



Autumn 2006

On 19 September, the Paths for All Partnership which now comprises 20 organisations representing relevant public sector and national representative bodies, was 10 years old. It was set up by SNH to encourage the development and promotion of path networks.

10 years ago there was a severe shortage of paths that could be used by the public with confidence. There were few signposts and little information on where people could walk, cycle and ride. There was generally a very low priority given to access provision.

Outdoor access is now 'mainstream', particularly in relation to health and well-being, sustainable transport, strengthening communities and economic development. The Partnership's Paths to Health initiative is an excellent example, aiming to improve the nation's health and well-being by encouraging sedentary people to become more active. One GP has referred to Paths to Health as "the best buy in public health"!

Real advances have been made in making the outdoors more accessible and welcoming with more paths available to a wider range of people. All 32 local authorities and both National Park Authorities now have operational Local Access Forums. More resources are being devoted to creating, promoting and managing path networks. 10 years ago there were only 3 Access Officers in Scotland. Now there are 83! The Partnership's aim is to encourage a Scotland of active communities with access to well-used path networks to satisfy their needs and aspirations.

It has been my pleasure to Chair the Paths for All Partnership Board for the last 4 years. I now feel the time has come to stand down and concentrate on SCNP where we have few resources and no staff. Professor Jeremy Rowan Robinson takes over the chairmanship of PfAP at the AGM on 26 October. I wish him, the Board (all committed, unpaid volunteers) and the excellent staff team, well for the future. Their work is an essential complement to ours and I anticipate that we will see even greater advances in this important work over the next decade.

Robert Maund
Chairman

Meeting the Minister

On the 26 September we had our annual meeting with Rhona Brankin, Deputy Minister. This was the second time that we had met Ms. Brankin, a degree of continuity not previously enjoyed! We raised issues concerning wind farms and the Scottish landscape and of course the consultative draft on SPP 6 concerning renewable energy. This naturally led to the status of Regional Parks which are now under serious threat from a host of major windfarm applications. The proposed consultation on coastal and marine national parks was also raised particularly in view of the delay. We were assured that the consultation document would be out shortly and so it has proved. Progress following the consultation on *Enhancing Our Care of Scotland's Landscapes* and the management of NSAs in particular, was also discussed and SCNP made it clear that unless the production of the management regime for each NSA was made mandatory, it was unlikely to be effective.

The promised meeting with Rhona Brankin being arranged by Jackie Baillie MSP concerning the Loch Lomond and Trossachs by-laws had been held about a fortnight earlier. SCNP confirmed its support for the position adopted by the Friends of Loch Lomond expressing concern that the proposed byelaws did not address the key issues of speed, noise, tranquility and dealing with jet skis and seaplanes.

Finally, SCNP raised the difficulty being encountered by many charitable trusts with trustee indemnity insurance. The Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) has indicated that such insurance should be regarded as remuneration, something which is precluded by the articles of most charities. This means that many charities are currently operating outside the law and will presumably continue to do so until such time as the Charities Act legislation is amended. The danger is that many trustees will resign on the grounds that without indemnity insurance they, and therefore their dependents, could be at serious financial risk through no fault of their own.

SPP6 Renewable Energy: Consultation Draft

The long-awaited consultation draft on renewable energy which a previous environment minister Allan

Wilson MSP said that he wanted to be plan-led, has finally arrived. It shows all the signs of being the product of a battle between those who wanted the SPP to be genuinely plan-led, guiding renewable energy developments to appropriate locations and those whose role in life seems to be inserting get-out clauses to allow the development industry to carry on challenging approved policies within development plans which have been adopted following major public consultation and discussion. It is a sad reflection on official thinking when those purporting to be addressing the problems of global warming and the contribution that renewable energy can make, do not recognise that keeping our most important landscapes and habitats inviolate is an essential part of the same process as well as a vital part of sustaining the economy and our largest industry, tourism, which now employs 145,000 (FTEs) people.

SCNP's response to the consultation can now be seen on our website.

Clyde Muirsheil Regional Park

SCNP has continued to oppose new windfarm applications in the Regional Park. At present there are five undecided schemes at the application stage comprising 82 turbines, many of them 410 feet high, and falling within a proposed *Special Protection Area* and *Site of Special Scientific Interest* and all of them within an *Area of Great Landscape Value*. SCNP has worked with the local action group to inform all the communities around the park, bringing them together to oppose the industrialisation of this wild and beautiful place. The process is time-consuming and exhausting and would be totally unnecessary if the Scottish Executive's guidance on the location of renewables had clarity and was unequivocal.

To date SCNP has contributed by giving talks in Bridge of Weir, Kilmacollm, Kilbarchan, Lochwinnoch, Kilbirnie, Beith, Dalry, Wemyss Bay and Inverkip. We have also met with the Councils of North Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire who set up the current Park Authority and Glasgow who provide a lot of the "customers". The new computer and projector equipment funded by *Awards for All* has proved an invaluable aid in this process.

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NP

At our recent liaison meeting on 15 September, the new Chairman of the Board, Mike Cantley, joined the discussion. We have been increasingly concerned that communications between the Park and those wishing to make

an input left something to be desired and that this could harm the Park. He accepted that communications were a problem and confirmed his intention to be personally involved in resolving the difficulties. He also expressed his determination to get the Park Plan and the Local Plan completed as quickly as possible and said that in future individual Board members would be responsible for sections of the Park Plan, and would be set targets, working with Park officials. The Local Plan would be started shortly, and a 2-year Plan extracted from the Park Plan to prioritise targets; this was expected to expose a funding short-fall. He planned to meet the new Cairngorms Park Chairman on a regular basis, and to seek to increase their joint funding. Our next liaison meeting is scheduled for February.

Cairngorms National Park

The Cairngorms is moving into a new phase. As chairman of the park since its creation, Andrew Thin, has now been appointed as the new chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage, succeeding John Markland. David Green takes over as chairman of the park authority. We congratulate both men on their new appointments and wish them every success. We look forward to making a positive contribution to their essential work.

A major issue facing the new Chairman will be the proposed new national grid lines intruding on the Park. Recognising that, even in a world that conserves energy and is plan-led rather than developer-led in the location of renewable plant and the necessary grid, SCNP advocated in its response to SPP 6 that government should be contributing to essential research into cost-effective ways of undergrounding the grid in the most sensitive locations. The technology will come. We just need to give a positive push in the right direction.

STOP PRESS! – Coastal and Marine National Parks consultation announced on 11 October – responses required by 10 January 2007.

Executive Committee.

Since the Summer Newsletter, the Executive has met on 21-9-06 and 17-10-06. Scheduled meeting 14 November, no meeting in December.

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

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP6): Renewable Energy Consultation Draft.

We have also supported the LINK response to: *SNH Consultation on 'Enjoying the Outdoors.'*

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

E-mail info@scnp.org.uk

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