



Scottish Borders National Park



Preface

Nature, Culture, Tradition

In the Southern Borders, horses feature heavily in the written histories of the area: there is a recurrent, striking and dynamic image of horses and skilled horse-riders down the ages. Today, the horse retains a very special place at the heart of our rural communities. Horses and today's crop of horse breeders, trainers and riders, enthral spectators at race fixtures, agricultural shows, stunt riding demonstrations, gymkhanas, show-jumping and major three-day events. The Borders Racing Academy and Stable Life cater for young people with different aspirations and needs. For many Borderers – including those without a horse of their own – owning shares in race horses, laying bets at Kelso Races, or joining the Ridings, continues the great tradition of the horse in the Borderlands. From fierce Borders tribesmen riding to resist the Roman armies, Borderers fighting wars and enemies recalled in ballads, down from the depths of the past, and now on into an unknown future, ghostly restless figures on horseback are always galloping across the back of Borderers' minds.



In spite of the many threats facing Borders rural communities and the countryside, there is a profound sense of pent up energy, of tensions waiting to be released. As land use has changed over the centuries and the population grew, many of the Borderlands' clans like the Johnsons, Nixons, Elliots, Douglases, Armstrongs, Turnbells and others left to settle across the world. Rogues and heroes, republicans and imperialists, we want their descendants to come back and visit. We would like to tempt some of them, and the young people here today, and other visitors seduced by the Southern Borders, to stay and to join the legions of horse-riders who will go on to shape the future of this unique part of Planet Earth.

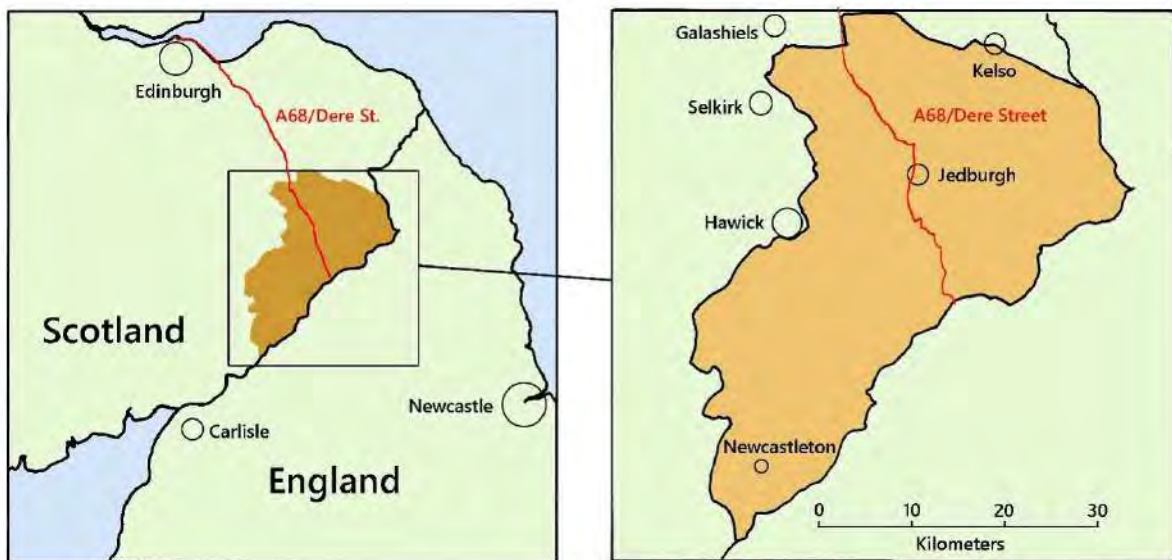
National Park designation for the Borders would not solve all the entwined problems of its environment and its communities. But it would help. Whether this bid is successful or not, we would like this document to communicate, to at least some degree, the fascination and importance of the landscape, its cultural heritage and its potential for the future.



Questions

1. What is the area being nominated for National Park designation?

The proposed **Scottish Borders National Park** lies at the heart of the Southern Uplands. The area's unique geology was created when the two ancient continents of Laurentia and Avalonia collided and thrust upwards, creating the Iapetus Suture and the range of mountains known today, well worn down over the intervening years, as the Southern Uplands¹. The area proposed is based on the old County of Roxburghshire, within Scottish Borders local authority, and at 1722 km², is average for a UK National Park (NP), smaller than Cairngorms' 4528 km² or LL&T's 1865km². A larger area would be quite feasible.



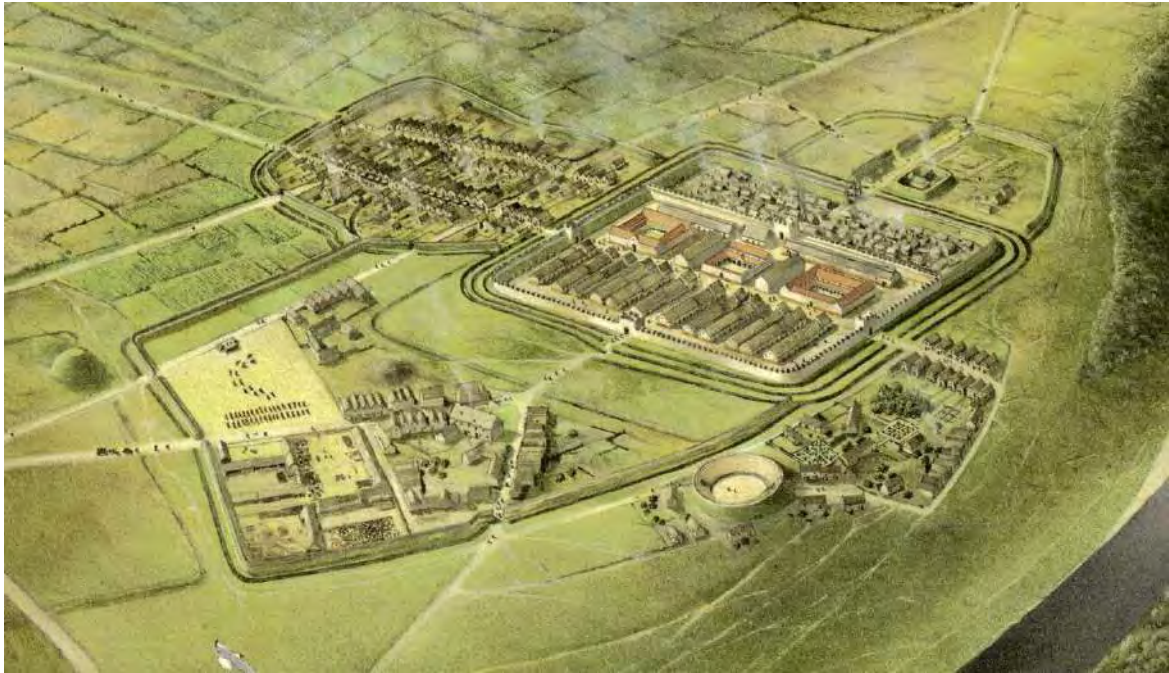
The southern boundary is the **Iapetus Suture**², at this point following the Anglo- Scottish Border. To the north and east, the hills are cleaved by the watercourses of the Tweed catchment, spawning ground of the Atlantic salmon³, which drain to the North Sea. On the west, the hills form the watershed with watercourses descending westwards towards the Solway. The area is rich in archaeological evidence of its varied past, from Neolithic times onward.

An oceanic climate, northerly location and the geodiversity of the Southern Uplands^{4 5} have created a range of unique habitats, reduced now in biodiversity, but with vast potential for nature restoration over the proposed area.

The peaty hills, scoured by glaciers and topped by volcanic plugs, extend to the horizon. There are species-rich patches of ancient woodland, increasing areas of young native woodland, and also large areas of commercial conifer forestry. The lower reaches of the eastern river valleys are fertile arable land. In the past, the great rivers provided the power for the woollen mills which processed the wool from the sheep on the hills.

The proposed NP is bisected by the A68, which follows the line of Roman Dere Street from York to Edinburgh. From the spectacular viewpoint at Carter Bar on the Border, the road descends through the heart of the proposed NP passing Jedburgh Abbey.

The extraordinary 'unconformity' of the red sandstone walls of the Jed Valley remind the traveller that James Hutton, 18th century founder of modern geology, made the observations here which underpinned his theory of the evolution of the Earth. Until then it was believed that the Earth had been created just 6000 years earlier. The basis of our current understanding of biodiversity, its loss and the possibilities of ameliorating this is rooted in these 18th century scientific discoveries.



Continuing north on the A68 in the steps of the Roman Legions, passing Melrose, the site of the vast Newstead Roman Fort and the hills of Trimontium, we cross the proposed NP boundary near Tweedbank, the terminus of Border Rail.

The town of Jedburgh lies within the proposed NP. Melrose, Kelso and Hawick lie on the boundaries. The villages of Newcastleton and Denholm lie within the proposed NP.

¹ Clarkson, E & Upton, B (2010) "Death of an Ocean". Dunedin Academic Press, Edinburgh, and Annex 1

² Clarkson, E & Upton, B (2010) "Death of an Ocean". Dunedin Academic Press, Edinburgh, and Annex 1

³ See Annexes Natural Heritage and Wildlife Corridors

⁴ Annex 1 – Natural Heritage

⁵ <https://scottishbordersnationalpark.com> see Appendix 2A

2. Why is the area of outstanding national importance due to its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage?



The proposed area is of outstanding national importance due to its natural heritage, its cultural heritage, and to the combination of its natural and cultural heritage.

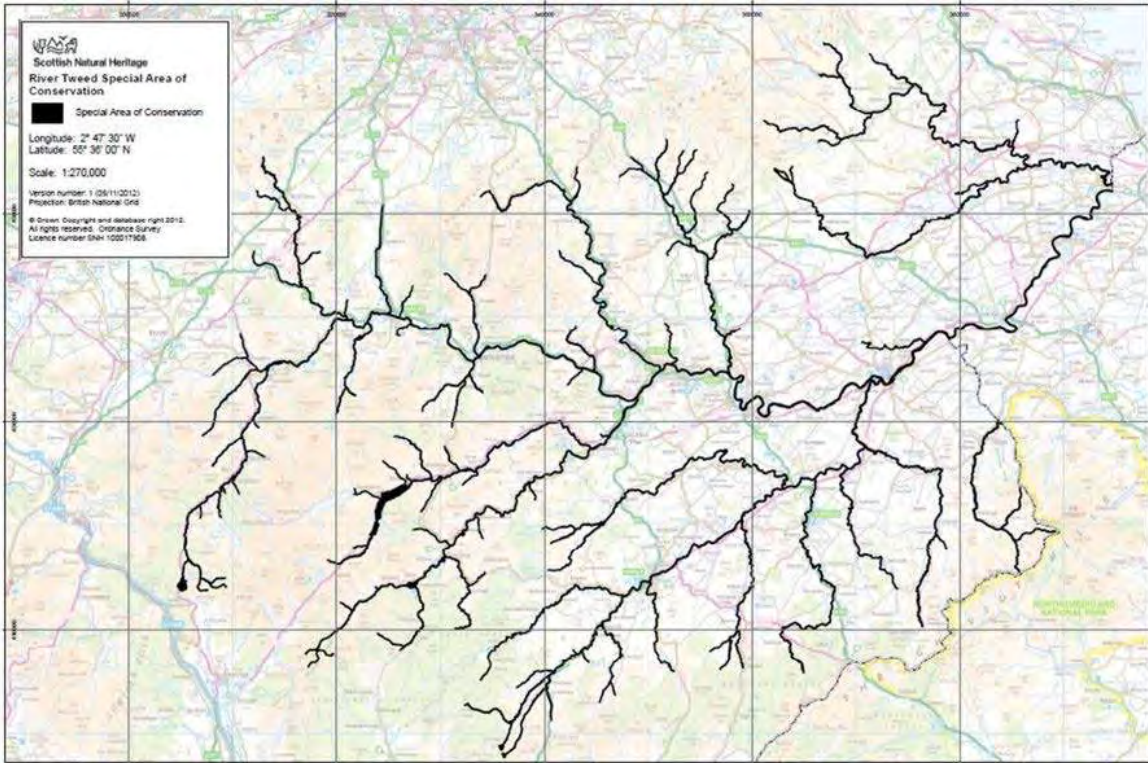
The Combined Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Southern Borders is the outcome of continuing interactions between its unique geodiversity, its global location, and human activities since the end of the last Ice Age 12,000 years ago¹. NatureScot (2019) declared 'The Scottish Borders have a distinct cultural identity and geographical character'². The narrative encompassing the co-evolution of the landscapes and culture of the Borders area is critical to understanding the development of Scotland into the modern nation it is today³.

This unquestionably marks the area as of outstanding national importance.

Natural Heritage

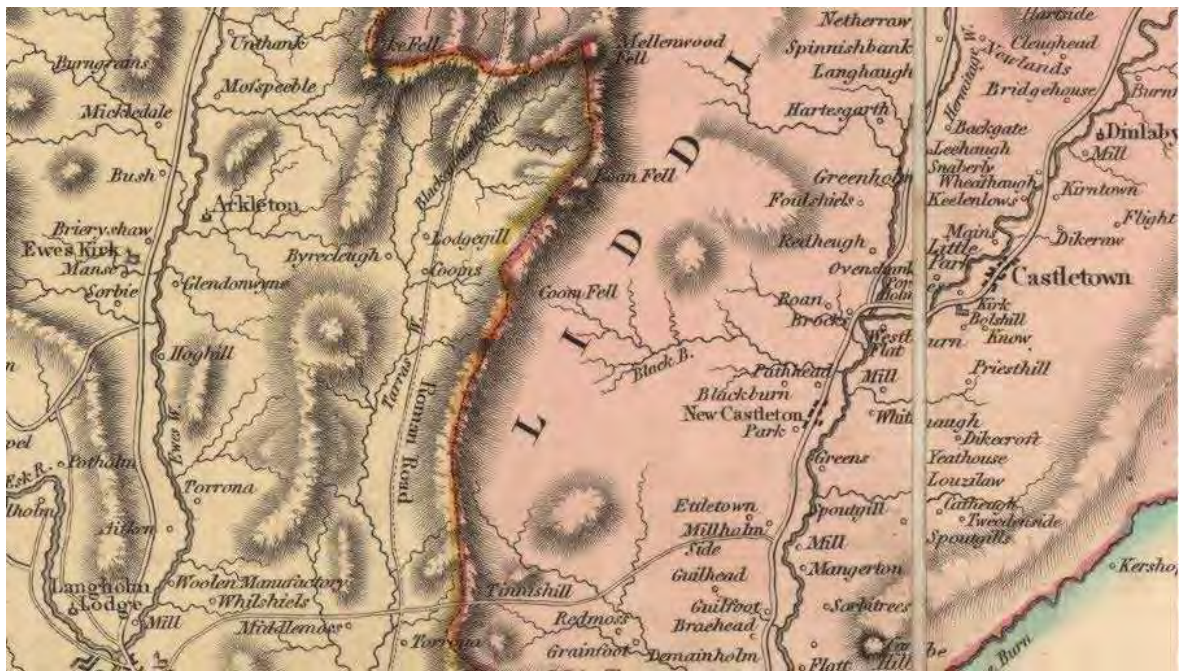
Evidence from many sources indicates that biodiversity has been in decline for centuries in the area. As in other parts of the UK, the rate of species loss has increased in recent years. Much of this is due to habitat loss caused by land management practices, and also to a range of aggressively invasive alien species including disease organisms. However, Nature is resilient – the sound of the cuckoo in spring, the jewelled flash of a kingfisher in Jed Valley, the Lanton ospreys gliding leisurely over the River Teviot, the patient fisherman hoping that the salmon will bite, the hare, badger or roe deer crossing the road in front of you in the evening, are just some of the reminders of a rich and resilient wild community ready to resurge with a bit of help. There are a substantial number of excellent projects aiming to help: rewetting peat, planting native trees on the hills and along watercourses to shelter the young fish, removing invasive plants, and many more.

However, there is a long way to go, and a vast amount of knowledge, skill and effort on the ground coordinated by a NP is needed to extend and improve habitats and restore functioning ecosystems⁴.



There are many SSSIs and other designations in the proposed area but the number alone does not give a meaningful measure of their significance for nature restoration. The outstandingly important Tweed SAC extends over two thirds of the proposed area. It also extends beyond to cover all the streams, rivers and fish in the Tweed catchment, across most of the Scottish Borders, protecting several species and habitats, including the precious Atlantic salmon.

A number of agencies are engaged in critically important work to increase this protection, but they are hampered by several factors⁵.



At the southern end of the proposed NP lies the extensive Langholm Hills SSSI and SAC, part in D&G (this part looked after by the Langholm Initiative and not included in the proposed NP). The 13,000+ acres of the SSSI-SAC in the Scottish Borders abuts a 2500 acre ecological restoration project on the hills of the watershed⁶. The traces of a Roman road from Carlisle to Hawick⁷ links them, and marks the beginnings of one of the wildlife corridors crossing the area which could eventually link uplands right across the Borderlands.

It is CSBNP's ambition to support the development of major land-based wildlife corridors connecting the east coast to the west, with the proposed NP at their heart⁸. This will be complementary and adjacent to the watercourses which are, themselves, crucially important wildlife corridors providing for so much important biodiversity⁹.



Golden Eagles¹⁰

The project to bring back a breeding population of golden eagles to the south of Scotland is still at an early stage but young birds are often sighted over the proposed area. These birds need space, and their establishment requires the willing and permanent support of landowners and communities across Southern Scotland. This emphasises the need for continuing landscape-scale commitment and cooperation between regions and communities. The proposed NP would lead on this.

These examples also give some idea of the importance of the proposed area nationally.

Much more needs to be done, and there is huge potential for nature restoration. Coordination by a NPA is needed.

Cultural Heritage

The proposed NP area has an extraordinary and unique cultural heritage¹¹. Its history is carved into the landscape. From the Neolithic period down through the Bronze Age and Iron Age, all the way to the present, humans marked the landscape with their tombs, religious sites, forts, agriculture and artefacts¹².

We owe our first written records about the Borderlands to the Romans. In the Roman period the Borders was a militarised zone. Many of their arrow straight roads, orderly forts and signal towers are still visible. The Trimontium Museum in Melrose provides fascinating insights into this period when the Borders were on the farthest edge of the Roman Empire, and the local tribes fiercely resisted the alien power¹³.



Less evidence remains of the early mediaeval period but by the 11th century, when King David 1st endowed three of the four great abbeys (whose magnificent red sandstone ruins stand in the proposed NP to this day), Christianity was well established. The scale and sophistication of these ruins testifies to the wealth and skills of the area, repeatedly dissipated by wars, but recreated by a resilient people.

The Reivers from the chaotic 14th to 16th centuries were the folk heroes. Their songs and stories have come down to us through the rich oral and musical tradition of the Borders. Families survived through plundering their neighbours. Songs and stories depict them as fearless riders living by their own codes of honour.

The catastrophic defeat of the Scots at Flodden Field in 1513 is still commemorated in the Hawick Horse statue, and the deaths of the sons of Hawick at Flodden is remembered with emotion at the Hawick Common Riding. The Common Ridings of the Border communities are a tradition rooted in memories of this turbulent past and in the fierce love of their land of the now peaceful communities within the proposed NP.

In 1545, Henry VIII's army devastated Tweeddale and Teviotdale. **Responding to the local community, CSBNP has taken this catastrophic event, re-enacted in a video now on the CSBNP's website¹⁴ as the focus for an ongoing demonstration programme of projects: 'The Twelve Towers of Rule'¹⁵.** To date, this has actively involved more than 200 young people in exploring the everyday lives of a late mediaeval rural community in the Valley of Rulewater, mainly through archaeological investigation and workshops and through complementary archival research by mediaeval historian Professor Richard Oram¹⁶.

In 1603, James VI and 1st united the Kingdom (although not the Parliaments) and brutally imposed order on the lawless Borderlands. By then, the Reformation had transferred ownership of the extensive abbey landholdings to the great landowners. These families continued to play an important role locally and nationally, and their castles, mansions and designed landscapes contribute to the area's rich cultural heritage. Most are open to the public for at least part of the year.

Changes in agriculture and the growing importance of the textile industry led to greater concentration of the population in settlements and towns. To this day, these communities celebrate traditions which have evolved in the Borderlands over a thousand years or more. As well as the Common Ridings, summers offer many local festivals of traditional music, of agriculture and country life, and of re-enactments of past battles¹⁷.

There has been a fair amount of emigration over the years, and the diaspora retain great affection and interest in their Border roots. Clan gatherings bring substantial numbers of visitors to the area to enjoy the legendary landscapes and to visit the churches and graveyards whose gravestones tell part of the story of their ancestors. Hawick's Heritage Hub, which is the home of the Scottish Borders archive and Local Studies collections, and small well-presented local museums, bring the past vividly to life for visitors¹⁸. It is impossible here to give more than an indication of the abundance and complexity of the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

This long-contested borderland, which played such a central role in the birth and growth of the Nation, unquestionably warrants NP designation. That would give much needed long-term sustainability to the improvements in biodiversity, habitat restoration and the protection of cultural heritage, all of which would provide exemplars and leadership to others.



¹ <https://scottishbordersnationalpark.com> summarised in Appendix 2A
² www.nature.scot/doc/landscape-character-assessment-borders-landscape-evolution-and-influences
³ Annex 3 – The Cultural Heritage
⁴ See Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage
⁵ See Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage and Annex 2 - Wildlife Corridors
⁶ <http://www.gorrenberry.org.uk>
⁷ See section of Roman road on Ainslie (1780) map, in NLS map collection (NLS.com)
⁸ See map of proposed wildlife corridors below
⁹ See Annex 1 – Natural Heritage and Annex 2 - Wildlife Corridors
¹⁰ <https://goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk>
¹¹ Link to FS Appendix 2B
¹² See Annex 3 – Cultural Heritage
¹³ Reid, J R (2023) "The Eagle and the Bear: a new history of Roman Scotland, Birlinn, Edinburgh.
<https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com>
¹⁴ <https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com>
¹⁵ See Annex 4 – The Twelve Towers of Rule
¹⁶ <https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com>
¹⁷ See Annex 3 – Cultural Heritage
¹⁸ See Annex 3 – Cultural Heritage

3. Why does the size, character and identity of the area warrant designation as a National Park?

NatureScot (2019) declared that: 'The Scottish Borders have a distinct cultural identity and geographical character'. Answers to previous questions confirm this, and the following section explains how NP designation would enable the Scottish Borders' transition to a sustainable, biodiverse exemplar to Scotland and beyond.



The proposed area contains the quintessential heart of the Southern Uplands and the Scottish Borderlands. It corresponds to a unique geologically and historically interlinked entity, the former county of Roxburghshire, concerning which there is a shared cultural heritage and traditions, and a large and useful body of historical data¹. The suggested boundaries in the map provided enclose 1375 km², the median size of a UK NP. This would be a manageable area for a small, competent NPA. It is emphasised that final decisions about the boundaries should be made after full consultation (apart from the southern boundary on the Border). Some of the peripheral area could be included, without increasing the management challenges.

As proposed, it would include a substantial representation of the geodiversity of the Borders², showing the essential interconnectedness of the landscape features and the different ecosystems: the peaty hills with their upland bird populations, the streams and rivers – populated with salmon, trout, eels and otters – running down to the flood plain pastures, then flattening out to the eastern fertile arable lands. On the wetter west side of the watershed there is high moorland. The relationships between these different habitats is clear in the landscape.

There are abundant opportunities for innovative ecological restoration and regenerative agriculture projects³, potential exemplars to areas beyond the National Park. This requires rigorous coordination of design and analysis of projects, using standardised measures and careful controls, to provide useful transferable knowledge⁴.

Restoration of habitats and dynamic ecosystems takes us into experimental, poorly understood territory; Carrifran in 2000 was the first attempt to restore native woodland at scale on upland, overgrazed hills⁵. There was little scientific knowledge to support the project initiated by Philip Ashmole and colleagues. A great deal was learnt but there is a long way to go. For example, we still do not know whether absence of the subsoil flora and fauna of a long-established woodland inhibits regeneration on bare upland ground. Considerable acreages of native woodlands have been planted since then, funded by the taxpayer, yet we do not know if we are giving them the best start. Research is underway internationally to find some of the answers, and locally at the Hutton Institute and the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh⁶. Hence our current efforts at ecosystem restoration are highly experimental. These projects should be carefully designed and monitored across Scotland, recognising its many varied niches, to optimise outcomes.

There have been other ecological restoration projects, as well as native woodland planting, in the proposed area⁷. **A National Park in the Southern Borders would be well positioned to support and coordinate the many bodies involved in ecosystem restoration in the Southern Uplands, to enhance outcomes and sustainability.**



Commercial activities

Forestry: There is a substantial area of commercial conifer forestry in the proposed NP. More is being planted by private companies with the help of generous grants and tax breaks. At present much of the larch in the area is infected with *Phytophthora ramorum* and is being felled to contain the disease. Recognition of the risk posed by extensive areas of monoculture has led the Scottish Government to decree slight reductions in the percentage of spruce in future plantings.

These issues raise questions about the future directions of both commercial forestry and the species mix which should be adopted on our hills. The proposed NP would address these questions. Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) is currently consulting on the next ten year plan for an extensive area in the proposed NP. This could provide a valuable testing ground for alternative approaches to commercial forest management. As well as some native woodland restoration, peat restoration and pond creation, it could include some commercial hardwood planting. With partners, a NPA could develop and deliver short training programmes, for different woodland management and monitoring approaches, including commercial hardwood forestry. There is little UK experience of forestry apart from conifer plantations. Hardwood forests typically have 100 year rotations in most of Europe, but their timber is much more valuable, and they provide a rich and varied habitat for many native species. Short workshops for visitors on eco-educational topics could also be offered either by FLS or the NPA.

Arable farming⁸: There is profitable arable farming in the drier river valleys east of the watershed, widening out towards the eastern edge of the proposed NP. War has hiked the cost of inputs and has helped to stimulate interest in regenerative farming, which is being supported by scientific research and field trials. There is an opportunity for a NPA, in partnership with NFUS and SRUC, to coordinate experimental projects involving local farmers and help them to access funding and advice. Valuable information relevant to the local environment would be produced, which would provide models to roll out to the extensive east coast arable lands beyond the NP.

Designation as a National Park

The area would greatly benefit from designation. It would provide exemplary leadership in models of harmonious and sustainable symbiosis between communities and the increasingly biodiverse ecosystems around them. Embracing partnerships, an NPA could improve project impact, assist in raising funding, and deliver long-term sustainability.

¹ See, e.g. Jeffrey, A. (1836) "An Historical and Descriptive Account of Roxburghshire from the most ancient to the present times", Fraser & Co, Edinburgh. And many other sources.

² See FS appendix 2A at <https://scottishbordersnationalpark.com>

³ See Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage, Annex 8 – Climate Change Mitigation etc, and Annex 9 – Farming, Food and Drink

⁴ See answer to Q1 and Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage

⁵ bordersforestrust.org

⁶ See Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage and Annex 2 – Wildlife Corridors

⁷ See Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage and Annex 2 – Wildlife Corridors

⁸ See Annex 9 – Farming, Food and Drink

4. How would designating the area as a National Park help to meet the special needs of the area?

Potential for the protection, recovery and restoration of the area's natural assets.

There are already a substantial number of recent and/or current projects focused on protection, recovery and/or restoration of the area's natural assets and overall biodiversity¹. To achieve real sustainability, these are in desperate need of better coordination, standardised record keeping to build a knowledge base, and methods of measuring and maintaining the improvements they achieve. Virtually all are short term project-based, without security of long term support and monitoring. There is a general shortage of underpinning scientific knowledge relevant to the area's unique geodiversity and geographical location: although some research results from elsewhere can be applied here, with most there is uncertainty about their applicability.

Critically, there are shortages of funding and on-the-spot skilled and unskilled labour to undertake the scale of work required now and in the foreseeable future.

These challenges are shared by the rest of Scotland and the UK. The proposed area could, if designated, contribute substantially to addressing these challenges and provide innovative leadership to others.

What are the immediate needs in the proposed area for restoration and recovery?

There are extensive areas of damaged peat which would reward conservation measures. There are extensive areas of reduced biodiversity and habitat degradation which could be improved. The protection of important species, such as the Atlantic salmon, could be enhanced. The skills, knowledge and commitment required for these and other pressing tasks could be developed through a combination of training approaches, coupled with better recording, analysis and shared communication about project design, delivery, measurement and monitoring approaches. It would also be essential to maintain knowledge-sharing links with other organisations involved in similar activities.

Methodology employed in e.g. successful large and small scale nature improvement projects in the North Yorkshire National Park demonstrates the need for stakeholder consultation and support, methodical surveys and planning, and built-in measurement of progress and outcomes, from the start². A Scottish Borders National Park would provide the opportunity to apply that discipline to a whole array of nature recovery and improvement ventures.

All this requires continuity of funding. The proposed NP would employ a professional fundraiser. Partnering with a NP increases credibility with funders, and NP involvement gives confidence to landowners that there is on-the-spot help with problems. NatureScot is currently having success in interesting international funders, and the proposed NP would aim to partner with it and others to safeguard the enduring impact of restoration projects.

Just a few of the local opportunities for improvement:

- Already substantial areas of rough hill pasture have been planted at taxpayers' expense with native broadleaved trees. Although individual landowners in most cases will be monitoring their growth, there is no standardised method of recording, and so no learning opportunity to improve the chances of further planting projects.
- There is a Europe-wide research project to identify the impact of climate change to the viability of groups of native tree species in different habitats. A number of such groups, or Genetic Conservation Units (GCUs)³, have been registered in the north of Scotland, but none so far in the Southern Uplands with its distinctive ecology. A young farmer in the Southern Borders, Robert Bailey, is hoping to register a GCU, but there is no Scottish Government funding. The costs involved are small but there has to be a 20 year commitment which needs some sort of public underpinning.
- While tree planting is generously funded by the Scottish Government, there has been less consideration of restoring the other fauna and flora of a sustainable woodland ecosystem. Now NatureScot is funding a two-year project at the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh to collect, propagate and plant out ten very rare plant species in suitable Scottish sites⁴. The proposed NP has several such sites which will be on offer next year when the young plants are ready. If designated the NPA would be able to ensure monitoring and protection of these sites in the long-term.
- The Atlantic salmon⁵



Protection and enhancement of cultural/historical heritage

CSBNP has been project-managing the widely reported 'Twelve Towers of Rule' programme⁶ in partnership with several local and national historical and archaeological organisations, public and private, and individuals, including 200+ young people. This is a demonstrator project showing how an NPA-coordinated programme can inspire and educate people of all ages to enhance and protect our cultural/historical heritage and, importantly, access the necessary funding.

This initiative has led on to a new project, initiated by CSBNP, to find appropriate, alternative, sustainable uses for the many threatened small churches that play key roles in the landscape, the cultural heritage, and in the hearts of communities and the diaspora.

The proposed NPA would strengthen and extend its relationships to give continuing support to the enhancement and understanding of the cultural/historical heritage, and encourage retention of practical skills for the protection of the built heritage, such as stone masonry etc. Fundraising by the NPA would be a critical ingredient⁷.

Sustainable use of the area's natural resources

'Something in the light with its hard sinister cleanness, gives mystery and dread to these hills'⁸.



The most obvious use of the area's natural resources is for sustainable tourism, exploiting its interlinked cultural and natural heritage. The Borders' glorious landscapes and winding routes offer great potential for walking, cycling, horse riding and other active leisure pursuits for visitors and locals⁹. In addition to their wellbeing benefits, if suitable information is provided, these offer opportunities to increase the understanding of the threatened natural and cultural heritage, and the steps being taken to reduce these threats and mitigate the impacts of climate change. This contributes to the Net Zero ambitions of the NPA. **CSBNP is in the process of adding to the many attractive routes over the hills and along the rivers, and working on providing better information about the natural and cultural/historical heritage¹⁰.**

There are great opportunities to increase these activities. However, increased visitor numbers pose challenges, and this is explored in detail in the answer to Q5 and in Annex 6 – Visitor Management, which also touches on low emission transportation issues.

Farming: There is no shortage of challenges here.

Arable areas need to be supported towards regenerative farming practices. Much research and many field trials are ongoing in the Borders, but without the details about farm support

to be provided in the secondary legislation accompanying the Bill currently going through Parliament it is not possible to offer precise actions. However, **the NPA would actively support farmers in accessing advice and support.**

There is a similar lack of detailed information available at this time about future grants for hill farmers. **The NPA would provide advice and support about diversification opportunities, many of which are likely to be tourism-related¹¹.**

Quarrying and mining: There are several quarries of mainly low value stone in the area. It is not envisaged at this time that this would create problems for a NP but a watching brief would be maintained.

Mining as a possible challenge is currently an unknown quantity. The gold mine in LL&T NP has raised concerns since its inception, while other UK NPs have become targets for proposed mines as novel resource demands have arisen. The Borders NP will maintain a watching brief for such proposals.

Socioeconomic need

Scottish Natural Heritage's 'Natural Heritage Futures – Borders Hills'¹² noted that 'The area relies on farm incomes which, particularly in the case of hill farms, have experienced a severe decline recently. Forestry provides some employment. The tourism industry is important to the area and, in common with the rest of Scotland, has seen several lean years. Fishing, grouse shooting and walking are important sectors within the tourism economy. Unemployment in the Borders hills has risen since the recent closures of textiles and electronics factories, particularly in Hawick. There are now marked economic contrasts between areas in the north within commuting distance of Edinburgh, and the more remote areas to the south where farming and other industries have declined'.

Six of the nine data zones in the Scottish Borders within Quintile 1 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (the 20% most-deprived in Scotland) are in Hawick, with the other three just outside Roxburghshire¹³. Amongst many other imbalances, health inequalities are more prevalent in such areas: for instance, in 2021, people in the most deprived areas of Scotland were 15.3 times as likely to die from drug misuse as those in the least deprived areas¹⁴. Hawick is badly affected by drug misuse, as are several other Borders towns where anti-social behaviour and isolation are rife. **Greater access to the countryside and a chance to reconnect with nature for town dwellers is known to promote better mental and physical health and wellbeing, as the pandemic demonstrated.**

Compounding its socioeconomic problems, the Scottish Borders' population is ageing faster than the average rate in Scotland. Between 2001 and 2021, the 25 to 44 age group saw the largest percentage decrease (-22.9%), while the 65 to 74 age group saw the largest percentage increase (+52.8%). Between 2018 and 2028, the 45 to 64 age group is projected to see the largest percentage decrease (-10.8%), and the 75 and over age group is projected to see the largest percentage increase (+29.6%)¹⁵.

Although much work has been done by SBC, SoSE and other public and private sector bodies to encourage new business and new businesses to the area, the local economy needs to improve significantly to be sustainable and attract and retain young families and working age people.

UK and international research shows that substantial socioeconomic benefits accrue to National Park areas as well as to the ‘halo’ areas around them. An NP tends to increase high-end tourism all year round, rather than concentrating on the summer period or specific events, making better use of existing infrastructure. In the proposed area this would generate growth in diverse businesses, including construction, professional and technical services, as well as retail and hospitality. There would be a permanent, year-round boost to local employment.

CSBNP’s independent Feasibility Study¹⁶ found that the proposed area meets the three conditions for National Park status required by the 2000 Act, and that:

- Designation would strengthen the economy of the Park area AND the much wider area surrounding it (the ‘halo effect’).
- Current (2017) socio-economic trends in the southern part of the Borders are not encouraging.
- NPs are proven contributors to sustainable economic growth.
- There is enthusiastic support from local communities and businesses.

CSBNP has updated its 2016 assessment of the cost and revenues of a Scottish Borders National Park, using the Office for National Statistics’ calculation of cumulative inflation between 2016 and early 2023 (39.42%). The assessment now estimates that, in the first year of operation (second year since designation), the National Park Authority’s revenues would slightly exceed its costs, and by the fifth year after designation the revenues would exceed costs by somewhere in the region of £200k¹⁷.

Green skills and jobs

The foregoing sections illustrate just a few of the opportunities that NP designation would open up for the creation of substantial numbers of jobs and green skills. The NPA would work closely with Borders College, SoSE, SSDA, SBC and other relevant bodies to maximise this contribution to the environment, to the socioeconomic welfare of the area and to the wellbeing of Scotland as a whole.

¹ Summarised with examples in Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage

² Pers. Comm. Chris Watt, West Yorks NP, 13.11.23

³ See Annex 8 – Climate Change Mitigation and the Just Transition to Net Zero

⁴ Afinger@rbge.org.uk

⁵ Detailed in Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage

⁶ See Annex 4 – The Twelve Towers of Rule

⁷ See Annex 3 – The Cultural Heritage

⁸ Masfield, J (1935) “The box of delights”.

⁹ See Annex 5 – Active Leisure

¹⁰ See Annex 5 – Active leisure

¹¹ See Annex 9 – Farming, Food and Drink

¹² See: <https://digital.nls.uk/pubs/e-monographs/2020/216649985.23.pdf>

¹³ See https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/8027/simd_2020_summary_of_all_scottish_borders_datazone_scores

¹⁴ See <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/rgar/2021/scotlands-population-2021.html>

¹⁵ See <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/council-area-data-sheets/scottish-borders-council-profile.html>

¹⁶ See on website <https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com>

¹⁷ <https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com>

5. How would designating the area as a National Park support visitor management, sustainable tourism and access for all? How would it enhance public understanding and enjoyment of the area's assets?

The challenge for a Scottish Borders National Park will be to attract more people AND keep special all that makes the Southern Borders unique.



The post-pandemic surge of visitors to the countryside has not been universally welcome. CSBNP has looked at National Parks elsewhere to see how it can cherry pick from their experiences to avoid or mitigate problems.

Establishing a professional countryside ranger corps, backed up by volunteer rangers, including an inspired and informed cadre of junior schools rangers, and improving public transport, parking, camping, toilet and recycling facilities would help hugely in alleviating the visitor infrastructure and management issues experienced in many parts of the countryside when pandemic restrictions were lifted.

Apart from a few hot-spots, lack of footfall especially at many of its excellent visitor attractions, may be more of a problem than congestion for much of the Borders. However, overcrowding where it does occur, and inconsiderate users of the Borders roads, services and facilities, do not only degrade visitors' experience; they also lead to alienated local residents and businesses, overloaded infrastructure, environmental damage, and threats to an area's culture and heritage.

CSBNP's proposals take the 'prevention is easier and faster than recovery' line drawing on other National Parks and public spaces' years of experience in welcoming the vast majority of responsible visitors, mentoring and educating the newbies, and dealing effectively with the minority of not-so-well-behaved visitors.

Managing visitors with sufficient knowledgeable, welcoming, enthusiastic and professional rangers is key. This workforce, plus the provision of sufficient high quality, well maintained infrastructure, services and facilities, would alleviate much ASB.

To this end, **a Borders NP would set up a Pan Borders rangers corps** to work closely with local gamekeepers, ghillies, the emergency services, the South of Scotland Visitor Management Group, and the Scottish Borders Partnership Against Rural Crime, which tries to mitigate the negative consequences of people who visit the countryside but don't comply with normal standards of behaviour. The rangers would also liaise closely with SBC's two Community Action Teams (CATS), whose members tackle ASB across the Borders: rural areas have benefited from CATs' officers' targeting of off-road motorbiking, hare coursing and thefts.

Further contributing to first-rate services, **the NPA would continue its partnership with Heriot-Watt Digital Entrepreneurs to develop a comprehensive information dissemination programme using real-time apps**, including developing IT for visitor direction, management, bookings etc systems. These could also be used to control traffic flow and volume to Scottish Borders hotspots like Scott's View and St Mary's Loch reached by narrow roads, and the Borders abbeys when nearby car parks are full. Digital signage on trunk roads would provide clear, consistent messages at NP entry points, campsites and lay-bys, and ensure that the What Three Words app can be used to allow anyone to indicate immediately where they are in an emergency or if reporting an incident.

Simple and relatively inexpensive improvements to local infrastructure will benefit both visitors and local people year round. **The NPA will work with SBC and landowners to create more lay-bys and passing places, car parking, large waste bins and, especially over the summer season, temporary toilets, bicycle racks/shelters.**

Rangers would be central to coordinating many of the NPA's activities, partnerships and collaborations with e.g. Borders College. Many of these would have the potential to create – and attract funding – for diverse specialist jobs. Active support from the rangers would help to win the support of those who remain ambivalent about the need for new National Parks and their potential to e.g. coordinate large-scale habitat restoration or the wide-ranging mental, physical and economic benefits they can bring to those living and working in, or visiting, the Borders.

There is also a lot of untapped potential amongst older people, many of whom are still active and would appreciate the mental and physical benefits of volunteering along with like-minded individuals for different NP projects. Younger teenage volunteers could gain valuable pre-work experience in the NP, acquiring transferable skills so sought after by potential employers.

Keeping a balance between those living, working and managing an area, while allowing people to visit and enjoy it, will often involve a National Park Authority and its partners managing conflicts of interest. Stakeholders, residents and visitors will all care highly for the area but often for different reasons. Key to addressing landowners' concerns including litter, fly-tipping, livestock worrying, dog fouling, theft, fire, vandalism, and wild camping – are professional rangers.

A Scottish Borders National Park would prioritise:

- **Establishing a Pan Borders corps of professional rangers.** Rangers are the boots-on-the-ground, eyes and ears of a National Park. All rangers need to be able to inspire and interpret their area's natural and cultural heritage, and to be able to communicate well in difficult circumstances: rangers often need to deal with challenging or distressed people, when they need to be alert to risk as well as being able to deal with situations in a non-confrontational manner.
- **Signage:** providing simple, unobstructed and - where appropriate - reasonably unobtrusive - board and digital signage with clear, consistent messages that encourage respect for the NP's natural working environment such as being aware of when farmers are busy with fieldwork, birds are nesting, calving and lambing times etc.
- **The development and integration of environmental educational programmes with local schools and youth groups.**
- **Developing more and more accessible paths and trails** for walkers and cyclists, and more horse rides like the Buccleuch Ride, to cater for local people and visitors alike without encroaching on unsuitable land such as fragile wildlife habitats or fields with growing crops.
- **Working with SBC to tackle littering and fly-tipping** by, for example, emulating Wandsworth Council. Wandsworth features a post a day on social media to highlight what the council is doing to tackle littering and fly-tipping, as well as what each and every one of its residents can do locally to prevent litter louts from robbing them of their precious parks, natural habitats for wildlife, and clean roadside and village/town centres.



Access to Nature for Scotland's people

Jedburgh, which would be the central town in a Borders National Park, is 60-90 minutes from the central belt of Scotland. The total population of Edinburgh, Glasgow and the rest of the central belt is estimated at 4.2 million, which means that 78% of the population is within easy reach of the Scottish Borders. (The Borders Railway journey from Edinburgh to Galashiels /Tweedbank, on the edge of the Borders NP, takes just under an hour).

Another 1.4 million is the combined population of Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, Cumbria and Carlisle. We might anticipate that people from all of these areas would continue to contribute to the visitor economies of Glasgow and Edinburgh but the proximity of the Scottish Borders would allow visitors from across the UK and further afield to add a visit to a National Park to their Scottish trip. There are, literally, 5.5 million potential visitors on our doorstep, including the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle and Carlisle, each of which has a sizeable railway station and an airport.

However, the intention of a Scottish Borders NPA would not be to maximise the number of visitors to the Borders, rather to make the benefits of visiting a Borders NP available to a greater proportion than before of the people who would benefit most from the chance to enjoy responsible access to the countryside.

The benefits to Borders residents and the much wider population centres nearby would accrue through exposure to Nature and the mental and physical wellbeing which that supports. There would also be the added benefits of ecological, historical and cultural education and recreation in situ, as well as gaining a greater appreciation and understanding of the countryside and the need for all of us to look after it for future generations.

For more detailed information, please see Annex 6 – Visitor Management.



6. How would designating the area as a National Park bring wider benefits to Scotland as a whole and support national priorities?

Designation of the Southern Borders as an NP would bring a wide range of benefits to Scotland as a whole.

Visitors

Evidence in the UK, EU and USA shows that the label 'National Park' acts as a magnet to 'high quality' visitors seeking nature, cultural heritage, etc, which increases spend both within the NP area and in the 'halo' around it. This spend stimulates construction and professional services employment. These, in turn, increase returns to local and Scottish Government, benefiting the whole of Scotland.

Exemplary role

The proposed NP would lead strongly on the coordination of nature restoration and biodiversity projects – see previous Answers and Annexes. This would be particularly relevant in relation to the broad range and intensity of land uses throughout this area¹, distinguishing it from the two existing NPs. These benefits would extend far beyond the boundaries of the NP, with many of the projects being testbeds for all of Scotland, as well as being significant contributors to the Just Transition to Net Zero.

As a body enshrined in law, the NP will be in a position to assist the many excellent short-term projects in the area to extend to sustainability. NPs have access to funding sources not open to the government or local authorities. As stated at the Scottish Government workshop for NP applicants on 4.12.23, an NP being associated with projects is attractive to funders because of NP permanence.

Wellbeing

Designation would be followed by the creation of enhanced opportunities of all sorts for communities and visitors to increase wellbeing through well-designed and improved access to the countryside, and the improved socioeconomic status of local people.

These and other benefits would complement the strategic contribution of existing NPs.

Climate change mitigation, adaptation, achieving a Just Transition to Net Zero, increasing biodiversity and nature restoration.

These topics are also addressed in previous answers².

'Geodiversity is the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils, together with the natural processes which form and alter them'³.

'Geodiversity underlies and determines the character of our landscape and environment'⁴.

The Southern Uplands' geodiversity and geographical location underpins a range of unique ecosystems and habitats. There is a pressing need to build on, and extend, the many excellent nature restoration and habitat improvement projects⁵ currently underway, funded by short term grants, and to put them on a sustainable footing for the long term. There is a real risk that many of the excellent achievements of these projects will be lost if there is insufficient follow up support for a substantial period until they become sustainable.

Creation and extension of wildlife corridors will make a crucial addition to the biodiversity in and far beyond the proposed NP⁶.

The above require coordination and mediation by a permanent body, in other words a National Park. Their long-term support to sustainability is critical for mitigation of climate change and achieving a Just Transition to Net Zero.

Encouraging nature-friendly farming

Future agricultural activity will be very much influenced by the content of the Agriculture Bill, currently going through the Scottish Parliament, and the associated secondary legislation. Other legislation in the pipeline will also have a significant impact. The details of these are still unknown, which limits what can be said here. However, the general trends for farm policy have been indicated⁷ by the Scottish Government, and it is expected that there will be a much stronger focus on requiring land management practices which increase biodiversity, nature restoration, ecosystem services such as flood control, climate change mitigation, and the Just Transition to Net Zero.

Producers may soon have to prove that they are farming sustainably. Indeed, many farmers in the proposed NP area are already piloting nature-friendly solutions, and this will be steadily extended in line with the requirements of the awaited Agriculture Bill. As noted above, the Southern Uplands have a unique geodiversity. As such, a customised approach will be needed along with careful monitoring of the impact and effectiveness of novel techniques. The South of Scotland Regional Land Use Framework⁸, currently at draft stage, will provide much valuable information to underpin these changes.

Nature-based solutions⁹ for farming are also being explored by countryside charities as well as government.

Regenerative farming focuses on topsoil regeneration, increasing biodiversity, and restoring the natural water, carbon and nutrient cycle. Interest in regenerative farming is already growing, partly due to the expected legislation but also to the increased cost of inputs – fertiliser, pesticides etc – caused by the war in Ukraine.

Regenerative farming contributes to climate change mitigation, flood control and overall conservation but requires substantial change in management practices, as well as location-specific advice and help. Organisations such as Nature-Friendly Farming¹⁰ can help, and a NPA will ensure that farmers are linked up with the sources of advice which can support the changes they must make.

Climate change adaptation in farming

Crop science

There is an active body of research and development in Scotland of cereal varieties which will be needed as the climate changes. Robbie Waugh of the James Hutton Institute reviews the plant breeding issues and current research¹¹ on barley which is of paramount importance for the Scotch whisky industry (2022 exports £6.2bn, 11,000 people employed in Scotland alone) and also for the beer market.

Diversification is providing important support to farming incomes, with farmers being guided towards better land use choices – the Scottish Government is encouraging tree planting where appropriate and offering guidance and grants to farmers¹².

Agritourism and farm retail is growing, again with support from the Scottish Government¹³. This provides multiple benefits – accommodation and education for visitors, income for farmers, and income from tourism to rural businesses.

For farmers faced with these many challenges, help from a coordinating body such as a NPA that is familiar with the characteristics of their area and can access the information and guidance needed to make decisions about future practices, will be invaluable.

Development of green skills and jobs

Increasing biodiversity and nature restoration requires a great deal of skilled and semi-skilled, mostly hands-on work. Already a number of projects in the area are providing some training for volunteers, and this is welcomed. However, this has nowhere near the scale or potential longevity to fill the long-term demands of significant and lasting nature restoration. Even in the long-term, total sustainability will not be possible, due e.g. to the lack of top predators to control deer and the need to control invasive species.

In addition, visitor management will require ranger and associated skills.

The NPA will work with Borders College, SRUC, other training providers, professional bodies, and also land managers, to coordinate development, certification and delivery of the range of skills needed.

This will generate a considerable increase in green jobs in the NP area, and will provide models for adoption across Scotland.

Responsible investment in natural capital

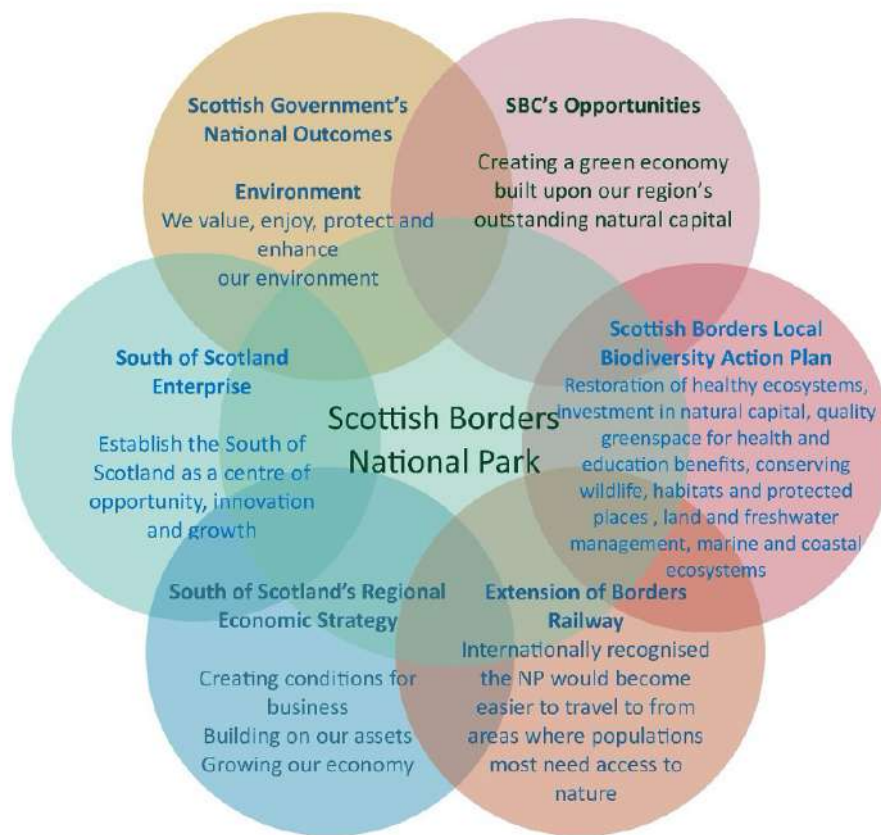
The then Minister for the Environment and Land Reform in 2022 said that responsible investment in natural capital must be of 'high integrity so that it verifiably restores and enhances nature...and is genuinely values-led so that it supports a Just Transition and involves and benefits communities.'¹⁴

NatureScot has assessed the need for investment in Natural Capital and is already leading the way in attracting large-scale private investment¹⁵. It is important to avoid multiple different requests for funding coming from the different bodies in the same area.

The proposed NPA will work in coordination with NatureScot and, where appropriate, with other bodies to secure responsible investment in Natural Capital.

Policy fit

All of the aims, objectives, outcomes or purposes of the outer circles in the following Venn diagram have been mentioned and promoted in this document as fundamental aspirations or benefits of a Scottish Borders National Park.



¹ <https://sosrep.dumgal.gov.uk/media/28720/RLUF-Consultation-Draft/pdf/RLUF-Consultation-Draft.pdf?m=638369585054070000>

² See answer to Q2 and Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage, and Annex 2 – Wildlife Corridors

³ SNH (2015) "Applying an ecosystems approach in Scotland" www.nature.scot

⁴ Lawrence et al, (2007) "Northumberland National Park Geodiversity audit and action plan" www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk

⁵ See Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage, and Annex 2 – Wildlife Corridors

⁶ See Annex 2 – Wildlife Corridors

⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/next-step-delivering-vision-scotland-leader-sustainable-regenerative-farming/#:~:text=Our%20vision%20for%20Scottish%20Agriculture%20We%20will%20transform,Scotland%27s%20future%20agriculture%20support%20regime%20from%202025%20onwards.>

⁸ <https://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/news/landuseframework>

⁹ <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-work/our-advocacy/naturebasedsolutions/grassland-farmland/nature-based-solutions-in-agriculture/>

¹⁰ <https://www.nffn.org.uk>

¹¹ Waugh, R (2023) "The future success of barley" in The Scottish Farmer. Dec 9. www.thescottishfarmer.co.uk

¹² forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/farm-woodlands

¹³ Millar, J (2023) "New agritourism monitor farms" in "The Scottish Farmer", November 25. www.thescottishfarmer.co.uk

¹⁴ Statement given to the Scottish Parliament by the then Minister for Environment and Land Reform, Mairi McAllan, on the Interim Principles for Responsible Investment in Natural Capital, 31 March 2022

¹⁵ See Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage

7. Is there evidence of local community engagement and participation in developing the proposal? Is there evidence of local support for the proposal? Does the nomination include any concerns or opposition?

The lead group involved in developing the nomination is:

Campaign for a Scottish Borders National Park
SCIO SC050030 (CSBNP),
Spital Tower, Denholm, Scottish Borders TD9 8TB.

Emails: d.jane.bower@googlemail.com, media@scottishbordersnationalpark.com

Initially an informal campaign, CSBNP, was incorporated as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation in March 2020.

Website: <https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com>

The current core team is as follows (in alphabetical order):

Alan Bailey (CSBNP Trustee)
Professor Jane Bower (CSBNP Trustee and Chair)
Simon Clew
Malcolm Dickson QPM
Dr George Jamarillo
Dr Geoffrey Kolbe (CSBNP Trustee and Secretary)
Marion Livingston (CSBNP Trustee)
Malcolm McGregor (CSBNP Trustee and Treasurer)



Germination

The seed of the idea came from John Mayhew's 2013 report for the APRS and SCNP, 'Unfinished Business: a National Parks Strategy for Scotland', which recommended a Cheviots National Park. However, CSBNP, which came together to develop the concept in 2016, has been very community-led.

Very many individuals and organisations in the proposed NP area and beyond have given their ideas, their help, support and sponsorship over the years since the first public meeting that year in Jedburgh Town Hall when 240 people turned up on a cold wet November night to chew over the proposition and start to give it shape. These contributions have been crucially important in developing this proposal, and CSBNP owes a great debt to everyone who has given time, thought and encouragement.

Since its inception, CSBNP has sought to keep all stakeholder organisations, other partners - local and beyond, and interested individuals, in the loop, and to coordinate their discussions and contributions to the evolving proposal on a continuing basis right up to the present.

There has been strong support from the majority of groups, except for mixed responses from farmers and landowners (see below). Two or three very large and influential landowners do not support designation of a NP in the Scottish Borders.

CSBNP has employed a variety of media – its website

www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com, its Facebook page @scotbordersNP, news releases and articles published in local and national press, TV and radio interviews, and a regular newsletter and leaflets. CSBNP has circulated information and updates, held group and one-to-one meetings, project-managed 'The Twelve Towers of Rule' demonstration programme (Annex 4 – The Twelve Towers of Rule), and engaged directly with a wide range of community-based groups and other stakeholders.

Community Councils (CCs)

All CCs in the proposed area have been sent extensive information about NPs, and about the proposed Scottish Borders NP, initially in 2016 and regularly thereafter. All have been encouraged to provide feedback, and to schedule presentations by the CSBNP core team. Most have responded very positively by email, and a number have requested and received presentations at which local people have contributed ideas and suggestions (more details in Annex 7 – Support for a Scottish Borders National Park).

Minority Concerns

The views of Community Councils have been for the most part extremely positive, with just a few individuals voicing reservations. These concerns, along with some expressed by a minority of SBC elected members and a minority of farmers and landowners, have been fully addressed with either changes to CSBNP's approach (eg proposing that the NP would not become a planning authority; researching and producing a visitor management plan), or research of facts which suggest that some concerns were not fully supported by evidence. These developments were made in direct response to the genuine issues raised, and publicised as widely as possible through the media and meetings/presentations/briefings.

More details on all of the above are given in Annex 7 – Support for a Scottish Borders National Park, and Annex 6 – Visitor Management.

Scottish Borders Council

From November 2016 onwards, CSBNP has provided regular written updates to all elected members and key officers. The independent Feasibility Study for a Scottish Borders NP was provided in hard copy to all elected members on publication in 2017. There have been occasional meetings with successive: Council Leaders, Lead Councillors on Economic Development, Chairs of Planning & Building Standards Committee, Chief Executives and officer leads. There have also been individual discussions with local Councillors, some of whom have been very positive while others have had reservations. In March 2023, a CSBNP team member presented, in response to an invitation, to the Cheviot Area Partnership. Also in March 2023, separate briefings were given to the SNP-Greens Political Group and the Independents Political Group. In May 2023, a similar briefing was provided to the Lib-Dem Political Group. There was a further meeting with senior SBC officers on 19th September 2023.

Issues arising from individual contacts with Councillors or political groups have been responded to either at the time or in follow-up communication and detailed in the attached Annex 7 – Support for a Scottish Borders National Park.

Independent Public Consultation

Updating its Local Development Plan, SBC published a Main Issues Report (MIR) in September 2018 as a public consultation document, and held a series of public meetings across the Scottish Borders at which CSBNP publications, including the Feasibility Study, were prominently displayed. This was decided by SBC without any input from CSBNP. The MIR included a short statement about the proposal for a Scottish Borders National Park, followed by two questions:

Do you support the designation of a National Park within the Scottish Borders?

If so, which general area do you think a National Park should cover?

For further information, the MIR also referenced the independent Feasibility Study, providing a link to the study and CSBNP's subsequently published Position Statement¹.

This consultation and the results of the two questions on the NP are summarised in the Adopted Local Development Plan 2023². CSBNP received a copy of these results, and analysed them further.

The results were as follows, and were shared by CSBNP with all elected members and key officers in post at the time³.

- Of the total 114 responses, 81 (71%) were in favour of the proposal, 22 (19%) objected and 11 (10%) were uncommitted.
- Of 110 mentions of a geographical preference in answer to the supplementary question, 54 (49%) favoured a minimum of the old county of Roxburgh (this was by far the largest degree of support for any mention of geography).

- Tellingly, of those 103 responses which either supported or objected, the 81 responses in favour represent 79%, while the 22 objections represent 21%.

Responses to the MIR were reported to a full Council meeting in September 2019. A recommendation that the Council formally consider the proposal for a National Park in the Scottish Borders was agreed but not actioned until December 2023.

In 2020, five Councillors who were still in post in December 2023, together with several others no longer in post, privately declared support for the proposal.

Surprisingly, in light of the above, on 14.12.23 Scottish Borders Council followed the Chief Planning Officer's recommendation which, although it acknowledged that the concept of a National Park in the Borders was a good idea, the area proposed by CSBNP was too small, and there were some potential downsides (which had all been addressed previously in the FS or by CSBNP), and SBC subsequently declined to support the CSBNP proposal.

Relevant MSPs

Mairi Gougeon MSP met two CSBNP team members before the 2019 election at Holyrood while she was the relevant Minister.

The two MSPs whose constituencies cover the Scottish Borders, i.e. Rachael Hamilton (MSP for Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) and Christine Grahame (MSP for Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale), have each received personal briefings since CSBNP was set up.

From November 2016 onwards, written updates and some verbal updates were given to MSPs whose constituencies include part or all of the Scottish Borders.

In June 2022, the creation of new National Parks in Scotland was the subject of a scheduled debate in the Chamber at Holyrood. CSBNP sent a written briefing to the same group of MSPs from all parties, which was quoted in the debate. Within days of the debate, ten cross-party MSPs declared support for both South Scotland proposals (Scottish Borders and Galloway).

Landowners, Farmers and Land Managers

Summary

CSBNP has held many formal and informal discussions with farmers and landowners⁴. Responses from farmers have ranged from extremely supportive to quite negative. Landowners have also given the same wide range of responses. Two very large, influential landowners do not support the creation of a NP in the Borders. CSBNP has since analysed responses and provided reassuring answers to these stakeholders' fears and concerns⁵.

Two farmers (one supportive of CSBNP, the other undecided) were interviewed by one of the Heriot Watt University students undertaking post-graduate work on digital means of enhancing the NP offering.

An account of the formal and informal meetings with farmers and landowners is provided in Annex 7 - Support for a Scottish Borders National Park, including ways in which concerns have been listened to and acted upon.

Engagement with Other Organisations and Groups

Scottish Land and Estates
National Farmers Union, Scotland
Environmental Alliance for the South of Scotland (EASoS – CSBNP is a member)
Southern Upland Partnership
South of Scotland Enterprise
Tweed Forum
Borders Forest Trust
River Tweed Commission
Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh
Historic Environment Scotland
NatureScot
Scottish Campaign for National Parks
Action to Protect Rural Scotland
Kelso Probus Club, February 2022
Hawick 41 Club, January 2020

CSBNP also held a seasonal reception for supporters, local elected representatives, SBC officers and interested parties, in December 2022, kindly hosted by the Borders Distillery, Hawick.

Regular updates have been provided to Borders Network of Conservation Groups and many other organisations such as local community, sports and leisure groups, which have expressed an interest.

Local Businesses

A broad range of local businesses has been consulted. They are strongly supportive. For instance, the most recent leafletting focused on shops and other businesses in the central areas of Hawick and Kelso in late summer 2023, and Melrose, Galashiels and Jedburgh in autumn 2023. The opportunity was taken to speak face to face to those proprietors/managers/staff free to share a few moments. Support for the National Park proposal was substantial.

South of Scotland Destination Alliance

CSBNP's chair has had a one-to-one meeting with the chief executive, David Hope-Jones, and she and other CSBNP members participated in stakeholder consultation meetings, and contributed to an online survey, on a new SSSDA strategy, held in August and September 2023.

Website <https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com> CSBNP's website invites comments and regularly receives messages of support, and only occasional negative comment to which it responds.

Social media

As well as NP news and stories communicated to the general public via traditional media, CSBNP has long used its Facebook page to keep followers and others up to date with progress. More recently, CSBNP created an Instagram presence and, amongst other things, uses this to share on its website outstanding photos of the Borders taken by Instagram posters – proof positive that

- (a) the Scottish Borders is indeed beautiful, and
- (b) that visitors and residents endorse that judgement wholeheartedly.

Conclusion

The CSBNP team believes that the evidence shared here, and in the more detailed descriptions in Annex 7 – Support for a Scottish Borders National Park, the response to Question 5 and in Annex 6 – Visitor Management, is compelling. Altogether this evidence reveals:

- **A wide range of stakeholders who have been identified and consulted with;**
- **A variety of different ways of conducting community engagement and participation;**
- **Issues and concerns that have arisen from a minority of these engagements;**
- **These concerns have been listened to, acted upon or provided with a wider context, and that feedback has been provided.**
- **Overwhelming majority support for a Scottish Borders National Park.**

¹ See www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NP-Position_Statement.pdf

² https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20051/plans_and_guidance/121/local_development_plan

³ For the full analysis document shared with councillors, see: <https://scottishbordersnationalpark.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Scottish-Borders-National-Park-responses.pdf>

⁴ Annex 7 – Support for a Scottish Borders National Park

⁵ See Annex 7 – Support for a Scottish Borders National Park

⁶ www.facebook.com/scotborderspark



Annexes

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Annex 1

The Natural Heritage

Seize the moment - the great opportunity

The Southern Borders with its unique geodiversity^{1,2} is in a prime position to substantially enhance Scotland's biodiversity through nature restoration and, in the process, to support a Just Transition to Net Zero.

Reversing the ongoing biodiversity loss through nature restoration in all parts of Scotland demands high priority. A major cause is habitat loss, aggravated by ongoing introduction of invasive species and human activity. There are and have been many initiatives by many public and private bodies, but they lack coordination, Council budget cuts and lack of long-term funding limit their effectiveness. The proposed National Park in the Southern Borders would be well-positioned to make a significant contribution to reversing this disastrous trend.

The proposed NP would provide key exemplars of effective practice which would be emulated, not just in Scotland but in other all too numerous locations where biodiversity is declining. It will give some quick wins by addressing the gaps in protection and provision. It will help arrange support for the many projects which will have run out of their short-term funding. This is a huge threat to those outcomes which have not yet achieved sustainability (which includes most) in a time of budget cuts and general financial uncertainty.

Restoring and protecting Nature

'Geodiversity is the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils, together with the natural processes which form and alter them'³.

"Geodiversity underlies and determines the character of our landscape and environment"⁴.

The Southern Uplands' geodiversity and its geographical location underpin a range of unique ecosystems and habitats. There is a pressing need to build on and extend the many excellent projects currently underway, funded by short-term grants, and to support them through to sustainability (for examples see following sections). There is a real risk that much of the excellent achievements of these projects will be lost if there is insufficient follow-on support for a substantial period until they become sustainable.

This requires coordination, negotiation and mediation by a permanent body: a National Park Authority.

NatureScot recently evaluated the needs for greater and more sustained investment in Natural Capital in a pilot study of the Scottish Borders⁵. They characterised the 2021 natural capital assets and ecosystem services supplied, and found a need for very considerable (and sustained) improvements. There is ongoing work on a Regional Land Use Framework^{6,7} which should, when finalised, update the 2021 position but a huge amount remains to be done.

¹ Clarkson E & Upton B (2010) "Death of an Ocean", Dunedin Academic Press, Edinburgh

² <https://scottishbordersnationalpark.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Scottish-Borders-National-Park-Feasibility-Study.pdf>

³ SNH (2015) "Applying an ecosystems approach in Scotland" www.nature.scot

⁴ Lawrence et al, (2007) "Northumberland National Park Geodiversity audit and action plan" www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk

⁵ Dickie, I and Royle, D (2021) NatureScot Research Report 1284- facilitating local natural capital investment- Scottish Borders Area.

⁶ <https://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/RLUP>

⁷ <https://sosrep.dumgal.gov.uk/media/28720/RLUF-Consultation-Draft/pdf/RLUF-Consultation-Draft.pdf?m=638369585054070000>



From the type and volume of work which NatureScot specifies, one major conclusion has to be that it will require massive hands-on, on-the-spot effort for a very long period, as well as considerable ongoing finance.

The restoration of habitats and creation of sustainable ecosystems is labour- and skill intensive.

This is where an enthusiastic and informed local population is essential both to help on the ground as volunteers, and to raise awareness of different projects amongst local people and visitors. In the proposed NP area, there are many recent and ongoing projects aiming to inspire, engage and educate communities, especially young people, to help them to gain an understanding and appreciation of their natural and cultural environment. An important aim is to show people how the two facets of their world are intertwined, and how they can learn to enhance their environment in a sustainable way.

Leading (where appropriate), supporting and coordinating these efforts will be a major responsibility of the proposed NPA. It will increase the effectiveness and long-term durability of the outcomes of ongoing projects and contribute to the creation of green skills and quality jobs, as well as the physical and mental well-being of local residents.

In the Scottish Borders, internationally important protected areas include: six Special Protection Areas (SPA) for birds, three of which are also Ramsar sites for wetlands, and nine Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for threatened habitats and species. There are also two National Scenic Areas (NSA), one National Nature Reserve (NNR) at St Abb's Head, and 95 protected Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The precise number of these protected sites will depend on the final boundaries of the Borders NP (which will be determined by government consultation). However, the Scottish Government's rationale for a new National Park includes the NP(s) taking on a leadership and exemplary role stretching far beyond its boundaries, facilitating and coordinating the required changes at a strategic landscape scale. Critically important will be to create standard measurement and monitoring systems to be applied throughout the Southern Uplands, and preferably on a national scale. At present landowners are carrying out these essential functions mainly according to whatever systems they have devised. This makes it difficult to develop advice for future projects to optimise outcomes. **CSBNP is in discussion with project management of nature restoration projects in, e.g. North Yorkshire NP about its use of standardised measurements implemented from project initiation to analysis of outcomes.**

The Scottish Borders Notable Species List contains local species, including those considered as representing some of the key issues for wildlife conservation and land management in the Scottish Borders. Protected sites are detailed in SBC's Biodiversity Action Plan 2018-28⁸. However, severe budget cuts have been imposed since this was published.



The proposed Scottish Borders NP will actively collaborate with different organisations and local communities to tackle crucially important and diverse challenges, such as:

- Threats to the iconic North Atlantic salmon's spawning grounds;
- The Golden Eagle project in southern Scotland, at risk of running out of funding;
- Red squirrel conservation – greys and reds compete at many sites across the Borders and the multiple popular efforts to help the reds need coordination;
- Peat restoration across our hillsides, including the extensive areas of deep peat currently blanketed with mature conifers, planted before the importance of peat for carbon sequestration was understood, and which will soon be felled leaving severely damaged peat;
- Wildlife and nature corridors;
- Ecosystem enrichment, including work to improve soil and water quality;
- Standardisation of measurement and monitoring.

The proposed NP will engage the key levers that will allow the existing designations and the many public and private initiatives to be more effective and durable. One of these levers is the considerable popular and official concern about the threat to iconic species. This will be engaged more effectively

⁸ https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/928/local_biodiversity_action_plan.

through coordination of awareness, knowledge and initiatives by a body, such as the National Park, which itself will have great longevity. The many other less conspicuous but essential components of healthy habitats can then also be given adequate consideration.

A practical and important role for the NPA will be to provide an interface between visitor and local volunteer contributions to monitoring biodiversity, and the national and international bodies which collate and analyse data, using standardised approaches⁹. There are an increasing number of attractive, user-friendly, freely available digital tools, for example iNaturalist¹⁰, and the Merlin App¹¹, which allow users to identify and learn about wildlife and keep records.



The Atlantic Salmon

The Atlantic salmon (*salmo salar*), which has been a cultural icon since Pictish times¹², is a key indicator of Scotland's biodiversity. Stocks have been declining and the species, which is a mainstay of many rural economies, is under severe threat. It is an EU Species of Conservation Concern. Part of its life cycle is spent in the Atlantic Ocean, but its critically important breeding grounds are in freshwater streams in Europe from many of which it has now been lost. There is an urgent international drive to save it from extinction. The River Tweed is the world-famous, principal salmon river in Scotland. It is of huge ecological and economic importance. Virtually all of its catchment, down to the smallest burns, is the precious spawning ground of the salmon. Nearly all of the Tweed catchment is in Scotland, and it is all (including the lesser part in England) protected as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It also includes a number of SSSIs overlapping the SAC which are not marked in the map here.

The Atlantic salmon is threatened both in its freshwater breeding phase and in its salt-water phase. International efforts involving many organisations, both public and private, are being made to identify and where possible to modify the threats to its survival.

Like many watersheds, centuries of deforestation, draining and overgrazing have degraded, fragmented and to a substantial degree destroyed, much of the upland habitats of the Southern Borders. This has increased during the last century due to agricultural and forestry intensification. In spite of the many public and private bodies set up to protect it, and the raft of legislation, the Tweed catchment is still plagued by pollution, invasive species, ongoing property development on floodplains, and other problems.

⁹ "Guidelines for developing national biodiversity monitoring systems", UN Commission for Europe, unece.org

¹⁰ iNaturalist on the App Store

¹¹ <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org>

¹² Jamieson, D & Baker, A (2002) *The Forth Naturalist and Historian*, v45, 2-22

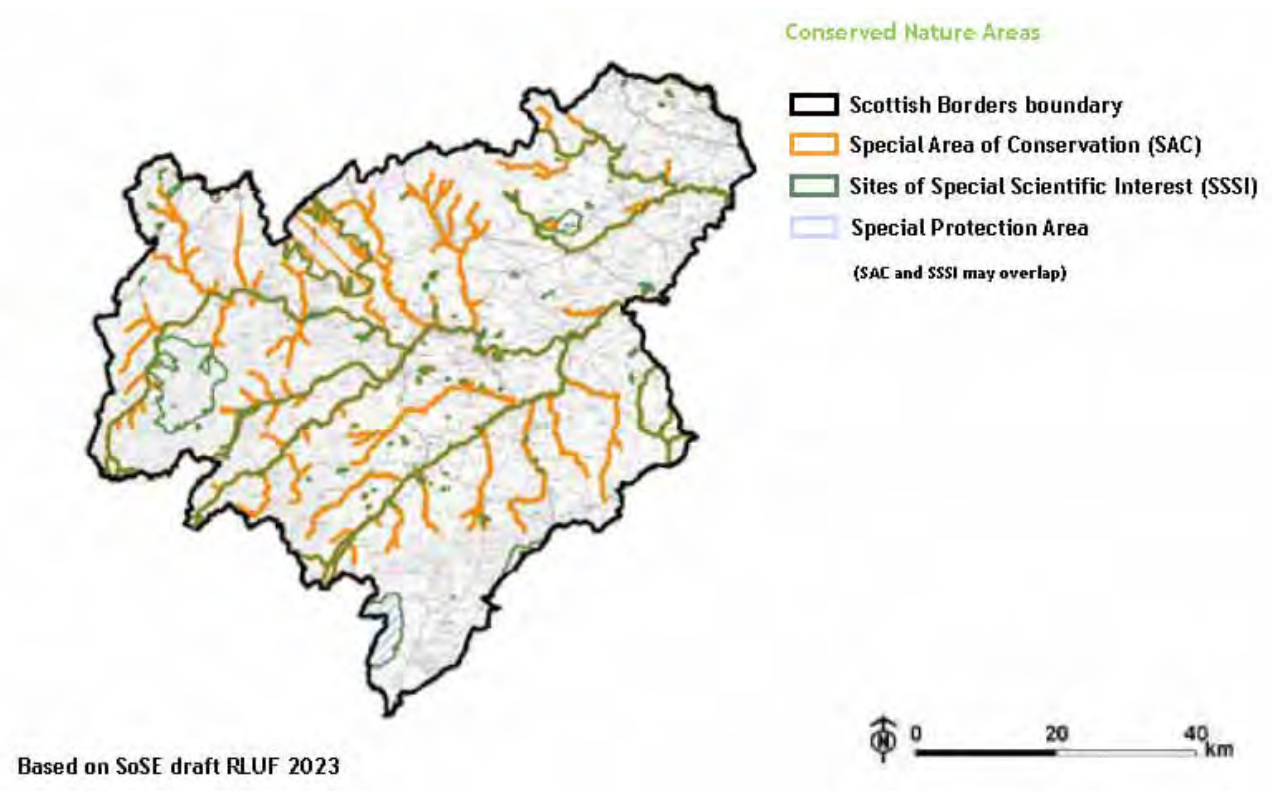
The Tweed catchment encompasses 15% of all of the Atlantic salmon's spawning ground in Scotland¹³.

The 200 year old River Tweed Commission, headquartered within the proposed NP, is tasked with managing and protecting the salmon, and other protected species in the river. Its extensive responsibilities are financed by a modest budget, mainly drawn from a levy on owners of registered fisheries. The associated Tweed Foundation raises its own funds for its important research programme.

The Tweed Forum works with stakeholders on both sides of the Border to agree a management plan for the different land and water uses as they affect the fish, in the interest of minimising conflict and protecting the salmon. It also manages a range of related short-term projects.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency¹⁵ (SEPA) also has an important role to play in monitoring the watercourses and managing water quality, extraction etc.

Ironically the Tweed SAC protection only extends to the water and the fish: it does not include the banks and surrounding hillsides which impact importantly on the water quality of the spawning grounds.



¹³ <http://www.rtc.org.uk> - The River Tweed Commission

¹⁴ <https://tweedforum.org>

¹⁵ <http://www.sepa.org.uk>



There are many different land and water use interests in the area and these are often in conflict. The proposed NP will be well positioned to assist and support the protection of the salmon and its habitat during these crucial freshwater stages of its lifecycle, playing an internationally important role in its protection. It will work to ensure that run-off areas into the watercourses are managed sensitively. Rationally, formal protection should be extended beyond the water itself to be effective, and an NP will propose such extension.

The Scottish Government has also indicated a special interest in the welfare of the salmon with a grant of £500,000 in 2022. There is a particular opportunity at this time, with public interest in the well-funded five year Destination Tweed project led by Tweed Forum (see discussion in the section below on Wildlife Corridors).

The Atlantic salmon is not the only species protected within the Tweed SAC. The eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), several species of lampreys and the otter (*Lutra lutra*) are within the group of vertebrate species protected in the Tweed SAC as are the aquatic plants. Eels, once abundant and now rare, eat an invasive species of crustacean, which in its turn eats young salmon and eggs in the catchment. At present, this eel appears to be the only means of control of the crustacean which threatens the survival of the salmon in the catchment (J. Stewart, pers. comm.), demonstrating the importance of protecting, not just the most iconic species, but also the symbiotic group – in this case the ecosystem of the watercourses. It also illustrates how one of the group - the eel - has acquired a new role, controlling an invasive species. **Again, the NP would provide the continuity and coordination required for protection of this precarious and hugely important ecosystem.**

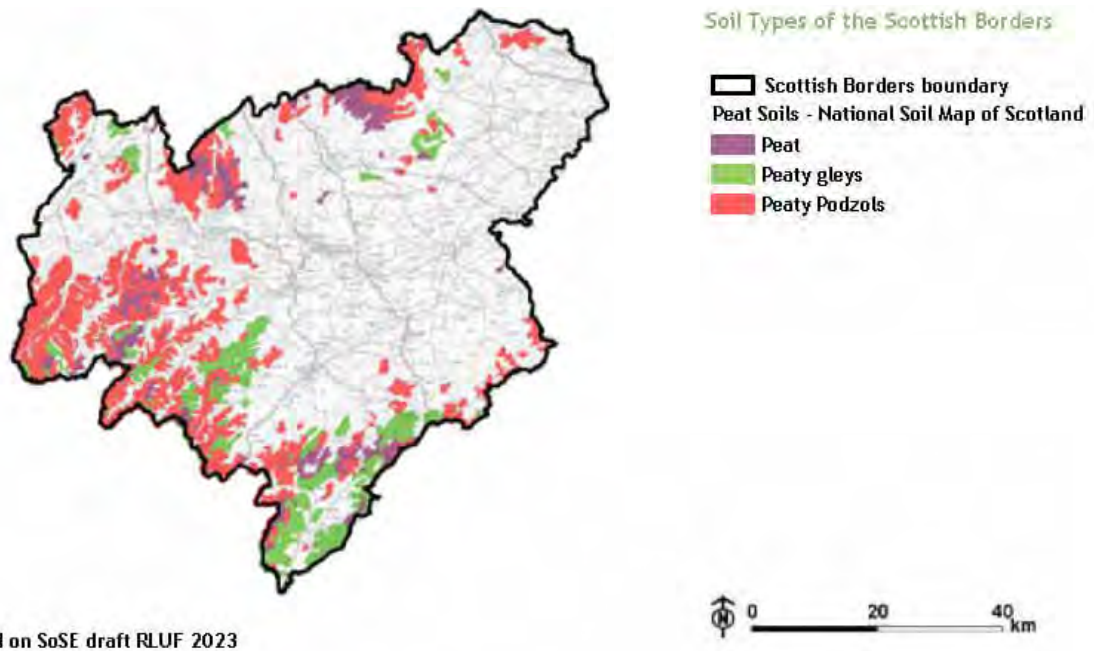
The Golden Eagle

The iconic golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) is not threatened globally, but it has been persecuted to near extinction in Scotland and is particularly rare in the South of Scotland. The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project¹⁶, a five year project originally set up in 2017 to reinforce the population in the South of Scotland, has now successfully introduced a substantial number of young birds to secret locations. As yet none of them have started breeding and, unfortunately, one has just been reported as lost (November 2023). A further year's funding was awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (2022) to the project, and there are efforts to find funding for another year or two. The project team has worked with farmers, landowners, communities and schools, educating and building support. Continuity will be important for long-term success, but at present it is not clear whether ongoing support will become available. **The proposed Scottish Borders NP can play a key role here, that includes raising funds.**

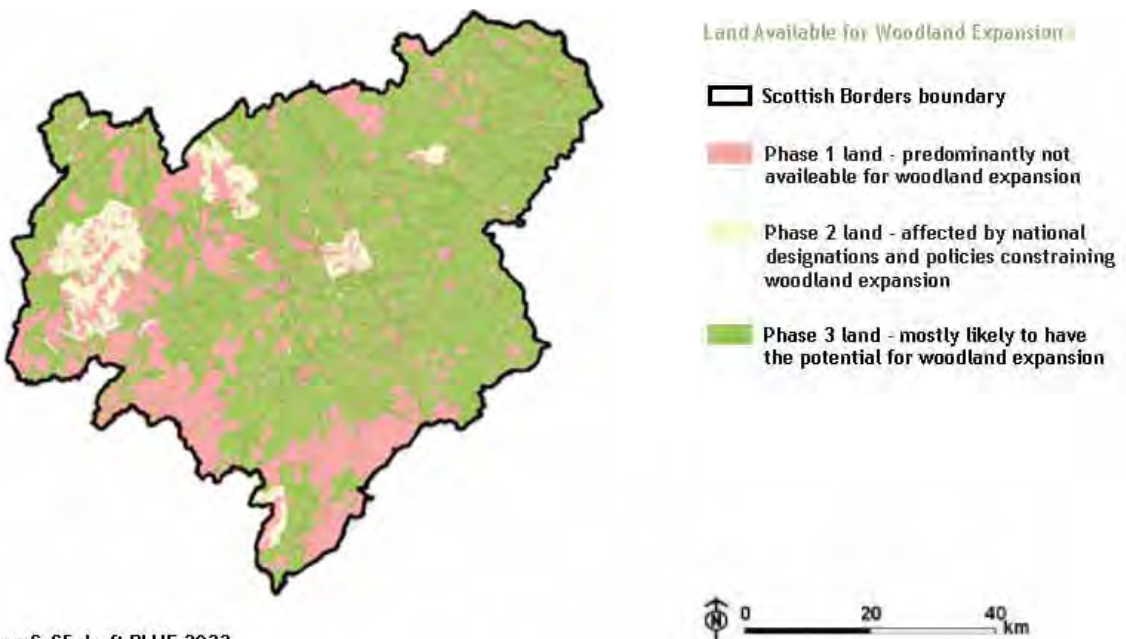
¹⁶ <https://goldeneaglessouthhofscotland.co.uk>,

Peat Restoration

In recent years there has been a growing awareness of the importance of peatlands, initially as an ecosystem type and more recently as a carbon sink as well (summarised www.nature.scot). NatureScot’s Peatland Action is providing financial, advisory, and training support across Scotland. The hills of the Scottish Borders carry vast areas of peat, most of which has been damaged by centuries of human efforts to drain it, and by 20th century plantations of conifers. There is huge potential for restoration of the peat on open hillsides: Tweed Forum and Borders Forest Trust are among those already restoring peatlands across the Borders.



Based on SoSE draft RLUF 2023



Based on SoSE draft RLUF 2023

The big question is how best to restore deep peat after the mature conifer plantations are felled, as this will become a real issue over the next 15 years and has not yet been addressed satisfactorily.

The proposed NP would coordinate investigation of these problems, and play an active role in leading (if required) facilitating the restoration of this unique and potentially abundant carbon sink and habitat type. The carbon capture achieved would make a substantial contribution to the Just Transition to Net Zero.

Important work is already underway within the Southern Borders, but this could be greatly enhanced, the necessary linkages created, and speedier progress made, if a NPA with a facilitating and coordinating role was to be created.

Ecosystem enrichment (including habitat restoration)

The proposed NP will have to work within the framework of legislation, much of which is currently going through the Scottish Parliament and includes the Agriculture and Natural Environment Bills. Since important details of these are not yet known, the following sections are necessarily limited. Ecosystem enrichment occurs through

- (1) increasing biodiversity of impoverished ecosystems,
- (2) extension of the physical coverage of a given ecosystem, including very importantly through wildlife corridors.

Increasing biodiversity

In recent years there have been several reintroductions of native species that were extinct or very rare in Scotland. These projects are strictly regulated and are overseen by law by NatureScot's expert team. They include mammalian, bird and plant species, and **CSBNP has had discussions with some of the experts involved. A major issue for each proposed introduction is the question of whether there is an adequate amount of suitable habitat.** If not, reintroduction has a limited chance of success, which is not just disappointing, it wastes precious resource and demotivates hard-working teams.

Beavers (*Castor fiber*): it is very much hoped that beavers may eventually be reintroduced to the proposed NP. However, at present there is a lack of suitable habitat along the watercourses for beavers. This is being addressed through, as noted above, extensive riparian planting. When the trees reach an adequate density and height, there should be suitable habitat for beavers in several locations. Also, when the trees are large and dense enough, particularly special and valuable individual trees can be painted with beaver deterrent. Discussions with the River Tweed Commission suggest this may take up to 60 years.

It is essential to create good habitat for reintroductions. It requires patient investment of resources to help Nature to re-establish key components of the ecosystem.

This highlights the importance of NP designation of the area to guarantee the longevity of the results of current projects.

Cranes (*Grus grus*): There are a few nesting cranes in the northeast of Scotland. Habitat loss appears to be the main cause of the low numbers. A project in Cairngorms by 'Scotland, the Big Picture'¹⁷ is reintroducing the crane there. It is hoped that the proposed NP will be able to learn from this project and partner with a willing landowner with suitable habitat for the crane.

¹⁷ <https://www.scotlandbigpicture.com>

Another species being investigated by CSBNP is the spectacular White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*), fairly widespread in parts of Europe and North Africa and currently being reintroduced in Sussex. As yet, there is only one record of it nesting in Scotland (on St Giles Cathedral in the 15th century) and so it does not qualify under Scotland's regulations as a native species (NatureScot, pers comm). Global warming may well encourage this species to spread north over time, and they may eventually nest in the proposed NP.

Plants: There are several projects to reintroduce rare or extinct plants in Scotland. An example is NatureScot's two-year project being carried out by Dr Aline Finger at the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh (RBGE) to propagate and plant out ten rare species in areas of suitable habitat where they can spread naturally. CSBNP is currently locating possible sites within the proposed NP area.

Soil fauna and flora: The multitude of micro-organisms which inhabit healthy soils play an important role in soil ecosystem functioning, underpinning the health and sustainability of the above-ground part of an ecosystem¹⁸. This is of great commercial concern for regenerative farming as well as for ecosystems in general. With the growing cost of arable farming inputs there is an increasing interest in improving soil health. The Scottish Borders NPA would support co-operation between researchers and farmers in the NP in pilot projects, knowledge-sharing and development of training opportunities (see Annex 9 - Farming, Food and Drink).

The positive effects on growth of inoculation by rhizobium, mycorrhizal fungi and mineral nutrients on plants, including trees,¹⁹ have been known for some time. Ongoing research in Scotland and internationally is too extensive to list here but, interestingly, a small Scottish spinout company is already developing commercial rhizobium. The extensive, publicly-funded planting of native broadleaves in Scotland would benefit from pilot studies of localised soil enrichment in the proposed NP. **This is an example of how the NP could demonstrate a sustainable approach to holistic reforestation and lead on to better practice in future plantings.**



¹⁸ Briones, MJI (2018) "The serendipitous value of soil fauna in ecosystem functioning", *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, Dec 2018, No.6, Review.

¹⁹ Newbould & Rangeley, 1984, "Plant and Soil" 76, 105

Annex 2

Wildlife Corridors

Ecosystems and the habitat requirements of individual species do not recognise the physical boundaries decreed by humans, so National Park boundaries must not be boundaries to Nature Restoration.

NPAs must develop relationships beyond their boundaries, as well as create physical routes facilitating different species' spread: the North Atlantic salmon needs to spawn in cool freshwater streams then spend most of its life in the ocean; golden eagles need to range across the whole of southern Scotland and the north of England.

Wildlife – and nature - corridors are strips of appropriate habitat which can link areas of local species richness, to reduce species isolation, boost pollination and preserve genetic diversity.



The watercourses themselves are critically important wildlife corridors for a wide range of species of fish, birds, mammals, plants and invertebrates.

Their water quality and riparian areas must be protected to function effectively. The proposed NP will encourage the development of wildlife corridors, incorporating the watercourses as well as the land. The beginnings of such routes are already visible in parts of the proposed NP area, linking into a series of both large and smaller scale restoration projects across the south of Scotland.

For example, in the south of the proposed NP, a 2500 acre ecological restoration project in the Hermitage Valley²⁰ connects with Langholm Moor, a Special Protection Area (SPA) which extends across the boundary between SB and D&G. The 11,500 acre part of the SPA that lies within the Scottish Borders in the proposed NP, has been purchased by Oxygen Conservation²¹, which is developing a nature restoration plan. The remaining part of the SPA is in the care of the Langholm Initiative, and is undergoing nature restoration²² initially with native woodland planting in the Tarras Valley and re-wetting peat bogs.

²⁰ <http://www.gorrenberry.org.uk>

²¹ <https://oxygenconservation.com>

²² <https://langholminitiative.org.uk>

A Roman road ran from Carlisle through the Tarras Valley, over the hills, on to Hawick and possibly on to Trimontium, beside the Tweed near Melrose. Faint remnants of the typically straight road are marked on Ainslie's 1780 map²³. Now, it is only intermittently visible as overgrown farm tracks but it marks the potential route of a wildlife corridor.



The Tweed Valley itself passes through the proposed NP and has potential to be another wildlife corridor linking east to west. There are already several areas under restoration, including Carrifran Wildwood²⁴, the first ecological restoration project of its kind, managed by the Borders Forest Trust (BFT)²⁵, and beyond it a series of other BFT projects towards and including the Devil's Beeftub. To the east, Destination Tweed offers potential to develop the wildlife corridor to the mouth of the River Tweed at the North Sea.

NatureScot's carbon team has accessed considerable international funding for tree planting along the Tweed watercourses and adjacent areas²⁶, which will supplement the current commitments.

Luke Comins, Director of Tweed Forum, summarises Tweed Forum's current projects:

'We have a large portfolio of riparian, peatland and woodland habitat sites across the catchment. These tend to be located in the headwaters/upper catchment simply because there is more opportunity here and they are often the source of problems e.g. flooding, historic habitat loss, thermal stress etc. Destination Tweed is a collection of 13 projects led by Tweed Forum but with a number of partners (including BFT and the Southern Upland Partnership) using the River Tweed as the backbone for the creation of a source to sea trail. Tweed Forum has a number of constituent projects which focus on river restoration (on the Biggar Water); designed landscapes along the Tweed; invasive species control along the length of the Tweed; environmental education, and riparian planting in the headwaters above Innerleithen. The target is 200ha but we hope to achieve much more than that. We will of course connect with existing habitats where possible and are working closely with BFT project and also BugLife who are running Pollinators along the Tweed aiming to expand meadows etc in and around towns/villages along the Tweed. Connected to this is the Tweed Meadows project run by Merlindale Nature which has just gained funding.

²³ <https://www.nls.co.uk> and see inserted image.

²⁴ Ashmole, P & Ashmole M (2020) "A Journey in Landscape Restoration", Whittles Publishing Ltd.

²⁵ <https://bordersforestrust.org.uk>

²⁶ Sanderson, J.L (2023) "Natural Capital" in "The UK Forest Market Report", Goldcrest and Tilhill.

‘We are also helping lead on the Wild Heart Expansion Project, which has a much bigger project area (upper Tweed, Ettrick, Teviot, Esk and Clyde), and involves NatureScot, SOSE and Palladium as well as BFT and SUP. In addition, we are developing a Borderlands Natural Capital project, which will focus on targeted riparian woodland to deliver multiple benefits including protection of salmon stocks, flooding, water quality, carbon etc. So in summary, lots going on in and around the Tweed, and creating wildlife corridors is very much a key goal.’

Here then are the beginnings of substantial restoration/wildlife corridors from east to west, crossing the proposed NP with projects **on land and in and by the watercourses**. With some small additions they could eventually join up to form an extensive ecologically restored whole in the Southern Uplands running from coast to coast. Achieving this ambition would yield ecosystem benefits much greater than the sum of its parts.

There is, however, a huge barrier to carrying this forward to sustainability. These complementary projects are all dependent on short contracts of 1-5 years. They have won substantial funding in a period of relative plenty. We are now entering a period of extensive budget cutbacks. Most of the projects’ outcomes will not survive long without further rounds of coordinated funding and careful, coordinated management over the long years required to establish woodland habitats and the associated (and interdependent) biodiversity.

The proposed Scottish Borders NP will fill this gap, and will look for opportunities to establish further wildlife corridors radiating out to the north and south.

National Parks have the reputation and longevity to secure the future for those outcomes of short term-funded projects. A National Park Authority, working in partnership with the organisations described above, would be able to go a long way towards providing long term project management. In the absence of NP designation of this area it is likely that many of the benefits achieved so far will be lost, and the ambition of major wildlife corridors will not be realised.



Proposed initial wildlife corridors

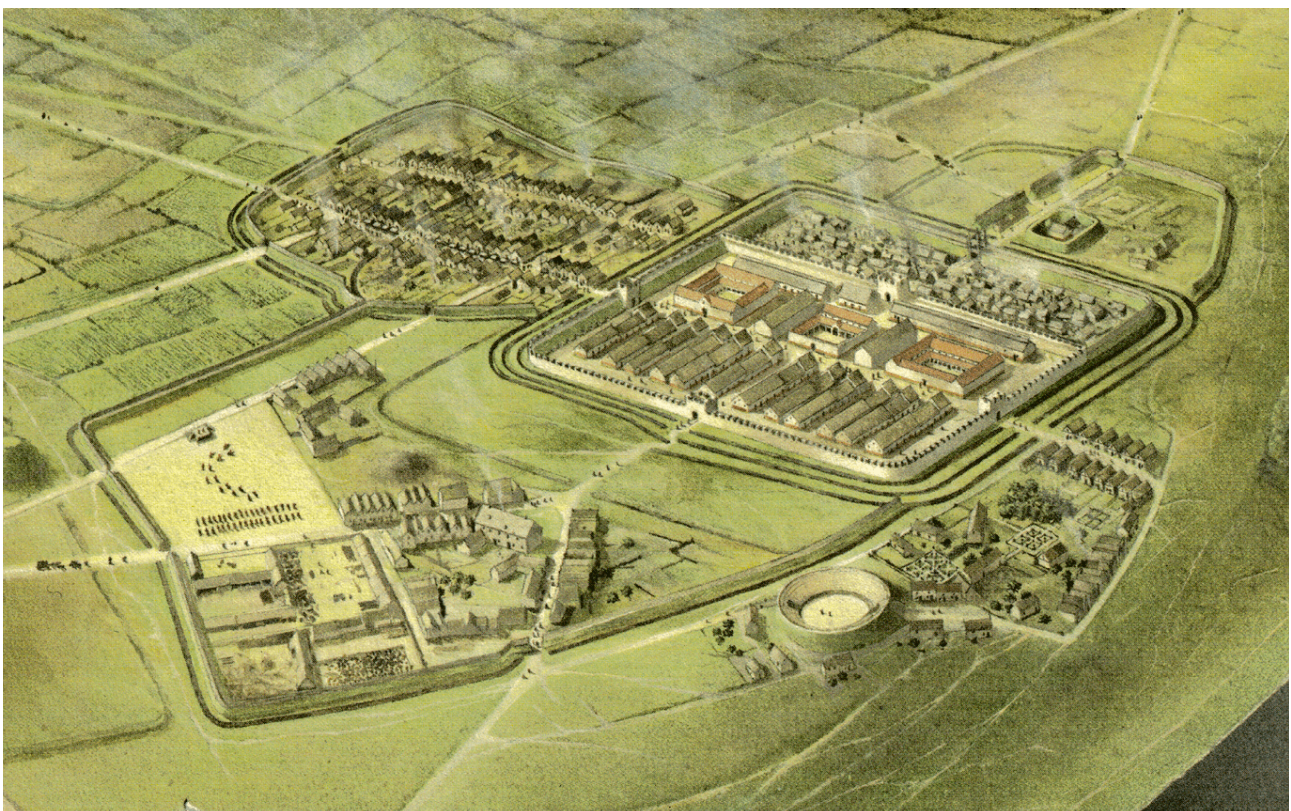
A point made in the government’s Microsoft Teams technical workshop for National Park applicants on 4 December 2023 was that funding organisations prefer that a permanent body is involved in a project to which they contribute finance; also, that National Parks are regarded as an implicit guarantor of projects with which they are associated.

Annex 3

Cultural Heritage

The proposed National Park lies at the heart of the Southern Borders, and this Annex can only provide a flavour of the vast wealth of its cultural heritage. Volumes of records and analysis have already been written but much remains to be explored.

There are at least 408 hill-top Bronze and/or Iron Age forts recorded in the Scottish Borders, more than in any other part of the UK or the Republic of Ireland. Of these, most are in the Southern Borders.



The Romans also left an abundance of remains, some still linked by remnants of their straight roads. The Scottish Borders Historic Environment Record (HER)²⁷ lists more than 15,000 archaeological sites dating from Neolithic times onwards, and more sites are regularly added.

The old town centres and settlements are themselves significant parts of the built cultural heritage with fine streetscapes, Jedburgh in the middle of the NP being a particularly striking example. The vernacular architecture of the 18th and 19th century farmhouses and barns, built of local stone, fit comfortably into the rural landscapes, as do the small rural churches many of which stand on sites which have been holy ground for centuries. Many of the gravestone inscriptions have been deciphered and recorded²⁸.

In addition to the tangible heritage of important structures and artefacts there is a rich intangible heritage of local tradition and customs, songs and stories, some of them formally recorded²⁹, as well as an abundant published literary heritage.

²⁷ <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/20013/environment/603/archaeology>

²⁸ <https://bordersfhs.org.uk>

²⁹ For example, the collection of historical and romantic ballads - Sir Walter Scott (1802) "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border"

The Ridings

Every year, over different dates in different places, towns throughout southern Scotland celebrate the riding of their boundaries. This tradition is undertaken on horseback and has in some towns been with us for centuries. The festivals associated with these ‘ride-outs’ commemorate the local history with music, song, parades and concerts, culminating in the whole town participating as they wish. Steeped in ancient customs and traditions, these are some of the biggest and oldest equestrian festivals in the world and, arguably, up there with the Palio in Sienna.

These aren’t just unforgettable spectacles of horsemanship, pageantry and community spirit. They are festivals upheld with genuine fervour by local people of all ages in living homage to their towns’, and southern Scotland’s, unique identity, shaped to a degree by its tumultuous past.

The Ridings can be traced back to the 13th and 14th centuries when the border lands were in constant upheaval as wars with England were played out back and forth over the Borderlands over long periods of time. A clan-sponsored habit of plunder and cattle thieving (known as reiving after the ancient Scots word for robbing or stealing) took hold as the Borderlands became increasingly lawless. Townspeople felt the need to ride their marches to protect their common lands and prevent encroachment by neighbouring landlords.

Well beyond the point at which they were no longer needed, the Ridings continued in commemoration of the town’s history, heritage and sense of identity. The colourful events of today’s Scottish Borders, some involving hundreds of horses, celebrate this heritage, consisting of ride-outs, traditional sports, games, music and traditional tipples. There is invariably a furious ‘chase’ with horses galloping through the town’s streets or environs, lined with people cheering³⁰.



³⁰ Most of this section uses material which can be found at <https://scotlandstartshere.com/ridings-festivals/>

Ballads, poems and pipes

The musical heritage dates back to the Borders Ballads which are a group of songs and poems in the long tradition of balladry collected from both sides of the Border. Like all traditional ballads, they were traditionally sung unaccompanied. There may be a repeated theme within each piece, but there is no 'chorus' as in most popular songs³¹.

Rooted in the wild and beautiful lands along the Border in mediaeval times, they describe a traditionally lawless area whose inhabitants owed allegiance firstly to kin, secondly to laird and lastly to the authorities in London or Edinburgh. Recording a violent, clannish world of fierce hatreds and passionate loyalties, the ballads tell vivid tales of raids, feuds, supernatural events, betrayals, romances and acts of revenge.

Another aspect of Borders' musical heritage persists to the present day with performances on the Border Pipes, an ancient and distinctive type of bagpipe³².

Newcastleton, Denholm and Kelso have popular and well-attended annual folk festivals and concerts.



Abbeys, Museums, Castles, Battles and some innovative 5* attractions

There are four mediaeval abbeys in the Scottish Borders, all established in the 1100s (three within the proposed NP area and one, Dryburgh, only just outside). This amounts to the largest concentration of abbeys in Scotland: a reflection of the historic importance of the southern Scottish Borders.

Historic Environment Scotland tells us that 'Kelso Abbey was founded in the 1100s and was one of Scotland's largest and wealthiest religious houses.

'The abbey was founded by monks invited by King David I. Originally settling at **Selkirk**, the monks relocated to **Kelso** in 1128, moving close to David's new castle at Roxburgh.

³¹ Beattie, William (1952), *Border ballads*, Penguin, retrieved 12 May 2013

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Border_pipes

‘Next to nothing remains of the once-sprawling monastery precinct. But what survives of the church is one of the most spectacular architectural achievements in medieval Scotland. It is situated on the edge of the historic burgh of Kelso, itself one of Scotland’s prettiest towns, and has been a favourite subject for artists since the late 1600s’.

The same king founded Scotland’s first Cistercian monastery in **Melrose** in 1136. The Abbey suffered at English hands during the Middle Ages. Rebuilt in the 1380s, it was used as an abbey until the Protestant Reformation of 1560.

Robert the Bruce chose *Melrose Abbey* as the final resting place for his heart: the abbey is a magnificent ruin on a grand scale, and it was a highly desirable place to be buried.

David I also founded a priory in **Jedburgh** in 1138 and raised it to abbey status in 1154. The Augustinian brethren came from France. Augustinians contributed to royal governance, and their houses could sometimes be found near to royal power centres, in this case Roxburgh Castle. The majestic built heritage of Jedburgh Abbey combines two important architectural styles in Europe, ie Romanesque and early Gothic.

The graceful ruins of *Dryburgh Abbey* can be found secluded in woodland by the River Tweed. The peaceful environs today can give visitors a sense of the contemplative life of a mediaeval monk. Established by Premonstratensian canons in 1150, Dryburgh became the foremost house in Scotland of this French order. Although never as wealthy or influential as the other three abbeys, Historic Environment Scotland relates: ‘The abbey did suffer four savage attacks, however – the most famous in 1322. Edward II’s soldiers turned back to set fire to Dryburgh having heard its bells ringing out as the English army retreated’.



Elsewhere in the Borders

The Trimontium Museum in Melrose relates the history of the largest Roman Fort north of Hadrian’s Wall, and of the interaction between the invading Romans and the native Iron Age tribes. Exhibits include some of the finest displays of Roman and Iron Age finds north of the Wall. Regular walks over the site of the fort are led from the museum.

Hawick Museum tells the story of the town in an 18th century mansion surrounded by a large public park with many unusual trees and plants.

Borders Textile Museum, in a 16th century restored Towerhouse in Hawick, tells the story of the economically important textile industry in the Borders.

Hawick Heritage Hub is a state-of-the-art archive and family history centre, which is part of a fine building of contemporary glass and restored stone, based on a former mill. The other part of the building houses the popular 'Heart of Hawick', with meeting places, coffee-shop and theatre/cinema. *Stobs Camp* is a former military and internment camp located just outside Hawick. An internationally important site due to its level of preservation, it is probably the best preserved World War 1 camp in Britain³³.

Mary Queen of Scots' House is a museum in a restored 16th century towerhouse in Jedburgh, which tells the story of Scotland's tragic queen. This was the place from which she rode over the hills to Hermitage Castle to meet her adviser and future husband, the wounded Earl of Bothwell, and returned the same day, an extraordinary and arduous ride.

Jedburgh Castle Jail is Jedburgh's museum, unfolding the story of the Royal Burgh and some of its famous people.

The River Tweed Salmon Fishing Museum, in Kelso, explores the life cycle of the Atlantic salmon and its contribution to the socioeconomic development of the Borders over the last 8000 years.

Hermitage Castle in Liddesdale, is a huge glowering sentinel guarding the western approaches to the valley and the subject of many tales of wickedness, witchcraft and bloodstained deeds.

Fatlips Castle is a restored, classic 16th century Peel Tower at the top of Minto Crags, near Denholm, overlooking the Teviot River. It offers a spectacular viewpoint and is accessible on foot.

*Abbotsford*³⁴, situated on the River Tweed, was the home designed and built in the first quarter of the 19th century by Sir Walter Scott and his architects, and was a pioneer of the Scottish Baronial Style. Scott had spent time as a child with his grandparents on their farm adjacent to Smailholm Tower, another peel tower in Roxburghshire, which inspired the young Walter and remains on its rocky outcrop today.



³³ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stobs_Military_Camp

³⁴ See also 'Literary Heritage' within this Annex.

Unfortunately, through no fault of his own, Scott's finances failed within a year of him taking occupation of Abbotsford. It was only sympathetic creditors, and publication of many more novels (which did no good to his failing health), which enabled him to remain in possession of his home. (See Literary Heritage section on page 20.)

There are many other historic buildings within short distances from the proposed NP area, including:

Floors Castle, which has been the seat of the dukes of Roxburghe since 1726, when it was built in the Georgian style by William Adam. A later duke updated the house with remodelling and rebuilding by William Henry Playfair in a style similar to that used on Donaldson's School for the Deaf in Edinburgh. Closer to a palace than a house or castle, the building and landscaped grounds are a popular attraction, but would experience a significant increase in interest from the worldwide appeal of the National Park brand.

Traquair, Scotland's oldest inhabited house (lived in by the same family since 1491) has been visited by 27 Scottish Kings and Queens, and lies only a few miles away from the NP boundary. The house and its gardens are open to the public and host many public events.

Bowhill House, in the Yarrow Valley near Selkirk, is one of the homes of the Duke of Buccleuch and his world-famous private art collection, both of which, plus the designed landscape of the grounds, can be viewed by the public.

Mellerstain House, around eight miles north of Kelso, is a stately home and possibly the only remaining complete building designed by the famous architect Robert Adam. The interior is a masterpiece of delicate and colourful plasterwork.

The Great Tapestry of Scotland, just outside the proposed NP area, is one of the world's largest community arts projects, hand-stitched by 1,000 people from across Scotland. It consists of 160 linen panels and 300 miles of wool – enough to stretch the entire length of the country. It is now on permanent display in a purpose-built gallery and visitor centre in the town of Galashiels.



Battles

Armies have fought back and forth countless times over the area of the proposed NP, at least since the time of the Roman military occupation during the first 300 years of the Christian era. Some of the most important are listed below:

Battle of Degsastan, 603, in Liddesdale between Aethelfrith of Bernicia and the Gaels under Aedan mac Gabrain. Aethelfrith won³⁵.

Flodden, 1513 (just outside the proposed NP and on the English side of the Border), between the English and the Scots. A devastating defeat for the Scots with Scots King James IV killed alongside the flower of Scottish manhood.

Battle of Hornshole, 1514, between an English raiding party and the sons of Hawick. Many men of Hawick had been killed at Flodden, so their young sons rode out, fought fiercely - and won the battle. It is commemorated to this day by a statue in Hawick High Street and remembered at the annual Hawick Common Riding.

Battle of Ancrum Moor, February 1545, Teviotdale. One of the battles of the Rough Wooing, between the Scots and the English, so called because it was caused by the Scots refusing Henry VIII's demands for the hand in marriage of the infant Mary Queen of Scots for his son, the young Prince Edward. This battle was won by the Scots but triggered the punitive devastation of Tweeddale and Teviotdale in September 1545 by an English army led by the Earl of Hertford, brother-in-law of Henry VIII. The Twelve Towers of Rule were burnt in the course of this raid (see Annex "The Twelve Towers of Rule").

Literary Heritage

Many world renowned writers are associated with the Southern Borders.

Sir Walter Scott was the enormously popular inventor of the historic novel, and a poet who conjured up the Borders landscapes in many of his writings. He was also the first British author to gain an international following, with one of his Borders-based titles giving rise to a famous Italian opera³⁶ still performed today. He also played an important role in recording the rich oral tradition of the Border Ballads. The house he had built for himself at Abbotsford, and his books and collections there (of ancient furniture, arms and armour, and other relics and curiosities especially connected with Scottish history) are major visitor attractions, aided by an adjacent, present-day visitor centre and restaurant, all located close to the terminus of the Borders Railway at Tweedbank.

James Hogg, Scott's contemporary, is best known for his psychological novel 'Confessions of a Justified Sinner'. In his less well known novel 'The Three Perils of Man: War, Women and Witchcraft' he evoked the fey spirit of the Southern Borders and its contested landscapes. Charlie Scott of Yarbire, his sturdy son of a minor laird, is a recognisable typical Borderer.

John Buchan, First Baron Tweedsmuir, prolific novelist and diplomat, probably most known for 'The Thirty-nine Steps', loved the Southern Borders hills and was another admirer of the Border Ballads. Although born in Perth he chose to take a Southern Borders title when he was made Governor General of Canada.

The Borders Book Festival is a popular annual event in the Borders cultural calendar. It brings current prominent writers from across the UK and elsewhere to talk to thousands of attentive local bibliophiles and visitors in a beautiful garden setting in Melrose.

³⁵ The Venerable Bede, "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles.

³⁶ 'Lucia de Lammermoor' by Gaetano Donizetti

Annex 4

The Twelve Towers of Rule

This is a volunteer archaeology and interpretation programme, community-driven, and project-managed by the CSBNP³⁷. Centred around the valley of Rulewater (a tributary of the Teviot in the Tweed catchment) in the Scottish Borders, the Twelve Towers programme has brought together diverse organisations and individuals to:

1. Provide the local community, local schools and the wider Borders and beyond, with opportunities to actively explore the cultural and natural heritage of rural Borders life in the late mediaeval period, as so little is known.
2. Engage with young people, in particular, to provide workshops and hands-on skills training and knowledge transfer, including valuable transferable skills.
3. Increase visitor numbers, especially international visitors through the Borders clans' networks of members, and enhance the quality of the offering.
4. **Demonstrate how a National Park in the Southern Borders could contribute to the socioeconomic welfare of the Borders, the understanding of the intertwined natural and cultural environment, and to inspiring, enthusing and upskilling of young people.**



The initial focus is on the conflict and tensions of the 16th century and the evidence that era of conflict might have left behind in terms of standing structures, archaeology, land use, documentary and object related evidence. A starting point has been investigating the sites and documentary evidence associated with the raid by the Earl of Hertford in 1545 in the longer campaign known as the 'Rough Wooing'. It is a developmental pillar of the Borders-wide evidence gathering for the Scottish Borders National Park.

Following a meeting with the local community in December 2019, CSBNP set up a working group, the Twelve Towers Team, with an ongoing remit to discuss options, gather evidence and identify funds to progress the projects. The group includes landowners, historians, representation from the Scottish Borders Council, Hobkirk Community Council, Historic Environment Scotland, Archaeology Scotland, Ancrum Historical Society, Hawick Archaeological Society, the Hawick Reivers Festival, Family and Clan Associations and other local people. Jane Bower, chair of the National Park Forum, is project managing the overall programme.

³⁷ <https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com>

CSBNP raised initial funding from SoSE, SBC and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Archaeology Scotland, advised by Roger Curtis of Historic Environment Scotland, is sponsoring the archaeological operational aspects of the project and has been able to raise substantial funding additional to that raised by CSBNP to further develop the project. More than 200 young people, mainly from seven Border schools, have now been actively involved.

Professor Richard Oram (Stirling University) and Tom Turpie have reviewed archival records³⁸ (see CSBNP website) and this information is now being incorporated into the emerging narrative of late mediaeval life and strife in a rural Borders community. This will be presented online and in hard copy in a form suitable for lay audiences.

Additional objectives

- Increase the cultural profile of the Rulewater catchment and adjacent districts.
- Develop local trails and interpretation to give a focus for visitors and residents on the cultural heritage of the area.
- Investigate and record sites and documentary material relating to the 1545 raid, and other raids or events in the 16th C.
- Create and host a website with site details displayed as they come to light.
- Investigate and record other sites in Rulewater and Southdean from the 16th C.
- Contribute to the updating of the Historic Environment Record (HER) at Scottish Borders Council, and contribute to updates of Canmore and Pastmap.
- Develop digital reconstructions to enhance the visitor experience and contribute to wider historic understanding.
- Improve/enable access to selected sites; including signage and downloads.
- Work with the Reivers Festival and other cultural groups on the history and culture of the Scottish Borders.
- Develop options with owners of sites and landscapes concerning the application of an 'Adopt a Monument' Scheme.
- Work with other groups who have locus in this area: Northumberland National Park, Historic England, Defence Estates (Otterburn Range) the Ancrum Mantle Walls Project and Peeblesshire Archaeological Society.

An important, ongoing activity of the CSBNP is to communicate information about the programme and its findings to lay audiences through local, national and international media as well as to relevant professional bodies.

There is more information about the 12 Towers of Rule programme on the CSBNP website.

CSBNP wishes to take this opportunity to register its appreciation for the many substantial contributions which the wide range of interested individuals and organisations have made to the Twelve Towers programme.

³⁸ <https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com>

Annex 5

Active Leisure

The proposed Scottish Borders National Park area offers a huge range of active leisure opportunities, many of which are already well-supported with online and printed information.

There are both formally organised activities and supporting information for those who wish to plan their own leisure. All can provide, to varying degrees, participants with heightened awareness and appreciation of the landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

There is considerable potential within the proposed NP area to increase the number, range and rewarding nature of these activities. Partnership working between the National Park Authority (NPA) and the public and private bodies whose remit is to provide and enhance these leisure options, would give them greater payback and sustainability, and help them to reach out further to - and involve - less privileged groups. It will be critically important to coordinate and improve accessibility to the many information sources that will enable all public groups to enjoy and learn about the area. This will include free online sources such as Merlin³⁹, which identifies the presence of bird species from birdsong.

Providing safe access to the countryside is especially important in a living, worked landscape where livestock and machinery operations may impact temporarily or seasonally on access routes or to take account of climate change measures, biodiversity loss and breeding seasons. **The NPA would help to coordinate the tourism and leisure industry's role in educating visitors and locals about the changes underway, the reasons for them and what they can do to help perhaps by volunteering or even donating - as Mountaineering Club of Scotland members do - to repair popular paths and trails.**



³⁹ <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>

Currently, the main tourism and leisure opportunities centre on:

Walking

Some of the enjoyable and educational activities already offered within CSBNP's Twelve Towers of Rule programme are noted in Annex 4. CSBNP is also developing other new paths networks including the 50-mile long Cheviots Circular, the Wheel Causeway south of Hawick, Ruberslaw paths network, and the Ancrum Heritage Trail. Many other organised opportunities to enjoy and help to protect the Borders' natural and cultural heritage are offered within numerous short-term projects in the area. These all illustrate the possibilities, and also the costs, such as maintenance and signage, associated with such opportunities.

There are also many informal active leisure opportunities in the area, which contribute to local and visitor wellbeing, as well as enhancing enjoyment and understanding of the area's natural and cultural heritage.

The Forestry Commission (now FLS) and the private sector of forestry have undertaken considerable development of walking, horse-riding, mountain-biking and cycling routes on their properties, sometimes linking in to environmental, archaeological and historical interpretations.

Short and medium walks: There is abundant information online and in hard copy about walking routes throughout the Scottish Borders. Scottish Borders Council has a very helpful site⁴⁰ with detailed maps and information about length, difficulty, places of interest, etc. The South of Scotland Destination Alliance has an excellent online guide to walks throughout the south of Scotland⁴¹, and there are many other guides to short and medium distance walks within and around the proposed NP area. Hawick - Town O' a Thousand Trails - is developing local walks⁴², and **CSBNP is developing a number of Pilgrimage Walks between small rural churches in some of the Borders most remote areas.**

Long distance walks: For those seeking more of a challenge and an even better chance to soak in the natural and cultural heritage there are two much longer walks which can be undertaken in stages or a series of days with overnight stops. St Cuthbert's Way celebrates the life of the Borders born 7th century saint who devoted his life to the early church. This starts at Melrose Abbey and winds its way some 100km through the Borders and Northumberland to Holy Isle, seen by some as a modern day pilgrimage.

The Pennine Way: one of the most popular long trails in the UK, ends (or begins) in Kirk Yetholm in Roxburghshire. While the short stretch from the Border to the end is a tiny fraction of the whole route, it obviously brings in walkers to the Borders. **A Scottish Borders NP could provide digital and physical signposts, similar to those developed through its partnership with Heriot Watt University's digital entrepreneurs Master students, to flag up more things to see and do in the area all year round.**

The Borders Abbeys Way: a 109km circular route linking the four mediaeval abbeys at Jedburgh, Melrose, Dryburgh and Kelso that also takes in the other historic border towns and villages of Denholm, Hawick, Selkirk and St Boswells.

Linking up: Slow Ways⁴³ is developing a UK-wide network of walks, and CSBNP intends to link up with this growing network to attract more visitors to the Borders.

⁴⁰ https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20032/parks_and_outdoors/632/walking

⁴¹ <https://scotlandstartshere.com/nature-and-outdoor-activities/walking/>

⁴² <https://www.townof1000trails.co.uk>

Cycling

VisitScotland figures show that Scotland's share of Europe's volume and value of cycling trips and spend based on UK visitors alone is only 0.5% and 0.8% respectively, so there is a huge opportunity for Scottish tourism – and the Scottish Borders – to boost cycling tourism.

According to Cycling UK (www.cyclinguk.org), investing in active travel makes good sense.

- For every £1 invested, walking and cycling return an average of around £5-6 (very much better than the high speed railway HS2 at around £2.30 for every £1 invested.)
- Active travel helps keep people fit and guards against ill-health, saving the NHS money;
- Boosts high streets, towns and shopping areas especially in attractive, compact towns where there is ample cycle parking – as in the Borders;
- Creates jobs (the TUC estimates that creating cycle lanes and pedestrianisation comes top for immediate job creation (direct and supply chain jobs) per £1 million investment, along with energy efficient upgrades and reforestation);
- Good for the tourist, leisure and rural economy (data from Cycling UK's King Alfred's Way route in the south of England show that riders spend an average of £83.60 per day on accommodation, food and drink).



On-road cycling and mountain biking are both popular activities for individuals, families and clubs in the Scottish Borders. Many organised local, and several international, events take advantage of the area's extensive, quiet road network. Cycling contributes to health and wellbeing, and at the same time increases awareness of the landscapes and wildlife of the countryside. Lots of useful information including maps is available online, and new cycling paths are under development.

'Cycling in the sparsely-populated Borders is a delight for the confident tourer, and can feel like the best of the 1960s. It's an area of local shops, friendly communities, handsome market towns with good cafes, and little traffic. There's wilderness beyond the lush Tweed valley, a few notable climbs, and certainly lots of big scenery. Now that the Borders Railway – axed in 1969 but rebuilt in 2015 – is back up and running, it's easy getting to the heart of this under-rated region.'

⁴³ <https://beta.slowways.org/>

Although under-represented as a cycling designation, in the summertime the Scottish Borders see many visitors from overseas who appreciate the area's quiet roads and multiple marked routes, and often come with family and friends to take part or to watch the popular Tour O' The Borders and Tweedlove events based at Peebles - boosting the local economy.

The SSDA states: 'The Kirkpatrick C2C, South of Scotland's Coast to Coast cycling route, celebrates Scotland's rich history of innovation and the South's key role in the creation of the bicycle - almost 200 years ago, Kirkpatrick Macmillan from Dumfriesshire created the first pedal driven bicycle, the velocipede.. The on-road route offers 250 miles of uninterrupted joy for experienced cyclists from Stranraer on the west coast to Eyemouth on the east coast, passing through many of the South's villages and towns'.

The Scottish Borders has also hosted the Tour of Britain in 2022, and the UCI Cycling World Championships in 2023.

Horse riding

The rolling hills of the Southern Uplands are perfect horse riding country. There are 380km of way-marked horse riding routes in the Scottish Borders, and maps of local routes and hosts for overnight stays are listed online⁴⁴.

Other activities and leisure opportunities

There are boundless other opportunities to share and capitalise on the Scottish Borders' remarkable culture, unique traditions and rich wildlife from astronomical photography, bee-based therapy and bird watching to vintage car rallying and volunteering on small and large scale projects. The Borders also has the space to offer those who seek it, peace, solitude and tranquillity.

Accommodation

Every type of accommodation for visitors is available in the proposed area, from camping⁴⁵ to luxury hotels⁴⁶, and it will be important that the NP offers accommodation of the right type, at the right price in the right location.

For lots of people, particularly from lower income families, a day trip or weekend car camping jaunt with their family may be a child's first taste of the magic of the outdoors. So it is vital that budget/ basic level but good quality experiences are available, as well as those designed to appeal to the more affluent. The proposed NP area and its 'halo' of towns and settlements have adequate facilities, accommodation and available information for the initial stages after designation. This reduces the need for substantial investment. As the new NP evolves and develops its activities, it is predicted that visitor numbers will grow, and that private sector commercial interest will increase most types of facilities, accommodation, attractions etc, and create new jobs in the area.

Unless the area is designated as an NP, its considerable potential for active leisure, and the socioeconomic benefits of visitor spend and tourism-related business and job creation will be lost.

⁴⁴ <https://www.rideborders.co.uk>

⁴⁵ https://www.pitchup.com/campsites/Scotland/Scotland/Scottish_Borders/Hawick/ruberslaw-wild-woods-camping

⁴⁶ <https://schlosshotel-roxburghe.com/en/spa>

Annex 6

Visitor Management

Scotland's many brilliant but often costly marketing campaigns to attract more visitors have not been adequately matched with the kind of national or local investment in tourism infrastructure required to cope with many extra visitors. We have also lacked the inspirational education and guidance needed to help visitors and local people enjoy and explore the countryside and its wealth of natural and cultural heritage without damaging it.

A new NP in the Southern Borders has no need to reinvent the wheel: there are many examples of practical solutions in different contexts that can be adopted or adapted to meet local conditions. What is vital is that all stakeholders (especially businesses, landowners, foresters, housing developers) have the inspiration, confidence, proven solutions and imagination to make the most of the short, medium and long term opportunities that operating within or close to a NP can bring. The new NP does, however, need to benefit everyone - not just one or two sectors.

Infrastructure improvements and business opportunities

A new NP in the Southern Borders would provide not just the permanent marketing boost the region needs to attract more visitors. As NPs do across the world, it would attract more of the type of responsible visitors who spend more and stay longer (maybe even move their families here to live). It would also provide the impetus to change how some essential but currently underfunded – or non-existent – public facilities and services are provided.

From the outset, SBNP would work with diverse private and public partners, including Scottish Borders Council (SBC), Historic Environment Scotland, Forestry and Land Scotland and NatureScot, as well as local clubs and groups in the Third Sector, to identify, budget for and promote more and better facilities and services for visitors. Crucially, this would also improve the physical and mental well-being of local people.



Some relatively quick, low-cost wins include:

- Setting up the framework for a PAN Scottish Borders Rangers Service that would involve the emergency services, SBC's wardens and Community Action Teams, and both private and public landowners drawing on the Cairngorms NP example.
- Expanding the development of a comprehensive information dissemination programme using real-time apps with the Digital Entrepreneurs Masters students at Borders College.
- Making more and longer laybys, as well as extending existing ones (both on local authority land and by negotiation with local landowners) and well maintained car parks, waste bins and WCs. These improvements would help both visitors and local residents, especially as many Borders' roads are barely wide enough to accommodate motorhomes, rural lorry deliveries, and tractors with trailers and which are of geographical and socioeconomic necessity. In the Western Isles, such developments have improved traffic flow.
- Every village or hotel in the Borders could emulate the Shieldaig community in the Highlands, which has set up campervan charging points in the car park with a small fee, to encourage people to stay for a night or two and use the local facilities.
- Hotels in more remote areas could - like the Craighouse Hotel in Jura, or Kingshouse Hotel in Glencoe - welcome wild campers who will use their restaurants and bars, and even showers. This emulates the Britstop scheme - a form of agritourism - which could easily be expanded to the benefit of both visitors and the local economy.
- Local golf - and other - clubs could generate extra income out of season by creating a few campervan charging points in their car parks (which are usually deserted after dark). A small fee could perhaps provide access to toilets/showers, and encourage golfers and other visitors to use their courses and other local attractions.
- Identify more and better sites for bicycle racks/shelters - some of which could double with rural bus shelters.
- Set up a network of bicycle rental stations, perhaps with maintenance and repair facilities (like many ski hire facilities in Europe).
- Review existing provision for camping and caravans and, working with site owners, enhance, extend and share facilities or services including sluices for chemical waste disposal as required.
- Identify sites that could be run in partnership with the private sector to give immediate business opportunities. Sites in or close to villages and towns, would appeal to motor caravans and camper vans (both basic and serviced) and allow these visitors to walk or cycle to restaurants, shops, etc. Sites close to villages and in places not accessible by car would, especially if at least basic services were provided appeal to campers with tents.

Rangers (professional, seasonal, junior and volunteer)

Rangers are the boots-on-the-ground, eyes and ears of a National Park. Their work involves a myriad of public-facing, nature-based and maintenance jobs. All rangers need to be able to inspire and interpret their area's natural and cultural heritage. They especially need to communicate well even in difficult circumstances perhaps dealing with challenging or distressed people, when rangers need to be alert to risk as well as handling situations in a non-confrontational manner. In the UK, most rangers and countryside access officer teams work closely with the emergency services.

Volunteer rangers and junior rangers: the Southern Borders may have more pockets of deprivation than most other parts of Scotland, as well as a higher than average number of older people. However, post Covid many citizens nationwide are coming forward to volunteer, and in the Borders there are a significant number of older people who already enjoy and would appreciate more opportunities to keep physically and mentally active. The core rangers team would work with schools to involve young people as junior rangers, along the lines of the South Downs NP.

Most people want to do the right thing but just need a nudge in the right direction by a friendly, knowledgeable person. However, any incidents of anti-social behaviour would be tackled through stronger enforcement of existing laws. The provision of more facilities including toilets and litter bins, more low-cost campsites, and investment in education on responsible access would also go a long way towards mitigating anti-social behaviour (ASB). As L&TNP has learned, new laws or bylaws can be costly and ultimately ineffective without rangers, and may need to rely on a police presence – a resource that simply does not exist in remote rural areas.

Boosting ranger and warden numbers can bring immediate improvement to an area’s natural and cultural assets, as well as the visitor – and local resident – experience as shown by for example Cairngorms NP, the Outer Hebrides, at Lunan Bay and by East Lothian Council.

Scotland’s Land Reform may well be amongst the world’s most progressive but after nearly 20 years, various aspects need to be improved to take account of climate change impacts and the growing surge of people now visiting the countryside. As a start, some decisions are needed (specifically on camp fires, trees, water and pollution ie human and dog waste) or at least a recalibration by the Scottish Government of key parts of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC).



Education and inspiration

Engaging with and motivating young people – especially those living in towns - to take more than a passing interest in our natural and cultural heritage is a challenge. But it is one that the NPA could tackle head-on initiating partnerships and cross-border exchanges where people of all ages can learn about and connect with nature and be taught the importance of an updated Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Ensuring there is first-rate signage, guidance and interpretation of the Scottish Borders’ many natural and cultural assets will be key, and the NP would ramp up its collaborations with local schools, Heriot-Watt University and Archaeology Scotland to devise inspirational material and novel means to engage with people of all ages.

The NPA would also work with local communities, particularly in the more remote areas, to develop long-term sustainable tourism management plans with local organisations and people (CSBNP is already doing this with the Twelve Towers Heritage project and the Pilgrimage Walks).

‘Slow adventure’ tourism could help visitors to immerse themselves in wild places and engage with local people, stories and food throughout the year, helping them to understand and appreciate the Borders’ wealth of natural and cultural assets. According to University of the Highlands and Islands research, slow adventure appeals to an affluent urban consumer base and captures the current consumer appetite for more authentic and immersive experiences.

Technology

Although a Borders National Park would be unlikely to attract the number of visitors experienced by the larger and wilder NPs in the UK, easing pressures on congested routes (especially on the Borders' many narrow roads and at prime visitor attractions) would avoid some of the driver frustration seen in other popular rural regions. Redistribution strategies using proven technology and new solutions devised with partners such as Borders College would be key to achieving a happier balance.

Geofencing: Location-based services that use GPS, Wi-Fi etc could trigger pop-up messages on visitors' phone or GPS to welcome them when they reach a particular area, and confirm which of the nearest car parks is full/still has spaces. Similar information could be displayed real-time in visitor centres within the NP boundaries, on digital monitors on the A68 and A7, and in gateway towns to help visitors plan their routes in areas where Wi-Fi is intermittent or simply not available.

Application programming interface (API). According to Outsideonline.co, the US company that brought commercial nous to running some 100,000 federal campsites, real-time updates on campsite availability are provided through its API. Similar software powers Google Transit, Hotels.com, and Kayak, which make it easy to do everything from planning journeys to making restaurant reservations. Third party involvement to create, for example, campsite reservation applications has led to a wave of tech businesses transforming the booking experience.

Social media can help directly with visitor redistribution when agencies use it to trumpet lesser known or off the beaten track sights and experiences.

Geotagging is a great way to promote something of natural or cultural interest but directly asking visitors to refrain from sharing the exact coordinates of every landscape photo they post could help keep the number of visitors to manageable levels at iconic sites.

A site reservation system that limits daily numbers to well-known beauty spots during peak season could also help manage traffic and parking issues but may not be easy to introduce where many different routes lead to the attraction or into the National Park.

Introduce smart cards for motorhomers to use when travelling round a network of aires/car parks that gives them pre-paid or point-of-use access to whichever services and facilities they need.

Deploy reservations and ticketing systems. Theme parks and similar tourist attractions have long used sophisticated reservations and ticketing systems. Other destinations are beginning to follow their lead. For example, the Milford Track - a 33-mile hiking trail in New Zealand limits the number of full-trail hikers to 90 per day during peak season.

Real time technology can be used to nudge visitors to help smooth out congestion, even out peak and non-peak arrivals and to spread visitors to less popular destinations. In others cases, visitors themselves can tap into real-time data to avoid crowds or check how long the queues are at visitor attractions, downloading an artificial intelligence-powered service that suggests off-the-beaten-path destinations based on their social media profiles.

Compulsory registration. In Thailand's largest national park near Bangkok's megalopolis, visitors must register with their addresses. This makes it easy for rangers to track them down if they leave rubbish behind - and post their trash back to them, and warn them of punishments including imprisonment or hefty fines.

Annex 7

Support for a Scottish Borders National Park

Since its inception, CSBNP has engaged extensively with individuals and groups in every sector across the Scottish Borders, and with many local, national and international organisations.

Community Councils

Most recently CSBNP has presented to well-attended meetings of: Scottish Borders Community Councils Network (twice); the Community Councils of Jedburgh and District; Hawick; Denholm and District; Southdean; Nisbet, Crailing and Eckford; Upper Liddesdale and Hermitage; Newcastleton; Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham. Several others were also addressed in the earlier years. All CCs in the SBC area have received regular CSBNP newsletters and updates. These have elicited much useful feedback and comment which has shaped CSBNP's proposal. (The most recent newsletter was distributed to all CCs in January 2024).

Scottish Borders Council

Formal engagement with Scottish Borders Council is covered in the main response to Question 7.

Local businesses

Diverse local businesses across all sectors have been consulted. They are strongly supportive. Leafletting of shops and businesses in the central areas of Hawick, Kelso, Jedburgh, Melrose and Galashiels in late summer/autumn 2023 provided CSBNP members with the opportunity to speak face to face with those proprietors/managers and staff free to share a few moments to talk about the pros and cons of NP designation. Support for a Scottish Borders NP was substantial.

Meetings and contacts with farmers and landowners

A meeting with the local branch of NFUS was held in Denholm, in January 2017. There was mixed support and hesitation and the Campaign Team noted that the main concerns were that there would be another level of planning bureaucracy and that NP status would attract more visitors, a proportion of which would be irresponsible in terms of access to land. These concerns were subsequently dealt with as described under the heading Issues and Concerns Arising below.

In January 2018 a meeting with Scottish Land and Estates (SLE) was held in Denholm. This also showed mixed support and hesitation, the latter largely for reasons not dissimilar to those of NFUS. However, an update given to the SLE local chapter in 2023 met with fairly positive responses.

Individual letters and information about the NP have been provided to large-scale landowners. Recent positive communications with Roxburghe Estate's managing director on multi-organisational cooperation in visitor management have been very encouraging.

Frequent informal face-to-face meetings with farmers, foresters and other land managers in a range of contexts have offered opportunities to explain and discuss the CSBNP's proposal, respond to positive and negative comments, and develop greater awareness of the pros, cons and mitigation measures of NP designation as described in the following section 'Issues and Stakeholders' Concerns'.



Issues and Stakeholders' Concerns

Councillors, community councillors, local businesses, landowners, farmers and land managers have been interested in CSBNP's evolving proposal to varying degrees. Many elected members as well as some farmers, have indicated support as our proposal has developed over the years and has responded to some minority (but not minor) concerns.

The latter included some people's worries that:

- **NP designation would result in more bureaucracy, specifically in relation to planning** – CSBNP responded to this early on by proposing that a Borders National Park should not become a planning authority. As the NP would be entirely within Scottish Borders Council (SBC) area, planning powers should remain with SBC, with an NPA having statutory consultee status for applications within, or visible from, its area, and for changes to the Local Development Plan and other relevant policies.
- **Designation might result in people from outside the NP buying houses within the NP for use as holiday homes, leading to higher property prices, leaving local people struggling to compete for housing, especially at the lower end of the market** – CSBNP researched experience in other NPs and discovered that this is not necessarily or even universally the case. Local research showed that latest statistics record the Borders as having the fifth highest level of empty properties in Scotland, with 6.8% of its dwellings currently unoccupied⁴⁷. SBC is working to reduce this number and bring more empty homes back into use, so it does not appear that there is a housing shortage as such - although all statistics hide a more complex situation. Some NPs have actually created new affordable housing for rent or sale, and SBC is currently discussing a doubling of council tax on second homes to try to avoid the situation in the Cairngorms where 12% of houses are second homes, very much higher than the Scottish average.
- **Designation might encourage so many additional visitors to the area that the Borders infrastructure would be overwhelmed, not unlike the Lake District NP, the Northern 500, and Skye** – CSBNP responded by pointing to the fact that Dumfries & Galloway Council area currently records twice as many visitors than the Borders and is not overwhelmed. CSBNP further maintained that:
 - The Scottish Borders is accessible from north, south, east and west and so less likely to experience the kind of traffic congestion problems seen in areas with fewer access routes.
 - A Scottish Borders National Park is unlikely to experience anything like the numbers of visitors seen in the wilder beauty of the Lake District, or Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.

⁴⁷ Daily Record, Jan 20234

- The new NPA in the Borders will have prepared for more visitors in advance (eg by introducing byelaws on camping and parking), and will concentrate on attracting an increase in the right kind of visitor, not marauding hordes.
- **Designation will attract more irresponsible visitors** – Good practice in visitor management has the opposite effect. See ‘Visitor Management’ in response to Q5 and also Annex – Visitor Management.
- **Increased overnight visitors will exceed available overnight accommodation**, as apparently occurred for three one-day events in the Kelso area in 2022. CSBNP responded by pointing out that the NPA would practice good visitor management, spreading visitor numbers over a longer season, providing an increased total number of annual customers for existing accommodation providers, plus creating a market for additional accommodation such as farm cottages and well managed pop-up campsites. It does not anticipate the NPA supporting single large-scale events which have not catered for overnight accommodation needs.

Most of these responses appeared first in our widely circulated Position Statement of 2018⁴⁸, and have been mentioned in our leaflets and newsletters, in articles and opinion pieces in local and national media, or through direct feedback to individuals concerned.



⁴⁸ See https://www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NP-Position_Statement.pdf

Annex 8

Climate Change Mitigation and the Just Transition to Net Zero

The changes to farming practices described in Annex 9 – Farming, Food and Drink will play an important role in climate change mitigation across the NP area. Native woodland planting and other measures touched on in the Answer to Q2, and in Annex 1 – The Natural Heritage, will also contribute very significantly. Increased biodiversity will be an important factor in mitigation of the risks due to climate change and in the Just Transition to Net Zero.

The following sections add some points to this inevitably abbreviated discussion.

Genetic Conservation Units (GCUs)

Conserving genetic diversity within our native species is important for increasing resilience to climate change and invasive new pests. The UK is part of the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN)⁴⁹ and NatureScot has actively signed up a number of native woodland areas in the north of Scotland to this programme. The Southern Uplands with their different geodiversity and more southerly location are not yet represented in this important project.

The proposed NP would aim to identify suitable candidates and facilitate their inclusion. It would also aim to join programmes for other species groups to build greater resilience⁵⁰.



⁴⁹ Hubert, J and Cottrell, J (2014) "Establishing and managing gene conservation units", Forest Research FCPN021

⁵⁰ Minter, M et al (2021) "Exploring the potential for GCUs to conserve genetic diversity in wild populations" <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/2688-8319.12061>

How agriculture is adapting

CC resilient plants: Scotland is renowned for its crop science research, and there is already an active body of research and development of cereal varieties which will be needed as the climate changes. Robbie Waugh of the James Hutton Institute reviews the plant breeding issues and current research on barley⁵¹ which is of paramount importance for the Scotch whisky industry (2022 exports £6.2bn, 11,000 people employed in Scotland alone) and for the beer market (£19m to the UK in 2022).

Diversification is increasingly supporting many farm incomes, and to help farmers make better land use choices, the Scottish Government provides guidance and grants⁵².

The proposed NP will play an important liaison role, and in coordinating the multiple sources of information and advice available to farmers and land managers to help them to make informed choices. The NP could coordinate mapping of areas of valuable biodiversity across the NP area where there is a paucity of information or it is held locally before any major changes to land use are introduced.

In the Southern Borders, mitigation of the effects of climate change and effecting a Just Transition⁵³ will require major changes in land use. (It will also require a range of modifications and improvements to some farm buildings).

Emissions reduction in land use - agriculture and forestry (which employ 4000 and 600 people respectively) are major components of the area's economy. Reducing the carbon emissions of the equipment and practices used in these sectors is a major challenge.



The NPA will work with these sectors to identify appropriate low emissions solutions. The move to regenerative agriculture and to nature-friendly farming will, as discussed in Annex 9 – Farming, Food and Drink, reduce emissions and mitigate some of the impacts of climate change such as increased flooding. The NPA will aim to facilitate the adoption of such sustainable solutions and provide a local resource of information and regular knowledge exchange for land managers.

⁵¹ Waugh, R (2023) "The future success of barley" in The Scottish Farmer. Dec 9. www.thescottishfarmer.co.uk

⁵² forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/farm-woodlands

⁵³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-fairer-greener-scotland/>

The National Land Use Strategy⁵⁴ 2021-28 gives guidance as to the direction of changes required, and South of Scotland Enterprise (SoSE) is currently preparing a Regional Land Use Framework⁵⁵ (RLUF), which will provide the information farmers and land managers need to make informed decisions in the proposed NP area. When the RLUF and the Bills currently going through the Scottish Parliament are finalised, the proposed NPA will draw on these to draw up a plan to encourage, coordinate and support much greater action on the ground across the NP area.

The draft RLUF report confirms the urgent need for the collation and analysis of more and better quality data, clearly presented, to provide insights and highlight opportunities. This will help policy makers, farmers and land managers keen to make informed, evidence-based decisions that will help their businesses thrive and reduce their carbon footprint.

Amongst the NPA's priorities to help land managers will be the development and delivery of appropriate skills training and education to underpin the growth of green jobs in the rural economy that will be needed to support the planned changes. It will have due regard to avoiding placing burdensome costs on communities and on the individuals least able to pay. It will be designed to ensure that benefits are evenly spread.

Emissions – transport

The National Park proposal and the Carlisle Railway extension proposal are not mutually dependent. However, both should be followed through, as the benefits gained would undoubtedly be greater than the sum of the parts: an NP would create more demand for rail journeys, while the NP itself would benefit from a larger proportion of its visitors choosing to leave cars at home, and the environment would benefit from the same circumstance.

The NPA would work with public and private bodies to create adequate infrastructure for electric vehicles. It would ensure availability of appropriate maps, signage and online visibility. Updating and expanding existing car-parks and creating new ones for a Borders National Park would provide the opportunity to locate charging points for electric vehicles (including electric bicycles) in evermore places in the Borders, for the benefit of locals and visitors alike. While the nation-wide infrastructure of chargers seems likely to remain an issue for some years, it is inevitable that the ease of charging will become increasingly important to those holidaying in the UK by car, to the extent that areas with a higher proportion of chargers per head of population could establish a competitive edge in that respect.

The increased demand that a NP would create for easy and clean visitor and local resident transport would undoubtedly justify electric buses - large and small - to service the NP area. Snowdonia NP's Sherpa bus service has successfully helped to reduce traffic congestion where access to tourist hotspots is limited, and Yorkshire Dales NP's circular service connects a dozen or so towns and villages, benefiting both local people and visitors.

Emissions – housing

The National Planning Framework (NPF4) includes priorities to increase the population by improving local liveability, creating a low carbon network of towns and supporting sustainable rural development. Development needs, not least for new housing and new businesses, will require additional land to be released and building new homes will inevitably have a carbon footprint. In a region of low average incomes, SBC's Planning Department will play an important role in ensuring that the right development comes forward in the right places. The target for SBC is 4800 homes between 2023-24 and 2032-33.

⁵⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-third-land-use-strategy-2021-2026-getting-best-land/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/news/landuseframework>

Although it is not proposed that the Scottish Borders NPA has any executive planning remit, it might well support – or even initiate when appropriate – public and private partnerships in devising carbon neutral regeneration of brown field sites in or on the outskirts of towns and villages to provide new housing, facilities and services.

UK NP housing initiatives that may be of interest include:

- Exmoor NP’s Rural Housing Project acts as an ‘honest broker’ to find sites for affordable housing.
- North York Moors NP helps the region’s Housing Group to share good practice, and feeds suggestions into the Regional Housing Board.
- The Peak District NPA leads a housing partnership of interested delivery partners.
- Rural community land trusts (CLTs) – for example:

Dartmoor: In a £3.6million project led by the Christow Community Land Trust (CCLT), affordable highly energy efficient homes were built, most to full PassivHaus standards. Almost no heating is required and total energy bills for each property expected to be around £100 a year. The development for Teign Housing was believed to be the first PassivHaus development to be built in a NP anywhere in the world. Fourteen of the houses were available to rent. The four sold on the open market, at an affordable price, have restrictions on occupancy and market price to retain their affordability for local people.

Cairngorm: Throughout the Cairngorms NP community trusts are developing projects that include affordable housing as well as a wider range of housing types and tenures, with help from the Communities Trust and Rural Housing Scotland, and the Scottish Government’s Rural Housing Fund. Recognising that accessing housing on the open market is a challenge for many people working within the NP, CNP and its partners are now tackling these issues through, amongst other, measures:

- Reducing the proportion of second homes in new developments;
 - Maximising the proportion of new housing that is affordable in perpetuity;
 - Using the Local Development Plan to try to ensure that new open market housing better meets local needs (eg a greater mix of house types and sizes, with an emphasis on smaller homes);
 - Targeting public sector funding towards the National Park and to sites with the greatest potential for delivering affordable housing;
 - Supporting communities to deliver community-led housing solutions, including by making the most of powers to buy land and taking a more pro-active role in management where appropriate;
 - Promoting high standards of sustainable design and energy efficiency in new homes to ensure they are affordable in terms of lifetime running costs.
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Annex 9

Farming, Food and Drink



The Southern Borders produces significant amounts of the ingredients for food and drink, both for local consumption and for export.

The NP area proposed for designation includes many hill farms producing mainly lamb, and a smaller area of arable and horticulture in the lower land towards the east of the NP area. Most livestock is reared relatively extensively. Future agricultural activity will be very much influenced by the content of the Agriculture Bill currently going through the Scottish Parliament and the associated secondary legislation. Other legislation in the pipeline will also have a significant impact. The details of these are still unknown. However, the general trends for farm policy have been indicated⁵⁶ by the Scottish Government and it is expected that there will be a much stronger focus on requiring land management practices which increase biodiversity, habitat and nature restoration, and the provision of ecosystem services such as flood control, climate change mitigation, and the just transition to net zero.

Nature-based solutions for farming are being explored by countryside charities as well as government and it is expected that producers will soon have to prove that they are farming sustainably.

Regenerative farming focuses on topsoil regeneration, increasing biodiversity, restoring the natural water, carbon and nutrient cycle. Interest in regenerative farming is already growing partly due to the expected legislation, but also to the increased cost of inputs – fertiliser, pesticides etc – caused by the war in Ukraine.

⁵⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/next-step-delivering-vision-scotland-leader-sustainable-regenerative-farming/#:~:text=Our%20vision%20for%20Scottish%20Agriculture%20We%20will%20transform,Scotland%27s%20future%20agriculture%20support%20regime%20from%202025%20onwards>

⁵⁷ <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-work/our-advocacy/naturebasedsolutions/grassland-farmland/nature-based-solutions-in-agriculture/>

Regenerative farming can help to mitigate the impact of climate change through flood control and overall conservation, but requires substantial changes which need location-specific advice and support. Organisations such as Nature-Friendly Farming⁵⁸ can help, and a NP will ensure that farmers are linked up with the sources of advice that can support the changes needed.



Local production and locally sourced ingredients are increasingly important to the mid to higher end of the hospitality sector, but the message and practice is neither universally understood nor followed.

There are nevertheless worthy pioneers in the Scottish Borders.

Suppliers in and around the NP area include:

- The Borders Distillery (opened in March 2018 – the first Scotch Whisky distillery in the Scottish Borders since 1837, dedicated to help regenerate Hawick by bringing whisky-making back to the region using local ingredients);
- Kelso Farmers Market;
- Burnside Farm Foods and Borders Berries on the Rutherford Estate near Kelso;
- Going Native Heritage Meats in Hawick;
- The Borders Brewery near Denholm where the cereal used is harvested on the farmland on which the brewery is located, ie “from plough to pint”;
- Reiver Country Farm Foods in Berwickshire; and Peelham Farm near Foulden;
- Standhill Farm tomatoes;
- Stitchill Dairy;
- the artisan Firebrick Bakery in Lauder;
- and too many honey producers to list.

Restaurants favouring local produce include:

- The Hoebridge and Seasons in Gattonside;
- Provender, The Town House, and Burts Hotel in Melrose;
- Schloss Roxburghe Hotel, Heiton;
- The Capon Tree in Jedburgh;
- The Caddy Man near Jedburgh;
- The Gordon Arms Hotel in Yarrow Valley;
- The Cross Keys Inn, Ettrickbridge;
- The Gordon Arms in Gordon;
- The Cross Keys in Ancrum.

⁵⁸ <https://www.nffn.org.uk>

A notable hybrid of farming and hospitality is Wilson's Farm and Kitchen near Kelso.

An NPA could create or support some coordination of effort across the NP area, in partnership with the tourism body SSSDA, and spread good practice much more widely than individual pioneers can operating in a vacuum. This could include co-operative purchasing power which would give producers a more stable order-book, deliver affordable local produce to a much greater number of consumers, and reduce duplicated transport costs.

An NPA would have the PR power to persuade more large-scale retailers such as supermarkets to increase the proportion of food and drink they stock that has been locally produced or prepared. Likewise, the NPA would work with local producers to supply local schools, care homes and hospitals with a higher proportion of locally produced food.

The NPA could help producers by helping them to set up a Borders-wide picking, processing and delivery network and, for livestock producers, push for a local abattoir to ensure NPA branded produce builds further on its very good reputation for animal welfare and provenance.

Agritourism and farm retail is growing, with support from the Scottish Government⁵⁹. This provides multiple benefits – accommodation and education for visitors, income for farmers and income from tourism to rural areas.

As a National Park which celebrates a mixture of worked and farmed landscapes with intervening wilder spaces, the Scottish Borders National Park Authority will become the farmer's friend and support in many ways, including the just transition to Net Zero and the promotion of produce which contributes to that end result.



⁵⁹ Millar, J (2023) "New agritourism monitor farms" in "The Scottish Farmer", November 25. www.thescottishfarmer.co.uk