

Scottish Wild Land Group
DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT

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](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 in them, including tracks, dams, wind turbines and fences. If wild areas are to be retained for future generations to enjoy, then stricter protection is needed. Hence SWLG strongly believes:

- Greater emphasis needs to be given to ‘wildness’ 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, protected 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.
- Not all action which undermines wild land is controllable through the local authority planning system, in particular new hill tracks and commercial forestry. These activities in Wild Land Areas need to be brought under democratic control.
- 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.