

Democratic renewal and our National Parks

Description

If you have not read it, I would commend the [lecture](#) Andy Wightman gave last week on the case for a renewal of Scottish democracy. I am not a member of any political party, the lecture does not mention National Parks but what it says is, I believe, entirely relevant to our National Parks and the issues that are covered on parkswatch, from the need for transparency to corporate power. I was particularly struck by the following extract:

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I met a small health charity recently and I asked them what was told that they were awaiting a new strategy from the government.

Why wait, I asked. Why not draft the strategy yourselves?

Politics should not simply be about making demands of the government, though that is.

In my view, organisations such as those representing the public have been doing this for some time - scaling up the policy papers and the briefings to draft their own strategy. It is activism, subversive democracy, transparency initiative, and a power that will challenge the often complacent political establishment. It is a bit of risk, danger, excitement and creative energy.

Which leads me to some recommendations as to how to improve democracy, hold power to account and create a new political debate.

Parkswatch is a blog, a platform for critical thinking (and I hope debate) about National Parks but in covering issues I and other contributors have made demands and suggestions of what need to change. Much of this has been in response to what the Parks are doing or failing to do. It's reactive. I think Andy is right. Those who care about our National Parks need to scale up their engagement and to start to take initiatives.

While our National Park authorities continually talk about local communities, its been pretty clear where the power has been to date and there has been very little sign of bottom up initiatives. There are though signs of change. The best example I can think of is the Save the Ciste group, who have been developing their own plan for Cairngorm and are now openly thinking about alternative ownership and control of Cairngorm. A major challenge to the powers that be. I think we need lots more of that in our National Parks:

- how about an alternative to Flamingo Land at Balloch instead of waiting for the developer to come up with their own proposals?
- how about developing some alternative plans for some of the large landed estates, such as Dinnet, to restore missing species and repair the damage that has been done through the unlawful creation of bulldozed tracks? Re-wilding plans.
- how about some plans to restructure the blanket afforestation in the western part of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park that is again devoid of wildlife. Instead of waiting for Forestry Commission Scotland to do something, why not go for it?
- what about communities in Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park taking the previous plans for campsites there that have been abandoned by the LLTNPA and, in partnership with recreational organisations, deciding good places for campsites and then demanding the LLTNPA gives them the resources to deliver it?
- what about alternative guidance for hydro schemes, not just design standards but about where they should be located in our National Parks?

Parkswatch is not an organisation but if individuals or organisations have ideas for injecting a bit of risk, danger, excitement and creative energy into our National Parks, please contribute them.

Category

1. Cairngorms
2. Loch Lomond and Trossachs
3. National Parks

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