



Coastal & Marine National Park – Position Statement

Background

In 2005 the Minister for the Environment, Ross Finnie took steps to fulfil the Liberal Democrat election pledge to create the UK's first Coastal and Marine National Park in Scotland (CMNP). He instructed Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to identify candidate areas.

- ✚ In April this year SNH published a report recommending five areas for consideration. Mull and Iona are in two of those areas, and we conclude that there is a very real chance that we will find our islands within a proposed designated area.
- ✚ At the end of June we expect the Scottish Executive to launch a 12-week consultation period seeking views on these 5 areas, ending in October. By Christmas we expect the Minister to have chosen which coastal area of Scotland will be designated, and there will then follow 12 to 18 months of consultations and discussions to finalise the park area and how it will be managed.

Recent press articles and correspondence indicate that the subject of a proposed Scottish Coastal and Marine National Park needs to be debated locally and accurate information disseminated to our residents. Some people see national park status as a way of protecting our valued environment while providing significant economic opportunities for a region long neglected. Others are concerned about how being in a national park will impact on our daily lives and particularly those earning their living from marine-based industries, who fear additional controls may threaten their businesses.

What is the Community Trust's viewpoint?

Following their Board meeting of May 15th the Directors agreed that the Mull & Iona Community Trust:

- ✚ supports initiatives which will bring greater investment in the islands infrastructure, particularly roads, affordable housing, sewerage treatment and sufficient supplies of drinking water.
- ✚ supports initiatives which provide sustainable employment and business opportunities, but it would therefore be opposed to an initiative which might threaten existing business and jobs, narrowing the economic base of a fragile island economy, or which might increase levels of bureaucracy and associated delays, for businesses and residents.
- ✚ believes that much more detail is required about the likely composition, powers and area of a National Park and it will continue to seek this from government.
- ✚ will continue to support efforts to get clear and accurate information to residents concerning the National Park proposals, and does not favour sweeping generalisations either for or against.
- ✚ supports community involvement in decision making and government, and if consulted will continue to promote mechanisms by which communities views can be heard and which enable communities to have a greater involvement in issues affecting our quality of life.
- ✚ Believes that democratic control of any Park Authority should be a prerequisite.
- ✚ will, where resources allow, continue to respond to requests from residents or local community groups for assistance with participating in future discussions.

Why does the Community Trust have these views?

The Directors of the Trust have recently conducted a strategic review of the organisation, now in its ninth year. Having analysed the report which led to the setting up of the charity, the work of the last eight years and the continuing demands upon it the strategic framework in which we work is:

- OUR MISSION** – Improving the quality of life on Mull & Iona
OUR STRATEGY – Working together to unlock the potential of our islands
OUR VALUES - Open Democratic, Accountable & Enterprising
OUR VISION - Influential, Respected and Sustainable

The staff and volunteers of the Mull & Iona Community Trust will continue to apply this strategic framework to our four key strategic areas:

- **Community Services**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Economic Opportunity**
- **Natural & Cultural Heritage**

<i>So what's the Community Trust been doing about it?</i>
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Awareness Raising

The *2004 Island Voices survey* (which was designed and circulated with the help of local volunteers), was a genuine attempt to investigate the views of Mull & Iona residents on a wide range of economic, environmental, and predominantly, social, issues. Two of the questions referred to national parks. Only 344 questionnaires were returned, but of those, 53% of respondees were in favour of coastal and marine national park.

November 2005 – As SNH began to develop their work on a CMNP, in an effort to bring this to the attention of residents, MICT asked SNH head office staff to come to Mull to explain their work. They agreed and the MICT AGM hosted a well attended presentation and discussion on the subject.

January 2006 – In response to requests for information, generated by the AGM, the Trust coordinated a public meeting of the Land & Sea Forum, (a sub-committee of the Trust) attended by SNH local staff and a wide cross section of the community. The conclusion was that further meetings/debates were of limited value until the government's proposals were clearer.

May 2006 – A Community Trust 'Information Bulletin' was circulated to local organisations and individuals with an update on consultation and the next steps to be taken by the government, highlighting the opportunities for people to make their voices heard.

Capacity Building and Lobbying

MAFA - Following the November AGM, Trust staff were asked to help the aquaculture and fisheries businesses on Mull form an Association. The Trust took minutes, attended a steering group, wrote a new constitution, (subsequently edited & adopted), and chaired the inaugural meeting of MAFA in December 2005. Office staff acted as (paid) Treasurer for MAFA until they secured a volunteer to do so.

Representation to SNH– In December 2005 the Trust responded to SNH's open invitation to express viewpoints about a proposed CMNP, and submitted a letter to their head office. This letter outlined many of the points raised at the AGM and urged the government to consult the communities involved.

George Lyons MSP – In February 2006 staff and Directors met with MSP George Lyon repeat the points raised in the letter to SNH. George Lyon subsequently secured a response from the Minister, Ross Finnie and forwarded this to us.

February 2006 – In response to the Trusts awareness raising, Mull NFU Branch Members and local landowners had arranged a meeting in Salen Hotel with local SNH Board Member Hugh Raven. A member of MICT's staff attended and participated in discussions.

<i>And Finally.....</i>

- The views of our local communities and Members are given full consideration by the Trust. Our track record proves that wherever possible, a balanced approach to developments is taken, and we particularly welcome more Members to participate in the Trust's work.
- Board meetings of the Mull and Iona Community Trust are open to all Members, and minutes are available on the website – www.mict.co.uk
- Board Directors are elected from the Membership at each AGM, when one third of existing Directors and any Co-opted Directors must stand down.