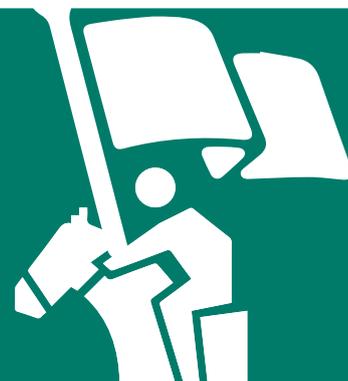


Scottish Borders National Park

NEWSLETTER | ISSUE 2



Five of the Borders' 'WOW' spots

Breathtaking, mysterious, beautiful and inspiring – the Scottish Borders is all these things. But there are some gems that have an extra sprinkling of spectacular – the 'wow factor' capable of leaving a permanent footprint on your bank of feel-good memories. And we have so many on our doorstep!

We love ❶ the view north from Carter Bar ❷ the view down the Teviot Valley from the top of Fatlips Castle ❸ Hawick common riding gallop up to the Common ❹ massed pipers at Floors Castle ❺ Jedburgh Abbey lit up at night.

What makes YOUR heart beat with pride or jaw drop?



Quality not quantity - slow food that does not cost the earth

With around a quarter of UK and US youngsters aged 18-24 vegan or vegetarian, and millions being ploughed into ventures that will support plant based eating in the future, the NP brand could help small scale producers already trying to farm in the most humane and sustainable way.

Smaller farms, fewer chemicals, better soil, more wildlife and grazing livestock on grassland or cover crops but not on land that could support crops grown for human consumption would help us to retain and enhance the country's natural capital and, through boosting soil health, play a major role in sequestering carbon. Animals have a huge role in regenerative agriculture eating those crops that draw down a lot of carbon.

In this second newsletter, we have distilled feedback from individuals and groups to paint a picture of where and how a Scottish Borders National Park (SBNP) could be shaped to breathe new life into this beautiful but increasingly fragile backwater. The Scottish Borders are heaven for visitors and those who retire here but for those who need to make a living here, the region needs more people and investment.

The Campaign for a SBNP believes everyone who owns, manages and uses our countryside – and especially those who use it for leisure – needs to do so responsibly. As Julian Glover, who is leading the UK Government's review of NPs says, we can't pretend that conflicts don't exist - and NPs have to deal with them every day - but that doesn't mean we can't deal with them. He believes the UK's NPs need US-style rangers to boost public engagement so that they can better appreciate NPs' phenomenal natural and cultural assets.

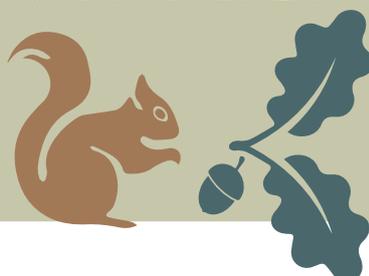
The SBNP Campaign team wants to encourage all Borderers to have their say – so please use our Facebook page and website to post your thoughts, comments and criticism.

Meantime, public support continues to grow for a SBNP as shown by key analysis of Scottish Borders Council's (SBC) Main Issues Report, which will help to shape the next local plan.

Amongst planning related issues, readers were asked: Do you support the designation of a National Park (NP) within the Scottish Borders?

If so, which general area do you think a National Park should cover? (*see overleaf for the Campaign's suggestion*).

While local councillors may not make a decision imminently, the positive response to the MIR questions suggests that the NP may be a significant step closer to gaining SBC's much needed support before the proposal is formally put to the Scottish Government. The Galloway National Park Association already has cross-party support from its local councillors and MEPs.



Rural security: managing more visitors (and locals)

Fly tipping, dog fouling, sheep worrying, anti-social behaviour, vandalism, theft of agricultural equipment and general rural security are problems in and out of the UK's national parks but best practice in several NPs is getting results. (see our two stories below)

Police Scotland takes the lead with dog owners

Police Scotland, with Scottish Natural Heritage, National Farmers Union Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates and the Kennel Club, has been running an annual campaign against sheep worrying, stressing to dog owners that their pet could be killed if it is found to be in the presence of sheep, irrespective of whether it has physically attacked or chased sheep. In 2018, 131 incidents resulted in police conducting investigations. But what many dog owners do not realise is the danger their dog's fouling can cause to sheep and cattle, and why they need to pick up after their pets - this is especially important for dogs that haven't been wormed. As dogs don't display any symptoms, owners may not know that they are infected, but any sheep or cattle grazing on contaminated grass are at risk of becoming severely ill.



Anti social behaviour

Now in its fifth year, Operation Ironworks tackles anti-social behaviour around Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park deploying high-viz police patrols who work with park rangers for six months through the peak holiday periods. Recent changes to local by-laws have banned alcohol consumption in certain areas, and camping outside official camp sites between 1 March and 31 October. Central Scotland Police's campaign has had a big impact, with a noticeable reduction in anti-social behaviour, a decrease in damage to trees and less litter being dumped. Best of all, more families are making return visits as they now feel safer visiting the area.



Drive and discover

The Reivers Road project, conceived by Debbie Webster and Alastair Cunningham formerly of Scottish Clans and Castles, provides drivers with a virtual tour guide of the Scottish Borders. Six unique, GPS triggered, audio trails talk about the Borders' legends providing commentary, history, drama and music.



Moor to Enjoy

With growing evidence that being in 'green space' is great for both our physical and mental health, NPs have an important role to play in the nation's health and well-being. Exmoor NP's Moor to Enjoy project recently demonstrated the benefits through a survey of 508 visitors:

- 38% of participants were more physically active than on an average day
- 74% said they were more relaxed after visiting Exmoor
- 77% reported having been more sociable than on an average day
- 87% said visiting Exmoor had lifted their spirits

IMAGE: Mountain biking © VisitScotland/Ian Rutherford

What is YOUR idea of a NP?

Ever since land was set aside in Main Ridge Reserve of Tobago in 1776 and the Bogd Khan Uul Mountain in Mongolia in 1778 the need to protect, admire, conserve, and learn from the landscape has been interpreted in a multitude of ways. The late nineteenth century saw a resurgence of protection of landscapes from the cliffs of Yosemite and the boiling fumaroles of Yellowstone, these lands being set aside as havens against the 'progress' of civilisation. As more and more regions became protected not only in the United States, but across Europe, the idea of what constituted a national park further expanded to include the cliff-hugging coastal community of Cinque Terre in Italy, and the rolling hills of England's densely populated, intensively farmed South Downs. Today national parks reflect a diverse collective of human and natural connections retaining a sense of place, belonging, and a unique interpretation of how people value, need and use these protected but constantly evolving landscapes.

What would the National Park Authority do?

- 📍 Marketing & Information
- 🌿 Conservation
- 🚶 Paths & Visitor Infrastructure
- 👮 Policing & Monitoring
- 🎓 Education, Skills & Training
- 👷 Job Creation (Paid & Volunteer)
- 🗺️ Planning *No planning authority - SBC already has a Planning Department (the NPA could have a consultee role in the existing planning regime)*
- 🏠 Land Use Policy

CASE STUDY

Christow Community Land Trust Housing, Dartmoor

A £3.6million project led by the Christow Community Land Trust (CCLT) has provided 14 affordable highly energy efficient homes on Dartmoor, with most of the properties being built to full PassivHaus standards. As almost no heating is required, total energy bills for these properties is around just £100 a year. This development was completed in 2017 and is possibly still the only PassivHaus development to be built in a NP anywhere. Most of the development's homes are available to rent and several have been sold on the open market, at an affordable price and with ownership restrictions.

Proposed area of the Scottish Borders National Park



Where would the SBNP be?

It would comprise the old county of Roxburghshire, ideally including the Gateway Towns of Hawick, Jedburgh and Kelso to the south and Melrose and Selkirk to the north. This would create a huge area of wild land and vast views, complemented by the Borders' unique tapestry of rolling hills and valleys.

How would a SBNP be run?

By a National Park Authority run along very different lines to NPs elsewhere. Scotland's distinctive legislation allows for the slimline, locally controlled NPA model the Campaign has proposed, which would rapidly generate cash flow and jobs to the local area and to the Scottish Government.

How much would a SBNP cost?

Set up costs of between £1m to £1.5m and annual running costs of circa £2m (a fraction of the Great Tapestry of Scotland), largely offset by the permanent profile-raising impact of the National Park brand.

- 🐎 Riding
- 🎣 Fishing
- 🚢 Harbour
- 🚲 Cycling
- 🌾 Agriculture
- 🏰 Castle
- 🏰 Stately Home
- 🏰 Abbey
- 🏰 Common Riding
- 🚶 Hill Walking
- 🌌 Dark Skies
- 🏰 Archaeology

- 📍 National Park Visitor Centres - potential to share with existing facilities.
- 🌐 Enterprise Zone

What control would the SBNP have over landownership and use?

None. SBNP would not add to the existing burden of Scottish Government regulation controlling landowners', managers' and farmers' operations. The Campaign enthusiastically supports traditional land-based businesses and activities including field sports.

How would NP status help our countryside, villages and towns?

Post-Brexit, EU subsidies will be phased out and replaced with a new policy likely to put the value of our natural assets - be they wildflowers, soil, rare species - at its core. A SBNP would help farmers and landowners to get the best deals available.

What would be the SBNP's impact on local housing?

The concept of a 'decent' standard of living is difficult to define because of other people's lifestyle choices but there is a growing consensus that 'affordability' must be considered in relation to incomes, rather than private rents or house prices - as is current Government policy.

Some UK NPs are developing interesting approaches to affordable housing issues (see case study), recognising that issues around affordable housing go beyond house prices and age groups - especially in rural areas. For example, Exmoor NPA hosts a Rural Housing Project that aims to act as an 'honest broker' in finding sites for affordable housing. The North York Moors NPA plays an active role in the region's housing group that shares good practice and feeds suggestions in to the regional housing board, and the Peak District NPA leads a housing partnership.



Protect our pollinators

A flurry of donations and fundraisers over the summer months raised £18,000 to boost the Bee Lines campaign, launched on World Bee Day in May by the South Downs National Park Trust. Now the charity is calling on community groups across the region to get behind the fundraising drive to raise £75,000 to help farmers and other landowners create new wildflower corridors – essentially a ‘road system’ for insects – that will link habitats and encourage pollination.



Space travel made easy

While 2020 is being trumpeted as the year that space travel becomes a reality, the fifth Dark Skies Festival, held jointly by the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks, will show just how much visitors can enjoy the cosmos without leaving planet Earth and appreciate how the darkness of the National Parks’ skies, as a result of low light pollution, can be harnessed as a kind of natural health service.



IMAGE: Night Sky over Fatips @ Ian Oliver Photography

Power to Cheviot's peat bogs

The UK’s highest altitude- and one of the largest at 151 ha - peatland restoration project is now well underway on the summit of the Cheviots. Peatlands are the largest terrestrial store for carbon, more than all the trees around the world combined. On healthy peatlands, the plants absorb carbon out of the air and lock it up, but when the peat is bare, carbon is released so, native plants, including heathers, cottongrass and sphagnum mosses are being harvested from the valley below and flown up by helicopter to be planted and help protect the bare peat.



Re-imagining Dunion

A new vision for turning a former quarry and landfill site into a visitor attraction inspired by the Eden Project, Cornwall, and the Centre for Alternative Technology, Wales, is gaining traction. The brownfield site on the Dunion is the remains of a carboniferous volcano and offers spectacular views over the Scottish Borders. It has the archaeological remains of a large hill fort, perhaps dating from the Dark Ages, and seven hut circles.

National Parks: living, working places where beauty drives the economy

New analysis of data obtained from the Office of National Statistics reveals that NP economies have prospered since the last analysis in 2013. These living, working landscapes are home to rural communities and businesses that are contributing to national prosperity and well-being and which depend on a high quality natural environment and the NPs’ special qualities to achieve this growth. Between 2012 and 2016:

- the Gross Value Added (GVA) of NP economies grew in real terms in the range £1.4bn to £2.4bn;
- the number of businesses in NPs grew by 10% (to more than 25,000);
- more than 21,000 jobs were created; and
- business turnover was £13bn (up from £10.4bn in 2012).

Many policies and practices in the UK’s NPs could be used to replicate these results elsewhere:

- GROW, an independent charitable organisation in the South Downs National Park, gives people experiencing psychological and emotional distress a chance to recover and feel better through activities like nature walks, practical conservation, and helping on farms within the NP.
- Working with GPs in Dartmoor National Park to evaluate the benefits to mental and emotional health and well-being of interacting with landscapes, wildlife and the recreational opportunities found in the NP.
- The Explorer’s Club in the North York Moors National Park allows whole families to explore and care for the NP through eg adopting a 3 mile stretch of the Cleveland Way National Trail. Families are now looking after all 109 miles of the trail, undertaking practical conservation to keep it in good condition.

Public helps to shape Lakes Local Plan

The Lake District National Park Authority’s draft Local Plan consultation has resulted in significant changes to the way the development of new houses, businesses and visitor attractions will be managed within the NP.

Proposals include:

- Increasing the number of local homes from a minimum of 900 to 1200 during the next 15 years.
- Supporting housing on farms, particularly to help with generational changes.
- New tourism projects and new car parks will be required to make a financial contribution towards infrastructure and sustainable travel.
- Protecting and enhancing important wildlife habitats, sites and species and by requiring developers to compensate to secure net increases in biodiversity.



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