

A third national park can pay its way, say Galloway campaigners

A study reveals creating a new protected area would not only protect natural heritage but through creating 1,400 jobs can repay its costs, reports **MARTIN WILLIAMS**



IT IS an area described as “a genuine Scotland in miniature” which ranges from wild hilly country punctuated by wooded river valleys and green pastures to bays with sandy beaches and rocky headlands. It is home to many of the habitats and animal species for which Scotland is renowned, from blanket bogs to coastal sand dunes, and birds of prey such as golden eagles and hen harriers to over-wintering wildfowl. Plans to help protect its rich landscape and wildlife while boosting the economy of Galloway by creating Scotland’s third national park have been resuscitated, with a new masterplan stating that it would create up to 1,400 jobs and would pay for itself. The bid for the new national park, which would bring together Galloway Forest Park, Scotland’s first Dark Sky Park and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, would be expected to boost a flagging economy by up to £70 million each year in the short term, a new study on the project reveals. The idea has previously been floated but the Scottish Government has previously

said any new park would incur significant costs and that, at a time of pressure on public finances, it would not be right to raise expectations. The Galloway National Park Association is rekindling the would-be project by trying to mitigate ministers’ concerns in an extensive study that makes the case for the national park. Despite being renowned throughout the world for its natural beauty, from the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond to the craggy heights of the Cairngorms, Scotland ranks near the bottom of the world league in terms of its number of national parks, which are seen as havens for the protection of natural landscapes, wildlife and habitats. Currently, the country has two national parks – Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, which was created in 2002, and the Cairngorms, established in 2005. Together, they cover only 7.2 per cent of Scotland’s land area, compared to England, which has 10 parks covering 9.3% of the country and Wales, whose three parks cover 19.9%. The report submitted to ministers by the association, which calls for a feasibility study to be carried out, says there is “significant local support” for the national park across local authorities, MSPs and local residents. The group is led by Dame Barbara Kelly who said: “Now is the time for us to speak up for Galloway.” John Mayhew, from the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, said the Scottish Government should give the plan full consideration saying it would be an “investment” in the area.



■ Scotland has less national park land than England or Wales.

“The cost would be offset by business growth, a rise in business rates, income tax and VAT”

national park would be offset by business growth and the associated rise in business rates, income tax and VAT.” The group believes national park status would raise the profile of the area and contribute both directly and indirectly to its economic and social development and prosperity. It is hoped the status would also help reverse “alarming” predictions of a decline in the region’s population. Latest projections show the population of the Dumfries & Galloway Council area dropping by 6.1% by 2037. Over roughly the same period, the working age population is forecast to fall by 20%, while the number of over-65s would increase by more than a third. The “worrying” picture confirmed by economic data which showed the Dumfries & Galloway Council area as having the lowest average full-time working wage in Scotland and a Gross Value Added (GVA) per head that, at £18,720, was more than 20% below the figure for Scotland as a whole in 2017. “Faced with this depressing situation and still worse outlook, the region – and especially its more rural south-western extremities, in both Dumfries & Galloway and South and East Ayrshire – clearly requires a boost,” the report says. A 2014 study shows Northumberland National Park, one of the quietest in England, attracts 1.5 million visitors a year who spend £190m. Cairngorm, also with 1.5 million visits, generated £185m. However, in spite of the latest move, the Scottish Government said: “There are no plans to designate new national parks in Scotland.”

BULLETIN



■ Kate Humble believes we are too urbanised.

TV’s Humble: ‘We need to get out more’

TV presenter Kate Humble has said wildlife shows are failing to persuade people to get outside and experience nature for themselves. The ex-Springwatch host complained that people are just “watching everything remotely”. Humble, 50, praised her former BBC documentary series, Springwatch, and big hit Planet Earth. “Given that I am such a country bumpkin, I really don’t understand what the barrier is. “We have got wonderful access to wild spaces – we have got nature reserves, parks, natural parks, all of which are very accessible to everybody. So, in a way, there is no excuse. “We have just become increasingly urbanised. We tend to listen to music rather than listen to the natural music of birdsong.” Humble, speaking at the launch of an initiative by shopping centres owner Intu to reconnect people with nature, added: “We are so distracted – it really is at our peril.”



■ The Ullapool Sea Savers took part in a beach clean at Ullapool Harbour yesterday, while also raising awareness of the challenges facing their local marine environment.

Young sea savers muck in to clean harbour and raise awareness of threat to marine life

A BAND of young activists who are working hard to raise awareness of climate change showed others how it’s done by taking part in a beach clean on their home turf. The Ullapool Sea Savers (USS) mucked in at Ullapool Harbour yesterday – one of Scotland’s busiest tourist destinations thanks to the village’s ferry terminal. The eight-strong group of young people, all pupils at Ullapool Primary School and High School, have committed to raising awareness of the challenges facing their local marine environment. Describing themselves as a group of “passionate, articulate,

well-informed and dedicated young people”, the environmentally conscious team is determined to tackle threats to marine life. The group formed in September last year and has been campaigning tirelessly to raise awareness of environmental issues. Ullapool sits in the heart of Wester Ross Marine Protected Area. It is a community immersed in the life of the sea on every level and USS members are determined to do everything they can to see that environment valued and protected now and for the future. Working closely with the

Scottish Wildlife Trust’s Living Seas NW Highland group, the young people have been educating themselves about their local marine life, but also about the harm being done to the seas – and everything that lives in them – both locally and internationally. They decided to channel their frustration and sadness and came together to seek out positive, pro-active ways to work to promote, protect and save the seas. Each activist has become an ambassador for a certain species, and they’re constantly forming partnerships and friendships with people to help support those species.

The young sea savers played a role in a successful campaign to stop the mechanical dredging of kelp last year. Kelp absorbs carbon dioxide and its forests are home to many marine species and when USS discovered that a large company wanted to licence kelp dredging for the first time in Scotland, they set to work. The young people campaigned when a protest was launched, even visiting the Scottish Parliament to make sure that the Crown Estate Bill amendment – ensuring only sustainable methods of kelp harvest is allowed – was passed.



■ The young people are passionate about the environment.

OPINION

Davidson returns with the same old stale anti-indy views

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Protesters stick to task

THREE protesters glued themselves to City Hall in London to raise awareness of climate change ahead of the EU elections. Andrew Medhurst, an ex-banker, Larch Maxey, a teacher, and Roger Hallam, a PhD student, are all running as independent candidates in the European Union elections as part of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Independents group. Mothir Rahman, a lawyer who is standing for the group, said outside City Hall: “We need to act now – it’s an emergency. “The dangers are quite clear.”

Concern over Assange term

UNITED Nations rights experts have voiced concern about the “disproportionate” sentence given to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange as well as his detention in a high-security prison. Mr Assange was given a 50-week sentence earlier this week for a bail violation and is being held at Belmarsh Prison in south-east London. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said: “This treatment appears to contravene the principles of necessity and proportionality envisaged by the human rights standards.”

Turner Prize hits brakes on Stagecoach over anti-gay rights campaign

THE Turner Prize has ended its sponsorship deal with Stagecoach South East – just a day after a controversy involving the transport company’s chairman was revealed. Sir Brian Souter unsuccessfully campaigned to keep Section 28, the law which banned teachers and pupils from discussing homosexuality in schools. He bankrolled the high-profile Keep The Clause campaign against

the Scottish Executive’s plans to scrap Section 28. At the shortlist announcement, the spotlight turned on the decision to pick the bus operator as sponsor of the prize, for which an exhibition will be held at Turner Contemporary in Margate. Officials from Turner Contemporary and Tate have now said the sponsorship had been ended by “mutual agreement”. “Turner Contemporary and Tate’s highest priority is to show and celebrate artists and their

work,” the officials said in a statement. “The Turner Prize celebrates the creative freedoms of the visual arts community and our wider society. “By mutual agreement, we will not proceed with Stagecoach South East’s sponsorship of this year’s prize.” The transport firm said in a statement: “Stagecoach South East has mutually agreed with Turner Contemporary and Tate not to continue with the company’s sponsorship of the 2019 Turner Prize.

“We do not want anything to distract from the artists and work”

“We are absolutely committed to diversity in our company, however, we do not want anything to distract from celebrating the Turner Prize artists and their work.” When, at the press conference to unveil the shortlist, it was asked if anyone had considered the choice of sponsorship a bad idea, there was an awkward silence. Tate Britain director Alex Farquharson said that picking a sponsor “is very much a matter for the hosting venue”. Victoria Pomery, director of

Turner Contemporary, said Stagecoach South East was good for the area, adding: “I think the service that they provide is first rate.” She said she hoped that work shown in its galleries “changes attitudes and mind-sets”. Last year’s Turner Prize was won by artist Charlotte Prodger with her film, shot on an iPhone, about “queer identity” and her experience of coming out as gay in rural Scotland. Turner Contemporary has said it will “continue to seek support”.