

Stakeholder consultation on the selection criteria and approach to National Parks in Scotland 30/November/2022

Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) is an umbrella body for organisations working in the built environment in Scotland. Drawing on extensive expertise in a membership-led forum, BEFS informs, debates and advocates on the strategic issues, opportunities and challenges facing Scotland's historic and contemporary built environment. BEFS is a supporting member of the [Climate Heritage Network](#).

Other relevant consultation responses from BEFS can be seen below, as many issues overlap and demand associative consideration:

- [Draft National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\) Consultation](#)
- [Land Reform Net Zero Nation Consultation](#)
- [Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy Consultation](#)

BEFS Statement:

BEFS welcomes this NatureScot consultation as part of the commitment from Scottish Ministers to establish at least one new National Park by 2026, exploring the role and approach to National Parks and how areas for new National Parks could be nominated and selected.

We recognise that this is a key stage in the process, considering how best to make National Park designation more effective and responsive to current social and economic challenges, as well as addressing the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change.

BEFS notes the emphasis on flexibility within the range of functions that a new National Park might fulfil. As such we would consider that it is worth recognising the changed context when considering the cultural-heritage aspects; Historic Environment Scotland (HES), and Our Place in Time (OPiT), and Built Environment Forum (BEFS) did not exist when the initial parks were formed.

Given this it is reasonable to expect that the reasons for designation may still reflect those used previously, whilst also reflecting new and emerging priorities; there is an understanding that any national park should be of outstanding natural value, but other contributions: to net zero, to communities, and to place may well need to be balanced. BEFS continues to emphasise that culture/heritage/nature policy areas substantially overlap, especially in relation to net-zero goals.

Exploring the contribution of the historic environment and cultural heritage to the role and approach of National Parks moving forward is welcomed and felt to be vital; embedding heritage where appropriate and ensuring that existing considerations are maintained and enhanced should be a key concern.

BEFS considers it essential that the symbiotic nature of the existing historic (including the built environment) and the natural environment is recognised and fully integrated within this new approach. BEFS would further seek clarity within these definitions around the use of 'cultural heritage' vs 'historic environment'. In defining cultural heritage this could be addressed, and BEFS would suggest the need for new and updated designation criteria to speak the same language seen throughout the existing policy landscape – for example [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#), the [Historic Environment Policy for Scotland \(HEPS\)](#) and [Our Place in Time \(OPiT\)](#).

It is also worth highlighting that this consultation overlaps with a review of the existing OPiT - the new draft historic environment strategy, currently out for formal consultation contains this definition:

'The historic environment is the physical evidence for past human activity. It connects people with place, and with the traditions, stories, and memories associated with places and landscapes.'

The historic environment is part of our everyday lives. It provides character to our landscapes, enhances our local communities, and helps to forge a sense of place. Our historic environment is our homes, our workplaces, our schools, hospitals, and recreational facilities. But at its heart, the historic environment is about people, and about our collective past, present, and future. It's about our connections with each other and the places we live in; about the legacies we inherit, and those we leave behind. The historic environment is Scotland's story. And it is Scotland's future.

While the historic environment is the main area of focus in this strategy, it's just one part of Scotland's heritage. The historic environment sits alongside the material culture left to us as museum, gallery, and archive collections; the intangible heritage of stories, traditions, rituals, crafts, customs, music, and poetry; and our natural heritage: the diversity of life we share our planet with, shaped by millennia of interaction with human societies, and billions of years of evolution. [Full publication found [here](#).]

BEFS responses to further Consultations in relation to the Built Environment can be found at:

<https://www.befs.org.uk/resources/consultations/>

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Responding on behalf of an Organisation - **BEFS** (Built Environment Forum Scotland)

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