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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport
Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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1 March 2024

Dear Edward

As you will be aware, the Scottish Government committed to designating at least one new National Park by 2026, to join Cairngorms National Park and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. In October last year I invited communities across Scotland to explore, develop and submit nominations for their area to become a new National Park and I am delighted to say that we have had a very positive response.

I can confirm that we have received five nominations from communities that would like their area to be considered for designation as Scotland's next National Park.

Those nominations are:

- Scottish Borders
- Galloway
- Lochaber
- Tay Forest
- Loch Awe

Each proposal will now be appraised against the [published criteria](#) and an appraisal report will be produced. Following the conclusion of this appraisal process, we would expect to announce before the Summer recess which area or areas will go forward as a National Park Proposal and the statutory process can then begin.

To commence the statutory process this summer, we intend to appoint a reporter who will lead a detailed investigation into the National Park Proposal and undertake extensive engagement and consultation with local communities, businesses, stakeholders and relevant local authorities. This will include consultation on the proposed geographic area, the desire to designate the area as a National Park and what functions a National Park authority in the

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area should exercise. This consultation will inform the reporter's advice on the final National Park Proposal.

We would then expect to bring forward draft secondary legislation next year for consultation, scrutiny and consideration by Parliament in order to designate a new National Park during this Parliamentary session.

As ever, please do share any comments or questions which the Committee has on this process.

I have written to the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee to inform them of the same.

Kind regards

LORNA SLATER

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