

WILD LAND AREAS IN SCOTLAND

Background

NatureScot has identified the 42 wildest areas of Scotland as Wild Land Areas (WLAs). Of these areas, NatureScot states:

“Large areas of Scotland – chiefly in the north and west – have largely semi-natural landscapes that show minimal signs of human influence. These may be mountains and moorland, undeveloped coastline or peat bog.

Our wild land:

- is a big part of Scotland’s identity
- brings significant economic benefits – attracting visitors and tourists
- offers people psychological and spiritual benefit
- provides increasingly important havens for Scotland’s wildlife

Surveys have shown widespread support for safeguarding these landscapes. See, for example, the 2012 Public Perception Survey of Wildness in Scotland.

‘Wild land area’ describes the most extensive areas of high wildness. It is not a statutory designation, but wild land areas are considered nationally important.”

Further information about WLAs, including maps and descriptions of each one, can be found on the NatureScot website at <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-policy-and-guidance/landscape-policy-wild-land>

SWLG Policy Statement

The Scottish Wild Land Group fully supports NatureScot’s identification of the 42 Wild Land Areas, but believes that identification of these is only the first stage. There is continuing attrition of these areas from new infrastructure being developed within them, including tracks, dams, wind turbines, telecommunication masts and fences. If wild areas are to be retained for future generations to enjoy, then stricter protection is needed. Hence SWLG strongly believes:

- The landscape of Scotland is an asset of national importance, providing an underpinning to the tourism industry and contributing to the high quality of life in rural Scotland.
- As noted by NatureScot above, wild land is a key aspect of the Scottish landscape.
- Greater emphasis needs to be given to wild land in planning decisions, with a strong presumption against any new infrastructure which will impact on the wildness of the Wild Land Areas.
- Wild Land Areas need strong legal protection, provided by a new Act of Parliament giving them statutory protection. Without such protection, SWLG believes attrition of WLAs will continue so that, over time, few tracts of wild land will be left in Scotland.
- SWLG supports any action by local authorities to use the planning system to defend Wild Land Areas against inappropriate development.
- SWLG supports the call by Scottish Environment LINK’s [Hilltracks Campaign](#) for better planning control of new hilltracks.
- SWLG will strongly support any landowner or land manager who wishes to increase the wildness of areas by removing inappropriate infrastructure, including hill tracks and fences.