



**MOUNTAINEERING
SCOTLAND**
WALKCLIMBSKI

The Future for National Parks in Scotland

A stakeholder consultation on the section criteria and approach to National Parks in Scotland

A consultation from NatureScot: Scottish Ministers wish to review the role of our National Parks, especially their role in addressing the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change.

Mountaineering Scotland comments are restricted to the sections that touch on the Role and Statutory Aims of National Parks

The Role of National Parks (Q1-7)

1. Do you support "leadership of nature recovery and a just transition to net zero" becoming the overarching purpose of Scotland's National Parks? If not, what else would you propose?

A new approach to land management is required, in order to conserve the wild qualities of the landscape for future generations to enjoy as previous generations have.

The four existing aims of Scotland's national parks should be sufficient to achieve the suggested purpose of Nature Recovery and a Just Transition to Net Zero if they are balanced against each other in a way that achieves these aims. It would be helpful to frame a new approach to promote nature recovery, but we suggest not as an over-riding principle but **to give greater weight to nature recovery** if there is a conflict between two or more aims, as set out in Section 9 (6) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

In this way evidence has to be gathered to demonstrate the relative merits of any proposal in reaching a balance.

The means of achieving nature recovery and net zero lie more with national support mechanisms for agriculture and forestry and with Transport Planning and the Development Planning regulatory framework, with the National Park Authority able to act in a co-ordinating role: to create a richer and wilder environment in the uplands. It is our opinion that this has to happen alongside engaging people in outdoor recreation for both awareness and understanding, and also for the personal benefits of health and wellbeing.

It is important to bear in mind that outdoor recreation and community sustainability are also important functions of a National Park— people need experience the natural environment, and what nature recovery can be like in order to care for and support actions for climate and nature.

2. Which of the proposed elements of leadership and action set out in the list above do you support? What others - if any - would you propose?

We agree with the proposed elements, with the proviso that we support the natural regeneration of woodlands and scrub where the land and private investment can naturally support this.

3. What opportunities are there for National Parks to generate private investment in natural capital?

This may be viewed as a matter of land reform and the economics of landowners and communities, however, nature-based tourism and the provision of outdoor learning opportunities are possible ways for securing additional private investment. There are two strands to this: one focused on domestic and international tourists who want to come and experience the exceptional landscape and wildlife of our National Parks, and the other being more about the delivery of educational programmes and training opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of Nature Recovery and Net Zero opportunities, as well as the rights and responsibilities of recreational access.

4. What role should local communities play in the National Park and how should National Park authorities work with and for them to secure a just transition?

We think it is important that communities are involved in the strategic direction of national parks, and essential to acknowledge both communities of place, and communities of interest and participation have views which may or may not be the same. National Park Authorities are well placed to attempt to balance and accommodate different views.

5. Do you support a “vision and mission” for all of Scotland’s National Parks being clearly set out in a national statement? If not why not?

No comment

6. If you favour a national statement for Scotland’s National Parks being developed, what else should it cover?

No comment

7. To what extent should new National Parks be about the future potential of an area for nature restoration as well as what’s currently in place

Mountaineering Scotland would support rewilding initiatives to restore natural ecological processes to increase the wild qualities of land, where there is broad agreement across the sectors of society involved in the area.

The Statutory Aims of National Parks (Q8-12)

8. Are any specific changes to the existing four Aims required? If so why, and what are they?

In our opinion, Section 1 (a) – (d) and Section 9 (6) are sufficient legislation to achieve the aim of nature recovery. It is national development planning, transport planning, forestry and agricultural policy and funding that will drive change, co-ordinated by the National Park Authority.

9. Which of these possible options, or mix of possible options, do you think would help strengthen the focus and contribution of National Parks, and why?

No comment

10. Are there other options that could be considered? If so, what are they?

No comment

11. Do you think there should be any changes to the wording in the Act to require public bodies to support delivery of National Park Plans? If so, what would you propose?

We agree that the involvement of other relevant public bodies in the delivery of National Park Plans will be essential to the delivery of Nature Recovery and Net Zero aims.

12. Do you have any other suggestions for improving partnership working to support the implementation of the National Park Plan by all?

No comment

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