

PE1556/D

Ms Sigrid Robinson

Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Clerks
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The Scottish Parliament
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26th May 2015

Dear Ms Robinson,

RESPONSE TO PETITION [PE1556](#)

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.

We thank the Public Petitions Committee for the chance to express our views in relation to Petition PE1556.

RSPB Scotland have consistently supported the setting up of National Parks in Scotland, including Marine National Parks and are keen to see them function properly in order (in particular) to conserve and enhance their natural heritage, while also promoting recreational and sustainable socio-economic development.

Our members are residents in, and visitors to, the National Parks. RSPB Scotland is a major land manager and visitor attraction operator in both National Parks. We work in partnership with the National Park Authorities (NPAs) and others to help preserve important habitats and conserve Scotland's biodiversity. RSPB staff have been employed by National Park Authorities and have been members of National Park boards.

Scottish Council for National Parks (SCNP) and Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS) report, *Unfinished Business*, calls on the Scottish Government to develop a forward strategy for national parks in Scotland. The SCNP/ARPS report is a thorough and objective piece of work and RSPB Scotland supports its broad conclusions including:

- National Parks bring a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits and there is substantial public support for more National Parks in Scotland.
- There is scope for improvement in the Scottish Government's operation of the two existing National Parks. The Scottish Government should prepare and implement a strategy for National Parks, that includes the working of existing National parks, and the objective of designating more National Parks. This strategy should seek to include at least one Coastal and Marine National Park

- This strategy should be fully integrated with the National Planning Framework, the sustainable Land Use Strategy and the National Marine Plan.

In addition to this, RSPB Scotland supports:

- Expansion of the network to protect areas where national conservation, landscape, recreation and tourism (economic) interests coincide is a valid long-term aspiration for national parks in Scotland. During the 2009 consultation on National Parks, there was overwhelming public support both for the idea of national parks in Scotland and subsequently for the enabling legislation. Support was predicated in many cases on an assumption that a national parks network in Scotland would eventually extend to areas beyond the current two parks, probably including sites identified in the 1990 Countryside Commission for Scotland report, as well as a “marine” national park.
- National Parks are nationally significant protected areas where the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage should be a priority. National Parks should also be exemplars in demonstrating sustainability. Such sustainability often requires hard decisions and NPAs should be enabled and encouraged to face these, and ensure that natural heritage protection is delivered.
- The management and delivery of the aims of Scotland’s two existing national parks in a more coordinated manner to achieve all their aims, especially conservation.
- Engagement in further discussions to identify the most suitable areas for consideration for future national parks. In our view, this should certainly include at least one marine area, which would meet distinctly different needs and aims from those to be delivered by Marine Protected Areas delivered by the Marine Act for Scotland.
- Ensure that this work is conceived and delivered strategically.
- Support for and from local communities for additional National Parks to conserve and enhance their natural heritage, while also promoting recreational and sustainable socio-economic development.

We remain very supportive of the concept of national parks, and hope to see additional national parks designated in the near future.

Kind Regards

Rea Cris
Parliamentary Officer, RSPB Scotland