



Mr Rob Lucas  
Chair,  
Galloway National Park Association

30<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Mr Lucas,

Following extensive consultation across the region, we are in the process of finalising a South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy which aims to more than double our visitor economy over the coming decade. This is a collaborative endeavour, with the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) working closely with VisitScotland, South of Scotland Enterprise, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Scottish Borders Council and hundreds of businesses and communities across the South of Scotland.

The strategy makes clear the importance of designations and accolades as part of our work to inspire visitors to come to the South of Scotland. It references the value of both our existing designations, including the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, National Scenic Areas, Marine Reserves and Great Trails, as well as prospective new designations such as a National Park.

There is compelling evidence that National Parks can help develop the visitor economy and the visitor experience. They can support and safeguard natural landscapes, biodiversity, and cultural and historical heritage, they can support outdoor recreational opportunities, and they can build the destination profile.

We recognise that the Galloway National Park Association has developed and maintained significant popular and political support, which is key to the success of such an enterprise. And, for this reason, we are happy to add our support to the forthcoming bid to create a Galloway National Park.

We feel that, where there is clear support from business, communities and the Council, establishing a National Park in the South of Scotland would help power our visitor economy. It would complement and help amplify 'Scotland Starts Here', our collective consumer-facing brand and, with the existing UNESCO Biosphere, it would allow us to show the world the beauty and environmental significance of the South of Scotland.

Crucially, in keeping with our shared commitment to responsible tourism, we must ensure any new demarcation has net zero, community benefit, access and inclusion, and visitor management designed in from the outset. We must also ensure that any new National Park allows appropriate, sustainable development as our visitor economy grows, and that areas just outside the national park do not suffer as a result.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D Hope-Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with some ink bleed-through from the reverse side of the paper.

David Hope-Jones OBE FRSGS  
Chief Executive Office,  
South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA)