The Future for National Parks in Scotland

Summary Analysis of Contributions to Public Dialogue Platform

February 2023

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

1.   Introduction

It is around 20 years since Scotland's first National Parks, in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, and Cairngorms, were established. Both National Parks are home to some of Scotland's most outstanding scenery, are internationally important areas for nature and receive millions of visitors each year. The Parks work closely with their communities, land managers, local businesses, third sector and individuals to tackle the biodiversity and climate crisis, to help manage facilities for visitors, to promote responsible access, develop sustainable communities and ensure sustainable development.

The Scottish Government's 'A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22' contains a commitment to establish at least one new National Park in Scotland by Spring 2026.

To be able to do this in an open and transparent manner, we need to be able to assess any area which is put forward for designation against a set of agreed expectations for what National Parks will deliver for Scotland going forward.

To assist with this, a 'Challenge' exercise was created on the Scottish Government's public dialogue platform (www.ideas.gov.scot). This platform allows users to participate in debates and discussions about areas of government policy and challenges facing Scotland.

The 'Future for National Parks in Scotland' challenge sought views on what National Parks should be delivering for Scotland and the people who live and work within them. Whilst the challenge did not aim to seek views on the location of new National Parks, it did seek views on the criteria that are necessary to selection the next National Parks in Scotland. The following questions were raised:

1. What do you value most about Scotland's National Parks?
2. How can National Parks help the environment?
3. How can we better manage visitor pressures in National Parks?
4. What criteria should we use to decide where the next new National Parks in Scotland should be?

The challenge was open for ideas and comments between 16 May and 6 June 2022.

2.   Summary of Public Engagement with Dialogue

The Scottish Government's dialogue platform allows users to submit 'ideas' to generate discussion, and to rate and comment on ideas submitted by other users.

Ideas and comments are moderated, and any which are off topic or which do not follow the site's moderation policy (e.g. duplication, profanity/hate speech, personal attacks or spamming) are rejected. Additionally, ideas which are deemed to be too similar to other ideas already submitted, may be locked from further rating and commenting, in order to focus the conversation in one place.

For the most part, the National Parks challenge was pre-moderated, meaning ideas and comments would not be viewable to the public until they had been approved by a moderator. However, during some periods such as the public holiday weekends in late May and early June, the challenge was set to post-moderation in order to keep the conversation flowing while Scottish Government moderators were unavailable at these times.

Engagement Levels

Table 1 provides some summary figures on public engagement with this challenge.

Table 1 – Before and After Moderation

No. of Contributors		No. of Ideas		No. of Comments		No. of Ratings	
Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
82	**79**	106	**102**	481	**476**	716	**714**

During moderation, four ideas were rejected – two for being off-topic, one because it was a duplicate of another idea already posted and one due to an error in the title (which was later resubmitted as a new idea, with a corrected title).

Five comments were rejected. All of these were due to duplication, likely as a result of users accidentally double posting their comment.

For the purpose of this analysis, rejected ideas and comments have been excluded.

Most engaged-with and most popular ideas

Tables 2 shows the ideas which generated the most comments from users.

Table 2

Idea Title	Summary	No. of Comments
Criteria for a new National Park	Conversation starter posted by Scottish Government to seek views on the criteria for areas under consideration for a new National Park location	40
Protecting and restoring biodiversity	Conversation starter posted by Scottish Government to seek views on how National Parks can help to protect and restore nature	22
Galloway	Conversation about the potential of Galloway as a new National Park - due to accessibility, variety of natural habitat/beautiful landscapes and existing 'dark sky' designation.	19
Scottish Borders should be a National Park	Conversation about the potential of Scottish Borders as a new National Park due to excellent transport links, landscapes and built heritage. Designation would help to enhance tourism and revive traditional industries.	15
Sustainable tourism and managing visitors	Conversation starter posted by Scottish Government to seek views on how to ensure everyone can continue to enjoy National Parks without a negative impact on nature and the visitor experience.	15

Table 3 summarises the user-generated ideas which received the most votes with an average rating between 4 and 5 (out of 5).

Table 3

Idea Title	Summary	No. of Votes	Average Rating (out of 5)
End Driven Grouse Shooting	Driven grouse shooting should be banned in National Parks and throughout Scotland	19	4.63
Maritime / Coastal National Park on Scotland's West Coast	Create new National Park of maritime and coastal area around Scotland's West Coast and the Islands served by Calmac ferry network.	17	4.47
Any park must restore the ecosystem	New National Park should restore the ecosystem as the Borders Forest Trust have done. Needs to be accessible by public transport, keep out cars, no grazing, bring back nature, forests, reintroduce species, be novel and include people. Repopulate Highlands and allow people to live there in harmony with nature.	17	4.82
Pristine wilderness	Scotland would benefit from having a "pristine wilderness" National Park as in Canada, where no vehicular access is permitted (foot, horseback or canoe only)	15	4.20
Accessible to all, by public transport	Crucial that new park is accessible to people with reduced mobility and should feature facilities/ experiences for visitors with conditions which might exclude them from other visitor attractions. Also must be easily accessible by public transport, available to the largest amount of people possible.	15	4.53
Scottish Borders should be a National Park	Scottish Borders has excellent transport links, landscapes and built heritage. Designation would help to enhance tourism and revive traditional industries.	15	4.27
Ranger service	Ensure there is a ranger service with funding to manage visitor pressure in the park.	15	5.00

For the purpose of this report, we have grouped the ideas submitted to the Dialogue platform into key themes. Table 4 gives an overview of the ideas submitted under each theme, and how much engagement they generated.

Table 4

Theme	No. of Ideas	No. of Comments	No. of Ratings
Location suggestions, criteria and type of park	45	222	274
Protecting and restoring nature	8	43	96
Governance, Corporate Structure and Roles for National Parks	10	35	35
Sustainable Tourism, Visitor Management, Travel and Accessibility	12	54	103
Local economy and impact on residents/local communities	8	29	46
Land use	4	14	51
Climate change / Renewable Energy	8	43	59
Alternative Designations / Opposition to new National Park	7	36	50
Total	**102**	**476**	**714**

Tables 5-12 summarise the ideas contributed under each of these themes. A more detailed breakdown of each of these ideas and associated comments is provided in Section 3 of this paper. The term 'National Parks' has been abbreviated to 'NP' in tables 5-12.

Location, criteria and types of park

This theme saw the highest level of engagement, accounting for almost half of the 102 ideas submitted.

Table 5

Idea Summary	Comments	Ratings	Average Rating
Suggestions/views on new National Park location			
New NP location suggestion - Galloway	19	17	3.99
New NP location suggestion - Scottish Borders	15	15	4.27
New National Parks need local support - Galloway has this and a new NP would bring much needed investment and jobs	14	12	4.00
New NP location suggestion - Southern Uplands - from Galloway to Cheviots	12	4	4.25
New NP location suggestion - all of Scotland	8	14	3.29
New NP location suggestion - Flow Country	6	8	3.25

Idea Summary	Comments	Ratings	Average Rating
Suggestions/views on new National Park location			
New NP location suggestion - Borders and Galloway as combined NP	6	4	3.25
New NP location suggestion - Scottish Borders, with links to Northumberland NP in England	6	2	2.00
Conditions in the Act set the criteria for new Parks. Some areas in Dialogue wouldn't make the standard, but Glencoe/Lochaber does	6	1	5.00
New NP location suggestion - Maritime Park covering Scotland's west coast and islands	5	17	4.47
New NP location suggestion - all of Scotland's shoreline	5	14	4.29
Encompass Scottish Borders and Galloway in single Park with one Authority	5	2	2.50
New NP Location Suggestion - Fife	4	8	3.50
New NP location suggestion - Pentlands	3	9	4.11
Proposal to invite Scotland's 8 cities to apply for national park city status	3	8	3.50
NP as a catalyst to land reform in the Glen Affric area	3	5	4.80
Connect Loch Lomond & Trossachs NP to Cairngorms NP to create a meaningful area for nature restoration	3	5	3.40
New NP location suggestion - urban park in Glasgow, joining up existing parks	3	4	4.00
An intrinsic part of a South of Scotland National Park should be a well-designed and managed theme park.	2	6	2.00
Look after Scotland as if whole country was a National Park	2	6	4.33
New NP location suggestion - Lochaber	2	5	3.40
Opportunity to have a different type of NP in Scotland in Glen Affric	2	1	5.00
New NP Location Suggestion - Glen Affric	2	0	N/A
Link both highland and lowland Perthshire to re-establish ecological connectivity	2	0	N/A
New NP Location Suggestion - Outer Hebrides	1	9	4.44
New NP location suggestion - Highlands from Cairngorms to west Coast north of Oban	1	9	3.44
New NP location suggestion - Carron Valley	1	4	2.75
New NP location suggestion - central Scotland between M8 and M9	1	3	2.00

Idea Summary	Comments	Ratings	Average Rating
Suggestions/views on new National Park location			
NP for Glen Affric could boost economy, improve wildlife, improve housing and improvement management	1	0	N/A
Use National Park status to regenerate one of Scotlands largest brownfield sites	1	0	N/A
New NP location suggestion - Highland Perthshire between Lomond and Cairngorms	0	6	4.17
New NP location suggestion - East Neuk and Landward Fife	0	5	3.20
New NP Location Suggestion - Ochil Hills (Clackmannanshire)	0	2	1.50
New NP location suggestion - area of North Coast 500	0	0	N/A
Sub-total	**150**	**209**	
Type of National Park			
Make a 'pristine wilderness' NP like in Canada - no vehicles allowed	8	15	4.20
There should be a marine NP out to 12 nautical miles, to benefit coastal communities and the coastal/marine environment	3	12	4.75
Establish 3 Parks, one wilderness, one nature restoration & visitor management, one focused on deer management, then compare after 50 years	1	0	N/A
Sub-total	**12**	**27**	
Criteria for / value of National Parks			
Ideas on criteria for assessment of NP locations	40	21	4.76
Look to international experience of National Park.	5	8	4.63
National Parks to mirror Buglife Important Invertebrate areas to ensure protection and improvement of invertebrates	4	6	4.83
What do people value most about NPs	8	2	2.50
Learn from the experience of Ireland in designing new National Park	1	1	1.00
New NP must be based around strong natural capital criteria	2	0	N/A
Detailed views from D&G Council on original 4 'ideas' posted by SG	0	0	N/A
Sub-total	**60**	**38**	
Total	**222**	**274**	

Protecting and Restoring Nature

Table 6

Idea Summary	Comments	Ratings	Average Rating
Ideas on how NPs can protect and restore nature	24	44	4.86
New park should restore the ecosystem and be accessible by foot and public transport	3	17	4.82
Prioritise biodiversity over tourism/money	5	14	4.36
Extra rights/protection for wildlife through NPs	6	13	4.31
Focus of new NP should be restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services	1	3	5.00
Series of suggestions for making NPs as natural/free from human impact as possible	2	2	4.00
Book recommendation - focus on birds/other wildlife, wildlife corridors, running of National Parks	2	2	3.00
Reality is that existing NPs fail to conserve natural heritage by allowing/approving development in e.g. ancient woodland or flower/fungi rich meadows	0	1	5.00
Total	**43**	**96**	

Governance, Corporate Structure and Roles for National Parks

Table 7

Idea Summary	Comments	Ratings	Average Rating
Ideas on changes to statutory roles for NPs	14	11	3.73
Create a single National Park Service for Scotland, as in US/Canada	8	11	4.45
One Chief Exec covering all NPs with deputy CEO for each park	5	4	1.50
NP Boards should be locally elected without personal commercial interests represented	3	2	3.50
Suggestion for European approach - wider body overseeing all parks and other similar designations across Scotland	2	0	N/A
Gaelic language and culture should be enshrined in any new NP	1	4	4.75
Access to volunteering opportunities should be a core requirement of NPs	1	3	2.67
NP authority should be made sole, or principal, management authority in the area with full planning or 'call in' authority	1	0	N/A
Set up National Board supplemented by local boards	0	0	N/A
One Director of Corporate Services covering all NPs	0	0	N/A
Total	**35**	**35**	

Sustainable Tourism, Visitor Management, Travel and Accessibility

Table 8

Idea Summary	Comments	Ratings	Average Rating
Sustainable Tourism / Visitor Management			
Ideas on sustainable tourism in NPs	15	20	4.55
NPs needed to manage visitors and visitor infrastructure	4	15	5.00
NP will bring an increase in visitors and pressures on housing which has to be properly managed	7	9	4.89
Sharing paper which brings together different and practical approaches into one readable and helpful publication. https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com/resources/	4	8	4.25

New NP should be exemplar of sustainable tourism and management of protected areas	0	6	4.83
Better infrastructure required to support visitors	3	4	5.00
Needs to be a balance in NPs between needs of nature and those of humans	1	2	5.00
Provide cabins/bothies for visitors	0	0	N/A
Sub-total	**34**	**64**	
Travel / Accessibility			
New NP should be easily accessible by public transport and for those with mobility issues	9	15	4.53
Improved path networks can improve physical and mental health	5	10	4.00
New NP needs to support wider policies, including active travel, climate change etc.	2	9	4.44
Bike accessibility key consideration for existing Parks and criteria for new Parks	4	5	4.20
Sub-total	**20**	**39**	
Total	**54**	**103**	

Local economy and impact on residents/local communities

Table 9

Idea Summary	Comments	Ratings	Average Rating
Southern Uplands is a working landscape which should not be over-burdened by increased regulation should it be designated a new NP	8	4	2.75
Important to consider the needs of people who live in NPs	5	12	4.50
Local employment in agriculture and forestry is key, without unrealistic regulation	4	11	3.82
Use NPs to promote rural 'indigenous' cultures and groups in Scotland	4	11	4.00
New NPs should restrict building of 2nd homes and retrospectively consider previous applications.	4	5	4.80
Encourage small businesses, allied to tourism industry	2	0	N/A
New NP should be used to encourage repopulation of the islands to help deliver the goals	1	2	3.00
All rivers should be free to fish	1	1	1.00
Total	**29**	**46**	

Land use

Table 10

Summary	Comments	Ratings	Average Rating
Inviting views on land management in NPs	5	20	4.80
Calling for end to driven grouse shooting in NPs and throughout Scotland. Rewilding can maintain rural jobs	5	19	4.63
Crofting should play a strong role, in terms of expansion across NPs, especially in woodland	4	12	4.17
NP could turn round negative aspects of land use and development to enhance biodiversity.	0	0	N/A
Total	**14**	**51**	

Climate Change / Renewable Energy

Table 11

Summary	Comments	Ratings	Average Rating
How National Parks can help tackle climate change and deal with its effects	13	35	4.83
Need to balance Net Zero and environmental improvement - target National Scenic Areas for new NP	8	3	4.33
Consider infrastructure to deliver Net Zero when deciding area for new NPs	7	1	1.00
New NP should not be sited in areas where it will bring about conflict with planning policies	6	5	3.40
Local economy benefits and environmentally friendly schemes that reduce carbon consumption without creating an industrial landscape	4	7	4.29
Key consideration about whether current policy prohibiting windfarms in NPs would apply to new park, if this would hinder Scotland's climate goal and if existing windfarms in new NP area would be left or removed	4	3	4.33
NP should encompass areas bought for carbon-offset and green investment to safeguard their future	1	4	4.75
Ambition to create new NPs does not align with net zero targets, which require creation of new renewable energy sites that are not allowed within NPs	0	1	5.00
Total	**43**	**59**	

Alternative Designations / Opposition to new National Park

Table 12

Summary	Comments	Ratings	Average Rating
Benefits of UNESCO designations (biospheres and geoparks) over NPs	8	13	4.15
Geology and geodiversity are fundamental aspects often overlooked. Why not better support existing geoparks instead of creating a new NP	7	7	4.86
Rather than creating another NP, why not designate more Regional Parks?	6	5	4.00
National Park tourism affects environment. Wilderness areas solely for conservation as defined by IUCN would be preferable.	5	12	3.67
No more National Parks - NPs are expensive, create additional bureaucracy and are proven to be bad for biodiversity	5	6	3.00
Rather than create new NPs, properly fund the existing Regional Parks	3	4	5.00
Alternative to NP - Geopark	2	3	4.67
Total	**36**	**50**	

3. Analysis of Ideas and Comments

This section contains a more detailed analysis of the views expressed against each theme.

The Dialogue consultation elicited a wide range of ideas relating to the criteria for selecting areas to be designated as Scotland's next National Parks. It also generated a wide range of ideas and comments about the powers and functions of National parks in Scotland. This section provides an overview of these comments, grouped by common themes. As might be expected from this topic, many of the themes are reflected in more than one subject area.

The charts in sections 5-12 show the total number of comments related to each theme.

Throughout this section, the term 'National Park' has often been abbreviated to 'NP'.

3.1 Criteria, value and location/type of park

The topics in this section attracted a large number of comments, featuring the highest engagement of all the categories in this report.

Criteria

Ideas and comments in this category broadly fell into two groups:

- Suggestions for the general criteria to be used to decide the location of a new National Park;
- Arguments in favour of one or more specific areas being suitable for a National Park. For the purposes of this analysis, and to ensure impartiality at this stage of the process, these comments have been grouped together and generalised.

The most frequently expressed views were that the chosen location:

- offered something unique or complementary to the existing National Park (NP) portfolio, was in a part of the country which didn't currently have an NP, had a strong narrative or cultural heritage linked to its landscapes, and combined the current NP aims to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area whilst promoting the understanding and enjoyment of the area;
- contained a variety of high quality habitats, ecosystems, beautiful scenery, biodiversity, coastline and/or geology or was of "outstanding national significance for natural beauty, biodiversity, cultural heritage or landscape";
- was easily accessible - either from Scotland's existing population centres, for tourists travelling from other parts of the British Isles, or for those who cannot easily access the existing NPs – with good transport links, or the capability to upgrade existing links;
- be able to demonstrate strong local support from residents, communities, businesses and/or local authorities;

- be able to find a compromise between the key aims of NPs, including balancing the protection of nature with sustainable economic/social development, tourism and land use;
- could support and build on existing environmental designations in the area;
- ensure that NP designation meets the specific needs of an area, addressing a genuine socio-economic or demographic need, or a need that cannot otherwise be met;
- can provide a good variety of recreational/outdoor activities, cycling and walking routes, and cultural or historical attractions;
- has good infrastructure/facilities, and the ability to cope with an increased number of visitors.

Some commenters suggested that the decision should be based on which area most closely met all the existing conditions for NPs, while others expressed doubts that a specific proposed location, or any area in Scotland, met the existing conditions for NP designation.

There was also some debate as to whether the existing NP conditions were adequate, or whether this exercise should be seen as an opportunity to update/expand the criteria to help tackle the biodiversity and climate crises, and encourage innovative approaches. Some commenters cautioned against making the criteria too broad, or recommended following good practice examples from overseas NPs and models of land ownership/management. Specific suggestions for criteria included:

- "Distinctive and coherent character" / "Distinctive character and coherent identity";
- an identifiable cultural or natural heritage at risk;
- land management patterns which demonstrate harmonious interaction between people and nature (drawn from IUCN Protected Area Management Category V - Protected Landscape/Seascape);
- opportunities for appropriate/small scale public enjoyment consistent with conservation;
- a suitably large area;
- potential for integrated management;
- the area's potential for addressing nature recovery.

Value and benefits

This section summarises views provided on what people value about National Parks, and the benefits, or potential benefits, that NP designation can bring to an area.

The most commonly expressed views about the value or benefits of NP designation included:

- boosting the local economy and businesses, increasing income from tourism and hospitality sectors, providing jobs (including skilled jobs) for young people or working age families, regenerating deprived areas, and increased recognition from the internationally known 'kitemark' of NP status;

- helping to protect nature and biodiversity, landscapes, peatlands, forests, marine areas and other ecosystems, tackling climate change and promoting best practice in conservation or acting as exemplars;
- additional resources to address existing visitor management problems, improve infrastructure and/or modernise and upgrade public transport;
- working in partnership with regional economic agencies to support regeneration (although some commenters also stated that NP designation was unnecessary where a region already had a dedicated economic agency);
- encouraging sustainable and responsible land use, and ensuring commercial interests don't override sustainability;
- encouraging and promoting sustainable and responsible access to nature, with associated benefits to mental and physical health (noting that our understanding of this has improved since the original NP legislation was drafted), helping to connect people with nature or providing educational opportunities;
- helping to implement land reform, giving communities greater control over land management or providing a forum for local input into decision making;
- reviving or promoting traditional/indigenous industries or crafts;
- providing added value/generating more income than it costs to run/the economic benefits of NPs are proven.

Location and type of park

While the Scottish Government did not directly seek views on the possible location of new National Parks as part of this consultation exercise, a significant number of ideas and comments provided suggestions or support for a specific location for a new National Park. In approximate order of the frequency of mentions, location suggestions for a traditional park included: Galloway, Scottish Borders, Glen Affric, Lomond Hills/Loch Leven, all of Scotland, the Southern Uplands/all South Scotland, Perthshire, Flow Country, Glencoe/Lochaber, Highlands, Carron Valley, Fife, the area between the M8/M9 corridor, the route of the NC500, the Ochil Hills and the Pentland Hills.

Some ideas and comments also provided suggestions or support for a particular/novel type of National Park. These included:
- a marine/coastal/islands park or addition of an area of sea to an existing or new terrestrial park, with comments that the 2000 Act included provision for this, and that it would help address a perceived disconnect between land and sea, demonstrate how people can live and work in harmony with the sea, and add additional value to the NP portfolio. In response, some comments suggested that potential conflict with the fishing industry would need to be carefully managed, and that the island ferry network may need to be upgraded. Suggested locations included the west coast, Argyllshire coast and islands, Outer Hebrides, or all of Scotland's shoreline;
- a pristine wilderness park or an area within a park set aside for this, with no access by vehicles, or even by humans – e.g. examples in Canada. In response, some commenters questioned what constituted a wilderness, whether there was any true wilderness area in Scotland, potential

compensation required for landowners and whether it was right to restrict access if human access wasn't one of the main negative factors affecting conservation.
- an urban/city park, as an opportunity to make use of public/private partnerships and regenerate derelict or post-industrial land. One commenter questioned whether this was a suitable use for NP status. Suggested locations included Glasgow, Ravenscraig or inviting all Scottish cities to apply;
- three independent but linked parks – one wilderness, one promoting both biodiversity and visitor access, and one focused on deer management;
- incorporating a theme park into a National Park – responses suggested this was an inappropriate use for an NP;
- a park similar to that in Glendalough, Ireland.

It was also suggested that whatever the location of a new NP, careful consideration was needed as to whether any towns in the area would be included within the boundaries of the park.

3.2   Protecting and Restoring Nature

Figure 1. A bar chart summarising the ideas and comments generated relating to the global biodiversity crisis and the role that National Parks can play in realising the ambitions of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to halt biodiversity loss in Scotland by 2030 and substantially restore biodiversity by 2045. In this figure, most ideas relate to land use and tackling biodiversity and climate crises.
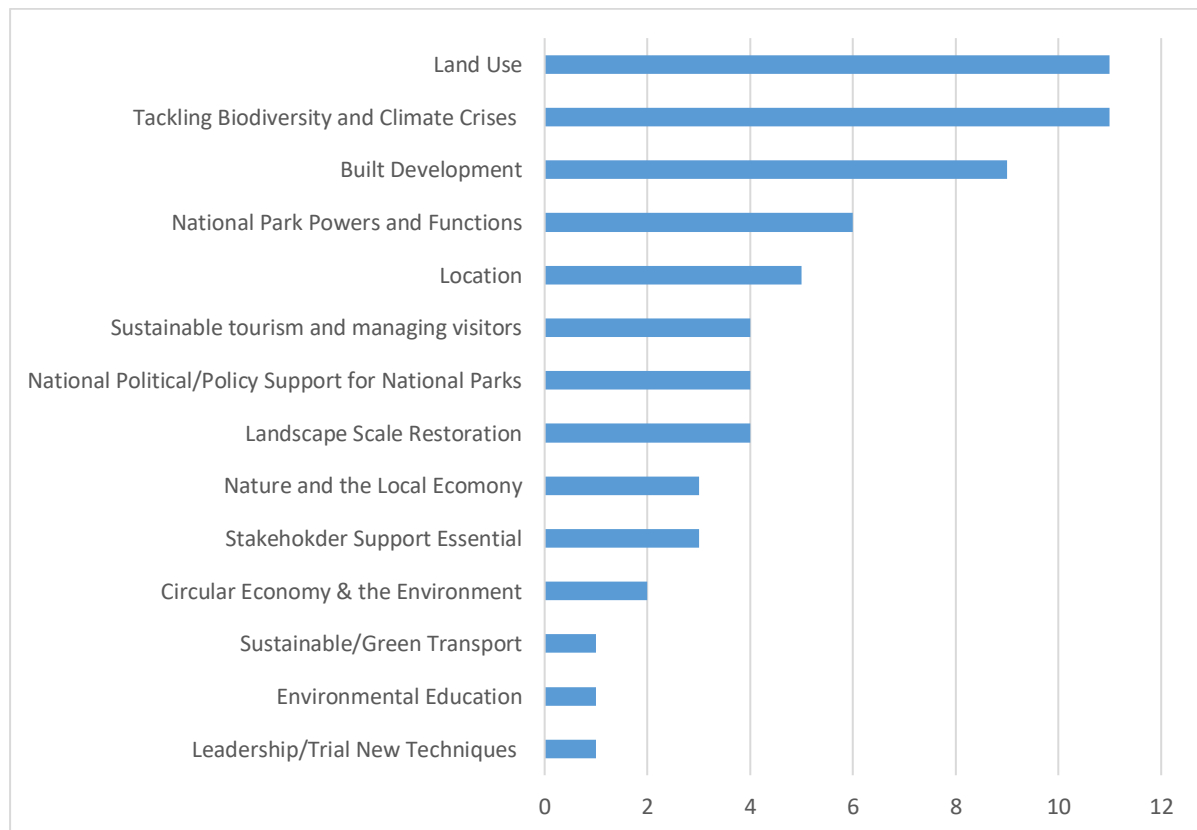
The majority of the comments focussed on the role which National Parks could play in tackling the biodiversity and climate crises and the role which land use (including built development) would need to play within the Park to achieve the ambitions. All comments received recognised the key role which National Parks could play in addressing the twin crises. The consultation highlighted a number of land use issues within National Parks, such as grazing pressure and degradation of peatlands. The ability of National Parks to contribute to biodiversity recovery at a large (landscape) scale was also highlighted as an important part of their role. The importance of the Parks ensuring the involvement of local communities and businesses in decision making associated with land management, particularly change, was recommended.

3.3   Governance, Corporate Structure and Roles for National Parks

Figure 2: A bar chart summarising the ideas related to current governance arrangements within National Parks and possible changes or improvements to existing processes and structures. In this figure, most ideas relate to inviting views on changes to statutory roles for National Parks.
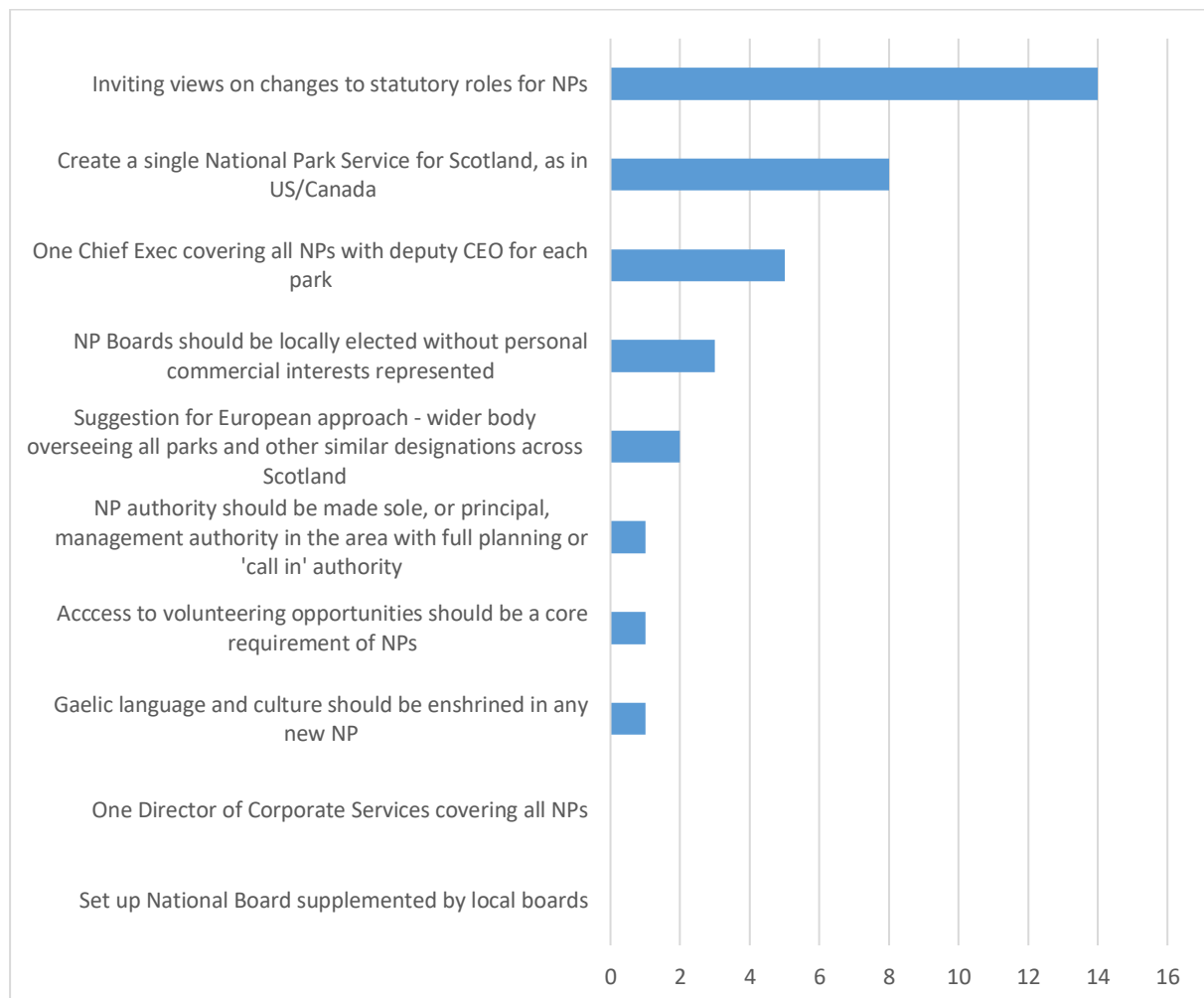

The largest number of comments in this section expressed views on changes to statutory roles for National Parks. This included some support for the creation of a National Park Service, similar to those in USA and Canada, to work across all of

Scotland's National Parks. A more centralised approach was also reflected in a number of views expressing a preference for a single CEO overseeing National Parks with deputies appointed for individual parks.

There were also a number of comments related to ensuring governance and structures of National Parks take into account the local circumstances and identity and are without any vested/commercial interests. This includes clear support for local democratic representation on National Park boards.

3.4   Sustainable Tourism/Visitor Management, Travel and Accessibility

Figure 3: A bar chart summarising the ideas generated relating to sustainable tourism within National Parks. In this figure, most ideas relate to sustainable tourism and managing visitors.
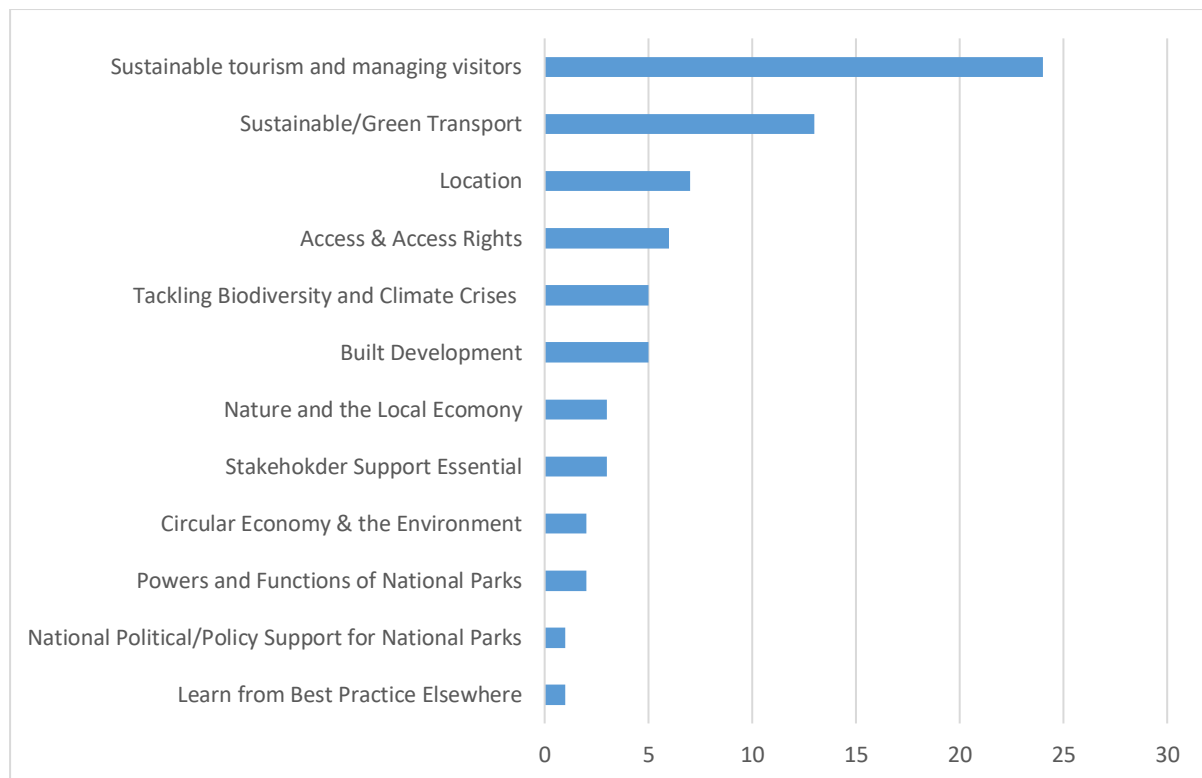
Most ideas and comments sought solutions to high visitor numbers and commented on the importance of sustainable tourism and visitor management. Increased traffic was identified as working against the nature and climate based aims of National Parks. The need for green, public transport within and in order to access parks was the idea raised most often under this theme. In particular, it was suggested that any such services should be regular, accessible, affordable (or free, where appropriate) and introduced without negatively impacting on local communities.

Accessibility in general was a key theme in the responses and ideas received in particular for those with low mobility or younger people.

Additionally, a significant number of ideas identified well-funded ranger services and improved/increased facilities as being key to successful visitor/Park management.

This section also included opposition to new National Parks, with visitor numbers/pressure, visitor behaviour and second homes among the reasons against the designation of new National Parks.

3.5   Local Economy And Impact On Communities

Figure 4. A bar chart summarising the ideas generated related to the local economy and impact on communities. This theme resulted in a lower level of repetition of ideas across respondents but a greater breadth of suggestions than most other themes. In this figure, most ideas relate to the powers and functions of National Parks.
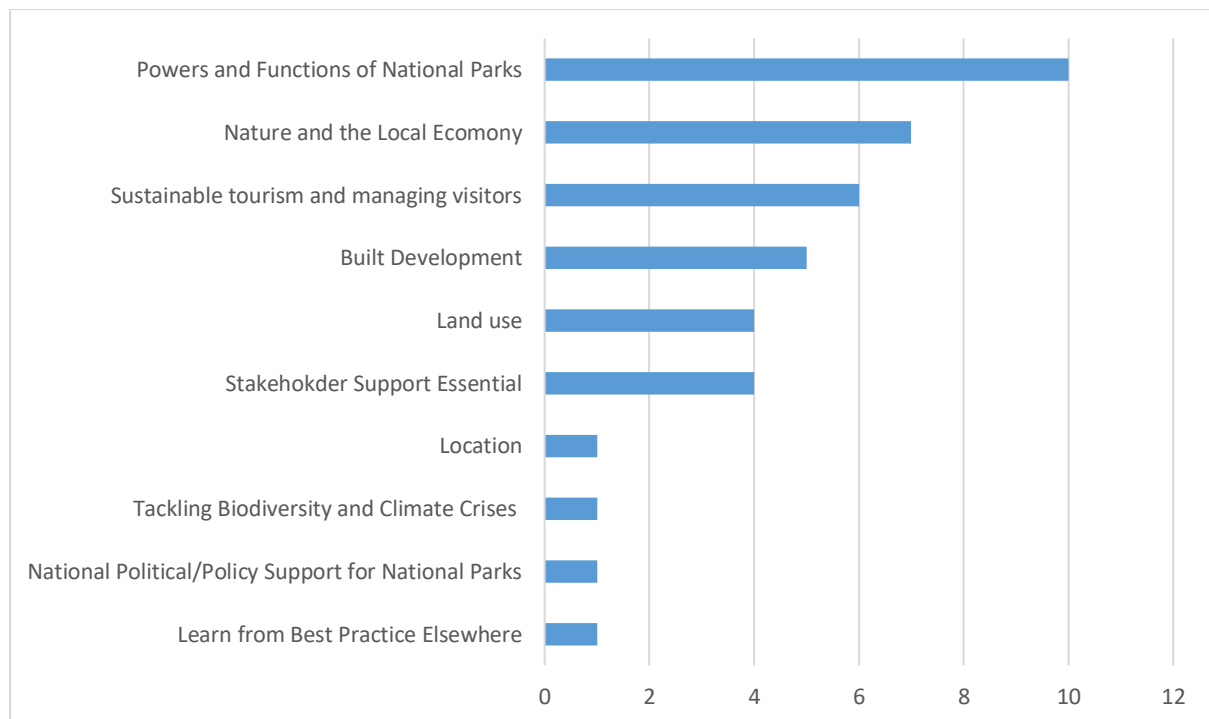
The powers and functions of National Parks were discussed by a number of respondents, covering a range of areas, including planning powers for National Park Authorities, learning from existing National Parks and the impact of National Parks being in one versus multiple local authority areas.

Second homes within the area of National Parks was also a recurring topic, with responses reflecting upon the impact on the local community and businesses.

A number of responses highlighted the importance of existing local economies and the desire to see National Parks remaining as working landscapes, acknowledging the industries and employers in place.

3.6   Land Use

Figure 5. A bar chart summarising the ideas generated related to Land Use. In this figure, most ideas relate to woodlands/forestry.
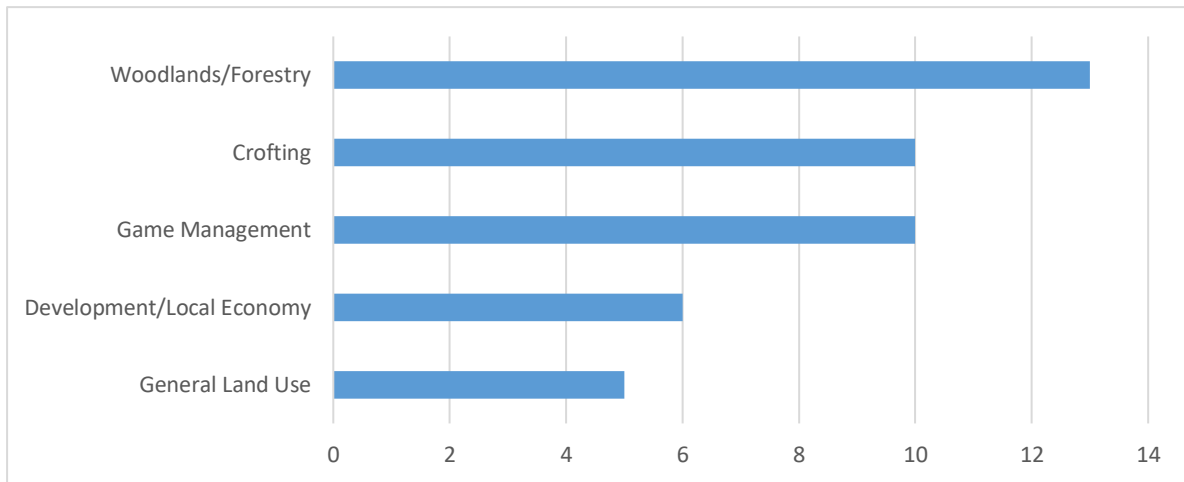

Forestry was the most common topic discussed in responses about land use, with a broad range of ideas relating to support for forestry or the opportunities a new National Park could bring. Additionally, there were also a number of responses encouraging greater restoration or expansion of ancient/natural woodland.

Crofting generated a range of comments with most responses on this topic seeking new crofting opportunities within any new National Park. A smaller number of responses expressed opposition to crofting both in the new Park and generally.

The ideas generated in relation to wildlife and game management included a range of opposing views, with calls to ban driven grouse shooting raising the most views whereas other responses sought to highlight the benefits of game management for the local economy and environment.

3.7   Climate Change and Renewable Energy

Figure 6. A bar chart summarising the ideas generated in relation to climate change and renewable energy. In this figure, most ideas relate to renewable energy/grid infrastructure.
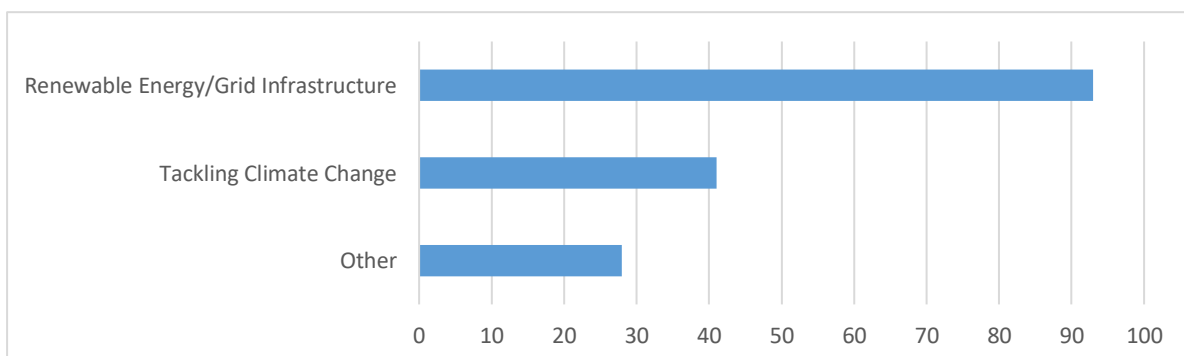
In section 11, views on the themes of climate change and renewable energy have been grouped, with renewable energy – and windfarms in particular – being the most prominent topic.

Views expressed under this topic highlight national planning policy which does not support development proposals for windfarms within National Parks. A number of respondents have commented that National Park designation would rule out future/planned windfarms, with a smaller number of respondents suggesting that windfarms should be permitted within National parks.

The impact of onshore wind developments on land, nature and communities is a common theme under this topic. Issues raised include community benefit, how to balance national priorities and needs in relation to renewable energy and the challenge of meeting Scotland's net zero commitments if windfarms are not permitted in National Parks.

There are also a significant number of comments highlighting the matter of grid connectivity and wider renewable energy considerations. These include giving consideration to planned future transmission infrastructure upgrades and network development needs being considered when planning for new parks.

Overall there is no consensus in the views expressed in relation to renewable energy.

On the theme of tackling climate change, the majority of respondents gave recognition and support for National Parks having a leading role in supporting these aims. The views expressed cover a wide range of related subject areas, including leading on sustainable land use and working to facilitate this within the park, carbon storage, working with local business and becoming an exemplar within Scotland for tackling climate change and the just transition to net zero.

Another key feature in this theme is the management and expansion of existing and ancient woodland and the key role this can play in tackling climate change. A range of views express support for this being a key role of National Parks.

3.8   Opposition Views

Figure 7. A bar chart summarising the ideas generated expressing views in opposition. In this figure, most ideas relate to opposition to, or concerns about National Parks.
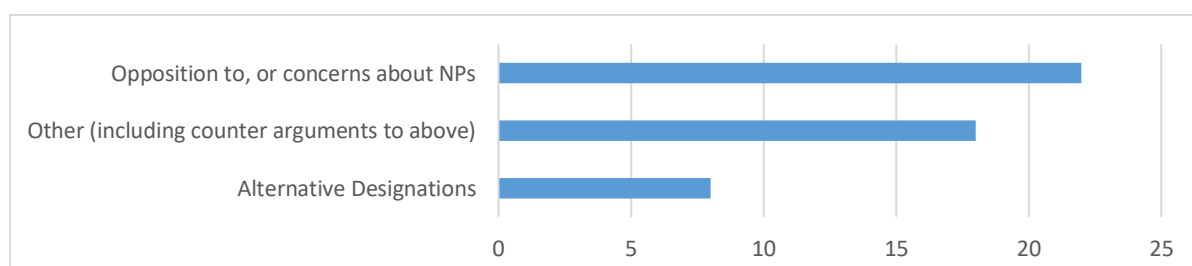
This section focuses on the views which expressed opposition to the topics and ideas in this dialogue exercise, in particular around the establishment of new National Parks. The views received offered a range of reasons and considerations for opposition to new NPs.

Concerns about potential additional bureaucracy and associated costs were raised by a number of respondents. There were also views expressed about the potential for additional planning restrictions and processes to remove planning control from local authorities and existing enterprise/growth initiatives. Some respondents questioned whether National Park status was needed and if other approaches may be more appropriate for protecting the natural environment.

A significant proportion of views within this section expressed concerns relating to the impact that a new National park could have on the local area, for example regarding visitor numbers/management, house price impacts on the local community and the impact on jobs. Some respondents also questioned the economic benefit that would be realised as well as whether the impacts of a new National Park on nature and biodiversity would be negative as a result.

Windfarms were also a recurring topic under this theme. Respondents' views largely centred on the challenge of meeting Scotland's net zero commitments if development of windfarms in National Parks is not supported..

Further Information:

While this paper summarises the views provided by respondents, the full list of Dialogue responses is available to view at ideas.gov.uk.

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This publication is available at **www.gov.scot**

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