

**SCOTTISH COUNCIL
FOR NATIONAL PARKS
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NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2004**

Brian Parnell 1922-2003

Most people will have heard by now of the sad death of our Hon. Secretary and Vice Chairman, Brian Parnell following a walking accident in the Ochil Hills on 7 December 2003. Whilst not wishing to repeat here the account of his long and distinguished contribution to Planning and the Environment in Scotland which has appeared in obituaries, we do wish to record our sadness at losing him and draw attention to the tremendous contribution he made to SCNP for more than a decade and to the cause for National Parks in Scotland.

On a personal level, we have all lost a good friend, a modest man of great integrity and without pretensions, who dealt with us all with humour, generosity and patience. We have been fortunate to have such a colleague and friend and we shall miss him greatly. We should reflect on Brian and his life every time we visit a National Park in Scotland, in the knowledge that their existence owes much to his passionate commitment and selfless efforts on behalf of Scotland's finest landscapes and wild places.

Yours

Robert Maund - Chairman

Our AGM: 7 May 2004

The Annual General Meeting of any organisation seems to be a complete turnoff to many otherwise supportive members. The election of officers, the routine of administration of the organisation in accordance with its constitution etc., is seen as boring and there is always that danger of putting your head over the parapet and getting landed with a job!

We do urge you to come however, and give us the benefit of your views. Also, if you know anyone, friend, relative, partner, etc., who has an interest in the great outdoors, bring them along to see if their interest is sufficient to persuade them to join as a Friend or even

more, become a Council Member and work on the Executive.

Perhaps more important than the AGM's routine business, we wish to devote some of the day to a discussion of the paper we have produced about the need for **A Strategy for Future National Parks**. The paper will be included with your documents for the meeting and the Executive is very keen to get your reactions and hopefully support, so that we can take the matter forward with some confidence.

We have invited Mr Allan Wilson, Minister responsible for National Parks to address us and await his reply.

Planning Ahead - A Strategy for Future National Parks in Scotland

If we get general support for the arguments in our paper, the question arises as to how we might get this across to a wider audience. Government has made it clear on many fronts that the views of communities will be very influential in persuading them which ideas to run with.

For our part, we accept that it is very important to have communities involved and supportive of future Park areas. It has to be recognised, however, that National Parks, by their very nature, are designated for reasons of national importance. Future National Parks must be designated for the right reasons rather than the lottery of such things from the past as Enterprise Zones, Duty Freeports etc.

We have, therefore, aired our ideas with LINK. Their Special Areas Task Force group has agreed to include our paper in their work programme for the coming year and it could become part of the EveryoneCan Campaign which LINK runs via all the member organisations and the web.

This can mobilise up to 250,000 people with a commitment to the environment - and a vote!

Cairngorms National Park

The Cairngorms National Park is being faced with a whole series of applications for renewable energy projects including both run of river hydro schemes and wind farms. They have recognised that to wait until their own plan is ready and respond to these schemes using the inherited Structure and Local Plans

most of which have differences of emphasis, will not be satisfactory. This has led them to prepare and consult on an Interim Policy mentioned earlier, within which they have tried to look at all renewable energy scenarios and interpret national policy and guidance for their circumstances. This seems to us an entirely laudable effort and we have responded in a positive way whilst giving comments which might further improve and refine the policy.

Whilst this has been going on, their neighbour, Perth and Kinross Council has been bombarded with wind farm applications and has also felt the need to interpret national policy as applied to their area. As you will be aware, the Perth Highlands are the subject of a campaign to include them in the National Park as was proposed by SNH, the Parliament's adviser in such matters. We believe it is only a matter of time before the Park boundary is widened to include the Perth Highlands.

In the meantime, we could see different policies adopted for areas which adjoin each other and which may ultimately be merged in the National Park.

The whole point about sustainability for the future is that you have to plan for it. Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Structure Plan Committee which includes part of Loch Lomondside has also consulted on renewable energy policy, Moray is doing the same, the Ayrshire authorities have got together for similar reasons and there are serious concerns in Argyll and Bute. Their tasks are made harder by the lack of clarity from Scottish Ministers resulting in applications, the locations of which are governed more by land ownership than a policy framework.

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NP

After our concerns about the slippage in the programme for the preparation of the Plan for Loch Lomond and Trossachs, there are encouraging signs that the work is gaining momentum. The team working on the Plan is fully staffed and the draft should be out for consultation in about October/November. This is clearly going to be critical if the development control process is to become more robust in its defence of the National Parks and the reasons for its designation.

It will obviously be some time before the plan goes through the full process to adoption but

once approved by the Park Authority for consultation, it will become a material consideration in dealing with future planning applications and the Park should be able to break free from some of the inherited consents which have troubled the Park's first year.

SCNP Executive

Since the Winter 2003 Newsletter, the Executive has met on three occasions, 9 January, 18 February, 24 March and a further meeting is scheduled in April.

Our scheduled meeting with Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park was held on 11 March and that with SNH on 1 April. The next meetings will be held in October and September respectively. We have not managed to establish regular meetings with Cairngorms National Park but it is hoped a clearer picture will emerge during April after further contact is made with the Chairman, Andrew Thin.

We have sent formal responses to three consultations, all of which can be read on our web site as follows:

Scotland's Future Landscapes - SNH Renewable Energy: Interim Planning Policy No.1 - Cairngorms National Park Review of Land Managed by the Forestry Commission Scotland - FC

Also in April, Robert Maund and George Boyd are meeting with Kathy Moore, CEO of CNP to discuss fund-raising and other areas of co-operation.

Members and Friends

As you know, we want to get more Members and Friends. This can often be achieved as successfully through personal contact as by expensive campaigns that we can ill afford. Three new recruits have recently joined and one of them, John Rodger, has been co-opted onto the Executive where his skills as an experienced Chartered Surveyor will be invaluable. John has a lot of experience working with voluntary organisations and is a committed walker. We are delighted he has agreed to join us. Do you know anyone you can persuade.....?

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