



Campaigning for the Conservation of Wild Land in Scotland

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Dear Sir

Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2

I am writing to you on behalf of the members of the Scottish Wild Land Group. We have several aims but included among these are ambitions to promote the interests of wildlife and biodiversity, the restoration of rare and missing species and environments, and the connection of habitats and protected areas to allow ecological recovery and species movements. We have long considered that in order to help delivery of these particular aims, Scotland should have more national parks, both terrestrial and marine. We were thus interested to see in the Council's Main Issues Report, Question MIR 14, your preferred option to explore the potential to create a coastal and marine Argyll and Islands National Park. You also state that should the Scottish Government instigate a review of national parks that Argyll and Bute Council would seek to have their proposals included for appraisal. We are very supportive of this in principle.

It is most disappointing that Scotland, despite having some of the finest landscapes and seascapes in the world, coupled with unique biodiversity and ecosystems, can only boast two national parks. This is difficult to understand given that the benefits to national parks in contributing environmental, social and economic benefits are well documented.

In 2007 the Scottish Executive and Scottish Natural Heritage produced a document supporting the case for new coastal and marine national parks, and put forward for consideration several possible areas, including several with coastal islands, but sadly this proposal was not progressed, this represented a lost opportunity at the time.

We would like to comment on some specific areas of your proposals. The particular aims and conditions for national parks in Scotland are set out in the National Parks [Scotland] Act 2000. Some of these conditions refer to the setting of park boundaries, a crucial matter, and in the case of the national park area you propose it might be found that in order to comply with the Act that any new national park may extend into the areas of adjacent local authorities in order to achieve the aims of the Act.



There are four statutory aims of national parks in Scotland, all of these have to be demonstrably achieved and there is no hierarchy of importance:

- a. To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area
- b. To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area
- c. To promote understanding and enjoyment [including enjoyment in the form of recreation]of the special qualities of the area by the public, and
- d. To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

We would respectfully point out that it would thus be inappropriate to propose that securing the social and economic development of communities should be the "driving force" of the national park. There are, as you recognise, very many economic gains that could be realised by focussing instead on all the stated aims of national parks, with good planning and management in order to achieve social and economic benefits over the long term.

The national park would be more effective if it has full planning powers as in the case of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, unlike the Cairngorms National Park where delays and frustrations can occur and there is some lack of clarity occasionally for communities, landowners and developers.

You also comment on the national park Board structure, and we would again draw attention to the National Park[Scotland] Act 2000 which specifies the composition of a Board.

There are several successful and important local industries already in existence in the area you propose for national park status, such as farming, fishing, distilling, wildlife tourism, many diverse recreation possibilities on land and sea, and beautiful landscapes and seascapes to attract tourists. With the increased funding from government that a national park would attract, and a focus on sustainability and good stewardship, the communities in the area would be well placed to develop these industries further. This would help to ensure their stability and security, and to provide attractive areas to live in, work and raise families. Tourism might be expected to be a core high value industry, as national parks attract visitors due to their special qualities and their recognised national value and assets.

We will watch progress on your ambition with great interest. Should you have any queries about any of the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Beryl Leatherland

