

1) Do Ministers or SNH have any specific areas in mind?

No. Ministers have not ruled out any areas for consideration by SNH.

But they have provided a number of steers:

- that the area must contain both land and sea;
- that the coastal and marine resources of the area will be of outstanding importance;
- that the area should have not be too 'remote' and should have potential for access and enjoyment; and
- that designation of the Park could make a significant contribution to the social and economic development of the area

SNH is developing these into practical criteria to assess all the proposals that may come forward, together with other areas which may merit consideration. We may also need to consider a number of other factors – such as the future management of the area, or the degree of support for it locally and nationally.

2) How will a Park area be selected?

Ultimately, Scottish Ministers will select an area following their consultation next year (2006). SNH has been asked to prepare advice to inform this consultation. To do this we are assessing all the proposals that come forward, together with other areas which we believe may also merit consideration. We will be doing this against a standard list of criteria using the information we have available. This assessment and the supporting data will be made available as part of SNH's advice to Scottish Ministers in March 2006.

3) What aims will the National Park have?

Ministers have proposed that the new coastal and marine National Park will be set up under the existing framework of National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, and it will therefore have the same four broad aims as the terrestrial National Parks already in existence in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs and the Cairngorms. These are:

- conserving and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage;
- promoting the sustainable use of natural resources;
- promoting the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area; and
- promoting the sustainable economic and social development of its local communities.

These aims will be pursued collectively, so that the achievement of one aim for the area will not undermine the achievement of another but should contribute to it. In this way, social and economic development will be addressed alongside the proper protection of the natural heritage. However, in cases where there appears to be irreconcilable conflict between these aims, priority will be given the protection of the area's natural and cultural heritage.

4) Why do we need a coastal and marine National Park?

Compared to existing designation or environmental protection measures, Ministers believe such an approach can bring added value to the sustainable management of some of our most outstanding coastal and marine environments, for example through the better planning and coordination of various coastal and marine activities. A Park Authority will also provide a single point of leadership for the area and should increase community involvement in decisions about the management of many more of the area's resources. National Park designation is a great accolade and throughout the world experience suggests that Park areas benefit from an increased profile, strengthened management and greater investment.

5) Will it control fishing, windfarms, built development etc.?

These activities are already regulated. So the question is what is the added value of a Park taking on this role? This may mean different things in different places, but perhaps the most important role for the Park Authority will be in being able to better co-ordinate these activities through the statutory Park Plan. In addition, there are possibly a number of activities that the Park Authority will need to have some more direct influence, and possibly control, over but what activities these are and how this will happen in practice is still to be determined.

6) Will commercial fishing still be allowed in the new National Park?

Absolutely. Ministers have stressed that National Parks are not marine protected areas in another name, and that sustainable fishing will continue to take place within a future Park area, contributing to the achievement of all four aims of the National Park. It is not envisaged that the Park Authority will have any specific powers for fisheries management, but the Park Plan will provide an important context for considering the interaction between fishing activity, other activities and the coastal and marine environment within the National Park. Further discussion is therefore needed on the relationship between a future Park Authority and the work of the new Inshore Fisheries Groups, and also on how inshore fishing expertise can be best be involved in the management and governance of the Park Authority

7) How big will the Park be?

Again this is a question SNH has been asked to advise on. As a general rule, the experience on land suggests that larger Park areas are better for long-term management, and this would seem to be equally applicable for coastal and marine areas. At the same time, the area has to be small and coherent enough for its management and to give it a clear identify.

8) How far out to sea or inland will it go?

The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 applies *up to the 12 nm limit*, so a Park established under this legislation could not go further than that. The inland boundary is likely to be determined by the extent of 'coastal zone' e.g. the area of land most closely associated with the sea. This is likely to be quite limited on the mainland, but potentially could include whole islands and peninsulas.

9) Who will be on the Park board?

Under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, Scottish Ministers and local authorities will each make 40% of the appointments to the Board of the Park Authority, ***with the remaining 20% directly elected by people who are on the electoral role for the area.*** Legislation places an upper limit of the size of the Board of the Park Authority of 25, ***with a guarantee that at least 20% of the members will be people who live in the area, or who are its local authority ward or community councillors.*** There is scope within the existing legislation to vary these proportions for coastal and marine National Parks to take account of the wider community of interests in these areas, and also the different role of local authorities. This is one of the issues SNH has been asked to advise on.