



Summer 2005

Our AGM held on the 16th April went off very well. The amendments to the constitution were agreed and John Foster was unanimously appointed as our first Honorary President.

After the formal business, there were two presentations, from Ruth Chambers, Deputy Chief Executive of the Council for National Parks for England and Wales and from John Mackay, formerly of SNH. Ruth spoke of the work of the Council for National Parks since its foundation in 1936. It now employs 9 core staff and takes on other part-time staff to work on specific projects. She outlined some of the growing threats to National Parks and used the description "critical friend" to explain the Council's role.

John Mackay took us through the processes which had been adopted in designing the Scottish National Parks legislation. It was apparent that no-one had foreseen the possibility that the designation of future national parks might become a purely political issue unless someone outside government was charged with the responsibility for advising on the necessity for future designations. This more than ever justifies our case for having a strategy for future National Parks and our case for doing the technical work now to highlight those areas which, based on consistent criteria, would be appropriate.

Having had a successful day, there is one further comment to be made. We decided to hold the AGM on a Saturday in the hope that we would get a better attendance and draw in those who, because of work commitments, could not attend on a Friday. It didn't work and attendance was disappointing. The quality was there but not the quantity. Your executive appreciates that AGMs are not normally the most stimulating events for which to give up valuable free time. Over the last 4 years, however, we have organised talks at the AGM from Jackie Bailey MSP, Dr Peter Rawcliffe of SNH, Bill Dalrymple and Bill Wright of Loch Lomond and Trossachs NP and the Cairngorms Campaign respectively, and this year, Ruth Chambers and John Mackay. All have been excellent and stimulated good questions and constructive discussion.

The survey on a preferred day for the AGM which we undertook last year was inconclusive on the choice of a weekday. A new survey form is enclosed - please return yours. Without your guidance, we will continue to struggle to generate the necessary support. Remember, for protecting the environment, it's not what you get out of it that's critical - it's what you put into it.

Robert Maund
Chairman

Scotland aims for the UK's first Marine National Park

On 15 June, the Scottish Executive announced a two stage process to create the first park of its kind in the UK. The Minister, Ross Finnie, said "*We are committed to managing ... Scotland's coastline ... in the interests of our communities and the wide range of important species the seas and coasts support.*" The Executive's news release said, "*The process of designating a Coastal and Marine National Park will be overseen by a new outcome-focused stakeholder group (our emphasis) chaired by Mr Finnie.*" Who writes this stuff one wonders? Do they think it generates interest and enthusiasm in the wider public? It will also be interesting to see who the 'outcome focused' stakeholders are.

The Executive is going to publish a Marine Strategy and the proposed Park will be an important strand in the strategy '*to establish a coherent approach to managing Scotland's coastal and marine environments*'. This is very welcome news and let us hope that it augurs well for the case SCNP has been making for a similarly strategic approach to National Parks whether land, coastal or marine based, to NSAs and to the protection of our most important landscapes and ecosystems.

Loch Lomond and Trossachs Plan

On 16 May, the NPA formally launched two important documents, the State of the Park Report (344 pages) and the Draft Park Plan (328 pages). The latter is out for consultation and comments are invited by 3 September. The State of the Park Report is essentially factual and is the base line against which future change will be measured. As well as being available as hard copy, both documents are available on one CD and also on the LL and T website. It is clear that a tremendous effort has gone into these documents and the Plan deserves a constructive response from all those concerned with the well-being of Scotland's first National Park. SCNP will be meeting with Bill Dalrymple, Chief Executive on 8 July for a preliminary discussion and clarification before moving on to a full response.

Cairngorms National Park Boundary

On 20 April, there was a debate in the Scottish Parliament, initiated by John Swinney, MSP, on the southern boundary of the Cairngorms NP. The debate did not end with a vote and it enabled the issue to be aired in a rational way - for the most part. SCNP has never understood how anyone could have chosen a boundary along a mountain ridge unless it had been the result of a political carve-up to pacify

the former Highland Region. SCNP passed a unanimous resolution at its AGM calling on the Executive to resolve this anomaly as soon as possible.

We also wrote to the Minister, Lewis Macdonald, before the debate. As was to be expected, our pleas and those of many others fell on deaf ears but at least the Minister did not slam the door on the possibility of a change depending on the outcome of the quinquennial review in 2008. It was an important exercise in keeping the issue before the public. We are not out of the wood by any stretch of the imagination - several future National Park contenders lie within Highland Council's area and it seems unlikely that they will welcome any further erosion of their powers.

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is a tick-borne infection spread most commonly by sheep. The ticks are apparently becoming more abundant in cattle, birds, deer and sheep and the disease is on the increase. Lyme disease is a notifiable disease in Scotland and is difficult to diagnose. It can lead to permanent disability and has on occasion been misdiagnosed as a stroke. Those working in rural industries, land management and enjoying countryside recreation should be aware of the position. For more information, go to www.bada-uk.org

Awards for All

Your Executive has made a successful application to Awards for All to meet the cost of new technology and enable us to set up a programme of presentations on National Park issues. The award of £3500 will enable us to acquire two laptop computers, two digital projectors, a slide scanner and the necessary software. One set of equipment will be kept on the east and one on the west. A start has been made on the presentations and we hope to be in a position to initiate talks to interest groups and respond to invitations in a way that has not been possible up to now. Our thanks to Awards for All.

SCNP Executive

Following on from the AGM, the Executive Committee is now made up as follows:

Chairman and Public Relations: *Robert Maund*

Vice Chairman: *Duncan Campbell*

Hon. Secretary: *Kate Walsham*

Hon. Treasurer: *George Boyd*

Hon Membership Secretary: *Bill McDermott*

Frank Bracewell

Ian McCall

Paul Ramsay

John Rodger

Charles Strang

Bill Wright

Since the AGM, the Committee has met on 17 May and 14 June. A further meeting is set for 12 July at which we hope to meet up with Drennan Watson of

the Cairngorms Campaign. Our meeting with Richard Wakeford, Head of Department, SERAD has been postponed from 29 June to 5 October. This is unfortunate because we had hoped to have discussions before we meet the Minister in August.

Beware of the Wild Men, part 2.

You will have been following the saga of the complaints after Jeremy Clarkson drove a 4x4 vehicle up a mountain in a National Scenic Area and caused damage that could take decades to regenerate. The BBC claimed that Mr Clarkson's activities would not encourage others to behave in a similarly irresponsible manner. The Council for National Parks (for England and Wales) has recently published a report on the problems being caused by motorised vehicles venturing into the hills and mountains often using ancient rights of way which were established for reasons of essential access, not recreation, long before the internal combustion engine was invented. This report can be seen at www.cnp.org.uk.

CNP came to the conclusion that there was a significant impact on the **Brecon Beacons, Exmoor, Lake District, Northumberland, North York Moors, designated South Downs and the Yorkshire Dales National Park.**

CNP's strategy calls for immediate action for government to:

- ◆ **Recognise the special purposes of protected areas such as National Parks**
- ◆ **Equip National Park Authorities with adequate powers and resources to take action**
- ◆ **Ensure that there is better enforcement of the law by all relevant authorities**
- ◆ **Bring clarity to the legal status of routes quickly.**

The Scottish Executive often seems reluctant to close the stable door until the horse has bolted. Perhaps in this case, they might be persuaded to take action before the problem gets out of hand.

Late Breaking News

We have a new Minister. In the recent Scottish Cabinet re-shuffle, Lewis Macdonald moved to Health and Rhona Brankin came from Health to SERAD. In their broadest sense, National Parks are concerned with health - ours and the land and the creatures who live on it. SCNP congratulates Ms Rankin on her appointment and we look forward to working constructively with her to establish a strategy for National Parks in Scotland.

SCNP The Barony, 2 Glebe Road, Kilbirnie, KA25 6HX. Tel: 01505 682447

E-mail info@scnp.org.uk

website <http://www.scnp.org.uk>