



### Spring/Summer 2008

This Newsletter is a bit late for Spring but then again, Spring also seemed a bit late this year. The reason is that we were totally immersed in the preparation for the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Kelburn Windfarm Inquiry which commenced on 10 June and finally wound up on 7 July. SCNP joined forces with the 'Save Your Regional Park Campaign' and together put forward 5 witnesses on the history of the park; landscape; tourism; community action; and a lay-persons view.

The partnership was accepted as a 'relevant person' which means that we had to circulate all correspondence, productions, precognitions etc to the reporters and other 'relevant persons' in accordance with a timetable laid down by the reporters. The appellants were late with their environmental statement, their productions and their precognitions for which the reporters gave them an extra week. We had all ours done on time. The appellants productions amounted to two filing cabinet drawers full (weighing in at 4 stone or 28kg) and their precognitions, summaries and written statements came in at 294 pages!

On 6 May, SNH withdrew their objection and submitted 56 pages of material purporting to justify their position. They declined to be present and answer questions and in spite of our repeated requests, the reporters office declined to summon them to be present. Confirmation was received on 22 May, two days after our precognitions and summaries were completed and copied ready for dispatch. The reporters said we could debate SNH's position at the Inquiry (who with?) and write supplementary precognitions. We are all volunteers with many other commitments, something for which there seems to be scant regard.

Government has put out a consultation document on Modernising Planning Appeals with responses required by 9 May. We have missed it, being tied up with the mega paper-chase of Kelburn. If Scottish Ministers really want to know what's wrong with the system, they should just see the boxes and boxes of files on this one case generated by commercial interests determined to overwhelm all opposition to their schemes.

If the spirit of the 2006 Planning Act, which is not yet enacted, had been followed, we would actually have debated the application that was refused rather than the alternative scheme which was revealed a week before the pre-inquiry meeting – but that's another story.

**Robert Maund**  
Chairman

### Parliamentary debate on National Parks.

We decided to attend the debate on National Parks and were pleasantly surprised. All sorts of rumours had been circulating about the attitude of the SNP government to national parks, the role of SNH etc but in the event, we had a debate in which all the parties appeared to be singing from the same hymn sheet and the dire predictions, mainly generated by a report commissioned from an academic in business matters, were firmly scotched by the Minister. The quinquennial review which is now under way, is clearly very important but it was accepted across the parties that the boundary of the Cairngorms should be amended to include the Perthshire highlands and that other boundaries might be adjusted in the light of the first five years experience. We intend to contribute to the review and to make a positive input.

### Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NP.

We have very much followed the lead given by the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs in our response to LL and TT Local Plan. Whilst the Plan has much to commend it and seeks to pin down what can be achieved in the first few years, it does not address the issue of local needs and affordable housing and allows for open market speculative housing as a vehicle for achieving a measure of affordable housing. Much of the national park is either potential commuter territory for big settlements such as Glasgow and Stirling or a target area for second homes. It is disappointing that the Park Authority has been unwilling to learn from experience in the English and Welsh National Parks who, having tried a range of alternatives over the years, have now come down against any significant speculative open market housing on the grounds that it creates more problems than it solves. A further difficulty in the plan is the absence of clear guidance on chalet developments some of which have been permitted in or adjoining settlements on such a scale as to threaten the character of the settlement.

### Cairngorms National Park.

Consultation on the Modified Deposit Local Plan closed on 25 July. We were disappointed that our submission on the draft local Plan did not lead to a meeting and further discussion. As with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs the response to the issue of local needs and affordable housing has not benefited from the experience of the English and Welsh national parks. The deposit plan seems

likely to go to a public inquiry and we will have to decide on whether to appear or limit our involvement to written representations. Our experience at the recent CMRP wind factory inquiry demonstrated how time consuming Public Local Inquiries can be for voluntary organizations without paid staff resources.

### **SCNP Fundraising for “the Project”.**

At the time of writing the money committed to or already banked towards our joint project with APRS has crept up to £15,800. We clearly have a substantial hill to climb and it is disappointing that various grant-giving bodies seem to have more difficulty funding policy development and the promotion of ideas than the nitty-gritty of footpath construction, tree planting, dry-stone walling etc.

### **Annual General Meeting 2008.**

The AGM in April was a successful event and we had two valuable contributions from our speakers, Michael Russell, Minister for the Environment and Andrew Forsyth, Executive Director of the Friends of the Lake District. Unfortunately, because he had to go on to another commitment, Michael Russell was unable to stay and hear Andrew Forsyth and the question and answer sessions had to be separate as well.

Michael Russell's contribution reflected the debate in the parliament and he was positive about the future for national parks. It was also clear that any future national parks would be very dependent on the views of local communities and without their support new parks would be unlikely to proceed. This illustrates the importance of our proposed campaign to go to the areas involved and consult with and encourage communities by pointing out the positive benefits that can come from national park status. The government's approach however, does not appear to have regard for the national dimension required for a strategic approach to national parks across Scotland. Some of our new members who have joined as a result of our efforts on the Save Your Regional Park Campaign, questioned the Minister on his attitude to wind-power developments in national and regional parks. His response indicated that industrial scale wind turbines in national parks seemed unlikely but he very frankly confessed that he was not briefed on Scotland's regional parks and offered to meet some representatives once he had got himself up to speed. We hope the meeting can be arranged over the summer.

Andrew Forsyth gave us an excellent talk on the contribution of voluntary societies to the protection and promotion of national parks. Like the Friends of Loch Lomond, the Friends of the

Lake District was formed long before there was a national park. They are in the enviable position of having substantial resources which allows them to employ staff and conduct basic research and run campaigns on important issues as necessary. It was unfortunate that the Minister's commitments did not allow him to stay to hear Andrew because there was an important message to be heard on community involvement, which Scottish Ministers are very keen on, but also the strategic dimension that the concept of national parks requires but which seems not to be given its place in Scotland.

John Foster stood down as Hon. President and was unanimously elected as Hon. Vice-President. Thanks were expressed to John for his on-going commitment to the national parks movement in Scotland. We continue our search for an Hon. President who will give us a high profile with the general public as well as government and other interested parties.

### **Campaign for National Parks**

Members may have noted that CNP for England and Wales with whom we are affiliated have recently changed their name from *Council* to *Campaign* for National Parks. This gives the general public a clearer indication of their intentions and role without losing the CNP acronym. The Executive Committee is to consider whether there would be advantages in doing the same. ***If you have views on whether we should follow suit please contact us by e-mail or letter.***

### **Consultations.**

*UK Marine Bill – responded.*

*Scottish Marine Bill*

*Forestry Commission Scotland*

*draft Climate Change Action Plan – responded.*

*LL&TT Local Plan - responded*

*Cairngorms Deposit Local Plan – responded.*

*Cairngorms NP – revision of boundary*

*National Parks Review Stage 1 - responded.*

*Management Risk from P. Ramorum and P. Kernoviae*

*Consultation on Scottish Soil Framework*

### **Executive Committee.**

Since the Winter Newsletter, the Executive has met on 12 February, 3 March, held the AGM on 18 April and met again on 3 June and 22 July. A further meeting is scheduled for 2 September.

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