

Scottish Borders National Park

NEWSLETTER | ISSUE 1



The Campaign for a Scottish Borders National Park (SBNP) congratulates Scottish Borders Council (SBC) for including our proposal in the Main Issues Report for the next local plan. However, the cautious response from Scottish Borders politicians to the Campaign's ideas contrasts with our reports of the vision in Skye that a National Park could be just what's needed to manage the impact of the huge number of visitors

the island attracts, and the enthusiasm shown by Galloway's MSPs and local councillors for a similar idea.

Indeed, at a recent FMQs session, the First Minister did not say 'No' to investigating the feasibility of creating a Galloway National Park. Our newsletter highlights three positive but separate Borders projects from Visit Scotland, Scottish Borders Tourism Partnership,

and SoSEP (the South of Scotland Economic Partnership). These are of course welcome, but our Campaign believes strongly that the national and global recognition that comes with the National Park brand would bring disparate initiatives together to strengthen efforts to regenerate and enhance our beautiful region. Stories highlighting how things are done in other parts of the UK also make inspiring reading.



Why are our local politicians allowing Dumfries & Galloway to gallop past the Scottish Borders when the case for a National Park in this region is better substantiated, widely supported, economic impact fully detailed (with financial benefits by way of tax receipts to the Scottish Government), and included in SBC's Main Issues Report – in other words, fully tacked up to 'take the matter forward properly' as requested of D&G by the First Minister?

Council includes Scottish Borders National Park in key planning document

Scottish Borders Council is inviting the public's views on a Scottish Borders National Park through its Main Issues Report (MIR), which will shape the region's next Local Development Plan. This follows a positive response to the SBNP's Economic Impact Statement www.borders-national-park.scot. You can view the MIR online at www.scotborders.gov.uk/ldp2mir - the deadline for submitting your views is **31 January 2019**, or find out more at one of the following:

- 26 Nov** PEEBLES Burgh Chamber (drop-in 2pm-5pm and workshop 6pm-8pm)
- 27 Nov** DUNS Council Chamber (drop-in 2pm-5pm and workshop 6pm-8pm)
- 28 Nov** WEST LINTON Village Centre, Raemartin Square (drop-in 2pm-6pm)
- 29 Nov** GALASHIELS Tesco foyer (drop-in 2pm-5pm)
Transport Interchange (workshop 6pm-8pm)
- 12 Dec** NEWTOWN ST BOSWELLS Council Chamber (workshop 6pm-8pm)
- 18 Dec** HAWICK Morrison's Foyer (drop-in 2pm-5pm);
Heritage Hub (workshop 6pm-8pm)

PLEASE help to fly the flag for our Campaign – and help those who are working to shape the Scottish Borders future - by popping in to one of SBC's drop-in sessions or workshops. (see above)

Dunbar site for John Muir statue

The artist behind the Kelpies pays tribute in his latest creation to the world famous Scottish naturalist and godfather of America's national park system, John Muir. The giant steel sculpture of a bear by Andy Scott will be placed next to the A1 entering Dunbar, where Muir was born in 1838. The 16-foot high bear will symbolise Muir, also known as John of the Mountains, who emigrated from Scotland in 1849, and is famous for petitioning US Congress for the National Park bill that protected Yosemite in California in 1890. He died in 1914.

This Scottish visionary foretold human beings' need for breathing space and to re-connect with Nature in an increasingly busy and industrialised world.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/statue-pays-tribute-to-steel-of-naturalist-john-muir-3phcrbn8c>

Marketing 'windfall' a temporary fix

The eagle-eyed amongst our readers will have spotted VisitScotland's recent announcement of £500,000 over two years for marketing the south of Scotland. While the tourism sector will welcome help, sadly, this is a sticking plaster approach to fixing the broader issues facing the area as the funding is ring fenced for pet projects. The £500,000 is to be used for destination marketing for the South of Scotland (Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway) under specific themes outlined by Scottish Government – coastal, forest, dark sky, UNESCO biosphere, cycling and walking.

These funds have already been committed to the creation and distribution of content in paid media campaigns, funded support for businesses to attend business development trade missions and EXPOs. Says SBNP member Alan Bailey of Ruberslaw Wild Woods Camping: *'We really should be exhorting people to raise their sights and think big, bold and long term.'*

£500,000 for 2 years' marketing of existing initiatives in the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway doesn't sound as good value as £2m to market the the whole of the Southern Borders forever.



Cairngorms landowners team up for UK's biggest restoration project

Cairngorms Connect is a partnership of neighbouring land managers, committed to a bold and ambitious 200-year vision to enhance habitats, species and ecological processes across a vast 600 square kilometre project area within the Cairngorms National Park. It is the biggest habitat restoration project in Britain, and the Endangered Landscapes Programme has recently announced that it is awarding a £3.75m grant to support the £9m project.

The aim is to link the fragments of Caledonian Forest and restore the habitats in between so that threatened species can communicate and move around.

Pete Mayhew of the Cairngorms National Park Authority said: 'The partnership is a visionary project within the Cairngorms National Park. It is already delivering across many of the key NP objectives – for habitats, species and people. The success of the bid to the Endangered Landscapes Programme is great news for all of us, and really does set the project on a sound footing for the coming decades in the restoration of some of Scotland's most amazing habitats.' The land managing partners are Wildland Ltd, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forest Enterprise Scotland and RSPB Scotland.

The NPA team partnered local landowners to work on a project that has pulled in substantial - £9m - investment to the area.

Skye eyes up National Park 'solution'

Amid the row about how best to handle the high number of visitors travelling to Skye, Labour MEP Catherine Stihler has joined local campaigners and called on the Scottish Government to designate the island as a National Park. NP status she says would help to safeguard the island's natural beauty and enable national park authority staff to actively manage visitor access and infrastructure development as done in both the Cairngorm and Loch Lomond & the Trossachs NPs.

More than 100 local businesses in Skye are already countering the impact of high visitor numbers in Skye by confirming that they are very much open for more business. The group includes well known hotels, restaurants, tour operators, as well as local politicians, who are concerned that their businesses could be undermined by sensationalist stories about overcrowding when what is required is managed access and even more investment.

This acknowledges the active role played by NPs elsewhere, in managing visitor access and attracting public and private investment to upgrade infrastructure and facilities.

See full story at: <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/1p/news/islands/inner-hebrides/1534084/mep-calls-for-skye-to-be-made-scotlands-next-national-park-in-bid-to-protect-stunning-scenery/>



Its official! National Parks are good for your health

Exciting new research carried out by academics at the University of York shows that for every £1 invested by the Government, the North York Moors National Park (NYMNP) generates approximately £7.21 of health and well-being benefits for visitors and volunteers.

Until now, the return on investment for the Government in terms of the health and well-being of people using National Parks has not been calculated. This report confirms that the activities the NP delivers not only have an overwhelmingly positive impact on the health and well-being of visitors and volunteers, but also a real value to the economy.

The co-authors pointed out that this initial analysis only looked at the health and well-being outcomes for volunteers and visitors to the NP, and only at those activities funded through the NP grant from Defra. As a result, other groups who may experience benefits, such as school children, and activities funded through grant schemes, fell outside the scope of this report so the value of £7.21 is likely to be an under-estimate.

This figure shows how NPs can help to improve people's health and wellbeing, as well as encourage visitors from all backgrounds to create thriving natural environments.

National Park footpaths get an overhaul in Yorkshire

Parking areas and footpaths have been repaired and extended at Ribbleshead Viaduct, one of the most iconic sites in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, in a £60,000 project made possible by the National Lottery.

Ad hoc parking and camping had been causing damage to the historical settlement of Batty Wife Hole, which straddles the T-junction of the B6255 and the B6479 roads. However, over a six week period, contractors installed or repaired a total of 380 metres of kerb and parking along verges of the two roads; installed a 42 metre aggregate path on Blea Moor Common to better link the parking areas to an existing footpath to the viaduct; and put in two 'sound posts' where people can listen to recordings, made by young rangers, of people's experience of walking in the Three Peaks area. The repairs are part of a four-year programme of community, conservation and heritage projects developed by the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership, led by YDMT, and mainly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

NP authorities can help local authorities manage and fund the repair and maintenance of public spaces and facilities.

Calculating social return on investment

Social return on investment measures the social value created when organisations engage in activities and projects that make a real difference to individuals and society. In the North York Moors National Park (NYMNP) study, a value of £6.80 was given for this, which is the equivalent cost of a one-off fitness class at a local gym. This method was repeated for all potential health and well-being outcomes for volunteers and visitors, using data from the most recent tourism and volunteer surveys to calculate total values for the year 2017-18. Several deductions were also made, for example, to reflect the fact that a proportion of visitors and volunteers would seek an alternative outdoor space or volunteering opportunity even if the NP did not exist.

www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/healthandwellbeing



Hawick's centre of excellence for textiles to open in 2019

This £610,000 South of Scotland Economic Project (SoSEP) initiative to boost the economy in the south of Scotland will open in a former mill building in Hawick next year. The centre is being set up to help to address critical skills issues in the sector, and provide training at all levels. The hope is that by boosting confidence in the sector, continued investment by established companies will be encouraged as will be inward investment from other companies wishing to relocate to the Borders.

Providing training is one thing but creating jobs to keep those who have been trained in the region will be the real challenge. Together with better physical and digital connectivity, NP status would raise the Southern Borders' profile as an extremely attractive place in which to do business, and in which to live and work...

Breaking the volunteering myth

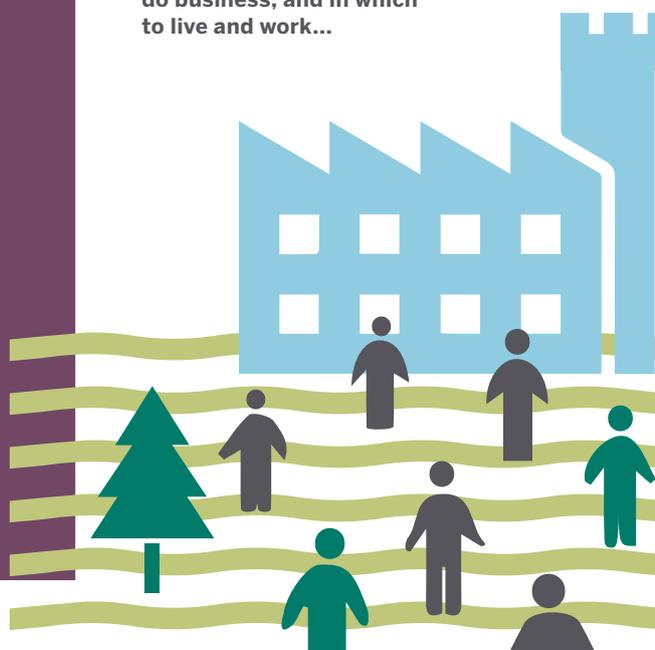
One of the great myths about volunteering is that a volunteer comes for free. Yes, volunteers donate their time, skills and experience to a cause or given task without payment or contract, but for volunteering to really achieve its aims a volunteer needs a manager.

In the South Downs National Park (SDNP) more than 150 organisations engage volunteers: for instance, the National Trust needs volunteers to guide visitors through stately homes and tend ornamental gardens; the Wildlife Trusts need volunteers to monitor wildlife and manage habitats; and organisations like the Weald and Downland Living Museum engage volunteers to act out the lives of the old Sussex peasantry to entertain visitors.

The SDNP Authority has more than 400 volunteers carrying out tasks across the chalk downland, heathland, woodland and wetlands as part of the volunteer ranger service. Rangers spend hours risk assessing and planning activities, preparing and acquiring equipment and transport, agreeing access to sites with landowners, and dealing with all the administration required to recruit and register volunteers. Volunteers need training, some in unusual areas such as water safety, the use of certain tools and machines, or how to monitor wildlife like dormice and bats.

Many people volunteered with SDNP in 2018 to feel part of a community revealing an important new role for NPs in the 21st century when the health implications of loneliness in society are so widely recognised.

Volunteering helps to break the vicious spiral of loneliness and ill health - and NPs can create thriving volunteer communities.





Changing the face of Scottish Borders tourism

Earlier this year, the Scottish Borders Tourism Partnership raised funds from its members to deliver a new tourism strategy for the area. This resulted in SBTP enlisting the help of the team behind the hugely popular North Coast 500 route. Professor John Lennon, Director Moffat Centre for Travel and Tourism Business Development presented the team's findings recently at Borders College, and plans subsequently announced by SBTP included the setting up of a charitable body and trading company with tourism and other businesses as investors to increase the profile of the Borders as a destination, the development of an app, and a new marketing drive using the strapline 'Scotland starts here'.

All very welcome but doesn't have the staying power of National Park designation.



YOUR views needed for the National Parks review

Nearly 70 years after the country's National Parks were first set up to open up the countryside and allow more people to connect with nature, an independent panel is looking at how these iconic landscapes meet our needs in the 21st century – including whether there is scope for the current network of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and 10 National Parks to expand.

The review will explore how access to these beloved landscapes can be improved; how those who live and work in them can be better supported; and consider their role in growing the rural economy. Weakening or undermining NPs' existing protections or geographic scope will not be part of the review. It will instead focus on how designated areas can boost wildlife, support the recovery of natural habitats and connect more people with nature.

National parks cover a quarter of England's land but just 7% of Scotland's, so there remains huge potential for existing and new NPs to harness our world renowned natural assets to contribute to the economy.

Hundreds attend the first conference to designate Galloway a national park

The Galloway National Park Association (GNPA) hosted its first meeting near Castle Douglas earlier this month. The GNPA has been widely welcomed by those who live in the south-west of Scotland, and its campaign has enjoyed cross-party support from its local authority and local MSPs since the start.

GNPA president Dame Barbara Kelly said that securing NP status could help with wider regeneration as the

National Park brand is recognised across the world, and that it alone could provide a real boost to the Galloway economy, bringing more visitors to the area. She emphasised that the GNPA does not need to simply follow the model of other NPs but can learn from the experience of other areas and develop a plan that meets the unique needs of Galloway and the local community.

Just as a Scottish Borders National Park could...

Women in Wellies event inspires rural careers

An event to encourage more young women to consider pursuing careers in the rural sector was organised recently by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA). 'Women in Wellies' aimed to increase awareness among young women – or those considering a career change – of the wide range of jobs on offer in the land-based sector. The event at Boat of Garten featured presentations from women who are already making a living working in forestry, farming, gamekeeping, recreation, conservation and academia. Participants had a chance to learn more from other women with 'A Day in the Life' work stations encompassing a wide-range of rural pursuits.

Official statistics indicate that the rural workforce is predominantly male, around 74 per cent, and there is a deficit of young people entering land based careers in Scotland.

Events like this are just what's needed in the Borders where farming and forestry are so important to the local economy but struggle to attract youngsters to the sectors.



HELP! Can YOU spare a few hours a week?

The Campaign for Scottish Borders National Park is upping the ante to capture the swell of public - and business - support for the creation of a National Park in the Southern Borders. The Campaign team needs help to manage social media and make the most of new and existing video/film production. Please contact via the Campaign website if you have the experience, flair and commitment to join our dedicated team and are prepared to work hard and fast for the Scottish Borders' future. (NB no salary, no pension, no sick pay and certainly no golden handshakes/parachutes.)

f Follow us on Facebook @scotbordersNP - share your views and photos. Visit our website: www.borders-national-park.scot