

Campaign for a Scottish Borders National Park (CSBNP) Proposal May 2023

Executive Summary

The Scottish Government (SG) plans to designate at least one more National Park (NP) by 2026, with proposals to be solicited in summer 2023. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to obtain this coveted designation.

Legal framework and local support : The CSBNP proposal is designed to fit the requirements of the National Parks (Scotland) Act, 2000. The outstanding natural and cultural heritage of the Southern Borders fully merits designation. An independent feasibility study (2017) supports it, and there is extensive popular support for it (see Appendix A), identified through a number of routes including through SBC's 2019 Main Issues Review consultation.

Location and impact :



Based on the Ordnance Survey Map, with permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, Crown Copyright, Licence No. 100058796

It is proposed that the Park be located in a southern area of the Scottish Borders, possibly based on the former County of Roxburgh, but boundaries should be determined in consultation with communities. An NP would be well-positioned to enhance and protect this area of important but threatened natural heritage and its unique and still lively cultural heritage. There are considerable efforts in the area to enrich and strengthen biodiversity – important ongoing projects supporting the

recovery of the extensive areas of peat need support and extension to become sustainable. Climate change must be addressed. There is

a pressing need to identify genetic conservation units (GCUs), none of which have yet been identified in the Southern Uplands nor the SE Scotland lowland river catchment areas. This would be one of the priorities for increasing sustainable biodiversity for the new NP which would seek to join the national and international networks employing this approach to mitigate the impact of climate change.

The unique cultural heritage of the Southern Borders as it has evolved down the ages and as it lives on in song, story, the Ridings, the visible architectural record from neolithic times down to the present, etc, are a unique but underappreciated asset which demands wider recognition and to be made more accessible to the Scottish and international publics. An NPA would be positioned to deliver this.

The Visitor Economy : Substantial socio-economic benefits would accrue to the designated area (which includes some of Scotland's most deprived communities) and to the 'halo' around it. An NP would increase the right kind of tourism, supporting a wide range of businesses including construction, professional and technical services as well as retail and hospitality. This would generate a year round boost to local employment.

Revenues and costs : The proposal is for a slimline model (no planning department) which would not usurp the responsibilities of other public bodies. It would rather aim to partner with other organisations, public and private, and to coordinate, support and assist a broad range of natural and cultural heritage activities. Its core costs of about £3m per annum (2023 prices) would be covered by a Scottish Government grant, and it would raise additional funds from public and private sources to support projects, in line with practice in other UK NPs.

Farmers and landowners : Farmers and landowners who live locally will be critically important to the NP's ability to meet its objectives. The NP would aim to assist farmers and landowners to achieve nature-friendly environmental outcomes while maintaining profitability, contributing to the Scottish Government's objectives in the difficult current context It would aim to help maximise their opportunities to participate in adequately-funded schemes.

Governance : The NP would be a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) with powers and responsibilities in line with the 2000 Act. It would be governed by a National Park Authority (NPA) which would have majority local representation, some of it elected, on its Board. Other members with relevant expertise would be appointed by SG.

Managing visitors : The CSBNP has addressed the potential negative aspect of increasing visitor numbers in an extensive and well-received review of best practice in visitor management for the benefit of visitors themselves and of local communities. Its report is on the website www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com
Recommendations for the specific needs of a Southern Borders NP are included.

Policy fit

The following diagram indicates the complementarity of the proposed National Park to policy objectives. This is further illustrated in Section 7.

The missing piece of the policy jigsaw has been found -
a Scottish Borders National Park.

