

# **New National Parks in Scotland Appraisal Framework**

**Consultation Paper**

**May 2023**

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## Ministerial Foreword



The Scottish Government has committed to designating at least one new National Park in Scotland by the end of this Parliamentary session in 2026. As Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, I am delighted to be consulting with you on how nominations for new National Parks should be appraised.

It is 20 years since Scotland's first two National Parks were created. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and the Cairngorms are home to some of our most iconic scenery, outstanding nature and magnificent landscapes. They each work hard to preserve, restore and promote our natural and cultural heritage. They promote responsible access to nature and they support the development of sustainable communities whilst attracting millions of visitors annually. It is clear that they have become jewels in Scotland's crown and now is the time to add to them.

Last year we consulted widely on the future of National Parks in Scotland and I am very grateful to everyone who took part in that process. Thank you for sharing your views, insights and ideas. These consultations have shown that many people want to see new National Parks in Scotland. They have also highlighted the important leadership role of our National Parks in tackling the interlinked crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, whilst also welcoming visitors and supporting local communities and businesses.

This Autumn we will launch the nominations process for new National Parks. I am delighted that several areas have put themselves forward as candidates for National Park status and I hope that we will receive nominations from across Scotland. In order to determine the area or areas to be taken forward for designation, we have developed a draft appraisal framework with proposed criteria for new National Parks in Scotland.

We want to ensure that the nominations and appraisal process is open, fair and transparent. That is why we are presenting the appraisal framework in draft, so that you have an opportunity to give us your views and feedback before it is finalised.

I would encourage everyone to participate in this consultation to ensure your views are heard. Your responses will help us to refine the broad criteria and finalise the appraisal framework, paving the way for this historic expansion of Scotland's National Parks.

**Lorna Slater MSP**

**Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity**

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The nature and climate emergency

There is increasing global consensus around the urgent need to address the interlinked crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. The natural environment underpins our economy and our society. It affects our jobs, our health, the food we eat and the water we drink. It supports food production and security and provides the blueprint for many modern medicines. Healthy biodiversity prevents soil erosion, purifies water and helps prevent and mitigate flooding. Nature also contributes to our wellbeing, providing recreation, relaxation and a sense of place. Sadly, Scotland has seen a decline in its biodiversity. The State of Nature Report for Scotland shows an average decline in the abundance and the distribution of Scotland's species over recent decades.

## 1.2. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the role of National Parks

The draft [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#) sets out Scotland's ambition to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 and to restore and regenerate biodiversity across our land, freshwater and seas by 2045. The strategy also sets out the most urgent priority actions which are required to put us on track to become nature positive by 2030. One of these priority actions is the designation of at least one new National Park in Scotland by 2026. The strategy also highlights the important leadership role of our National Parks in halting and reversing biodiversity loss and mitigating climate change.

Scotland's National Parks are more important now than ever before. Working with partners and their local communities, they can be exemplars in their work to protect and restore nature. They can develop and test nature based solutions – such as restoring peatland and expanding woodland – in order to 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. They can help to encourage nature-friendly farming, forestry and marine use. They can support sustainable tourism and visitor management. They can create new employment opportunities and support sustainable growth of the local economy by promoting green skills and jobs. And they can help to generate and channel inward investment in the area's precious natural resources.

### 1.3. Consultation background

In Spring 2022, the Scottish Government launched a public consultation on the future for [National Parks in Scotland](#). This was the start of a national discussion to find out what people value most about Scotland's National Parks. It 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.

The Scottish Government subsequently commissioned NatureScot to take forward further public consultations and provide advice on the role and approach of National Parks in Scotland and how new National Parks should be selected. NatureScot's [Report](#) was published in February 2023 and, based on the consultation responses that were received, it has informed the development of a draft appraisal framework and selection criteria for new National Parks. A Strategic Environmental Assessment is being carried out and will be published in the summer.

### 1.4 Consultation overview

#### **What are we asking of you?**

The Scottish Government has produced an [Appraisal Framework](#) to support the assessment of nominations for new National Park designations. This consultation is seeking your views and comments on this Appraisal Framework and the selection criteria for new National Parks.

**We recommend reading the Appraisal Framework before submitting your responses to this consultation.** This framework, once finalised, will be used to appraise all nominations that we receive for new National Parks.

#### **Why your views are important**

The Scottish Government wants to ensure that the nominations and appraisal process for new National Parks open, fair and transparent. That is why your views matter – we want to ensure that you have an opportunity to comment on the draft framework and the selection criteria before they are finalised.

**How long will the consultation be open for?**

The consultation is open from 11 May 2023 and will close on 4 August 2023. The Scottish Government intend to produce an analysis of responses during the Autumn of 2023.

**What will the consultation cover?**

The main aspects of this consultation are

- Appraisal framework
- Proposed criteria for new National Parks
- Nomination form

## 2. Consultation questions

Respondents should take into consideration the information provided in this document alongside any knowledge or personal experiences that could be relevant. All opinions are welcome.

You are invited to answer all the questions. However, if you are unable to answer any question then please feel free to skip and move on to the next.

### 2.1. Questions

#### **New National Parks appraisal framework and selection criteria**

Section 4 of the draft appraisal framework sets out the nominations process for new National Parks and the proposed criteria against which nominations will be appraised.

The following questions seek your views on these criteria and the proposed components of each criterion.

#### **Criterion 1 - outstanding national importance**

Is the area of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage?	Component 1 Is the proposed area of outstanding national importance due to its natural heritage, including biodiversity, geodiversity and landscapes?
	Component 2 Is the proposed area of outstanding national importance due to the area's cultural heritage, including the historic environment?

#### **Question 1**

**Do you agree that 'outstanding national importance' should be a criterion for assessing nominations for new National Parks?**

Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.**

**Question 2**

**Do you agree with the components of criterion 1 (outstanding national importance)?**

**Component 1** **Agree**  **Disagree**  **Don't know**

**Component 2** **Agree**  **Disagree**  **Don't know**

**If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.**



## Criterion 2 - size, character and coherence

Does the area have a distinctive character and a coherent identity?	Component 1 Does the proposed area have a distinctive character and coherent identity?
Is the proposed area of a sufficient size to justify integrated management as a National Park?	Component 2 Is the proposed area of a sufficient size to warrant integrated management as a National Park?

### Question 3

Do you agree that 'size, character and coherence' should be a criterion for assessing nominations for new National Parks?

Agree  Disagree  Don't know

If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.

### Question 4

Do you agree with the components of criterion 2 (size, character and coherence)?

Component 1 Agree  Disagree  Don't know

Component 2 Agree  Disagree  Don't know

If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.

### Criterion 3 - meeting the special needs of the area

How would designating the area as a National Park meet the special needs of the area? What difference would National Park designation make to the area for nature restoration, cultural heritage, sustainable use of natural resources, public enjoyment and sustainable communities?	Component 1 How would National Park designation support the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage and the historic environment?
	Component 2 How would National Park designation support nature recovery and restoration in the area, including ecosystem restoration, protection and recovery of vulnerable and important species and wildlife management?
	Component 3 How would National Park designation help to promote the understanding and enjoyment of the area by Scotland's people?
	Component 4 How would National Park designation support the sustainable development and well-being of local communities?
	Component 5 How would National Park designation support the sustainable use of the area's natural resources and how it would make a significant contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation?

#### Question 5

**Do you agree that 'meeting the special needs of the area' should be a criterion for assessing nominations for new National Parks?**

Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.**

#### Question 6



#### Criterion 4 - visitor management and experience

How would designating the area as a National Park support visitor management and the area's offer for education, recreation and enjoyment by all of Scotland's people?	Component 1 How would National Park designation enhance opportunities for enjoyment, recreation and understanding of the area's natural and cultural heritage?
	Component 2 How would National Park designation support visitor management in the area?
	Component 3 How could National Park designation support current and potential future transport infrastructure in and around the proposed area?
	Component 4 How could National Park designation support access to nature for Scotland's people?

#### Question 7

Do you agree that 'visitor management and experience' should be a criterion for assessing nominations for new National Parks?

Agree  Disagree  Don't know

If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.

#### Question 8

Do you agree with the components of criterion 4 (visitor management and experience)?

Component 1 Agree  Disagree  Don't know

Component 2 Agree  Disagree  Don't know

Component 3 Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**Component 4**

**Agree  Disagree  Don't know**

**If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.**

## Criterion 5 – added value

Why is the investment required to create and operate a new National Park for this area justified?	Component 1 How would the benefits of a National Park in the area justify the investment required?
	Component 2 What is the added value that National Park designation would bring to the area?

### Question 9

**Do you agree that ‘added value’ should be a criterion for assessing nominations for new National Parks?**

Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.**

### Question 10

**Do you agree with the components of criterion 5 (added value)?**

Component 1 Agree  Disagree  Don't know

Component 2 Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.**

## Criterion 6 - local support

Is there sufficient evidence of local support for this proposal?	Component 1 What level of local support (with evidence) is there from local interests (community bodies, landowners and managers, businesses, third sector organisations, public bodies etc).
	Component 2 What level of support (with evidence) is there from the local authority/authorities in the area?

### Question 11

**Do you agree that 'local support' should be a criterion for assessing nominations for new National Parks?**

Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.**

### Question 12

**Do you agree with the components of criterion 6 (local support)?**

Component 1 Agree  Disagree  Don't know

Component 2 Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.**

## Criterion 7 - strategic contribution

Would the designation of the area bring benefits to Scotland as a whole and contribute to strategic priorities including nature restoration, climate mitigation and adaptation action, green investment, skills and jobs and nature friendly farming?	Component 1 How could National Park designation support the area's leadership on climate change mitigation and adaptation in a way that is fair and inclusive for local communities?
	Component 2 How could National Park designation support the area's contribution to commitments within the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, including ecosystem restoration, protection and recovery of vulnerable species, wildlife management, nature friendly farming, the expansion of areas that are protected for nature and the development of nature networks?
	Component 3 How could designation as a National Park support sustainable investment in the area's natural capital?
	Component 4 How could designation as a National Park support the development of green skills and jobs in the area?
	Component 5 How could designation as a National Park complement the contribution that Scotland's existing National Parks make to tackling the nature and biodiversity crises?

### Question 13

Do you agree that 'strategic contribution' should be a criterion for assessing nominations for new National Parks?

Agree  Disagree  Don't know

If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.



**Question 14**

**Do you agree with the components of criterion 7 (strategic importance)?**

**Component 1** Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**Component 2** Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**Component 3** Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**Component 4** Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**Component 5** Agree  Disagree  Don't know

**If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer.**

**Question 15**

**Once finalised, the appraisal framework will include details of how each criterion will be scored. This will be published ahead of the nominations process being launched. Do you have any comments that you would like to make about how the selection criteria should be scored?**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide their comments on the selection criteria scoring.

## Question 16

**Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about the draft appraisal framework and nominations process for new National Parks?**

### 2.2. Responding to this consultation

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub [Citizens Space](#). You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of 4 August 2023.

If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, please complete the Respondent Information Form and send it to:

New National Parks Team - Nature Division  
The Scottish Government  
Area 3H South  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh  
EH6 6QQ

[NationalParks@gov.scot](mailto:NationalParks@gov.scot)

### 2.3. Handling your response

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the About You page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form included in this document.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our [privacy policy](#).

## 2.4. Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at [Citizen Space](#). If you use the consultation hub to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will be made available.

## 2.5. Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact address above or at [NationalParks@gov.scot](mailto:NationalParks@gov.scot) Scottish Government consultation process

Consultation is an essential part of the policy-making process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on a proposed area of work.

You can find all of our consultations online at [Citizen Space](#). Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, by email or by post.

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision-making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy

- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.

## Annex A: Respondent Information Form

### New National Park Evaluation Framework

**Please Note** this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:  
<https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
- Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email Address

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (without name)
- Do not publish response

**Information for organisations:**

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but

we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

No



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