



Consultation response:

Ramsar sites

The Cairngorms National Park Authority supports this move to afford equal protection to Ramsar sites as European sites when assessing the potential effects or impacts of new plans or projects. Ramsar sites within the Cairngorms National Park are all SSSI's, Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation, and thus unaffected by proposed changes. Regardless of this, we agree that for consistency across Scotland and the UK, all Ramsar sites should be treated as 'habitats sites' for the purpose of assessing the effects of plans or projects which may have an adverse effect on them and give them the same weight as European sites for the purposes of Habitat Regulations Appraisals.

A consistent approach will simplify the process and make it easier to implement. This approach removes any ambiguity created by other designations underpinning Ramsar sites. Developing specific conservation objectives for the natural features of Ramsar sites, will provide much greater clarity and will be easier for both stakeholders and the public to understand.

However, as per our previous response to the consultation on the strategic framework for biodiversity, the Park Authority considers designated sites, in their current format, risk being a significant barrier to the National Park being an exemplar of nature restoration and achieving the National Park Partnership Plan outcome for '...a biodiversity rich National Park with better functioning, better connected and more resilient ecosystems'. In reviewing designation systems would like to see an approach which would allow for a more mobile and adaptive approach to protecting biodiversity which allows the necessary change in the landscape.

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