



**GALLOWAY  
NATIONAL  
PARK  
ASSOCIATION**

May 2019

**GALLOWAY NATIONAL PARK**

IT'S OUR TIME

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For more information on GNPA, see [www.gallowaynationalpark.org](http://www.gallowaynationalpark.org)  
GNPA is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with OSCR. Reg No SC047398.

## Foreword

We published “*A National Park in Galloway – a Discussion Paper*” in October 2017 to prompt a series of discussions around the proposal that Galloway should be considered as a National Park. In the intervening eighteen months we have had over 100 meetings throughout Galloway and beyond. Many comments and suggestions were made at these meetings and on social media as a result of which we organised a conference last November.

What has become very clear throughout all this process is that there is huge interest and overwhelming support for the idea. Encouraged by this support, the Association will now start to campaign for Galloway to become a National Park and this document sets out the arguments for this as clearly as we can. We are also happy to meet with any interested parties and continue the discussion.

Join us now as we take the case to the Scottish Parliament. Now is the time for us to speak up for Galloway.



**Dame Barbara Kelly**  
**President**  
**Galloway National Park Association**

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# Summary

The Galloway National Park Association was registered as a Scottish Charity in May 2017. The principal aim of the Association is to research the potential for a National Park in South West Scotland and to consider the possible costs and benefits.

The Association has 16 Trustees, 9 Patrons and over 250 subscribing members.

Trustees have undertaken research and the Association has also commissioned research leading to the publication of a Discussion Paper in October 2017 supported by a website and leaflets.

A major engagement process commenced in January 2018 and involved over 100 meetings. These included extended sessions with 20 Community Councils from Muirkirk and Dailly in the north to Drummole and the Isle of Whithorn in the south, some 12 specially arranged public events and meetings with a range of organisations and sectoral interests including local authorities and representatives of the farming, forestry and landowning communities.

Responses were sought *via* a questionnaire which was distributed at meetings and was also made available online on the GNPA website. Of the 430 respondents to the questionnaire 84% were in favour of a National Park.

The views of young people have been sought *via* a series of National Park related projects at local schools and an invitation to present their views at a major consultative conference, which attracted almost 300 delegates, in November 2018.

Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils have indicated their support in principle for a National Park.

Local MSPs, representing the three largest parties in the Scottish Parliament, have indicated their support for a National Park.

The Association has concluded that:

- ✓ The area has natural and cultural resources of national significance which merit designation as a National Park.
- ✓ The area has special environmental, economic and social needs which a National Park could help to address.
- ✓ A National Park could build on the work of the existing Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere in applying the principles of sustainable rural development and integrated land use, and exemplifying their benefits.
- ✓ South West Scotland has in recent decades experienced rapid and sustained land use change - perhaps more far-reaching than anywhere else in Britain. It now faces further such change. A National Park Authority could focus attention on this prospect and its potential implications, bringing together all stakeholders and seeking to develop a consensus on the way forward in line with the ambitions of the Scottish Government's Land Use Strategy.

- ✓ National Park status would raise the profile of the area and attract visitors, new residents and investment, thus strengthening the resilience of its communities and complementing the aims and activities of the new South of Scotland Enterprise Agency.
- ✓ A National Park Authority with a majority of local representatives and employing professional staff, based in the west of the region and focused on the issues relevant to such a deeply rural area, could assist local democracy, provide new jobs and contribute to the desired de-centralisation of power.
- ✓ A National Park Authority could give greater priority and resources to improving access to the countryside with benefits for health and wellbeing.
- ✓ A National Park could help better interpret and market Galloway's distinctive cultural heritage.
- ✓ The costs to the Scottish Government of funding the National Park would be offset by business growth and the associated rise in business rates, income tax and VAT.
- ✓ There is very significant local support for a National Park across the local authorities, local MSPs and local residents.

Accordingly the Association asks Scottish Ministers to commission a formal, publicly-led study into the feasibility of a Galloway National Park.

**“...the Association asks Scottish Ministers to commission a formal, publicly-led study into the feasibility of a Galloway National Park”**

# Introduction

1. This document sets out the case for creating a National Park in the part of South West Scotland traditionally known as Galloway. Historically this embraced a wider area than that of the two counties of Kirkcudbrightshire and Wigtownshire currently within the territory of Dumfries and Galloway Council. It ran from at least as far east as the Nith and to the north included much or all of the Carrick portion of Ayrshire. This more expansive definition would be entirely appropriate to a National Park just as valuable for its cultural as for its natural heritage interest.
2. The case for such a Galloway National Park is being put forward by the Galloway National Park Association (GNPA). This is a small charitable organisation, formed by a group of local residents brought together by their love of the area and concern for its long-term well-being. In preparing it, GNPA has canvassed opinion widely across the region, seeking insights, suggestions and feedback from local authorities, public bodies and representatives of community and sectoral interests, as well as from the public at large. It has been heartened – surprised even – by the degree of interest expressed in the possibility of a National Park and the widespread enthusiasm that the idea has aroused. This manifested itself strongly at the conference that GNPA organised in November 2018, which was attended by almost three hundred people.
3. In the light of this response, GNPA is convinced that the next step should be for Scottish Ministers to commission a thorough-going feasibility study which would provide the basis for a consultation of the kind prescribed in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. Such an exercise would, it believes, confirm the extent of support for the concept of a National Park reported in this document and provide the basis needed for detailed proposals to the Scottish Parliament



on matters such as boundaries, powers and governance arrangements. It should also enable ministers to make more precise estimates than has hitherto been possible of the likely financial costs and economic benefits of such an initiative.

4. GNPA would like to emphasise that it does not regard a Galloway National Park as a magic solution to all the challenges that the region faces. It warmly welcomes other steps that are being taken to improve its fortunes, notably Borderlands and the establishment of the proposed South of Scotland Enterprise Agency. Borderlands will provide a much needed boost for the area's infrastructure in the short term. A National Park of the kind that it envisages is entirely compatible with – and indeed complementary to – these. A National Park would, however, contribute to the overall strategy in both the short and longer term a unique component focused upon the key assets of the south westerly corner of the region – its natural and cultural heritage – and would be designed specifically to help its people and businesses look after and make the very best of these to the long-term benefit of its communities.

**“GNPA  
welcomes  
Borderlands  
and...the  
proposed South  
of Scotland  
Enterprise  
Agency”**

5. The remainder of this document, and its accompanying appendices and documents, sets out this case more fully. It seeks to demonstrate that the designation of Galloway as Scotland's third National Park:

- ✓ is amply justified by the region's distinctive identity and wealth of natural and cultural heritage interest,
- ✓ would make a logical and cost-effective contribution to an overall strategy for securing the future environmental, social and economic well-being of South West Scotland,
- ✓ would, on the evidence of the extensive public engagement exercise undertaken by GNPA over the past year, be welcomed by communities, businesses and individuals across the region,
- ✓ is supported by the three local authorities and by MSPs representing the region from across the political spectrum.

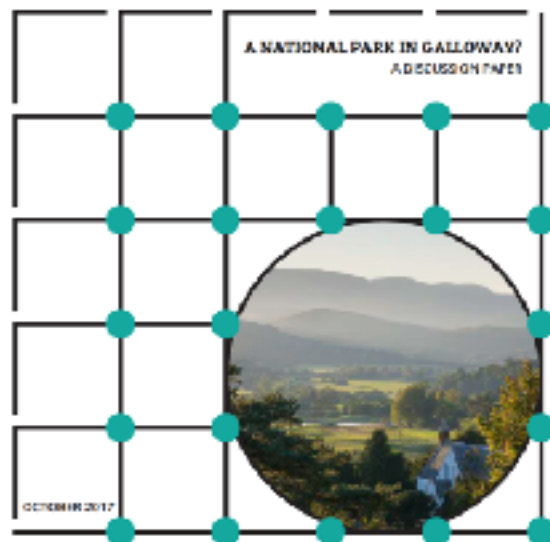
6. In the light of these findings GNPA urges Scottish Ministers to commission a feasibility study into the nature and extent of a potential Galloway National Park.

# Galloway National Park Association

7. The GNPA is a small charitable body established in 2017 and recognised by OSCR (Reg No SC047398). It is run by volunteers based in the region and funded entirely by membership subscriptions and by donations, predominantly from private sources. Its membership currently stands at over 250.

8. Over the two years of its existence to date GNPA has researched experience in setting up and running the two existing Scottish National Parks and others across the UK, and its relevance to the circumstances of, and challenges facing, South West Scotland. It has also investigated the current state of the society and the economy of the region, and the prospects for these, with a view to assess how these might be affected by the creation of a National Park.

9. Based upon this work, GNPA produced a discussion paper “A National Park in Galloway?”, describing the key features of Scottish National Parks and setting out for consideration thoughts about the way in which a Galloway National Park might operate and the benefits (and possible disbenefits) that it might bring to the region. With the help of this booklet and using leaflets and presentations, GNPA engaged widely across the region, both geographically and sectorally, to gauge reaction to the ideas and to the possibility of a National Park. The arguments that it presented are summarised in the following section.



## Objects of GNPA

- \* To promote the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural assets of the area for public benefit
- \* To promote, undertake and publish research into issues affecting conservation and enjoyment of the natural and cultural heritage of the area and to identify how this may be furthered through the designation of a National Park
- \* To advance public education in and understanding of how a National Park could contribute to improving health and wellbeing through the enjoyment, understanding or enhancement of the area's natural and cultural assets



# Is a Galloway National Park Justified?

10. The proposition and assessment that GNPA put forward for scrutiny and comment were both grounded firmly in Scotland's distinctive National Parks legislation, as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. It therefore sought in the first instance to examine how far Galloway met the key tests for National Park status laid down in that Act, namely that: –

- (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 its special needs and would be the best means of ensuring that National Park aims are collectively achieved in a co-ordinated way.

In doing so, those representing GNPA stressed, particularly in relation to the third, “special needs” test, that the statutory aims of Scottish National Parks included not only the conservation and recreational objectives traditionally associated with National Parks the world over but also the sustainable use of natural resources and the sustainable economic and social development of local communities.

## Natural and cultural heritage qualities

### Natural heritage.

11. Within a relatively small area Galloway contains a remarkable diversity of landscapes and wildlife habitats. These range from a mountainous core, comprising the wildest hill country in southern Scotland, through extensively afforested moorland and foothills, to green, hummocky pastures patterned by drystone dykes and threaded by secretive, wooded river valleys, finally terminating in an extraordinarily varied coastline of muddy inlets, sandy bays and bold, rocky headlands. In the round and together with the region's characteristic white-painted farmsteads, neat peaceful villages and bustling, characterful small towns, these landscapes constitute a genuine “Scotland in miniature”. They also encompass many of the habitats and species for which the country is renowned, from blanket bogs to coastal sand dunes, and birds of prey such as golden eagles and hen harriers to over-wintering wildfowl. The national and international significance of these resources is reflected in the presence within the region of the UNESCO-accredited Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve, the UK's first gold-rated Dark Skies Park, three of lowland



Scotland's five National Scenic Areas and numerous Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for animals and habitats, and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

12. Many of these interests, and of course others of a more strictly aquatic nature, extend well beyond the land into the marine environment. Indeed the Solway Firth emerged as a strong candidate for designation as a Coastal and Marine National Park in the assessment carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage in 2005/06. As a result, GNPA considered with some care whether to renew the idea of a National Park with a seaward element – an idea that enjoys the support of the Marine Conservation Society. It eventually decided, however, that though the ecological case for doing so was very strong, the practical complications that the move would introduce were too great, especially at a time when other initiatives to improve the management of Scotland's seas were in hand. It thus concluded that the possibility should be noted as very attractive in principle, and in many ways a logical development of any National Park established in the region, but not one to be pursued at this juncture. A Galloway National Park would of course work closely with a Marine Planning Partnership when the Solway Marine Plan is being prepared in terms of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010

### **Cultural Heritage**

13. As to cultural heritage, Galloway's relatively benign climate and easy accessibility by sea is reflected in a long history of human occupation, with continuing evidence of almost every phase, from standing stones and "cup and ring" markings to medieval abbeys, tower houses, Covenanters' graves and planned villages. Equally notable is its literary and artistic heritage, embracing Burns, Crocket and Buchan on the one hand and the Glasgow Boys, John Maxwell, Archie Sutter Watt and Andy Goldsworthy on the other. All bear witness to the endless fascination exerted by this alluring corner of Scotland.



## Recreational Value and Potential

14. The potential for enjoyment offered by this vast array of interests is self-evident and is already beginning to be exploited. Initiatives such as the 7stanes mountain biking trails at Dalbeattie and Kirroughtree, the Dark Skies Observatory at Craigmengillan, the Wigtown Book Town and Festival, and the Kirkcudbright Galleries are examples of what can be achieved. So far, however, the surface has barely been scratched and a quick inventory of the opportunities shows how much more could be made of the region's recreational and tourism resources, given sustained effort to promote them and to provide and maintain the appropriate infrastructure.

## Distinctive character and coherent identity

15. If the region passes muster in terms of specific qualities and features, still more conclusively does it pass the test of distinctive character and coherent identity. Its unquestionable uniqueness has its physical origins in the geology associated with the closure of the Iapetus Ocean and the collision of two formerly separate land masses to form what is now the island of Britain. In much more recent times successive periods of glaciation have both moulded the landforms of the Southern Uplands and given rise on lower ground to the extensive drumlin fields so characteristic of Galloway. Add to this a history involving the prevalence at different times of several differing languages and political allegiances, a central role in the coming of Christianity to Scotland and in the country's subsequent religious history, the greatest loss of population of any part of Scotland at the time of the 'clearances', and its multitude of artistic and literary associations and Galloway can unquestionably claim to be a "land apart".

## Special needs

16. Despite its wealth of natural and cultural heritage resources, the rural south western corner of Scotland undoubtedly faces some serious challenges. Many of these arise from its remoteness from major centres of population and contemporary economic activity and a continuing heavy reliance on the primary industries of farming, forestry and fishing (together these account for 28% of businesses in Dumfries and Galloway, as compared to 9% in Scotland as a whole). These are industries where technological advances are steadily reducing employment opportunities, with agriculture for example now providing only 2% of jobs in Dumfries and Galloway. Some of these activities are also severely exposed to the uncertainties arising from Brexit and indeed possibly to wider social trends, such as a shift towards more plant-based diets. This concerning prospect is



exacerbated by the recent decline in public sector employment, on which Galloway (like most rural areas) had become increasingly dependent for employment and particularly for relatively highly skilled, well-paid jobs.

### **Demographic trends.**

17. The demographic implications of this scenario are alarming. Latest projections show the population of the Dumfries and Galloway Council area declining by 6.1% by 2037. Over roughly the same period the working age population is forecast to fall by 20%, whilst the number of over-65s would increase by over a third. The continued draining away of young people implicit in these projections could only be bad for the vigour of local society and raises the prospect of a community struggling to service its own long-term needs.

### **Economic performance.**

18. This worrying picture is confirmed by the economic data, which show the Dumfries and Galloway Council area as having the lowest average full-time working wage in Scotland and a Gross Value Added (GVA) per head that at £18,720 was in 2017 over 20% below the comparable Scottish figure. Over 30% of employees in the same area earn below the Living Wage – more than 50% more than in the country as a whole. Meanwhile, the business start-up rate, at 31 per 10,000 adults, is the lowest in Scotland.

### **Socio-economic needs.**

19. Faced with this depressing situation and still worse outlook, the region – and especially its more rural south western extremities, in both Dumfries and Galloway and South and East Ayrshire – clearly requires a boost. It urgently needs to reverse current demographic trends and to retain and attract more people of working age. It also needs to stimulate the demand and secure the investment required to create more jobs and especially more good quality, reasonably well-paid ones. It needs to enhance its capacity to retain and attract dynamic and talented individuals. And as an overwhelmingly rural area it needs to focus attention on, and think hard about, future land use.

**“..needs to reverse current demographic trends and to retain and attract more people of working age”**

### **Land Use**

20. South West Scotland has over the past century seen probably the most far-reaching changes in land use of any part of Britain, mainly through the extensive tree planting of its uplands. With the prospect of further, possibly very sharp, shifts in the balance of economic advantage amongst different land uses, substantial additional change is very much on the cards. This could have major social as well as environmental impacts. At the same time the increasing diversification of the rural economy into activities which, though often not directly dependent on the use of land, rely heavily on the quality of the surroundings in

which they take place, makes it all the more vital to actively anticipate, plan for and guide change and to strive so far as possible to reconcile potentially conflicting aspirations.

### **The way forward.**

21. The issues outlined above have come very much to the fore in the past few years and have been hotly debated, not least in the context of climate change and in the preparations for Brexit and for the proposed South of Scotland Enterprise Agency. They featured strongly in GNPA's own dialogue with communities and stakeholders. The messages coming back as to what the region needs to help it to overcome these challenges were notably consistent. The shared perception is that above all else Galloway needs a higher public profile: to be "put on the map" as a place to live, work and visit. This is partly, but by no means exclusively, about increasing awareness of it as a tourist destination – of persuading visitors to Scotland to "turn left at Gretna" – or indeed to head south rather than north from the central belt. This in itself would bring economic benefit. Even more, it is about stimulating appreciation of it as a place offering an alluring combination of economic opportunity and quality of life: a place in the broadest sense of the term to "make a good living".



22. Central to this goal, of course, is the creation of better and more diverse employment opportunities, especially for young people. The discussions facilitated by GNPA underlined in this connection the crucial importance of communications infrastructure, particularly mobile and broadband services, as well as road and rail improvements. They also highlighted a range of other needs, including:

- ✓ enabling the continued development of the primary sector (agriculture, forestry and fishing) and fostering the adding of value locally to its initial outputs;
- ✓ more active and sustained efforts to promote the area's attractions as a tourist destination and to provide the infrastructure and services required to make the most of these;
- ✓ a public body, with a majority of local representatives, capable of maintaining and building upon the good work of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire

Biosphere and dedicated to conserving, and helping local people and businesses to secure long-term, sustainable benefit from, the region's bountiful natural and cultural heritage assets;

- ✓ a carefully designed mechanism capable of facilitating inclusive discussion about the competing demands being placed upon the region's land and other natural resources, with a view to generating the widest attainable consensus as to how these can best be harmonised and integrated;
- ✓ a planning regime geared to reconciling the need for development, especially in the field of renewable energy, with respect for the region's rich natural and cultural heritage.

#### **A vision and plan of action.**

23. The upshot of such activity would be a vision for the region's future achieved through a pooling of knowledge, insight and ambition across the private, public and third sectors and grounded in a full appreciation and understanding of its natural and cultural assets, and a thorough assessment of its strengths and weaknesses as a place to live and do business. Equally important would be a co-ordinated programme of action designed to make a reality of this vision.

**“...a vision for the region's  
future.... a co-ordinated  
programme of action designed to  
make a reality of this vision”**

## What could a National Park do for Galloway?

24. Galloway has long hidden its light under a bushel. Put another way, its predominantly quiet delights have often been overshadowed by those of the more dramatic and widely feted landscapes of the Highlands and Islands. Yet both a systematic inventory of its natural and cultural assets and the personal testimony of those fortunate enough to know it can leave little doubt as to the outstanding quality of its countryside and its built and artistic heritage. In any other country it would almost certainly have long enjoyed the recognition that it deserves. Indeed it was only the imminence of the designation of most of upland Galloway as a National Forest Park that prevented the Ramsay Committee from recommending it as a National Park in 1945. More recently it has been identified as a worthy candidate for National Park status in the “Unfinished Business” report published in 2013 by the Scottish Campaign for National Parks and the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland.

**“Galloway  
needs ..a strongly  
positive image as  
a place to live,  
work and visit”**

25. The case for designation rests equally heavily, and at least as compellingly, on the appropriateness of a National Park as a means of meeting the region’s “special needs”. As outlined above, these arise from both its geography and physical nature and its current socio-economic characteristics. As a relatively remote rural area, it needs to trade on its natural and cultural resources. To do so effectively, especially in a modern post-industrial economy, it needs to establish for itself a strongly positive image as a place to live, work and visit.

### **The National Park brand as a promotional tool.**

26. In that regard there is no more enticing brand on which to base its promotion than that of the National Park. This is recognised world-wide as a guarantee of excellence and signifier of something special. In the UK context it is also an image associated with a dynamic, living, working countryside – neither an area reserved solely for nature nor a place where time stands still. The goal is rather to exemplify how people and nature can co-exist harmoniously and to that end to foresee and manage change in a manner that maintains the overall quality of the environment by combining the best of the old with the best of the new. In that respect National Parks’ guiding philosophy aligns completely with that of the existing Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere. This has similar aspirations and as an international designation enjoys considerable prestige amongst those in the know – but none of the popular recognition.

## **An exemplar of genuinely sustainable development.**

27. Just as fundamental to Scottish National Parks as their aim of integrating conservation, enjoyment and socio-economic advancement is their catalytic style and commitment to empowering local communities; their role in seeding ideas and facilitating co-ordinating action. This is where the Park Plan, prepared in partnership under the leadership of the National Park Authority, is critical. With its necessary focus on land use as the crucial determinant of the future environment, it represents exactly the sort of tool required to help the people of a rural area such as Galloway to shape their future destiny. At a time when the

direction of the forces and policies that will determine the options open to them is more uncertain than for many years, a planning process of this kind, designed to give them a say in specifying goals and setting priorities, is precisely what they need. So too is the commitment from the many participating organisations to pursue the agenda identified that comes with such a plan.



28. The National Park Authority itself could play a major role in delivering these aspirations by:

- ✓ promoting the area both as a tourist destination and as a place to live and work,
- ✓ creating the physical infrastructure required to support increased leisure activity, including the physical exercise and social interaction so badly needed as an aid to improved well-being by residents and visitors alike,
- ✓ identifying current and future business opportunities and the skills needed to exploit them, and sharing this knowledge with other organisations with responsibilities for assisting potential beneficiaries,
- ✓ attracting into the area additional project funding from sources ranging from the National Lottery to commercial sponsorship and “visitor payback” schemes,
- ✓ itself offering high quality, relatively secure jobs within rural communities which have in the recent past seen many such jobs, whether in the public sector or in private enterprises such as banks, drastically reduced in number and often relocated to major regional centres.

## **Relationship with the proposed South of Scotland Enterprise Agency.**

29. A Galloway National Park with a brief on these lines would complement and reinforce the work of the proposed South of Scotland Enterprise Agency. The remit of the latter naturally and properly focuses on economic regeneration, with a welcome recognition that in a rural area such as southern Scotland economic fortunes are inextricably bound up with social vigour and resilience. The proposals for it acknowledge that its land and natural resources are key assets on which many of its existing businesses rely and which have the potential to support many more. This point was forcefully underlined in responses to the





consultation paper, which identified the region's history and natural and cultural heritage, and their contribution to its high quality of life, as three of its eight principal economic strengths. The proposals do not foresee a specific role for the Agency in looking after and making the most of these resources, nor for identifying and developing the specific skills and community capacity required to exploit them.

30. This is precisely the role that a National Park could play in promoting and facilitating environmentally sustainable development of the sort for which respondents to the consultation called. Their comments emphasised the need to diversify the economy, to support smaller towns and villages as well as the larger urban centres, to strengthen tourism, to reduce the seasonality of employment and to create facilities for, and invest in, young people. To this end they saw it as crucial to market the region more strongly, to apply the principles of the Scottish Government's Land Use Strategy, and to foster cooperation across sectors such as farming and forestry and tourism, food and drink and the arts. They also stressed the need to develop a shared long-term vision to provide the basis for such collaboration.

31. It would be hard to characterise more accurately the mission of a National Park of the type that the GNPA advocates. Nor would a fruitful relationship between the new Enterprise Agency and a Galloway National Park Authority be in any way unprecedented: Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Cairngorms National Park already work together very successfully in just such a manner.

### **Socio-economic benefits.**

32. GNPA has not attempted to quantify in any detail the social and economic benefits that a Galloway National Park might bring. International experience

does, however, suggest that in financial terms the multiplier effect could well be of the order of ten times the cost of running the Park. If tourist numbers alone could be boosted by 10 - 25% (hardly an over-ambitious or unrealistic goal), the economy could be expected to gain by £30m - £70m a year in the short term. This might create or support in the region of 700 - 1,400 jobs.

33. The benefits to the economy more widely are even harder to estimate. There is evidence from other National Parks (for example the Cairngorms) that they are capable of attracting footloose businesses and – also importantly – increasing

the area’s attractiveness to skilled professionals in fields such as medicine and teaching. In Galloway, with its relatively sparse population and preponderance of small and part-time businesses (around three quarters employ fewer than 5 people), even small-scale enterprises and small numbers of additional jobs would be most welcome. Indeed in many communities they would be the most appropriate means of reinforcing both the economy and the social fabric; capable, for instance, of justifying the retention of communal facilities such as the primary school. Just as helpful would be assistance in recruiting to hard-to-fill posts

in sectors such as health and education, where in a competitive market, employers are increasingly having to highlight attractions beyond those inherent in the job itself. As with jobs in tourism, these benefits would not be confined to the Park area. Communities in close proximity to it, and especially those acting as “gateways”, have also been shown to gain substantially.

**“..the multiplier effect could well be of the order of ten times the cost of running the Park”**

### **Operating costs.**

34. The cost of running a Galloway National Park would of course depend very much on its precise extent, powers and *modus operandi*; all matters that GNPA has explored but on which it has not attempted to reach definitive conclusions. It believes, however, that even an extensive National Park could probably be administered for no more, and possibly less, than the current £5m pa cost of running the Cairngorms National Park, the largest in Britain. Bearing in mind that some functions (certainly in relation to access and very probably in some other fields) would be transferred from existing local authorities, the net additional cost would be even less than this.

### **Offsetting revenues.**

35. GNPA’s necessarily broad brush calculations suggest that even taking a narrow budgetary view of the financial equation, a National Park capable of stimulating economic activity to the modest extent envisaged above could within a few years be expected to generate extra tax revenues sufficient to more than cover its operating costs. The basis for this claim is set out in Appendix 1 to this document. The main source of the additional revenue would be increased VAT receipts, as a result of the expected growth in tourism and the wider business economy. The 700 - 1,400 extra jobs generated by this increased activity (see paragraph 28 above) would also boost tax revenue. In an economy like

Galloway's this effect might even be accentuated, owing to the fact that many existing businesses fall below the VAT threshold (self-employment is double the national rate) and many jobs are part-time. In so far as heightened activity carried businesses over the VAT threshold and individuals beyond (or further beyond) their personal allowances, it would raise tax revenues disproportionately. Although this income stream would inevitably take a little time to build up, it seems to GNPA to be reasonable to anticipate increased tax revenue of £5m - £12m a year.

36. There should also, of course, be some savings to the public purse. These would arise across many programmes, from economic development and tourism to health and wellbeing. As with the increased tax revenues, not all of these would accrue to the Scottish Government. It is worth pointing out that, as well as boosting visitor numbers to Scotland overall, attracting more tourists to South West Scotland might help to alleviate pressure on some of the areas further north that are currently at or approaching saturation point. This would not only help to safeguard the quality and long-term reputation of these current hotspots but also reduce the need to invest significant sums in measures designed to cope with the intensity of demand placed upon them.

37. Provided that this contribution to the nation's coffers is recognised and reflected in the allocation of additional funds to the relevant departmental budgets the establishment of a new National Park in Galloway should not be seen as being at the expense of other Government programmes. On the contrary, it should in GNPA's view be regarded as an investment not just in the country's environment, with benefits to its citizens both locally and nationally, but in its economic future.

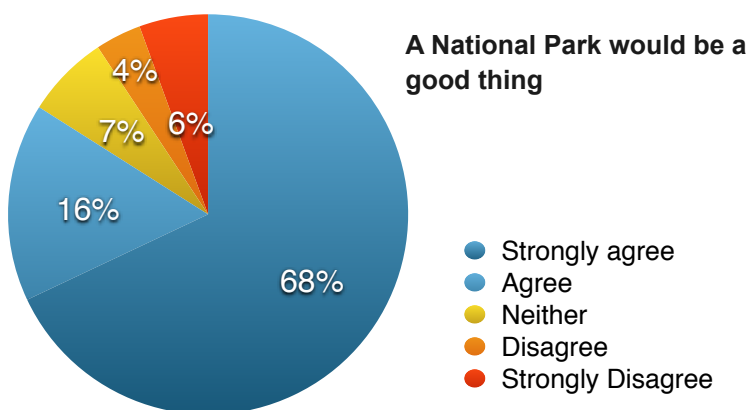
**“..attracting more tourists to south west Scotland might help to alleviate pressure on some of the areas further north”**

# Community Feedback

## Overall response

38. As explained earlier, GNPA sought from the outset to engage widely with the public and relevant stakeholder interests across the region, from Dumfries in the east to Stranraer in the west, and Muirkirk in the north to Drummole in the south. Over a thousand people in all attended meetings of various kinds, which included 20 events hosted by community councils, 12 public meetings convened by GNPA itself and over 20 presentations given in response to requests from other organisations (see Appendix 2 for details). In a proactive effort to involve the younger generation, GNPA representatives worked with three secondary schools and maintained an active social media presence on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

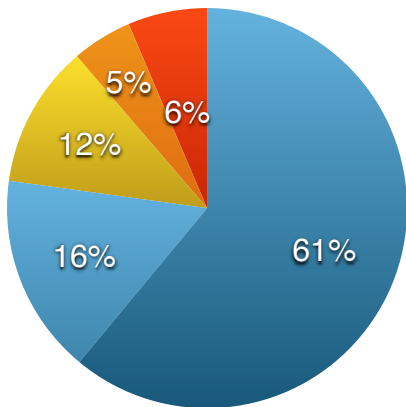
39. GNPA recorded and reflected upon the points raised in all these forums. It also sought feedback through a survey questionnaire. This was distributed in hard copy at community events and public meetings and was also available to complete online through GNPA's website. Over 430 completed forms were returned and analysed. They revealed a very high level of support for a National



Park in Galloway, with over 84% of respondents agreeing that it would be a good thing, 68% strongly so. Interestingly, the proportion agreeing that a National Park would be good for people living and working in the area, at 83%, was even higher than the proportion who considered that it would be good for the environment (79%)

40. As to the more detailed design and operation of any National Park, responses revealed a strong desire to be within it, with 75% (77% of those based in Galloway) expressing a wish for their area to be included. Particularly notable in this regard was the fact that opinion in the far west of the region, especially in the Rhins of Galloway, was overwhelmingly in favour of inclusion, despite the assessment in GNPA's discussion paper that this area's natural and cultural heritage credentials were slightly weaker than those of areas further to the east. This case was moreover supported even by some commentators based elsewhere, primarily on the grounds of the ornithological and botanical interest of the peninsula.

41. A similar desire for inclusion was voiced in comments from the northern fringes of the wide area (based largely but not entirely on the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere) considered in the discussion paper as a potential National Park. These included communities and locations within the Biosphere but assessed by GNPA as less appropriate to a National Park. Amongst them



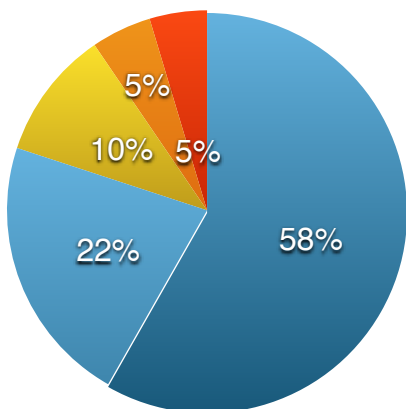
**I want my area to be in Galloway National Park**  
(Galloway responses only)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

were communities in upper Nithsdale and parts of South and East Ayrshire, although events held in some of these places revealed an acceptance that their interests might best be served by “gateway” status as settlements outwith a National Park but benefiting from proximity to it.

### Planning and development

42. Unsurprisingly, comments relating to the implications of a National Park for planning and development featured prominently in the feedback from community and other sources. These revealed that in Galloway, as in other rural areas, there is widespread concern about the limited supply of housing suitable for local needs. Several people were worried that the designation of a National Park might lead to an increase in house prices to levels beyond the reach of some members of the local community. When these anxieties were articulated at public meetings, GNPA representatives pointed out that such problems were experienced across all attractive rural areas and tended to be most acute in



**A National Park should have a role to play in the future planning of development**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

those readily accessible to major urban centres; a situation far removed from Galloway. They also stressed that National Park Authorities elsewhere in Scotland and the UK were very alive to these issues and were in various ways working to overcome the difficulties posed. More generally in relation to planning, they pointed out that the success rate for

applications in National Parks, both in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK, was actually higher than the local authority average. This was in large part due to the effort that they put into pre-application discussions with would-be developers.

43. In the light of these and other development-related questions raised, it was striking to find that over 80% of the respondents to the questionnaire agreed that a Galloway National Park should have a role in the future planning of development, with almost 60% agreeing strongly with this proposition. The survey did not attempt to establish the precise nature of the part that people felt that a Park Authority should play, although the Discussion Paper (see Bibliography) itself had spelt out the various options available, distinguishing clearly between the comprehensive planning powers exercised by the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the much more limited role in

determining individual planning applications of its Cairngorms counterpart. What was very apparent from the comments made at meetings, however, was that what most people were seeking was an accessible, responsive planning service, applying policies designed for local circumstances and committed to helping them to formulate proposals that would secure approval without protracted to-ing and fro-ing.

### Implications for land use

44. Beyond these development-related matters, there were two main reservations expressed about the idea of a National Park. The first was a perceived inability to tackle what were seen as some of the region's most pressing problems, such as shortcomings in its transport and communications infrastructure and social care provision. Second there was a generalised unease about the impact that it might have upon the operation of the area's primary land use industries, notably agriculture and forestry. The latter misgivings were, however, matched by a desire frequently and strongly voiced at community meetings for those not directly involved in these sectors to have more contact with them and greater influence over the direction of their future development. Encouragingly, there was some recognition amongst leaders in both industries that in this respect wider and more active dialogue was now required. There was also an acknowledgement in all quarters that, rightly constituted and led, a National Park could play a valuable role in facilitating this and in promoting as wide as possible a consensus about the future use of the region's land and other natural resources.

### Young people

45. An especially heartening aspect of the feedback received was the very positive response of young people. This was reflected in the presentations given

by secondary school pupils at the November conference. These articulated powerfully not only their wish to find ways of staying and making a living in a place that they clearly loved but also that a National Park dedicated to making sustainable use of the very features that made the area so special could help them to do so. Importantly, this view was not the product of naive or ill-informed exuberance: several of those taking it, especially those from farming backgrounds, had initially been sceptical of, and even hostile to, the proposition. Information about the purposes and operation of Scottish National Parks had, however, overcome these initial misgivings and convinced

**“..reservations expressed about shortcomings in transport and communications ...and impact on primary land use”**



them of the opportunities inherent in the wider recognition of the qualities that they already held dear. This in itself bore testimony to the potential of a National Park to instil in its inhabitants the pride and confidence so central to longer-term economic and social success.



# Political Support

## Local Authorities

46. GNPA was encouraged at the outset by the open-minded and generally positive attitude towards the possibility of a National Park adopted by the three local authorities in the region: Dumfries and Galloway Council, South Ayrshire Council and East Ayrshire Council. All three had already committed themselves to supporting the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, which as noted earlier has very similar objectives and a philosophy, grounded in the pursuit of genuinely sustainable development, identical to that envisaged for a “Galloway National Park”. All were enthusiastically supportive of GNPA’s efforts to engage the widest possible public audience in a debate about the pros and cons of a potential National Park and took a close interest in the progress and results of the exercise.

47. As the local authority with the most extensive geographical stake, Dumfries and Galloway Council had already committed itself in its 2017-22 Council Plan to “supporting the campaign to establish a Galloway National Park, consulting with the local community and stakeholders to develop the right model for the area”. Following the widespread public support reported and confirmed at the

conference organised by GNPA on 12 November 2018, the Council reiterated its support for the proposal in letters dated 3 December to the GNPA Chairman, Dame Barbara Kelly, and to Roseanna Cunningham, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform. In the former, the Chairman of the Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Committee, reaffirmed that the Council backed “the principle of establishing a National Park”. In the second he did likewise and called upon Ministers to clarify the Scottish Government’s position and to set out the processes and timeline necessary to create such a Park.

**“..reaffirmed that the Council backed “the principle of establishing a National Park”.**

48. Whilst the existing Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, with its emphasis on river catchments as a defining feature, embraces substantial tracts of both South and East Ayrshire, none of the options for a National Park set out in the GNPA’s discussion paper encompasses anything like as high a proportion of their authorities’ territories or populations as they do of Dumfries and Galloway Council’s. Both have nonetheless signalled sympathy for GNPA’s objectives in exploring the concept of a Galloway National Park and the degree of community support for it. South Ayrshire has affirmed this support in the form of a financial contribution towards the cost of the November conference and the presentation to Scottish Ministers of a case for a formal, Scottish Government-initiated consultation on the proposition. The East Ayrshire Council Cabinet, for its part, agreed on 7 November to “support, in principle, the campaign for a Galloway



National Park”. This stance was reported formally to the GNPA conference the following week by the Council’s Head of Economic Development and Planning.

49. In summary, therefore, all three local authorities that would be directly affected by a Galloway National Park are keen to seek Scottish Government support for the initiative.

### **Members of the Scottish Parliament**

50. The region’s MSPs have been equally supportive. The constituency MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries, Finlay Carson, has followed in the footsteps of his predecessor, Sir Alex Fergusson, in fervently advocating the proposition and making it a key component of his electoral platform. As regional MSPs, both Emma Harper and Colin Smyth have also made known their support for the cause, which the latter also championed in his previous role as an elected member of Dumfries and Galloway Council. There is therefore clear cross-party backing at Holyrood for further, more detailed examination of the form that a Galloway National Park might take.



## Conclusion

51. GNPA has, it believes, investigated the case for a potential Galloway National Park as thoroughly and systematically as was feasible for an unstaffed voluntary organisation. In particular it has engaged widely and openly with communities and stakeholders across the whole area lying within the historic boundaries of the region. By doing so it is satisfied that it has not only considered how far Galloway meets the criteria for designation as a National Park laid down in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 but those relating to community and political support adopted by Scottish Ministers in their statements on the potential for further National Parks in the country.

52. GNPA has not attempted to produce a detailed blueprint for a National Park, with proposals on detailed matters such as precise boundaries, powers and governance arrangements. In its view recommendations on such issues would more appropriately come from a public body with the competence and capacity to investigate and consult upon them more fully. On the basis of the work that it has done GNPA is, however, convinced that it has:

- ✓ shown that the region possesses natural and cultural heritage resources of outstanding national importance, and a distinctive character and coherent identity,
- ✓ established that the conservation of these resources, and the encouragement and facilitation of their sustainable use, is crucial to the future social and economic well-being of South West Scotland,
- ✓ demonstrated thereby that the designation of a National Park in the region is warranted by its natural and cultural heritage attributes and is the best way of meeting its special needs,
- ✓ shown that a National Park would help to attain the Scottish Government's broader ambitions for the future of southern Scotland and complement other initiatives geared to this end, such as the proposed South of Scotland Enterprise Agency,
- ✓ highlighted the particular appropriateness and value in a south west Scotland context of a body with a focus on land use and the powers and resources to help communities and other relevant stakeholders to generate and implement a shared strategic vision for its future evolution,
- ✓ demonstrated that National Park status would raise the profile of the area and contribute both directly and indirectly to its economic and social development and future prosperity,
- ✓ reassured residents of the area that a National Park of the proactive, facilitating kind envisaged would not constitute a block to developments appropriate to it and convinced them that to be effective it should have a formal role in the planning process,
- ✓ revealed widespread public and political support for a "Galloway National Park",

53. GNPA now asks Scottish Ministers to commission a publicly-led study into the feasibility of a Galloway National Park which could in future provide the basis for a proposal to the Scottish Parliament to designate such a Park.

**“GNPA has, it believes, investigated the case for a potential Galloway National Park as thoroughly and systematically as was feasible for an unstaffed voluntary organisation”**



## Appendix 1 Economic Benefit to Government

Tourism in Dumfries and Galloway was valued in excess of £320m per annum in 2016. A National Park would be expected to raise the value of tourism by 10 – 25% and possibly by much more than this with time suggesting £32m to £70m of increased turnover in the Park area and its immediate surroundings. UK Tourism Alliance figures indicate that 85% of this turnover would be within the scope of VAT.

A National Park is likely to cost in the region of £3m to £6m per annum in direct costs depending upon the range of functions it adopts and, to a lesser extent, the scale of the park.

From the perspective of the Scottish Government the direct returns are in the form of increased business rates and more importantly income tax payments and VAT returns. The value of these direct returns to Scottish Government based on these figures would range from £3.7m to £7.8m per annum and would easily exceed the direct costs of the central grant.

These calculations are based on the conservative estimate of creating 700 – 1,400 F.T.E. jobs at average pay rates for the Dumfries and Galloway (amongst the lowest in Scotland). By way of comparison, over 7,100 people are currently employed in tourism in the region.

The economic benefit calculations are likely to underestimate the full value as employment characteristics of the potential Galloway National Park are currently characterised by a smaller proportion of full-time roles where tax take is maximised and lower unemployment where tax take is minimal (both almost ¼ less than Scotland as a whole).

The potential Galloway National Park area has over 1,000 more employees in part-time

roles than the Scottish average would suggest. Increasing hours worked by part-time employees who have already used up much of their personal allowance increases the tax revenue over and above the amounts calculated here by as much as an additional £1.6m to £3.8m per annum.

The potential Galloway National Park area has double the number of self-employed people (but only 50% more registered for VAT compared to Scotland as a whole). Increasing the scale of business of the self-employed to bring them within the scope of VAT to a level seen elsewhere in Scotland would generate an additional £0.3m to £0.6m per annum.

The overall direct financial return to the Scottish Government is therefore likely to be in the range of £5.6m to £12.2m per annum. Although dependent upon the size of the Park, the general trend is that the larger the Park the greater the economic benefits to the local economy and to the Scottish Government. Those within the potential Galloway National Park but outside its heartland are more likely to be unemployed or in part-time employment, again magnifying the gains.

National Park designation is shown from long established UK parks to attract others with the potential to move to the area, further adding to the GVA of the potential Galloway National Park.

There are also a number of significant indirect financial benefits to Scottish Government that are harder to quantify but include reduced unemployment and welfare costs. Less directly, the shift to a more active and outdoor economy can have major and well documented benefits to health for local residents and the wider population of Scottish visitors with associated financial savings. With NHS Scotland estimating that 'outdoor' prescriptions could save £80m a year from the mental health budget alone then these indirect benefits are likely to be significant.

## Appendix 2. Meetings held or attended by GNPA

### Community Council Presentations (20)

New Galloway & Kells CC  
Colmonell & Lendalfoot CC  
Ballantrae CC  
Borgue CC  
Port William CC  
Dalry CC  
Dailly CC  
Kirkmaiden CC  
Isle of Whithorn CC  
Tynron CC  
Barrhill CC  
Muirkirk CC  
Crossmichael CC  
Kirkmahoe CC  
Pinwherry and Pinmore CC  
Cree Valley CC  
Dalbeattie CC  
Balmaghie CC  
Terregles CC  
Stranraer CC

### Public Meetings (12)

Kirkcudbright  
Dalmellington  
Wigtown  
New Galloway  
Castle Douglas  
Stranraer  
Dalbeattie  
Newton Stewart  
Thornhill  
New Cumnock  
Girvan  
Glentrool

### Other organisations (10)

Devorgilla Rotary Club  
Wanlockhead  
Community Trust  
Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere  
Kirkcudbright Rotary Club

Galloway Preservation Society  
Dalbeattie Forest Community Partnership  
SCNP Conference  
Dumfries Museum & DGNHAS  
Thornhill Rotary Club  
Dumfries Rotary Club

### Events (11)

Kirkcudbright Farmers and Producers Market  
GNPA Discussion  
Paper Launch Event  
Environment Fair  
Scottish Birdwatchers Conference  
Beltie Books Spring Book Festival Event  
GNPA A.G.M  
Moniaive Gala  
Dunscore Gala  
Newton Stewart Day of the Region  
GNPA Conference  
Scottish Rural Parliament

### Meetings with representatives of organisations (5)

National Trust for Scotland  
Kirkcudbright Development Trust  
Dumfries Chamber of Commerce  
Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership  
Scottish Dark Sky Observatory

### Land interest groups NFUS (7)

NFUS Regional Manager/Local Representatives  
NFUS Regional Manager  
Stewartry NFUS Area Meeting

Wigtownshire NFUS Area Meeting  
Dumfriesshire NFUS Area Meeting  
NFUS Regional Manager  
NFUS Regional Manager

### Forestry (5)

FCS/FES Edinburgh  
FCS South of Scotland South of Scotland Regional Forestry Forum  
Royal Scottish Forestry Society  
FCS South of Scotland

### Scottish Tenant

### Farmers Association (1)

STFA Chairman

### Scottish Land and Estates (2)

SLE Policy Adviser  
SLE Executive Director, Regional Coordinator, Policy Adviser

### SRUC (1)

SRUC Workshop 'The Future of Land Use in Southern Scotland'

### Learning from

### National Parks (4)

Cairngorms NP  
Northumberland NP  
Loch Lomond and Trossachs NP  
Northumberland NP Presentation

### Council Staff (7)

D&G Environment Manager  
D&G Head of Planning  
South Ayrshire Economic Development & Planning and East Ayrshire Planning  
D&G Environment Manager

South Ayrshire Planning  
East Ayrshire Head of Planning and Economic Development  
D&G Anti-poverty Officer, Environment Manager

### Councillors (6)

D&G Labour and SNP Councillors  
D&G Convenor and Vice Convenor  
D&G Councillors presentation to Labour/SNP Administration  
D&G Councillors presentation Conservative Group  
East Ayrshire SNP/Labour/Ind Councillors  
D&G SNP Councillors

### Schools and Young People (10)

Doon Academy  
The Zone,  
Dalmellington  
Dalmellington Army Cadets and Scouts  
Castle Douglas High School Field Trip  
Castle Douglas High School Conference follow-up  
Douglas Ewart High School S3  
Douglas Ewart High School Highers  
Douglas Ewart High School Conference follow-up  
D&G Youth Services/YOYP representatives  
D&G Youth Services/YOYP follow-up

**Total 101**

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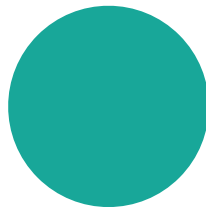
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