seen.

The chalets application was supported by the officials as being consistent with policy. Others reading the policies might easily have taken a different interpretation and there was much well reasoned opposition from various community organisations. The application was nevertheless approved by 4 votes to 3.

Whilst it might be hoped that these are typical of the teething problems which come with a new organisation finding its way, and particularly in the absence of its own up-to-date plans and policies, concern must be expressed about the management of the meetings, the playing to the gallery and the approach of the chairman. Some members of the committee not used to the worst excesses of local government political behaviour, were rather shocked by the experience.

### **The Everyone Campaign**

The Everyone Campaign representing Scotland's environmental groups campaigning together (500,000 supporters, 25 organisations, ONE voice) launched its campaign on 26 February, to try to get all the political parties involved in the forthcoming elections to appreciate that the environment will be a decisive issue. The campaign is encouraging all voters to send a clear message to candidates of all parties saying that they care about the environment and asking what they intend doing about it if elected.

More information can be found at the campaign web site [www.everyonecan.org](http://www.everyonecan.org)

### **SCNP Executive**

Since the Autumn Newsletter, the Executive has met on three occasions, 26 November, 21 January and 26 February. A further meeting is scheduled for 16 April 2003.

### **AGM**

The 12th AGM is scheduled to take place at 10.30am on 2 April 2003 at the Smith Art Gallery, Stirling. Coffee will be available from 10.15am. After lunch, which will be available at the Gallery, there will be a Speaker and the meeting should close at about 15.30pm.

Please make a big effort to attend - your interest, support and commitment is essential to the new National Parks and any others that follow.

### **SCNP Web Site [www.scnp.org.uk](http://www.scnp.org.uk)**

Our Web Site has been kept up to date with news of forthcoming Executive meetings, Newsletters and so forth. We have also had a small but steady flow of e-mails seeking information, with quite a few from abroad. Clearly the site is getting better known and we are now getting a number of firms trying to sell us a service which would monitor use of the site and record the number of 'hits' etc. It would be nice to know but we can't afford it at present.

As we've said before, we are always anxious to receive views - and help - so feel free to contact us with queries or suggestions.

**SCNP  
15 Park Terrace  
Stirling  
FK8 2JT**

**Tel: 01786 465714  
E-mail [RGMaund@aol.com](mailto:RGMaund@aol.com)**