



Spring 2006

Saving Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

We have within our remit, the protection of important landscapes and habitats, and in February wrote to Ross Finnie, as Minister for the Environment, because of our concern over the large number of windfarm projects that were at various stages of the process in Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. Between 280 and 300 turbines covering about 6500 hectares are in the pipeline in the Park which is described in the recent Scottish Executive consultation "*Enhancing Our Care of Scotland's Landscapes*" as an '*Area of Great Landscape Value*'. It is also a proposed Special Protection Area and SSSI. In our view, the industry is pursuing these sites because National Guidance on windfarms in Scotland lacks clarity and is equivocal.

It was therefore, very encouraging to read much of a letter the local MSP and Minister responsible for deciding on the larger windfarms, Allan Wilson, wrote to the local paper (3 May), in particular his recognition that the regulatory regime he inherited as Minister in November 2004 was developer-led in respect of the location of future renewable energy development. The commitment to review the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG 6) and replace it with a regime and that **is 'plan-led and helps protect and preserve our natural heritage and internationally renowned natural sites for future generations'** could well ensure that the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park is saved from unnecessary wind farm development and the industrialisation and consequent destruction of an AGLV and pSPA.

We strongly support the inclusion of locational guidance for renewable energy developments in the revised NPPG. If the revised process is to be genuinely plan-led then the Park can be saved because the strategic plans for Ayrshire and Glasgow and the Clyde Valley already indicate alternative areas which will meet any reasonably calculated share of national renewable energy targets. It is to those areas that the industry should be directed and it should be made very clear that it will not gain support for windfarms in National Parks, Regional Parks, Special Protection Areas and other sensitive designated areas.

Robert Maund - Chairman

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NP

It is some months now since the National Park Authority prepared the draft National Park Plan for public consultation. They received around 450 responses and have been analysing them and making appropriate changes. They are also looking at what the priorities should be for the Plan and what might be achieved within the first five-years. This may require some revisions to the Plan. The aim is to have the final version submitted to Scottish Ministers for their approval towards the end of this year.

The scale of the task was obviously greater than anticipated and as a result the preparation of the National Park Local Plan is falling further behind. This must be a matter for concern because the Local Plan is the vehicle for implementing the National Park Plan Policies.

However, good news on the development control front. We have just been informed that the Planning Committee shared our objection and has refused a proposed development on land to the east of Tarbet House near Arrochar.

Cairngorms National Park

As previously reported, Cairngorms NPA has published its draft local plan for consultation. Consultation on the first stage is now complete and in March they published, again for consultation, the Draft National Park Plan and comments are invited by 30 June 2006. The intention is to bring the National Park Plan and the Local Plan together by the autumn so that they can be considered by Scottish Ministers and hopefully gain approval for new policies and the means of implementation for the next 5 years. This will mean that the potential conflicts between the old plans of the four local authorities which have a stake in the current National Park area will have been ironed out and hopefully there will be a consistent approach which more accurately reflects the needs of Scotland's largest National Park. If this happens in the timescale set out, it will

mean that the Cairngorms, although designated a year after Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, will have caught up and even overtaken them.

Coastal and Marine National Park

Scotland moved a step closer to its third (or even third and fourth) National Park on 31 March 2006 when Scottish Natural Heritage published its advice to Scottish Ministers on the establishment of one or more Coastal and Marine National Parks. The advice guides Ministers to five areas off the West Coast and the full document can be found at www.snh.gov.uk. When Ministers have decided on the direction they wish to travel, there will be further consultation. Any designation is unlikely until 2008.

Promotional Exhibitions

In March, we made a further submission for support from SNH to enable us to produce duplicate exhibitions which we can use when giving a programme of talks and establishing a presence at various conferences concerned with environmental issues. The cost of the exhibitions is £5000 and we have been successful in getting a grant towards this work of £4500. We thank SNH for their continuing support.

AGM: 21 April 2006

The 15th annual general meeting of SCNP was held at the Smith Art Gallery and Museum in Stirling. As well as going through the formal business of electing officials and the executive committee, we had some lively and occasionally provocative suggestions which confirmed that notwithstanding the relatively small numbers present, there is quality in depth, which is a great asset to the organization. In the afternoon, **Professor Adrian Phillips**, one-time Director of the former Countryside Commission (England and Wales) and for many years a leading figure in IUCN, gave an illustrated talk entitled '**National Parks - Lessons from beyond Scotland**'. The talk was a stimulating and excellent contribution which placed our activities in Scotland in the perspective of the international movement to sustain protected areas. We are most grateful to Adrian for sparing the time to prepare his

address and for sharing his national and international experience of National Parks with us.

SCNP Executive

Following on from the AGM, the Executive Committee met on 16 May and comprises:

Chairman and PR Officer: Robert Maund

Vice Chairman: Duncan Campbell

Hon. Secretary: Kate Walsham

Hon. Treasure: George F Boyd

Hon. Membership Sec: Bill McDermott

Ian McCall

John Rodger

Charles Strang

The following were co-opted:

Frank Bracewell and Paul Ramsay

Sadly, Bill Wright APRS Director, has left us. APRS has been reassessing its work-load and feels that it can no longer spare the time Bill has been devoting to us and others with similar interests. We fully understand and thank Bill for his valuable contribution. We look forward to opportunities to work with him again on causes of mutual concern in the future.

Since the Winter Newsletter, the Executive has met on 14 February, 14 March, 21 April (AGM) and 16 May. Meetings are scheduled for the rest of the year with next two being on 6 June and 11 July.

Since the Spring Newsletter we have responded to the following consultations:

Cairngorms Draft Local Plan: Feb 2006

Future of the Centre for Hydrology: Feb 2006

Enhancing Our Care of Scotland's Landscapes: April 2006

Rural Development Programme for Scotland:

The Strategic Plan: April 2006.

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