

Frequently asked questions

This is a list of questions about this proposal and our draft recommendations. If you still have queries after you have read this section please try

www.snh.org.uk/NationalParks, or contact Debbie Greene or Andy Rockall -

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1. What is a National Park?

The term National Park is used to describe a number of different types of protected area throughout the world. In Scotland, the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000¹ specifies three conditions that an area must meet if it is to become a National Park, namely:

- that the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage;
- that the area has a distinctive character and coherent identity; and,
- that designating the area as a National Park would meet the special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in relation to the area in a co-ordinated way.

Each National Park has a National Park Authority responsible for co-ordinating the collective efforts of all those involved in managing the area.

2. What are the aims of National Parks?

Scottish National Parks differ from many other Parks in that they specifically include a social and economic development aim. Their four aims are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- to promote sustainable use of natural resources of the area;
- to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public; and
- to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

3. Who are the Cairngorms National Park Authority?

The Authority has a Board of 25 Members, and employs 59 staff, spread between two offices in Grantown-on-Spey and in Ballater. The Authority is a public body that receives financial support directly from Scottish Government.

The Board currently comprises 5 members elected directly by the voters in the Park; 10 members appointed directly by Scottish Ministers; and 10 appointed by nomination of the 4 local authorities currently in the Park (see Table 1 in the consultation leaflet). Two of the Highland nominations and one of the Aberdeenshire nominations must either live within the Park, or be a Councillor or Community Councillor for an area in the Park. The Local Authorities do not have to nominate

¹ http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2000/asp_20000010_en_1

Councillors as Board members, but in practice they have done so. At the moment, 22 of the 25 Board members live in or close to the Park.

4. What does the Cairngorms National Park Authority do?

It is responsible for preparing a National Park Plan for the area which sets out how the area should be managed over the next 25 years. The Authority leads and co-ordinates the activity required to achieve the Vision in the Plan. In addition, the Authority has specific functions in relation to development planning (i.e. determining what new developments should or should not go ahead in the area). The Authority must prepare a Local Plan for the Park and decide on planning applications that are of significance to the National Park aims. The Authority is also the Outdoor Access Authority. This means that it must prepare a Core Paths Plan, set up a Local Outdoor Access Forum, publicise the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, and uphold people's access rights. If you want to know more, please visit www.cairngorms.co.uk or contact the National Park Authority on 01479 873535.

5. How is the Cairngorms National Park managed?

Land managers, local businesses, public bodies, local organisations and local people all manage the Park. But it is the Cairngorms National Park Authority that has the job of ensuring that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in a co-ordinated way. The Authority is mainly an enabling and facilitating body rather than a regulatory body. This means that it helps and encourages many people and organisations to work well together to ensure the Parks stays a special place well into the future.

6. What are the management priorities in the Cairngorms National Park?

The management priorities are set out in the Cairngorms National Park Plan². The Plan brings together all those involved in managing the Park to set out a long-term vision, a framework for management, and priorities for action. It sets out how all sectors can work together to collectively achieve the four aims of the Park.

The Plan identifies seven Priorities for Action, which are being delivered by a wide range of people and organisations over a five year period, from 2007-2012. These priorities are:

- Conserving and enhancing biodiversity and landscapes
- Integrating public support for land management
- Supporting sustainable deer management
- Providing high quality opportunities for outdoor access
- Making tourism and business more sustainable
- Making housing more affordable and sustainable
- Raising awareness and understanding of the Park.

² http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/current_activities/nationalparkplan/index.php

7. Will the management policies of the National Park be changed to take into account the proposed change to the boundary?

Yes, at the first available opportunity. There are a number of management policies for the National Park in place and all are subject to review within the next few years. All of these policies have been developed after widespread consultation with anyone who might be affected. The Cairngorms National Park Authority would ensure that the same opportunities for consultation are available in relation to any proposed changes. In the meantime any policies that are currently in place (through, for example, existing Local Plans) would be the basis for any decisions made.

8. Does the Cairngorms National Park bring with it more rules and regulations?

Rather than being concerned with rules and regulations, the National Park is much more about encouraging positive management actions. When the National Park is extended to cover parts of Perth and Kinross, the main difference will be that responsibility for carrying out some existing regulatory functions will pass from Perth and Kinross Council to the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Their respective policies may be slightly different. The main responsibilities that will change hands are Access Authority duties, and some Planning Authority duties, as explained in Question 4.

9. How did this proposal to change the boundary come about?

The Cairngorms National Park was established in 2003. This followed a series of public consultations and consideration by the Scottish Parliament³, with much discussion about how large the Park should be. At the time the Park was established the boundary excluded any land within Perth & Kinross Council. Many people were concerned about this decision, and this led to the establishment of the Perthshire Alliance for the Real Cairngorms (PARC)⁴ to campaign for the boundary to be changed.

John Swinney, the local constituency MSP, introduced the Cairngorms National Park Boundary Bill⁵ to Parliament in September 2006. This Bill proposed that the boundary should be extended into Perth & Kinross – to cover the area we had proposed for inclusion in the Park in our *Report on the proposal to establish a National Park in the Cairngorms*⁶ in 2001. Briefing 07/05⁷, prepared by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, contains more information on the Bill and the background to it.

An important stage of the passage of this Bill through the Scottish Parliament was an examination by the Parliament's Environment and Rural Development Committee during January and February 2007. Key local and national stakeholders gave evidence to this committee at a meeting in Blair Atholl.

³ For the history see <http://www.snh.org.uk/strategy/natparks/sr-np0h.asp>

⁴ http://www.cairngormscampaign.org.uk/cairngorms_parc.php

⁵ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/bills/72-CairngormsNP/index.htm>

⁶ <http://www.snh.org.uk/strategy/natparks/sr-npc00.asp>

⁷ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-07/SB07-05.pdf>

The Committee decided that there was a strong case for Highland and Eastern Perthshire to be included within the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park⁸, as originally recommended by SNH in 2001. However, the Committee did not think that the Bill provided the best way of addressing the Park boundary. Instead, they strongly recommended that the boundary should be considered as part of the 5-year strategic review of National Parks (which is now underway). Parliament voted against the Bill in March 2007.

In the run up to the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2007, the Scottish National Party (SNP) made a manifesto commitment to extend the National Park into Perth & Kinross. The SNP gained the largest number of seats in this election, and the new Scottish Ministers, as part of a debate in Parliament, announced their proposal to modify the boundary in March 2008.

10. Why are you running another consultation on this subject?

Scottish Ministers asked us to run a consultation because the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 requires that people must be consulted on any formal proposal by Ministers to modify a National Park. The Scottish Parliament built extensive consultation into the Act because they were very concerned that everyone with an interest could have their say on how and where National Parks should be established and run.

In view of the previous consultations on this subject, this current consultation avoids going over old ground. Instead it focuses on two key issues that still need to be sorted out. This is the first full consultation on the detailed boundary for the National Park in Perth & Kinross. Our last consultation on the Cairngorms National Park in 2001 looked into a wide range of issues, including the general area that the Park should cover, but it did not examine the precise boundary in any detail.

11. Will there be other changes to the Cairngorms National Park boundary?

There may be. Scottish Government is carrying out a strategic review of Scotland's two National Parks: Cairngorms; and Loch Lomond and Trossachs. The National Parks Review is focussing on the organisational arrangements of the National Park Authorities and it will also look at whether there is a need for any other boundary changes. The review is being done in two stages. The first stage is examining key questions on the organisation of the bodies that run the National Parks and began in May. The second stage will begin in the late autumn and will deal with more detailed operational matters, boundary changes, and possible criteria for designating any future National Parks. You can find further information on the National Parks Review on the Scottish Government's website⁹. Alternatively, you can contact nationalparksreview@scotland.gsi.gov.uk for more information.

Our work on the proposal to extend the southern boundary of the Cairngorms National Park is part of this wider process of reviewing the National Parks, but it is being managed as a separate project.

⁸ Environment and Rural Committee 2nd Report, 2007 (Session 2) – Stage 1 Report on the Cairngorms National Park Boundary Bill – Volume 1 – Report [SP Paper 784 Session 2 (2007) available at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/environment/reports-07/rar07-02.htm>

⁹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Countryside/16131>