

CONSULTATION – AFFRIC & LOCH NESS NATIONAL PARK

Strathglass Community Council and its partners progressed an initial consultation exercise to determine the views of our local communities in relation to a potential nomination, that if chosen would lead to a full consultation process, for the Affric and Loch Ness area to be considered as a potential area to be designated as a national park. As a community council, and with the time available to us, we publicised via websites, social media and paper notices organised information events around neighbouring villages that provided access to all relevant Scottish Government documentation and published FAQs to respond to questions from the public via a website. Written feedback was sought at the consultation meetings on the initial topics which arose in stakeholder meetings and early survey responses.

The timescale set by Scottish Government and delays in appointing their consultants provided a very short window within which to conduct the consultation.

Media/Events

2829 visits to the website www.newnationalpark.org

Press releases were sent out to 400 journalists/media outlets.

5 national radio interviews

26 public meetings were attended (including community councils meetings and community association meetings)

5 consultant-facilitated public consultation events were held, (Beauly, Cannich, Drumnadrochit, Kilmorack and Glenmoriston) with approximately 400 people attending.

Survey Responses

405 responses were received to the online survey. Table 1 below shows the count and percentage of respondents to the question “do you think the Affric and Loch Ness area should explore the possibility of becoming a national park?”

Table 1.

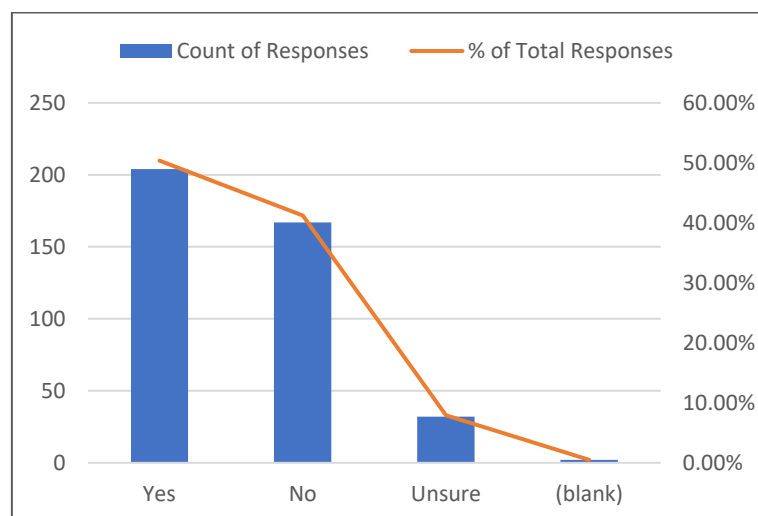


Table 2 below shows the age distribution of responses, with all age groups except those 35 to 44 and 75 plus responding yes to the same question.

Table 2.

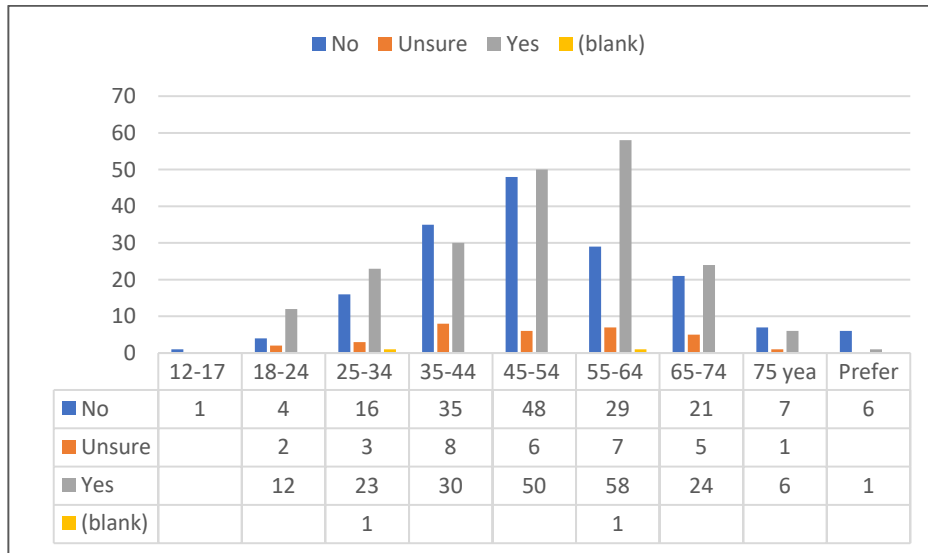
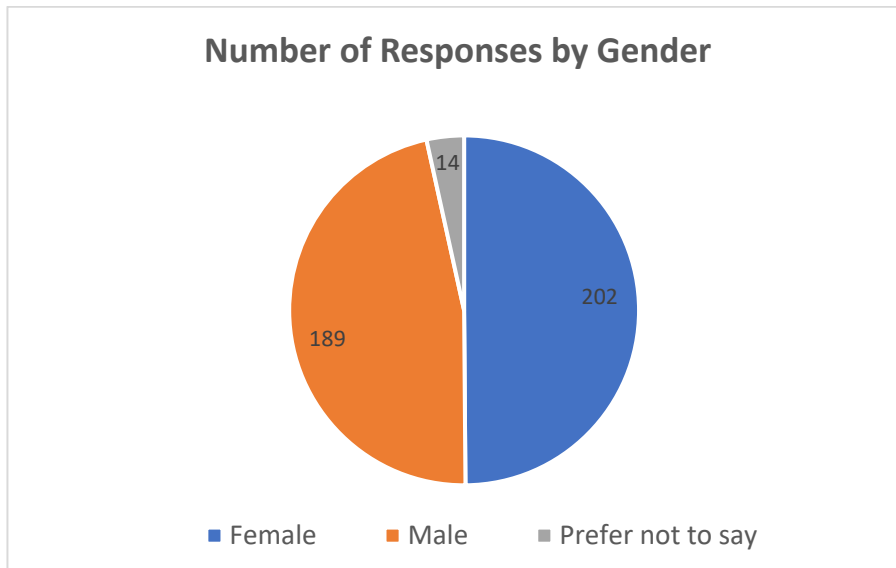


Table three below shows that approximately half of the responses received were from females, whilst the remainder were male or preferred not to say.

Table 3.



Local Responses by Postcode

Table 4 below shows the there was a 50/50 percent split between 'yes' and 'no' respondents in IV4, with 68 responses for each and a further 14 who were 'unsure'.

Table 4.

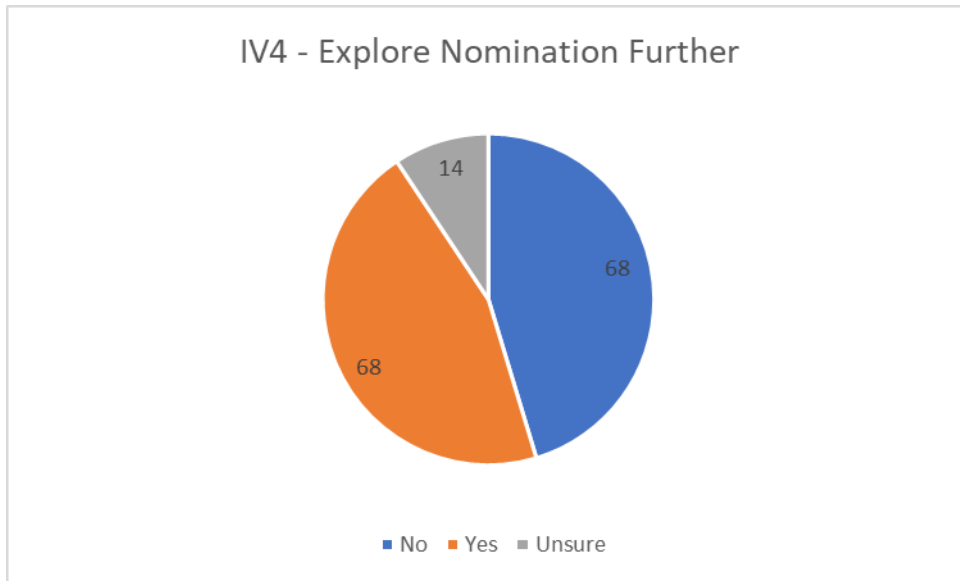
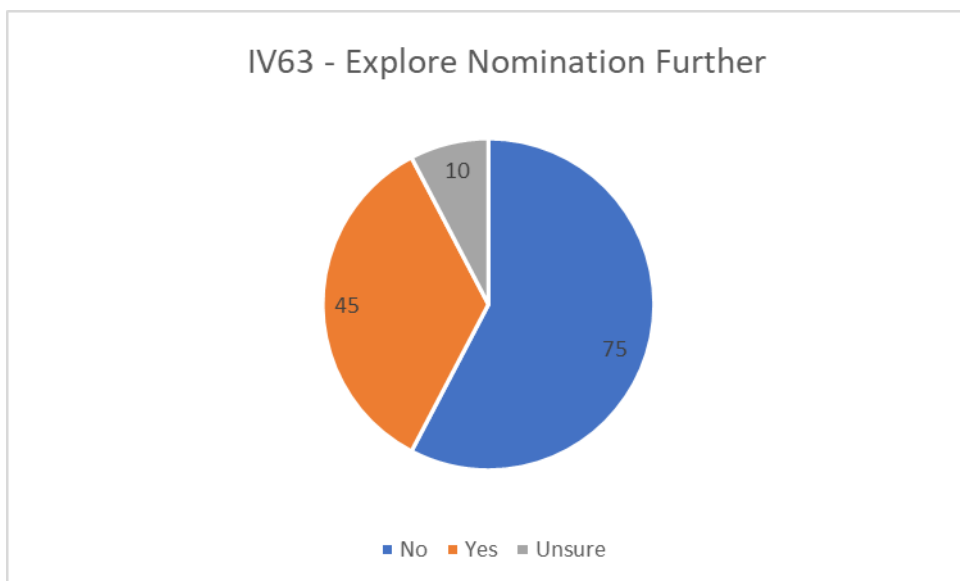


Table 5 below shows that in IV63, the 'no' responses were higher, with 75 'no' and 45 'yes'. A further 10 respondents chose 'unsure'.

Table 5.



Conclusion

Overall, the review of the data suggests that 50.37% support, 41.23% opposition and 7.9% unsure, for exploring the possibility of Affric and Loch Ness to become a national park.

Those responding 'yes' largely cite the potential for environmental protection and visitor management as being important concerns.

Those responding 'no' largely cite concerns for the impact on farmers and crofters, with a small number citing the potential for visitor numbers increasing and property price increases.

However, in IV4, which incorporates our SCC area, support from respondents reduces to 50/50.

Recommendations

Based on this and in line with the objectives of the community council, "to ascertain, co-ordinate and reflect the views of the community which it represents, to liaise with other community groups within the area, and to fairly express the diversity of opinions and outlooks of the people" the following three recommendations are proposed:

1. That Strathglass Community Council does not progress with the nomination.
2. That Strathglass Community Council provides a report to Scottish Government providing a data analysis, a summary report and feedback regarding the process. This will ensure that the views of respondents are known.
3. That Strathglass Community Council records thanks to partners who supported the initial consultation process, to the consultants Lateral North and to all members of the community who responded to the survey and/or attended the consultation events.