

A proposal for a Galloway National Park

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Section 1 – Introduction

- 1-1 Scottish Ministers have made a statutory proposal to establish a new National Park in the Galloway area (including parts of East and South Ayrshire) and have asked NatureScot to develop and formally consult on detailed proposals for it. **At this stage, no decision to establish a National Park has been made and Scottish Ministers are keen to also gauge the level of support for this proposal and alternatives to it.** This paper forms a key part of the consultation we are undertaking as the Reporter to inform advice to Scottish Ministers on these matters.

Background

- 1-2 In 2021, the Scottish Government announced that the time was right to establish a third National Park building on, in its view, the generally positive experience of the existing National Parks in Loch Lomond & the Trossachs and the Cairngorms in caring for two of Scotland’s most special places. A Scottish Parliament debate in June 2022 demonstrated cross-party support for new National Parks in Scotland and a NatureScot public opinion survey in 2022 indicated that 89% of people in Scotland supported the creation of a new National Park.
- 1-3 At that time, the Scottish Government did not have a specific area in mind for Park status and instead developed a non-statutory process to seek nominations from local groups. Five areas came forward. They were [appraised](#) by an expert panel against the published criteria. Scottish Ministers agreed that the [bid](#) put forward by the Galloway National Park Association (GNPA) and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve (G&SABR) had met all of the appraisal criteria.
- 1-4 This bid for a Galloway National Park built on previous work by the GNPA and had been subject to considerable discussion locally over many years, as well as specific consideration within the local development plan for Dumfries and Galloway. While not everyone was in favour of Park status for area (as the bid itself made clear), the bid was supported in principle by all three local authorities – Dumfries and Galloway: East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire - and the South of Scotland Enterprise.

Key steps towards establishing a National Park

- 1-5 On 22 July 2024, Scottish Ministers published a formal [‘proposal’](#) under Section 2(1) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. Scottish Ministers appointed NatureScot as the Reporter to consult and advise them on the proposal. They also issued guidance to NatureScot (termed a ‘requirement’) about how we should undertake this task. We have prepared this consultation paper in line with the requirement. It follows a phase of pre-consultation work to inform and engage communities and stakeholders across region. An overview of this work and the feedback received to date will be published separately.
- 1-6 Following this consultation, Scottish Ministers currently require NatureScot to submit and publish a report on its findings and recommendations by 28 April 2025, though Scottish Ministers could extend this reporting period if necessary. Scottish Ministers will consider NatureScot’s report, including the findings of the public consultation, and consider whether or not they wish to designate the area as Scotland’s third National Park. If they decide to do so, they would then prepare a designation order which provides for the National Park to be legally established by the Scottish Parliament.

- 1-7 The designation order would first be subject to a further period of public consultation before being finalised. It would then be submitted to the Scottish Parliament for further scrutiny before approval or rejection.

Issues for the Reporter to address

- 1-8 Scottish Ministers have asked NatureScot to provide advice on the following matters:
- the area which it is proposed should be designated as a National Park
 - the desirability of designating the area in question (with or without modifications) as a National Park
 - an assessment of whether the conditions in section 2(2) of the 2000 Act are satisfied in relation to the area that has been proposed as a National Park
 - the functions which it is proposed the National Park Authority should exercise
 - the proposed governance arrangements for the National Park Authority including:
 - the proposed size of the Authority
 - the proposed number of elected members
 - the proposed number of members appointed by Ministers (including those to be nominated by the local authority/local authorities in the area)
 - the proposed date of election to the Board
 - and any particular expertise, knowledge and skillset that should be represented on the Board
 - consider options for a new National Park Authority in Galloway to be cost efficient, contribute to Scotland's public sector reform agenda and provide value for money for Scotland as a whole
 - recommend the development of any transitional arrangements in the area prior to designation as a National Park
 - the proposed name of the National Park.

The starting point for the Reporter investigation is the bid submitted jointly by the GNPA and G&SABR together with the relevant findings within the Scottish Government's appraisal panel report.

- 1-9 In our advice to Scottish Ministers, we also need to report on the engagement and consultation we undertook and how we analysed the views provided including:
- reporting on who the major stakeholders and interest groups are and how they have been engaged and consulted
 - providing an analysis of the balance of opinion on the matters considered, including specific reference to the views expressed by local communities and businesses (including those representing agriculture and forestry interests) and by bodies and agencies representative of interests which fall outside NatureScot's main remit
 - ensuring that any views which are those of NatureScot as statutory adviser on natural heritage matters are kept clear and distinct.

The Reporter consultation

- 1-10 The purpose of the Reporter consultation is to provide the opportunity for all those with an interest in the area to formally comment on the proposal for the National Park, including whether or not they support the proposal for a new National Park in the area. In line with the Reporter requirement, NatureScot is committed to making sure that the consultation is inclusive, transparent and participatory, and that

everyone who wants to contribute to it has sufficient opportunity to do so, including people and groups with protected characteristics including ethnicity, age, disability and intersectionality. To deliver this requirement, we will organise and publicise meetings and events with local communities, interest groups, businesses and landowners and managers, using a variety of formats and approaches.

1-11 While this is a national consultation, it is particularly important that everyone who lives and works in or close to the proposed National Park area has the opportunity to get involved and make their views known. In the run-up to this consultation, we have therefore:

- written and provided briefing on the process to the three local authorities, 52 community councils and 39 community organisations across the indicative area suggested by the bid
- prepared and distributed through the post an information leaflet to 52,000 households and businesses within and close to the indicative area suggested in the bid (though we recognise that not all addresses have received them as we had anticipated)
- created a dedicated online Reporter hub to provide information and the opportunity to share issues and concerns, with 1,044 unique respondents contributing a total of 2,951 comments to the various surveys hosted on the information hub
- held or inputted to over 30 meetings online and in person with circa 400 people from local and national groups and stakeholders to explain the process and discuss the issues it raises.

At the same time as this engagement work, we have developed options for the detail of this consultation, both drawing on these discussions and our own field work and analysis.

1-12 To ensure we gather as wide a range of responses as possible from people living and working the area, we have developed five other elements to the consultation alongside this main paper.

- 1) A summary online survey for individuals and households.
- 2) A survey leaflet distributed to the 52,000 household and business addresses in or close to the area.
- 3) Twenty-six independently facilitated public consultation events held across the area.
- 4) Sector-led consultation meetings and events including land managers, tourism, renewables, conservation and local authorities.
- 5) A range of bespoke engagement work with young people, black and ethnic minorities, disability groups, and other under-represented groups.

Further details of these public events and activities are available on the dedicated [online hub](#) we have established for this reporting work. They will be also advertised locally and nationally.

1-13 Our reporting team (nationalparkreporter@nature.scot) are available during office hours to answer any queries you may have on any aspect of this consultation paper, or on the timings and locations of the public events.

How to contribute to this consultation

1-14 We welcome comments on all aspects of the proposal but would particularly welcome views on the specific matters set out in this consultation paper.

You can respond via one of two online surveys or through the survey leaflet which will be distributed to households and business addresses across the proposed area

Alternatively, please email or write to us requesting a paper, audio or Gaelic version of this survey:

Email: nationalparkreporter@nature.scot

By post: Reporter Team, NatureScot, Battleby, Redgorton, Perthshire PH1 7EW

For your responses to be analysed in accordance with our [data policy](#) and the requirements of our advice to Ministers, we do need to ask for the some basic information about you. This will also help us to understand the strength and range of local and national opinion.

The deadline for responses is midnight on 14 February 2025.

Section 2 – What would National Park status mean for Galloway?

2-1 This section explains what National Parks do and how they operate. It also sets out how, in general terms, a National Park in Galloway would work if it was to be established.

What are National Parks?

2-2 National Parks are an internationally recognised designation for protecting and enhancing some of a country's most special places for nature, landscape and culture. Each country has taken a different approach to National Parks to meet its specific circumstances and Scotland is no different.

2-3 Alongside the conservation and enjoyment of the area, Scotland is unique in having National Parks with statutory aims that include promoting the economic and social development of their local communities and the sustainable use of their natural resources. Collectively, these aims allow Scotland's National Parks to deliver both for people and nature.

2-4 Scotland's National Parks are run by public bodies whose governing boards have a majority of local representatives on them. Of these, 20% or more are directly elected by local residents and at least 60% are local representatives. Their powers can vary but will normally include some role in town and country planning and managing access and recreation. Local authorities continue to provide key services across the area such as education, transport, waste collection and housing.

2-5 Land in the National Parks continues to be owned and managed by individuals, commercial or third sector organisations, and public bodies. The regulatory powers and funding streams of Scottish Government and its agencies with responsibility for farming, forestry and environmental protection (including Scottish Forestry, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, and NatureScot) all continue to apply in National Park areas.

Key elements of the legislative framework

2-6 The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 provides the legislative framework for all National Parks in Scotland. It also provides a menu of options that can be tailored to meet the needs of each specific area on land or sea.

2-7 Common elements of all National Parks in Scotland include:

- The four Park aims and how these will be collectively delivered by the National Park Authority and other public bodies.
- The requirement to establish a public body called the National Park Authority with membership of its governing board including directly elected members, local authority nominations and Scottish Government appointments, with at least 60% of its members being local members drawn from the first two categories.
- The requirement for the members of the Board of National Park Authority to elect its Convenor.
- The requirement for the National Park Authority to appoint a Chief Executive Officer.

- The requirement for the National Park Authority to draw up and implement a National Park Plan.
- The general functions and powers of the National Park Authority that allow it to function, provide grants and services, and manage the area better.

2-8 Elements which can be decided on a Park-by-Park basis include:

- the functions and powers in relation to town and country planning
- the functions and powers in relation to access
- the size of the Park Board
- staffing arrangements and budget
- the name of the National Park
- arrangements in relation to marine areas.

These matters are considered further in Sections 5-8 of this consultation paper.

How would a Galloway National Park Authority work in practice?

2-9 The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 establishes the four aims of all National Parks which allows for them to deliver for both people and nature:

- 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
- to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

2-10 The general purpose of a National Park Authority set out in the Act is to ensure that each of these four aims are collectively achieved in a co-ordinated way, thus ensuring that conservation of the natural and cultural heritage continues to underpin the economic, social and recreational value of the National Park in the long-term.

2-11 National Park Authorities deliver this general purpose by convening, facilitating and working positively with communities, businesses, land managers and other public bodies to develop and deliver a long-term vision for its area. They also leverage funding and promote action to address Park-wide priorities for people and nature in the context provided by regional and national strategies and plans. For example, the [Cairngorms 2030 Programme](#) supports 25 projects across the National Park with a total value of £42.3 million, including over £10 million in funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The programme is delivering benefits for rural communities and businesses across a range of areas including health, wellbeing, nature restoration and sustainable transport.

2-12 Drawing on this experience, the proposed National Park in Galloway could support and enhance the sustainable development of the area over the longer-term through:

- **Park-wide planning.** A Galloway National Park Authority would draw-up, consult on and lead implementation of a National Park Partnership Plan for the area. The Plan would set out the high-level vision for the National Park and the priorities and specific actions required (and by whom) to achieve it. National Park Partnership Plans are developed and agreed through the involvement and input of a wide range of local and national interests. All public bodies operating within

the Park area are required to help develop and support implementation of this Plan. In turn, the Park Plan would be a key means to deliver the set of regional strategies and plans that have been developed for the South of Scotland, including the relevant development plans.

- **Projects and resources.** Scottish Ministers would provide a Galloway National Park Authority with a dedicated budget to provide an enhanced level of management of the area. The Park Authority would also draw in other significant investment from both the public and private sectors to provide targeted grants to local communities and land managers. Such funding could support a range of action to protect or enhance nature or the cultural heritage of the area; to realise local place plans and help communities and businesses mitigate and adapt to climate change; and to improve visitor infrastructure and the management of access and recreation. The Park Authority would also be able to employ staff or co-ordinate staff in other organisations to provide a range of expertise and advice in supporting the National Park aims.
- **Participation and Partnership.** A Galloway National Park Authority would strengthen local representation and participation in decision-making within the Park area. It would seek to work with a range of partners across the community, private and public sectors to deliver the National Park aims. At least 60% of Board members would be local representatives (either directly elected or nominated by local authorities in the area). It would consult local communities and stakeholders in the development and implementation of the National Park Plan for the area and it could establish advisory groups on specific topics to draw on local and national expertise.

2-13 While a collective approach to National Park aims are embedded in the strategies, plans and projects for the Park area, if there appears to the National Park Authority to be conflict between the first aim and any of others, the Act requires it to give greater weight in its decision-making to the first aim (of protecting the natural and cultural heritage of the area) in the long-term. In practice, the two existing National Park Authorities have only formally invoked this principle in a small number of cases in the past twenty years, and only in the context of their planning functions. The operation of this principle in relation to the potential powers of a Galloway National Park is considered further in Section 5.

Frequently asked questions about National Park status and its implications for Galloway

2-14 The following commentary responds to the most frequently asked questions about National Park status and its implications for Galloway. It draws on the available evidence and the expertise and experience of the existing National Parks in Scotland and elsewhere.

Are all National Parks the same?

No, the National Park designation is tailored to meet the needs of each country. Our approach in Scotland is different to England and Wales. While comparison with similar Park areas such as Northumberland or Pembroke National Parks is useful, the approach there is different. Similarly, Galloway is not as close to large centres of population as National Parks like the Lake District, Peak District or South Downs. Within Scotland, the legislation also allows the powers, functions and governance of each area to be tailored to meet the specific needs of the area, so we would expect a

Galloway National Park to be tailored to local circumstances and different to the existing ones.

What are the key benefits that National Park status could bring?

Galloway is a unique part of Scotland and its nature and its history are an important part of our nation's natural and cultural heritage. But while the special qualities of the area are valued, we need to do more to care for - and grow - its natural capital in ways which help address the climate emergency, reverse biodiversity loss and meet the needs of its communities and businesses. Establishing a National Park to manage the area for the longer-term could help address this through better Park-wide planning and increased resources and investment in the area. In doing so, it could bring new jobs to the area through direct employment in the Park Authority itself. It could also contribute to economic development more generally, for example through employment in nature restoration, climate mitigation and adaptation projects, as well through new opportunities for nature-based and sustainable tourism. A dedicated Park Authority Board with at least 60% local representation could strengthen local participation in decisions that are made in the area.

Would the area be able to cope with increased visitors?

The scale and impact of increasing visitors is hard to quantify, though experience from both existing Scottish National Parks suggests it would likely to be incremental, taking place over decades rather than a step change. It would also be influenced by wider trends in tourism as much as Park status itself. Both existing Scottish National Parks have a strong track record of improving visitor experience and visitor management. They have put considerable effort and resources into these issues over recent years, working closely with the local destination management organisation, local authorities, VisitScotland, Transport Scotland and others.

We would expect a National Park in the Galloway area to place similar priority on minimising impacts on the most popular or sensitive areas, while at the same time encouraging visitors to other places which have more carrying capacity. A larger Park area would allow more opportunities for this. Close working with land managers, local authorities and Transport Scotland would be essential in terms of parking, traffic management and road infrastructure.

Would the National Park be the planning authority for its area?

The legislation provides for a range of options, from a full planning authority with responsibility for development planning and management through to statutory consultee status. Both existing National Park Authorities have responsibility for preparing the local development plan. Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority has responsibility for determining planning applications. In the Cairngorms, the National Park Authority can 'call in' key planning proposals for it to decide, rather than the proposals being decided by the local planning authority. Both arrangements are generally seen to be appropriate for their areas, though different arrangements could be considered for a Galloway National Park given the different geography and needs of the area.

Would additional regulations be placed on land managers?

The regulation and mainstream funding of farming and forestry by the Scottish Government and Scottish Forestry is undertaken in National Parks in the same way as it is elsewhere in Scotland. In National Parks, some additional regulatory planning

processes apply that means that certain non-domestic development proposals, which elsewhere in Scotland are treated as permitted development, may need to seek planning permission. National Parks are also classified as 'sensitive areas' under the regulations for Environmental Impact Assessment that apply to development and land use change. As a result, some development proposals, such as agricultural sheds or forestry proposals larger than a specified size, may need to be 'screened' to determine if an Environmental Impact Assessment must be undertaken and, if so, whether prior notification or planning permission is needed. These requirements do not themselves prevent well planned and designed development or land use change from happening, but they could have additional cost and time implications where such changes are proposed.

Are there any benefits for land managers of being in a National Park?

Galloway has very productive dairy and commercial forestry sectors which are subject to international markets as well as national or regional policies. Based on the experience of the existing National Parks, potential benefits for farming and forestry businesses could include:

- additional advice and support for farmers, land managers, businesses and communities to diversify their activities and address the challenges of climate change (recent examples of this include the [Loch Lomond & the Trossachs Resilient Farming Network](#) and the [Cairngorms Climate Adaptation Fund](#))
- increased support and capacity for landscape scale collaboration (e.g. geese management schemes and water quality)
- the development of National Park 'branding' (which could build on the existing Biosphere Certification Mark).

Both National Parks also provide significant support through their ranger services to help land managers plan for and better manage public access. Involvement in any of these programmes and projects is voluntary – land managers are not obliged to work with the Park Authority, though many willingly do.

What would the impact be on house prices and availability?

House prices have risen in the existing Scottish National Parks in line with trends across similar 'attractive' rural areas between 2003 and 2019. The evidence suggests that the average house price in the Cairngorms area, alongside a number of other similar rural areas, has increased more significantly since Covid-19 and this is part of the counter-urbanisation trend that has occurred since the pandemic. Such analysis is complicated though. The data can be interpreted in different ways and its relevance to other parts of Scotland uncertain.

What is clear though is that since the first two National Parks were established, the purchasing of existing housing for second homes or as holiday rental properties, leading to a loss of affordable housing, has become a significant concern across all of rural Scotland. Both existing National Parks are actively addressing this issue. In Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, 69% of new houses built between 2018 and 2022 were affordable and the current Partnership Plan for the Cairngorms includes a commitment to a target of 75% of new housing to be affordable by 2030. There has also been a short-term let control area established in the Badenoch and Strathspey area of the Cairngorms National Park. While the challenges of the housing market in the south west of Scotland are possibly different to the existing National Park areas, affordable housing has been identified as a key issue for action

in the [South of Scotland Housing Action Plan](#). A new Park Authority would need to keep this issue under active review and seek to address any significant implications of National Park status for its area, working closely with the local authorities, South of Scotland Enterprise and the social housing providers in the area.

Would new wind farms be allowed in this National Park?

To ensure that any new National Park can help support action needed to tackle the climate emergency, the Scottish Government has indicated their intention to consult on changing the existing national planning policy related to onshore wind in any new National Parks. This is likely to mean that a new National Park in Galloway would be treated differently from the existing National Parks, where national policy currently restricts new wind farm development. Existing policies for national and international designations such as National Scenic Areas and national and European nature sites would remain, so new wind farms would be unlikely to be proposed or permitted in these locations within the proposed National Park. Both the existing Galloway Forest and Dark Skies Parks will also continue to have an influence on what proposals are being developed. Under current UK arrangements, National Park status may also open up opportunities for funding the re-routing, redesign or undergrounding of existing and new grid infrastructure.

What would happen if you live or work on the edge of this National Park?

The answer to this will vary depending on local circumstances and the type of work you do. While a National Park designation requires a firm boundary for administrative purposes, it is not intended that the planning and management of the area should necessarily stop at the boundary. Rather, National Park Authorities aim to work in partnership with the local authorities and other agencies to ensure that planning and management of the National Park is integrated with its surrounding area. Examples may include the development of specific planning policies, traffic management, core paths and longer distance routes or visitor management. The National Park Authority would be expected to ensure that those living and working on the edge of the National Park are consulted as the Park Plan is developed.

What sort of budget would the National Park have?

After over 20 years of operation, the total core funding provided this year by Scottish Government to both the existing National Parks was £20.9 million. While we would not expect the core budget of a Galloway National Park to be as large as either of the existing National Parks, sufficient annual funding would be required to support the initial establishment and ongoing operation of a National Park in Galloway, including support for new project activity and grants across its area. The right scale of the budget for a National Park Authority would be considered by Scottish Ministers as part of their decision to proceed with designation or not. It would be based on the preferred area of the National Park and the powers and governance arrangements of the National Park Authority. In making its proposal, the Scottish Government has specifically highlighted the need for any new National Park to be cost efficient, contribute to Scotland's public sector reform agenda and provide value for money for Scotland as a whole.

How do we know the existing National Parks are a success?

Both existing National Park Authorities have a strong track record in promoting responsible access and addressing visitor management issues, including use of their

bylaw making powers to address anti-social behaviours and environmental impacts. They invest in nature recovery, work at landscape scale and the condition of their designated nature sites is as good if not better than elsewhere in Scotland. Many communities and businesses have benefited from the additional support and funding the National Park Authorities have provided. They have also attracted considerable interest from across Europe in how they have delivered conservation alongside rural development. If established, a Galloway National Park Authority would be required to report on its progress on delivering the National Park aims to Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Parliament. Like all public bodies, the National Park Authority would be subject to audit and review to ensure it is being effective in meeting the needs of its area.

Can't we achieve the same outcomes through existing mechanisms?

This question has been posed for many years. In part the answer is yes, as the work of the existing Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve on promoting ecosystem restoration, community development and environmental education illustrates. However, many of the current arrangements do not offer any long-term administrative or financial stability, nor do they provide a formal mechanism for resolving disputes or determining priorities. In contrast, a National Park would have legal status; local accountability through its board; legally defined aims, duties and boundaries; funding from Scottish Government; and mechanisms for drawing external investment into the area. They are therefore a special solution to the challenges faced by particular areas over the longer-term.

Can a National Park be de-designated?

Yes, a designation order for a National Park can be changed or annulled, though this would require extensive local and national consultation on par with designation.

- 2-15 In responding to the specific questions in this consultation, we would welcome further insight and evidence related to these issues that individuals and organisations can provide. As well as informing our advice to Scottish Ministers, this material will contribute to the assessment of the potential positive and negative social, economic and environmental impacts of a new National Park in Galloway that the Scottish Government are undertaking. This includes further work on the [Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\)](#) of this proposal, building on the environmental report previously prepared in 2023. The Scottish Government will also undertake work to determine any socio-economic impacts and the potential impacts of the proposal on businesses, child rights, and wellbeing and equalities.

Section 3 – The case for the proposed National Park

- 3-1 This section explores the case for the proposed National Park in more detail and reports on the issues and opportunities that have been raised by communities and stakeholders during the pre-consultation information and engagement phase.

Why a new National Park?

- 3-2 When considering the designation of a new National Park, the Scottish Government recognised the contribution they can make across a range of environmental, social and economic priorities. They are some of Scotland's most special places where nature is thriving and enjoyed by many; where sustainable use and enjoyment of the area are at the heart of community wellbeing and prosperity; and where some of the urgent action needed to tackle climate change is realised on the ground.
- 3-3 The Scottish Government expects a new National Park in Galloway to contribute to its key priorities of growing the economy, tackling the climate emergency and improving public services. It should also take account of local circumstances and the views of local communities. It should deliver environmental benefits alongside economic growth and progressive land use, including renewable energy, agriculture and forestry. It should support the visitor economy and have a positive impact on people's social, mental and physical health.

Why a National Park in Galloway?

- 3-4 Discussion about a National Park in Galloway is long standing, dating back to the National Park survey undertaken by the Ramsay Committee in the 1940s. More recently, in 2012, Dumfries and Galloway Council commissioned research from the Southern Upland Partnership on National Park status for the area and included reference to exploring it further in its local development plan. Further discussion was also generated by the Galloway National Park Association which led to the publication of its "It's Our Time" [paper](#) in 2019 which built the foundation for the successful bid.
- 3-5 Common to all these reports is recognition of the natural beauty of the hills and coast of the area; its national importance for wildlife, landscape and cultural heritage; and its attraction for outdoor recreation and tourism. Through the lens of the climate and nature emergency, we know that these ecosystems and the services they provide are diminishing and need a step change in our care and enhancement of them. This in turn would provide multiple social and economic benefits.
- 3-6 At the same time, the area is of significant economic importance for its timber, renewable energy and farming. It is recognised as the dairy capital of Scotland. All these sectors are an important component of local employment and community life, but they are also of national significance in terms of tackling climate change, food production and moving to a more sustainable circular economy. Despite this important economic base, the area is performing less well than other rural areas in Scotland, with lower average wages, an ageing population and pockets of significant child poverty. Average occupancy rates for visitor accommodation are low and the tourism season is also shorter than elsewhere.
- 3-7 The [strategies and plans](#) of the Regional Economic Partnership for South of Scotland place high value on the importance of the area's natural capital in tackling these

issues, as signalled by the development of the natural capital innovation zone for Southern Scotland. The new [responsible tourism strategy 2024-34](#) also seeks to grow the visitor economy sustainably by inspiring more visitors to come to the South of Scotland in ways which do not undermine the special qualities of the area or the infrastructure and services that communities depend on. While focusing on community development needs, similar aspirations are picked up in many of the local place plans which are being developed by local communities across the area.

- 3-8 The establishment and expansion of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve indicates the desire from South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) and the three local authorities across the area to find solutions to these challenges by focusing on action that protects the core of this area and seeks more sustainable approaches in its [buffer and transition zones](#). The management plans previously drawn up for the three coastal National Scenic Areas of Fleet Valley, East Stewartry Coast and the Nith Estuary also had similar aspirations. The area is also unique in terms of the scale of public land managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) and, to a much lesser extent, NatureScot on behalf of the Scottish Government. This brings significant opportunities for landscape scale approaches to nature recovery and sustainable land management.
- 3-9 As the recent consultation on the new [Regional Land Use Framework](#) highlighted, there are tensions both between these land uses and the natural and cultural heritage of the area. These tensions are set to rise with increasing trends towards afforestation of its upland areas, the future pipeline of renewable energy and grid infrastructure projects being considered for parts of the area, the growing intensification of lowland farming, and pressures for housing development, particularly on the coast.
- 3-10 The expert panel that appraised the Galloway bid also recognised many of these issues and opportunities, noting in particular:
- the high natural and cultural heritage value of the area
 - the important socio-economic context – an area doing less well than other rural parts of Scotland
 - an opportunity for nature recovery, to grow sustainable tourism and for greater co-ordination of existing land uses in keeping with the regional economic strategies for the area, the borderland inclusive growth deal and natural capital innovation zone
 - a clear contrast to existing Scottish National Parks (hill, lowland and coastal character; south west location) which provides opportunities for further demonstration and exemplars.
- 3-11 Against this background, the [bid](#) set out a well-argued case for how a National Park could help address the special needs of this areas as follows:
- **Through driving innovation and partnership** a new style Galloway National Park will address our area’s competing demands for conservation, communities and commerce with creativity, cohesion and respect. Its location in the national Natural Capital Innovation Zone places the Park in a leadership position to address biodiversity loss and climate change at a scale that will attract responsible private investment. It will:
 - **Deliver landscape scale change in response to biodiversity goals and climate change targets:** Galloway has small-scale land ownership with few large estates. Producing change at scale requires the Park to bring individual

landowners and managers together to enhance and expand existing nature networks. The Park will provide an opportunity for strategic spatial planning across 3 local authority areas that is essential if we are to address the rapid rate of land use change.

- **Provide a testbed for innovative nature-based solutions:** The Park contains landscape types and land uses which differ from existing NPs in terms of scale and diversity. This mosaic creates unique opportunities for solutions to be trialled and for knowledge transfer to other rural communities as exemplars of good practice. Building on the experience of the UNESCO Biosphere, and relationships with secondary and tertiary educational facilities across Scotland, robust partnerships are already in place. This Park would hit the ground running.
- **Deliver the Wellbeing Economy:** Despite decades of economic investment in agriculture, forestry and renewable energy Dumfries and Galloway has stubbornly languished at the bottom of the income league for Scotland, unlike other rural areas. Our innovative Park will focus on the regeneration of communities, economy and the environment, building on existing initiatives developed by the Biosphere and others.

Views on the potential benefits and drawbacks of a Galloway National Park

3-12 During the pre-consultation engagement phase, the proposal has stimulated much debate locally on the potential benefits and drawbacks that National Park status for Galloway could bring. Views on both support for a National Park and opposition to it have been passionately made.

3-13 Some of the benefits of National Park status highlighted by individuals, communities and businesses have included:

- action to help tackle the climate emergency, reverse biodiversity loss and protect the valued natural and cultural heritage of the area
- increased funding for the area
- a stronger local voice in the planning and management of the area
- better promotion, provision and management of public access, outdoor recreation and education, and sustainable tourism
- better long-term planning of key land uses including forestry, farming and renewables
- direct and indirect jobs and external investment in the area, providing opportunities for more young people to stay in the area
- positive support for land managers and for growing the visitor economy
- increased trade for local businesses
- a greater spotlight on community development aspirations.

3-14 At the same time, a range of issues and concerns have also been identified, including the following:

- damage to nature and the historic environment and people's quality of life
- not enough recognition given to protecting the natural and cultural heritage
- additional bureaucracy and restrictions on land managers
- negative impacts on existing local businesses and land uses
- increase in house prices and/or decrease in affordable housing
- busier roads, with more congestion and road traffic accidents
- increased pressure on local infrastructure, services and businesses because of increased traffic volumes

- increased pressure on local health services
- more pollution, littering and irresponsible and/or illegal visitor behaviours
- no greater control of further wind farm developments/restrictions on further wind farm developments
- greater national control over local decision-making
- increase in low skilled, seasonal jobs and decrease in skills employment (i.e. agriculture)
- that National Park status will perpetuate the idea that the area is 'natural', which it is not
- time and money would be better spent elsewhere (in existing services and enforcing existing policies).

3-15 As the Reporter, NatureScot recognises the hopes and fears which underpin these comments. We also acknowledge the passion on both sides that the proposal has generated locally. National Park status confers national recognition of the special importance of the natural and cultural heritage of an area. It would attract more visitors, though this is likely to be gradual and can be planned for. It would place more requirements on development and land use but would also provide support and new opportunities for land managers and businesses. Many of the issues raised both for and against the National Park proposal are systemic across rural Scotland and a National Park could only address them in the long-term if it worked closely with the local authorities, public bodies and the Scottish Government. How a National Park is run and governed and how it works alongside and for its communities and in partnership with others would be critical for its long-term success. Much would also depend on the detailed proposals for the proposed National Park which we are exploring and seeking views on through this consultation.

Gauging support for the proposal and alternatives to it

3-16 A key purpose of the consultation is to gauge support for or opposition to the proposed National Park either in principle, or in terms of the detailed options NatureScot as the Reporter are suggesting for its area, powers and governance. If support or opposition is stated in principle, we would like to understand the reasons behind this position too.

Q1a To what extent do you support the idea of a new National Park being established in the south west of Scotland?

- 1. Strongly support**
- 2. Tend to support**
- 3. Tend to oppose**
- 4. Strongly oppose**
- 5. Undecided**

Q1b Please tell us the main reason(s) for your opinion.

3-17 A number of alternative options for a National Park could be considered, including:

- a stronger role for the Biosphere Reserve
- a more integrated approach to the planning and management of the Galloway Forest Park to deliver multiple benefits
- the preparation of new management strategies by Dumfries and Galloway Council for the coastal National Scenic Areas or the coast as whole.

While all of these alternatives may have merit, only the Biosphere Reserve would cover the whole of the indicative area suggested in the bid, and beyond. None of these alternatives currently come with the additional and long-term funding, functions and powers or governance arrangements or the policy status that a National Park could bring.

Q2a Are there any alternatives to a National Park in Galloway that you would support? Please explain your answer.

Q2b What are the advantages of your preferred alternative(s) over a National Park?

3-18 The next sections of this survey go on to consider possible options for the specific area of a National Park in this part of Scotland, as well as detailed arrangements for its functions, powers and governance.

Section 4 – Area of the proposed National Park

- 4-1 A key part of the Reporter’s role is to explore possible options for the area of the proposed National Park and its indicative boundary. This area must also conform with the three conditions of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, namely:
- the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or its combination of natural and cultural heritage
 - that the area has a distinctive character and coherent identity
 - that designating the area a National Park would meet special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the aims of the National Park are achieved in co-ordinated way.
- 4-2 A key question in the consideration of options for the geographic area of the proposed National Park is its overall size. Experience from National Parks elsewhere in the world suggests that too small an area would not provide for the effective planning and management of the area, especially given the broader aims of Scotland’s National Parks. At the same time, too large an area would create problems for its effective administration by the National Park Authority. One difference between this proposed National Park area and the existing two is the extent of its coastline and the significant contribution this makes to the special qualities and character of the area. While the indicative area suggested in the [bid](#) used the Mean Low Water Spring (MLWS) as its suggested boundary, the national and international designations for nature conservation and landscape on the coast extend into the marine environment. An additional consideration is the existing Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve and its future geographic and working relationship with the proposed National Park.
- 4-3 The indicative area suggested in the bid is circa 3,400 square km. This is approximately twice as big as Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park but smaller than the Cairngorms (which at 4,528 square km is by some way the largest National Park in the UK). At circa 60,000 residents, the indicative area proposed in the bid contains approximately twice the combined population of both existing National Parks.

Possible options for the National Park area

- 4-4 To prepare for this consultation, NatureScot has adapted the methodology it used as the Reporter for Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park and the Cairngorms. This involves dividing the indicative area suggested in the bid into a number of sub-areas based on their natural and cultural heritage qualities and then applying the three conditions of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 to each of the sub-divisions to help generate a number of options. The preparation of options necessarily involves a degree of judgement about how these sub-divisions can best be combined to deliver a coherent area of outstanding importance that has potential to deliver the range of National Park aims. Further information on the methodology and our assessment work will be provided in a separate report.
- 4-5 From this work, NatureScot has drawn up three options for the potential area of a National Park as a basis for this consultation. These options are presented in Map 4-1 and Table 4-1. A fourth option for the National Park area has been suggested, restricted to just the Dumfries and Galloway Council area, though further work would be needed to consider what area this would cover. Further consideration of the

relationship between the National Park area and the marine environment will also be needed, even if the Mean Low Water Spring is used as a coastal boundary.



Q3a If a National Park was to be designated, which of the three options presented in Map 4-1 and Table 4-1 would you support?

- Option 1 - 'Hills and coast'
- Option 2 - 'Hills and extended coast'
- Option 3 - 'Hills, coast and countryside'
- Other - see Q6
- None

Q3b Please give your reasons.

Q3c Do you have comments on the extent of the area in your preferred option? Would you add or remove particular areas, features or settlements to make the option smaller or larger? And if so, why?

Q4 Is there another option for the area of the proposed National Park which should be considered? If so, what do you suggest and why?

4-6 In making their statutory proposal, Scottish Ministers have formally indicated that they consider that the conditions set out in Section 2(2) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 are likely to be met, or will be met, in relation to the general area of Galloway as suggested in the [bid](#).

Q5a Looking at the description of the options presented in Table 4-1, do you think they meet the legislative conditions for designation?

- a) the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or its combination of natural and cultural heritage

**Yes/Partially/No
Why?**

b) that the area has a distinctive character and coherent identity

**Yes/Partially/No
Why?**

c) that designating the area a National Park would meet special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the aims of the National Park are achieved in a co-ordinated way.

**Yes/Partially/No
Why?**

Q5b Do you have any additional comments on Table 4-1 which might be relevant to the consideration of the geographic area?

Table 4-1 – Overview of the options for the proposed National Park area

-	Option 1 Hills and coast	Option 2 Hills and extended coast	Option 3 Hills, coast and countryside
Size (ha)	155,915	274,749	417,718
Estimated population	14,820	42,434	61,402
Main settlements	Gatehouse of Fleet, Kirkcudbright, New Galloway, Newton Stewart	As option 1, plus Dalbeattie, Portpatrick, Stranraer, Whithorn and Wigtown	As options 1 and 2, plus Ballantrae, Barrhill, Castle Douglas and Girvan
% areas of each of main Nature and landscape designations	Nature designation 12% SSSI 6% SAC 0.9% SPA 1.2% Ramsar 1.2% NNR 0.16% LNR Landscape designation 6% National Scenic Area 85% local landscape designations	Nature designations 9% SSSI 5% SAC 1.6% SPA 1.7% Ramsar 1% NNR 0.34% LNR Landscape designations 8% National Scenic Area 64% local landscape designations	Nature conservation 9% SSSI 4% SAC 3.2% SPA 1.2% Ramsar 0.6% NNR 0.22% LNR Landscape designations 5% National Scenic Area 50% local landscape designations
Natural and cultural heritage importance	<p>The area includes the Core area of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve as well as one of two Wild Land Areas in South of Scotland. It also would incorporate most of the Galloway Forest Park and all of the Galloway Dark Sky Park and the Cairnsmore of Fleet National Nature Reserve.</p> <p>The area comprises a distinctive mix of hills that form a regional landmark, and varied and highly scenic coastline of rocky promontories and estuarine flats.</p> <p>Parts of the area are long settled, with archaeological remains on the coast. Cultural heritage includes associations with artists, personified in Kirkcudbright as the painters' town.</p>	<p>The area includes a much more extensive coastline of rocky headlands, low cliffs and sandy bays. The Mull of Galloway is the southernmost point of Scotland.</p> <p>The cultural heritage includes the cradle of Scottish Christianity at Isle of Whithorn. Wigtown is Scotland's book town, and WWII links include D-Day training locations. 'Land of the Leal' was set in the Rhins.</p> <p>The start/end point of the Southern Upland Way is at Portpatrick on the west coast of the Rhins while new Kirkpatrick C2C cycle route starts/ends at Stranraer. There are stretches of coastal path which are the building blocks to the ambitious plans for a SW coastal long distance route. NCN 73 and 7 cross the area</p>	<p>At Ballantrae there are rare remnants of once-oceanic crust from ancient tectonic plate collisions. Cultural heritage interests are extensive, with particular notable evidence of pre-historic hut circles to the east of the area.</p> <p>The area includes both the Southern Upland Way and Ayrshire Coastal Long-Distance Routes, which together with NCN routes and many other paths and trails are part of the wide range of recreational opportunities of the region.</p>

-	Option 1 Hills and coast	Option 2 Hills and extended coast	Option 3 Hills, coast and countryside
	<p>There is a plethora of recreational opportunities, including Kirroughtree mountain bikes centre. The hills provide challenging territory for walking and mountain biking. The Southern Upland Way and NCN 7 passes through the core of the area.</p>	<p>from west to east and Dalbeattie is another one of the Seven Stanes mountain bike centres.</p>	
<p>Distinctive character and coherent identity</p>	<p>In part because of the large-scale commercial forestry that dominates their lower slopes, the Galloway Hills are distinctive, wild and feel remote. They provide a regional landmark.</p> <p>Lochs and rivers, and richly wooded river valleys are typical. The interplay of natural and cultural heritage, and the meeting of land and sea are key elements of the landscape of the area.</p> <p>The infrastructure of early twentieth century hydroelectric power schemes is distinctive. In the Glen Kens it is the basis for water-based recreation.</p> <p>Sometimes known as Scotland's Riviera, the Solway coast is a long-established holiday destination.</p> <p>Settlements are often distinctive and traditional in character.</p>	<p>The inclusion of more of the Solway coast increases the marine character of the area. Extensive coastal flats are of an openness and horizontal scale unusual in Scotland, as is the incoming tide as fast as 'a galloping horse'.</p> <p>The coastal hills, particularly Criffel as well as the Mull of Galloway, are key landmarks.</p> <p>The farmland, settlements and historic patterns of land use are distinctive. Drystone dykes are typical. The Machars peninsula in particular is said to be the epitome of Galloway culture.</p> <p>It is an important food producing region and contains almost half the Scottish dairy herd in its lush pastures. There are hill sheep farms and beef cattle, of which the distinctive Galloway breed is synonymous with the region.</p>	<p>In addition to the features of Options 1 and 2, the Carrick coast and countryside typically includes farmland backed by raised beaches. It is a well-settled landscape, with pastoral river valleys and policy woodland as well as upland farmland and moorland.</p> <p>More of this area is characterised by extensive forestry. It also includes a number of large wind farms with related grid infrastructure.</p>
<p>Meeting the special needs of the area</p>	<p>The area depends on both its primary production (forestry and agriculture) and the visitor</p>	<p>Many of the issues and opportunities described in Option 1 also apply here.</p>	<p>Many of the issues and opportunities described in Options 1 and 2 also apply here.</p>

-	Option 1 Hills and coast	Option 2 Hills and extended coast	Option 3 Hills, coast and countryside
	<p>economy. Accordingly, it relies on the health and quality of its natural and cultural heritage to sustain its socio-economic needs.</p> <p>There are extensive opportunities for nature recovery from source to sea, including restoration of peatland, native woodland, and coastal habitats.</p> <p>There are land use issues relating to the balance between forestry, upland farming and recreation and their impacts on the natural and cultural heritage. Building more resilience to climate change in the commercial forestry sectors will be critical for its long-term success.</p> <p>There is considerable scope for expanding recreational routes and opportunities, emphasising the relative wildness and challenging nature of the hills. There would be opportunities for both refreshing existing visitor facilities as well as developing new ones. Initiatives that extended the visitor season and increased responsible tourism and public access would be of benefit.</p>	<p>The inclusion of the larger coastline would provide more opportunities for restoring coastal habitats, managing the impacts of climate change and developing coastal and marine recreational opportunities, including completing the SW coastal path. The area would also be linked by train from Ayrshire, providing more opportunities for sustainable travel.</p> <p>Depending on how far inland the extended area went, there could be more opportunities to support farmers to tackle climate change and increase biodiversity on their land in ways which benefited the resilience of their business. However, the extent of intensive [dairy] farming could lessen the difference that a National Park could make, given the smaller role of government support for these businesses.</p> <p>Inclusion of more of the western communities such as Stranraer could help support economic recovery.</p>	<p>The wider area is seen as critical to meeting renewable energy targets both through new wind farm capacity and improving related grid connections. A National Park could help plan for this positively with the industry and the community.</p> <p>This larger area could also help realise a SW coast path to complement the other long-distance walking and cycling trails the area has to offer. It could also provide the potential to do more to record and promote understanding and enjoyment of the rich and distinctive cultural heritage of Galloway.</p> <p>Inclusion of more of the north-western communities such as Barrhill and Ballantrae could help support economic recovery in this area. Girvan could benefit as gateway community even if not included.</p>
Key questions to consider further	<p>Should the communities of Dalmellington and Straiton be included?</p> <p>Should Cairnsmore of Carsphairn be included?</p>	<p>How much of the countryside of the Machairs and Rhins should be included in addition to the coast?</p>	<p>Should Girvan be included in the National Park?</p>

-	Option 1 Hills and coast	Option 2 Hills and extended coast	Option 3 Hills, coast and countryside
	Should the Nith Estuary National Scenic Area (NSA) and coastal uplands (Criffel) be included?	Where should the boundary on Loch Ryan be drawn?	

Boundary considerations

4-7 If Scottish Ministers decide to proceed with designation following the outcome of this consultation, a more detailed boundary for the proposed National Park would be considered. If that happens, further statutory consultation would take place on this detailed boundary. In drawing up the detailed boundary for the existing Scottish National Parks, the criteria set out in Box 4-1 were used.

Box 4-1 – Principles for identifying the detailed boundary of a National Park

- wherever possible the boundary should follow an easily distinguishable and permanent natural feature
- where administrative boundaries follow such features, they should be adopted
- towns and villages and, where possible, their surrounding communities, should normally either be wholly included within or excluded from the National Park
- the nature and location of public or private land ownership in the area should generally not be a determining element for the National Park boundary because this may be subject to change, but consideration should be given to the potential impact of the National Park boundary on land management operations
- transient features such as field boundaries, paths or roads, all of which could change in the future, should be avoided, where possible
- when field boundaries, paths or roads are used because of the absence of other features, they should be wholly included within the National Park area
- where watercourses are used, they should be wholly included in the National Park although consideration should be given to the dynamic nature of many watercourses which generally make these features unsuitable for the definition of legal boundaries
- the boundary should be prepared on Ordnance Survey maps at 1:10,000 scale and should be accompanied by a written description.

Q6a Do these principles provide a reasonable basis for drawing up a detailed National Park boundary for the area?

Q6b Do you have any suggestions for changes to these principles which would be specifically required for drawing up a boundary for a National Park in this part of Scotland?

Section 5 – Functions and powers of the proposed National Park Authority

5-1 The framework for the powers of the National Park Authority is provided by the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. These include:

- a range of general functions and powers provided by Schedule 2 of the Act
- a range of countryside functions and powers provided by Schedules 3 and 5 of the Act
- the town and country planning functions conferred under Section 10 of the Act
- any additional functions and powers that are stated in the designation order, including for example the access functions and powers conferred under part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) 2003 Act.

5-2 With the exception of the National Park Partnership Plan, all the powers and functions for a National Park Authority in Schedules 2, 3 and 5 of the Act are drawn from existing legislation for local authorities and other public bodies. Box 5-1 provides a summary of these general functions and powers.

Box 5-1 – General functions and powers of a National Park Authority

General

- provide advice and assistance
- undertake or fund research
- give grants
- enter into contracts, accept gifts, form or promote companies and partnerships
- fix and recover charges for goods, services and facilities

Management

- enter into management agreements and make bylaws and management rules
- establish nature reserves
- buy and manage land either by agreement or by compulsory purchase
- general arrangements for access, provision to make access orders and access agreements, acquire land etc.
- improve waterways for recreation
- protect and maintain rights of way
- request road traffic orders from the Scottish Ministers

Services

- provide information, education services and facilities for the purpose of promoting the special qualities of the National Park by the public
- provide or promote leisure facilities in the National Park, and to encourage people to visit the National Park
- provide campsites and provide food etc in the National Park.
- provide recreational, sporting, cultural and social facilities and activities in the National Park

Q7 Are there any further existing functions and powers from recent legislation that would be beneficial for this Park Authority to be able to draw on and why?

5-3 Whatever arrangements are put in place for the additional functions and powers of the National Park Authority, it will be important that they are as simple as possible, avoid overlap with functions and powers of existing public bodies, and focus on the

issues that matter to this National Park area. The following suggestions seek to follow these principles.

Town and country planning

5-4 The Act provides the following options for the National Park Authority's planning function:

- a) to be the planning authority for the National Park with responsibility for both development planning and development management for its area
- b) to be treated as the planning authority for the National Park, but only in relation to development planning
- c) bespoke arrangements for the planning function that are set in the designation order.

Scottish Ministers have not expressed any preference for any of these options for a Galloway National Park.

5-5 At present, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park operates under Option a (development planning and management), while Cairngorms has arrangements which straddle Options b (development planning) and c (the ability to call-in development management cases of significance for it to determine rather than the local authority). The Scottish Parliament agreed with the Scottish Government that these arrangements were necessary in order to better integrate planning policy across the four (for Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park) and five (for Cairngorms National Park) local authority areas and allow focused attention to be given by the Park Authority to the key issues in managing the area.

5-6 While the experience of the existing National Parks is relevant, the geography and administration of the proposed area is different and may suggest an alternative approach is needed. Issues to consider include the following:

- **The volume and nature of planning cases.** As a result of geographic size and greater population, the Dumfries and Galloway Council part of the proposed National Park area is likely to generate the highest volume of its planning case work. Past development trends may of course not be future ones though any National Park would inherit the existing development planning policies for the area until a new development plan or plans had been prepared following designation. In the smallest area option, much of the land is owned or regulated by the Scottish Government and/or is already subject to national planning policies because of its designated status. If the largest area option were selected, it would cover a significant part of one council area.
- **The role of the Scottish Government.** National Planning Framework 4 guides spatial development, sets out national planning policies, designates national developments and highlights regional spatial priorities. It is part of the development plan, and so influences planning decisions across Scotland. The large-scale energy and forestry proposals in the area are currently determined by the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit and Scottish Forestry respectively, with the local authority as consultee. These arrangements would not change if the proposed National Park became the planning authority.

- **Resourcing.** While recognised as an important and positive function for both the existing National Parks which is essential to delivery of the National Park aims for these areas, the preparation of a local development plan and determining planning applications requires dedicated skills, resourcing and expertise. It also has an opportunity cost in terms of the time spent on this function compared to others, particularly in terms of Board and senior staff time. Equally, National Park status would require additional resources for the planning service if it was retained by the local authorities.
- **Park status.** Both of Scotland's existing National Parks meet the [global definition](#) of a protected area established by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This definition requires a National Park Authority to have some means to prevent significant negative impacts of development and land use proposals on its area in line with the National Park principle.

5-7 Against this background we do not consider that a new National Park Authority should become the full planning authority for the area. However, we do consider that a bespoke planning function would be required. Possible options for this are set out in Box 5-2.

Box 5-2 – Possible options for the bespoke planning function

<p>National Park Plan</p> <p>a) The Park Plan could set out more specific strategic policies for spatial planning within the Park area which local authorities would need to take account of in undertaking their development planning and management function; and</p> <p>Development planning</p> <p>b) The Park Authority could be a key partner and statutory consultee for the development plans covering its area; or</p> <p>c) The Park Authority could be responsible for the development plan for its area, working closely with the three local authorities with further consideration needed on the detail of how this function could be best be resourced and undertaken (including possibly joint arrangements).</p> <p>Development management</p> <p>d) The Park Authority could become a statutory consultee for development management undertaken by the three local authorities, with cases where the Park Authority objects to a proposal that has been recommended for approval by the local authority being called-in for determination by Scottish Ministers or</p> <p>e) The Park Authority could call-in and determine any case which it deems to be of national significance to the achievement of the Park Aims or policies or priorities in its Park Plan.</p>

Q8a Do you agree with the need for a bespoke approach suggested for the planning function for a National Park authority in Galloway?

Yes/Maybe/No/Don't know

Q8b Looking at the possible options in Box 5-2, how do you think this should work in practice?

Q8c What alternatives should be considered and why?

Access, recreation and visitor management

5-8 Both existing National Parks are access authorities and undertake this key function for their areas, including preparing a core path plan for their area, upholding access rights, providing advice to land managers and promoting the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Given the third aim of National Parks is to promote the understanding and enjoyment of the area, a similar role may be appropriate for the proposed Galloway National Park, though the detail of it will depend on the area which may be selected for National Park status.

Q9a Do you agree that the National Park should in principle become an access authority for its area?

Yes/Maybe/No/Don't Know

Q9b If not, what other options could be considered and why?

5-9 Core path plans have already been prepared by the three local access authorities and could be reviewed jointly with the National Park Authority following the finalisation of the first Park Plan. There may be a stronger case for the National Park Authority to create a new core path plan if the largest option for the area was selected.

Q9c Do you agree with the suggested approach to core path planning?

Yes/Maybe/No/Don't know

Q9d If not, what other options could be considered and why?

5-10 At present, only one of the three local authorities have an active local access forum. If all three were active, it may not be necessary for a National Park Authority to establish its own forum, provided membership of these other forums includes representation from the National Park area. However, there is a stronger case for the National Park Authority to create its own local access forum if such forums do not exist or are not active or the largest option for the area was selected. We would also suggest that a National Park Authority should establish an advisory forum with a wider remit on recreation and visitor management as well as access.

Q9e What are the strengths and weakness of these options for access and other fora?

Q9f Are there any other options you would want to see considered?

5-11 Another important consideration is the additional resourcing a National Park could bring, particularly in support of both access users and land managers. Under its core powers, the National Park can deploy a ranger service which could complement or replace the existing services provided by Forestry and Land Scotland and the local authorities within the area.

Q10a Do you think that the new National Park should establish its own ranger service?

Yes/Maybe/No/Don't know

Q10b What are the strengths and weakness of this approach?

Q10c Are there any other options which should be considered and why?

Forestry and wind farm development

5-12 Farming, forestry and renewable energy are important land uses which will play a major role in meeting the aims of the National Park. While the policy and regulatory framework for them is a matter for the Scottish Government and its agencies, a National Park Authority would need to work closely with these sectors in drawing up its Park Plan in ways which supported their long-term success.

5-13 One approach would be for a Galloway National Park Authority to become a statutory consultee on the forest management plans prepared by Forestry and Land Scotland; regulation and funding decisions made by Scottish Forestry; and energy development proposals dealt with by the Energy Consents Unit in the Scottish Government under the Electricity Act. We also see merit in the National Park Authority and Forestry and Land Scotland jointly producing a management plan for the Galloway Forest Park which sets out the long-term vision for nature and recreation in the area as a whole, alongside the important ambitions for timber production contained in the individual forest management plans prepared by Forestry and Land Scotland.

Q11a Do you agree with these possible arrangements?

Yes/In part/No/Don't know

Q11b If not, what alternative approaches should be considered and why?

Section 6 – The governance and staffing arrangements for the National Park Authority

6-1 The Board of the National Park Authority is the decision-making body of the National Park and is directly accountable to Scottish Ministers for its actions. The framework for representation on the National Park Board is provided by the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. In essence, this framework:

- sets the maximum size of the National Park Board as 25 (although to date, it has always been smaller than this in the existing Scottish National Parks)
- provides for a minimum of 20% of the National Park Board to be directly elected by those living in the National Park area
- provides for Scottish Ministers to appoint 50% of the other members and for local authorities to nominate the remaining 50%
- ensures that a minimum of 60% of the Board's members are likely to be 'local' (defined as either people who live in the National Park area, or who are a councillor for an electoral ward or community council any part of which is in the park area).

The approach requires at least one representative from each local authority within the National Park area. For the existing Scottish National Parks, some of the electoral wards for directly elected members extend over more than one local authority area.

Size and make-up of the National Park Board

6-2 At 17 and 19 members, the current size of the Boards of the existing Scottish National Parks are considered large for a public body, which normally operate with 12 or fewer members. However, these larger sizes allow for proportionate local representation which is particularly important given the planning functions of these National Parks.

6-3 The size and population geography of the area has important implications for the number of directly elected members and the share of local authority nominations. This in turn has implications for the size of the National Park Board. Further detailed work would be needed to calculate the precise populations for the preferred area of the proposed National Park.

6-4 From the initial analysis we have undertaken, the following options for the size and composition of the National Park Board are suggested in Table 6-1 and Diagram 6-2.



Table 6-1 – Options for the size and composition of the National Park Board

-	Directly Elected Members	Local Authority Nominated Members			Ministerial appointments to the board	Total number of board members
		EA	SA	D&G		
Area Option 1	4	1	1	2	4	12
Area Option 2 or 3	5	1	1	3	5	15

6-5 Both these options mean that two thirds of the Board’s membership would be likely to consist of local representatives (depending on who the local authority decides to nominate), with one third of members directly elected by local people living in the National Park area.

6-6 While having more directly elected members than the minimum of 20% specified by the legislation has been strongly supported in the community meetings where this topic has been discussed, it may raise concerns over the range of skills and expertise that a Board needs to have available to run effectively, as well as the balance between local and national representation. Similarly, greater representation from Dumfries & Galloway Council area may also be merited in terms of relative population size of proportion of the area, but this would mean a much larger Board size.

Q12a Do you support these proposals for the potential size and composition of a National Park Board in the Galloway area?

Yes/Maybe/No/Don’t know

Q12b What do you think would be the advantages or disadvantages of these suggested arrangements?

Q12c What alternative options could be considered and why?

Areas of expertise required by the National Park Board

6-7 A National Park Board would need a range of expertise and experience to work effectively and to consider the full range of National Park aims. To this end, the Act requires that no person may be nominated by local authorities or appointed by Scottish Ministers to the Board unless they have knowledge or experience relevant to the functions of the National Park Authority or National Park. Scottish Ministers also need to follow formal [guidelines](#) for making appointments, which include the need for consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion.

6-8 In addition to its members, a National Park Board will be able to draw on the range of expertise of its staff and its partners. It also has the ability to establish sub-committees and advisory groups to assist its work. Collectively, these arrangements should enable it to have access to the knowledge and experience relevant to the aims of the National Park that it would need. Nevertheless, given the particular importance of nature, farming and forestry in this area, we propose that Scottish

Ministers should ensure that this expertise is directly represented on the National Park Board.

Q13a Should Scottish Minister appointments to the Board include expertise on nature, farming and forestry?

Yes/Maybe/No/Don't know

Q13b What other areas of expertise would the Board require, and why?

Q14 Do you have suggestions for the topics that National Park sub-committees and advisory groups should be created for?

Q15 What steps could be taken to ensure a new National Park operated in ways which are inclusive of ethnic minorities and other protected characteristics?

6-9 The legislation requires that at least 60% of the members of the National Park Board are 'local members'. A local member is defined by the legislation as a person who lives in the National Park area, or who is a councillor for an electoral ward or community council, any part of which is in the National Park area. Experience from the existing National Parks suggests that local authority nominations would be elected councillors whose wards were wholly or partly within it and therefore meet the criteria as a local member. In both the proposals suggested above, more than 60% of the National Park Board would be local members.

Timing of elections of directly elected members

6-10 If Scottish Ministers decide to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway, a separate consultation would be undertaken on an election order for direct elections to the National Park Authority. However, the designation order must itself specify the timing of these elections. The designation order also contains the date on which the National Park Authority is established following approval of the order and the date of its first meeting. All elections, appointments and nominations to the National Park Authority must be completed by the establishment date. The inclusion in the designation order of the timing of the elections is needed to allow this to happen and also to allow a choice to be made between having the elections before or following the completion of the local authority nominations and Scottish Government appointments. For both the existing National Parks, the process of elections, nominations and appointments overlapped, though the elections were held following completion of the nomination and appointment process.

Q16 Views are sought on the timing of the direct elections in respect to the selection of other elements of National Park Board.

National Park staffing

6-11 The Scottish Government is placing greater priority on public sector reform and a range of proposals is being developed to take this forward. Reducing duplication, increasing efficiency and working more effectively makes sense in terms of making public funding go further, but it also adds value in terms of delivering better outcomes locally. As a place-based approach to public sector delivery, National Parks would seem to be well-placed to contribute to this agenda.

6-12 Further consideration is needed on the scope to transfer or share staff between public sector bodies operating in the area, as well as offices and other corporate functions. Shared corporate functions with the existing National Park bodies, NatureScot or other relevant public bodies could also be considered. With three National Parks, a single National Park agency could also become a more viable option. As noted earlier, S17 of the legislation on 'agency arrangements and joint arrangements' provides a number of tools for this, including allowing two or more National Park Authorities to exercise any of their functions jointly. Schedule 1 (13) of the Act requires a CEO to be appointed but leaves open what other staffing arrangements are put in place.

Q17a What options for using the existing public sector staff and resources to undertake the work of the National Park Authority should be considered and why?

Q17b Are there any benefits or drawbacks to these options which need to be considered?

6-13 If it was established as a standalone body, we consider that the National Park would need a CEO and team of circa 25 to:

- i) support the Board and manage the body (20%)
- ii) develop, consult and lead implementation of the National Park Partnership Plan (40%)
- iii) undertake its planning, access and land use functions (40%).

More detailed assessment would be needed to consider staffing requirements for provision of its ranger and visitor services for the area.

Q18a What level of staffing do you think is appropriate for the area, powers and functions and governance arrangements being considered?

Q18b What other areas of work would require further staffing and why?

Section 7 – Name of the National Park

7-1 In the discussions around National Park status for this area and in the bid itself, Galloway has commonly been used. Much of the debate has also largely focused on the Dumfries and Galloway Council area. In historical terms, some experts consider that the Kingdom of Galloway would be a more accurate name given that the area extends into the two Ayrshire authorities, though the Biosphere Reserve has chosen an extended name to specifically refer to Southern Ayrshire.

Q19a Do you agree that – if designated – the National Park should be called the ‘Kingdom of Galloway National Park’?

Q19b If not, what alternatives would you suggest?

Section 8 – Other issues

8-1 You are welcome to make any additional comments on issues which have not been addressed in the consultation. We also welcome further evidence and data related to the potential positive or negative environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposed National Park that individuals and organisations can provide.

Q20 Do you have any other comments you wish to make here which are relevant to the proposal?

Q21 Is there further evidence and information you want to provide on the potential positive or negative environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposed National Park?

Annex – Consultation questions

Q1a To what extent do you support the idea of a new National Park being established in the south west of Scotland?

Q1b Please tell us the main reason(s) for your opinion.

Q2a Are there any alternatives to a National Park in Galloway that you would support? Please explain your answer.

Q2b What are the advantages of your preferred alternative(s) over a National Park?

Q3a If a National Park was to be designated, which of the three options presented in Map 4-1 and Table 4-1 would you support?

Q3b Please give your reasons.

Q3c Do you have comments on the extent of the area in your preferred option? Would you add or remove particular areas, features or settlements to make the option smaller or larger? And if so, why?

Q4 Is there another option for the area of the proposed National Park which should be considered? If so, what do you suggest and why?

Q5a Looking at the description of the options presented in Table 4-1, do you think they meet the legislative conditions for designation?

Q5b Do you have any additional comments on Table 4-1 which might be relevant to the consideration of the geographic area?

Q6a Do these principles provide a reasonable basis for drawing up a detailed National Park boundary for the area?

Q6b Do you have any suggestions for changes to these principles which would be specifically required for drawing up a boundary for a National Park in this part of Scotland?

Q7 Are there any further existing functions and powers from recent legislation that would be beneficial for this Park Authority to be able to draw on and why?

Q8a Do you agree with the need for a bespoke approach suggested for the planning function for a National Park authority in Galloway?

Q8b Looking at the possible options in Box 5-2, how do you think this should work in practice?

Q8c What alternatives should be considered and why?

Q9a Do you agree that the National Park should in principle become an access authority for its area?

Q9b If not, what other options could be considered and why?

Q9c Do you agree with the suggested approach to core path planning?

Q9d If not, what other options could be considered and why?

- Q9e What are the strengths and weakness of these options for access and other fora?
- Q9f Are there any other options you would want to see considered?
- Q10a Do you think that the new National Park should establish its own ranger service?
- Q10b What are the strengths and weakness of this approach?
- Q10c Are there any other options which should be considered and why?
- Q11a Do you agree with these possible arrangements?
- Q11b If not, what alternative approaches should be considered and why?
- Q12a Do you support these proposals for the potential size and composition of a National Park Board in the Galloway area?
- Q12b What do you think would be the advantages or disadvantages of these suggested arrangements?
- Q12c What alternative options could be considered and why?
- Q13a Should Scottish Minister appointments to the Board include expertise on nature, farming and forestry?
- Q13b What other areas of expertise would the Board require, and why?
- Q14 Do you have suggestions for the topics that National Park sub-committees and advisory groups should be created for?
- Q15 What steps could be taken to ensure a new National Park operated in ways which are inclusive of ethnic minorities and other protected characteristics?
- Q16 Views are sought on the timing of the direct elections in respect to the selection of other elements of National Park Board.
- Q17a What options for using the existing public sector staff and resources to undertake the work of the National Park Authority should be considered and why?
- Q17b Are there any benefits or drawbacks to these options which need to be considered?
- Q18a What level of staffing do you think is appropriate for the area, powers and functions and governance arrangements being considered?
- Q18b What other areas of work would require further staffing and why?
- Q19a Do you agree that – if designated – the National Park should be called the 'Kingdom of Galloway National Park'?
- Q19b If not, what alternatives would you suggest?
- Q20 Do you have any other comments you wish to make here which are relevant to the proposal?
- Q21 Is there further evidence and information you want to provide on the potential positive or negative environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposed National Park?