



Our Reference: 202500453782

13 March 2025

Dear

Thank you for your correspondence of 29 January 2025 to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, regarding your concerns in relation to the proposal to establish a new National Park in the Galloway area. As an official in the Scottish Government's Directorate for Environment and Forestry I have been asked to reply.

I note you have raised your ongoing concerns about the consultation on the proposal to establish a new National Park in the Galloway area. You have also expressed concerns about proposals to amend the National Parks legislation through the Natural Environment Bill being introduced when the new National Park proposal is being considered.

As you will be aware, the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill was introduced to Parliament on 19 February 2025: [Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Bill | Scottish Parliament Website](#). The Bill amends the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 in order to:

- update the language of the National Park aims and elaborate on what is considered to be part of the aims;
- strengthen the existing duties on public sector bodies operating within National Parks so that these bodies must (i) have regard to the National Park aims and (ii) facilitate the implementation of National Park Plans; and
- introduce new powers for Scottish Ministers to be able to set up a fixed penalty notice regime for the contravention of specified National Park byelaws.

The existing powers to designate a new National Park under the 2000 Act and the designation process are not affected by the Bill. The proposed changes update the language of the aims, with the new subsection elaborating on what is considered to be part of these aims, reflecting the day to day work of National Parks and the existing duties on National Park authorities. Therefore we do not envisage any



issues with the Bill being considered by Parliament at this time.

Residents and businesses operating within the existing National Parks and the area proposed for a new National Park now have the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the National Parks legislation. We will continue to listen very carefully to any views expressed and to engage closely with all interested parties.

In your letter you have also raised concerns around the suitability of NatureScot as an independent reporter. The reporter's role and who can take on the role of reporter is set out in the [National Parks legislation](#), with NatureScot specifically named due to its expertise related to the National Park aims. NatureScot undertook the reporting role when Scotland's first two National Parks were established in Loch Lomond & the Trossachs and Cairngorms. NatureScot was once again asked to take on the reporter role for the proposal to designate a new National Park in the south west of Scotland.

The reporter team has completed a very thorough and comprehensive consultation process and they are now starting to analyse the responses. NatureScot has also commissioned an independent review of the consultation process and this will be presented to the Scottish Government alongside the consultation findings and the report on the proposal.

Finally, I would reiterate that the proposal is by no means a done deal. NatureScot will analyse every consultation response and they will report to the Scottish Government this Spring on all views expressed during the consultation.

The Scottish Government will carefully consider the outcome of the consultation - including the views of people living and working in Galloway and South and East Ayrshire - before taking any further decisions. We are not obliged to proceed with the proposal if we do not consider it to be in the best interests of people in Galloway and across Scotland.

I hope this response has been helpful and provided some reassurance on the points you have raised.

Yours sincerely,

Marc Tennant
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