



Autumn 2007

"Thanks to global warming, it is also getting warm in Scotland now" –

A sentence I heard just before I left Germany for Scotland, coming along with another one, asking why did I choose Scotland, where it rains so many days in the year. Well, as I have been here now for almost four months I must say there is a lot more in Scotland than the whisky, sheep and kilt-wearing men. There is also just as much rain over here as in some parts of Germany. The summer temperature is a bit lower, but I got used to that.

Being a Landscape Ecology student from Germany, I was given the chance not only to learn about the effort SCNP is making to increase the numbers of national parks, but also I had the chance to actually be in that nature that needs protecting. Since Scotland is one of the least populated areas in Europe, it is a lot easier to get out into nature than in Germany with almost four times the population density.

Those wide-open areas make it a fascinating, gorgeous and diversified land with beautiful lochs, flowering heather on moorland, breathtaking views from the mountains and some majestic old trees. It is also one of the last wildlife areas in Europe, and I am glad I have had the chance to see it with my own eyes. All those benefits make it a perfect holiday destination for green tourism.

In Germany we have 14 national parks. It seems surprising to me, that it took so long for the first two Scottish National Parks to be declared and even more that it came to a halt once more after that. For me it is hard to understand, why there are not any more National Parks in Scotland. These unique landscapes should not have to face threats like huge wind farms which not only disturb the wildlife but destroy vast areas which they may be put in. It is also a horrible thought how the scenery would be spoiled by turbines.

People in Scotland should not take their great outdoors for granted, but also be aware what a magic piece of the earth lies in front of their doorstep and that it needs to be preserved for the joy of the following generations as well.

Nora Leipner

Placement Student with SCNP/CMRP

Meeting the new Minister.

In November we are to meet with the new Minister for the Environment, Michael Russell MSP. He will be the fifth Minister we have sought to influence in the last three years! We hope this time to come away with the three Cs – Commitment, Consistency and Continuity.

SCNP has prepared a paper to discuss with the Minister which seeks to show the way forward to establish a family of national parks, land based and marine, across Scotland which will truly reflect our unique landscapes and the flora and fauna they support. We are convinced that out of this approach could come a welcome boost to the economies of some of our most fragile areas arising from the promotion of environmentally sustainable development and the servicing of green tourism.

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NP.

One of the impacts of the establishment of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park is that the Friends of Loch Lomond, a body which pre-dates the national park and the earlier regional park, has extended its area of interest to cover the Trossachs and is now called the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs. It is important to note that they are not called friends of the National Park – they are friends of the area which is a national park and thus retain their independence in common with other friends' organizations such as the Friends of the Lake District.

This extension of interest is a welcome move as it will bring to the Trossachs the same care and attention which the Friends have brought to the Loch for many years. This has been far more than a watchdog role, important though that is. The Friends have organized studies, surveys, published books and carried out works on the ground such as footpath construction.

This all requires individual commitment and resources. The Friends have now made the bold move to appoint a member of staff to ensure their work is carried forward in a positive fashion. We wish them every success and look forward to an on-going collaboration.

Coastal and Marine National Parks.

The Scotsman newspaper has recently run a campaign to "Save Our Seas". It called upon all readers to express their support to "protect our

precious marine environment by taking the following measures:

1. Set up a network of marine reserves and protected areas to properly safeguard sites such as St Kilda, the Sound of Mull and others.
2. Introduce a marine planning system, effectively zoning areas for appropriate use. This will safeguard fishing grounds from offshore windfarm and other developments and allow humans to exploit the seas in a sustainable way.
3. Create a single marine management group to administer the system efficiently.
4. Give Scotland control of conservation to the 200-mile boundary with international waters.”

This initiative is very much to be welcomed. It comes at a time when the government has put the coastal and marine national park ideas of the previous administration on hold. SCNP accepts that there is much in the management of our seas which needs to be sorted probably through a Marine Bill. This is complicated because of the shared powers between Holyrood and Westminster and could take much valuable time. There is much to be said for establishing Scotland's first coastal and marine national park now using the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 so that the experience gained can establish best practice and inform the longer term efforts to bring our seas under consistent management.

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.

North Ayrshire's Planning Committee refused the planning application for a windfarm of 19 turbines at Kelburn within the Park unanimously earlier this year. It is now to be the subject of a public inquiry following from the applicant's appeal. SCNP is joining forces with the local Wind Factory Action Group to fight the appeal. This will entail a great deal of time, work and some considerable expense all of which would be unnecessary if the guidance in 'SPP 6: Renewable Energy' was clear and unequivocal. So far there have been two public inquiries, one in the Park and one just outside. Both schemes were rejected. In addition to Kelburn, there is the potential for six further public inquiries as wind energy developers relentlessly chase their subsidies at our expense and without regard to destruction of a Park which is a regional or even a national asset. How many public inquiries do there have to be before a government can be persuaded to introduce a genuinely plan-led system which Allan Wilson, (ex-MSP) the first Minister we dealt with, said he wanted? Surely SCNP is not the only body that wishes to see this developer-led scramble come to an end.

Cairngorms National Park.

CMRP is not the only Park under threat from wind turbines. Just north of Grantown-on-Spey on the edge of the national park there are five schemes for windfarms amounting in total to approximately 150 turbines. To the visitor, they might as well be in the park because they will impinge on it directly. One scheme at Dunearn is immediately to the northwest of Lochindorb and covers an area as large as the loch. The wider area is an important blanket bog and is home to golden eagle, hen harrier, red kite, osprey, merlin, goshawk, peregrine falcon, red and black throated divers, capercaillie, black grouse, redshank, red squirrel, pine martin and wildcat.

SCNP Fundraising for "the Project".

In our Summer Newsletter we reported that, in the absence of any action from government or its agencies, SCNP had decided to pursue its concept of a strategy for national parks across Scotland. This will require funds beyond our current means and at least a member of staff. We have now drawn up an 'application for funding' document for the three year project and gone into partnership with APRS to make it a joint project. The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland works to protect Scotland's world-renowned landscape and the amenity of the countryside. They care about Scotland's varied scenery and rural environment which is a priceless asset for the health, prosperity and well being of present and future generations. They strive to be an authoritative voice which makes good things happen in rural Scotland and combats threats to damage it.

Clearly SCNP and APRS have many common interests and if we are successful, it should mean that many more areas of Scotland would eventually have management arrangements in place which will be dedicated to long-term environmental sustainability with all the benefits this can bring to local communities and Scotland as a whole. Hopefully the experience gained in the national parks will also benefit other parts of rural Scotland where land management and planning should reflect best practice. Our appeal for funds should be launched during November and the outcome should be clear within six months.

Executive Committee.

Since the Summer Newsletter, the Executive has met on 4 September and 16 October and a further meeting is scheduled for 13 November. There is no meeting in December.

STOP PRESS: Please note our AGM will be on 18 April 2008 at Stirling Smith Art Gallery.

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