

SUMMER 2010

Wild Land News

Magazine of the Scottish Wild Land Group

CONSERVATION

Rewilding: is there room for it?

WINDFARMS

The truth behind windfarm schemes

NEW WAYS FORWARD

for Wild Landscapes

HILL TRACKS

Government response to campaign



New ways forward for wild landscapes

“It is well recognised now that when we talk about wild land in Scotland we are not talking about wilderness – the American ideal of pristine environments where the influence of humans is all but non-existent.

It is vital though that we do not let this reality detract from the value of what we do have in Scotland – areas where, despite past and current (often continuing) land use by humans, clear opportunity continues to exist for people to have incredibly wild experiences! ”

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Summer 2010

WILD LAND NEWS

Summer 2010, Issue 76

Magazine of the
Scottish Wild Land Group

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To the left: Beinn Eigne, A. Kociolek
Front cover: Torridon, A. Kociolek

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The truth behind
the WINDFARM project in Glenmorie

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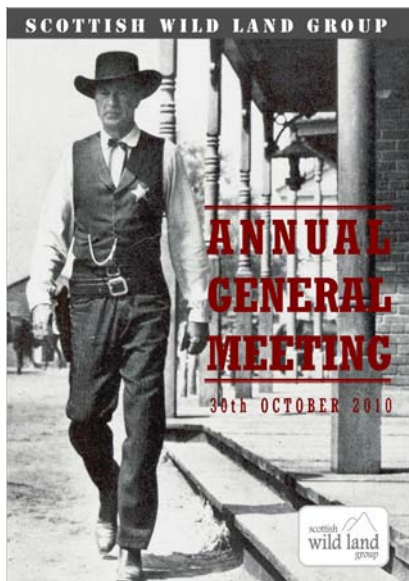
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Rob Mc Morran

Comment from Rob, SWLG Co-ordinator



Date for your diary:

The SWLG will be holding our Annual General Meeting on the 30th October this year (The Royal Hotel in Bridge of Alan , 7pm).

The AGM represents a real opportunity for you to share your views with us and show your support for wild land – so make sure you pencil in the date and come along on the day.

Welcome to Wild Land News 76! As you will probably have noticed, Wild Land News has undergone something of a redesign, for which we are all extremely grateful to Ania Kocielek – who is rapidly becoming an indispensable part of the SWLG team – thank you Ania! We hope you all like the new magazine format as much as we do.

Calum Brown once again opens this edition of the mag, by revisiting the concept of ‘rewilding’ and whether we have room for it in Scotland.

Well, I don’t know about you, but it seems to me we have quite a lot of room in Scotland and not so many people – so I would say we have plenty of room!! As Calum notes, in many ways the real stumbling blocks for any attempt at rewilding are likely to be social and political, as opposed to being related to ecology or habitat requirements. In a political sense it would perhaps be premature to attempt to reintroduce the wolf – but there are plenty of other less offensive animals which are ‘missing’ in Scotland. As Calum also points out, the potential for controversy is never a reason not to do something – just as the idea that because

Scotland is ‘small’ is never a sound argument against adequately protecting this country’s wild land.

Following on from Calum’s article, I have attempted to capture some of the key messages from the recent Scotland’s Wild Landscapes conference (see www.wildlands.info for more). The organisation of the conference was led by the Centre for Mountain Studies (part of the UHI Millennium Institute) and the SWLG and was, in my view, a major step in the right direction. A real further step would appear to be inclusion of wild land in the upcoming Scottish Sustainable Land Use Strategy and an integration of wild land with the often more widely publicised biodiversity agenda.

Calum also provides us with an update on the ongoing hill tracks debate – which has been gaining real momentum – this being due to the hard work of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland. This edition also includes two articles from SWLG members; Geoff Moore and George Charles. Geoff’s article is a well researched piece on the Glenmorrie windfarm proposal and George discusses the influence

of 'shrink wrapped adventure' on our hills and wild land and on our views on what a wild experience is really all about. Indeed, George touches on something which I often feel is central to the idea of wild land - but often pushed aside in favour of discussions about ecosystem benefits, economic benefits and tourism benefits – the idea that wild land has intrinsic value. That's not to say the other benefits are not important, but that to really understand what wild land is all about we need to start thinking in non-selfish terms, on (as George says) geological time-scales and in ways which don't place humankind at the centre of the universe!

Wild land, however you view or define it, is without doubt something of a hot topic right now. Following on from the recent conference, the Scottish

Government commissioned report on wild land and how it is managed outside of Scotland has just recently been completed (see the next Wild Land News). The John Muir Trust and MCoFS have stepped up their campaigning on wild land issues and further moves are afoot in the arena of wild land mapping and wild land policy development (watch this space.....!). As pressures grow, so does the response. More than ever, it is a time to recognise the benefits of Scotland's wild land and make your own views heard on the key issues. The SWLG will be holding our Annual General Meeting on the 30th October this year. The AGM represents a real opportunity for you to share your views with us and show your support for the wild land cause – so make sure you pencil in the date and come along on the day. Happy reading!

What have the SWLG been up to?

Since the publication of our last magazine the SWLG have been up to all sorts! Rob, our Co-ordinator, with help from Jayne Glass, has been organizing the recent Scotland's Wild Landscapes Conference (see this magazine for details). The committee have also been working together on a plan of activities for the coming years for the group. Ania Kociolek, our marketing guru, with help from the SWLG committee has also designed a new SWLG leaflet, for wide distribution around Scotland – you should find some

included with this mag. Calum Brown and Rob have also been participating in discussion groups organized by the CNPA, on hill tracks in the Cairngorms National Park and the Park's future policies in this area. Committee members have also been attending Scottish Environment LINK meetings, writing articles for the magazine and putting the magazine together over the last month or so. SWLG are currently on something of a membership drive, so following on from developing our Facebook and Twitter pages we are beginning to

attend events to represent SWLG and gain greater support across Scotland (and possibly further afield). We are also currently organizing our volunteers, regularly updating the website and developing an email list of members – if you think we don't have your email address please do email us and let us know what it is so that we can include you on future email updates!

Calum Brown

In Wild Land News 73 we published a selection of articles about 'rewilding' in Scotland. In one of those articles, Calum Brown took us through the history that has led us to ask whether rewilding in Scotland is really a possibility. In this edition, Calum shares the findings of interviews he carried out with 11 people involved in ecological restoration projects in Scotland – there is a clear message that rewilding is a feasible possibility with plenty of associated benefits.

REWILDING IN SCOTTISH CONSERVATION: is there room for it?

WHAT IS REWILDING?

Rewilding is both a vague and controversial concept, the subject of strong opinions and differing interpretations. Its implied rejection of the environmental *status-quo* and the ambiguous social implications that follow evokes passionate responses on all sides. The term has been applied to describe very specific conservation strategies but also as a catch-all description of restoration involving tree planting, species reintroductions, or simply the removal of human influence from a patch of land. It has even been appropriated by an anarchist movement dedicated to the liberation of humanity from modern civilisation. For all these reasons, it may have become an expression of questionable value.

There is one clear definition of rewilding as a conservation strategy that is both simple and distinct from

other restorative ideas. It is the process of reintroducing species which play an important role in their ecosystem but have recently (ecologically speaking) been extirpated by man, and protecting them in large, interconnected reserves. The science behind this idea is well supported, but its interpretation and applicability in practice is less straightforward. As a result it is difficult to achieve an objective view of it, particularly in the complex and emotive context of the Scottish environment, with its long history of human management. It is all very well to discuss the principles of rewilding, but its ultimate form will inevitably be dictated by the opinions of landowners, conservationists and the general public, and by its fit with the methods of conservation already being used.

REWILDING ON THE GROUND

Perhaps best placed to provide an operationally valid interpretation are those who are currently engaged in some form of restorative conservation in Scotland; people who have experience of the relative merits of different strategies for reviving some aspects of the former wildness of the land. For this reason I interviewed representatives of 11 different projects of ecological restoration across the country, as part of a postgraduate study of rewilding. Five of these projects were managed by non-governmental organisations, four by private estates, and two by statutory agencies. They included a wide range of environmental and ecological conditions, from the almost pristine to the severely degraded, and a wide range of restoration techniques to match. All, however, reflected some facet of the idea of rewilding, whether through an emphasis on natural processes or explicit plans to reintroduce missing predators.

Their most common objectives included the restoration of habitats (particularly native woodland), the fulfilment of experimental or educational functions, and the generation of social or economic benefits. While not all of these are normally associated with rewilding, none of the people I spoke to thought it was incompatible with them. It was less consistent with

their methods, though. These varied from an almost total absence of active management (with the exception of the ubiquitous requirement for deer culling) to intensive programs of tree planting, fencing, and access control. The more intensive management was seen as necessary to repair damage to the environment, and perhaps for this reason even the most intrusive techniques were not generally thought to be precluded by rewilding. To the extent that these projects were distinct from rewilding, most felt that they would at least make useful precursors to it.

REINTRODUCING SPECIES

One of the most serious forms of human intervention, of course, has been our disruption of Scotland's food chains at the level of large herbivores. None of our native large predators remain, and these are the very species that rewilding seeks to protect. If the theory holds, their

Woodland view – natural and commercial woodland in front of an area of the Monadhliaths managed for agriculture and sport. A similar diversity of land uses is envisaged in rewilding's 'buffer zones'.



Photo: Calum Brown

“If a camel is a horse designed by committee, a successful conservation strategy shaped through consensus amongst all parties with an interest in the Scottish environment is unlikely to achieve very much”

restoration is the single most significant step we can take towards securing robust and functioning ecosystems, but it is also the most controversial.

Some of the projects I looked at did plan to reintroduce species, but most felt that attempts would be problematical at best and wholly impracticable at worst. This was partly due to lack of suitable habitats, but the attitudes of local communities, landowners and the wider public were seen as larger stumbling blocks. Interestingly, many felt that these attitudes were to some extent based on inaccurate understandings of the process and potential benefits of rewilding, and that a strong ecological and socio-economic case was not being made. While those who intended to reintroduce species argued that difficulties of this kind should not be allowed to pre-empt the ecological argument for their plans, the broad consensus was that most reintroductions would currently be premature.

Instead, other more immediate priorities for rewilding in Scotland were identified. Chief among these was the protection of large areas of wild land or natural native woodland, within which human impact would eventually be minimised so that natural processes could take precedence. It was generally agreed that this need not hinder other forms of land use;

several respondents stressed that some recreational, extractive and sporting activities would benefit, and that others – including commercial forestry, intensive agriculture, muirburn and grouse shooting – could continue unaffected outside protected areas or in neighbouring buffer zones. Nevertheless, this would entail a new balance between interventionist management practices in some places and a *laissez-faire* approach in others, and once again perceptions – rather than practicalities – were thought to pose a problem.

Given all the concerns about how divisive rewilding would probably be, strong justifications are needed if it is to be favoured over other strategies. Many of the people I spoke to gave scientific and moral reasons for their own work – enhancement and protection of biodiversity, and an obligation to repair damage caused in the past, not least for the benefit of future generations. The implied scale of rewilding was perceived as its most distinct characteristic, and so the arguments for it were very similar, but with greater emphasis placed on the moral obligation.

IS THERE ROOM FOR IT?

To some extent then, rewilding was seen as ecologically and ethically desirable, rather than imperative. Is it therefore a luxury we may not be

able to afford? This is a difficult question to answer for an ill-defined strategy that has not yet been implemented and about which little relevant data exists. It should be possible to estimate at least some of

the social and economic consequences, including perhaps those that accrue from so-called ecosystem services, but this remains to be attempted. While we have a better idea of the ecological

European Grey Wolf, Highland Wildlife Park – the potential reintroduction of this species is one of the most controversial



Photo: Ken Brown

benefits, these alone do not make a compelling case for everybody. I found widespread agreement, however, that rewilding would produce net socio-economic benefits, with aesthetic and recreational improvements expected to lead to increased revenue from tourism and other employment opportunities. These benefits are of a general nature, suggesting that rewilding could be viewed favourably by large sections of the population.

The problems associated with it, in contrast, had more to do with specific land uses or social groups. Its incompatibility with commercial forestry and intensive agriculture and the resulting hostility of many landowners were among the most

serious obstacles identified. Some also thought it would fall foul of an increasing population's demand for housing, energy, and industrial development. Given these legitimate and considerable issues, the potential for rewilding in Scotland reduces to a question of space; whether there is room for it alongside all the other demands – environmental, social and economic – that we make of our land.

If a camel is a horse designed by committee, a successful conservation strategy is unlikely to be shaped through consensus amongst all parties with an interest in the Scottish environment. The interviews I conducted produced a clear message that rewilding in Scotland is both reasonable and feasible, requiring the protection of large areas and the gradual re-naturalisation of their environment. In many cases there was the aspiration to reintroduce species like wild boar, beaver and even, eventually, the wolf; keystone species that can make enormous contributions to the biodiversity of their habitats. The associated benefits were felt to be significant, and it would be wrong to abandon them until they have been properly considered. Controversy is certainly not, in itself, a reason to dismiss ideas, and the difficulties rewilding faces should not dissuade us from pursuing it.

Remnant birch woodland on Creag Meagaidh. SNH intend to restore ancient woodlands on the estate by allowing natural regeneration.

Photo: Calum Brown



Rob Mc Morran

WILD LANDSCAPES—new ways forward

In many ways, despite wild land continuing to appear as very low down on the Scottish Government's agenda, wildness and wild landscapes have in fact been receiving a considerable amount of attention of late. One example of this is the Scottish Government commissioned study on how wild land is being managed across Europe - which is just now due for completion, with a project seminar planned for 7th July at Perth College-UHI. The first major conference on wild landscapes since the John Muir Trust wild land conference in 2004 was also held recently, on May 13th and 14th. This event was a genuinely collaborative effort, with support from a diverse range of partners, including UNESCO Scotland, **the Scottish Wild Land Group**, the Centre for Mountain Studies, Perth College UHI, Leeds University (Wildland Research Institute), Lochaber College UHI, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Cairngorms

National Park Authority, the John Muir Trust and the Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

The event tackled a range of key questions – such as whether re-wilding as an idea was even applicable in Scotland and what contribution Scotland's wild areas could make to climate change mitigation. The event was well attended, with over 100 delegates taking part in a range of presentations and discussion sessions over the two days. A number of ideas and themes emerged and I have included the overall key messages which emerged from the event below for your interest. Critically, this event represents a step in the right direction – an effort to raise the profile of wild land and move it up the political agenda and get people thinking about what can be done in the future to both conserve and protect Scotland's wild areas.

On 13th and 14th May, the first major conference on wild land since the John Muir Trust event in 2004 took place at SNH Battleby, near Perth. Our Co-ordinator, Rob Mc Morran, tells us more about what happened and reflects on the key messages from the conference.

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GENERAL CONFERENCE MESSAGES AND CONCLUSIONS

Clearly define and map the resource

To protect wild land and wildness in the wider countryside advanced GIS based mapping techniques (incorporating public participation to assist with defining the key (multiple) criteria for wildness in Scotland) offer major potential. Such techniques could be used by Scottish Natural Heritage to **map wildness on a continuum across the whole of Scotland.**

Recognise the benefits

Mapping of wildness could facilitate clearer recognition of the direct and indirect benefits associated with core wild land and surrounding (or smaller scale) wild areas. In particular, **stronger engagement with the ecosystem services agenda** and the creation of direct linkages between the existence of defined wild land areas with ecosystem services provision (e.g. fresh water and carbon storage) by stakeholders offers significant potential. Once recognised, **further awareness raising of ecosystem services and wider economic (tourism and land use related) and social and cultural (e.g. health, recreation and traditional land uses) benefits** offers major potential to raise the political profile of wild land and wildness in Scotland's Countryside.

Make ecology a central theme of wild land and wildness

The concept of wild land in Scotland has thus far centred on landscape and recreational perspectives (as opposed to a focus on ecological wildness), placing attributes such as remoteness and the lack of visible human artefacts at the core of the concept. These attributes remain important; however, further inclusion of ecological principles within the concept offers major potential for a broadening out of the topic area and for the development of **linkages with the biodiversity agenda – and specifically the objective within the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy for the conservation and restoration of semi-natural habitat areas at large scales across Scotland.** Building on existing forest habitat networks, nationwide **ecological network mapping** is one potential avenue for such development.

Strengthen the policy framework

Together with themes 1-3 above, the **opportunity for inclusion of wild land and wildness as key elements within the Scottish Land Use Strategy** (currently under development) was recognised. National Parks have also emerged as the vehicles viewed as best suited to further initial development (and testing) of wildness mapping and wild land policy – with potential for

follow-on expansion of such approaches across Scotland more widely. Wider opportunities for integration of the wild land agenda with climate change and health agendas also exist.

Apply zoning approaches

The potential for zoning of landscapes within designated areas (such as national parks) or in conjunction with the further development of IUCN sites in Scotland emerged as a key theme of the conference. Such approaches were outlined as those which **delineated core wild land zones (where development was subject to the greatest degree of control) surrounded by multiple levels of buffer zones where productive land uses occur at low to moderate intensities (multifunctional landscapes)** and the limits of acceptable human-induced change increase with increasing distance from the core. National parks were viewed as the most suitable vehicle (currently) for the early adoption of such approaches, with stakeholder and landowner collaboration likely to be a central requirement of any such approaches.

Expand information zone

In relation to all of the above messages, but particularly 1 and 2, expansion of the information base (e.g. GIS based mapping at the national level and quantification of ecosystem benefits) is of major importance to ensuring future coherency and consistency in discussions around wild land and wildness.

Two key themes which emerged were the importance of defining what we are talking about through mapping of wildness (see Steve Carver's article on mapping wildness in WLN 72) and the use of zoning in key areas (such as the Cairngorms National Park) to provide a higher degree of protection to core wild land zones and protect the areas surrounding core wild land through the use of buffer zones – an approach used widely in other areas in Europe and in other countries around the globe. It is well recognised now that when we talk about wild land in Scotland we are not talking about wilderness – the American ideal of pristine environments where the influence of humans is all but non-existent. It is vital though that we do not let this reality detract from the value of what we do have in Scotland – areas where, despite past and current (often continuing) land use by humans, clear opportunity continues to exist for people to have incredibly wild experiences! Perhaps even more important though, is the realisation that ecology, even badly damaged ecology, can be restored and natural or 'wild' processes can begin to flourish again in key areas – deer numbers can be reduced, woodland can be regenerated and keystone species can gradually return.

Along these lines, one important theme which emerged from the event, was the need to shift the emphasis slightly when we talk

about wild land in Scotland – away from a pure focus on landscapes, remoteness, ruggedness, scenic beauty and so on, more towards one which takes all of those aspects on board – but also begins to recognise the importance of ecological principles – deciding, for example, how wild an area is not just based on its remoteness and scenic gradeur, but on the ecological health and functioning of that same landscape. What condition are the area's habitats in? What keystone species are present? Why is there no woodland and, if there isn't, would there be if the ecological balance was restored? These are all things under consideration in Scotland – but often under the banner of biodiversity conservation – and there are clear and strong links to be made here with the wild land agenda and potential benefits all round.

I am perhaps biased when it comes to this conference – having been the

“...one important theme which emerged from the event, was the need to shift the emphasis slightly when we talk about wild land in Scotland – away from a pure focus on landscapes, remoteness, ruggedness, scenic beauty and so on, more towards one which takes all of those aspects on board – but also begins to recognise the importance of ecological principles”

Photo: Jayne Glass



David Hetherington, John Risby (Forestry Commission Scotland), Calum Brown (SWLG) and Jonathan Hughes (Scottish Wildlife Trust) discussing 'rewilding' at the conference.

lead organiser through both my role as Co-ordinator of the SWLG and as a staff member at the Centre for Mountain Studies. That said though, the feedback so far suggests it was a success, both in terms of promotion of the resource and identifying new opportunities between the wide range of stakeholders. We now

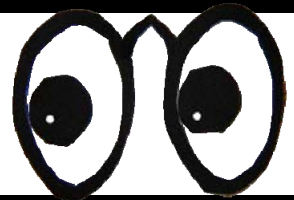
need to work on the ways forward – expanding the information base, promoting the value of the resource, strengthening the policy framework and really striving for a strategic and coherent approach to both the protection and enhancement of wild land and wildness across Scotland.

Most of the presentations from the conference have now been made available on the conference website (www.wildlands.info).

This website is also now host to a collection of filmed interviews with conference speakers. To reflect the success of the conference and further the original aims of the event the Scottish Wild Land Group is currently investigating the possibility of publishing a new version of the popular ‘Scotland’s wild land—what future?’ report developed in 2001 – the proposed title being: ‘Scotland’s wild land—what future? – 10 Years on’.

A D V E R T

WATCH THIS SPACE!!!



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Wild Land News currently has a readership of over 1500, with a further growing readership of the mag in PDF format through email distribution. Our magazine is distributed across a huge range of relevant organisations in Scotland, as well as among our own members. You will find our Mag freely available in outdoor shops, a variety of offices, the Scottish Government buildings, climbing walls, bothies and lots of other strange places! Wild Land News is a widely respected publication, which has recently be reformatted and updated to reflect changing reader demands and an expanding membership. Back issues are also freely available for download from our website!

Calum Brown

Report on HILL TRACKS

Since the last issue of *Wild Land News*, the campaign to control the spread of hill tracks has received a great deal of coverage. Over 2,500 people have now signed the online petition set up by the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and supported by the SWLG and others, and this has featured in many local and national news stories. Responses have been issued by a range of organisations both opposing and supporting a change to current planning law, and on Wednesday 9 June the parliamentary debate on hill tracks, initiated by Peter Peacock MSP, took place.

This debate was significant for the (somewhat inconclusive) insight it provided into current Government thinking on the issue. In outlining the Government's position, Stewart Stevenson MSP (Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change) suggested that the voluntary code of conduct favoured

by the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association, which received support from some MSPs during the debate, was being actively considered. A broad intention to "regularise, systematise and simplify the operation of Permitted Development Rights in relation to hill tracks" was expressed, with an emphasis on the role of environmental impact assessments and Scottish Natural Heritage's best practice guidance.

While this alone would have been a disappointing response, the Government subsequently announced that it will formally review the General Permitted Development Order that exempts agricultural or forestry tracks from planning regulations later this year. Permitted Development Rights as they stand are a *de facto* green-light for bulldozed tracks throughout the Scottish uplands, and it is a matter of urgency that they are altered. We welcome the news that this may

"Without legal regulation, hill tracks have effectively been subject to voluntary standards throughout the period that has seen a dramatic and largely unrecorded increase in their extent, together with the use – and abuse – of increasingly damaging methods of construction. "

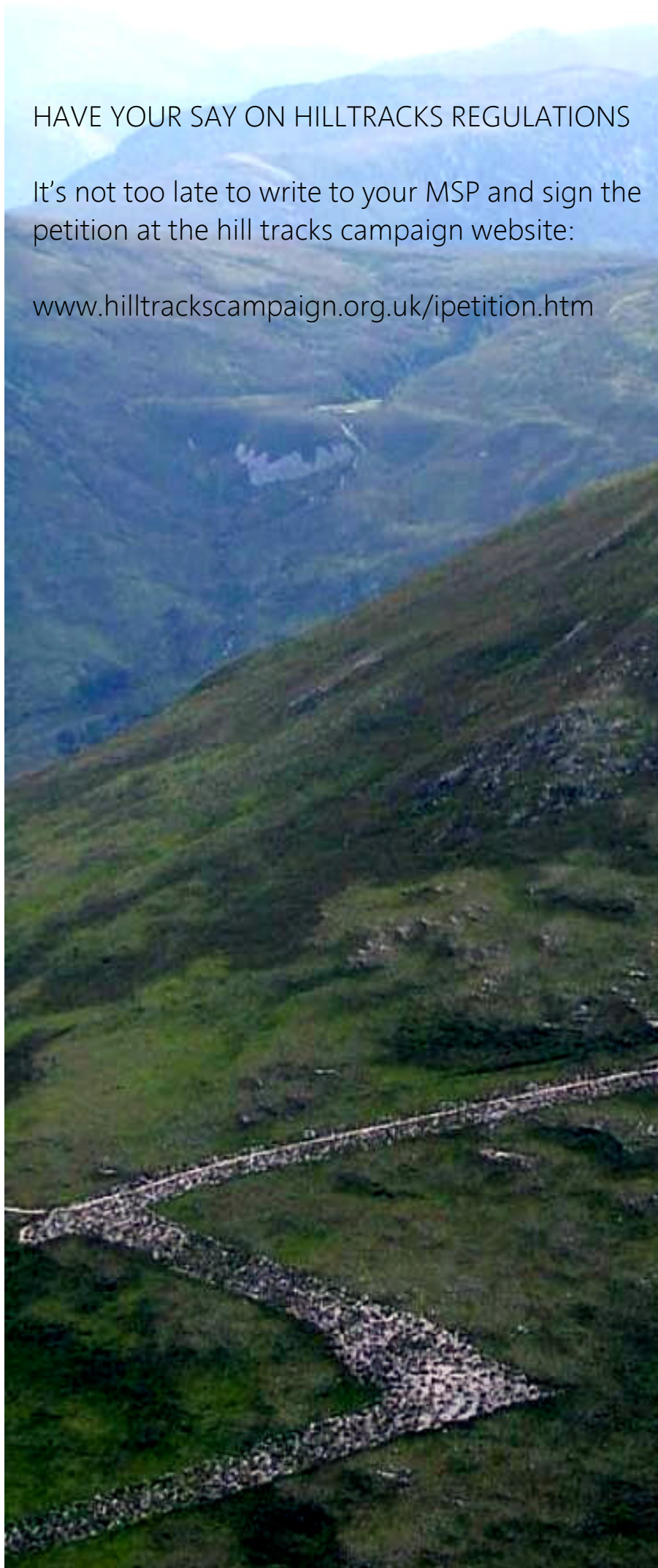
soon be done, and particularly that the findings of the Heriot-Watt report, which identified serious flaws in current regulations, are being properly considered. Without legal regulation, hill tracks have effectively been subject to voluntary standards throughout the period that has seen a dramatic and largely unrecorded increase in their extent, together with the use – and abuse – of increasingly damaging methods of construction. The debate does not, as sometimes suggested, stem from a discrepancy between the aesthetic interests of recreational land users and the socio-economic interests of local people. We all have an interest in the aesthetic, recreational, social and economic value of Scotland’s land, and none are served by the cumulative destruction of our environmental capital. A system in which a legal loophole allows significant damage to be caused without requiring justification sends entirely the wrong message, and needs immediate reform.

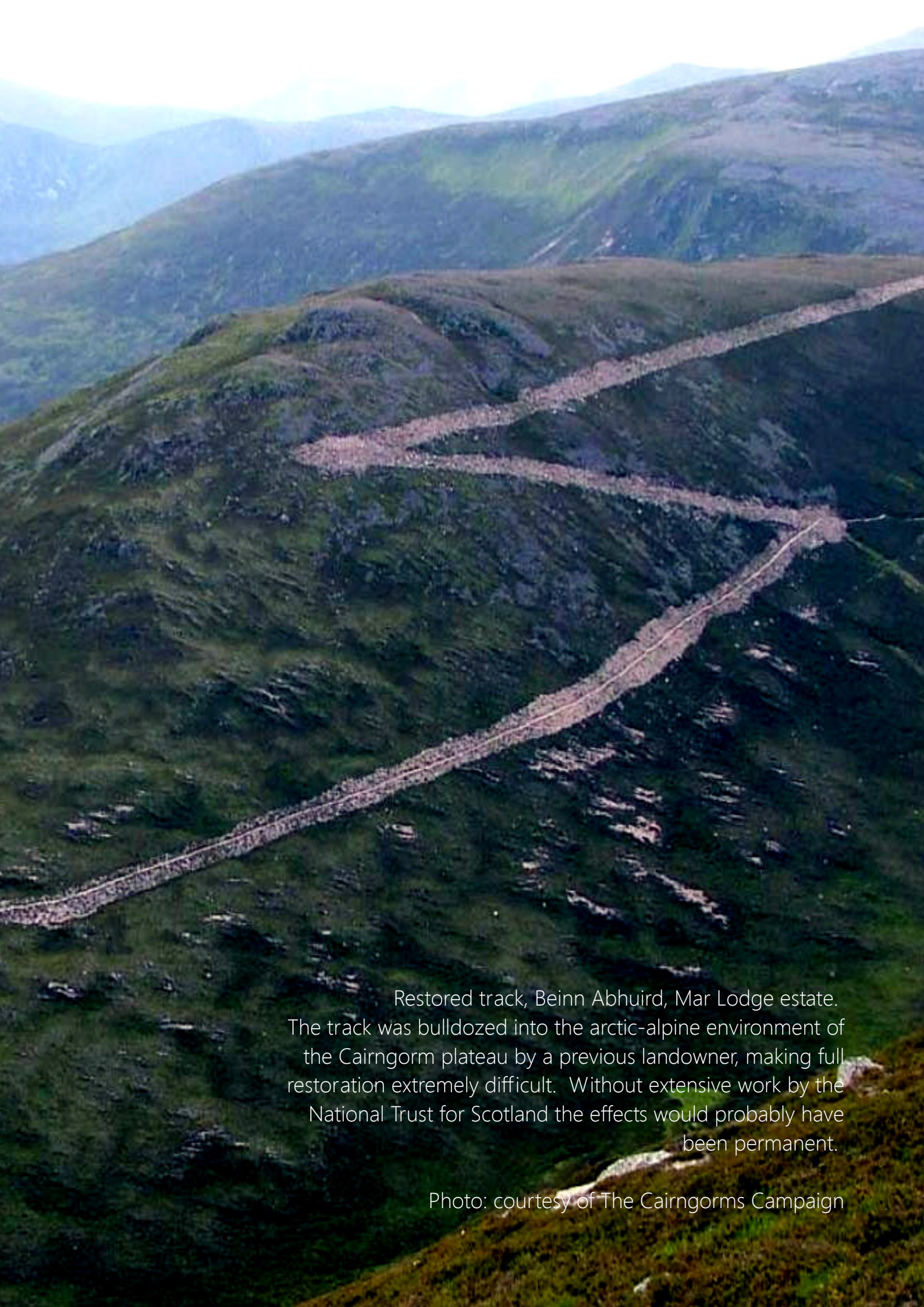
HAVE YOUR SAY ON HILLTRACKS REGULATIONS

It’s not too late to write to your MSP and sign the petition at the hill tracks campaign website:

www.hilltrackscampaign.org.uk/ipetition.htm

If you wish to read the transcript of the parliamentary debate, it is online at:
www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialReports/meetingsParliament/or-10/sor0609-02.htm#Col27125





Restored track, Beinn Abhuird, Mar Lodge estate. The track was bulldozed into the arctic-alpine environment of the Cairngorm plateau by a previous landowner, making full restoration extremely difficult. Without extensive work by the National Trust for Scotland the effects would probably have been permanent.

Photo: courtesy of The Cairngorms Campaign

ARTICLES from members

In this issue we are delighted to have two articles submitted by SWLG members. In the first, Geoff Moore describes his recent visit to an exhibition for a proposed 115 MW windfarm at Glenmorie – a huge and conspicuous development that will dominate views for many miles around. Geoff's encounters with the scheme's promoters are both illuminating and worrying, exposing the half-truths and mistakes that often underpin the publicly-presented cases for such projects. Geoff's own extensive research prepared him well and he presents some of his findings here, making a strong case for skepticism about official pronouncements on the energy generation potential and other benefits of windfarms.

In the second article, George Charles gives a personal perspective on the mapping of wild land in Scotland. Demonstrating the difficulties of accounting for the subjective experience of wildness, George argues that a dominant Munro-bagging culture amongst hill walkers has compromised the inherent value of many of our mountain areas, and overshadowed their true psychological and cultural significance. Do you agree with him? Do write and let us know – as always, we welcome contributions from members, and thank Geoff and George for their articles.

Note: The views expressed in these articles are the views of SWLG members and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SWLG. We very much welcome articles from members so please contact editor@swlg.org.uk if you would like to submit one.

Geoff Moore

GLENMORIE WINDFARM EXHIBITION: a report

On Monday 26 April I attended an exhibition by the company Wind Energy - a subsidiary of American-owned global power giant AES - to promote their proposed Glenmorie wind farm. This is their first foray into the Highlands, but they are also looking at sites in Caithness and near Glensanda Superquarry.

The company first showed interest in the Glenmorie site in 2004, and their current proposals are for a 115MW scheme on the broad ridge immediately southeast of Carn Chuinneag, mostly between the 1500' and 2000' contours and alongside the proposed Kildermorie hydro project. This scheme dwarves its two neighbouring wind farms (Novar and Tharsuinn) and consists of 40 turbines, each 500 feet high, in four parallel straight rows of four kilometres each. It effectively forms one apex of a huge equilateral triangle of turbines along with its two neighbours, and is also considerably further into the wild land to the northwest.

It will be visible from vast swathes

of the Highlands - particularly the whole north side of the Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area, from which, along with Tharsuinn wind farm, you will see an unbroken line of turbines along much of the skyline. You may imagine that Ben Wyvis would block it from the southwest but it will be visible from the Fannichs (one of the Highlands' few ranges from which no wind farms are currently prominent) and the highest hills on the north side of Glen Strathfarrar. Most of the turbines will also be visible from the Beinn Dearg and Ben More Assynt ranges. (All these observations are from the company's display of indivisibility charts).

Although there was much emphasis on consulting the public, local council and Scottish Government, it was stated in bold that they WILL be putting in a planning application. I also read the first admission that these things may not in fact be removed after 25 years; they may apply to leave them in situ.



While there I was approached by two company representatives (neither of whom were direct employees of Wind Energy) and took the opportunity to question them about the scheme. The first seemed to be in PR, and didn't know the answers to most of the technical questions I asked him. Although he promised to get back to me, to date I have heard nothing.

Responding to my suggestion that the taxpayer does not need to pay such huge subsidies for wind power schemes, he told me that the headline construction cost is only 20% of the capital cost and the investment payback time is about 15 years. Next, with the promise of tens of thousands of "green" jobs yet to materialise, I asked him if it was the company's policy to source turbine parts from British factories; he replied that it was

not. I also asked him about the average Capacity Factor (effectively how often the wind blows at optimum speed equivalent) for Scottish wind farms, which was given as 40%. He told me this is over-optimistic and that the industry and the Department of Trade and Industry now use a figure of 30%.

The second, apparently more knowledgeable, representative joined in our discussion a little later. He was involved in the Environmental Impact Study, but made no secret of his enthusiasm for renewables in general and wind farms in particular. Common sense would tell you that neutral parties should carry out the environmental impact study – surely there is a conflict of interest otherwise?

He agreed with me that the HRES (Highland Renewable Energy Strategy: the vast and flawed document produced for Highland Council to aid their determination of renewable energy planning applications) has indeed been discredited and told me that it is no longer in use. I then questioned him about whether CO₂ payback times take account of mining and transporting iron ore for construction from overseas. He said that they are not allowed to include such data and have instead to use a calculation drafted by SNH (see below).

He also helpfully directed me to the Department for Energy and Climate Change's website, a source I have previously used for valuable information, and a file called DUKES 09 (Digest of UK Energy Statistics 2009; again see below).

When I asked about energy losses in transmission, he claimed that the electricity generated by this scheme will only go as far as the Inverness area. I pointed out that if we are to believe what wind farm companies tell us, the Highland market is already more than saturated. A quick check later of official wind farm websites showed that the Fairburn, Kilbraur, Millennium and Tharsuinn wind farms alone “can” provide the electricity needs of all 100,000 Highland households. In addition, other wind farms and pre-existing hydro schemes could theoretically more than power non-domestic energy use in the Highlands. All the excess energy from the new wind farms MUST therefore be going outside the

Highlands. At this point he replied that this is why the Beauty-Denny Line is being upgraded. Why then did he initially claim that the electricity was going to the Inverness area? I doubt if such a knowledgeable person would unwittingly make a genuine mistake on such a matter.

I made a brief mention of the negative impact his scheme will have on the landscape of a vast area, although I doubted whether such concepts, difficult as they are to quantify, would be important to him. He argued that turbines must look like “matchsticks”, which is true but misses the point. From so many high places now when you look around you see prominent matchstick-like arrays. But up till

not many years ago you could stand on most Scottish mountaintops and see little obvious development. Much of that has now been lost, for the rest of our lifetimes at least. Near the end of our discussion he suddenly changed his tone and became condescending, asking me whether I have electricity in my house and where I would like it to come from. My reply was “clean” coal. I would prefer a few large coal fired plants with carbon capture and storage than hundreds of hilltop wind farms. Coal is currently the world’s biggest single energy source, and emitter of greenhouse gases. We do need to try to clean it up immediately, and doing so would make far more difference to climate change than the present renewables drive.

NOTES

Calculating carbon savings from wind farms on Scottish peatlands - a new approach (SNH website):

SNH acknowledges that constructing wind farms on peatland may actually result in increased greenhouse gas emissions, but states that many related studies worldwide give wildly differing results; and that it is not in the planner’s remit to take carbon savings into account. The calculations in this document are very comprehensive but also very complex and potentially open to misuse to obtain desired results.

Some relevant factors are not included. In a case study, SNH give 2.6 years as payback time (Wind Energy’s own website cites 3-10 months as a general figure), but this figure assumes full restoration of the land after 25 years. Whether this will happen is open to doubt, as it is a very expensive process to fully remove wind farms (much concrete wartime infrastructure was never removed). Wind Energy themselves admit that some tracks will be left at the landowners’ request.

Relevant data from Digest of UK Energy Statistics 2009

(DECC website):

1) Approx 7% of UK electricity is lost in transmission: 1.6% from high voltage grid, 5.7% from low voltage, and 0.3% from theft. The Plant Load Factor of a generating facility is the ratio of how much energy is actually generated over years compared to the theoretical maximum output. The average for wind power is only 23%; for conventional large-scale hydro it is 36%; for base load plants the range is 40-72%; and for

NOTES—continued

pumped storage hydro it is 10-15% (pumped storage is a net user of energy). A comparable figure for the Glendoe scheme would be around 16% - similar to a pumped storage scheme but without the ability to move the water back up the hill!

Wind farms have the additional disadvantage that they become useless when the wind drops, and this is out of the control of the operators. In contrast, gas powered plants are often operated less when the price of gas increases, and shutdowns for routine maintenance of conventional plants can be planned in advance.

2) For large-scale hydro, there is a big difference in outputs between particularly dry and wet years (in 2003 such schemes produced only

257,000 tons of oil energy equivalent, but for 2008 the figure was 395,000).

3) Little mention is given in the media that the biggest form of renewable energy is biomass e.g. landfill gas (wind and water only provide 28% of renewables output).

4) Despite the scores of wind farms coming online since 2004, the electric output and generating capacity of fossil-fuelled plant continues to rise, along with demand. Therefore the stated aim of renewables to reduce greenhouse emissions and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels isn't being achieved.

5) There was an allegation in the press in 2008 that Scottish and Southern Energy was deliberately reducing the output of its older

hydro plants (originally built with public money) and not upgrading the generators to more efficient modern versions in order to qualify for increased public subsidies aimed at plants of less than 20 MW output. It was also suggested that they successfully lobbied the government to include existing plants in the subsidy scheme. There is mention in this digest of an original scheme which did indeed exclude existing infrastructure and plants of greater than 20MW output. So where does the "missing" electricity come from, fossil—fuel? This also implies that the subsidies are more valuable than the selling price of the electricity itself.

Photo: Geoff Moore

View north east from the site of the proposed Kildermorie Hydro Scheme dam in Easter Ross. The site of the proposed 40 turbine Glenmorie Wind Farm is along the horizon to the right of the prominent peak (Carn Chuinneag)



George Charles

WILD LAND: a mind map

One of the interesting effects of the work of Steve Carver and the formation of the Wildland Research Institute (WRi) has been to focus thoughts on what we mean when we talk of 'wild land', and which factors are essential or peripheral to it. One which in my opinion has been under-emphasised by the work of the WRi is the effect of the most numerous users of the hills: hill-walkers and other recreational groups.

I believe that a land's wildness value is ultimately in the mind of the beholder, and modern hill-walking culture can cast a big shadow over this. This culture is, of course, driven by 'Munro-bagging', with a favoured route on each hill. To my mind, each of these routes creates a corridor of un-wildness along its course - not through the numbers of users or a visible path on the ground so much as from the psychological effect of the route being 'known' and 'established'. This has a strong impact on my own personal wild land mind map, in which some areas correlate with the WRi assessment (e.g. Loch Mhairc) and others do not (e.g. Pools of Dee).

The current culture pulls one towards a view of the hills as a recreational resource, which falls some way short of affording them their true dignity in my eyes. I feel there's been a creeping acceptance of this view in recent years by those with louder voices in the field (for example, when the first Corbett guide was published in the early 1990s, then *TGO* editor Roger Smith lamented the spread of guidebook culture within his review, and yet the magazine is now edited by a man most famous for his Munro and Corbett guides). Regarding the hills as a recreational resource is a short step from regarding them as an economic resource, and is not conducive to sound long-term management. The summit-centric attitude leads to a slightly reductive view of the wider landscape - believing an area is 'done' (such *foul* language!) once its principal summits have been stood upon - although I suppose the only real losers here are the peak-baggers themselves.

What this does is to place the focus firmly in the realm of human

"I believe that a land's wildness value is ultimately in the mind of the beholder, and modern hill-walking culture can cast a big shadow over this."

achievement and away from the hills. The proliferation of mountain training courses, while undoubtedly having many benefits, creates a feeling of entitlement and bypasses the hill apprenticeships many walkers and climbers would have previously served over a number of years. The human focus causes this culture to be essentially transient and there are now more people, with more influence, for whom the hills - and particularly Scotland's hills - are a mere phase in a lifetime of commercially-packaged, shrink-wrapped 'adventure'. A sense of permanence is needed for landscape appreciation and many of today's barbarian hill-goers do not have this. Too much focus on the human element leads to a self-absorbed mentality without much hope of safe-guarding the wild land it is ultimately built upon.

All this human narcissism and transience goes some distance to robbing a landscape of its dignity and, together with the (tweed & rifle) sporting culture, creates a false heritage. Within all the proposals for a return to centuries old ecology there seems little desire to explore the possibility of re-introducing some truly traditional land use practices (and maybe go some way to reversing the shame of the clearances) in the shape of transhumance. This may help to facilitate a greater understanding of the hills as an integral part of Scotland's society and culture rather than something separate in which to seek 'respite' or sport. With a little imagination this could be achieved

without further industrialising the Highlands and without reverting to medieval standards of living. I, for one, would view this as having less of a negative impact on wild land quality than peak-bagging culture. I appreciate that this map may have all the qualities of one ripped from desperate hands on a storm-bound winter summit only to be recovered from amongst the deer-grass come spring, but think of it as a work-in-progress never to be fully completed. Landscape appreciation is essentially a question of perspective. If the hills are viewed as separate from everyday life, as a place of escape, exploitation will result. The wild *is* everyday life: if you believe this to be the case, or imagine a world in which it was the case, appropriate stewardship will inevitably follow (i.e. living with the wild, not trampling over it).

"Let it be clear to you that the peace of green fields can always be yours in any spot; and nothing is any different here than from up in the hills, or down by the sea, or wherever else you will" - Marcus Aurelius.

When life on and off the hill becomes one aesthetically charged whole, then we have truly understood the meaning of wild land. When where you are psychologically takes full precedence over where you are or what you're doing physically; when you mark time on a geological scale and colours take on more importance than any credit crunch, then surely we can say that wild land is truly enriching our lives.

George is an SWLG member living in Upper Deeside who often walks all the way up a hill only to walk all the way back down again.

His current projects include overcoming a fear of long-distance running and wondering how early in the year he can survive swimming in Braeriach's Lochan Uaine.

In response to an article from Campbell Slimon in WLN 74, which attempted to present the case for Beaully Denny, Jo Cumming Chair of Cairngorms Revolt Against Pylons (CRAP) writes to SWLG. Jo presents (in considerable detail) the facts behind the arguments. It goes without saying (but we will say it anyway) that the SWLG fully supports the activities of CRAP and the BDLG. Thank you for the well worded and carefully thought out response Jo!

Jo Cumming, The Chair, Cairngorms Revolt Against Pylons

Response to' BEAULY DENNY. The Case for'

I felt quite weary reading Campbell's article "Beaully-Denny Pylons - The Case for" and the many accusations [in Wild Land News 74]. Is it so wrong to fight against our country being despoiled?

I don't know where he dreamed up the '8,500 signatures' sent in by Cairngorms Revolt Against Pylons (CRAP). 3,000 objections relating to the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) were sent in via comments on the CRAP website or through letters, emails and postcards. Of these, 70% were from Scotland. 3,000 could only be achieved with the help of the many people who alerted family and friends to the plans. Thank you all.

The Scottish Government received **18,000 objections** by the deadline

to trigger a public inquiry (PI) and a further **2,000** after the deadline - the biggest protest since devolution. They received **45** letters in support of the Beaully-Denny 400KV line! Campbell states that at a well attended local meeting the line agreed was "avoiding Laggan altogether by heading straight to Dalwhinnie from Garvamore six miles upstream from Laggan...everyone appeared to be happy". Surely 'Laggan' is a community covering 400sq miles? I've yet to meet anyone from Ardverikie or Kinlochlaggan who knew about this meeting or was ever consulted. This was why the Park Authority held the subsequent meeting in Kinlochlaggan Hall. Of the 52 people who attended, over

three quarters voted against the line.

Over the subsequent months many concerns were raised about Scottish & Southern Energy's (SSE) plans.

They had a scare story about old oil filled cables underground when most European countries insist on undergrounding through sensitive areas using modern methods. Doubts were raised about the need for the line. Photographs taken from behind bushes and in cuttings in the A9 minimised the impact of the pylons on the landscape. IT experts complained 'squat' drawings make the pylons look shorter. We commissioned an architect and IT specialist to superimpose pylons, carefully drawn to the SSE specification, on a Drumochter photo where cars give a sense of scale. This was submitted to the PI and has never been challenged by SSE.

As regards the Corrieyairack, in our submission to the PI and while I was questioned by the QC at the Inquiry, we clearly objected to the pylons destroying all three entrances to the

Park including the Corrieyairack.

The view along Glenshero to Kinlochlaggan on our website shows where the biggest pylon on the whole line will tower over the Loch Laggan entrance.

The seven main protest groups handle different aspects. The largest, the Beaully-Denny Landscape Group, which includes the National Trust, JMT, Ramblers and the Scottish Wild Land Group representing 400,000 members, is, as the name suggests, looking after the landscape along the route.

Campbell needs to tackle them about the Corrieyairack. We support the removal of the Boat of Garten line but the CNPA is dealing with it.

The estimated 10-15% drop in revenue for tourist related business comes from SSE's figures, not ours. Which local business can afford such a drop? Of course people will not do U-turns at Dalwhinnie or

Inverpattack but will they tarry? In the PI report the Reporters expect there will be displacement but say it won't matter as people will use the rest of the Park. At the PI the SSE QC told me if people lose jobs in Laggan so what, they can move to Kingussie! Was this argument also used during the Highland Clearances?

The maps produced were not from us; they were submitted by SNH and the CNPA. Nor have we ever said the line would go through the 'centre' of the Park. The current pylons are reasonably hidden by trees. Because the new ones will be up to twice the height, the overall

Photo: SWLG



size will increase to seven times because the base needs to be so much bigger. We're not in California, trees here don't grow to that height! The stunning panorama on the moor between Dalwhinnie and Laggan will be destroyed. It seems that Campbell has no conception of the size of the proposed pylons or the increase in magnetic field from 132kv to 400kv. Incidentally, no-one can tap into a 400kv line. Local renewable power will need to travel on wooden poles to the next substation which for us is at Dalwhinnie.

I too was brought up where there was no electricity until 1963, in Deeside. We also saw the underground pipelines built to take oil from the north-east to Grangemouth; you can hardly see them now. Incidentally, there is also little evidence of the 'cut and fill' hydro pipeline at Dalwhinnie. Coal fires used to belch smoke but we don't accept that now. There are alternatives to this 400kv line and even Ofgem, the industry regulator, says SSE has overestimated the capacity required.

There are other attributes in the Highlands other than it just being a Garden of Eden. However, tiny Scotland is the world's 7th most popular holiday destination. Time and again visitors, especially from North America, delight in the absence of the wires that festoon their homeland. As regards Planning Gain, the government says they have no power to insist on mitigation as this is a private

planning application by SSE. We have written to the CNPA supporting their push for mitigation and they hope to get money for community bodies - but don't hold your breath. It is likely that a squad of Balfour Beatty contractors will build the line with little local work and like Campbell we doubt that Laggan will benefit. Maybe he could start a campaign to ensure communities gain the same benefits from pylon lines as they do from windfarms? We would support him. Personally, I voted for devolution as a step towards the dream of independence but involvement in this campaign has shaken my belief in the Scottish Government's analytical and decision making capabilities. The Lib-Lab pact gave SSE woolly objectives to start with. The need for the line and alternatives have not been fully considered because the SNP refuses to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment. SNP Highlands and Islands MSP, Vice-Convenor of the Economy, *Energy and Tourism* Committee was overheard denouncing the 20,000 objectors *before* the PI was complete. It does not bode well for a democratic independent Scotland. Sadly, when Beaully-Denny is built, I suspect many people will say "I didn't realise they would be so big!" By then it will be too late, they will be with us for 80 years.

Jo Cumming, proud to be CRAP



For more information about the Cairngorms Revolt Against Pylons, visit:
www.cairngormsagainstpylons.org

In this edition's 'my wild land' Frances Potheary, Outdoor Access Officer for the Cairngorms National Park and member of the Cairngorm Mountain Rescue team, explains how her own view of wild land has evolved over time, from one of adventure, escape and extreme journeys, towards one of recognising the beauty in the detail and recognising the potential for seeing and experiencing the wildness all around us. Thank you Fran for this thought provoking piece!

Frances Potheary

My WILD land

"Let's no more exclude places from a definition of wild land, than seek to romanticize and glorify others. There are wild places everywhere we live, let's go discover them."

Recently I re-read one of my favourite essays by Barry Lopez "The American Geographies". In it he looks at people's knowledge of the geography of place championing those whose knowledge is "intimate rather than encyclopedic, human but not necessarily scholarly". He warns against the loss of this knowledge as people with first hand experience of land dwindle, and the insidious "packaging and marketing of land as a form of entertainment" to increasingly urban dwelling populations. Living and working in a National Park and watching summer visitors arrive, I am acutely aware of how I too came to this area as one of them over twenty years ago. The meaning of wild land has changed for me in the last few

years. At one time it meant escape, adventure, travel, wide-open panoramas, whether that was a sea kayak journey in the Pacific Northwest, a circumnavigation of the Outer Hebrides, or a winter ski journey across the Norwegian tundra – often inspired by other people's tales or a glossy magazine article. Maybe it was the hike in fuel prices a few summers ago; maybe it was caring for a dog for the first time – these things combined to keep me closer to home, to exploring my own patch and finding the 'wildness' on my doorstep. And there was plenty to be found. Regular dog walks brought me a familiarity with my own patch and an eye for the detail – especially the changes of the seasons. The rusty

plumage of a hen capercaillie taking flight on a dreich autumn day; lesser twayblade on a mossy gorge wall and the early summer scent of fragrant orchid; the busy tracks of the wee beasties over several feet of silent, impenetrable snow. I learnt to follow the focused gaze of Coll to catch the miniscule and distant movement of deer on a heather hillside – dogs see movement so much more clearly than colour – and sometimes work out where the calves would be hidden and still, in hollows. These days in the Cairngorms I am just as much captivated by a spring flush, the bright dense matting of sphagnum mosses and ‘plurozium purpurea’; or a tennis court size meadow of cloudberry in flower only minutes away from the scars of the ski area. My changing appreciation of wild land has also been the re-discovery of the places of my childhood, the much developed, low lying East Anglia, a region so flat that if you

stood on two Suffolk Yellow Pages you would get a view. Only the other year, to the background drone of traffic, we explored a tiny piece of mixed woodland, hemmed in by the bright gold of corn fields, to find red helleborine, brave and flourishing under coppiced hazel stands. I watched with delight a BBC Natural History programme, presented by Robert MacFarlane, featuring the unlovely county of Essex. Seeing Rainham Marshes literally teeming with birdlife, knots flashing ‘smoke and mirrors’ across the sky, I wondered how I could have ever put it so firmly in the box of a trashed, denuded landscape. So wild land for me is a lesson to avoid labeling, to be open-minded - let’s no more exclude places from a definition of wild land, than seek to romanticize and glorify others. There are wild places everywhere we live, let’s go discover them.

Photo: Calum Brown
Dun Deardail





2020VISION: Wild land photography project

SWLG have signed up as partners with the 2020VISION project, an ambitious photography-based conservation initiative ever that has just been launched. 20 of the country's top wildlife and nature photographers are documenting the value of restoring Britain's fragmented ecosystems and the life-support services they provide. From autumn onwards, the team will carry out 20 flagship assignments, which clearly demonstrate the link between a healthy, robust natural landscape and the well-being of local people.

'Ecosystem thinking' is something that is now prevalent in the scientific and conservation community, but the value of a wilder Britain, where ecosystems

function as they should, has not yet been communicated on a scale such as this. 2020VISION will bridge that gap using the motivational language of inspiring photography.

The team includes Chris Packham, Joe Cornish and Andy Rouse, who will be joined by videographers and sound recordists, and will visit key locations throughout Britain where large habitats are being restored or re-connected, not only for the benefit of the wildlife species that live there, but for people too. The thousands of images and hours of footage generated from these assignments will then be woven into compelling narratives and presented in innovative ways up and down the country – working with local partners and communities.

Carbon trap. Sponge. History classroom.

Find out more about
the project at
www.2020V.org.



More than just a bog.



Spreading the word about SWLG: public events

Are you interested in promoting SWLG at a public event? We're planning to take stands at Mountain Film Festivals and other events to help raise the profile of SWLG and tell more people about the importance of wild land. Contact us at admin@swlg.org.uk if you're interested in finding out more.

Keep up! Follow us!

SWLG's 'social network' has been growing on Facebook and Twitter (follow @SWLG). It's a great way for us to tell everyone about what's going on and for you to let us know your thoughts. If you would like to follow our updates, you can access our pages via the buttons on the SWLG website (www.swlg.org.uk).



Thank you to members for distributing Wild Land News

We would like to say a big thank you to those of you that offered to help the last edition of Wild Land News across the country. If you think you could take a few copies to leave in local shops, libraries etc in your local area, please e-mail admin@swlg.org.uk and we'll send you some.

New SWLG leaflet

Enclosed with this magazine, you should find a few copies of the new SWLG leaflet which was designed by Ania Kociolek, a new SWLG volunteer. We would really like to see the membership of SWLG grow so please pass on these leaflets to friends or leave them in local libraries or shops.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please pencil in the 30th October for the SWLG 2010 AGM. More details to follow in the magazine and on the website.


30th OCTOBER 2010
The Royal Hotel in Bridge of Alan, 7pm



Remember Gary Cooper and the High Noon movie? Determination and fight for the just cause. Remember Tomasz Sarnecki's famous poster? Peaceful revolution, meaningful choices. Come along to the AGM and help us make a difference! No shoot out at AGM though—honest!

How can you contribute to WLN?

We welcome any general enquiries about wild land in Scotland as well as any comments you may have about the content of WLN. We are also keen to hear about any local developments in wild areas which you think might concern the Group. Please contact Rob Mc Morran, the Co-ordinator, in the first instance. We welcome contributions for WLN (articles, letters, photographs etc). Please send any contributions to editor@swlg.org.uk or contact us if you prefer to send hard copies. We are always looking for more volunteers, please e-mail us if you are interested.



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(Please make a cheque payable to "SWLG" and send it to us along with this form)

Yes, please keep me posted about volunteering opportunities with SWLG.

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Yes, I would like to receive free quarterly copies of Wild Land News.

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Please post this form to:

Tim Ambrose, SWLG Treasurer, 8 Cleveden Road, Glasgow G12 0NT

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We campaign for ...

... a move away from large-scale onshore wind energy towards renewable energy policies which respect and value wild landscapes



... sustainable deer management that brings deer populations into balance with wider highland ecology



... introduction of planning regulations which control the development of hill tracks and avoid the degradation of wild areas



... restoration and rewilding of wild landscapes and the reintroduction of missing species



Scottish Wild Land Group— campaigning on
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www.swlg.org.uk



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