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Local Development Plan
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Dear Sir or Madam

Local Development Plan 2 Main Issues Report – response to Qs MIR 14 & 15

We are writing in response to the above two questions in the Main Issues Report of the Local Development Plan 2 consultation. Ramblers Scotland helps everyone, across Scotland, enjoy walking and protects the places we love to walk. We are the representative body for walkers in Scotland and are recognised by **sportscotland** as a governing body of sport. We are a membership organisation with 54 local walking groups in Scotland, running 3,500 group walks a year. These include groups based in Mid Argyll & Kintyre and Lochaber & Lorn (which covers northern Argyll within its area), and many of our other groups regularly visit Argyll & Bute to walk – attracted by the wonderful landscapes, wildlife and natural heritage of the area.

Question MIR 14: *Do you agree with the Council's preferred option to explore the potential to create a new National Park within Argyll and Bute?*

The concept would be a coastal/marine Argyll and Islands National Park which recognised that our heritage includes agriculture, seafood industries, forestry and tourism industries, potentially including the western seaboard of Argyll including Mull, Coll, and Tiree, Islay, Gigha, and the west Kintyre coast, the National Scenic Areas of Knapdale; Lynn of Lorn; as well as Jura, Scarba, Lunga and the Garvellachs.

If a review of National Parks is to be instigated by the Scottish Government then Argyll and Bute would actively seek to be included in this review in order that the options can be fully appraised at that time.

Ramblers Scotland has long supported the proposal to set up a ministerially-led national parks strategy group to carry out a review of existing national parks and consider locations for future national parks. We backed efforts within the then Scottish Executive to establish a coastal and marine national park in 2006, and in 2013 we supported the recommendations of the [Unfinished Business](#) report by the Scottish Campaign for National Parks and Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, which identified seven potential search areas including one which covers much of the area outlined above within Argyll & Bute.

Scotland's natural heritage is widely recognised as a national asset and a magnificent setting for outdoor recreation which brings huge benefits for our health and well-being. In addition, the [Marine Recreation & Tourism Survey 2015](#) showed that annual expenditure on marine recreation and tourism was estimated as being worth up to £3.7 billion to the Scottish economy.

We recognise the value of national parks in promoting rural economic development while also bringing higher levels of protection to our most treasured landscapes and our natural and cultural heritage, and acting as a focus for outdoor recreation. National parks bring significant social and economic benefit, directly through the work generated in park planning and management, but also indirectly through tourism. In principle we support the option to explore the potential for a new national park centred on Argyll & Bute, if there is strong local backing for this proposal.

Question MIR 15: *It is further proposed that:*

- *The boundaries of the coastal/marine Argyll and Islands National Park area must be wholly within the Argyll and Bute Council area;*
- *The Council retains the town and country planning function;*
- *That substantial resources are made available to both the Local Authority and the National Park to ensure the successful implementation of the Park and to ensure that the aims and objectives of the Park can be delivered;*
- *That the Park should have as its driving force the aim of securing the social and economic development of our communities;*
- *The Park should not in any way jeopardise our indigenous local industries of fishing, agriculture, aquaculture and tourism;*
- *That the vast majority of the members of the National Park Board must be from those living and working in the Park area;*
- *The governance model adopted should not represent a large costly bureaucratic organisation.*

Do you agree with the above proposals?

While we may understand the reasoning behind these proposals above, the establishment of a national park must primarily be based upon the National Park (Scotland) Act 2000. It may therefore not be possible for the boundary to be wholly within Argyll & Bute Council area or for the focus of the national park to be on social and economic development. A new national park will need to conform with the conditions set out in the legislation and deliver the four objectives for national parks in a coordinated way, including the promotion of outdoor recreation which is a key tourism industry in the area.

However, we do support the desire for the national park to be the planning authority. We also believe it should be the access authority for the area of the national park to ensure that outdoor recreation is fully supported and promoted for both residents and visitors.

In terms of governance, again the membership of the national park board will need to follow the terms of the legislation, but we believe there is a level of flexibility within this Act to ensure that the functions of the national park are carried out in a way that is tailored to the needs of the local area and this could be less bureaucratic than that within the two existing parks.

We would be happy to discuss these issues further.

Yours faithfully

Helen Todd
Campaigns & policy manager

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