



A Galloway National Park?

Views from international expert, Roger Crofts

The perspective brought to the debate on a proposed new National Park by **Roger Crofts** is one of great significance which must be heard and respected. His expertise and experience speaks for itself. He was the Founder CEO of Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot) 1991-2002, who led on the establishment of Scotland's two National Parks. He remains an internationally renowned expert on protecting nature and advocate for more environmentally effective use and management of land and natural resources. He served as the European Chair of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature World Commission on Protected Areas 2000-08 and, since 2023, he is the Convenor of the Royal Society of Edinburgh Community of Interest on Environment. As well as this work at national and international level, Roger also has a home in Dalry, so he has good knowledge and understanding of the proposed Park area.

His recent publications on the proposed Park have included an article in The Times, '[Time to pause on plans for a new national park](#)' (Oct 2024,) a Briefing paper, '[A Galloway National Park?](#)' published on his website in October and a [recent article of the same name published in the Glenkens Gazette](#) (Dec 2024.) In these he raises several key issues that he suggests were not addressed in the Galloway National Park Association / GSA Biosphere bid. He asks questions that he believes must be answered before the Scottish Government can reach an appropriate conclusion on the potential designation of a new Park. These include whether a new park would address the issues of climate change and biodiversity better than current arrangements and whether the 'non-environmental' benefits could be better achieved through existing organisations working more effectively in partnership with local interests and with each other.

He also raises the vital question of whether the proposals have gained widespread support within the community, which the No Galloway National Park campaign believes they clearly have not. In this case, he calls for a more measured timescale of working towards an integrated solution to address all the social, economic, environmental, cultural, educational, and health issues we face.

The current timetable is tied to a political agenda to designate a park before the 2026 elections, rather than aiming to get things right for the community who will be most affected, i.e. those who live and work in the area. International experience indicates that these initiatives are only successful if there is sufficient dialogue with communities and they are not perceived to be imposed. The current consultation process is proving totally adequate for this to happen.

We must take the time to fully address the key issues and questions raised by both an international expert and in our own community.