

Perth And Kinross Council

4 October 2023

TAY FOREST NATIONAL PARK BID – ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Report by Head of Planning & Development
(Report No. 23/263)

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the engagement strategy to help shape the Council's bid to create a new national park in northern Perthshire.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:

- agrees to the engagement approach set out in this report and asks officers to seek input from communities and stakeholders
- Agrees that the findings of the engagement exercise will be reported back to Council in early 2024, along with the finalised bid submission.
- Agrees that the proposed name of the new park shall be the Tay Forest National Park
- Notes the branding that has been designed to support the bid.

3. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

- 3.1 This report is structured over the following sections:

- Section 4: Background/Main Issues
- 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](#). The period for submission of nomination bids is understood to potentially run from October 2023 to February 2024.

4.3 In March 2023, the Council agreed to make budget provision to support a bid submission for a new national park in northern Perthshire. The remit for a Member Officer Working Group (MOWG) was agreed in May 2023 and is attached as appendix 1.

4.4 The MOWG has developed the bid proposals, to a point where it is now appropriate to engage communities and stakeholders. This will assist in shaping proposals further ahead of reporting to Council in December and submitting the bid in early 2024.

5. PROPOSALS

Bid Outline

5.1 The Scottish Government will assess bids using criteria [published in draft](#) earlier in 2023. Bids are not expected to provide full detail. For those that are selected by Ministers to progress, matters such as the detailed boundary, or the role and function of a new national park authority, are to be considered by the Reporter at the Inquiry stage.

5.2 The assessment criteria cover the following:

- Outstanding national importance
- Size, character and coherence
- Special needs of the area
- Visitor management and experience
- Added value
- Local support
- Strategic contribution

Scottish Ministers have also indicated their wish to see National Parks as special places for wildlife and biodiversity that will actively support nature recovery and the transformational change needed in approaches to land-use, in order to achieve a just transition to net zero in Scotland.

- 5.3 The bid submission to be reported to Council in early 2024 will be structured around these criteria, supported by an environmental and economic evidence report, and a summary of the engagement to be carried out this October and November.
- 5.4 For the purposes of that engagement, the emerging proposals will be set out more simply, as set out below:
- An explanation of what a national park is.
 - A description of the natural and cultural heritage qualities of the area which would merit national park designation.
 - The scope for a national park authority with a remit to focus on how best to actively manage tourism in the area to ensure it is sustainable and to the benefit of the local economy and the natural environment.
 - The scope for a national park authority to access additional national funds to carry out focused management of the area to achieve those aims.
- 5.5 Although many details of the boundary will only be determined at subsequent stages, a set of Frequently Asked Questions is being prepared for use in engagement material.

Title and Area

- 5.6 The MOWG has developed a vision of a national park which connects Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park with the Cairngorms National Park. This area encompasses a rich diversity of natural and cultural heritage assets and an attractive visitor offer. Much of this relates to:
- the River Tay and its tributaries.
 - the forests of the area.

Accordingly, the MOWG has proposed naming the proposed park the 'Tay Forest National Park.

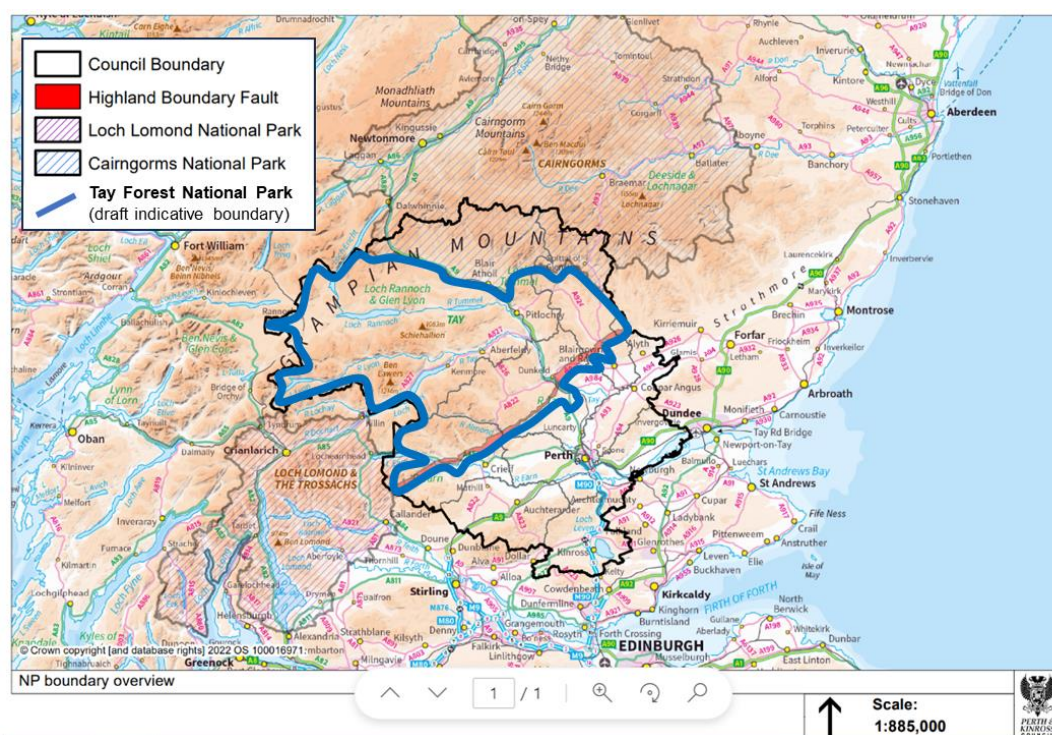
- 5.7 A logo has been developed to support the bid process, which conveys rivers and diversity of trees:



5.8 As noted above, nominations are not expected to define precisely the geographical area of the proposed park, as this will be considered during the Inquiry for selected bids. For the purposes of engagement in shaping the bid, a broad-brush boundary has been identified which:

- connects the two existing national parks
- largely follows the Highland Boundary Fault, as a major geological and landscape feature that influences land use and settlement patterns
- extends south of the Boundary Fault in places to incorporate clusters of high value natural heritage designated sites

A map showing the draft indicative boundary is provided below and is attached as Appendix 2.



5.9 The proposed national park takes in Aberfeldy, Pitlochry, Dunkeld, Birnam, and Comrie. National Park status would provide benefits directly in this area, and indirectly for all of Perth and Kinross. Potential benefits include:

- Additional abilities to carry out visitor management and a joined-up strategy for sustainable tourism in the park and its approach routes.
- A national park planning authority, with a role to be defined but currently envisaged as having 'call-in' powers similar to those of Cairngorms National Park Authority.
- Additional funding from Scottish Government to provide the core resource for a national park authority.
- Additional capacity to help achieve the Council's climate change targets, for example through nature restoration and sustainable travel.

Engagement

- 5.10 Engagement with communities and stakeholders will now take place to shape the bid proposals further. A key aim is to ensure that the bid submission and the vision for a national park it sets out reflects the views of the many different people that live and work in the area.
- 5.11 The engagement period will run for 8 weeks, from 6 October, closing on 1 December. A launch event has been arranged for the morning of Thursday 5 October in Pitlochry's Festival Theatre. A wide range of stakeholders have been invited.
- 5.12 Information on the bid proposal will be provided in a set of dedicated webpages. Individuals will be invited to help shape the bid through structured questions on the Council's Consultation Hub. There will be scope to provide general comments.
- 5.13 In-person drop-in events will be held in four settlements within the proposed park area as follows:

Dunkeld	Monday 30 October, Royal School of Dunkeld
Pitlochry	Wednesday 1 November, Pitlochry High School
Comrie	Tuesday 7 November, Comrie Primary School
Aberfeldy	Thursday 9 November, Breadalbane Community Campus

- 5.14 The drop-in sessions will run from mid-afternoon to evening to allow people with different daily schedules to stop by. It is proposed to hold an online session later in November to supplement the in-person events.
- 5.15 Publicity and awareness raising for the bid and the opportunities to get involved will be carried out.
- 5.16 Consultation findings will be gathered into a report. This will be used to prepare the finalised bid submission. The engagement report and an evidence report setting out environmental and economic information supporting the bid will be reported to Council in February 2024 for approval. They will then be submitted online to the Scottish Government.
- 5.17 If the nomination bid is selected to proceed to the next stage, a reporter inquiry 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 Highland Perthshire's outstanding natural beauty and rich cultural and landscape diversity.

Author

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Report to Council 10 May 2023 Establishment of Member/Officer Working Group National Park within Perth and Kinross
- Appendix 2 Map of draft indicative boundary

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	None
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	None
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 engagement will be met from the existing budget set for this bid.

Workforce

- 2.2 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 There are no asset management implications arising from this report.

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 from the Tay Forest National Park MOWG and colleagues in relevant services. Further internal engagement will be carried out as the nomination process continues.

External

4.2 This report sets out an strategy for engaging external stakeholders to help shape the nomination bid. The strategy has been developed by Corporate Communications with the MOWG.

5. Communication

5.1 Planned communications are set out in more detail in the above report and its appendix.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2.1 None.