



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01556

Name of petitioner

John Mayhew on behalf of SCNP and APRS

Petition title

A National Parks Strategy for Scotland

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to prepare and implement a strategy to designate more National Parks in Scotland, including at least one Coastal and Marine National Park.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

We have:

- Met every Environment Minister since 2004 to propose the designation of more National Parks
- Run a three-year joint project from 2010 to 2013 to carry out research, raise awareness and argue the case for more National Parks
- Published a major report, *Unfinished Business* (2013), setting out the case for a National Parks Strategy for Scotland, proposing the creation of several more National Parks and identifying seven suitable areas
- Engaged with several other national organisations (eg RSGS and RTPI) and local communities (eg Cheviots, Galloway and Mull) to argue our case
- Met several MSPs for areas we propose as National Parks
- Published articles in several monthly or quarterly magazines and newsletters of other NGOs

Petition background information

Introduction

Scotland's landscapes rank amongst the best in the world, including wild mountains, pristine rivers and lochs, ancient forests, stunning coastline and islands, all rich in wildlife and history. With landscapes of such quality it would be reasonable to expect to see them recognised, celebrated and protected according to international best practice. However, out of over 3,500 National Parks in the world, Scotland has only two.

National Parks

'National Park' is the leading internationally-recognised designation for places of the highest national importance for natural or cultural heritage, including landscape, wildlife

and recreation. The term 'National Park' has various meanings in different countries, but National Park status is recognised across the world as the highest accolade which can be given to a place within its national context. There are over 3,500 National Parks worldwide, including such well-known places as Jotunheimen in Norway, Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, the Galapagos in Ecuador, Cradle Mountain in Tasmania, the Karakoram in Pakistan and Yosemite in the USA. Some National Parks are truly wild areas, although across much of Europe most are wholly or partly lived-in, working landscapes. Scots-born naturalist, explorer and writer John Muir inspired the creation of the world's first National Parks in 19th-century USA and is known as the 'Father of National Parks'; the centenary of his death fell in 2014. There are currently 15 National Parks in the UK, including Snowdonia in Wales and the Lake District in England.

National Parks in Scotland

Scotland was relatively slow to realise the potential of National Park designation. Expert reports in 1945, 1974 and 1990 recommended establishing at least four National Parks in Scotland, and extensive research and debate in 2005-2007 established a clear case for one or more Coastal and Marine National Parks. After over 50 years of deliberation, the National Parks (Scotland) Act was eventually passed in 2000, but only two National Parks have been designated: Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park in 2002 and Cairngorms National Park in 2003. The flexible wording of the 2000 Act enables National Park powers, functions and governance structures to be adapted to suit local circumstances.

Scotland's first two National Parks have achieved a great deal in their first decade and represent remarkable value for money. They inspire pride and passion amongst local people and visitors, and provide many valuable benefits to local residents, visitors and Scotland as a whole. SCNP and APRS consider now is the time to spread these benefits still wider by adding more parts of Scotland to the worldwide family of National Parks. There are further areas of outstanding importance for landscape and recreation in Scotland worthy of National Park designation, and evidence of public support for this at both national and local levels. The designation of more National Parks, best done in the context of an overall agreed national strategy, would bring additional resources to places which merit designation, strengthen Scotland's international standing for environmental protection and support our crucial tourism industry.

Parliamentary debates on National Parks in March 2008, November 2009 and November 2013 generated many positive comments from MSPs. The Scottish Government reviewed the existing National Parks in 2009, but failed to establish the national Strategy Group proposed as part of that review.

Some of these benefits can be delivered in other ways and by other bodies. However, we consider that designating a special area as a National Park is the best way to:

- generate a high profile
- support its active management as well as its protection
- encourage integrated planning and management by all public bodies; and
- invest additional national resources in helping both residents and visitors to enjoy the landscape whilst conserving it for future generations

Proposals

We consider that:

- National Parks generate many environmental, social and economic benefits
- There is substantial national public support for National Parks, and local support for designating further National Parks in some parts of Scotland
- There is a strong case for designating more National Parks in Scotland
- There is scope for improvement in the Scottish Government's operation of the two existing National Parks and any future ones
- The Scottish Government should prepare and implement a strategy to designate more of Scotland's land, coast and sea as National Parks
- This strategy should be fully integrated with the National Planning Framework, sustainable Land Use Strategy and National Marine Plan

Call to Action

We call on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

- Establish a Ministerially-led National Parks Strategy Group
- Prepare a national strategy for future terrestrial and marine National Parks in Scotland
- Improve National Park legislation, structures, functions and powers
- Recognise and take full advantage of the benefits of National Park status

Links

Scottish National Parks Strategy Project:

<http://www.ruralscotland.btck.co.uk/Projects/ScottishNationalParksStrategy>

Unfinished

Business: <http://btckstorage.blob.core.windows.net/site1061/Projects/ScottishNationalParks/UnfinishedBusinessMarch2013.pdf>

Scottish Campaign for National Parks (SCNP): <http://www.scnp.org.uk/index.htm>

The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS): <http://www.ruralscotland.btck.co.uk/Home>

SCNP on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rgmaund1?fref=ts>

APRS on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/APRScotland>

APRS on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/APRScotland>

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/nationalparks>

Related information for petition

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

How many signatures have you collected so far?

1

Closing date for collecting signatures online

13 / 03 / 2015

Comments to stimulate online discussion

Scotland's landscapes are amongst the best in the world, but we only have two National Parks, the highest national accolade which can be given to a place. Scotland's first two National Parks have achieved a great deal in their first decade, and they inspire pride and passion amongst local people and visitors. There are other outstanding landscapes in Scotland worthy of National Park designation, and local and national public support for this. More National Parks would generate many environmental, social and economic benefits. They would bring additional resources, strengthen Scotland's international standing for environmental protection and support

our crucial tourism industry. It is now time that the Scottish Government prepared a strategy to designate more of Scotland's land, coast and sea as National Parks.