

MIR 14

Yes. We at COAST support the Scottish Campaign for National Parks and The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland campaigns for a strategic approach to the designation of more National Parks (NPs) in Scotland; in particular we support the park initiatives with a significant marine and coastal component. .

Our experience on Arran regarding the No Take Zone and the South Arran Marine Protected Area has shown how even relatively small specially designated areas inspire pride and passion among local people and visitors, and they provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to local residents, visitors and Scotland as a whole.

We support the SCNP's proposal of a Coastal and Marine National Park (CMNP) centred on Mull, but possibly extending north towards the Small Isles or south towards Islay. We understand that extensive work carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Scottish Executive in 2005-2007 made a convincing case for the designation of at least one CMNP. SNH shortlisted five strong possible candidate areas; from these the Scottish Executive identified either Argyll Islands and Coast or Ardnamurchan, Small Isles and the South Skye Coast as possible strongest all-round candidates; it further suggested that a combination of these two areas might also be a strong candidate. The SCNP therefore proposed a CMNP based around Mull, Coll and Tiree, extending northwards past Ardnamurchan to the Small Isles and southwards to Colonsay and possibly Islay and Jura.

This area contains both outstanding coastal scenery and distinctive and contrasting island groups, with many marine features vital to the health of our coastal and marine wildlife. It is the landscape and the wildlife that draw many of the folk that visit and which therefore support our coastal communities in being sustainable.

MIR 15

COAST have some comments on the various proposals below:

- **Boundaries**

We understand that the boundaries of the proposed NP must be determined according to the conditions set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000:

- (a) that the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage,
- (b) that the area has a distinctive character and a coherent identity, and
- (c) 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 co-ordinated way.

Therefore determining the boundaries according to these conditions might result in a park not wholly within the Argyll and Bute Council area and work with other authorities will be required.

- **Planning**

Whether it is the Council or a National Park Authority all planning decision making which affects coastal and marine areas need to ensure protection of the

environment. The decision making must be consistent with the National Marine Plan, Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategic Framework Directive; and defensible at a local and national level.

- Resources

We agree that adequate resources which will be substantial will need to be made available

- Aims

It is key that the socio-economic development is sustainable environmentally and economically. All the four aims of Scottish NPs which are set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 are such drivers:

- (a) to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area,
- (b) to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area,
- (c) to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public, and
- (d) to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

There is considerable evidence that NPs bring significant social and economic benefits to their areas. Some of this evidence is set out in the SCNP 2015 report, The Socio-economic Benefits of New National Park Designations in Scotland.

- Local Industries

Promoting sustainable use of the natural resources of the area is one of the four aims of NPs in Scotland, so there is no reason why an Argyll and Islands NP should jeopardise the indigenous local industries referred to in the question, as long as they are being carried out in an environmentally sustainable way. The advantages to the tourism industry in particular which generally result from NP status are further explored in the SCNP 2016 report Tourism and Future National Parks in Scotland.

- Membership of Board and Governance

The governance of the Argyll and Islands NP will be required to conform to the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000; whereby at least one fifth of NPA members must be directly-elected local people, and of the remaining members half must be nominated by the Council (normally elected local Councillors) and half appointed by Scottish Ministers. This means that although it is highly likely that the majority of board or NPA members will be resident in the NP area, this is not an absolute requirement. It is likely that an Argyll and Islands NP would be less complex and costly than either of the two existing NPs in Scotland, Our understanding is that these issues are explored in more detail in the SCNP 2015 report Future National Parks in Scotland – Possible Governance Models.