While our aim is to provide information whenever possible, in this instance an exception under Regulation 10(4)(d), material in the course of completion, unfinished documents, or incomplete data has been applied to some of the information requested.

This exception is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking into account all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exception.

We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exception. We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosing information as part of an open, transparent and accountable government. However, there is a greater public interest in allowing a private space for officials to consider draft content of documents to ensure that factual and accurate information is released in the public domain.

As we have applied Regulation 10(4)(d), under Regulation 13(d) a public authority must also outline when the information will be completed. The final statement was completed on 29 May 2025 and has been included in this release.

A small amount of information has been withheld under Regulation 10(4)(e) (internal communications). This exception is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exception. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exception. We recognise that there is some public interest in releasing the information as part of an open, transparent and accountable government. However, this is outweighed by the greater public interest in allowing Scottish Government officials a private space to share free and frank views and advice for the purpose of deliberation on any given policy.

A small amount of information has been redacted from the document disclosed under Regulation 11 – Personal Data as it contains personal information and disclosing it would contravene the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and in Section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018. This exception is not subject to the 'public interest test'.

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ANNEX B

Question 1 - ***Any correspondence sent to Mairi Gougeon or Jim Fairlie relating to the Galloway and Ayrshire National Park proposal since 1 April 2025***

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 29 May 2025 18:10
To: Central Correspondence Unit <CentralCorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>; Gougeon M (Mairi), MSP <Mairi.Gougeon.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: FW: Meeting with Finlay Carson MSP
Importance: High

Good afternoon Cabinet Secretary,

Thank you for offering to meet with me to discuss the Statement on the Galloway National Park and future proposals, following the announcement in the Scottish Parliament Chamber today.

I wish to meet at the earliest opportunity. Could you advise of a date please?

Thanks in advance.

Yours sincerely

Finlay Carson MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Galloway & West Dumfries

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

+ 107 King St, Castle Douglas, DG7 1LZ
([REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
** finlay.carson.msp@parliament.scot*

([REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
+ M3.16, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

BSL calls welcome through:
contactSCOTLAND-BSL

t: @fincarson
fb: www.fb.com/fin.carson
w: http://www.finlaycarson.co.uk
privacy policy: www.finlaycarson.co.uk/privacy-policy

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 29 May 2025 16:56
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED:

REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Request from Official Report

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Here is the link to the SCDC report:

accompanying-report-scdc-naturescot-engagement-review-pdf-25-april-2025.pdf

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 29 May 2025 15:52
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]<[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Request from Official Report

Hi Team

[REDACTED: OUT OF SCOPE]

Could someone please let the Official Report know how to access the report mentioned?

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

From: OfficialReport <Official.Report@parliament.scot>
Sent: 29 May 2025 15:48
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Subject: Request from Official Report

Good afternoon

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During this afternoon's statement on Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal, the cabinet secretary quoted from a report by the Scottish Community Development Centre. I've tried looking online, and have been unable to track the report down. In order to ensure the accuracy of the report, would it be possible to direct me to where that report is published?

I have noted the quotes as follows:

"NatureScot's engagement on the national park proposal achieved very impressive levels of public involvement"

and

"this consultation compares very favourably with others and has demonstrated elements of very good practice in the use of the National Standards in Scotland".

Thanks and kind regards

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Official Reporter | Scottish Parliament Official Report
My working days are Tuesday to Friday

****

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Sent: 08 May 2025 15:16
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy <cabsecfornze@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: For awareness - Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal - General Question Time 8 May 2025

Good Afternoon,

We would be grateful if PO could make the Cabinet Secretary aware of the following questions from today's General Question Time.

This afternoon the following question was asked by Finlay Carson in Parliament:

To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the net zero secretary has had with the rural affairs secretary regarding the potential environmental and biodiversity impact of the proposed Galloway national park. (S6O-04627)

The Acting Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy responded with the following:

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The Scottish Government received NatureScot's report on the Galloway and Ayrshire national park proposal on Monday 5 May. We will now carefully consider the outcome of the consultation and NatureScot's advice on the proposal before taking any further decisions. That will include full consideration of the potential environmental, social and economic impacts. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands will update the Parliament on the next steps before recess, subject to parliamentary business.

For awareness, the following supplementary questions were then asked:

Finlay Carson: Biodiversity, the natural environment and landscapes are, of course, key factors when it comes to designating any new national parks. Economic sustainability and growth are also critical considerations.

The designation process in Galloway has been less than satisfactory. There have been significant issues, including a perceived bias and a lack of any detail on how a Galloway national park would or could be different from the two existing national parks, given the area's hugely important dairy farming, forestry and renewables sectors. That has resulted in mistrust and divisions within communities, which will take years to heal.

We have heard that the Scottish Government has now received the consultation report from NatureScot and that it is currently considering it. The Government promised that the report would be published, but it has not been, and constituents will have to wait until the end of June for the Government to respond with its decision.

It is my understanding that there is not a majority in favour of the national park proposal and that a full designation order is unlikely to be made. On that basis, in her discussions with the rural affairs secretary, will the cabinet secretary ensure that the Scottish Government will not simply walk away without recognising and addressing the unique challenges and opportunities that rural businesses and tourism and hospitality businesses in Galloway face?

Gillian Martin: As Mr Carson knows, there was a thorough and comprehensive consultation process—5,000 consultation surveys were completed and more than 30 consultation events were held across the area covered by the proposals, with more than 1,000 people attending. The rural affairs secretary has to look at the results of the consultation and take them seriously. An awful lot of information is included in the consultation, and she will advise the Parliament when she is ready to do so.

Craig Hoy: When the Cabinet Secretary looks at the responses to the consultation, will she impress upon NatureScot the importance of considering the postcodes of those who responded, so that we can tell whether those who live in the affected communities are those who are most opposed to the proposal?

Gillian Martin: As Mr Hoy knows, I am not the minister responsible for that decision, but I will pass on his comments to Mairi Gougeon, the rural affairs secretary.

The National Parks Team are happy to discuss any of the above if helpful.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (she/her)

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Policy and Project Manager | New National Parks Team | Biodiversity Unit | ENFOR Nature Division

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From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 25 April 2025 09:40
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Proposed new National Park - for awareness

This email is for the official record and confirms a Ministerial Decision. This email must be placed in the official record (eRDM) by your team in line with SG records management policy.
Thanks Jenny.

The Cab Sec has noted.

Best,
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (he/him)
Private Secretary | Rùnaire Prìobhaideach
M: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

The Cabinet Secretary's box closes at 2pm Monday to Thursday and 12 noon on Friday. Read more about the Cabinet Secretary's preferences here

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 23 April 2025 15:31
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION

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11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: Proposed new National Park - for awareness

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

We would be grateful if you could make the Cabinet Secretary aware that there has been some speculation on social media channels (facebook and X) regarding the outcome of NatureScot's consultation on the National Park proposal. An example is attached. It is unclear where the figure quoted has come from and the co-leader of the No Galloway National Park Campaign has confirmed that they do not know what the outcome of the consultation is.

We have alerted comms colleagues in case any speculation is picked up by local or national media.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Best wishes

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
Sent: 13 May 2025 13:06
To[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Factual Briefing Request - Mr Fairlie - National Parks

Thanks [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] – if there are any updates before Friday morning, can you please let me know?

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (she/her)
Private Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity – Jim Fairlie MSP
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

E: **MinisterforAC@gov.scot**
T: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 13 May 2025 11:05
To: Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Factual Briefing Request - Mr Fairlie - National Parks

Morning [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)],

Please see attached for briefing on the Galloway and Ayrshire National Park proposal. If you need anything else please let us know.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (she/her)
Policy and Project Manager | New National Parks Team | Biodiversity Unit | ENFOR Nature Division

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
Sent: 12 May 2025 17:02
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>
Subject: Factual Briefing Request - Mr Fairlie - National Parks

Hi folks,

Mr Fairlie is appearing on Radio 4's Any Questions this Friday 16 May which is being recorded in Ardfern, Lochgilphead.

Aware the show has a more UK-wide approach but in case more localised issues crop up, could you share the latest factual briefing/FMQ brief on national parks by ***17:00 on Thursday 15 May***?

Thanks,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (she/her)
Private Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity – Jim Fairlie MSP
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

E: **MinisterforAC@gov.scot**
T: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

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Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
www.gov.scot

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From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 13 May 2025 17:16
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: New National Park Proposal - Briefing - Cab Sec RALRI briefing for Colin Galbraith meeting 16 May 2025

Good afternoon,

Please see attached briefing for Ms Gougeon's meeting on Friday 16 May with Colin Galbraith from NatureScot.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] | Policy Lead – New National Park(s) | Biodiversity Team | Nature Division | Scottish Government

---

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 14 May 2025 11:16
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Ellen Leaver <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; DG Net Zero <DGNetZero@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Ministerial Statement: Galloway National Park Proposal 290525

Morning [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)],

The proposed title of the statement is "Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal"

The Reporters report will be published to accompany the statement.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (she/her)
Policy and Project Manager | New National Parks Team | Biodiversity Unit | ENFOR Nature Division

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 13 May 2025 12:09
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Ellen Leaver <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; DG Net Zero <DGNetZero@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Ministerial Statement: Galloway National Park Proposal 290525

Morning [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Thanks for all the info – we will ensure that we meet all the various deadlines.

To confirm that I will provide official support to the Cabinet Secretary in Parliament on 29 May.

For the pre-meet on 27th please can the following colleagues be invited for now (and we can judge availability closer to the time): Director Enfor, Deputy Director Nature Division, [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)], myself, [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]. Also [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] for Comms.

Thanks

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 13 May 2025 11:47
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Ellen Leaver <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION

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11(2)]@gov.scot>; DG Net Zero <DGNetZero@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Ministerial Statement: Galloway National Park Proposal 290525

Good morning team,

Please see note below from MPB.

Grateful for a title for the statement to be with Cab Sec **by 12 noon on Wednesday 14th May** for her clearance**.**

- Confirm whether there will be any documents published to accompany the statement, including a nil return, as soon as possible but no later than **10:00 on Thursday, 15 May.**

- Send up a copy of the proposed statement and briefing (including a Q&A with suggested questions that are likely to be asked following the statement, SpAd's will assist) to Cab Sec PO **by COB Friday 16th May and arrange for FM clearance of the statement.**

- Send the names of attendees for the **pre-meet on Tuesday 27th at 13:30 ASAP** and confirm who will be supporting Cab Sec on the day.

- Send the draft statement to MPB by **COP, Wednesday 28 May**. We understand there may be final tweaks after this version but as close to the final version is all the Minister needs to see.

Grateful to know that this has been picked up, thanks.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Minister for Parliamentary Business 2024
Sent: 13 May 2025 11:08
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <I[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Jeanette Campbell <[REDACTED:

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REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Colin McAllister <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for Parliamentary Business 2024 <MinisterPB@gov.scot>; Spads Admin <Spads_Admin@gov.scot>
Subject: Ministerial Statement: Galloway National Park Proposal 290525

Hi all,

Please see below details of a Ministerial Statement scheduled for Thursday, 29 May.

1455-1525 Ministerial Statement: Galloway National Park Proposal

Your Minister will have 10 minutes to deliver their statement (without interventions) followed by 20 minutes for questions.

Please ensure that between now and the statement you:

- Confirm the **title** as soon as possible, but no later than 12:00 on Thursday, 15 May.

- Confirm whether there will be any **documents** published to accompany the statement, including a nil return, as soon as possible but no later than 10:00 on Thursday, 15 May. Documents should be published on the day of the statement, at the start time shown above. An embargoed copy of the document must be sent from the relevant Private Office to the Minister for Parliamentary Business mailbox alongside the text of the statement (deadline below). These will be circulated, in confidence, to opposition parties one hour before the statement.

- Arrange for the **First Minister to clear the final text of the statement**, in advance of it being submitted. Please ensure that the First Minister has sufficient time to clear the statement within our deadlines. When sending the statement to FMPO, please include a sentence in your email which sets out whether the statement was requested by an opposition party and indicates if the statement is routine or relates to a sensitive or particularly political issue.

- The Minister for Parliamentary Business requires sight of the text of all ministerial statements the day before they are due to be delivered, therefore please send a copy of the draft statement to our office by COP, Wednesday 28 May. We understand there may be final tweaks after this version but as close to the final version is all the Minister needs to see.

- Include “CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY – EMBARGOED UNTIL [STATEMENT START TIME]” in the header of the statement and remove all tracked changes before **sending a Word copy to our office no later than 90 minutes** before the statement start time. We will circulate this alongside accompanying embargoed documents to opposition parties.

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- **Circulate** the final statement text and any accompanying documents to all Ministers 60 minutes prior to the statement being made.

- Ensure that the Minister is supported by all other portfolio Ministers on the front bench in Chamber for the duration of the statement. If there is an exceptional reason that a Cabinet Secretary or Minister cannot be on the front bench when a portfolio colleague is delivering a statement, a slip request must be submitted to Mr Hepburn for consideration. Where the slip is for a Junior Minister, it must be approved by the relevant Cabinet Secretary before it is sent to Mr Hepburn.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary to Minister for Parliamentary Business – Jamie Hepburn MSP
T: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] **| E:** MinisterPB@gov.scot
The Scottish Government | St Andrew's House, Regent Road, EDINBURGH, EH1 3DG

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 29 May 2025 09:00
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal - Draft statement to Parliament and Q&A

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Please find attached a clean version of the Cabinet Secretary's statement.

Thank you for confirming that you will send this on to the Minister for Parliamentary Business.

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We are editing the letters in line with Ms Gougeon's feedback and will send these back to you later this morning along with the updated Q&A.

Best wishes

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 29 May 2025 08:14
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal - Draft statement to Parliament and Q&A

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and team,

Ms Gougeon is broadly content with this and appreciate all the added input!

She has highlighted a couple of sections, but that's for my own reference, as there's a couple of things she wishes to reflect on.

Grateful for a final clean copy to send to MPB and Ministers later today.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 27 May 2025 16:58
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature

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Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <I[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal - Draft statement to Parliament and Q&A

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Apologies – I spotted a rogue sentence in the updated statement that should have been removed.

I would be grateful if this version could be shared with Ms Gougeon.

Many thanks

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 27 May 2025 16:31
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]<[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal - Draft statement to Parliament and Q&A

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Thanks very much for passing on the Cabinet Secretary's comments and edits to the statement. We have taken all of these on board [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

I have attached two versions of the statement – one with all of the tracked changes and comments, the other with all tracked changes accepted but with the comments retained in the margin for ease of reference.

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I would be grateful if the Cabinet Secretary could consider this updated version of the statement and let us know if there are any further edits that she would like us to make.

It would be very helpful if you are able to get back to us tomorrow morning so that we can seek the First Minister's clearance for the statement tomorrow before we send it to the Minister for Parliamentary Business.

Best wishes

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 25 May 2025 17:12
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal - Draft statement to Parliament and Q&A

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and team

Ms Gougeon has still to go through the briefing pack, as has been focussing on going through the reports again.

She has a few initial thoughts on the statement however and has made more comments and small edits in the attached.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

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[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 22 May 2025 17:34
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal - Draft statement to Parliament and Q&A

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

With thanks to [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] for her work on the Q&A, please find attached for the Cabinet Secretary's consideration:

- Draft Ministerial statement to Parliament
- Q&A briefing to accompany the statement
- NatureScot's report
- SoSE's consultation response

Please let us know if you need anything further at this stage.

Best wishes

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 19 May 2025 08:44
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature

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Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal - Speaking Note and Briefing for Cabinet Discussion and Announcement Handling Advice

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Ms Gougeon is fine with most of the proposals for handling, and makes sense to block off time after statement for bids. She is content with suggested list for letters to inform of decision, [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

On the speaking note- She will go through and edit herself for Tuesday.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 15 May 2025 14:10
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>

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Subject: Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal - Speaking Note and Briefing for Cabinet Discussion and Announcement Handling Advice

Good Afternoon,

Ahead of next week's Cabinet discussion, please see attached the following documents:

1) Draft speaking note for consideration

    - Does Cab Sec have any comments/edits?

2) A note of all feedback received from Ministers during the pre-Cabinet consideration process

3) Briefing on stakeholder responses to the Natural Environment Bill and RAI Committee evidence sessions

4) [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

    - [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
    - [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
    - [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
    - [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
    - [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

We would be grateful for answers to the above questions.

The National Parks Team can provide any additional briefing the Cab Sec would consider beneficial.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (she/her)
Policy and Project Manager | New National Parks Team | Biodiversity Unit | ENFOR Nature Division

---

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 29 May 2025 11:02
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>

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Cc: Spads Admin <Spads_Admin@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Urgent - For Clearance: New National Park Proposal: Stakeholder Letters

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Thank you for sharing the feedback from Cab Sec. Updated letters now attached. Grateful if these could be issued once Ms Gougeon had made her statement, at 15:05 today.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] | Policy Lead – New National Park(s) | Biodiversity Team | Nature Division | Scottish Government

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 29 May 2025 08:21
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Spads Admin <Spads_Admin@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Urgent - For Clearance: New National Park Proposal: Stakeholder Letters

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)],

Cab Sec states that the rest of the letters are fine, if similar edits could be made as what she has made to the MSP/MP letter.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 29 May 2025 08:19
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Spads Admin <Spads_Admin@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy

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Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Urgent - For Clearance: New National Park Proposal: Stakeholder Letters

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

An addition is needed to the MSP letter, highlighted in red, and Cab Sec has made other edits throughout.

Grateful for a clean copy ASAP and advice on issuing arrangements.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 28 May 2025 17:05
To: Mairi Gougeon <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Urgent - For Clearance: New National Park Proposal: Stakeholder Letters

Cab Sec, content to clear the statement, Q&A and MP/MSP letter?

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 28 May 2025 16:54
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Spads Admin <Spads_Admin@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <Kairn.Macleod@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>
Subject: Urgent - For Clearance: New National Park Proposal: Stakeholder Letters

Good afternoon,

Thanks [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] for the chat on Teams today.

Please find attached for the Cabinet Secretary's consideration the updated statement and Q&A and the stakeholder letters to be sent out by PO at the time of the statement tomorrow:

- Statement
- Q&A
- Nominating Group – Galloway National Park Association and Biosphere
- South of Scotland Enterprise
- Committees – Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee
- No Campaign
- D&G Council
- S Ayrshire Council
- E Ayrshire Council
- Letter for South of Scotland MSPs –

- Oliver Mundell MSP Oliver.Mundell.msp@parliament.scot
- Finlay Carson MSP Finlay.Carson.msp@parliament.scot
- Sharon Dowey MSP Sharon.Dowey.msp@parliament.scot
- Emma Harper MSP Emma.Harper.msp@parliament.scot
- Craig Hoy MSP Craig.Hoy.msp@parliament.scot
- Carol Mochan MSP Carol.Mochan.msp@parliament.scot
- Colin Smyth MSP Colin.Smyth.msp@parliament.scot
- Martin Whitfield MSP Martin.Whitfield.msp@parliament.scot
- Brian Whittle MSP Brian.Whittle.msp@parliament.scot
- John Cooper MP john.cooper.mp@parliament.uk

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- David Mundell MP david.mundell.mp@parliament.uk

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] | Policy Lead – New National Park(s) | Biodiversity Team | Nature Division | Scottish Government

---

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 29 May 2025 13:42
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Statement

Please see attached

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 29 May 2025 13:34
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Statement

And further edits

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] **On Behalf Of** Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 29 May 2025 13:12

To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Statement

HI,

Cab Sec has made further edits, grateful for a clean copy ASAP.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Question 2 - ***Any correspondence sent by Mairi Gougeon or Jim Fairlie relating to the Galloway and Ayrshire National Park proposal since 1 April 2025***

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 03 June 2025 12:01
To[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: New National Park Proposal: Diary Case 202500468714

Good Morning [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)],

I can confirm that the meeting will be going ahead tomorrow and Ms Gougeon will require briefing.

Many Thanks,
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] | **Assistant Private Secretary**
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands – Mairi Gougeon MSP

Room 2N.08 | St. Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

Ms Gougeon's box will close at 14:00 on Monday - Thursday and 12:00 on Fridays. You can find Ms Gougeon's updated preferences HERE.

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From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 03 June 2025 11:47
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: New National Park Proposal: Diary Case 202500468714

Good morning,

I've received Micase 202500468714 and drafted the attached letters. Can you please confirm whether this meeting is going ahead tomorrow or if it will be pushed to next week and I will update the accept letter with the date and upload it to the Micase System.

Grateful if you could confirm if Ms Gougeon requires briefing for this meeting.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] | Policy Lead – New National Park(s) | Biodiversity Team | Nature Division | Scottish Government

---

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 02 April 2025 09:31
To: Finlay.Carson.msp@parliament.scot
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Subject: National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire and the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill Discussion

Good morning,

Please find attached a letter from Ms Gougeon, for your consideration.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

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Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Mairi Gougeon MSP
T: 0300 244 4000 E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Finlay Carson MSP
Convener of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

___

2 April 2025

Dear Finlay

Thank you for meeting me on 11 March 2025 to discuss the proposed new National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire and the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill.

I hope that you found the discussion helpful and received some reassurance in relation to the public consultation and the next steps in the new National Park process.

As we discussed, there has been a significant amount of interest in the National Park proposal and I am acutely aware that there are polarised views on the issue. I am really grateful to everyone that has taken part in the consultation process. More than 1000 people have attended consultation events and drop-in sessions across the proposed area and more than 5000 surveys have been received by NatureScot.

As I mentioned, NatureScot is now in the process of analysing the consultation responses and they will report to the Scottish Government on the findings of the consultation, along with advice on the proposal and any alternative suggestions. NatureScot's report will also include an independent evaluation of the consultation process.

When the Scottish Government receives NatureScot's consultation report, we will give it very careful consideration before taking any further decisions on the proposal for a new National Park. I would like to reiterate that nothing is set in stone and no decisions have yet been made.

I intend to provide an update to Parliament on this matter in due course.

In relation to the national park provisions in the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill, I appreciate your concern that the passage of the Bill would potentially overlap with any next steps in the new National Park process. I note the Rural Affairs and Islands

Committee's current call for views and I shall listen carefully to any views expressed from the responses, as well as the Committee's scrutiny.

Yours sincerely,

MAIRI GOUGEON

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 02 April 2025 09:36
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@confor.org.uk
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Subject: National Park Proposal

Dear Mr Goodall,

Please find attached a letter from Ms Gougeon, for your consideration.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: 07760 750487
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
Mairi Gougeon MSP
T: 0300 244 4000 E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Stuart Goodall
Chief Executive
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@confor.org.uk

2 April 2025

Dear Stuart,

Thank you for meeting me on 12 March 2025 to discuss forestry sector issues.

I hope that you found the discussion helpful and received some reassurance in relation to the public consultation and the next steps in the new National Park process.

As we discussed, there has been a significant amount of interest in the National Park proposal and I am acutely aware that there are polarised views on the issue. I am really

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grateful to everyone that has taken part in the consultation process and I would like to thank CONFOR and its members for responding to the consultation. More than 1000 people have attended consultation events and drop-in sessions across the proposed area and more than 5000 surveys have been received by NatureScot.

NatureScot is now in the process of analysing the consultation responses and they will report to the Scottish Government on the findings of the consultation, along with advice on the proposal and any alternative suggestions. NatureScot's report will also include an independent evaluation of the consultation process.

When the Scottish Government receives NatureScot's consultation report, we will give it very careful consideration before taking any further decisions on the proposal for a new National Park. I would like to reiterate that nothing is set in stone and no decisions have yet been made.

Yours sincerely,

MAIRI GOUGEON

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 23 April 2025 12:33
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: RAIC - new national park

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Ms Gougeon is content with the revised response.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

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E-mail: **cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot**
From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 23 April 2025 10:51
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: RAIC - new national park

Good Morning,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

The final Nature Scot report will be provided on 5 May once it has been signed off by the Nature Scot Board. 5 May has been publicly committed to by Nature Scot. [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (she/her)
Policy and Project Manager | New National Parks Team | Biodiversity Unit | ENFOR Nature Division

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 23 April 2025 08:25
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: RAIC - new national park

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Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)],

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

She is conscious of the public holidays around the start of May and wishes to ensure she will actually receive it on the 5th May or by the end of the preceding week? [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Grateful for a response ASAP, thanks.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 22 April 2025 15:24
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: RAIC - new national park

Good Afternoon,

Please see the proposed answers to the RAI Committee questions for consideration. If Ms Gougeon is content, we will reply the Committee.

- When the Scottish Government expects NatureScot will provide its advice to the Scottish Ministers on the proposed Galloway national park.

Following analysis of the consultation responses, NatureScot, in its role as Reporter, will provide a report on the consultation findings and advice to Scottish Ministers on the National Park Proposal on 5 May 2025.

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- Whether NatureScot's advice will be published at the same time it is provided to the Scottish Ministers

Scottish Ministers will review and consider the report and advice on the National Park Proposal from Nature Scot prior to making any decisions on the proposed Galloway and Ayrshire National Park. The Reporter's report will be laid before Parliament and published when the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands provides an update to Parliament on next steps. We expect this update to take place before summer recess.

- When the Scottish Ministers expect to make a decision on the proposed Galloway national park.

The Scottish Government will carefully consider NatureScot's report and advice when we receive it on 5 May. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands will provide an update to Parliament on next steps before summer recess.

- How this decision will be communicated to the Scottish Parliament/RAI Committee.

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands will provide an update to Parliament before summer recess.

- The name and contact details for the lead official.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)], [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (she/her)
Policy and Project Manager | New National Parks Team | Biodiversity Unit | ENFOR Nature Division

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 10 April 2025 10:30
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION

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11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: RAIC - new national park

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)],

Grateful for your consideration of the request below. Please send to PO for clearance before responding, thanks.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 10 April 2025 10:13
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Rural Affairs and Islands Committee <rural.committee@Parliament.Scot>
Subject: RAIC - new national park

Dear private office,

I would be grateful if you could forward this email to the appropriate lead official to provide the following information—

- When the Scottish Government expects NatureScot will provide its advice to the Scottish Ministers on the proposed Galloway national park.
- Whether NatureScot's advice will be published at the same time it is provided to the Scottish Ministers.
- When the Scottish Ministers expect to make a decision on the proposed Galloway national park.
- How this decision will be communicated to the Scottish Parliament/RAI Committee.
- The name and contact details for the lead official.

Many thanks,
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
www.gov.scot

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Clerk to the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Mairi Gougeon MSP

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Oliver Mundell MSP
oliver.Mundell.msp@parliament.scot

29 May 2025

Dear Oliver,

New National Park decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses – 77%, were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40% were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

The consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

As I am sure you will agree, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the South West of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.

MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Mairi Gougeon MSP

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Finlay Carson MSP
Finlay.Carson.msp@parliament.scot

Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
www.gov.scot

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29 May 2025

Dear Finlay,

New National Park decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses – 77%, were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40% were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

The consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

As I am sure you will agree, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the

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Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the South West of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.

MAIRI GOUGEON

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Mairi Gougeon MSP

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E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Sharon Dowey MSP
Sharon.Dowey.msp@parliament.scot

29 May 2025

Dear Sharon,

New National Park decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

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which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot

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Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

The consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

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Emma Harper MSP
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29 May 2025

Dear Emma,

New National Park Decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

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The consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward

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Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

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Craig Hoy MSP
Craig.Hoy.msp@parliament.scot

29 May 2025

Dear Craig,

New National Park Decision

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Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Mairi Gougeon MSP

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Carol Mochan MSP
Carol.Mochan.msp@parliament.scot

29 May 2025

Dear Carol,

New National Park Decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

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Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Colin Smyth MSP
Colin.Smyth.msp@parliament.scot

29 May 2025

Dear Colin,

New National Park Decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

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MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

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Mairi Gougeon MSP

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E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Martin Whitfield MSP
Martin.Whitfield.msp@parliament.scot

29 May 2025

Dear Martin,

New National Park Decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

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The consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

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Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

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Brian Whittle MSP
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29 May 2025

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Dear Brian,

New National Park Decision

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Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Scottish Government
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Mairi Gougeon MSP

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John Cooper MP
john.cooper.mp@parliament.uk

29 May 2025

Dear John,

New National Park Decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

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David Mundell MP
david.mundell.mp@parliament.uk

29 May 2025

Dear David,

New National Park Decision

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As I am sure you will agree, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the South West of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.

MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Scottish Government
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Mairi Gougeon MSP

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Russel Griggs OBE
Chair
South of Scotland Enterprise
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@sose.scot

29 May 2025

Dear Russel

New National Park decision

Thank you for meeting me today to discuss the proposal for a new National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

As I set out in my statement to Parliament this afternoon, the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses – 77%, were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40% were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

I appreciate that this decision will receive mixed views within the region. Some individuals, communities and organisations are likely to welcome the decision, whilst others will be very disappointed. I recognise the huge amount of work and time that has been invested by a great many people and I know that the consultation period has been a challenging time.

I would like to thank SoSE for its constructive role throughout the process and for the suggestions that you have put forward with regard to a possible alternative approach to a National Park which draws on existing assets and structures in the South of Scotland.

I am sure you will agree that the consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

As you set out in your response to the consultation, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with solid regional partnerships and structures already in place. This includes the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, the regional land use partnership and framework, the Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, as well as the support, expertise, capacity and leadership that is provided by SoSE. The potential to strengthen existing arrangements is also reflected in NatureScot's report and, as I said in

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Parliament today, we now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with SoSE, its partners and local communities across the southwest of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.

MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Mairi Gougeon MSP

Scottish Government
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[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Galloway National Park Association
contact@gallowaynationalpark.org

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO
Biosphere
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gsabiosphere.org.uk

29 May 2025

Dear [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)], [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)],

New National Park Decision

Thank you for meeting me today to discuss the proposal for a new National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

As I set out in my statement to Parliament this afternoon, the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process. Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

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NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot.

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses – 77%, were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40% were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

I appreciate that this decision will be very disappointing to you and your organisations. I am aware that the Galloway National Park Association has been campaigning for a new National Park in Galloway for many years. I recognise the huge amount of work and time that has been invested by a great many people throughout this process and I know that the consultation period has been a challenging time for many people. On behalf of the Scottish Government I would like to thank GNPA and the Biosphere for your nomination and for your considerable contribution to the consultation process.

Whilst it is not the outcome that you were hoping for, I am sure you will agree that the consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

As I am sure you will agree, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

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And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the South West of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.

Yours sincerely,

MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Scottish Government
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Finlay Carson MSP,
Convener Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
c/o Clerk to the committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

By email to: rural.committee@parliament.scot

29 May 2025

Dear Finlay,

New National Park Decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a

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report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot.

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses – 77%, were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40% were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

The consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

As I am sure you will agree, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the southwest of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.
MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

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Edward Mountain MSP,
Convenor Net Zero, Energy and Transport
Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

By email to: netzero.committee@parliament.scot

29 May 2025

Dear Edward,

New National Park Decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot.

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses – 77%, were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40% were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the

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creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

The consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

As I am sure you will agree, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the southwest of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish

MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

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Ariane Burgess MSP,
Convenor Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

By email to: localgov.committee@parliament.scot

29 May 2025

Dear Ariane,

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New National Park decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot.

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses – 77%, were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40% were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

The consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

As I am sure you will agree, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an

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alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the southwest of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish

MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

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[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
No Galloway National Park Campaign
nogallowaynp@gmail.com

29 May 2025,

Dear [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2) and [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)],

New National Park decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot.

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses – 77%, were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40% were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

I would like to thank all those who took part in the discussions, got involved in the campaigns and responded to the consultation. The consultation process has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

There are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the southwest of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.

MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

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Councillor Gail MacGregor
Leader, Dumfries and Galloway Council
Gail.Macgregor@dumgal.gov.uk

29 May 2025

Dear Councillor MacGregor,

New National Park decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot.

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses – 77%, were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40% were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

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I am grateful for the engagement of Dumfries and Galloway Council throughout this process and for your response to the consultation.

The consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

As I am sure you will agree, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong l regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the southwest of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.

MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Scottish Government
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Councillor Martin Dowey
Leader, South Ayrshire Council
martin.dowey@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

29 May 2025

Dear Councillor Dowey,

New National Park decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in South West Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process.

Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot.

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses – 77%, were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40% were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

I am grateful for the engagement of South Ayrshire Council throughout this process and for your response to the consultation.

I recognise that your authority voted in favour of a new National Park and this decision may be disappointing. While this may not be your authority's preferred outcome, the consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of South West Scotland.

As I am sure you will agree, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the Natural Capital Innovation Zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an

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alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the southwest of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.

MAIRI GOUGEON

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

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Councillor Douglas Reid
Leader, East Ayrshire Council
douglas.reid@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

29 May 2025

Dear Councillor Reid,

New National Park decision

This afternoon in Parliament, I set out in a statement that the Scottish Government has decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in southwest Scotland.

As you are aware, NatureScot – in its role as the statutory Reporter – carried out an investigation into the proposal which included a 14 week public consultation process. Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire. Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

NatureScot analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on 5 May. These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website: National Parks - Landscape and outdoor access - gov.scot.

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it. The majority of consultation responses were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire. Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal while 40%

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were supportive. The report notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations on the evidence gathered during the investigation and the findings of the public consultation, the Reporter's advice is that the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.

The Scottish Government has listened to the views expressed by local communities, organisations and businesses. We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter. We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

I am grateful for the engagement of East Ayrshire Council throughout this process and for your response to the consultation.

I recognise that your authority voted in favour of a new National Park and this announcement may be disappointing. While this may not be your authority's preferred outcome, the consultation has raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about. As I said in my statement today, what is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of southwest Scotland.

As I am sure you will agree, there are very strong foundations to build upon, with strong local and regional partnerships and structures already in place. In addition to the biosphere, there is the regional land use partnership and framework, the natural capital innovation zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its report, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing arrangements could be further strengthened. SoSE has also suggested an alternative approach, drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland. We now need to take the time to reflect and give these suggestions deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the southwest of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.

MAIRI GOUGEON

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 29 May 2025 14:29
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>;

Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Potential questions NP statement.

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Please see attached

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (she/her)
Policy and Project Manager | New National Parks Team | Biodiversity Unit | ENFOR Nature Division

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 29 May 2025 14:16
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Potential questions NP statement.

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Thank you for this.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Kind regards,
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (he/him) | Assistant Private Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
Ministerial Private Office | The Scottish Government

CabSecForRALRI@gov.scot

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From: [REDACTED:REGULATION 11(2)]<[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 29 May 2025 14:07
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Potential questions NP statement.

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] | She/Her|Head of Biodiversity | Nature Division | [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

I work Monday to Thursday.

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 29 May 2025 13:25
To[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Potential questions NP statement.

Hi

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Grateful for this ASAP, thanks.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 29 May 2025 13:01
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Potential questions NP statement.

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 29 May 2025 12:37
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <Donald.Henderson@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Potential questions NP statement.

Hi,

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[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Grateful for a response immediately.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <Jenny.Gibbons@gov.scot>
Sent: 29 May 2025 11:13
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Potential questions NP statement.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

With thanks to colleagues for their input at short notice, please find attached responses to the questions.

Best wishes

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 28 May 2025 17:07
To: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Nature Division <DDND@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION

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11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Potential questions NP statement.
Importance: High

Dear all,

Grateful if responses to the questions below to be drafted and sent to PO ASAP.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Deputy Private Secretary - Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, MSP
Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
E-mail: cabsecforRALRI@gov.scot

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

1. [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
2. [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
3. [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)].

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

- [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
- [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]
- [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

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Ian Muirhead
Special Adviser to the First Minister
Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands.
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 03 June 2025 13:39
To: Rural Affairs and Islands Committee <rural.committee@Parliament.Scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@parliament.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@Parliament.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (Beth) <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@parliament.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]) <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@parliament.scot>
Subject: RE: RAIC - mtg 11.06 - Galloway and Ayrshire national park proposal

Good afternoon [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Hope you are well.

The Cabinet Secretary is content to discuss the NatureScot report and the Scottish Government's decision on the National Park proposal on June 11th.

I will provide a list of supporting officials in advance of the meeting.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (he/him) | Assistant Private Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
Ministerial Private Office | The Scottish Government

CabSecForRALRI@gov.scot

From: Rural Affairs and Islands Committee <rural.committee@Parliament.Scot>
Sent: 02 June 2025 11:57
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Johnston E (Emma) <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@parliament.scot>; Sutherland B (Ben) <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@Parliament.scot>; McCulloch B (Beth) <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@parliament.scot>; Kaur P (Parminder) <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@parliament.scot>
Subject: RAIC - mtg 11.06 - Galloway and Ayrshire national park proposal

Dear private office,

Following the statement last Thursday on Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal, the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee invites the Cabinet Secretary to discuss the NatureScot report and the Scottish Government's decision on **Wednesday 11th June**.

The Cabinet Secretary is already scheduled to attend that morning to give evidence on the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill; after this agenda item, the Convener proposes the Cabinet Secretary stay on to discuss the Galloway and Ayrshire National Park. This session would last approx. 60 minutes.

I would be grateful if you could confirm by close of play Wednesday 4 June. When confirming, it would be helpful if you could confirm the names and job titles of any supporting officials.

Please get in touch if you have any questions.

Thanks
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Assistant Clerk
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
****

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>
On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Sent: 02 June 2025 17:08
To: Carson F (Finlay), MSP <Finlay.Carson.msp@parliament.scot>
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Meeting with Cabinet Secretary Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands.

Good afternoon Mr Carson,

That is great, thank you for confirming.

I have secured TG.23 in Parliament for the meeting on Wednesday.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (he/him) | Assistant Private Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
Ministerial Private Office | The Scottish Government

CabSecForRALRI@gov.scot

From: Carson F (Finlay), MSP
Sent: 30 May 2025 17:12
To: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024
Subject: Re: Meeting with Cabinet Secretary Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands.

I would be pleased to meet on Wednesday at that time!
If you could please let me know where the meeting will take place.

Thanks

Kind regards

Finlay

Sent from Outlook for iOS

From: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot> on behalf of CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Sent: Friday, May 30, 2025 4:36:48 PM
To: Carson F (Finlay), MSP <Finlay.Carson.msp@parliament.scot>
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>
Subject: Meeting with Cabinet Secretary Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands.

Good afternoon Mr Carson,

As previously noted, Ms Gougeon would welcome a discussion with you on the Statement on the National Park and future proposals.

Would you be available on: Wednesday June 4th 15:30 – 16:00 in Parliament.

Grateful for your thoughts.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (he/him) | Assistant Private Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
Ministerial Private Office | The Scottish Government

CabSecForRALRI@gov.scot

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NatureScot
NàdarAlba
Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Email: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

05 May 2025

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE: Proposal for a new National Park in Galloway – NatureScot Reporter Advice

I am pleased to be able to provide our advice as Reporter on the proposal for a new National Park in Galloway.

When you asked NatureScot to undertake the role of Reporter, we knew we had a challenging task ahead of us. This has proved to be the case. The consultation work has been extensive in range and nature as we have consciously sought to reach across the breadth of the target audiences identified in your proposal document, as well as the wide range of interest groups active across the South of Scotland. While we are aware that some of the discussions around the proposal became polarised on occasion, we believe that the time taken to talk with so many interested individuals and organisations has given us a comprehensive overview of the issues facing the area and the potential for a new National Park to address these challenges.

The Reporter work has been complex. In preparing this advice, my Board has been mindful of the task set us: to assess how a new National Park could contribute to Scottish Government priorities; take account of local circumstance; meet the needs of local communities; and, achieve environmental benefits alongside economic growth and progressive land use. You also asked us to gauge the level of support for the proposal and alternatives to it. In addition to simply considering the numbers for and against, we have looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments presented on either side.

Based on the evidence we have gathered as Reporter, it is clear that while there is support for the National Park and what it could deliver for the area, significant opposition, complexities and uncertainties remain about what a National Park might mean for individuals, communities and businesses in the area.

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Our advice to Ministers is that you consider not proceeding with the designation but instead consider opportunities to strengthen existing arrangements. Whilst our analysis suggests that the wider area considered meets the conditions set out in the Act, our view as Reporter is that the proposal has not sufficient clarity or garnered sufficient support locally to proceed.

Our Report sets out the detail of our analysis and outlines what strengthening existing arrangements could encompass. As requested, it also includes recommendations on the arrangement for a possible National Park should Ministers decide to proceed with the designation.

In your commission to me of 24 July 2024, you requested that I ensure that any views which are those of NatureScot as statutory adviser on natural heritage matters are kept clear and distinct. I have therefore written to you separately with my Board's recommendations to you as your statutory adviser on nature conservation.

Finally, I would welcome a meeting with you to discuss our Report.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Colin Galbraith FRSE
Chair

Encs. Main Report

NatureScot
NàdarAlba
Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Email: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

05 May 2025

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE: Proposal for a new National Park in Galloway – advice on natural heritage matters

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I am writing to present our advice on the proposal for a new National Park in Galloway as your statutory adviser on natural heritage. As requested, this is separate to our advice as Reporter.

Our advice in this letter is guided by our detailed expertise on the natural heritage and experience of providing advice on all aspects of nature within the Galloway and Ayrshire regions, and our wider understanding of the Government's ambitions for halting biodiversity loss throughout Scotland, as expressed in the recently published Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

It is clear that we are in the midst of the interlinked nature loss and climate crisis that is already having a profound impact on nature in Scotland, with an urgent need for nature recovery across the country. The recent launch of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy is a major contribution to this recovery, as is the Nature Restoration Fund. All this will help meet the urgent 30 by 30 challenge.

Our advice is guided also by the effective operation and delivery of nature recovery across the two existing National Parks. We are aware of the good work done by them and in other National Parks across the UK, not least their ability to obtain private funding to support the delivery of National Park aims, including nature restoration and climate resilience that has been inspiring. Their work is impressive also in terms of growing the local economy and facilitating and managing public access to the countryside.

Given this context, and recognising the diversity of views expressed in the consultation, on balance we see the benefit for nature and for nature recovery, and indeed also for the local economy, in pursuing the creation of a National Park in southwest Scotland at a limited geographical scale as outlined in the map below. We note that the report as Reporter outlines a series of complex issues and concerns raised during the consultation, and it is clear that it was difficult for many to visualise what a park would really mean for the area and how those concerns might be addressed. These issues and concerns would need to be further considered in depth.

We note in particular that a substantial percentage of the area we recommend for designation is already in government ownership of one form or another, hence implementation may be simpler than that for a larger area under more diverse ownership. Indeed, in many ways a Park with these characteristics, with powers similar to the existing National Parks, would represent a logical extension of the approach outlined in the consultation report to enhance existing measures and institutional arrangements to better support nature recovery.

While very different in its natural heritage qualities, character and special needs to the existing two National Parks, we consider that the recommended area satisfies the conditions for National Park status set out in the Act. This accords with the assessment of the proposal undertaken by the appraisal panel and the Strategic Environmental Assessment completed by Scottish Government.

We consider that the natural heritage case is strongest for a National Park based on the core Hills and Coast area (see Annex 1 and Option A in Section 4 of our Reporter Advice). This view is based on our analysis of the landscape and natural heritage characteristics of the area which concluded that this core area most strongly meets all three conditions of the Act. Compared to the more extensive area we also considered as Reporter, it has a stronger

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degree of coherence and identity that would lend itself to collaborative management and effective promotion of the natural environment.

We would emphasise also that the needs for nature restoration and economic development in the wider area are of great importance. We envisage that the proposed Park should bring associated benefits beyond its boundaries and build a close and supportive relationship with the people and businesses in the wider Galloway and Ayrshire area.

Given our preference to progress with the Core area as the basis for a future National Park in Southwest Scotland, we are of the view that developing a model of powers and functions that are similar to the arrangements of the existing National Parks in Scotland, including both strong local representation and national appointees, would be appropriate for a new National Park in this area. Provided it was well funded, this would build on the existing management arrangements and enable greater coherence and strategic direction to current management of the natural resources and visitor activities, within this Core area.

The contribution of land management to the special qualities of this National Park is significant and for a National Park to be successful, any National Park Authority would need to develop a positive partnership between it and the farming, forestry and renewables sectors in particular.

I recognise that this advice in our capacity as your natural heritage advisors differs from the conclusions we reached as the Government's reporter. This is of course a consequence of the greater weight which in that capacity we necessarily place on the halting of biodiversity loss and the needs for nature recovery. There are certainly merits in either recommended approach.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you at your convenience and to consider the option of a smaller National Park focussing on nature recovery and/or the detail of other measures that might be put in place.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Colin Galbraith FRSE
Chair

Map of core area

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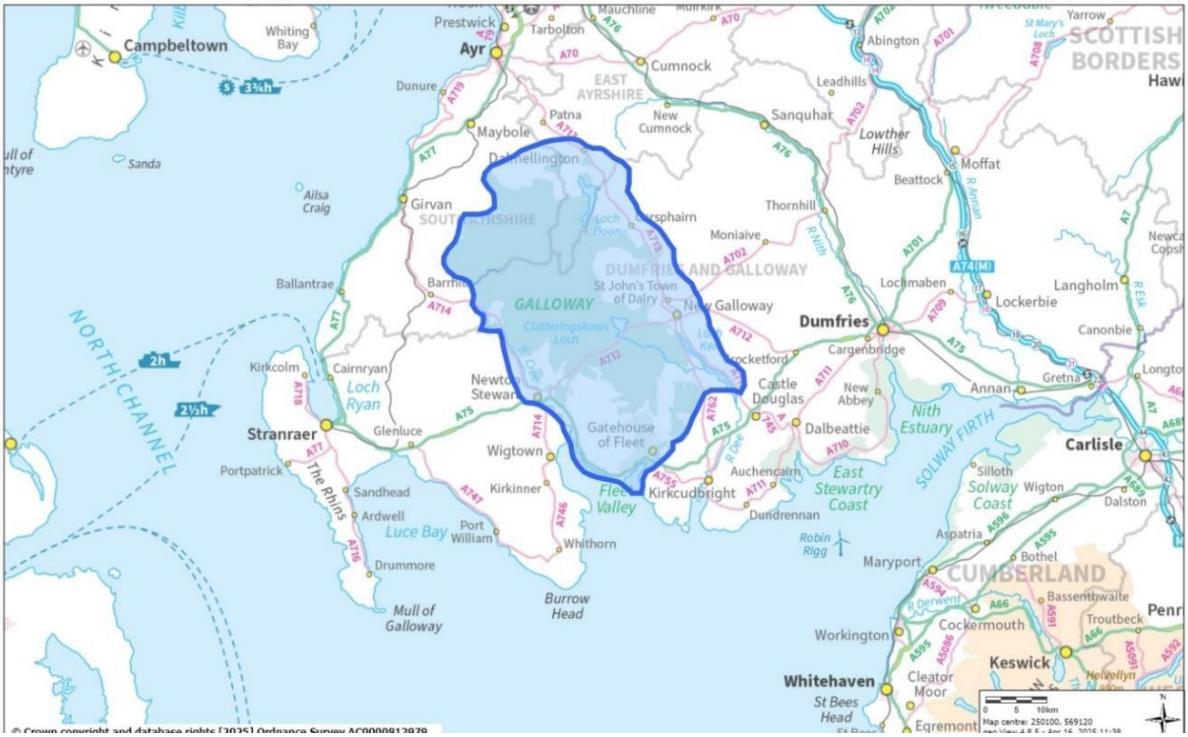

Question 3 ***Any briefings or draft statement provided to Mairi Gougeon in advance of the Ministerial Statement on Galloway and Ayrshire National Park delivered on 29 May 2025.'***

Ministerial Statement – Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal
29 May 2025

Q&A Briefing

Contents:

1. **Consultation Process and NatureScot as Reporter**
2. **Scottish Government's decision on new National Park**
3. **Next steps for Galloway**
4. **Role and value of National Parks in Scotland**
5. **Calls for an independent review of National Parks**
6. **Natural Environment Bill – National Park provisions**
7. **[REDACTED: OUT OF SCOPE]**
8. **Background brief – New National Park process & timeline**

<u>Consultation process and NatureScot as Reporter</u>

Q: The Galloway National Park proposal has been hugely controversial. How does the Scottish Government respond to concern from stakeholders and communities that NatureScot, in its role as Reporter, has not been impartial.

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A: The Reporter's role and who can take on the role of Reporter is set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 , with NatureScot specifically listed 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 public interest in the proposal has proven to be huge. It was extremely important that everyone with an interest had an opportunity to have their say on the proposal and I am very grateful to all those who took part in the discussions and to those who responded to the consultation.

I am grateful to NatureScot for carrying out such an important and extensive public consultation in a very robust and professional manner. Over 5000 consultation surveys were completed and over 30 consultation events were held across the proposed area, with more than 1000 people attending.

These 30 consultation events were facilitated by an independent body – Outside the Box. Feedback from participants was gathered as these events and most people felt they were helpful.

NatureScot commissioned the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) to conduct an independent review of its consultation work. SCDC's report has been published today and it confirms that NatureScot's consultation achieved high levels of public involvement and it demonstrated very good practice in the use of the National Standards for Community Engagement.

The report also sets out how the work undertaken by NatureScot exceeds the levels of participation in many processes which seek to "engage" communities and take major decisions based on this.

There are lessons to be learned from the SCDC report, but NatureScot has delivered in its role as Reporter.

Q: Why has NatureScot provided two conflicting sets of advice – one as the Reporter and one as Scottish Government's natural heritage adviser?

A: The Reporter's role and who can take on the role of Reporter is set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 , with NatureScot specifically listed due to its expertise related to the National Park aims.

NatureScot has fulfilled its role as the statutory Reporter by undertaking a public consultation, analysing the findings and providing advice and recommendations to Scottish Ministers. The Reporter's report reflects and takes account of all views provided during the consultation process. The report also takes into equal consideration the social, environmental and economic opportunities and concerns raised during the consultation process.

NatureScot has also provided separate advice to Ministers based purely on its expertise and views as Scottish Government's adviser on natural heritage matters. This recommendation

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was made because of the natural heritage benefits a park would bring and in response to the climate emergency. This is separate from the Reporter's report.

Q: Many stakeholders, including Dumfries and Galloway council, said that a lack of detail in the proposal meant they could not support the proposal. Would the outcome of this process have been different if the Scottish Government provided more detail on the proposal?

A: The process to designate a new National Park – including the requirements for public consultation - is clearly set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

The Scottish Government has followed this process, as has NatureScot in its role as the statutory Reporter.

As well as seeking views on whether or not to establish a new National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire, the consultation process was intentionally designed to seek people's views on options for the potential boundary, powers and governance arrangements.

Every National Park is different due to the particular needs and circumstances of different areas. It would not have been appropriate for the Scottish Government to make assumptions by setting a fixed boundary or assuming a position on powers, functions or governance structures without consulting local people first.

Also, the recent consultation was the first step in the legal designation process. Had we decided to proceed with designation, the next step would have been to prepare a much more detailed proposal and draft legislation for further public consultation.

Nevertheless, we will take time to reflect on the recent process and any lessons that can be learned from it.

Scottish Government's decision on the new National Park proposal

Q: Having received NatureScot's report on 5 May, why did it take the Scottish Government so long to publish this report?

A: The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 does not set a specific timeframe in which the Reporter's report must be published.

Scottish Ministers rightfully gave full consideration to the Reporter's report and the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposal on Galloway and South and East Ayrshire.

This process has drawn a huge amount of interest and debate. It was important for Ministers to have the time and space to carefully consider the consultation findings and the Reporter's conclusions and advice before publishing the report and announcing our decision.

Q: Did the Scottish Government need to go through this long and costly process if ultimately, the decision is just to potentially build on what is already there?

A: When the Scottish Government proposed the establishment of a new National Parks in 2021, there was overwhelming public and cross-parliamentary support, with Galloway being described by some parliamentarians at the time as a National Park in waiting. Local business

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and community support for a new National Park in Galloway has built up over many years and this was one of the factors that the Scottish Government took into consideration last year when we proposed the establishment of a new National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

The process of designating a new National Park is clearly set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and we followed this accordingly.

We were always clear that the people of Galloway and South and East Ayrshire needed to have the opportunity to discuss the issues, consider the content of the proposal including the desirability of a National Park in their area and suggest any alternatives.

It was right that we engaged with communities, interested parties and businesses on this matter and gave them the opportunity to consider whether or not the establishment of a new National Park was in the best interests of people living and working in the area.

Q: Should the Scottish Government have abandoned this policy when the Bute House Agreement ended?

A: When Scotland's National Parks were debated in Parliament on 7 June 2022, there was strong cross-party support for the Scottish Government's commitment to designate at least one new National Park during the current parliamentary session.

Colin Smyth called for multiple new Parks to be designated.

Brian Whittle urged the Scottish Government to "*move faster on designating Scotland's next National Park*".

Finlay Carson describing the "*baffling situation of having only two National Parks*" and Galloway as "*a National Park in waiting since 1945"*.

In 2022 the Scottish Government and NatureScot consulted on the future of National Parks in Scotland. The analysis of these public consultations indicated public support for the establishment of new National Parks in Scotland.

NatureScot's 2024 Omnibus survey of public opinion (based on a nationally representative sample of Scotland's adult opinion) found that 86% of those polled support a new National Park being established in Scotland.

It is clear that there is support in principle for new National Parks in Scotland. However, in this instance, based on the findings of the public consultation and the Reporter's conclusions, we have decided not to proceed with a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire. The findings of the public consultation were a very important factor in our decision.

Q: It is concerning how Galloway became the sole contender for a new national park. There is a lack of transparency and understanding in how the decision was made. Should the process for proposing a National Park be changed?

A: The process for proposing a new National Park, and consulting on the proposal, has been transparent throughout.

In October 2023 we issued a public call to local communities and organisations across Scotland to put forward nominations for their area to become Scotland's next National Park.

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We received nominations from communities in Galloway, Loch Awe, Lochaber, Scottish Borders and Tay Forest.

These nominations were appraised by an expert panel against published criteria and the outcome of the appraisal process was summarised in a report which was also published. This information is available on the Scottish Government's website.

The Galloway nomination demonstrated local engagement and local support, with the appraisal panel noting "*the nomination presents evidence of a significant level of community support based on the engagement work that has been undertaken over a long period, including during the recent nomination period*".

Support for the nomination was also publicly demonstrated by the three local authorities, South of Scotland Enterprise, South of Scotland Destination Alliance and Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO biosphere reserve.

The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 clearly sets out the process for designating a new National Park including what should be included in the proposal and how the consultation of the proposal should be carried out. The Scottish Government has followed this process and NatureScot has fulfilled its requirements as the statutory Reporter in a robust, professional and transparent manner.

Q: Forestry, farming and renewables are all sectors which have raised concerns about a National Park in Galloway from the beginning. Given the importance of these sectors to the area, surely Galloway was never the right fit for a National Park?

A: The original Galloway and Ayrshire nomination demonstrated significant local engagement and local support for a new National Park, including endorsement by all three local authorities and a range of business organisations.

The proposal highlighted the area's diverse landscapes and stunning coastline, its outstanding biodiversity and its rich natural and cultural assets. It also made a strong case for the benefits that National Park status could bring to local communities, the local economy and the environment – demonstrating how it could achieve for nature and people.

That was the rationale for us proposing the designation of a new National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.

However, we were very clear when we announced the proposal that a new National Park in Galloway must take account of local circumstances and the views of local communities.

It was right that we gave individuals, businesses and organisations the ability to consider, discuss and provide their views on this proposal. The decision not to proceed with the designation is based on consideration of the consultation findings, including consideration of the social, economic and environmental factors that were raised by communities, stakeholders and businesses.

Q: Dumfries and Galloway Council voted in favour of a motion calling on the Scottish Government to hold and finance a local referendum on whether or not a new National Park should be established in Galloway. Why did the Scottish Government not listen to local representatives and hold a referendum?

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A: The statutory process for consulting local communities and interested parties on a proposal for a new National Park in Scotland is set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 ("the 2000 Act").

The public consultation that NatureScot carried out asked local people whether or not they want a National Park within their area. It also asked for views on the more detailed aspects of the proposal such as the possible area, powers, functions and governance of the proposed National Park.

We think it is very important for people to have their say on these issues too and it would not have been possible to obtain this type of detail through a referendum.

Q: We remain in a cost of living crisis and budgets are being continually cut. How much money has the Scottish Government spent on this process?

A: The delivery costs to date of designating a new National Park, excluding staffing costs and expenses, are £343,948.71.

These costs are broken down as follows:

- £100,000.00 funding to NatureScot for New National Parks
- £1,130.24 on the appraisal process
- £27,387.77 on consultation activities
- £71,980.01 on impact assessments
- £140,224.30 on nominations support funding
- £3,226.39 on publication costs

Q: While the Scottish Government may have decided that a new National Park is not right for Galloway, the twin biodiversity and climate crises remain. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to ensure we still meet our biodiversity and emissions targets?

A: Our Programme for Government sets out how this Government is working hard to address the twin crises of climate change and nature loss.

Part of the response sets out "The Scottish Government has an ambitious 20 year mission and our climate change plan will be published by the end of this Parliament. We have now received the Climate Change Committee's advice on how we meet our net zero target in 2045 and we are actively considering that at present

We have a clear vision for a green industrial revolution, recognising that renewable energy generated in Scotland can pave the way for lower bills and green industries can create jobs and growth.

We are taking action to decarbonise transport and heat in buildings as well as tackle fuel poverty.

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We will work with all our communities and land managers – including those in southwest Scotland - on actions to restore and protect nature and to support efforts to adapt to climate change whilst also reducing our emissions.

We are extending our Nature Restoration Fund to enable funding of a further round of multi-year projects to help deliver the priorities set out in our Biodiversity Strategy.

We are increasing the scale and pace of peatland restoration to at least 12,000 hectares, up from a current target of 10,000, this year and creating at least 10,000 hectares of woodlands - which will include over 4,000 hectares of native woodland.

We are supporting our farmers and crofters to produce food, reduce emissions and deliver biodiversity improvements. This includes implementing the Future Farming Investment Scheme, delivering £14 million of capital support to encourage farmers and crofters to carry out investments to improve business efficiency and achieve nature and climate outcomes.

Q: The consultation process has highlighted the major connectivity issues in the Galloway area. Will the Scottish Government consider taking the money set aside for the National Park and investing in the A75?

A: The Scottish Government recognises the strategic importance of the A75 Trunk Road, as both a key transport corridor in the South West of Scotland, and the critical link it provides in connecting the ports at Cairnryan to markets in the UK and Europe via the wider trunk road network.

Recommendation 40 of the Scottish Government's second Strategic Transport Projects Review, published in 2022, identified the need for safety, resilience and reliability improvements to the A75. This may include junction improvements, enhanced overtaking opportunities and the widening and realignment of carriageways.

The Scottish Government is currently facing significant pressure on our capital budget which is affecting our ability to maintain investment on not just the A75, but transport infrastructure across Scotland. In spite of the pressures on our resources, we will continue to prioritise investment in the safety and operation of our trunk road network, and are currently progressing a number of actions to further improve road safety on the A75. This includes a speed management scheme at A75 Crocketford, introducing signalisation at A75/A76 Cuckoo Bridge Roundabout, and junction improvements at A75 Haugh of Urr.

Road safety is of paramount importance to the Scottish Government. As part of Transport Scotland's annual assessment of trunk road safety performance, additional sections of the A75 at Mouswald, Glenluce and Twynholm have been identified for further investigation this year.

Q: The consultation has created serious divisions in local communities. How will the Scottish Government help to address these divisions and bring communities back together?

A: The Scottish Government is firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across southwest Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area to flourish.

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As I said in my statement, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing structures and arrangements could be further strengthened. We are grateful for these suggestions and we will reflect on them. We do not want to rush forward with new proposals in the coming months, but instead we will take the time to give these suggestions deeper consideration.

Next steps for Galloway and for new National Parks

Q: The proposal for a new National Park and the consultation process has raised expectations in Galloway. Now the National Park proposal has been abandoned, will the Scottish Government simply abandon the people of Galloway too?

A: Of course not. The Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities, businesses and organisations in Galloway and Ayrshire to support economic growth, eradicate child poverty, reduce carbon emissions and enhance and restore nature.

As I mentioned in my statement, NatureScot has put forward some suggestions for ways in which existing initiatives and structures in the region could be further strengthened. We are grateful for these suggestions and, rather than rushing into any decisions on next steps, we will now take the time to give these suggestions deeper consideration.

Q: When will the Scottish Government provide more detail on any alternative approach?

A: NatureScot has put forward some suggestions for ways in which existing initiatives and structures in the region could be further strengthened. We are grateful for these suggestions and, rather than rushing into any decisions on next steps, we will now take the time to give these suggestions deeper consideration.

Q: Will the Scottish Government now revisit the other nominations and repeat this process in order to meet its commitments to establish a New National Park?

A: The Scottish Government remains firmly committed to our existing National Parks and we remain open to proposals for the creation of new National Parks in the future.

However, as we have seen, the designation of a new National Park is rightfully a detailed process that takes time to work through. There are therefore no plans to revisit other nominations for a new National Park in this Parliament.

Role and value of National Parks in Scotland

Q: The people of Galloway have clearly rejected a National Park. Does the Scottish Government see any value in National Parks? Do they provide value for money for Scottish taxpayers?

A: The Scottish Government is committed to National Parks in Scotland and we recognise the immense value they bring for nature, climate and people.

Our existing National Parks support thriving local economies, help to manage millions of visitors and protect the natural environment for the benefit of current and future generations.

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Our parks play a significant role in generating and leveraging investment, creating new employment opportunities and bringing communities together to address local priorities.

For example, the Cairngorms 2030 programme supports 25 projects across Cairngorms National Park. The total value of the programme is £42.3 million, including over £10m funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. These projects deliver benefits for rural communities and businesses across a range of areas including health and wellbeing, nature restoration, net zero and sustainable transport.

Another example is in Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, where the latest STEAM report shows that in 2023 an estimated £540 million was generated in the local economy through visitor and tourism businesses, whilst tourism supports over 6700 jobs within the National Park. The National Park authority has invested in tourism facilities and infrastructure and it currently employs 66 permanent and seasonal rangers to help manage visitor pressures.

Whilst we have decided not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire at this time in light of the consultation findings and Reporter's recommendations, we remain open to the potential establishment of new National Parks in the future.

Calls for an independent review of National Parks

Q: The consultation process has highlighted many concerns about National Parks. Should the Scottish Government have undertaken an independent review of existing National Parks before it sought to designate a third?

A: There are no current plans for the Scottish Government to conduct an independent review of the two existing National Parks in Scotland. That is because National Parks are accountable to their boards and to the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Parliament can also scrutinise the Parks' performance directly as it does with all public sector bodies.

National Park authorities are required to produce a five year National Park Partnership Plan and their Corporate Plans are aligned to these. These Plans, including the aims and objectives within them, are signed off by Ministers.

Delivery is monitored and reviewed at regular meetings between the Scottish Government and National Park authority Convenors and Chief Executives. Park authorities are also required to report on their delivery and performance through their Annual Report and Accounts, which are laid before Parliament and published.

<u>Natural Environment Bill – National Park provisions</u>

Q: The Natural Environment Bill seeks to change the aims of National Parks. Why did the Scottish Government propose to change the underpinning legislation designate at the same time as designating a new National Park?

A: The existing powers to designate a new National Park under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and the designation process are unchanged by the Natural Environment Bill. Therefore we do not consider there to be any issues with the Bill being considered by Parliament at this time.

Bill provisions:
The Bill updates the aims of national parks, in light of their leadership role in tackling the climate and biodiversity crises, whilst also welcoming and managing visitors and supporting their local communities and businesses.

The Bill maintains the balance between the four existing aims and their social, economic and environmental objectives.

Whilst the four statutory aims of National Parks remain largely the same, the Bill makes clear that the following are considered to be part of the aims, underpinning the day-to-day work and focus of our National Parks:

- restoring and regenerating biodiversity,
- climate change mitigation and adaptation,
- promoting sustainable tourism and visitor management,
- Encouraging recreation in the area
- supporting access to and within their areas, and
- promoting sustainable development activity which improves the health, wellbeing and prosperity of individuals and communities within the area.

The Bill also adds a duty on public bodies operating within National Parks to have regard to the National Park aims and it strengthens the existing duty on public bodies to "facilitate the implementation" of National Park Plans rather than "having regard" to those Park Plans.

It also provides Ministers with a power to set up a fixed penalty notice scheme for the contravention of national park byelaws.

[REDACTED: OUT OF SCOPE]

Background brief – New National Park process & timeline

In May 2023 the Scottish Government invited expressions of interest in new National Parks and we received a positive response from communities and organisations across Scotland.

In October 2023 the Scottish Government invited communities to explore, develop and submit nominations for their area to be considered for designation as Scotland's next National Park. This followed a number of public consultations on new National Parks and on the criteria for new National Parks that was set out in our published appraisal framework: New National Parks: nominations guidance and appraisal framework - gov.scot.

Five nominations were received by 29 February 2024 from Galloway, Lochaber, Loch Awe, Scottish Borders and Tay Forest.

The these nominations were assessed by an expert panel against the six published criteria in the appraisal framework: outstanding national importance; size, character and coherence;

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meeting the special needs of the area; strategic contribution; visitor management and tourism; and local support.

Nominating groups were asked to set out the rationale for a new National Park in their area and to demonstrate and provide evidence of how their nomination meets each of the criteria. In terms of the local support criterion, nominations were required to set out who has been involved with the development of the nomination and to demonstrate the level of local support for the proposal. They were also asked to explain how they have engaged with local communities and interest groups in the development of the proposal. This includes residents, community bodies, landowners and managers, businesses, third sector organisations, public bodies and relevant local authorities. The guidance also required nominations to include details of any concerns and opposition from stakeholders and affected communities.

On 22 July 2024 the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands announced the proposal for a new National Park to be designated in Galloway and South and East Ayrshire, subject to further investigation. NatureScot was appointed as the statutory Reporter, as specified in the National Parks legislation.

From 7 November 2024 until 14 February 2025, NatureScot – in its role as the Reporter – carried out a public consultation on the proposal. More than 1000 people attended over 30 consultation events and over 5000 consultation surveys were completed.

NatureScot provided its report of the consultation findings and advice and recommendations to Scottish Ministers on 5 May 2025.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Statement by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands – 29 May 2025

Galloway and Ayrshire National Park Proposal

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Presiding Officer.

In 2021 the Scottish Government proposed the designation of at least one new National Park in Scotland by 2026, subject to legal conditions being met.

The proposal was debated in Parliament in June 2022 and it was strongly supported by all parties, with several Members calling for Government to designate new Parks as quickly as possible and Galloway being described by some as a ‘National Park in waiting’.

In October 2023 we issued a public call to local communities and organisations across Scotland to put forward nominations for their area to become Scotland’s next National Park.

Detailed guidance on the nomination and appraisal process was published following a public consultation on the appraisal criteria.

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Five nominations were received - from Galloway and Ayrshire, Lochaber, Loch Awe, Scottish Borders and Tay Forest.

The nomination process demonstrated the outstanding natural and cultural heritage that we have in Scotland, as well as people's ambitions for the rural communities they live in.

In Spring last year the five nominations were appraised by an expert panel, and the Galloway and Ayrshire bid was selected to undergo further investigation.

The proposal highlighted the area's diverse landscapes and stunning coastline, its outstanding biodiversity and its rich natural and cultural assets.

It also made a strong case for the benefits that National Park status could bring to local communities, the local economy and the environment – demonstrating how it could achieve for nature and people.

On the 22nd of July last year, the Scottish Government proposed the designation of Scotland's third National Park in Galloway and South and East Ayrshire, subject to legal conditions being met.

Reporter investigation

We were clear at that time, however, that the proposal required further investigation and consultation with local people and businesses.

This has been crucial in order to gauge the level of support and to understand people's views on more detailed aspects including whether a National Park could best meet the needs of the area and its communities.

NatureScot was appointed as the statutory Reporter, as specified in the National Parks legislation, to carry out this investigation, undertake a public consultation and report to the Scottish Government.

Following an initial period of engagement with local communities, public bodies and stakeholders, NatureScot ran a 14 week consultation process from 7 November 2024 until 14 February 2025.
Over five thousand surveys were completed and more than one thousand people attended events that were held across Galloway and South and East Ayrshire.

The public events were independently facilitated by 'Outside the Box', an organisation with expertise in running community consultation events in an impartial, open and welcoming way.

Sector-led consultation meetings took place with representatives from the farming, forestry, tourism, renewables and conservation sectors. NatureScot also held meetings with the three local authorities and with community councils.

The public interest in this proposal has proven to be huge, generating both strong support and strong opposition. At times the debate has become quite heated.

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This is understandable given how passionately people feel about their local area and the positive changes they want to see.

It was extremely important that everyone with an interest had an opportunity to have their say on the proposal and I would like to thank all those who took part in the discussions, got involved in the process and responded to the consultation.
All of the views expressed have been taken into account in the Reporter's report and I have given them careful consideration.

I would also like to thank NatureScot for its work carrying out such an important and extensive public consultation process in a very robust and professional way.

I am sure that Members will appreciate the complexity and scale of this task. This has also been reflected in the independent review of the consultation process by the Scottish Community Development Centre.

Their report states that: "*NatureScot's engagement on the National Park proposal achieved very impressive levels of public involvement*". It also states that "*this consultation compares very favourably with others and has demonstrated elements of very good practice in the use of the National Standards in Scotland*".

Consultation results

In its role as the Reporter, NatureScot has analysed the findings of the consultation and provided advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government.
These have been set out in a report which has today been laid before Parliament and published on the Scottish Government's website.

The report sets out that, of those who engaged with the consultation, 54% of responses opposed the National Park proposal and 42% of responses supported it.

The majority of consultation responses were completed by people living and working in Galloway and Ayrshire, with 94% of responses from those in the area, or within 30km of the proposed boundary.

Taking account of local responses alone, 57% opposed the proposal, while 40% were supportive.

It notes that support was greatest among environment, recreation and tourism sectors, whilst landowners, land managers and those working in the farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors had the strongest reservations.

Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation and consultation, the Reporter has advised that, whilst it considers that the proposed area meets the conditions for a National Park set out in the legislation, **the proposal does not have sufficient clarity, nor has it garnered sufficient local support to proceed to the next stage of designation.**

Listening and responding to local communities

I want to put on record my thanks to everyone who has been involved in this process. We have listened to the people of Galloway and Ayrshire.

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We have noted the views expressed by communities, organisations and businesses and respect those views. **We have carefully considered the advice and recommendations of the Reporter.**

We have weighed up the arguments for and against the creation of a new National Park in the area, taking full account of the potential economic, social and environmental factors, **and we have come to the conclusion not to proceed with the designation of a National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire.**

I realise that this decision will be very disappointing for those who have been campaigning for a new National Park in Galloway over many years.
I also recognise the huge amount of work and time that has been invested by a great many people throughout this process.

I would like to thank everyone involved in that process, including members of the Galloway National Park Association and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere.

The Galloway and Ayrshire proposal has generated a lot of debate about the role and value of National Parks in Scotland more generally.

Again, I am grateful to all those who have put forward their views and perspectives on this during the consultation process and this government has listened carefully to all views expressed.

Whilst we have decided not to proceed with the designation of a new National Park in Galloway and Ayrshire in light of the consultation findings and the Reporter's conclusions, I want to stress that this Government remains committed to National Parks in Scotland and their vital leadership role in tackling the climate and biodiversity crises, promoting sustainable land management, sustainable food production and supporting the economic and social development of local communities.
There is plenty of evidence to show that our National Parks are achieving for people and nature.

In Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, the National Park authority is working proactively with a wide range of public, private and third sector partners to reduce carbon emissions, restore peatland, protect and restore precious wildlife and habitats, generate investment and jobs in the local area and manage more than four million visitors to the Park each year.

This is also true in Cairngorms, where the National Park authority is at the forefront of the ambitious Cairngorms 2030 partnership programme which will see over £40 million invested in the Park area over five years to restore and enhance nature, reduce flood risk, support regenerative farming, improve active and sustainable transport, empower local communities and improve people's health and wellbeing.

We will continue to support our existing National Parks and we remain open to proposals for new National Parks in the future, any proposals need to be built on grassroots community support and consensus.

Next steps

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As we set out in our most recent Programme for Government, this is a government that is listening and wants to bring people together, because the most effective solutions emerge when we work together in partnership.

We fully recognise and appreciate that the consultation period has been a challenging time for local communities.

It has also raised some really important issues that people in Galloway and Ayrshire care deeply about – from improved transport links, affordable housing and health services to business investment, support for rural industries, environmental protection and opportunities for young people.

What is important going forward is that we take note of the issues, concerns and opportunities that have been raised during the consultation process and that we place a renewed focus on delivering for the people of southwest Scotland.

There are very strong foundations to build upon, given the area's importance for sustainable and regenerative farming and forestry, renewable energy and other land-based activity.

There are also strong regional partnerships and structures in place, including the regional land use partnership and framework, the UNESCO biosphere, the natural capital innovation zone and the responsible tourism strategy, all of which are supported by the region's economic partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise.

In its role as Reporter, NatureScot has put forward some recommendations for ways in which these existing structures and arrangements could be further strengthened.

SoSE has also suggested that there could be benefits in exploring an alternative approach drawing on the unique assets and existing structures in the South of Scotland.

We are grateful for these suggestions, and we now need to take the time to reflect and give them deeper consideration.

And in the meantime, the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to working in partnership with local communities and organisations across the southwest of Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, enhance and restore nature, support our rural industries, bring forward investment and deliver growth and jobs that enable the area and its people to flourish.

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