



MEDIA RELEASE FROM THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND

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SCOTLAND LAGGING BEHIND IN PROTECTIONS FOR ICONIC SCENERY

Scotland's largest conservation charity, the National Trust for Scotland called on policymakers to adopt different approaches to ensure scenic landscapes, that are vital for the wellbeing of the nation, are not diminished by inappropriate planning developments.

In doing this, the charity has set out proven measures that could be included in future Scottish planning legislation after comparing policies currently in place across the different nations of the UK.

Responding to the draft National Planning Framework (NPF4) being laid in the Scottish Parliament, the Trust highlights a need for Scotland to refresh its approach to protecting and managing our world-renowned landscapes and heritage sites. Doing so would not only bring Scotland in line with our neighbours across the UK but would also help make a positive contribution to combatting both the climate and biodiversity crises.

The Trust's examination of planning frameworks currently in place across Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland scored how well they each safeguard different elements of cultural and natural heritage.

Scotland scored strongly on the treatment of Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, while England leads the way on the protection of National Parks and of scenic landscapes.

The vast majority of Scotland's National Scenic Areas do not currently have active management plans in place to safeguard their special qualities, which means they cannot be counted towards our efforts to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030.

By contrast, their equivalent in England, Areas of Natural Beauty, do have management plans and do count towards the UK's commitments to protect 30% of land for nature.

This is why the Trust is calling on NPF4 to insist on the use of management plans for National Scenic Areas, thereby preventing, or at least restricting the scale of development in scenic landscapes. This will help protect their rich biodiversity, while also ensuring our trees and peatlands remain intact as important carbon stores.

While robust management plans will ensure the protection of existing National Scenic Areas, new designations will also be required for Scotland to meet its commitment to

'30x30'. With little update to National Scenic Areas since their inception over 40 years ago, the Trust believes they are long overdue a review and expansion.

Scotland's iconic landscapes are not only highly regarded for their natural beauty, but for the history they embody. As a key cultural and economic asset, the historic environment is already afforded protection within the planning system, but as COP26 discussions have shown, the time has come to better recognise the environmental benefits the historic environment has to offer.

Sites of historical significance, including battlefields such as Culloden, are a key part of our national identity but their landscapes also help keep air breathable and water systems clean, contributing to the wellbeing of local communities and visitors alike. This is a principle already recognised in planning policies in Northern Ireland and England, and another area where the Trust feels Scotland could strengthen its own strategy.

While it takes more than planning policies to conserve our national and natural heritage, NTS calls on the Scottish Government to take action in NPF4 that gives equal recognition to the social, cultural, environmental and economic value of these irreplaceable resources, and ensures they are not damaged or destroyed by inappropriate development.

Diarmid Hearn, Head of Policy at the National Trust for Scotland, said:

"Scotland is known around the world for the beauty of our natural landscapes, and while the current planning system helps to safeguard some significant features, this comparison with our UK neighbours demonstrates Scotland can and should be doing more to preserve our iconic landscapes.

"With Scottish planning policy now being reviewed, we are calling on the Scottish Government to strengthen existing protections for both cultural and natural heritage. We welcome the Government's recognition of the role the planning system has to play in responding to the twin crises of biodiversity and climate, and by enhancing the protections already in place we believe Scotland can become a leader in conservation and environmental protection at this critical moment."

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Editor's Notes:

About National Trust for Scotland

The National Trust for Scotland is the conservation charity that over 90 years has saved, maintained, and shared many of the country's most loved places, rich with history, heritage, nature, and culture. The charity celebrates Scotland's heritage and with almost 100 places in its care, there's a place for everyone to love.

The National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work of caring for the natural and built heritage that people from Scotland and across the world all love, ensuring its future for everyone to enjoy.

From coastlines to castles, art to architecture, wildlife to wildernesses, the National Trust for Scotland protects the national and natural treasures we all love. Support the National Trust for Scotland and help them protect the places we all love Become a member at www.nts.org.uk.

We would be grateful if, when referring to the National Trust for Scotland that our name is not shortened to 'the National Trust'. We are an independent organisation, separate from the National Trust. The National Trust for Scotland is commonly shortened to NTS or 'the Trust'.