



Scottish Campaign for National Parks NEWSLETTER

Spring 2016

Dear Members and Friends

Why does it take the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment and Rural affairs in England, Rory Stewart OBE MP, to say, as recently as last month in a document titled "*8-point Plan for England's National Parks*", that ..."National Parks are the soul of Britain. They are the centre of our imagination. When people think of Britain, wherever they are, they imagine these landscapes. I'd like to make sure that everyone in Britain, and more visitors from around the world, have the unique experience of going to our National Parks" ?

The above highlights the continuing mystery of why Scottish Government Ministers seem unable to grasp, and take action to secure, the wide range of benefits that would accrue from designating more National Parks in Scotland. However, the mood change in responses to our campaign that I highlighted in our last Newsletter continues, indeed, there is a gathering momentum as the contents of this current missive will demonstrate.

Last month we released our research report "*Tourism and Future National Parks in Scotland*," and we believe that this latest report provides compelling evidence on how the creation of more National Parks would help grow our rural visitor economy in a sustainable way. Such designations would also support the 2020 Tourism Strategy, with its focus on nature, heritage and activities. VisitScotland have not, to date, supported our campaign, but the appointment of a new chair, Lord Thurso, will hopefully provide us with an opportunity to persuade them of the merits of our case. The tourism industry as a whole ought to be a major supporter of our campaign, and efforts are being made to bring them on board. John Muir, the founder of National Parks, features again this year in which the US National Park Service celebrates its centenary. The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs are hosting a visit from the US National Parks ambassador, Lee Stetson, who will be bringing back home the "spirit of John Muir" to his birthplace in Dunbar as he portrays the great man, walking the new long distance footpath which bears his name. SCNP will be involved on 30 April when Lee will formally open the Tom and Rhona (Weir)'s Mountain Garden at Balmaha.

Mood changes in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway are clearly evident, and this is good news. Retiring MSP and former Presiding Officer Alex Fergusson has been helping our secretary,

John Thomson, capitalise on opposition to a proposed new power line, where the view of local activists is that a National Park designation would prompt consideration of alternative pylon routes by Scottish Power. Some success has been achieved on both counts, with Scottish Power announcing a possible re-think, and Dumfries & Galloway Council and the Southern Uplands Partnership moving towards supporting a Galloway National Park designation. We and a number of our friends are working hard in these areas, so do "watch this space" for further good news.

Finally, we have an election campaign going on, and SCNP and our partners APRS have been beavering away to get our agenda incorporated into Party Manifestos. At the time of writing we know that the three main parties with manifestos launched thus far have all included the possibility of more National Parks. Fingers crossed that planning and implementation of a strategy for more National Parks in Scotland feature in them all!

Ross Anderson
Chairman



Ross Anderson and his team work on Tom and Rhona's Mountain Garden

Research Report

Tourism and Future National Parks in Scotland



This third topic report to be published by SCNP and the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS) has been drafted by Graham Barrow, with input from APRS staff and SCNP board members, and follows on from the major report [Unfinished Business](#), previously published by SCNP and APRS, which explained that

“National Park status can attract more visitors, increase the average spend per visitor and lengthen the season, thereby increasing tourism-related employment and sustaining small-scale tourism businesses. National Parks tend to attract greater levels of inward investment, particularly for tourism, for outdoor recreation providers and for leisure developments”.

Using evidence from the worldwide network of National Parks to back its case, the new report [Tourism and Future National Parks in Scotland](#), argues convincingly that growing the network of Scottish National Parks would boost the number of UK and international visitors to Scotland, and generate much needed additional jobs and income in rural Scotland, particularly in some of its more fragile and remote areas.

Ross Anderson, SCNP Chairman, said: “Our new report provides compelling evidence which demonstrates that the creation of more National Parks would help to grow Scotland’s rural visitor economy in a sustainable way, and would support Scotland’s 2020 Tourism Strategy with its focus on nature, heritage and activities”.

John Mayhew, APRS Director, said: “Remoter communities in rural Scotland would greatly benefit from the year-round increase in visitor spending which more National Parks would bring and, importantly, bringing in more National Parks could ensure that this growth takes place without harming the precious landscapes that visitors come to see”.

The new report cites evidence from around the world to support its case, including that:

- Visitor numbers to the Kakadu National Park in remote Northern Australia grew from 46,000 in 1982 to 211,000 by 1991, with tourism spending at that time reaching \$35m;
- The three National Parks in Wales directly add £557 million per annum to the Welsh economy; and
- The annual 560,000 day-visitors and 33,000 overnight visitors to the Fiordland National Park in New Zealand generate \$196m additional regional economic output beyond what it would have been without the National Park.

Among the key conclusions of the Report are that:

- International visitors actively seek out National Parks;
- Increased visitor numbers help to sustain vital services, including shops, buses and cafes, used by local people;
- National Parks have a strong international reputation for being ‘open for business’ and welcoming to visitors; and
- Many national tourism websites actively promote National Parks as key components of their marketing offer, tourism and National Parks being natural partners: but NPs are less prominently featured on the *VisitScotland* website, possibly because Scotland only has two National Parks.

Graham Barrow

To Frack or not to Frack? – or – OKLAHOMA!

We note that Sarah Boyack, (lately) MSP, an SCNP supporter, has asked Scottish Government about fracking and the letting of associated research contracts. It is unclear as to whether the new Scottish Government will continue a moratorium on fracking in Scotland, nor has there been any indication whether, if such a ban were to be lifted, fracking would be allowed in National Parks, NSAs, Regional Parks and other protected areas. (To most people’s surprise, fracking has not been banned from English National Parks).

This uncertainty is of concern, especially in light of information on Oklahoma published in the March 2015 issue of *National Geographic Magazine*. It seems that Oklahoma, rather than California, is now America’s earthquake capital. In 2014 there were nearly 300 times as many magnitude 3.0 (and greater) earthquakes as there were in 2008. In 2014, 584 Oklahoman seismic events of that magnitude were recorded, whereas the yearly average before 2008 was less than five. The causes cannot be definitively identified, but the US Geological Survey notes that as the quakes increased in number, so had the use of injection wells that bury waste water from fracking. Whilst Oklahoma’s and Scotland’s geologies differ, the implications for those areas where fracking is a possibility are quite frightening. SCNP will be keenly watching developments, and should any pro-fracking legislation come forward we’ll be lobbying for at least a ban on fracking in protected areas, especially in our two National Parks and those special places we’ve identified as ‘candidate’ NPs.

Ross Anderson

Visit Scotland Announces New Chair

Mike Cantlay finished his term as chairman of VisitScotland on 31 March. Whilst we wish him well in his “retirement”, he was, sadly, not an obvious ally of SCNP in our quest for more National Parks, despite having been Convenor of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. He must have been well aware of the benefits of NP designation to the natural and cultural environment, to the tourism industry, and to local economies, but we never saw him step beyond Scottish Government's policy line, despite all the evidence that he should do so. The new chairman is Lord Thurso, who has an impressive tourism CV, and we are hoping to meet him before too long to press our case.

Ross Anderson

Barta Caceres

It was so sad to read on 4 March that this celebrated Honduran indigenous peoples and environmental rights campaigner had been murdered. She was a courageous defender of the natural world, and we must be sincerely grateful that the lives of our prominent environmental campaigners are not threatened or need police protection as she did. She initiated and led high profile campaigns against dams, illegal loggers and plantation owners. Last year she was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize for her opposition to one of Central America's biggest hydropower schemes. She felt she had to oppose this project saying *“We must undertake the struggle in all parts of the world, wherever we may be, because we have no other spare or replacement planet. We have only this one, and we have to take action.”* Scottish Government needs to take heed of this message, and seriously improve protection of our environment both on land and in the encircling sea. Designating some more National Parks would be a good start.

Ross Anderson

Could the Private Sector Do More for the Environment in Scotland?

Naturetrek operates wildlife holidays worldwide. To enjoy one of their 5-star holiday adventures should be on everyone`s wish list!

They are also a company which recognises the natural and cultural environment's value as a basis for ecotourism activities which contribute to more sustainable local economies. In 2007 they began purchasing Ecuadorian cloudforest, in particular a corridor that WWF identified as one of the 200 most important in the world. To date they have spent over £270,000 purchasing two biological corridors, which ensure that mammals can move between two National Parks, and which also function in the preservation of the region's flora and fauna, including its birdlife.

Naturetrek are keenly focused on the development of wildlife tourism and the opportunities this provides in sustaining local economies. These are matters which SCNP has featured in our Research Reports on tourism and the socio-economic benefits of National Park designation.

Naturetrek has recently launched a number of tours to Scotland, focused on the west coast including Oban, Mull and Ardnamurchan. Let us hope they understand and recognise the fragility of, and threats to, our environment, and maybe support SCNP in our efforts to persuade Scottish Government of the merits, including economic value, of the case for more National Parks.

Ross Anderson

Staffa: not yet a National Park (SNH)



News from the Parks 1 Loch Lomond & The Trossachs

A news update from the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs and others working to make the Park a better place for people and nature.

Friends' Future Priorities – The Friends, the only truly independent conservation and heritage charity covering Scotland's first National Park, have recently completed a review of activities over the past four years, and have set out an ambitious agenda for the years ahead under the themes of *Windows on the Park; Celebrating Cultural Heritage; Nature Conservation; Protecting the Park's Special Qualities; and Young Friends*: this involves taking forward a number of practical actions in collaboration with partners such as the Park Authority, local communities, and tourism and conservation groups. A summary copy of the future priorities chart, and details of recent activities, can be viewed at www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

A Safer Park – The safety of four million annual visitors to the National Park, and of its 16,000 residents, recently reached an important milestone with the 75th public access defibrillator installation by the Trossachs Search and Rescue Team, which has been working jointly with the Friends and local communities and businesses on this Park-wide scheme for several years. At a recent event in Balmaha, a new mobile *app* was launched, with the help of local MSPs Jackie Baillie and Bruce Crawford, which will help people quickly to find the location of the nearest defibrillator. Development of the *app* was funded by the Friends from the successful *Friends of OUR Park* visitor-giving scheme that they run with the help of 100 local businesses.

Balloch's Future Mapped Out – A £30,000 *LIVE in Balloch* planning exercise has been completed. Through a series of workshops and other public consultation events with local residents and other interested parties in February and March, draft proposals outlining future developments were prepared by a team of design and planning consultants. Key challenges addressed were how to link old and new Balloch through a review of development options for key sites, and ways of improving the public realm at the heart of the village. The chronic shortage of car and coach parking in the village was also partially addressed. Meanwhile the Park Authority's Planning Committee approved a controversial housing application that closed off the option of providing much needed car parking at one end of the village centre, despite strong representations from the Community Council, the Friends, and many villagers!!

Tom and Rhona's Mountain Garden Launch – To mark the completed makeover of the Tom Weir's Rest picnic site at Balmaha, home to a statue of the popular mountaineer, broadcaster and writer, there will be a special event on Saturday 30 April at 2pm, when the mountain garden, developed on the site in the names of Tom and his wife Rhona, and designed by SCNP's Chairman, Ross Anderson, will be formally opened by US National Park ambassador, Lee Stetson (a John Muir lookalike) and Richard Wright, editor of *The Scots Magazine*. Lee will be in Scotland as part of the US National Park Service centennial celebrations. The garden features a range of typical mountain plants, as well as a selection of stones and rocks collected near the Highland Boundary Fault which runs through Loch Lomond in close proximity to Balmaha. Feature stones include white quartz from Ben Lomond, and slate slabs especially engraved with quotes about Loch Lomond that were written by Tom 50 years ago, appearing in articles in *The Scots Magazine*. Everyone is welcome at this special event, and encouraged to wear a red toorie hat on the day! (If you don't have one they'll be on sale, with funds going to help maintain this popular Loch Lomond site, enjoyed by over 100,000 visitors since the unveiling of the Tom Weir statue in December 2014).

Controversial Camping Byelaws Approved by Minister – In January, after an extensive consultation, the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform, Dr Aileen McLeod, approved a large expansion of camping byelaws to cover a number of lochshores in the National Park. The byelaws, coupled with a new permit system and the provision of much needed small and informal campsites, will come into force between March and September 2017. They are designed to improve camping management arrangements, and to protect many of the busier hotspots. This follows on from the successful introduction of *no camping* and *no drinking* byelaws, and strengthened management arrangements, on East Loch Lomond several years ago. The proposals have been strongly supported by local communities, who see the measures planned as important to curb misuse of popular beauty spots within the National Park: but national recreation organisations, including Ramblers Scotland and the Scottish Mountaineering Council have strongly opposed proposals as they consider they are unnecessary, undermining the *right to roam* legislation which they and others worked hard to secure in recent years. SCNP and the Friends both supported the core proposals, but qualified this with a plea for more Park-wide camping provision to address major current shortages.

News from the Parks 1 Loch Lomond & The Trossachs



Loch Lomond: Balloch Aerial Shot



Loch Lomond Camping Map

Invited guests at the launch of the new defibrillator location *app*, at the Oak Tree Inn, Balmaha.



Photos from Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs

News from the Parks 2 Cairngorms

Every year in the Park, the University of the Highlands & Islands has an Integrated Land Use Conference, where its students from environmental management, forestry, gamekeeping and so on come together to discuss different topics. This year's agenda addressed *catchment management*, very timely given the devastating flooding on Deeside at Christmas. I spoke on issues around moorland management that had recently been in the press. There were many different points of view on this but, as always when listening to the range of speakers, it struck me that the only way that some of the issues are going to be resolved is through constructive dialogue.

A number of large-scale conservation projects are ongoing or being developed in the Cairngorms. Funding bids are being developed to help implement the *Capercaillie Framework*, and there are two *Environmental Cooperation Action Fund* bids in just now covering large areas of the Park. Work continues with estates on deer management. All of this is down to dialogue, working with others and seeking ways forward.

This year is also the third *Cairngorms Nature Festival (CNF)*. There are dozens of events taking place across the Cairngorms National Park on 14/15 May. *CNF* is a park-wide event which aims to get people close to nature, and promises to be a weekend of fun for all the family. Most events are free of charge, but some require booking in advance. Visit www.cairngorms.co.uk for the full programme.

Finally, this summer we shall be consulting on the next National Park Partnership Plan, focusing on the big issues around conservation, visitor experience and rural development, and I look forward to discussing these with SCNP in the course of the consultation.

Grant Moir

CEO, Cairngorms National Park Authority

News from the Parks 2

SCNP Response to Consultation on a Strategy for the Management of Cairngorm and Glenmore

In March we responded to this consultation. SCNP is strongly supportive of the need for a Strategy and the commitment which was made in the Cairngorm Partnership Plan 2012-2017 to “review, update, and implement a strategy for the Cairngorms, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore area”.

Strategy

We were disappointed, however, that the Draft Strategy had taken so long to prepare, given the extensive history of proposals and plans for the area. We were surprised that no reference was made in the Draft Strategy to this context. The considerable legacy of both policy work and research should have informed the development of the Draft Strategy. Instead, it read like less a Strategy, more a Visitor Management Plan. This was an opportunity missed. The Draft Strategy should be based on clear statements about current and future land-use.

It was not clear why Rothiemurchus had been omitted from the Draft Strategy, nor why Forest Enterprise Scotland had not provided any plans in respect of its extensive landholdings. These omissions were all the more surprising because the Draft Strategy talked about the need to integrate land management across Glenmore and Cairngorm landholdings – which we support – but then had nothing on habitat management or regeneration on either.

The Draft Strategy also failed to consider what resources were available from public agencies to assist with its implementation, nor how resourcing issues had shaped what had been presented.

Key Strategic Issues

The issues that have to be considered in any Draft Strategy for Cairngorm, Glenmore and Rothiemurchus should concern the conservation of natural habitats, the location of developments (which are mainly recreation-linked), and informal recreation. Construction of the ski road pushed development into what is both a hostile and a fragile mountain environment, not best suited for mass tourism.

Unfortunately, the Draft Strategy took as its starting point the status quo in terms of which land is for conservation and which for development, rather than exploring any alternatives. (Further) developments are not appropriate high up the hill. Alternative solutions must be found.

The Draft Strategy should be advocating not merely co-ordinated management, but *integrated* management, looking to shift developments where possible down the hill, where the challenge is to encourage more visitors without the development of large new facilities, and to make a renewed Glenmore Centre the primary visitor centre.

If the current suite of natural heritage designations is too inflexible to enable such a shift of developments downhill, then there is a need to rethink the whole approach to the Rothiemurchus/Glenmore corridor and look at, over time, broadening the focus of tourism to include other parts of Speyside.

Partnership

We were very disappointed that by far the biggest stakeholder group for the area, the people who are involved in recreation, whether formal (downhill skiing) or informal, were not mentioned in the Draft Strategy. Planners, land and facilities managers must explicitly promote constructive dialogue with recreational interests, and also find ways of engaging with people visiting attractions, 'ordinary' tourists who generally are not represented by organisations at all.

A copy of the full SCNP response will be found on our website shortly

Cairngorms (SNH)



News from the Parks 3

Campaign for National Parks

Government 8 point plan for National Parks

"We welcome the 8-Point Plan for England's National Parks the Government published yesterday, which places an emphasis on ensuring National Parks are protected and promoted for future generations to enjoy."

Campaign for National Parks



RSPB

Entries are now open for RSPB Scotland's Nature of Scotland Awards. These prestigious awards champion those who go the extra mile in conserving and protecting Scotland's wonderful wildlife and natural environment. Chris Packham said: "More and more businesses right across Scotland are realising that our wildlife, landscape and scenery are invaluable assets that give them a critical competitive advantage. Investing in our special wildlife and places makes good sense. I am thrilled that the Nature of Scotland Awards bring together such a wide community of people who are proud to say "we are giving nature a home in Scotland", and we look forward to duly recognising and celebrating their important achievements." The closing date for entries is Monday 13 June. To find out more and submit an entry visit:

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/natureofscotland>

Our Seas Are in Deep Trouble

Well done the RSPB for bringing our attention to the desperate state of the seas. The appeal for research funds to help restore our seas, featuring starving seabirds, seals, whales, dolphins, seahorses, squid, starfish, reefs and fish stocks, is extremely welcome. It is our hope that the RSPB have courage enough to face down the powerful fishing lobby and support the Minister in his drive for more Marine Protection Areas with meaningful fishing restrictions in them. SCNP, which campaigns for a coastal and marine National Park, will support the RSPB in any way we can.

Ross Anderson

Sustaining Our Assets: a Case for More National Parks

A document recently produced for Scottish Environment LINK purposes highlights the importance and value of our "Landscapes", and the landscape case is worth reiterating here in our newsletter:

"The beauty of Scotland matters to people. Long celebrated by poets, musicians and artists, Scotland's natural and cultural landscapes are renowned throughout the world; and it should be acknowledged that our landscape is, for this reason, a substantial economic asset. It inspires Scotland's "brand", and attracts visitors from throughout the world, helping make tourism one of the country's greatest foreign earners.

More importantly though, our landscapes matter because they greatly enhance our quality of life and our wellbeing: they give us inspiration, refreshment and enjoyment, and a connection with the natural world. Our distinctive and beautiful landscapes are often the keys to our senses of national, regional and local identities.

These values are elusive – they belong in people's emotions. They may vary from person to person and from place to place, as well as over time, and often they can be measured only by the volume of protest, when these landscapes risk being violated. This impulse to protect much-loved landscapes should not be dismissed as selfish NIMBYism: it is a wider reflection of public concern that nature and heritage should be cared for and respected. Such concern is a fundamental driving force for environmental good. It often acts as a vital counterbalance to the materialistic impulses of our society; and as a means by which our culture defends itself from its own excesses, in terms of the exploitation and destruction of the natural environment."

The above is why thousands, indeed millions of people care so passionately about Scotland's landscapes: it tells us that we need to protect, enhance, sustain and develop the resilience of our landscapes' assets as a matter of urgency. The need for a National Strategy for National Parks as part of this effort is absolutely clear. It should be delayed no longer!

Ross Anderson

Loch Maree: not yet a National Park (SNH)



SCNP Stalwarts Step Down

At the SCNP AGM later this month, two long serving stalwarts of the Executive Committee, Robert Maund and Bill Dalrymple, are stepping down. We owe them a great debt of gratitude for their work over many years on behalf of SCNP and the movement for more National Parks in Scotland.



Bill Dalrymple

was the first Park Officer for Scotland's first National Park – Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park – when it was established in 2002. Following his retirement, he has spent two three-year terms on the SCNP Executive Committee, providing wise counsel drawing on his experience with the National Park and his previous spells in a variety of roles with the Regional Park and Joint Committees that preceded it and, prior to this, with Dumbarton District Council where he was heavily involved in drawing up the first tourism and conservation subject plan for Loch Lomond in the early 1980s.

Bill will continue to serve as a Trustee of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, and plans to retain a close interest in efforts to secure more National Parks and establish a National Parks Service, which he sees as the best way forward for the National Park movement in Scotland.



Robert Maund

was the last Director of Planning for Strathclyde Regional Council and during this time he was a member of the Advisory Panel set up by former Countryside Commission for Scotland when it was asked by the Secretary of State for Scotland to carry out a review of conservation and management of the mountain areas of Scotland.

Subsequently, a conference was held at the CCS headquarters at Battleby and he was one of a number of speakers giving their reactions to the report which recommended the establishment of four National Parks. It became clear that government was not going to take any action to implement the recommendations of the report, and at the end of the conference Brian Parnell called for the re-establishment of the former Scottish Council for National Parks to promote the cause of national parks in Scotland. Robert was one of the founding members in 1990.

Robert succeeded Isabel Glasgow as chair of SCNP in 2002 when Isabel became a member of the newly established Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Board. He remained chair for 8 years until 2010. He was appointed an Honorary Vice-President in 2010, and took on the dual roles of Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary in 2013.

Robert has made an enormous contribution to the work of SCNP during his time in these various roles. For example, when he was Chair, Robert set up the regular pattern of meetings with bodies such as SNH, the two National Park authorities, CNP and annual meetings with the Scottish Government's (many) Ministers for the Environment. He sponsored and created our website/facebook page and established the regular production of our Newsletter. He worked with Charles Strang, then chair of APRS, to establish the partnership which produced the highly acclaimed report "Unfinished Business - A National Park Strategy for Scotland" and made great efforts spending endless hours filling in application forms to raise sufficient funds to allow the partnership to flourish.

More recently, Robert has been involved in establishing a Business Supporters Scheme, and overseeing the production of a series of topic Research Reports written by Graham Barrow to further the case for more National Parks in Scotland

While Robert is stepping down from the Executive Committee he will still be actively involved in the work of SCNP through his continuing role as a Vice-President.

James Fraser

Glen Nevis: not yet a National Park (SNH)

