

New National Parks in Scotland

Nomination process and draft appraisal framework

May 2023

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Background	3
2.1 Process for selecting and designating new National Parks	4
3. Nominations process	6
3.1 Timeline.....	6
3.2 Format.....	7
3.3 Submission.....	7
4. Appraisal	9
4.1 Guidance notes for areas submitting nominations for new National Park status	10
4.2 Appraisal Framework	13
4.3 Appraisal Process	16
Annex A – Nomination Form	17
Annex B – New National Park(s) Project – Timeline and Process	24

1. Introduction

The Scottish Government has committed to designating at least one new National Park in Scotland by Spring 2026, provided relevant legal conditions can be met. In order to ensure an open and transparent process, nominations for National Park status will be appraised based on the criteria set out in Section 4.

This document has been produced to support individuals, groups or organisations submitting proposals for a new National Park designation.

2. Background

“It is almost two decades since Scotland’s first National Parks in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and the Cairngorms were established. Both are home to some of the country’s most outstanding scenery, are internationally important areas for nature and receive millions of visitors each year. They work hard to tackle the biodiversity and climate crisis, help manage facilities for visitors, promote responsible access and develop sustainable communities. They have become jewels in Scotland’s crown, and now is the time to add to them”

Lorna Slater, Biodiversity Minister

National discussion on the future of National Parks

In 2022, The Scottish Government launched a public consultation¹ on the future for National Parks in Scotland. This consultation sought views and ideas on the role that National Parks can play in helping to restore nature, tackle climate change, promote sustainable land use and support public and community wellbeing.

Following this, NatureScot was asked to lead a further public consultation in order to provide advice to Scottish Ministers². This has involved engaging with a wide range of stakeholders. NatureScot’s advice includes:

- recommendations for amendments to existing legislation regarding the role of National Parks in Scotland.
- recommendations for the nomination process and selection criteria for new National Parks in Scotland.

This document relates to the process for the nomination and selection of new National Park(s) in Scotland.

The Scottish Government is giving thorough consideration to the advice received from NatureScot and the views expressed by consultees about possible changes to the powers and functions of National Parks in Scotland. Any proposals for change will be presented for further public consultation later this year. A Strategic

¹ [The Future for National Parks in Scotland - Scottish Government - Citizen Space \(consult.gov.scot\)](https://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/national-parks)

² [National Parks Advice to Ministers - February 2023 | NatureScot](https://www.naturescot.gov.uk/national-parks-advice-to-ministers-february-2023)

Environmental Assessment will be undertaken and published in future consultations related to this project.

2.1 Process for selecting and designating new National Parks

Nominations and appraisal

The Scottish Government is aware of several communities or groups which have expressed interest in putting their area forward for National Park status. A fair and transparent nomination process is therefore required to determine the area or areas to be taken forward to designation and an appraisal framework will be used to help assess nominations and identify the candidate area(s) (the 'National Park proposals') to be progressed under the [National Park \(Scotland\) Act 2000](#).

NatureScot have provided advice to Ministers relating to the appraisal and selection process for new National Parks, recognising that although section 2 of the 2000 Act sets out the process for Scottish Ministers to make proposals for the designation of National Parks, there is no process in the legislation for the public to submit nominations for National Parks or for selecting which of those nominations will then be proposed as a National Park by Scottish Ministers.

The proposed nominations and appraisal process is set out below and in Image 1 contained in Annex B:

- Register of interest – nominating groups will be invited to register their interest in bringing forward a nomination. This will enable the Scottish Government to provide interested parties with information and updates in advance of, and during, the nomination window.
- Scottish Government will publish the finalised appraisal framework
- Scottish Government will launch the nominations process and will set out its offer of support to nominating groups
- Nomination window (5 months)
- Deadline for nominations
- Appraisal of nominations and report produced
- Decision and confirmation by Scottish Ministers of nomination(s) to be progressed as 'National Park proposal(s)'.

Pre-registration for nominating groups

Individuals, groups or organisations considering making a proposal are invited to register their interest in submitting a nomination as part of this process.

Registration will allow Scottish Government to update interested parties with any important information, key dates and communications throughout the process. It will also enable Scottish Government to contact interested parties about the offer of support that will be made available during the nomination process.

In order to pre-register interest, nominating groups can contact NationalParks@gov.scot or by post (to New National Parks Team, Scottish Government, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ) including name, contact details and the name of the area you are interested in nominating. There is no requirement to register interest in order to submit a nomination. Nor does registration commit a group or organisation to submitting a nomination. Registration details will not be made public.

Reporter Investigation

Following the appraisal phase, subject to at least one nomination being selected to proceed as a National Park proposal, Ministers expect to appoint a reporter to undertake an investigation and report to them on the proposal(s). As outlined in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, it is anticipated that Ministers will require NatureScot to take on the role of reporter.

As outlined in section 3 of the Act, if Scottish Ministers require such an investigation and a report on the National Park proposal(s), there is a legal process that must be followed. The reporter is required to publicise the proposal, conduct the investigation including a public consultation and provide a recommendation to Ministers on the following to inform a Designation Order to be laid in the Scottish Parliament:

- (a) the area which it is proposed should be designated as a National Park,
- (b) the desirability of designating the area in question (with or without modifications) as a National Park,
- (c) the functions which it is proposed the National Park authority for the Park should exercise,
- (d) the likely annual costs and capital expenses of the authority in exercising its functions,
- (e) such other matters relating to the proposal as the requirement may specify.

The reporter's report will be published by Ministers and laid before Parliament upon completion.

Designation

Following the publication of the report on the National Park proposal(s), Scottish Ministers may decide to make a "designation order" following the process set out in the Act (Sections 6-7). This will include sending a copy of the draft designation order to every local authority within the proposed area, laying the proposed draft order before parliament and a further phase of public consultation on the proposed draft order.

3. Nominations process

3.1 Timeline

The timeline for the nomination process is set out below (final dates will be included in the table below at time of publication):

Process Stage	Description	Date
Registration of interest	<p>Individuals, groups or organisations considering making a proposal will be invited to register their interest.</p> <p>Registration will be open from 11 May 2023. There is no requirement to register interest in order to submit a nomination. Nor does registration commit a group or organisation to submitting a nomination. Registration details will not be made public.</p> <p>Registration will allow Scottish Government to update interested parties with any important information, key dates and communications throughout the process. It will also enable Scottish Government to contact interested parties about the offer of support that will be made available during the nomination process.</p> <p>Registration of interest can be completed before or during the nominations window by emailing NationalParks@gov.scot or by post to New National Parks Team, Scottish Government, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ.</p>	11 May 2023
Publish final appraisal framework and timeframes	<p>Final appraisal framework published following a period of consultation.</p> <p>The framework sets out the nominations process and selection criteria that proposals will be appraised against.</p> <p>This includes confirmed dates/durations for each stage of the process.</p>	
Launch nominations process (including support offering to nominating groups)	<p>The nomination window will formally commence – for a period of 5 months/20 weeks.</p> <p>The external organisation providing support will contact all nominating groups registered with Scottish Government and where individuals, groups or organisations have requested such support.</p>	

Process Stage	Description	Date
Nomination window (5 months)	The period during which individuals, groups and organisations will compile their proposals including the information required as set out in the appraisal framework.	
Deadline for nominations	Deadline for the submission of nominations to be received by Scottish Government.	
Screening and appraisal of nominations	All proposals will be appraised based on the criteria set out in the framework. The Scottish Government may request additional information from nominees. Appraisal report will be prepared for Ministers.	
Confirmation of nomination(s) to be progressed as 'National Park proposal(s)'	Scottish Government to announce the nomination(s) to be taken forward for designation as a National Park, subject to the findings of the statutory reporter process and relevant legal conditions being met.	

(This table will be replaced with a final and confirmed timeline following the consultation of the appraisal framework. This indicative table is included for information during the consultation phase).

Support to areas wishing to put forward a nomination

Subject to a successful open procurement exercise to appoint an external organisation with the relevant expertise, a non-financial support offering will be made available to nominating groups. Final details of this support offering will be confirmed before the nomination window commences and it will be designed to enable and support groups in the planning, and development of their nominations, for example by helping to arrange and host local community discussions and workshops.

3.2 Format

The Scottish Government recognises that proposals may be based on a wide range of information and evidence. Where possible, electronic files are requested and should be provided in PDF format.

3.3 Submission

Proposals must be received by the deadline (date to be confirmed following consultation).

These can be submitted by the following means:

Email: NationalParks@gov.scot

Post: New National Parks Team
Scottish Government
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

4. Appraisal

The appraisal of nominations for new National Park(s) will be based on:

- The nomination form which all areas wishing to submit a nomination for National Park status will be asked to complete by the deadline.
- The appraisal framework that will be used to assess proposals.

General guidance:

- All sections of the nomination form must be completed.
- Maximum word counts for each of the sections of the nominations form have been included in the appraisal framework and should be adhered to.
- While groups collaborating to combine resources/knowledge is to be encouraged, all nominations will be considered as part of the appraisal process.
- A clear message from the public consultation was the need to ensure the nomination process is clear, simple and as open as possible. As a result, there is no requirement to provide detailed plans about what a National Park would seek to do in a particular area beyond the information that is requested in the nomination form. A more detailed consideration of the role, powers and functions of a National Park proposal would form part of the reporter investigation if a nomination is taken forward for designation.
- Where required, Scottish Government officials may contact nominating groups during the appraisal phase where information is required to support the appraisal of nominations.
- To ensure transparency and fairness, any questions or clarifications submitted to the Scottish Government during the nomination window will be made available publicly along with the response provided.
- The table below sets out the questions being asked of nominating groups. This includes guidance on the information and level of detail required at this stage.
- Nominations must be submitted using the Nominations Form (Annex A).

4.1 Guidance notes for areas submitting nominations for new National Park status

Question	Guidance for nominations	Maximum word count
1. What is the area being nominated for National Park designation?	<p>Provide a name and simple written description of the potential area (or options for the area) including its approximate size and its main settlements. A map image can also be provided for this section to support this.</p> <p>Include what local authority area(s) the nomination is within.</p>	500 words
2. Why does the area nominated merit National Park status?	<p>Provide a non-technical description of what is special about the area, why it merits designation as a National Park and how National Park status would help to meet the special needs of the area.</p> <p>Your description should explain how the area meets the conditions for National Parks as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage • That the area has a distinctive character and coherent identity • That designating the area as a National Park would meet the special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in relation to the area in a coordinated way 	2000 words

Question	Guidance for nominations	Maximum word count
<p>3. What difference would designation as a National Park make for both nature and people? What is the strategic contribution that a National Park in this area could make?</p>	<p>Outline the benefits and added value that could be achieved by the area becoming a National Park, describing the opportunities for nature recovery, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable and progressive land use and support to the area's communities in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible. These could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complementing and adding to the strategic contribution of Scotland's existing National Parks; • positive action for the restoration and regeneration of biodiversity and the protection of vulnerable and important species; • reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change; • encouraging nature-friendly farming, forestry and marine use; • generating inward investment in the area's natural capital and the growth of green skills and jobs; and • supporting the development of a green wellbeing economy. 	<p>3000 words</p>
<p>4. How would designating the area as a National Park support visitor management and the area's offer for education, recreation and enjoyment by all of Scotland's people?</p>	<p>Outline the benefits, opportunities and challenges including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for enjoyment, recreation and understanding of the area's natural and cultural heritage; • How National Park designation could support visitor management in the area; • How National Park designation could support current and potential future transport infrastructure in the area; • How National Park designation could support access to nature for Scotland's people. 	<p>2000 words</p>

Question	Guidance for nominations	Maximum word count
5. Who has been involved in the development of this nomination?	<p>Provide the name of the lead person, group or organisation in the nominated area, including contact details.</p> <p>Provide a list of who has been involved in developing the nomination (e.g. local landowners and managers, businesses, community representatives, young people and seldom heard groups as well as any support from local authorities and public bodies). Provide a summary of the issues and opportunities that have been raised. Personal details must only be shared where the individual has granted permission to do so in line with data protection processes.</p> <p>Provide details of any local community engagement activities undertaken to discuss, consider or measure/gain support for the nomination and any evidence of local/stakeholder support for the nomination where available.</p> <p>Where applicable, details of any surveys or assessment of local support undertaken should also be provided here. This should not include any respondents' personal information.</p> <p>Any conflicts of interest that nominating groups are aware of should also be declared with supporting information/evidence.</p>	2000 words
6. Annexes	<p>Further material including simple maps, photographs, a list of relevant protected area designations and quantitative data can be included in separate annexes if this is considered relevant to the nomination. Any additional information provided should be clearly linked to one of the four questions above.</p>	

4.2 Appraisal Framework

The table below outlines the broad criteria against which nominations will be appraised, which will support the selection of National Park proposals to be taken forward for designation.

Criteria		Components
1. Outstanding national importance	Is the area of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage?	Is the proposed area of outstanding national importance due to its natural heritage, including its biodiversity, geodiversity and landscapes?
		Is the proposed area of outstanding national importance due to its cultural heritage and historic environment?
2. Size, character and coherence	Does the area have a distinctive character and a coherent identity? Is the proposed area of a sufficient size to justify integrated management as a National Park?	Does the proposed area have a distinctive character and coherent identity?
		Is the proposed area of a sufficient size to warrant integrated management as a National Park?
3. Special needs of the area	How would designating the area as a National Park meet the special needs of the area? What difference would National Park designation make to the area for nature restoration, cultural heritage, sustainable use of natural resources, public enjoyment and sustainable communities?	How would National Park designation support the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage and the historic environment?
		How would National Park designation support nature recovery and restoration in the area, including ecosystem restoration, protection and recovery of vulnerable and important species and wildlife management?
		How would National Park designation help to promote the understanding and enjoyment of the area by Scotland's people?
		How would National Park designation support the sustainable development and well-being of local communities?
		How would National Park designation support the sustainable use of the area's natural resources and how it would make a significant contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation?

Criteria		Components
4. Visitor management and experience	How would designating the area as a National Park support visitor management and the area's offer for education, recreation and enjoyment by all of Scotland's people?	How would National Park designation enhance opportunities for enjoyment, recreation and understanding of the area's natural and cultural heritage?
		How would National Park designation support visitor management in the area?
		How could National Park designation support current and potential future transport infrastructure in and around the proposed area?
		How could National Park designation support access to nature for Scotland's people?
5. Added value	Why is the investment required to create and operate a new National Park for this area justified?	How would the benefits of designating a National Park in the area justify the investment required?
		What is the added value that National Park designation would bring to the area?
6. Local support	Is there sufficient evidence of local support for this proposal?	What level of local support (with evidence) is there from local interests (community bodies, landowners and managers, businesses, third sector organisations, public bodies etc.)
		What level of support (with evidence) is there from the local authority/authorities in the area?

Criteria		Components
7. Strategic contribution	Would the designation of the area bring benefits to Scotland as a whole and contribute to strategic priorities including nature restoration, climate action, green investment, skills and jobs and nature friendly farming?	How could National Park designation support the area's leadership on climate change mitigation and adaptation in a way that is fair and inclusive for local communities?
		How could National Park designation support the area's contribution to commitments within the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, including ecosystem restoration, protection and recovery of vulnerable species, wildlife management, nature friendly farming, the expansion of areas that are protected for nature and the development of nature networks?
		How could designation as a National Park support sustainable investment in the area's natural capital?
		How could designation as a National Park support the development of green skills and jobs in the area?
		How could designation as a National Park complement the contribution that Scotland's existing National Parks make to tackling the nature and biodiversity crises?

4.3 Appraisal Process

The appraisal framework will be used to help assess nominations for new National Parks.

Once finalised, the appraisal framework will include details of how each criterion will be scored. The final appraisal framework will be published ahead of nominations opening.

Following the appraisal of all nominations received, a summary report will be produced. This report will inform advice to Scottish Ministers on the area or areas to be progressed as National Park proposals, subject to legal conditions being met.

Where nominations do not succeed in being proposed for National Park designation, the Scottish Government may seek to contact nominating groups to discuss the contents of their nomination and any viable alternative options, particularly where there is the potential for nominating groups to make a significant contribution to nature restoration and climate change mitigation in their areas.

Annex A – Nomination Form

Nomination for New National Park – **[insert nomination group or area name]**

Submitted by	[Name]
On behalf of	[insert names of key groups, organisations and persons involved in the nomination]
Date submitted	[Date]

1. What is the area being nominated for National Park designation?

Please provide a name and simple written description of the potential area (or options for the area) including its approximate size and its main settlements. A map image can also be provided for this section to support this.

Include the local authority area(s) the nomination is within.

2. Why does the area nominated merit National Park status?

Please provide a non-technical description of what is special about the area, why it merits designation as a National Park and how National Park status would help to meet the special needs of the area. Your description should explain how the area meets the conditions for National Parks as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000:

- That the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage;
- That the area has a distinctive character and coherent identity; and
- That designating the area as a National Park would meet the special needs of the area.

3. What difference would National Park designation make for both nature and people? What is the strategic contribution that a National Park in this area could make?

Outline the benefits and added value that could be achieved by the area becoming a National Park, describing the opportunities for nature recovery, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable and progressive land use and support to the area's communities in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible. These could include:

- complementing and adding to the strategic contribution of Scotland's existing National Parks;
- positive action for the restoration and regeneration of biodiversity and the protection of vulnerable and important species;
- reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change;
- encouraging nature-friendly farming, forestry and marine use;
- generating inward investment in the area's natural capital and the growth of green skills and jobs; and
- supporting the development of a green wellbeing economy.

4. How would designating the area as a National Park support visitor management and the area's offer for education, recreation and access to nature for all of Scotland's people?

Outline the benefits, opportunities and challenges including:

- Opportunities for enjoyment, recreation and understanding of the area's natural and cultural heritage;
- How National Park designation could support visitor management in the area;
- How National Park designation could support current and potential future transport infrastructure in the area;
- How National Park designation could support access to nature for Scotland's people.

5. Who has been involved in the development of this nomination?

Provide the name of the lead person, group or organisation in the nominated area, including contact details.

Provide a list of who has been involved in developing the nomination and details of any local community engagement activities undertaken to discuss, consider or measure/gain support for the nomination and any evidence of local/stakeholder support for the nomination where available.

Where applicable, details of any surveys or assessment of local support undertaken should also be provided here. Any conflicts of interest that nominating groups are aware of should also be declared with supporting information/evidence.

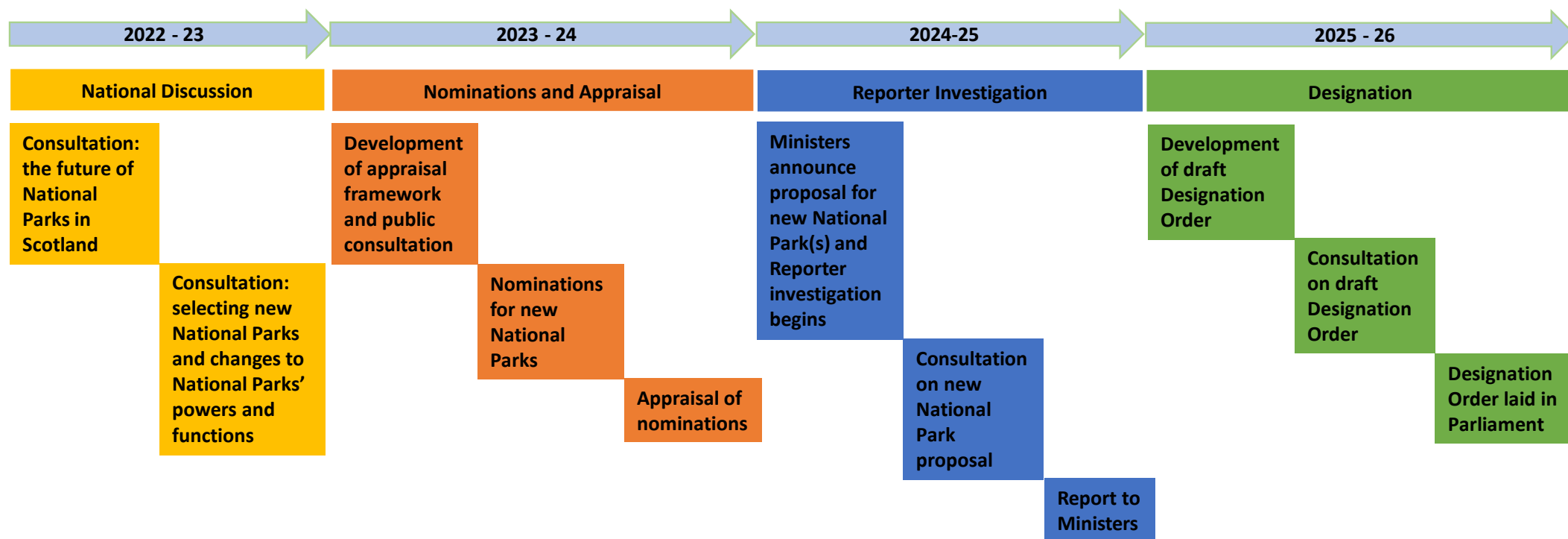
Nomination Form Annexes/Attachments:

[Insert any annexes or attachments here]

Annex B – New National Park(s) Project – Timeline and Process

Image 1 shows a high level timeline of the process stages for the selection and designation of a new National Park(s).

Image 1





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