



Scottish Council for National Parks

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NSA Consultation  
Landscape and Habitats Division  
Scottish Executive Environment and Rural  
Affairs Department  
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Dear Sirs

### **Enhancing our care of Scotland's landscapes.**

The Scottish Council for National Parks is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to your recent consultation document concerning the future of National Scenic Areas. Bearing in mind that SNH reported on this as long ago as 1999, this present document is clearly long overdue. SCNP's primary aim is to promote the protection, enhancement and enjoyment of nationally outstanding areas that are National Parks, or are appropriate to be designated as such, or are of sufficient merit to warrant special protection. This is manifest in our support for good stewardship of the country's best environmental assets and encouragement of sustainable methods of development, particularly within areas of national park potential. SCNP is a recognised Scottish Charity.

Our comments are as follows:

Para 1.1 It is logical to give Scottish Ministers powers to designate, de-designate, or revise the boundaries of any National Scenic Area but clearly, if the management arrangements that are being proposed are successful, it should never be necessary to de-designate such an area unless it is absorbed into a wider area such as a National Park with stronger powers of protection than apply to NSAs.

Paras 3.1-3.6 We accept that if future areas are to be designated as NSAs, it is appropriate to continue to base them on the aesthetics and preference rather than an analytical review of the components of landscape. We think, however, that NSAs are obvious starting points when considering the possibility of future national parks and there should be no question of the protection that they are afforded being weaker within a National Park. In recognizing the socio-economic needs under paragraph 3.5 it should also stress the importance of the Sandford principle where there are irreconcilable conflicts. Similarly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point of para 3.6 should also be tempered by the Sanford principle.

Para 3.9. This presumably implies that the public can comment on the proposed designation of an NSA.

Para 3.10. The term '*required to have regard to*' is not strong enough and '*take account of*' might be more appropriate. It is also important



that the GPDO review is open to public consultation. Our earlier response to the SNH consultation paper on this matter said that a substantial reduction of GPDO rights in NSAs was essential, particularly those applying to utilities, farming and forestry buildings, mineral workings, highway works, fish farming, telecommunication masts, extensions to buildings, and temporary uses (such as advertising boards).

Para 3.11. This paragraph is at odds with the requirements in paras 3.3 to 3.6 which refer to *'special qualities that merit special effort to ensure current and future generations can appreciate these qualities in the future.'*

**Subject to the above, we think the proposed powers of designation and of roles in the designation and review process are acceptable.**

Para 3.15. This approach may be satisfactory for National Parks with planning powers where these provide extra safeguards, but it will not be satisfactory for National Parks without full planning powers because the National Park Authority will not be in full control of the review process. This emphasises again the need for all National Parks in Scotland to have full planning powers and be the planning authority.

**Subject to the above, the proposal to review the need for NSA designations within national park boundaries on an individual basis seems satisfactory.** As things stand at present there may well be a case for retaining NSAs within National Parks but accepting that the quality of the landscape is not uniform across any National Park, it could be anticipated in the future that National Park Plans could identify and provide proper protection for areas now considered worthy of NSA designation within the park. The concept that the protection afforded by National Park designation would be weaker than NSA designation, seems unacceptable.

Para 4.2. The management's strategy is a key tool whereby the quality of NSAs can be protected and enhanced. The idea that local authorities and national park authorities *'should be encouraged'* as opposed to *required* to prepare Management Strategies is inadequate and the weakest part of this consultation paper. **The recognised value of NSAs to the public justifies statutory strategies and indeed, the appropriate local authority and National Park Authority should have a duty to produce such strategies.**

Para 4.3. The contents of this paragraph should all be subject to the Sandford principle.

#### **Contents of Management Strategies.**

The biggest threats to NSAs are wind farms and pylons. These problems can be overcome provided the Scottish Executive gives a clear lead to the development industry rather than apparently following in the wake of a market-led approach. **This clear lead must encompass an overall renewable energy strategy for Scotland, including a spatial strategy for wind farms and funding research**



**alternative technologies including well-designed hydro and wave energy schemes which have significantly less visual impact than large wind turbines.** There is also a need for greater research into techniques for reducing the cost of under-grounding electricity transmission lines.

Para 4.7 and 4.8 are welcome.

**Subject to our comments on paras 4.2 and 4.3, we think the proposed approach to preparation and the target of 2010 are satisfactory as is the two yearly (biannual?) review of progress together with a more fundamental review at seven-year intervals.** The roles envisaged for the various parties and the contents of the management strategies are also satisfactory but the Scottish Executive needs to provide financial assistance, probably by providing ring fenced money to SNH with which to help local authorities and NPAs who might struggle to deliver without such assistance.

Annex B

We agree that the do-nothing option is unacceptable but it might be necessary to prioritise actions in all NSAs under option 2, in order to ensure that key work is done.

To summarise, SCNP found the paper helpful to the future of NSAs. It broadly follows the recommendations we made to SNH [5 April 1999] but it would be a serious mistake not to have a statutory requirement to produce management strategies and provide the resources to achieve them. There is some detail about the costs of this vital work. It is absolutely clear that the sums involved (less than £7m per annum) provide critical support to Scotland's vital tourism industry and are very small in relation to the national annual budget (about £30 billion). Let us not spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar!

Yours faithfully

Robert Maund  
**Chairman**