

Perth And Kinross Council

22 January 2024

TAY FOREST NATIONAL PARK BID – ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS AND SUBMISSION

Report by Strategic Lead - Economy, Development & Planning
(Report No. 24/17)

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report updates members on recent consultation on the Council's bid to create a new national park in northern Perthshire and seeks authority to submit a bid to the Scottish Government.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:

- notes the findings of the engagement process carried out in October and November 2023 (Appendix 1)
- requests officers to hold an elected member briefing on the draft bid, prior to its submission
- authorises the Executive Director (Communities) to submit a bid to the Scottish Government, following final consultation with the Tay Forest National Park Member Officer Working Group.

3. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

- 3.1 This report is structured over the following sections:

- Section 4: Background
- Section 5: Proposals
- Section 6: Conclusion
- Appendices

4. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 4.1 The Scottish Government has announced its intention to form at least one new national park by Spring 2026.

- 4.2 The process has several stages, which can be summarised as:

- Nominations and Appraisal 2023-24
- Reporter Investigation 2024-25
- Designation 2025-26

Further details on the expected nomination process are available on the Scottish Government's [website and on NatureScot's website](#).

- 4.3 A new national park in northern Perthshire is an opportunity to further several Corporate Plan priorities, including achieving a stronger and greener economy and tackling climate change. Previous reports responding to this opportunity are as follows:
- [March 2023](#) – the Council agreed to make budget provision to support a bid submission for a new national park in northern Perthshire.
 - [May 2023](#) – the Council agreed a remit for a Member Officer Working Group (MOWG).
 - [October 2023](#) – the Council agreed an indicative proposed boundary and an engagement strategy for consultation with the public and stakeholders on emerging proposals.
- 4.4 Land Use Consultants Ltd (LUC Ltd) were appointed to assist in the engagement process and the gathering of evidence to support the final bid submission.
- 4.5 The deadline for submitting nomination bids to the Scottish Government is 29 February 2024.

5. PROPOSALS

Engagement Process

- 5.1 A launch event was held on 5 October 2023 in Pitlochry's Festival Theatre and was well attended by a wide range of stakeholders.
- 5.2 The engagement period ran for 8 weeks from 6 October to 1 December 2023.
- 5.3 The engagement process included:
- An online survey on the Council's [Consultation Hub](#)
 - A webpage providing information on the proposed bid: www.pkc.gov.uk/tayforestnationalpark
 - An e-mailshot to community groups, other representatives and stakeholders, and relevant agencies.
 - Media releases with national and local coverage, including television, radio, web and print.
 - Regular social media promotion of the consultation and individual events.
 - In-person drop-in sessions in:
 - Dunkeld
 - Pitlochry
 - Comrie
 - Aberfeldy

- Crieff
 - An in-person Q&A session in Pitlochry.
 - An in-person workshop with land managers (estates and farmers)
 - An online workshop with nature and environment organisations.
 - A final online session available for those unable to take part in other events.
- 5.4 Overall engagement levels and awareness were high, resulting in:
- Over 350 responses to the Consultation Hub survey.
 - Over 160 attendees at in-person drop-in sessions.
 - Around 40 land managers at a dedicated in-person workshop.
 - 24 representatives from 19 environmental organisations at a dedicated online workshop
- 5.5 Further details are set out in the attached consultation analysis report, prepared for the Council by LUC Ltd (Appendix 1).

Engagement Findings

- 5.6 The appended consultation analysis sets out information on the engagement activities along with a quantitative and qualitative analysis of responses gathered.
- 5.7 Key findings are set out at the end of each section of the attached report. On the principle of a national park (section 2), these findings include:
- Overall, there was general support for the proposed national park in the local area, with 56.8% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the idea of their community being located in the proposed national park (see Figure 1 below).
 - The greatest levels of support for the proposal (by group) are from charity / conservation group representatives (80% agree / strongly agree), community representatives / elected officials (75% agree / strongly agree), and members of the public (64.9% agree / strongly disagree).
 - The lowest level of support for the proposal (by group) is from land managers (78.1% disagree / strongly disagree).
 - There were generally high levels of support across most postcode areas within the proposed national park. Highest levels of support were identified within PH10 (72.2% agree / strongly agree), PH15 (63.3% agree / strongly agree) and PH16 - 18 (63.2% agree / strongly agree). Lower levels of support (by postcode) are identified within PH8 (areas around Dunkeld, Birnam and Amulree) (69.8% disagree / strongly disagree).

'To what extent do you agree with your community being in a national park in northern Perthshire?'

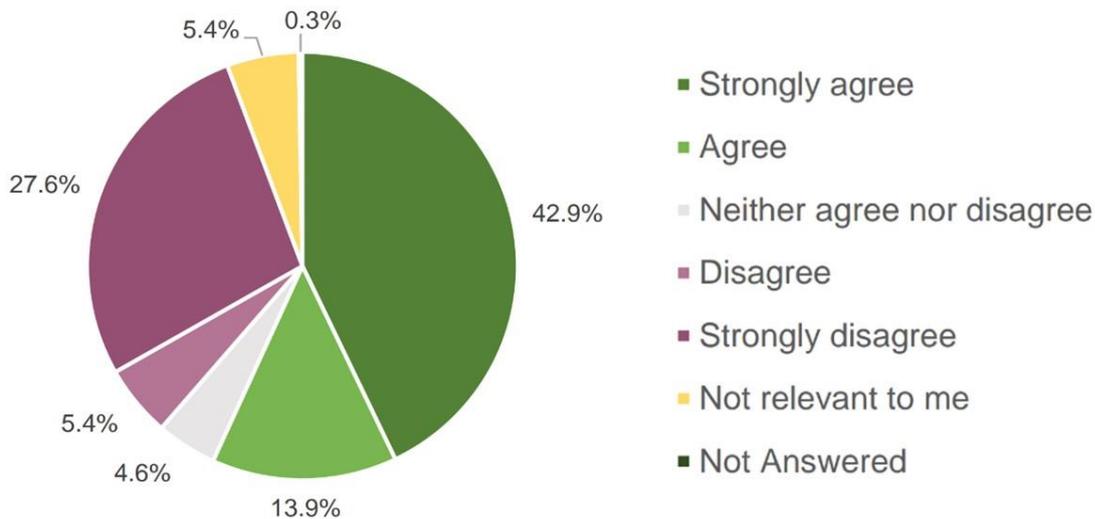


Figure 1: Extract from Consultation Analysis (Appendix 1)

5.8 Other highlight findings are:

- There was overall support for the indicative proposed boundary (53.1% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed) (section 3 of the appended report). The findings and evidence do not indicate a need to change which principal settlements are within the boundary. However, the bid would be stronger if the boundary was adjusted inwards in places to avoid where practicable bisecting areas of single land ownership highlighted to the Council, and to follow more closely the Highland Boundary Fault line south of Dunkeld & Birnam. Departures from the Fault line north east of Dunkeld and to take in Crieff are justified by the general support for inclusion of those areas. Figure 2 below shows the revised boundary at a high level scale.
- The issue of a potential future gap between national parks south west of Loch Tay was raised. Stirling Council have been engaged regarding this, and if the bid is successful this would be explored further as part of the Scottish Government's process.
- The environmental, social and economic qualities of the area are recognised by respondents, and additional assets and qualities were identified (section 4).
- Opinions on the priorities and opportunities for improvements in the area were gathered (section 5). Most respondents felt that national park designation had greatest potential to help enhance and restore biodiversity, with enhancing the tourism offer/visitor management ranking second and encouraging nature-friendly farming practices ranking third. The detailed qualitative findings will be useful in finalising

the bid submission. They will also be useful as reference for upcoming Council projects such as Local Development Plan 3.

- A more detailed understanding of the concerns which land managers (farmers and/or estate managers) have about a national park was gathered (section 6). There is scope to partly address some of these concerns in the finalised bid.
- Detailed ideas for the biodiversity and other natural heritage opportunities which a national park could support were gathered from environmental organisations (section 7).

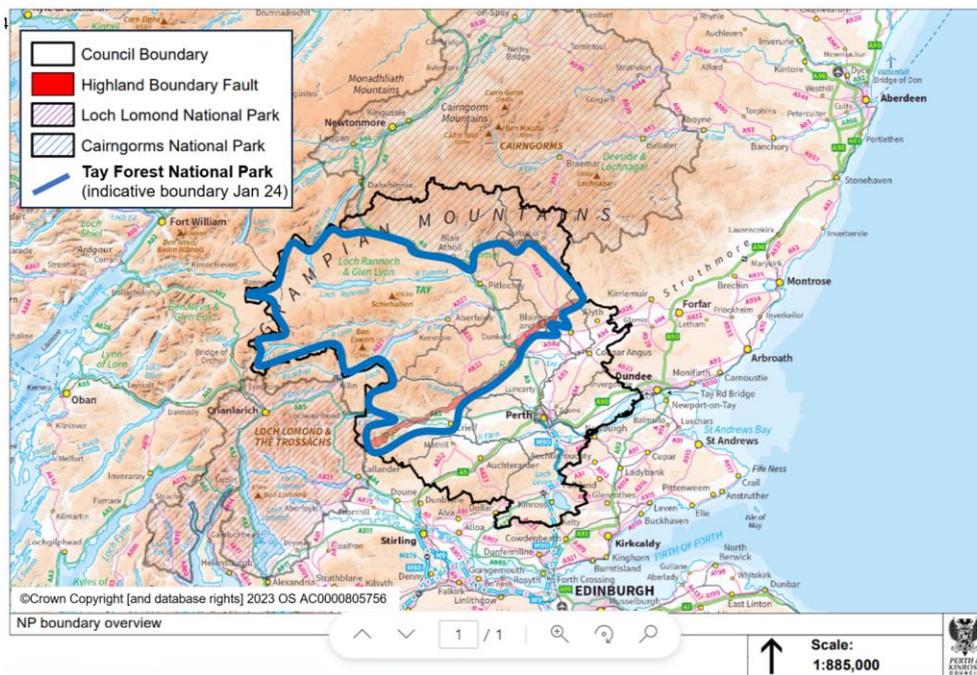


Figure 2: indicative proposed boundary (revised January 2024)

5.9 In summary:

- There is overall support for the principle of a new national park in northern Perthshire, with support from all respondent groups except land managers.
- There is overall support for the boundary proposed in the consultation. However, queries and points raised by respondents suggest that adjustments should be made to the boundary prior to submission as described above. It should be noted that if the bid is successful, there will be further consideration of this and other matters during the reporter investigation process.
- The detailed views gathered will be useful in finalising the nomination submission and producing a bid for a national park which reflects the aspirations and concerns of the people that live and work in the area.

Next Steps

- 5.10 In consultation with the Tay Forest National Park MOWG, officers will prepare a finalised bid for submission to the Scottish Government by the deadline of 29 February 2024.
- 5.11 Nomination submissions are to be structured and assessed using the following criteria:
- Outstanding national importance
 - Size, character and coherence
 - Special needs of the area
 - Visitor management and experience
 - Added value
 - Local support
 - Strategic contribution
- 5.12 The bid will be finalised using the appended engagement findings and a separate technical evidence report currently being compiled by consultants. It is intended to make minor adjustments to the boundary as outlined above, without affecting which principal settlements are included. These would be outlined fully at the elected members' briefing prior to submission.
- 5.13 A decision by Scottish Ministers on nominations is expected in mid-2024. If the nomination bid is selected to proceed to the next stage, a reporter investigation will be held to consider proposals and matters raised by stakeholders in more detail, as referenced in Section 4 above.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The opportunity to submit a bid to create a new national park is a rare opportunity to seek international recognition for Northern Perthshire's outstanding natural beauty and rich cultural and landscape diversity.
- 6.2 Extensive and in-depth consultation has been carried out on the emerging proposals. This demonstrates that there is overall support from residents, including those across the wider Perth and Kinross area. Communities and other stakeholders have provided detailed input. A high-quality and inclusive bid submission can now be finalised with the benefit of those findings.

Author

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Consultation Analysis report

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All Council Services can offer a telephone translation facility.

1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 This report supports the following priorities within the Community Plan 2022-27.

- (i) Mental and physical wellbeing
- (ii) Employability

Corporate Plan

1.2 This report supports the following objectives within the Council Corporate Plan 2022 - 27:-

- (ii) People and businesses are increasingly able to prosper in a local economy which support low carbon ambitions and offers opportunities for all;
- (v) Perth and Kinross is a safe and vibrant place, mitigating the impact of climate and environmental change for this and future generations.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. All costs arising from finalising the bid for submission will be met from the existing budget set for this bid. Financial implications arising from the success of the bid, and the formation of a new national park authority, would be the subject of separate reports during the statutory stages outlined in Section 4 above.

Workforce

- 2.2 There are no workforce implications arising from this report. Any changes arising from the success of the bid, and the formation of a new national park authority, would be the subject of separate reports during the statutory stages outlined in Section 4 above.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 There are no asset management implications arising from this report. Any changes arising from the success of the bid, and the formation of a new national park authority, would be the subject of separate reports during the statutory stages outlined in Section 4 above.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Act and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

3.3 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 the Council also has a duty relating to climate change and, in exercising its functions must act:

- in the way best calculated to delivery of the Act's emissions reduction targets;
- in the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programmes; and
- in a way that it considers most sustainable.

The information contained within this report has been considered under the Act. However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report.

Legal and Governance

3.4 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Risk

3.5 No significant risks have been identified as arising from this report.

4. Consultation

Internal

4.1 This report has been prepared with input to the project from the Tay Forest National Park MOWG and colleagues in relevant services.

External

4.2 This report sets out the findings of a major consultation with the public and external stakeholders.

5. Communication

5.1 Communications are set out in more detail in the above report and previous reports.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2.1 None.