A NATIONAL PARK IN GALLOWAY?
A DISCUSSION PAPER

OCTOBER 2017

This report represents the views of GNPA only
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This document has been carefully assembled to encourage and inform public engagement on the possibility of creating a national park in Galloway. Given the challenges the region is presently facing economically and socially, I believe this is a good moment to trigger such a discussion on the concept of a park, its possible powers, responsibilities and boundaries. The Galloway National Park Association was set up in late 2016 and has already attracted much interest and support and it is clear that many of you would like more information in order to encourage a healthy debate. I hope you will find this paper helpful in considering the pros and cons of promoting a model for sustainable development which could bring great benefit to the people and communities of the South-West. We welcome your response.

Dame Barbara Kelly
Galloway National Park Association
President

“I believe this is a good moment to trigger such a discussion on the concept of a park, its possible powers, responsibilities and boundaries”
**Introduction**

1.1 Galloway is a beautiful place to live and visit. Whilst recognising that the borders of Galloway have changed over time, we have broadly defined it as that area stretching from the Nith Valley in the east to the North Channel in the west and from the Solway shore in the south to the lower ground in Ayrshire north of the Galloway Hills. It thus incorporates parts of three local authority areas: Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire.

1.2 This area embraces rugged and rolling hills, attractive river valleys, fine pastoral scenery and a remarkable coastline including spectacular cliffs, sandy beaches and broad estuaries. These beautiful landscapes have inspired artists like Charles Oppenheimer, writers like S. R. Crockett and John Buchan and the National Bard, Robert Burns. Galloway has a distinct built heritage including prehistoric monuments, castles, baronial mansions, farmhouses and steadings and planned towns. This built heritage reflects the particular and varied history of Galloway that has seen St Ninian and Robert the Bruce, smugglers and Covenanters, agricultural improvers and industrial pioneers.

1.3 Galloway is characterised by a strong sense of community. The multiplicity of community organisations is demonstrative of this. Each small town and each village takes pride in its history, traditions, distinctiveness and character but Galloway is not without its economic problems arising in part from its relative isolation. Whilst in the past Galloway was at the heart of many sea routes and associated trading, today it is “at the end of the road.”

1.4 Data collated by the Crichton Institute in 2013 revealed that the number of people in employment in Dumfries and Galloway fell by 9000 between 2008 and 2013, unemployment doubled to 8%, and the region had the lowest average weekly pay for full time workers in Scotland. The outlook with the squeeze on public sector employment, a particularly large sector in Dumfries and Galloway, and the potential impacts of Brexit on agriculture are worrying.

1.5 Galloway’s landscape, wildlife, history and culture provide the primary resource for economic development but the landscape has changed and is changing as a result of afforestation, renewable energy and changes in agriculture. There is a commitment by the Scottish Government to more afforestation whilst Brexit may initiate further changes in farming.

1.6 The Galloway National Park Association (GNPA) is a Scottish Charity (SC047398) formed by a group of local people who believe a National Park could benefit Galloway and address some of its needs. Our trustees and members currently include farmers, landowners, artists, tourism operators and conservationists. We hope greatly to expand our membership to incorporate the widest possible range of people.

1.7 The purpose of this **discussion** document is to present our understanding of the National Park concept, the process of creating a Park, the nature of a National Park Authority, powers and responsibilities, boundaries and the potential impacts of Park status. This report is designed to inform public engagement, to explain our initial thinking, and to set out feasible alternatives. This is the start of the process and the report will change and develop in response to public engagement.

1.8 The report is intended for anyone with an interest in a Galloway National Park. We welcome any comments to contact@gallowaynationalpark.org

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Introduction

2.1 Many of the world’s most inspiring landscapes have been designated as National Parks. These include the Pyrenees in France, the Sierra Nevada in Spain, Banff in Canada and the English Lake District.

2.2 The first National Parks were designated in the late nineteenth century. The conservation movement and the campaign for National Parks were greatly assisted by John Muir, a Scot who moved with his family to the USA. These early Parks were remote areas of wilderness where public ownership was the norm. By the early to mid-twentieth century, however, there was a recognition that other areas merited special protection because of their outstanding landscape, wildlife and/or cultural heritage and that this protection could be realised without public ownership.

2.3 The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has developed a categorisation of National Parks and protected areas. Parks in the UK are categorised as areas “where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.”

National Parks in Scotland

2.4 In the immediate post-war period investigations took place into the prospects for National Parks in the United Kingdom. In Scotland, the Ramsay Report (1945) identified parts of Galloway as eminently suitable as a National Park but it was considered that its status as a Forest Park was sufficient to ensure its protection.

2.5 Whilst the designation of National Parks in England and Wales proceeded apace, no executive action was taken in Scotland to follow up the recommendations of the Ramsay Report. Indeed, it was not until 2000 that legislation was passed to allow the creation of National Parks in Scotland (the National Parks Scotland Act – the Act) notwithstanding the international recognition of its outstanding landscapes.

2.6 The Act provides that Scottish Ministers may propose the designation of a National Parks where: “(a) the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage; (b) the area has a distinctive character and a coherent identity, and (c) designating the area as a National Park would meet the special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in relation to the area in a co-ordinated way.”

2.7 The Act further sets out the statutory aims of a National Park as: “(a) to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area; (b) to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area; (c) to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of the special qualities of the area by the public, and (d) to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.”

2.8 The last of these aims is distinctive to Scottish National Parks and is a clear statement of the importance of ensuring that the Parks bring benefits to local people as well as to the wider public.

2.9 So far, two National Parks have been designated in Scotland: Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and the Cairngorms. In preparing this report, we have spoken to officers and residents of both Parks to gain an understanding of the practical realities of designation.
Introduction

3.1 In this chapter we consider how Galloway, as broadly defined, meets the criteria for designation as a National Park, namely whether it has: outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage; a distinctive character and a coherent identity; special needs which might be addressed through designation. We also examine other designations already conferred on the area and their impact.

Natural and Cultural Heritage

3.2 Galloway is an area of outstanding national importance in terms of landscape, wildlife and culture. It was recognised as such by the Ramsay Report in 1945 and by the declaration by UNESCO of the Galloway and South Ayrshire Biosphere in 1976 and its extension in 2012. Galloway includes some three areas recognised as of “outstanding scenic value in a national context” (National Scenic Areas) namely the Fleet Valley, the East Stewartry Coast and the Nith Estuary. There are also extensive areas designated as Regional Scenic Areas.

3.3 Landscape is, however, something to be experienced directly and personally. Residents and visitors will value different places for different reasons but there is a tremendous variety of visual experiences. The coast from Gatehouse to Newton Stewart and from Ballantrae to Glenapp are special in any season and at any time of day. Travelling from Dalmellington to Castle Douglas on a summer’s evening presents a panorama of hills silhouetted against the sunset and then the pastoral landscapes of the Ken Valley. Arriving in the Isle of Whithorn is always an uplifting experience. Loch Trool offers an easily accessible and dramatic highland landscape. These landscapes need to be celebrated and conserved.

3.4 In terms of wildlife, there are four wetland sites of international importance (Ramsar sites), some four or five Special Areas of Protection (depending on precise boundaries), sixteen Special Areas for Conservation, two National Nature Reserves and between 85 and 98 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (designated for biological or geological importance).

3.5 Many visitors, not only enthusiasts for wildlife, return home with vivid memories of seeing the kites at Laurieston, the ospreys at Threave and the red deer on the Queen’s Way. The wintering wildfowl provide spectacular views and a distinct sound to the Solway in winter. Wildlife in Galloway is plentiful and accessible and these qualities need to be conserved whilst minimising any conflict with land use.

3.6 The cultural heritage of Galloway is both tangible, in terms of a remarkable built heritage, art and artefacts and intangible in terms of language, legend and music. The built heritage is represented in Conservation Areas (e.g. 18 in Kirkcudbrightshire and Wigtownshire alone) buildings listed as of historic and architectural heritage and ancient monuments. Probably the most visible and exciting aspect of Galloway’s architectural heritage is its tower houses, often dramatically sited, and occasionally restored for contemporary living. Equally visible, but perhaps less appreciated, are the planned towns and villages of Galloway like Gatehouse, Castle Douglas and Kirkpatrick Durham. The many churches of Galloway often feature interesting graveyards with both elaborate memorials to the gentry and occasional covenanters’ graves with bold inscriptions. There is also an older heritage evident in the standing stones, stone circles and cup and ring marked stones. Galloway’s cultural heritage also embraces the poetry of Robert Burns and the paintings of the Kirkcudbright School. This heritage offers the potential for greater involvement and exploration for both Gallovidians and visitors.

“The cultural heritage of Galloway is both tangible, in terms of a remarkable built heritage, art and artefacts and intangible in terms of language, legend and music.”
Character and Identity

3.7 Galloway has a distinctive character. It is the combination of bare hills, some rounded, some craggy, forests, river valleys, farmed land and the villages and farm steadings that creates this distinctive character. The amazingly varied coastline also makes the area special. Galloway has always been in some ways a place apart, distinct from the rest of Scotland. Its coherence arises, in part, from this cultural heritage.

3.8 A further key factor in defining Galloway as a distinct unit lies in its geological history. The old, folded and compressed ocean beds that now make up much of the bedrock as far north as the Southern Upland Fault, and their associated volcanic intrusions, explain Galloway’s dramatic and varied character. The ice mass flowing from the Galloway Hills during the last glaciations eroded and shaped that bedrock and created most of the landscapes of the region, as far as and including the nature of its coastline and surrounding waters, and endowed it with many of its most distinctive features, notably its extensive drumlin fields.

Special Needs

3.9 Galloway does have “special needs.” Almost all the economic indicators suggest that the economy is in decline.

3.10 Gross Value Added per head, the usual measure of economic prosperity which reflects the value of goods and services produced in an area, is lower in Dumfries and Galloway than the Scottish average. Business start-ups (as indicated by registration for VAT) are lower in Dumfries and Galloway, East and South Ayrshire than in Scotland as a whole (see Table 1). Survival rates after three years are also lower in East and South Ayrshire than in Scotland.

3.11 Employment in Dumfries and Galloway has been contracting, by 9000 jobs between 2008 and 2014. Only two thirds of employees are in full time employment. Unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is higher than the national average. Wage levels are the lowest in Scotland.

3.12 Economic development is constrained by the poor accessibility of Galloway and by intermittently poor mobile and broadband connections. A potential decrease in farm support payments post Brexit and a continued reduction in public sector employment present further challenges.

3.13 The limited employment opportunities for young people, particularly skilled jobs, has led to significant out-migration, especially by those entering higher education. The out-migration of young people has been partially, but only partially, offset by the in-migration of retired people. The outcome is an aged and ageing population and a slight decline in overall numbers which is predicted to continue. Retired people can make a positive contribution to the area through professional skills and investment. However, an aged population can result in increased dependency and, potentially, a strain on health and social care services.

3.14 The contraction and centralisation of public services including local government, the police service and the Sheriff Courts has further reduced both the accessibility of services and local employment.

3.15 A particular challenge for Galloway is rapid land use change. Such change has been experienced in the past in terms of large scale afforestation, hydro development, changes in agriculture and windfarm development. Further change may be confidently forecast with further renewable energy development, further afforestation, and agricultural change arising from Brexit. Many local people feel that these changes have taken place and are taking place in pursuit of national policy objectives and without effective or participatory local input. Better co-ordination of this change, so conserving the natural and cultural resources of Galloway, is a special need. It requires some sort of focussed and co-ordinating body and specific skills. A National Park Authority could fulfill this role.

3.16 Thus, Galloway undoubtedly experiences “special needs” and we believe that the designation of a National Park could help to address some of these challenges.

3.17 We thus conclude that Galloway fulfils the statutory conditions for a National Park as set out in the Act.

Table 1: Business Start Ups and Survival Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>VAT/PAYE registrations per 1000 adults</th>
<th>VAT/PAYE 3 year survival rates %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries &amp; Galloway</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Ayrshire</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Ayrshire</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rural Scotland in Focus 2016
Other Designations

3.18 It has been noted that Galloway already has a Forest Park, is a designated Biosphere Reserve and a Dark Sky Park. Is this not enough? Is a further designation needed?

3.19 The Galloway Forest Park, created in 1947, is the largest in the UK. There is no question that Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) has made a major contribution to recreational facilities in Galloway through the Forest Park. The three visitor centres, the 7stanes mountain biking trails, the waymarked walks, the forest drives, the Red Deer Park and the Wild Goat Park are all valued by local people and visitors alike. The Forestry Commission’s recreational facilities are provided on the forest estate which is extensive but mainly embraces the upland core of the Galloway Hills. The Forestry Commission will be a key player in any Galloway National Park. However, notwithstanding the views of the Ramsay Report, we do not consider that a Forest Park can achieve everything that can be achieved with a National Park.

3.20 The Galloway and South Ayrshire Biosphere was first declared in 1976 and extended in 2012. Biosphere reserves are nominated by national governments and approved by UNESCO. We appreciate that considerable effort was made to achieve this international designation and significant effort has gone into promoting the Biosphere and its aims. The intention is to seek to reconcile conservation and development through zoning and community involvement, to promote sustainable development and to encourage the integration of cultural and biological diversity.

3.21 In our view, the Biosphere, which we strongly support, has two drawbacks. First, the concept of a Biosphere Reserve is not widely understood in the UK. Considerable effort locally has been put into promoting the concept and to seeking to encourage action. However, the title does not command the same recognition as a National Park.

3.22 Secondly, whilst the Biosphere designation acknowledges the international importance of the area it is not accompanied by any powers. Some limited financial resources are provided by the local authorities, the Forestry Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). However, the staffing of the Biosphere has been very limited and has relied on short term contracts. It has thus been difficult to develop sustained action to promote the concept of sustainable development. We thus conclude that the Biosphere designation, whilst valuable, does not provide the same scope for action as a National Park. It should be noted that Biosphere Reserves can and do exist within National Parks worldwide.

3.23 The Galloway Dark Sky Park, the first in the UK, was pioneered by the Forestry Commission and encompasses the central area of the Forest Park. The initiative has been supported by Dumfries and Galloway Council with a programme of changes to street lighting to reduce light pollution. The creation of the Dark Sky Park has seen the development of an Astronomical Observatory near Dalmellington. Like the Biosphere, there is limited specific funding for the Dark Sky Park and development initiatives are reliant on the Forestry Commission’s recreation budget or private sector initiatives. In the case of the Forestry Commission, funding from the Scottish Government is reducing year on year.

3.24 We thus conclude that although the existing designations are valued, have contributed to conservation and development in Galloway and deserve support, they cannot provide the scale of benefits that might arise from National Park status.

“...although the existing designations are valued, have contributed to conservation and development in Galloway and deserve support, they cannot provide the scale of benefits that might arise from National Park status.”
How would a new National Park be created?

The process of designation

4.1 Scottish National Parks are created and funded by the Scottish Government. The details of individual National Parks – their boundaries, functions and powers – are laid down in legislation so each Park has its own statutory basis. Proposed legislation for a Galloway National Park would have to be brought to the Scottish Parliament by Ministers.

4.2 In proposing a Galloway National Park, Ministers may ask Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) or another public body to consult locally and to prepare a report covering issues such as the boundary, functions, powers and costs. Alternatively, Ministers may consult and prepare a proposal themselves. Ministers can also order a Public Inquiry before finalising the proposal that they put to the Scottish Parliament.

4.3 The legislation (the Designation Order) laid before the Scottish Parliament must specify the boundary of the proposed National Park, the functions to be carried out by the National Park Authority, the time when its powers will come into force, and the precise composition of the Board that will run the Authority. They must also provide Parliament with a statement summarising the views expressed in response to consultations on the draft Order and outlining any changes that they propose.

4.4 Scottish Ministers would have the final say in whether to proceed with a Galloway National Park and how it should be organised. Thus, whilst the people of Galloway may make proposals, it is Ministers who will propose and the Scottish Parliament who will decide.

Ministerial views

4.5 Some insight into the Minister’s views on National Parks is available from answers given to questions in the Scottish Parliament. In September 2016 Finlay Carson MSP asked the Minister what progress was being made in the creation of new National Parks and what consideration had been given to creating one in Galloway. Roseanna Cunningham (the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform) responded that there were no plans to designate new National Parks although she did not rule out new Parks in the future. She noted that the creation of new Parks required considerable planning and the support of all local authorities and had cost implications. She added that there were no specific proposals for new National Parks and that such proposals must command consensus amongst stakeholders.

4.6 A further debate on National Parks took place on 24 May 2017 initiated by Finlay Carson MSP. On this occasion Roseanna Cunningham commented that: “Scotland’s National Parks are much more than just landscape designations. They are living, breathing spaces. They are generators of growth that attract business, innovation and, where appropriate, sustainable development.” However, she concluded that the Government could not “divert resources from other priority areas for the creation of new National Parks at present.”

4.7 In part through this report, GNPA is seeking to develop a realistic proposal for a Galloway National Park which commands the widest possible support. We are also seeking to test our belief that the costs associated with a Park would be modest and affordable given the beneficial economic impacts to Galloway. We hope to demonstrate that a National Park could give the Galloway economy a significant and cost-effective boost.

“..the people of Galloway may make proposals, it is Ministers who will propose and the Scottish Parliament who will decide.”
How would a Galloway National Park be organised and what does a NPA have to do?

Introduction

5.1 In this section we set out to describe the legal position regarding a Galloway National Park Authority and to suggest how such an Authority might be shaped to best meet the needs of the area.

The National Park Authority

5.2 Each Scottish National Park is governed by a National Park Authority (NPA). The Act provides that the NPA shall consist of:

(a) Members elected directly by local residents (at least 20% of the Authority);

(b) Members nominated by those local authorities wholly or partly within the National Park [50% of the remainder after (a)];

(c) Members nominated by the Scottish Government to represent the national interest [50% of the remainder after (a)].

Table 2 shows the composition of the NPAs for the two existing Scottish National Parks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Loch Lomond and Trossachs</th>
<th>Cairngorms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size (sq. kms)</td>
<td>1865</td>
<td>4528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Board Membership</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Members</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated by LAs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed by Ministers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NPA Annual Reports

5.3 Thus, in the existing NPAs around 30% of the membership is directly elected and local members form a majority. Decisions in a Scottish National Park are thus made by local people. The inclusion of national members, who have specific and relevant expertise (e.g. farming, land management, rural development, tourism, recreation and conservation) acknowledges that the Park is of national importance.

5.4 We consider that at least 30% of the members of any Galloway NPA should be directly elected. We also consider that the NPA should give careful consideration to achieving a gender balance and a reasonable representation of different age groups.

National Park Headquarters

5.5 We consider that the Headquarters of the National Park should be located in Galloway within the boundaries of the Park. We believe this would redress some of the centralisation of services that has reduced local decision-making and local jobs. A new National Park office in one of Galloway’s small towns could, of itself, have a significant local economic impact.
Staff

5.7 The staffing of National Parks depends very much on their size, functions and style of working. Every Park is required to have a Chief Executive. The two Scottish National Parks, in the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, currently employ around 60 and 120 staff respectively. The Cairngorms, the UK’s largest National Park, has amongst the smallest teams of staff – a situation that reflects the fact that it relies heavily on other bodies, both public and private, to help it to deliver its aims. The potential staffing of a Galloway National Park will depend upon how it discharges its functions, powers and responsibilities.

Functions, powers and responsibilities

The Legal Context

5.8 There are only three things that every National Park Authority is legally obliged to do:

• prepare a National Park Plan setting out how it intends, in its own actions and working with others, to manage the National Park;
• take the responsibility for managing access in the Park that elsewhere falls to local authorities, and
• establish at least one Advisory Group to help it to decide how best to do its job.

5.9 The Act provides considerable flexibility in terms of what else a NPA may do. It is permissive rather than restrictive in its approach. Thus a National Park Authority may:

• act as the Local Planning Authority
• provide advice and assistance
• undertake or commission research
• make grants
• acquire land
• make byelaws
• make management agreements

5.10 Based on the Act, the experience of the other Scottish National Parks and our knowledge of Galloway we set out here our preliminary ideas on how best a Galloway National Park Authority might operate.

Mode of Working

5.11 The two existing Scottish National Parks have sought to develop partnership working. We commend this idea and consider that a Galloway NPA should seek to work closely with local communities, key public sector partners and the voluntary sector in order to achieve, wherever possible, consensus, and to co-ordinate and maximise the sum of the actions by different groups. We see the NPA as acting in a manner that supports, enables, and facilitates.

5.12 In relation to local communities the Act requires close consultation with Community Councils on the preparation of the National Park Plan. We also recommend that Community Councils should have a consultative role in relation to all other interventions by the NPA. In relation to economic development and community development we consider that the NPA should work closely with the various locally based development initiatives (e.g. Gatehouse Development Initiative, Machars Action etc.).

5.13 Key public sector bodies which can assist the Authority will include:

• Dumfries and Galloway Council
• East Ayrshire Council
• South Ayrshire Council
• Forestry Commission Scotland
• Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
• Scottish Enterprise/South of Scotland Enterprise Agency
• Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
• Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)
• Visit Scotland
• Business Gateway

5.14 We consider that the aim should be to work with these bodies, respecting their existing roles, but bringing additional expertise and seeking further co-ordination. Further comment on working with these public bodies is given below.
We consider that the NPA will also wish to deploy the considerable expertise and enthusiasm of Galloway’s extensive and active voluntary sector including those groups concerned with wildlife and the built heritage.

The National Park Plan

The National Park Plan sets out how the NPA will seek to achieve the aims of the National Park in partnership with others. It is the key document which will shape the actions of the NPA and bring about the benefits which we believe can be realised. The NPA could contract out this work to a consultant or to the Councils. However, we consider that this document is so central to the National Park and the culture of the Authority that it should be developed and owned by the NPA although support might be sought from consultants or Council staff on specific aspects of the Plan. National Park Plans in the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs have been produced by the relevant NPAs.

Advisory Groups

The Act (Clause 20) also provides that each authority shall appoint at least one Advisory Group to assist in pursuing its aims. This is a way of ensuring that local experience and expertise directly influence the policies and actions of the NPA. Having regard to the nature of Galloway we consider that at least two Groups would be vital: a land use group and a tourism group. The land use advisory group reflects the critical importance of land use and management in conserving the natural and cultural resources of the area, the current post-Brexit uncertainties regarding agricultural support and the Scottish Government’s commitment to implementing a land use strategy, further afforestation, peatland restoration and the expansion of renewable energy.

The tourism advisory group reflects the widely held belief that Galloway’s nationally significant natural and cultural resources can provide the foundation for further tourism development.

Planning

The Act states that Ministers may provide that the NPA:

- Is the planning authority for its area covering both the preparation of development plans and development management;
- Is the planning authority responsible for development plans only;
- Has such planning functions as Ministers decide.

The planning function includes both the preparation of the Development Plan, the statutory plan which sets out what development is needed in an area and where it can be accommodated and development management, the day to day consideration of planning applications.

In the two existing Scottish National Parks the Development Plan is produced by the NPAs. In the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park all applications are determined by the NPA. In the Cairngorms National Park, most applications are determined by the relevant local authority although the NPA can “call-in” major applications for decision.

We recognise that local authorities may be reluctant to surrender planning powers to a new NPA and that local residents may be concerned as to whether such a transfer would change attitudes to development proposals. Nevertheless we consider that the NPA needs some planning powers to ensure that it is effective in executing the National Park Plan and realising the aims of the NPA. At this stage we have sought to present the different arguments to inform public engagement.

In relation to the development plan, there would appear to be at least two options;

1. that the plan preparation continues to be a function of the three local authorities but taking into consideration the new National Park;
2. that a single plan for the National Park is prepared by the NPA in partnership with the three local authorities.

Option (1) would be simple, would not require new staff or the transfer of staff but could reduce the effectiveness of the NPA by taking away a key planning function. It would also have the effect of dispersing planning guidance amongst three plans rather than one.
5.25 Alternately, it might be possible for a development plan to be produced for the National Park by the NPA acting in partnership with the three local authorities. The precise nature of the partnership could vary from the NPA having specialist officers and taking the lead, to the NPA sub-contracting most of the work to the local authorities.

5.26 In relation to determining planning applications. There are three options:

(i) The Councils determine all applications (as now);

(ii) The Councils determine most applications, but major applications are called-in by the NPA for decision (as in the Cairngorms National Park);

(iii) The NPA determines all applications.

5.27 Option (i) is the no-change option; it means that all planning applications and building warrants are determined by the Councils as now. It minimises staff numbers and hence costs at the NPA. However, this option means that the NPA does not control planning decisions and is entirely reliant on the Councils. This option is not in practice in either of the other Scottish National Parks.

5.28 Option (ii) would require limited staff at the NPA but would potentially lead to duplication of effort as both the NPA and the Councils would need to appraise all applications to determine and agree which should be “called-in.” This process may lead to “called-in” applications taking longer to determine than normal as the two month target for determination is only triggered when the NPA calls-in the application. The NPA would also end up determining only a handful of applications and this could pose problems in recruiting and retaining appropriate skilled staff.

5.29 Option (ii) is the arrangement used in the Cairngorms National Park although the NPA has indicated that it would like to change this to Option (iii).

5.30 Option (iii) has the advantage of clarity (all applications in the Park whether in Dumfries and Galloway or East or South Ayrshire would be determined in one place). This option would require adequate staffing in the NPA but would not, necessarily, mean any overall increase in staff numbers across the different authorities as posts might be transferred from the Councils to the NPA. Option (iii) would mean that applicants would still need to talk to the Councils about building warrants.

5.31 It is often perceived that NPAs are more restrictive in relation to development management than other planning authorities. However, this contention is not supported by the data. Table 3 shows that in the recent past a higher percentage of applications has been approved by NPAs than by our local Councils.

Table 3: Planning Approval Rates, NPAs and LPAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Q1 2015/16</th>
<th>Q2 2015/16</th>
<th>Q3 2015/16</th>
<th>Q4 2015/16</th>
<th>Q1 2016/17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cairngorms NPA</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D&amp;G Council</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>95.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Ayrshire</td>
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<td>92.7</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Scottish Government Planning Authority Performance Statistics

5.32 We invite comments on planning powers for the NPA.

Access

5.33 National Park Authorities have a statutory responsibility for access to the countryside. As such a Galloway NPA would be responsible for maintaining the core path network and the deployment of rangers. We consider that the NPA should seek to maintain, improve and extend the access network for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
What area could be in the National Park?

Introduction

6.1 It was noted in section 2.6 that to be designated as a National Park:

- the area must be of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or a combination of its natural and cultural heritage;
- the area must have a distinctive character and coherent identity;
- designation of the area as a National Park will meet the special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in relation to the area in a co-ordinated way.

6.2 We argued in chapter 3 that Galloway, as broadly defined, fulfils these criteria. We have sought to refine and develop this analysis to consider possible boundaries. Our analysis has been based on the following process which closely reflects the process used by SNH in defining the boundaries of Scotland’s first two National Parks:

a. What makes Galloway distinctive and special (see chapter 3)?
b. What distinct areas of coherent character can be identified?
c. What are the significant natural and cultural heritage interests of each area?
d. How do these areas rate in relation to these interests?
e. What are the needs of each area and assessment of the extent to which National Park designation was the best means of meeting these needs? What distinct areas of coherent character can be identified?

6.3 We defined the widest possible area that could be included in a Galloway National Park and broke it down into a manageable number of separate areas for the purpose of more detailed characterisation and assessment. We started with the boundaries of the UNESCO recognised Galloway and South Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve. These take in not only substantial parts of South and East Ayrshire, as far north as the River Ayr, but also parts of Upper Nithsdale east of the Nith up to the administrative border with South Lanarkshire. We added the rest of the Stewartry, down to the Solway coast, and the Rhins of Galloway. It also seemed sensible to include for consideration those parts of the Nith Estuary National Scenic Area and of the Solway Coast Regional Scenic Area that lie to the east of the river to a point just west of Ruthwell village.

6.4 This maximum possible territory was then divided into eight areas. The areas were defined after consulting a wide range of map overlays. The information taken into account included indicators such as landscape designations [National Scenic Areas (NSAs) and Regional Scenic Areas (RSAs)], landscape character units, geological boundaries and the distribution of geomorphological features (such as drumlins to the south and the limit of distribution of Galloway granite erratics to the north), maps of archaeological sites and habitats as well as social and administrative units and readily identifiable physical features, whether natural (e.g. the Ken Dee valley) or man-made (e.g. A75).
6.5 The eight areas identified were as follows (see Map 2 on P28):

1. The Merrick to the Fleet Estuary
2. Criffel and the Mid Solway Coast
3. The Thornhill Uplands
4. The Machars
5. The Ayrshire Coast
6. The Wigtownshire Moors
7. The Rhins
8. Southern Ayrshire and Upper Nithsdale

In the south-east the Biosphere boundary delimited Areas 1 and 2, whilst in the north the marked change in landscape character, not least as a result of past and continuing mining activity, helped to define a separate Area 8 within the boundaries of the Biosphere Reserve.

What are the significant natural and cultural heritage interests of each area?

6.6 Merrick to the Fleet Estuary comprises the high tops, open hills and the forests of the Galloway Forest Park, together with the lower farmed land extending from there to the sea, including the valleys of the Fleet and Tarff and the western half of the Ken/Dee catchment. The Fleet Valley NSA lies within this Area, as do a number of internationally designated habitats which together constitute the “core” zone of the Biosphere Reserve (GSAB).

6.7 Criffel and the Solway Coast embrace the range of coastal hills extending from just west of the Nith Estuary almost as far as Kirkcudbright, together with the indented coastline to the south, including the mouth of the Nith itself and the wetlands immediately to its east. It has a high level of scenic interest, reflected in the presence of two NSAs and near-complete coverage by RSAs.

6.8 About two thirds of the Thornhill Uplands is encompassed within a Regional Scenic Area. It straddles the traditional boundary between Dumfriesshire and the Stewartry and comprises the upper parts of the Urr Valley, most of the Cairn Water catchment and the middle reaches of the Nith, as well as the eastern portion of the Glenkens north of Dalry. It is notable for its upland glens, such as the Dalwhat, Shinnel and Scaur, and for the presence at Drumlanrig Castle of what is perhaps the region’s outstanding historic building.
6.9 The Machars is a relatively low-lying peninsula which can reasonably lay claim to be the cultural heart of Galloway. Its varied coastline extends from the mudflats of Wigtown Bay, round the exposed Burrow Head to the stony shores and sandy beaches of Luce Bay. Inland it contains a mixture of peatland, woodland and drumlin-strewn pastures, threaded by the River Bladnoch and its lower tributaries. It is rich in archaeological monuments of many periods and includes Scotland’s earliest centre of Christianity at Whithorn and its National Book Town at Wigtown.

6.10 The Ayrshire Coast is a comparatively narrow strip of predominantly steep-to-coast and hilly hinterland which runs from just south of Ayr as far as the east side of Loch Ryan. It is notable for its raised beaches and varied geological exposures and uncommon flora. Two attractive river valleys run down to this coast, those of the River Stinchar and the Water of Girvan.

6.11 The Wigtownshire Moorlands consists largely of medium-altitude moorland and is very sparsely populated outwith the lower reaches of the Water of Luce. Though primarily peat-covered, its eastern and northern sectors have been heavily afforested and in recent years have seen very extensive windfarm developments. The River Bladnoch is internationally designated for its freshwater biodiversity interest and some wetland areas remain nationally important. The most westerly part still mostly comprises open moorland, much of it internationally designated for its raptor interest. It is rich in ancient archaeological remains.

6.12 The low, lengthy ridge of the Rhins is connected to the rest of Galloway by a narrow plain of fertile ground. The coastline of the Rhins is predominantly rocky, with stretches of higher cliffs and punctuated by occasional sandy bays. At the Mull of Galloway it is at its most dramatic and as the southernmost tip of Scotland carries symbolic significance. The area’s very temperate climate, strongly influenced by the Gulf Stream, is reflected in the presence of exotic plants at Logan Botanic Gardens and elsewhere and in the year-round greenery of the dairy pastures which almost without interruption cover most of the hinterland of the peninsula.

6.13 Southern Ayrshire and Upper Nithsdale includes the former mining communities of the Ayrshire coalfield, as well as the more agricultural landscapes to the west of the latter. It bears widespread scars from its industrial past and large scale opencast mining continues in a few places. Although not heavily populated overall, much of the area has a rather different feel to the more uninterruptedly agricultural lands to the south. The most degraded areas are currently the subject of ambitious plans for restoration and regeneration, whilst in Upper Nithsdale proposals for multi-modal renewable energy generation are well-advanced.

How do these areas rate in terms of natural and cultural heritage?

6.14 Once the eight areas had been defined, a list was prepared for each of its principal natural and cultural interests, under the headings of geology and geomorphology, landscape and biodiversity, cultural heritage and recreation. Cultural heritage was defined, as in the Act, as structures and other remains resulting from human activity of all periods, languages, traditions, ways of life and the historic, artistic and literary associations of people, places and landscapes. To these were added known recreation facilities and interests and a rough-and-ready assessment of the potential held by the areas to build upon and expand them.

6.15 The first yardstick for assessing the ‘outstanding national importance’ of the natural heritage interests was the number and extent of relevant international and national designations. Internationally important sites included European Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), designated for their habitats and species other than birds, European Special Protection Areas (SPAs), designated for their ornithological interests, RAMSAR Wetlands of International Importance, the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and the Galloway Dark Sky Park as designated by the International Dark-Sky Association. National designations comprised National Scenic Areas, National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. It rapidly became clear that between them these various accolades provide a powerful case for arguing that the natural heritage interest of Galloway as a whole passes the test of ‘outstanding national importance’ laid down in the legislation.

6.16 Having listed the attributes of each area, we attempted to score them on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 signifying the highest value. Overall, the exercise confirmed that throughout the region, with the partial exception of the Southern Ayrshire and Upper Nithsdale area, there exists a high level of natural and cultural heritage interest, perhaps not fully recognised by those unfamiliar with it. The precise balance between natural and cultural interest undoubtedly varies, with the cultural component more to the fore on the lower ground. It is also prominent in areas like the
western part of the Wigtownshire Moors where the human touch has in recent centuries been relatively light and left intact the evidence of earlier occupation. Overall, however, it was hard to argue on the basis of the assessment that any part of the region, other than perhaps Southern Ayrshire and Upper Nithsdale, could be discounted as a candidate for National Park status.

What are the needs of each area and is a National Park designation the best means of meeting these needs?

6.17 We argued in chapter 3 that Galloway, as broadly defined, had special needs in relation to:

- low productivity
- loss of jobs
- low wages
- limited job opportunities for young people and associated out migration
- centralisation of services
- the prospect of substantial land use change.

6.18 These challenges are relevant to all the eight areas described above although generally they increase in severity towards the margins of the region, especially the remoter areas to the north, west and extreme north-east. Remoteness itself is an issue which has been exacerbated by poor mobile phone and internet connections and, to an extent, by the increasing centralisation of services. In addition, Southern Ayrshire and Upper Nithsdale have special needs relating to the legacy of coal mining and associated industrialisation.

6.19 Addressing these special needs will require concerted effort and the proposed South of Scotland Enterprise Agency will have a key role. However, the natural and cultural resources of the area provide crucial assets to underpin sustainable development. Land use in Galloway has changed rapidly in the past with the wide spread of afforestation, the development of the Galloway hydro scheme, the development of new farming techniques and, more recently the numerous windfarms. Further change is very much in prospect as the forests mature, new afforestation is encouraged, farming is impacted by Brexit and windfarm developers seek new sites. Such change will impact on the natural and cultural resources of the area and improved management and co-ordination of change is desirable. We believe that a National Park, by providing such co-ordination, raising the profile of the area, focusing effort on conservation and recreation, and securing increased investment, would be uniquely well-placed to help in addressing the special needs of the area.

Defining the boundaries

6.20 We sought to identify a ‘core’ or ‘heartland’ area encapsulating the character of Galloway. It then becomes possible to work outwards from this to suggest which areas should be included in any park. This was the approach that SNH adopted in appraising territory for inclusion in the two existing parks.

6.21 We consider that the Merrick to the Fleet Estuary and Criffel to the Mid-Solway Coast areas are indispensable components of any ‘heartland’ on the basis both of their character and the high proportion of the land already recognised as being of national or international value. Between them, these two Areas encompass the full topographical and land use succession from the highest peaks to a varied shoreline. They also contain all three of the region’s National Scenic Areas.

6.22 Whilst the River Nith is the traditional eastern boundary of Galloway and may have provided a defensible frontier it makes much less sense as a boundary to a National Park. In the south, the Nith Estuary NSA embraces both sides of the river and considering its national importance, it would seem inappropriate to exclude the east part from any National Park. Further north and to the east of the Nith, in the Thornhill Uplands, are the very attractive landscapes of the mid-and upper Urr valley, the Cairn Water and the three upland glens of the Dalwhat, Shinnel and Scaur. Although not nationally designated, we consider that this area well exemplifies the Southern Uplands’ characteristic landscapes and there is therefore a strong candidate for inclusion in a Park. Still further east, the dramatic landscape of the Dalveen Pass, though some way from the area traditionally recognised as Galloway, could provide an exhilarating entrance to the Park from the north east.

6.23 If Galloway is a land apart, the Machars is a land apart within Galloway. The peninsula has its own character or characters, with some distinction between a wilder northern landscape and a more pastoral landscape
in the south. It has retained much of high scenic value, both along its coast and in the interior. Add to these attributes its archaeological remains, association with early Christianity and attractive towns and villages and we concluded that this area too could readily justify National Park designation.

6.24 We consider that the southern part of Ayrshire Coast roughly from Girvan southwards could merit a place in any Park. Its combination of coast, river valley and moorland possesses an abundance of scenic and geological interest, much of it nationally recognised. We consider that as far as possible, however, the boundary of Park should be drawn to exclude the several windfarms currently operating within this area.

6.25 The Wigtownshire Moors possess some natural and cultural interest, as outlined in the description given earlier. Half a century ago, its claim for inclusion in a National Park of the kind envisaged would have been strong. However the extensive afforestation and what may well now be the densest concentration of wind energy developments anywhere in Scotland have eroded its credentials. Given these developments, we consider that most of this Area could only be considered for inclusion in a National Park if it was decided that the Rhins should form part of the Park.

6.26 The case for the Rhins rests largely on the quality of its coastline. Much of this is undoubtedly very fine and in parts, notably around the Mull of Galloway, exceptional. However, with the important exceptions of some gardens and estate policies, the peninsula is of limited interest. An existing windfarm sits prominently atop its central reaches and another has recently been approved further north. A possible way forward might be to include just the coastal fringe of the Rhins in the Park.

6.27 Southern Ayrshire and Upper Nithsdale is included in the Biosphere but has, in large parts, a rather different landscape to the areas described above. It also has particular needs associated with the former coalfield, which are being tackled by other initiatives.

Culturally, however, there are aspects of common heritage related, for example, to the Covenanters and to the poetry of Robert Burns. Thus it might be possible to develop a case to include, at least, parts of this area within a Park.

**Alternative boundaries for the National Park**

6.28 A variety of possible options emerges from our analysis, ranging in scale from a “Biosphere plus” option to one tightly focused on Merrick to the Fleet Estuary and Criffel to the Mid Solway Coast. We consider that a National Park comprising only the two latter areas would fail to encompass all the land which constitutes a Galloway ‘heartland’. Such a ‘heartland’ should also embrace the Thornhill Uplands and the Machars, the southern half of the Ayrshire Coast and the eastern fringes of the Wigtownshire Moors. We believe that this option would command widespread public support as striking a sensible balance between the historic notion of Galloway as a social and cultural entity and the requirements of the National Parks legislation in terms of natural and cultural importance and special management needs.

6.29 However, we recognise that such a boundary, although involving the designation of a large area of land (which could make it the second largest UK National Park, after the Cairngorms), would still exclude areas of significant natural heritage and cultural interest, with a particularly acute need for the sort of economic boost that designation as a National Park could impart. Previous experience also suggests that, once National Park designation is in place, communities on the margins are often keen to be brought into the Park. Looking south of the border (Map 1 on P9), it will be evident that a very large part of northern England has been designated as of national importance, as either a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and thus as meriting careful planning and management and the investment of central government funds. Despite many similarities in both character and need, the proportion of southern Scotland enjoying similar recognition and treatment is dramatically lower.
6.30 After much deliberation we have therefore identified four possible boundary options (see Map 3 on P36).

- **Option A**
  This embraces, working east to west, the Thornhill Uplands, Criffel to the Mid Solway coast, Merrick to the Fleet Estuary, the Machars and the Ayrshire coast south of Girvan.

- **Option B**
  As option A but including the coastal fringes from the Machars around the Rhins to link to the Ayrshire Coast

- **Option C**
  Option B plus the whole of the Rhins and the Wigtownshire Moors

- **Option D**
  Option C plus the coast north of Girvan to south of Ayr.

6.31 Notwithstanding the boundaries, we consider that the sub-title “The Kingdom of Galloway” might encompass the physical and cultural unity of the area.

6.32 We welcome comments on our analysis and suggestions.

“We welcome comments on our analysis and suggestions.”
What are the potential benefits of a Galloway National Park?

Introduction

7.1 In this section we set out first to identify the potential benefits of a Galloway National Park. Secondly, having regard to discussions and meetings that we have held, we also seek to address some of the fears raised about National Park status. This is the beginning not the end of the debate and we look forward to discussing these issues further.

7.2 We have grouped the benefits under the following headings:

- Enhanced profile
- Environmental benefits
- Economic benefits
- Social benefits

Enhanced profile

7.3 Galloway has a low profile. Many Gallovidians can tell stories of Galloway being confused with Galway, Highlanders asking whether Kirkcudbright is in Scotland or people simply not knowing there is somewhere west of Carlisle and south of Glasgow. Dumfries and Galloway’s Council’s Regional Economic Development Strategy identifies profile as a key issue noting that the region is simply not visible enough and is under promoted.

7.4 In relation to tourism we are all familiar with the reality that visitors from England and beyond rarely turn left at Gretna. Similarly, not many residents of the Central Belt travel to the South-West for their holidays. How can this be changed?

7.5 A new Galloway National Park will raise the profile of Galloway. National Parks have the highest level of public recognition of any protected area in the world. Visitors seek out National Parks recognising that they are special and offer facilities for recreation. A new National Park would generate increased press and media coverage via specialist publications, the internet, TV and radio. This will result in increasing visitor numbers from the UK and internationally and will assist existing tourism related businesses to thrive whilst creating new opportunities for new businesses.

7.6 The Biosphere has already sought to develop a logo which can be used by a wide range of businesses if they sign up to the Biosphere Charter. This concept could be further developed by the National Park. The Cairngorms has been notably successful in developing a logo which is used by many estates, by the different ranger services, by guide books and leaflets and by local businesses. Branding could be used for events, holiday accommodation, recreational facilities and locally produced foods.

7.7 National Park Authorities employ or retain a press officer who will ensure increased press and media coverage. They aim to publicise the work of the NPA and promote events and meetings in and near the Park. Having a member of staff continually drawing attention to the area and retaining links with press and media contacts would enhance the profile of Galloway.

Environmental Benefits

Conservation of natural resources

7.8 We have argued that the principal basis for local prosperity in Galloway is its natural and cultural resources. The first essential, therefore, is to conserve and enhance these resources. Since Galloway was first recognised as a potential National Park in the Ramsay Report (1945) there have been significant changes in land use and management. There are likely to be significant changes in the future with re-afforestation and new afforestation, changes in agricultural support and the development of renewable energy. The NPA would have the potential and ability to guide and co-ordinate this change, bringing the different parties together and working towards integrated land
uses. The Scottish Government has developed a national Land Use Strategy. The NPA could develop and implement this strategy at the local level, preparing a regional land use framework to guide and coordinate land use change and development. In the context of new, post-Brexit land use policy there may be scope for the NPA to develop new incentive schemes and to use management agreements to secure the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage.

7.9 Financial support for farming has been declining and may decline further post-Brexit. One highly possible scenario, which has been the subject of recent announcements and debate, is one in which greater emphasis is given to the wider benefits of land management in future support regimes. The designation of a National Park, by explicitly recognising the outstanding national importance of the natural resources of Galloway and the role of farming in conserving those resources, could give Galloway farmers an advantage in securing access to such funds.

7.10 The NPA would work in partnership with the FSC, SNH and HES. We consider that the NPA should become a key player in influencing future land use and management in the area equipped with financial incentives.

7.11 A NPA would have the potential to:

- lead or make a significant input to any land use strategy for the area;
- help shape proposals for afforestation and renewable energy development;
- develop, with landowners, farmers and local communities, a greater understanding of landscape character and agree conservation objectives;
- reward farmers and landowners for conserving the landscape;
- help local communities and communities of interest to acquire and manage land of conservation value;
- develop management agreements to secure conservation objectives.

Conserving and managing wildlife

7.12 Varied, relatively plentiful and accessible wildlife is one of the great attractions of Galloway for visitors. At the same time, there can be conflicts between wildlife and land management. A NPA would have the potential both to conserve and manage wildlife working in partnership with SNH and the voluntary conservation bodies. We consider it is vital that the NPA should work with statutory bodies, the landowning and farming community and wildlife charities to conserve and manage Galloway's wildlife.

Conserving cultural resources

7.13 Galloway has long been a distinct region with a history and culture of its own. As well as the tangible heritage of ancient monuments, historic buildings and planned towns, and art, there is an intangible heritage in the form of customs, stories and song. Working with HES and voluntary groups the NPA would have the opportunity to draw together and interpret this heritage for residents and visitors. We consider that NPA should seek to support communities to interpret Galloway's distinct history and culture for the benefit of residents and visitors.

Conserving and enhancing natural systems

7.14 In recent years there has been increasing recognition of the real benefits to society that natural systems provide. These “ecosystem services” are many and diverse and include regulating flooding, supplying clean water and absorbing carbon (as in peatlands and woodlands). A preliminary assessment of ecosystem services has been made for the Biosphere. A NPA would have the potential to build on this assessment, explain to landowners, farmers and local communities their significance at a local level and devise methods to ensure their conservation and enhancement.

Increasing understanding of the environment

7.15 We have noted that the richness of Galloway's natural and cultural resources is not always appreciated. There is a need better to explain, for example, why the landscape is like it is, what elements of Galloway's history are still evident in the landscape and how artists and writers have been inspired by Galloway. Such understanding can increase the appreciation of visitors and residents and increase pride in the area. A NPA will have the potential to focus on such interpretation of natural and cultural resources.
Increasing access to the environment

7.16 It is not always easy to gain access to Galloway’s outstanding countryside. For example, many coastal sites lack any or adequate parking provision to enable access. A NPA would have the powers to make appropriate provision. A NPA would be able to improve lowland core paths which are sometimes more apparent on maps than on the ground, improve access to the hills and resolve and manage any conflicts between recreation and land use. Increasing access to the countryside can benefit visitors and local residents.

Economic benefits

Tourism

7.17 Table 4 shows sustainable tourism employment and Gross Value Added by tourism for the three local authority areas which might, in part, comprise the Galloway National Park and, for comparison, Highland Region.

Table 4: Sustainable Tourism Employment and Gross Value Added

<table>
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<th>Dumfries and Galloway</th>
<th>East Ayrshire</th>
<th>South Ayrshire</th>
<th>Highland</th>
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<td>GVA (£M)</td>
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Source: Tourism in Scotland’s Regions 2014 – Visit Scotland

Visitor expenditure in UK National Parks varies from £85 million per annum on Exmoor to £1,100 million per annum in the Lake District.

7.18 The importance of visitors to the economy of National Parks in the UK is well known. Visitor expenditure in UK National Parks varies from £85 million per annum on Exmoor to £1,100 million per annum in the Lake District. There is clearly further visitor spending near the National Parks but outside their boundaries, especially in gateway settlements.

7.19 The Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) suggests that there were 2.43 million visitors to Dumfries and Galloway in 2014, with the visitor economy being worth £302 million p.a. and this spending supporting an estimated 7,000 jobs.

7.20 These figures suggest that there is scope for a significant development of tourism in Galloway which could be realised without detracting from the essential characteristics and tranquility of the area. A National Park would elevate Galloway as a tourist destination within the UK, Europe and further afield. It would encourage tourists to turn left at the border and might also assist in lengthening the tourist season. It could also help to ease the tourist pressures currently experienced by better-known destinations to both the north and south.

7.21 Currently tourism in the area is promoted by Visit Scotland and by the Councils. A National Park offers the potential for new and alternative marketing and for the development of improved visitor facilities. Currently the Councils have very limited money available for the provision of visitor facilities. We consider that the NPA could work with existing providers, the Councils and Visit Scotland to enhance the promotion of the area and to provide improved visitor facilities.

7.22 We consider that the achievement of National Park status could increase visitor numbers to Galloway by 10%-20%, bringing between a quarter and half a million extra visitors per annum. Within this total it is likely that the number of higher spending foreign visitors would increase as they would be drawn by the National Park label; some of these could be expected to stay longer in serviced accommodation.

7.23 This increased number of visitors would benefit the Dumfries and Galloway economy by between £30 million and £60 million p.a. in the early years. This figure could grow further beyond that over time. The additional spending suggests that between 700 and 1400 new and existing jobs would be created or supported.

Strengthening existing businesses

7.24 The opportunities for new businesses offering services to visitors would be increased by the existence of a National Park. New businesses, shops, arts and recreation facilities would receive some additional use arising from the increase in visitor numbers, thus improving the turnover of these businesses on average by at least 5% to 10% and probably as much as 20% in some locations (assuming that half of the turnover of these businesses remains from local residents’ spending). This will be particularly the case in the small towns in or near the proposed National Park.
Attracting new businesses

7.25 Whilst the benefit to the economy is likely to be greatest in the tourism sector and in catering, retail, arts and attractions, some economic benefit are likely to be felt in other sectors. The additional publicity and profile for the area could well attract some new footloose businesses and individuals. Experience elsewhere suggests that an enjoyable holiday experience, or even a positive image for an area, can provide just the prompt needed to crystallise such decisions. Surveys in the Cairngorms, for example, indicate that the National Park is a factor in attracting people to locate their businesses there (Cairngorms National Park Business Barometer surveys).

7.26 At present there are broadly 5,880 businesses in D&G of which 4,250 (72%) are small businesses with less than 5 employees (Dumfries and Galloway Regional Economic Strategy 2014-2020). If there were to be only a 1% increase in small businesses this would constitute around 40 new businesses employing between 80 and 160 people. Most of these jobs would probably be people working from home or in premises on their own properties in computer-based and craft-related employment.

7.27 It is likely that such footloose entrepreneurs would be attracted to locations in or near the proposed new National Park, but it is also possible that a small number of companies seeking larger workforces or premises would be drawn to the more urban environs of Dumfries or Ayr.

7.28 Increased profile and increased visitor numbers could also be expected to attract more private investment into the Park.

Direct and indirect employment of the new National Park Authority

7.29 A Galloway NPA would itself provide a range of jobs, which might include rangers, visitor information staff, estate workers, planners and community development officers. Based on the data from other National Parks in the UK it might directly employ between 40 and 80 staff, with a salary budget of between approximately £1m and £2m per annum. The majority of this money would be spent in the local economy and would thereby directly support local businesses and employment.

7.30 If, as we suggest, the National Park offices were to be located in one of Galloway’s small towns, this would have a positive socio-economic benefit to the neighbourhood through the location of well qualified staff, their families and their spending. This could be especially beneficial if the town concerned was one of the more westerly within the region.

7.31 In addition, the capital spending of the park authority would inject further money in to the local economy - possibly in the region of £500,000 per annum. Given the nature of the National Park’s responsibilities and activities, most of the work commissioned should be of a kind for which local businesses would be well equipped to compete. In some cases it could also give rise to appropriate training opportunities; indeed, the NPA might well seek actively to identify and create such openings, in co-operation with local business groups and educational establishments.

Increased spending in the area by Scottish Government and by others

7.32 Scottish National Parks are primarily funded by the Scottish Government. This means that a Galloway National Park would in all probability secure for the region increased expenditure directly from Holyrood. Whilst this would be of real benefit to the people of Dumfries and Galloway, East and South Ayrshire, the cost involved is currently viewed as a major stumbling block by the Scottish Government. That as much as anything appears to be the reason why more National Parks are not a priority for it.

7.33 Given the uncertainties about its exact form and functions, we are not in a position to develop detailed costings for a Galloway National Park. We know that the Government spends approximately £4m a year on the Cairngorms National Park. In England, national government contributes £2.4m each year to the Northumberland National Park, although this figure has fallen by 40% since 2010. The Park raises a further £2.1m from other sources. These are not huge sums; in the case of the Cairngorms, for example, they are roughly equivalent to the annual costs of a large secondary school.

7.34 Any costs must also be compared to the benefits that would flow from the expenditure. We have argued that a National Park is one of the ways, indeed a key way, of increasing economic activity in the area, thus increasing employment, reducing out-migration and increasing population. This in turn would increase revenue to the Scottish Government.
7.35 The net cost to the Scottish Government would almost certainly be less than £4m a year. Overall staff costs, the largest element of expenditure, could well be reduced by staff transfers and consequent offsetting savings in the Councils or other public sector organisations. Experience in National Parks elsewhere demonstrates the scope to cover some costs through revenue-generating activities undertaken by the NPA.

7.36 Ultimately, however, we believe that the south-west of Scotland deserves increased expenditure by the Scottish Government to address its special needs and to realise its potential. We recognise that an effort in this direction is being made with the proposed creation of a new South of Scotland Enterprise Agency, more akin in its remit to Highlands and Islands Enterprise, which in 2016/16 had a budget of £111m. In our view, a Galloway National Park would neatly complement such an agency and could greatly assist it in the task of promoting social and economic well-being in an area with such a wealth of natural and cultural assets. The two bodies should thus be charged by Government to work closely together and to pursue maximum synergy between their two programmes.

7.37 An important contribution to this endeavour could come from the proven effectiveness of National Parks in leveraging additional funds from other sources. Current examples in Scotland include the £6m “Mountains and the People” project, designed to enhance access opportunities and visitor experience in the two existing National Parks. Meanwhile the Northumberland National Park has not only, as noted above, raised £2.1m to almost match national government revenue funding but has obtained £10m in support from the European Union and the Heritage Lottery Fund towards a major landscape discovery centre.

Social Benefits

Community Development

7.38 Galloway is characterised by a number of small towns, small villages and a widely dispersed rural population. The area has an aged and ageing population and has tended to haemorrhage young people. Comparative remoteness, few job opportunities and the loss of local services require a response to create cohesive and vibrant communities. The Councils and a number of local development initiatives have sought to address the challenge. An NPA, by dint of its specific aim to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area’s communities, would be able to focus on this issue, working with Scottish Enterprise, the Councils, Business Gateway and the local development initiatives. The planned new South of Scotland Enterprise Agency may offer new opportunities.

7.39 We envisage that the NPA would have a distinctive role in terms of identifying the community development opportunities associated with the land and the many redundant and underused buildings in the area. We consider that the NPA should work with the bodies mentioned above and with Community Councils to empower communities and facilitate community development with particular reference to the use of land and buildings.

Improved employment opportunities for young people

7.40 Galloway suffers from out-migration of young people because of the limited opportunities for employment. This contributes to the ageing of the population as young people move out and retired people move in. In raising the profile of the region a National Park could also increase pride in the area amongst residents including young people. A developing economy will also increase the range of job opportunities available to young people. The NPA could and should work with schools, colleges and universities, particularly on the Crichton Campus, to develop the appropriate skills to benefit from and contribute to the National Park.

Enhanced facilities of value to local residents

7.41 A Galloway NPA could help to improve the provision of infrastructure for visitors. The investment over time in the National Park, and in its gateway communities, would enhance visitor facilities such as car parks, footpaths, signs, interpretation and education facilities and small scale catering outlets. Whilst these facilities would be used most heavily during the tourist season, they would also be of value to local residents.
Health and wellbeing

7.42 It is increasingly recognised that access to greenspace and the countryside is beneficial to health and wellbeing. By improving access and creating new facilities for recreation, the National Park could thus contribute to enhanced health and wellbeing. Similarly the opportunities for volunteering in the National Park (e.g. undertaking maintenance or management work or acting as a voluntary ranger) could provide opportunities for exercise and social interaction with beneficial consequences. In the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park alone, volunteers contributed 14,200 hours of their time in 2015/16, with 99% reporting that they would recommend the activity to others and 77% that they had expanded their range of friendships as a result.

….And Fears

More controls

7.43 National Parks are often thought to imply more controls. The statistics, as summarised above, suggest that a larger percentage of planning applications in existing Scottish National Parks are approved than in our existing local planning authorities. It is apparent that NPAs, given their statutory obligation to promote sustainable development, focus on pre-application discussions to assist developers in creating developments that are truly sustainable and compatible with the Park's aims.

7.44 As we have also demonstrated, the National Parks Act is generally an enabling piece of legislation. It does not give NPAs any draconian powers. Indeed that act requires NPAs to “promote sustainable economic and social development.” National Parks are not anti-development.

Local involvement

7.45 People may fear the arrival of another organisation setting out policies, rules and regulations, a remote organisation over which local people have limited control. We would argue that a new NPA would be precisely the opposite. It would be a small, accessible body, situated in Galloway and controlled and directed by a Board having on it a majority of local people. It would bring plan- and policy-making closer to home for the people of Galloway...

House price inflation and affordable housing

7.46 It is sometimes suggested that National Park status is a major factor in raising house prices to levels which put them out of reach for many local people. In reality the evidence suggests that such house price inflation is a feature of most attractive rural areas and that it is accessibility from affluent urban centres, rather than designation, that is the crucial determinant. This is borne out by the fact that currently average house prices in Dumfries and Galloway, East and South Ayrshire are all significantly below the national average. Indeed, East Ayrshire has the lowest average house prices in Scotland.

Table 5: Average house prices January-March 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Average House Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries &amp; Galloway</td>
<td>£132,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Ayrshire</td>
<td>£107,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Ayrshire</td>
<td>£149,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>£162,374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Registers of Scotland: Quarterly House Price Statistics

7.47 National Park status for Galloway might lead to some increase in demand for housing, including second homes. This could push up average house prices somewhat, albeit from what overall is a low level. But it seems highly unlikely that the scale of additional exposure that we have contemplated in this paper would send them rocketing. Even if better-known, Galloway would remain geographically far removed from major centres of population and economic activity.

7.48 The key issue is ensuring the availability of affordable housing in all parts of the area. Many NPAs in the UK have taken an active role in providing affordable housing by placing local occupancy conditions on some newly built homes and by providing land for community housing schemes. We believe that a Galloway NPA could play a role in ensuring the provision of small numbers of affordable housing particularly in the remoter and smaller towns and villages. This could have a beneficial impact on these communities.
“We don’t want to become like the Lake District”

7.49 Indeed, we don’t! The tranquillity of Galloway is a valuable resource and we would not want to disturb that key aspect of its character. We have sought to demonstrate that Galloway could accommodate an increase in tourism - with consequential economic and social benefits - without changing its character. Galloway, given its comparative remoteness from major centres of population, is never likely to receive the number of visitors that go to the Lake District. Moreover, Galloway is a much larger area than the Lake District, with as a result greater opportunities to disperse visitors more widely. We would see it as a key role of the NPA to ensure that as many parts of the region as possible benefited from tourism, thereby protecting its existing hot-spots from any danger of over-use.

“We believe that a Galloway National Park could provide a new model for sustainable rural development, to the great benefit of south-west Scotland as a whole.”

8.1 Our aim is to develop a proposal for a National Park which is realistic, beneficial to Galloway and commands wide popular support. This document has set out our preliminary thinking and we now invite comment to help us to achieve this overall aim.

8.2 In accord with our charitable aims we will continue to research the concept of a Galloway National Park, to inform people of our findings and, through public engagement, develop our proposals.

8.4 We recognise, however, that as set out in section 2 a proposal for a National Park can only be brought forward by Scottish Ministers. As we have noted, their present view is that National Parks need careful planning and the support of the relevant local authorities. This report has set out some ideas relating to planning a Galloway National Park and we hope to gain the support of all the relevant local authorities. We also want to develop widespread support amongst individuals, interest groups and communities. We recognise that the Scottish Government does not see the designation of a Galloway National Park as a priority but would hope that it will review its position. We believe that a Galloway National Park could provide a new model for sustainable rural development, to the great benefit of south-west Scotland as a whole. We hope and believe that the people of Galloway will see a National Park as a priority and will press the Scottish Government to launch a detailed feasibility study. In the interim, we welcome questions, comments and suggestions arising from this discussion paper.