

**SCOTTISH COUNCIL  
FOR NATIONAL PARKS**  
IUCN  
**NEWSLETTER**  
July 2002

The best laid plans of mice and men...in our last newsletter, we were looking forward to the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park being up and running by 2001. Unfortunately, and I suppose inevitably, things slipped, and it was only this week that the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority had its first meeting, with the Park due to be formally opened at the end of the month. Expectations are high for its future management and SCNP will continue to play its part in the process. So its time to celebrate for this most beautiful and diverse area, but not so for the Cairngorms!

All the signs are that political deals have had a greater influence over the area to be designated and the powers of the Park Authority than a rational consideration of what is required to protect and enhance a remote, beautiful and fragile environment. The area proposed has been radically reduced and the allocation of planning powers is a complicated mish-mash between the local authorities and the Park Authority. The struggle goes on. More follows.

As you probably know, SCNP has had a hard task to keep going financially. Without the generosity of many of you, we might not be here. After much to-ing and fro-ing, SCNP has now been accepted by the Inland Revenue as a charitable body and the wording of our articles has been amended to reflect this status.

Of itself, this change doesn't make us any better off but it opens the door to Obtaining financial support from a variety of charitable trusts. We are now actively pursuing, with welcome support from our sister body in England and Wales, the Council for National Parks, sources of funding to help us sustain our efforts. This year's AGM also decided to increase the Friends subscription to £10 per annum. We hope all Friends will recognise the necessity and continue their support.

We have also drawn up a 5-year Strategic Review and Business Plan and a Fund Raising Strategy. Let us hope that it won't be too long before we can report a more favourable financial future. In the meantime, thank you all for your continued support. There is much work to be done as the following sections of the Newsletter will demonstrate.

Best wishes

Isabel Glasgow,  
Chairwoman

## **Cairngorms National Park**

The current area of major concern lies with the Scottish Executive's proposals for the Cairngorms. As you know, a substantial consultation exercise has been undertaken, with SNH performing the role of both Government advisor and Reporter on the outcome. The consultation document indicated that Ministers' preferred solution on Planning Powers was to leave them with the local authorities. With five authorities, five Structure Plans and many more local plans involved, it seemed inexplicable how an effective, coherent planning service could be delivered. SCNP decided to join with the Cairngorms Campaign and others to submit a petition to the Scottish Parliament Petitions Committee seeking an explanation as to why it was right to place Planning Powers with the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Park Authority and yet do the reverse for Cairngorms, where the conflicts of interest were arguably greater.

Obtaining an answer from the Committee before the publication of the draft Designation Order for the Cairngorms was essential, because once published the legislation does not allow for modification, only acceptance or rejection. Rejection of the Order would result in yet further delay. Bill Wright of the Cairngorms Campaign and Bill McDermott and Robert Maund of SCNP appeared before the Petitions Committee in April, explained the concerns and answered questions from MSPs. The Committee decided to write to the Minister asking for an explanation of the clear inconsistency of approach between the two proposed Parks.

The Minister did not reply to the Petitions Committee - a civil servant sent a pot boiler worthy of Sir Humphrey himself! - and then the Draft Order was published on 29 May 2002.

Imagine our concern when, without explanation or justification, the Draft Order reduced the proposed area of the Park by removing all those parts in Perth and Kinross and Angus Councils which were included in the public consultation, thus reducing the number of local authorities involved from 5 to 3. In addition it split the Planning responsibility by leaving Structure Planning with the local authorities, placing the Park Local Plan with the Park Authority and leaving development control with the local authorities but subject to call-in by the Park Authority should it deem it necessary. The local authorities are not to have a right of appeal to the Minister against call-in. Call-in is intended to be a pro-active rather than reactive, i.e. sooner rather than later in the process.

This complex set of divided responsibilities seems destined to create conflict and tensions. Making the Park Authority the Planning Authority for the Park area would bring clarity and allow people to concentrate on the real issues and hopefully bring consistent, coherent criteria to bear when making decisions in the wider interest of the Park, its residents and its visitors.

The boundary now proposed for the Park, was not included in the public consultation exercise and was not considered by the Reporter. No rational explanation or justification has been given for the radical changes. The Petitions Committee has been fobbed off and rendered ineffectual. The draft Designation Order has produced a situation which could well be worthy of judicial review. Watch this space!

### **SCNP Executive Committee 2002/2003**

At this year's AGM the Council re-elected Joan Geddes, elected David Grosz and Frank Bracewell, and confirmed Robert Maund as PR Officer in place of Malcolm Payne who has stood down after many years splendid service. Our grateful thanks to Malcolm for all he has done.

At the Executive meeting on 6 June 2002, George Boyd agreed to become Membership Secretary.

### **SCNP Web site**

The Executive decided to set up this web site to keep all of you who have access, and indeed, anyone else who finds us, up to date with what we are doing and to invite feedback. We shall, of course, continue to use the post but it is important to reach as wide an audience as possible.

We are always anxious to receive views - and help - so feel free to contact us with queries or suggestions.

**SCNP**  
**15 Park Terrace**  
**Stirling FK8 2JT**

**Tel: 01786 465714**