

New National Parks

Appraisal Framework Guidance for Nominations

October 2023

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Introduction

“It is 20 years since Scotland’s first National Parks in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and the Cairngorms were established. Both are home to some of the country’s most outstanding scenery, are internationally important areas for nature and receive millions of visitors each year. They work hard to tackle the biodiversity and climate crisis, help manage facilities for visitors, promote responsible access and develop sustainable communities. They have become jewels in Scotland’s crown, and now is the time to add to them”

Lorna Slater, Biodiversity Minister

Scotland's National Parks are more important now than ever before. Working with partners and their local communities, amongst other things, they can:

- be exemplars in their work to protect and restore nature at scale;
- develop and test nature based solutions;
- restore peatland, rivers and wetlands and expand woodland;
- reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change in a way that is fair and inclusive to those living and working in their areas;
- encourage nature-friendly farming, forestry and coastal and marine use;
- support sustainable tourism and visitor management;
- create new employment opportunities and support sustainable growth of the local economy; and
- help to generate and channel inward investment in the area's precious natural resources.

The Scottish Government has committed to designating at least one new National Park in Scotland by the end of this parliamentary session in 2026. This is contingent on relevant legal conditions being met, including compatibility with the application of other regulatory frameworks in place or planned for the area.

As set out in the Bute House Agreement, Scottish Ministers will only designate new National Parks in response to local community demand. They recognise that National Parks should bring positive benefits to our environment and economy by supporting progressive development. This will help to address the climate emergency and improve public and community wellbeing.

An open and public invitation for expressions of interest in new National Parks was launched in May 2023. Communities and organisations that wish to put their area forward for designation as a National Park are now invited to develop and submit their ‘nomination’.

To ensure an open and transparent process, nominations for National Park status will be appraised based on the criteria set out in the Appraisal Framework. This will be used to support the selection of the area(s) to be taken forward as National Park proposal(s).

This guidance has been produced to support communities and organisations ('nominating groups') that wish to develop and submit proposals for a new National Park designation.

Background

National discussion on the future of National Parks

In 2022, The Scottish Government [launched a public consultation](#) on the future for National Parks in Scotland. This consultation sought views and ideas on the role that National Parks can play in helping to restore nature, tackle climate change, promote sustainable land use and support public and community wellbeing.

Following this, NatureScot was asked to lead a further [public consultation](#) to provide advice to Scottish Ministers. This has involved engaging with a wide range of stakeholders. NatureScot's advice includes:

- recommendations for amendments to existing legislation regarding the role of National Parks in Scotland.
- recommendations for the nomination process and selection criteria for new National Parks in Scotland.

This guidance document relates only to the process for the nomination and selection of new National Park(s) in Scotland. There is further information including a [consultation on proposed amendments](#) to the National Parks legislation available on our website.

After thorough consideration of NatureScot's advice, draft criteria for the [appraisal framework](#) were publicly consulted on from May to August 2023. A report has been published [analysing the consultation responses](#).

Overall the consultation demonstrated a high level of support for the proposed selection criteria and the analysis of these responses has informed the final appraisal framework and selection criteria.

Process for selecting new National Park(s)

We have received expressions of interest for new National Parks from a number of communities and organisations across Scotland. A fair and transparent nomination and appraisal process is therefore required to determine the area or areas to be taken forward to designation.

Nominating groups are required to develop and submit their proposal using a [standard nominations form](#). The [appraisal framework](#) with broad selection criteria will be used to help assess nominations and to inform the decision of Scottish Ministers on the candidate area(s) (the 'National Park proposals') to be progressed under the [National Park \(Scotland\) Act 2000](#) ('the 2000 Act').

As outlined in the appraisal framework at Annex A, the broad selection criteria that will be used to help assess nominations for new National Parks are:

- outstanding national importance
- size, character and coherence
- meeting the special needs of the area

- strategic contribution
- visitor management and tourism
- local support

Separately, compatibility with the application of regulatory frameworks surrounding existing and planned projects and activities for the area will be considered as part of the appraisal process. The 2000 Act allows for the possible designation of land-based National Parks and coastal and marine National Parks.

All areas of Scotland are eligible to submit nominations to become a new National Park (including those that have current or potential onshore wind developments). To ensure any National Park addresses the climate emergency and supports progressive development, we will develop new bespoke planning policy on onshore wind to be applied in new National Parks. This means that a new National Park will be treated differently to existing National Parks with respect to NPF4 policy for onshore wind.

The nomination and appraisal process and timeline is set out below and in image 1 contained in Annex : New National Park(s) project – timeline and process.

October 2023 – February 2024

- launch of nominations process for new National Parks – early October 2023
- confirmation of offer of support to nominating groups
- deadline for nominations – Thursday 29 February 2024

Spring 2024

- appraisal of nominations

Summer 2024

- decision and announcement by Scottish Ministers of area(s) to be progressed as ‘National Park proposal(s)’
- reporter Investigation commences

Reporter investigation

Following the appraisal process, subject to at least one nomination being selected to proceed as a National Park proposal, Ministers expect to appoint a reporter to undertake an investigation and report to them on the proposal(s).

In line with the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 (‘the Act’), it is anticipated that Ministers will require NatureScot to take on the role of reporter.

If Scottish Ministers require such an investigation and a report on the National Park proposal(s), there is a legal process set out in section 3 of the Act that must be followed. The reporter is required to (1) send the proposal to every local authority that has an area or part of an area within which the proposal relates; (2) publicise the proposal; (3) conduct the investigation including consulting local authorities, community councils and people who live, work or carry on business within the

proposed area and such other persons the reporter thinks fit on the proposal and (4) provide a recommendation to Ministers on the following matters:

- (a) the area which it is proposed should be designated as a National Park,
- (b) the desirability of designating the area in question (with or without modifications) as a National Park,
- (c) the functions which it is proposed the National Park authority for the Park should exercise,
- (d) the likely annual costs and capital expenses of the authority in exercising its functions,
- (e) such other matters relating to the proposal as the requirement may specify.

The reporter's report will be published by Ministers and laid before Parliament upon completion.

Process for designating new National Park(s)

Following the publication of the report on the National Park proposal(s), Scottish Ministers may decide to make a "designation order" following the process set out in the Act (sections 6-7).

This will include sending a copy of the draft designation order to every local authority within the proposed area, laying the proposed draft order before parliament, publicising the draft order and holding a further phase of consultation on the draft order.

Nominations process

Timeline

Below we have set out the timeline for the nomination and appraisal process.

Launch of nominations process - Early October 2023

The nominations process for new National Parks formally opens.

The appraisal framework (with selection criteria), standard nomination form and guidance for nominating groups are published on the Scottish Government website. Scottish Government will also confirm the support that will be available to nominating groups.

Support to nominating groups - October 2023

Deadline for nominating groups to request support services (e.g. to help facilitate community engagement on the development of new National Park nominations).

Nomination phase - October 2023 to February 2024

The period during which individuals, groups and organisations will develop and submit their proposals. Nominating groups should use the standard nomination form and demonstrate how their nomination meets the criteria set out in the appraisal framework. Nominations should demonstrate evidence of engagement with stakeholders and affected communities.

Deadline for nominations - 29 February 2024

Deadline for the submission of nominations to be received by Scottish Government.

Appraisal of nominations - Spring 2024

All nominations will be appraised based on the criteria set out in the appraisal framework. The Scottish Government may request additional information from nominees. Appraisal report will be prepared for Ministers.

Confirmation of nomination(s) to be progressed as 'National Park proposal(s)' - Summer 2024

Scottish Government to announce the nomination(s) to be taken forward as proposals for designation as a National Park, subject to relevant legal conditions being met, including the compatibility with other regulatory frameworks in place or planned for the area. The statutory reporter investigation will then commence. Scottish Ministers will then decide and announce the area or areas to be designated as new National Park(s) subject to parliamentary approval.

Support to areas wishing to put forward a nomination

Scottish Government has launched an open procurement process to appoint an external organisation with the relevant expertise to provide support to nominating groups where this is required.

This support will be impartial and is offered to enable and support groups in the planning and development of their nominations, for example by helping to arrange and host local community discussions and workshops.

Nominating groups should contact nationalparks@gov.scot to request this support and the New National Parks Team will arrange a meeting to discuss support requirements.

Requests for support should be received no later than Friday 27 October. The support services cannot be guaranteed for requests received after this date.

Format

Nominating groups are required to submit their proposal using the [standard nomination form](#). Where possible, electronic files are requested and should be provided in PDF format.

Submission

Nominations must be received by 29 February 2024. Unfortunately any nominations received after this deadline will not be accepted.

Nominations can be submitted by the following means:

Email: NationalParks@gov.scot

Post: New National Parks Team
Scottish Government
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Content and appraisal of nominations

The appraisal of nominations for new National Park(s) will be based on:

- the [nomination form](#) which all areas wishing to submit a nomination for National Park status will be asked to complete and submit by the deadline.
- the appraisal framework that will be used to assess proposals.
- any additional relevant information that is requested or commissioned by the appraisal panel.
- separately, compatibility with the application of regulatory frameworks surrounding existing and planned projects and activities for the area will be considered as part of the appraisal process.

General guidance for nominating groups:

- nominations must be submitted using the standard nomination form. All sections of the nomination form must be completed.
- maximum word counts for each section of the nomination form should be adhered to.
- while groups collaborating to combine resources/knowledge is to be encouraged, all individual nominations will be considered as part of the appraisal process.
- a clear message from last year's public consultation was the need to ensure the nomination process is clear, simple and as open as possible. As a result, nominating groups are only required to provide the information that is set out in the nomination form. A more detailed consideration of the potential powers, functions, governance and costs of a National Park proposal would form part of the statutory reporter investigation. This reporter investigation would commence if Scottish Ministers decide that a nomination should be taken forward for designation.
- where required, Scottish Government officials may contact nominating groups during the appraisal phase where information is required to support the appraisal of nominations.
- we have outlined below the questions that nominating groups are asked to answer using the standard nomination form. Each question specifies maximum word limits for each section. There is also guidance on the information and types of evidence that can be used to demonstrate how the proposed area meets the broad selection criteria for new National Parks that are set out in the appraisal framework (at Annex A).

Guidance on completing the nomination form

Below we provide guidance for nominating groups on each question in the nomination form.

Question one

What is the area being nominated for National Park designation?

Guidance for nominations

Nominating groups should provide a name and written description of the proposed area (or options for the area) including its approximate size, geographical scope and its main settlements. This should also specify the local authority area(s) that the nomination is within.

(Maximum word limit 500 words)

Question two

Why is the area of outstanding national importance due to its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage?

Guidance for nominations

Nominating groups should provide an explanation of why they consider that the proposed area is of outstanding national importance due to its natural heritage (including biodiversity, geodiversity and landscapes) or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage (including aspects of the area's historic environment).

Nominating groups may wish to include relevant evidence/indicators of natural and cultural heritage that are set out in the 'outstanding national importance' section of the appraisal framework.

(Maximum word limit 2,000 words)

Question three

Why does the size, character and identity of the area warrant designation as a National Park?

Guidance for nominations

Nominating groups should explain the rationale for designating the proposed geographic area as a National Park. This should include the approximate size of the area (sq miles/km). It should also include an explanation of the area's distinctive character and coherent identity, for example due to the landscape character types and/or defined nature networks.

Nominating groups may wish to include relevant evidence/indicators that are set out in the 'size, character and coherence' section of the appraisal framework.

(Maximum word limit 1,000 words)

Question four

How would designating the area as a National Park help to meet the special needs of the area?

Guidance for nominations

Nominating groups should explain how designating the area as a National Park would help to meet the special needs of the area. In particular, they should set out how designation as a National Park would help to address the following (as set out in more detail in the 'meeting the special needs of the area' section of the appraisal framework):

- Potential for the protection, recovery and restoration of the area's natural assets.
- Potential for the conservation and enhancement of the area's cultural heritage/historic environment assets.
- Challenges and opportunities for sustainable use of the area's natural resources.
- Challenges and opportunities regarding the economic and social development and wellbeing of the area's communities.

(Maximum word limit 2,000 words)

Question five

How would designating the area as a National Park support visitor management, sustainable tourism and access for all? How would it enhance public understanding and enjoyment of the area's assets?

Guidance for nominations

Nominating groups should outline visitor management and tourism pressures, challenges and opportunities in the area. They should explain how designating the area as a National Park would help to address current challenges and enhance visitor management and public enjoyment, understanding and access to the area's assets.

Nominating groups may wish to include relevant evidence/indicators set out in the 'visitor management and tourism' section of the appraisal framework.

(Maximum word limit 1,500 words)

Question six

How would designating the area as a National Park bring wider benefits to Scotland as a whole and support national priorities?

Guidance for nominations

Nominating groups should explain how designating the area as a National Park would bring wider benefits to Scotland as a whole and support national priorities including:

- climate change mitigation, adaptation and achieving a just transition to net zero

- biodiversity and nature restoration
- encouraging nature-friendly farming
- development of green skills and jobs
- responsible investment in natural capital

Nominating groups may wish to include relevant evidence/indicators set out in the 'strategic contribution' section of the appraisal framework.

(Maximum word limit 1,500 words)

Question seven

Is there evidence of local community engagement and participation in developing the proposal? Is there evidence of local support for the proposal? Does the nomination include any concerns or opposition?

Guidance for nominations

Nominating groups should set out who has been involved with the development of the nomination, including key individuals and organisations/groups.

They should explain how they have engaged with local communities and interest groups and demonstrate the level of support for the proposal.

Nominating groups should also include details of any concerns and opposition from stakeholders and affected communities.

Nominating groups may wish to include relevant evidence set out in the 'local support' section of the appraisal framework.

(Maximum word limit 2,000 words)

Appraisal framework and selection criteria

The appraisal framework at Annex A sets out the broad criteria against which nominations will be appraised. It also includes some of the relevant types of evidence and indicators that nominating groups may wish to include as part of their nomination. Separately, compatibility with the application of regulatory frameworks surrounding existing and planned projects and activities for the area will be considered as part of the appraisal process.

Nominating groups should be aware that the framework and criteria are not weighted and that nominations will be appraised on the merits of the overall proposal and should aim to demonstrate - with evidence - how they meet each of the criteria.

Appraisal process and decision on National Park proposal(s)

Following the appraisal of all nominations received, a summary report and advice to Scottish Ministers on the outcome of the appraisal process will be produced. The decision of whether a nomination which meets the selection criteria is to be taken forward as a national park proposal is then at the discretion of the Scottish

Ministers. In summer 2024, Scottish Ministers will announce the area or areas to be proposed to become a new National Park, subject to legal conditions being met including compatibility with other regulatory frameworks in place or planned for the area. The statutory reporter investigation outlined in section 2.3 will then commence. Scottish Ministers will then decide and announce the area or areas to be designated as new National Park(s).

Where nominations do not succeed in being proposed for National Park designation, the Scottish Government may contact nominating groups to discuss the contents of their nomination and any viable alternative options, particularly where there is the potential for nominating groups to make a significant contribution to nature restoration and climate change mitigation and adaptation in their areas.

Annex A – Appraisal framework and scoring guidance

Table 3 sets out the framework against which nominations will be appraised.

Table 3

Assessment criteria	Components	Indicators (evidence provided in nomination)	Assessment score 4 – extensive 3 – significant 2 – partial 1 – minimal/not addressed
Outstanding national importance	Is the area of outstanding national importance due to its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage?	Nomination to include evidence of the following:	i) Importance of natural assets (1-4)
		<p>Designated sites (number, area ha) Ramsar sites; Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas; European Marine Sites; Nature Conservation MPA; Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); National Nature Reserves (NNRs); National Scenic Areas (NSAs); Wild land Areas; Local landscape designations; Regional Parks; Long Distance Routes and SGTs; World Heritage Sites; Biosphere reserves; Global Geoparks. Evidence of important natural assets (e.g. species, habitats, ecosystems, nature networks) not covered by designations set out above.</p> <p>Evidence of cultural heritage World heritage sites; Listed buildings; Scheduled monuments; Gardens and designed landscapes; Conservation areas; Battlefields. Other relevant information on cultural/historic significance.</p>	ii) Importance of cultural heritage/historic environment assets (1-4)

<p>Size, character and coherence</p>	<p>Does the area have a distinctive character and coherent identity? Does the area's size justify designation?</p>	<p>Nomination to explain rationale for proposed National Park area, size of proposed National Park area, and why designation is justified e.g. due to coherent identity of the area, defined nature networks etc.</p> <p>Note: Applicants may wish to refer to Scottish Landscape Character Types and / or Natural Heritage Futures categories as part of their rationale/justification for their proposed geographic area.</p>	<p>Distinctive character and coherent identify (1-4)</p>
<p>Meeting the Special Needs of the area</p>	<p>Would National Park designation meet the special needs of the area? Would designation be the best means of ensuring the National Park aims are collectively achieved in a coordinated way?</p>	<p>Nomination to set out why National Park designation is justified and how this would impact specifically in each of the following areas in terms of supporting development of opportunities and achieving these in collective and coordinated ways.</p> <p>Nomination to set out restoration/enhancement potential for ecosystems/habitats and for cultural heritage and/or potential for reducing pressures on ecosystems and adapting/changing practices.</p> <p>Identifying/relating restoration potential to existing habitat condition and condition of designated sites (e.g. for peatland, native woodland, wetlands etc.).</p> <p>Nominees to explain/identify existing challenges/opportunities for natural resource management and land use transitions in their proposed area.</p> <p>Nominees to explain/identify challenges and opportunities for economic/social development and wellbeing in their proposed area.</p> <p>Nominees to identify relevant evidence on population loss, economic performance and employment profiles and extent to which the local economy is dependent on natural resources.</p>	<p>i) Potential for protection, recovery and restoration of the area's natural heritage/assets (e.g. due to decline in species abundance, protected areas in unfavourable condition) (1-4)</p> <p>ii) Potential for protection and enhancement of the area's cultural heritage and historic assets (1-4)</p> <p>iii) Potential for sustainable use of the area's natural resources (1-4)</p> <p>iv) Potential to support sustainable economic and social development and wellbeing of the area's communities (1-4)</p>

Strategic contribution	<p>Would designation of this area as a National Park bring wider benefits to Scotland as a whole (e.g. through its contribution to climate action, nature restoration, nature-friendly farming, green skills and jobs, responsible investment in natural capital)?</p>	<p>Relevant information to be provided by nominating areas to identify how the proposed National Park would bring wider benefits to Scotland as a whole. This could include contributions relating to net zero and just transition, biodiversity/nature restoration plans, plans to support nature friendly farming, plans to support development of green skills and jobs, plans/potential for investment in natural capital.</p>	<p>Strategic contribution (1-4)</p>
Visitor management and tourism	<p>Would designation have a positive effect on visitor management, public understanding and enjoyment of the area and sustainable tourism?</p>	<p>Nomination identifies current visitor and tourism pressures (including visitor numbers and number/extent of key activities/status as a visitor destination) and the current and future potential of tourism using supporting evidence where available.</p> <p>Proposals clearly articulate the potential of a National Park designation to address key challenges and enhance visitor management and public understanding and enjoyment of area's assets including access for all.</p> <p>Proposals clearly demonstrate potential of a National Park designation to support sustainable tourism that contributes to net zero, nature positive society, improves community wellbeing and delivers shared prosperity.</p>	<p>i) Potential of NP designation to address key challenges/visitor management pressures and enhance public enjoyment of area (1-4)</p> <p>ii) Potential of National Park designation to support sustainable tourism (1-4)</p>

Local support	<p>Is there evidence of local community engagement and participation in developing this proposal?</p> <p>Is there evidence of local support for this proposal?</p> <p>Does the nomination reference any opposition to this proposal?</p>	<p>Nomination to provide evidence (where available) of the following:</p> <p>Local community engagement and participation in the development of the proposal.</p> <p>Support from local interests including community bodies, landowners and managers, businesses, third sector organisations, public bodies, relevant local authorities etc.</p> <p>Details of concerns/opposition from local interest groups and communities.</p> <p>Note: 'local' is defined as relating to the area within and near to the proposed National Park.</p>	i) Local engagement (1-4)
			ii) Local support (1-4)

This section sets out the detailed scoring guidance for nominations

Assessment Criterion: Outstanding national importance

1 Minimal

- i) low number of natural heritage and landscape designations/low level of coverage and several types not present.
- ii) Limited examples/evidence of cultural/historic features in application.

2 Partial

- i) Limited number/coverage of designated sites for nature and landscape and some designation types not present.
- ii) Some examples/evidence of cultural heritage identified/listed in application.

3 Significant

- i) Range of designated sites (and related features) for nature and landscape (covering a significant proportion of the proposed area) and some landscape designations; includes evidence of overall natural heritage value and important natural assets (species/habitats etc.).
- ii) Range of cultural/historic features identified and some relevant information/evidence on cultural/historic significance provided.

4 Extensive

- i) Extensive designated sites coverage (with a broad range of features/habitats/species) for nature and landscape; includes evidence of overall natural heritage value and important natural assets (species/habitats etc.).
- ii) Broad range of cultural/historic features identified and information/evidence on overall cultural/historic significance provided.

Assessment Criterion: Size, character and coherence

1 Minimal

Application lacking a clear and well defined proposed area; lacking a strong rationale for a coherent identity; proposed area small and/or geographically fragmented and lacks justification for designation; nature networks not well identified and/or existing habitats fragmented/degraded.

2 Partial

A reasonably well defined area or area options; Lacking some aspects of rationale for proposed area and/or less coherent geographically (i.e. cutting across natural geographic boundaries etc.); nature networks less well identified and existing habitat areas smaller or more fragmented.

3 Significant

Well defined geographic area or area options; Clearly justified rationale for coherent identify of the area with some areas less coherent/contiguous; existing nature networks and large contiguous areas of habitats identified.

4 Extensive

Well defined and justified geographic area or area options. Clearly justified rationale for coherent identify of the area; very well defined existing nature networks and extensive areas of multiple types of habitats/nature networks identified and evident.

Assessment Criterion: Local support

1 Minimal

- i) Limited/no evidence provided of applicants having undertaken community/ stakeholder engagement.
- ii) Limited/no evidence of local/stakeholder support for proposal provided in any form (or opposition to the proposal).

2 Partial

- i) Some evidence provided of applicants having undertaken engagement with some relevant groups but may be missing certain stakeholders and/or be less formal/more ad-hoc.
- ii) Some evidence of local/stakeholder support for proposal provided but may be partial, not quantified and/or less current/up to date and/or not consider/include any opposing views.

3 Significant

- i) Community/ stakeholder engagement undertaken during proposal development with a range of stakeholders (see indicator).
- ii) evidence of majority local support within local community and some key (local and non-local) stakeholder groups and consideration of opposing views included in application.

4 Extensive

- i) Community/ stakeholder engagement undertaken during proposal development with a comprehensive range stakeholders (see indicator) using different methods.
- ii) evidence of strong/majority local support and balanced inclusion of opposing views across a broad range of stakeholder (local and non-local) types included in application.

Assessment Criterion: Meeting the special needs of the area

Category i)

Potential for protection, recovery and restoration of the area's natural heritage/assets

1 Minimal

- i) existing ecosystem restoration potential and/or cultural heritage enhancement potential not clearly set out or only partially explored, no use of supporting evidence.

ii) Specific rationale/potential of National Park designation to support developing/coordinating new opportunities for restoration of natural and cultural heritage not fully explained or only for a very limited set of opportunities.

2 Partial

Existing ecosystem restoration potential and/or cultural heritage enhancement potential partially explored for a limited set of opportunities, limited use of supporting evidence.

ii) Includes rationale/potential of National Park designation to support developing/coordinating new opportunities for restoration of natural and cultural heritage but this is partial and/or specific links to National Park designation are limited/weak.

3 Significant

Restoration/enhancement potential clearly set out for several key habitats/ecosystems and cultural heritage features, supported with relevant evidence.

ii) Includes a convincing rationale for how National Park designation would support developing/coordinating new opportunities for restoration of natural and cultural heritage.

4 Extensive

i) Restoration/enhancement potential clearly set out for a range of ecosystems/habitats and cultural heritage features, supported with evidence

ii) Includes a convincing rationale for how National Park designation would support developing new opportunities for restoration of natural and cultural heritage. Includes innovative elements and consideration of the scale of restoration/enhancement and related benefits.

Category ii) Potential for sustainable use of the area's natural resources

1 Minimal

Existing challenges and opportunities for natural resource management not clearly/fully set out; related opportunities for land use transitions not fully set out/limited in scope and/or not clearly linked to role of National Park designation; limited/no use of supporting evidence.

2 Partial

Existing challenges and opportunities for natural resource management partially/not fully set out; related opportunities for land use transitions not fully set out/limited/no use of supporting evidence; Rationale/potential of National Park designation to support developing/coordinating new opportunities for natural resource management/land use transitions included but limited in scope.

3 Significant

Existing challenges and opportunities for natural resource management clearly set out covering a range of relevant areas and supported with evidence. Includes a convincing rationale for how National Park designation would support developing/coordinating new opportunities for natural resource management/land use transitions including specific examples.

4 Extensive

Existing challenges and opportunities for natural resource management clearly set out covering a range of relevant areas, supported by a wide range of evidence. Includes a convincing rationale for how National Park designation would support developing/coordinating new opportunities for natural resource management including examples of mechanisms/innovative measures directly linked to National Park designation.

Category iii) Potential to support sustainable economic and social development and wellbeing of the area's communities.

1 Minimal

Existing challenges and opportunities for economic/social development and wellbeing not clearly/fully set out related opportunities limited in scope and/or not clearly linked to role of National Park designation limited/no use of evidence .

2 Partial

Existing challenges and opportunities for economic/social development and wellbeing partially set out; Rationale/potential of National Park designation to support developing/coordinating new opportunities included but limited in scope; limited or no use of supporting evidence.

3 Significant

Existing challenges and opportunities for economic/social development and wellbeing clearly set out covering a range of topics including identifying linkages between economy and natural resources, supported with evidence. Includes convincing rationale for how National Park designation would support developing/coordinating new opportunities for economic/social development and wellbeing including several examples/measures.

4 Extensive

Existing challenges and opportunities for economic/social development and wellbeing clearly set out covering a range of topics, including identifying linkages between economy and natural resources, supported by evidence. Includes a convincing rationale for how National Park designation would support developing/coordinating new opportunities for economic/social development and wellbeing including mechanisms/innovative measures directly linked to NP designation.

Assessment Criterion: Visitor management and tourism

1 Minimal

- i) existing challenges and visitor pressures not clearly identified or only partially explored, no use of supporting evidence.
- ii) potential of National Park designation to support sustainable tourism not fully explored or only in relation to a limited set of measures/areas.

2 Partial

i) Some existing challenges and visitor pressures noted but use of evidence limited; potential of National Park designation to address challenges partially set out but less comprehensive/lacking innovation and/or not fully covering visitor management and public enjoyment.

ii) some sustainable tourism opportunities identified and linked to the National Park designation but limited in scope and/or not clearly linked to NP designation.

3 Significant

i) scale and significance of existing challenges, opportunities and visitor pressures clearly set out including some evidence; potential of National Park designation to address challenges and opportunities to enhance visitor management and public understanding of the area clearly set out

ii) potential of National Park designation to contribute to sustainable tourism clearly articulated across a wide range of relevant activities.

4 Extensive

i) scale and significance of existing challenges and visitor pressures and related opportunities clearly set out including use of evidence; potential of National Park designation to address challenges and opportunities to enhance visitor management and public understanding of the area set out convincingly

ii) potential of National Park designation to contribute to sustainable tourism clearly identified across a range of innovative activities with potential for improving community wellbeing/prosperity, nature positive society and delivering on net zero targets.

Assessment criterion: strategic contribution

1 Minimal

Proposal lacks any consideration of the wider/strategic benefits from designating the area as a National Park. No specific relevant evidence used.

2 Partial

Some limited references made to opportunities which may have wider/strategic benefits but some may be more localised and/or less well linked to the need for National Park designation. Limited evidence used to support claims.

3 Significant

Proposal sets out several relevant opportunities which could have wider/strategic benefits (e.g for climate/nature action) which have been clearly linked to National Park designation. Some evidence used to support claims.

4 Extensive

Proposal clearly and convincingly sets out how National Park designation would bring wider benefits to Scotland in relation to climate action, nature restoration and other areas (e.g. nature friendly farming, green skills and jobs and investment in natural capital) and makes some reference to the scale of benefits. Relevant evidence used to support key points.

Annex B – New National Park(s) project – timeline and process

High level timeline of the process stages for the selection and designation of a new National Park(s).

2022 – 23

National Discussion

Consultation: the future of National Parks in Scotland

Consultation: selecting new National Parks and changes to National Parks' powers and functions

2023 - 24

Nominations and Appraisal

Development of appraisal framework and public consultation

Nominations for new National Parks

Appraisal of nominations

2024-25

Reporter Investigation

Ministers announce proposal for new National Park(s) and Reporter investigation begins

Consultation on new National Park proposal

Report to Ministers

2025 - 26

Designation

Development of draft Designation Order

Consultation on draft Designation Order

Designation Order laid in Parliament



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