

PE1556/E

Scottish Natural Heritage Letter of 29 May 2015

CONSIDERATION OF 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.

Thank you for seeking the advice of Scottish Natural Heritage on this petition.

Decisions on further National Parks are matters for Scottish Ministers and the position of the current Scottish Government in relation to this matter is clear.

We would therefore simply note the following points in relation to this petition

- SNH has a statutory role in the development of proposal for National Parks. Previously, our advice on the development and implementation of legislative proposals for Scotland's National Parks led to the establishment of Scotland's first two National Parks in Loch Lomond & the Trossachs (2002) and the Cairngorms (2003). We also provided advice to Ministers on proposals for Coastal and Marine National Parks (2006) and the extension to the Cairngorms National Park (2008).
- We consider that National Parks are positive assets for Scotland, acting both as an internationally recognised accolade that celebrates some of Scotland's finest nature and landscapes, but also as a powerful management and governance tool to help deliver conservation objectives more effectively alongside social and economic ones. While relatively young in international terms, experience of the first two National Parks is positive. It is reasonable to consider if this approach should be extended to other areas of Scotland.
- As the Committee has already heard, the location, number and affordability of further National Parks raise a number of issues which need further careful consideration. In part, this also reflects the considerable flexibility in terms of the powers, structures and governance that National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 provides for, and which allows arrangements for each National Park to be tailored to meet local circumstances. We consider that such a mechanism is also best suited to larger areas, so any new National Parks need to be considered along a more systematic review of the purpose and effectiveness of other area-based approaches such as National Scenic Areas, Biosphere Reserves and Geoparks, and Regional Parks. If a coastal or marine area was being considered, the relationship between the National Park and the new marine planning system would also need to be reviewed.

Scottish Natural Heritage
May 2015