



***'Wild land': a concept in search of space***



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**November 2004**

# Wild Land: A concept in Search of Space

## Foreword

In his recent book 'Mountains of the Mind' Robert Macfarlane asserts that 'we read landscapes...we interpret their forms in the light of our own experience and memory and that of our shared cultural memory' and notes how 'wilderness, as just about everything, is perceived through a filter of associations'<sup>1</sup>. This inescapable truth applies as much to wild places in general as to mountains.

The Cairngorms are one of the foremost mountain ranges in the UK, and provide a UK example of the cultural salience of mountains to which Macfarlane refers. The nature of mountain experience can be founded on different values, sometimes based on landscapes, sometimes wildlife, sometimes culture. To many users of wild places, these distinctions are artificial and the perception of value is built on a many-stranded conception of mountains, captured with great lucidity by Nan Shepherd in the *Living Mountain*<sup>2</sup>, her paean to the Cairngorms. Nan Shepherd is not alone. Seton Gordon<sup>3</sup> writes about the 'spirit of high and lonely places' with reference to the Cairngorms and W H Murray<sup>4</sup> celebrated their uniqueness in the UK, but also the threats, noting that 'until recent years (the Cairngorms) have given a wilderness experience that could be found nowhere else with such fulness (sic). But every man-made road driven into the interior, and every building put there, diminishes the experience. The process has gone far and should be halted; the loss is becoming irreparable.'

We should not assume homogeneity in this discourse about the values of wild places. The ordinary folk who walk the few hundred metres from the old Ptarmigan restaurant may feel that they have engaged with wild land, but their experience is less well charted than that of the purist writer of wild land experiences. These culturally constructed conceptions of the value of mountains do not comprise a single view and many people's values are much threatened by a combination of forces, not least amongst which is the sheer volume and variety of recreational demands. The extent to which man-shaped changes in the mountains compromise or challenge notions of wild land or wilderness depends both on the nature and extent of change and on our particular conception of wild land or wilderness. For those, like Murray, with marked preferences for a wild land experience, who advocate the long walk in and the removal of man-made constructions, the de-sacralisation of mountain spaces is a deeply felt concern. For the fair-weather rambler, a footbridge or a bothy might be a legitimate component of what is perceived as wild land. These diverse and competing mountain and wild land discourses must inform the way in which the wild land is addressed in the Cairngorms by the new National Park Authority.

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<sup>1</sup> Macfarlane R, (1994), *Mountains of the mind*, Granta : London.

<sup>2</sup> Shepherd N, (1977), *The living mountain*, Aberdeen University Press: Aberdeen.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon S, (1925), *The Cairngorm Hills of Scotland*, Cassells.

<sup>4</sup> Murray, W H, (1987), *Scotland's mountains*, reprinted with amendments 1993, Pillans and Wilson, Edinburgh.

## Introduction

- 1) This paper sets out the general background context surrounding the issue of wild land in Scotland. It explores definitions of wild land and related concepts, identifies key issues associated with wild land in Scotland, and explores the question of the desirability of designating areas as wild land for Scotland.
- 2) There is increasing interest in the concept of 'wild land', 'wildness', or 'wilderness' in Scotland, other parts of the UK and Europe. Changes in agricultural policy are leading to land abandonment in several European Union member states and in some cases 're-wilding' is taking place with little or no managerial input from humans. These events have led to renewed interest across Europe in setting aside land with minimal management to create 'wild' areas. There has been either interest or activity, not always in the public sector, in Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and the Netherlands in exploring and establishing some form of wild land area. Many of these are relatively small, with evidence of recent human activity, and, as such, are quite distinct from the concept of 'wilderness', which has been so influential in certain parts of the world (such as North America) in influencing the designation of areas of land for minimal management. In contrast there are the large areas of northern Scandinavia, which still contain 'wilderness-like' qualities, and to some extent are preserved in the wilderness areas and national parks of Finland, Sweden and Norway.
- 3) In the UK, and particularly in Scotland, this renewed interest in creating wild land has both supporters and opponents. Established conservation interests are often opposed to any suggestion that a new land designation may be created that, in their view, might dilute efforts to manage what is already protected, or even conflict with existing forms of land conservation and management<sup>5</sup>. Further concerns have been expressed, for example, by the Countryside Agency<sup>6</sup> over the social and economic consequences of designating land as 'wild areas', which may reduce the potential for resource use by local inhabitants and such arguments were widely used in the wake of the Mountain Areas for Scotland Report<sup>7</sup>. In addition, arguments are currently made, and have long been made in the USA, about the 'elitist' nature of wild land or wilderness that appears to benefit only a small minority of society<sup>8</sup>.
- 4) Unfortunately, the terms 'wild land', 'wildness', 'wilderness', come with an enormous amount of associated cultural baggage, resulting in argument and conflict over definitions, purpose, and management of potential wild land or wilderness areas. The aim of this paper is to unpack some of that

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<sup>5</sup> Wilderness Britain: society, policy and environment. Conference held at Leeds University, March 26-28 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Countryside Agency (2002) The Social and Economic Effects of Developing New Wild Land in Northumberland. Final Report.

<sup>7</sup> Countryside Commission for Scotland. (1990) The Mountain Areas of Scotland.

<sup>8</sup> McPhee, John. (1971) Encounters with the Archdruid. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.

baggage and clarify the key issues in the current discussions on wild land taking place in Scotland.

## Defining Wild Land

- 5) A large number of definitions of the terms 'wilderness', 'wildness' and 'wild land' can be found in the academic and policy literature stretching back over the past seventy years or more. Activity in the USA goes back to the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. the Wilderness Society was formed in 1935, and Aldo Leopold developed his ideas on wilderness as a "laboratory for the land community" in the 1930s and '40s), when there was widespread public concern to ensure that at least some of the 'wild' areas of the western part of the USA were maintained in an elemental state, and not purely managed to ensure long term supplies of natural resources. The fight over the Hetch Hetchy reservoir in California, for example, created the beginnings of powerful lobbies for protecting nature and wilderness in the USA<sup>9</sup>.
- 6) A major influence on the concept of wild land was the adoption of the Wilderness Act 1964 in the USA which, for the first time, defined in law what conditions were required in order to create a wilderness area. The strict criteria were later relaxed for areas east of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian by the Eastern Wilderness Act 1975, which allowed smaller areas and previously damaged land to be designated as wilderness<sup>10</sup>. It also resulted in the creation of wilderness areas in the more densely populated eastern half of the country where the impact of man was far more evident and there were no large remote areas. But even today, despite the creation of the Wilderness Preservation System, the notion of wilderness and its management continues to be debated<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Nash, Roderick. (1967) *Wilderness and the American Mind*. Yale university Press.

<sup>10</sup> Thorndike, E. (1999) New York's Adirondack Park: where US wilderness preservation began. *International Journal of Wilderness*, vol. 5(1).

<sup>11</sup> Some examples are: Cafaro, P. (2001) For a grounded conception of wilderness and more wilderness on the ground. *Ethics and the Environment*, vol.6(1); Waterman L. and G. Waterman. (1993) *Wilderness Ethics: preserving the spirit of wildness*. The Countryman Press, Woodstock, Vermont.; McAvoy, L. and D. Dustin. (1981) The Right to Risk in Wilderness. *Journal of Forestry*, March 1981.; Kelson, A. (1998) Integrating wilderness within broader landscapes: the US public land experience. *Land Use Policy*, Vol. 15(3), pp.181-189.

**Box 1. Definition of 'Wilderness' from the Wilderness Act 1964**

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.

An area of wilderness is further defined in the Act to mean an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which:

- (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable;
- (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation;
- (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and
- (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

- 7) 'Wilderness' as a concept has not been adopted widely in Europe, largely due to the lack of large remote areas of land that have been unaffected by human impacts. Very few countries have designated land with wilderness type qualities. In Sweden, for example, there is no concept of wilderness or wild land in legalisation, though the law for designation of natural parks mentions that land has to be in 'its natural state'. There is extensive legislation for protection of areas, such as nature reserves and National Parks, but the term wild land ('vild mark' in Swedish) is not used in the legalisation. However, a great part of Swedish National Parks, particularly in the Northern part of Sweden, are large mountain areas characterised by their 'wilderness' qualities. One example, Töfsingdalen National Park, is described as being: "...the very essence of the term wilderness: inaccessible, barren and deserted with rugged boulder fields and a virgin forest full of sprawling snags."<sup>12</sup>
- 8) Norway uses the term "Inngrepsfrie naturområder" which can be translated as 'undisturbed nature' (and is identified in terms of proximity to infrastructure) but land with this characteristic has been in decline for the

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.internat.naturvardsverket.se/>

past 50 years and currently only 12% of Norway can be characterised as 'wilderness-like'. The only country where the term 'wilderness' has actually been utilised in legislation is Finland, which has large areas of low-density population in the northern part of the country. The twelve wilderness reserves (Luonnonsuojelualu) that have been established are aimed not just at preserving the wilderness character but also to protect the resource base for the Sami-culture. But even here, wilderness has been declining in area, as energy resources are developed and outdoor recreational activities appeal to a larger proportion of the population.

- 9) The IUCN definition of wilderness, requiring "large areas of unmodified or slightly modified land", also makes it difficult for many European countries to identify areas that fit this wilderness category. Slightly different terminology is thus applied in Europe to identify areas with 'wilderness' type qualities (i.e. large areas, largely unaffected by man, with opportunities for solitude). Increasingly, the terms utilised across Europe are 'wild land', 're-wilding', or 'natural areas', which have been applied in different places with different meanings. Even within Scotland itself, terms such as wild land and wildness have multiple definitions.

#### **Box 2. IUCN definition of wilderness**

A large area of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea, retaining its natural character and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition.

### **Wild Land in Scotland**

- 10) The idea of wild areas or wild land in Scotland is not new. An enormous amount has been written about wild land in Scotland, stretching back to W.H. Murray's writing from the 1940s, and the post-war concerns over the impacts from afforestation, hydro-electric development and private road development to encourage easier game management. Protection of wild land was addressed even earlier by Percy Unna who established the principles (set out in a letter to the National Trust for Scotland in 1937) and still used today to underpin policies espoused by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS)<sup>13</sup>. The overarching principle for wild land is that it be maintained in a primitive condition for all time and with unrestricted access to the public.

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<sup>13</sup> National Trust for Scotland (2002) Wild Land Policy.

### **Box 3. The Unna Principles:**

- Land must be maintained in its primitive condition;
- The public must have unrestricted access;
- Mountains should not be made easier or safer to climb; and
- There should be no directional signs or shelters on the hills.
- No facilities should be introduced for mechanical transport:
- paths should not be extended or improved.

Several key organisations and individuals have developed definitions of the term 'wild land'. The NTS, for example, currently define wild land in terms of remoteness, lack of human activity and potential for recreation. The John Muir Trust focus more on the lack of human activity and impact<sup>14</sup>, while a recent definition of the term 'wild land' has been provided in the national policy guideline NPPG 14<sup>15</sup> which also focuses on remoteness, and lack of human activity. Others, such as Aitken on the other hand, has been more forgiving of human impacts<sup>16</sup>. His concern for wild land is with remoteness and the scope for recreation, while allowing low levels of resource use (e.g. extensive grazing of animals).

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<sup>14</sup> John Muir Trust (2004) Wild Land Policy.

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Office (2004) NPPG 14: Natural Heritage.

Website: [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

<sup>16</sup> Aitken, R. (1995) Wild Land in Scotland: A review of the Concept. Unpublished report.

<b>Box 4. Wild land Definitions</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
National Trust For Scotland	“Wild land in Scotland is relatively remote and inaccessible, not noticeably affected by human activity, and offers high-quality opportunities to escape from the pressures of everyday living and to find physical and spiritual refreshment.”
The National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG 14)	"Uninhabited and often relatively inaccessible countryside where the influence of human activity on the character and quality of the environment has been minimal."
John Muir Trust	“Uninhabited land containing minimal evidence of human activity.”

11) Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the John Muir Trust, and Scottish National Trust have also differentiated between two similar sounding concepts, ‘wild land’ and ‘wildness’. According to SNH, in their policy statement of 2003<sup>17</sup>, wild land is associated more with lack of human presence and physical measures of ‘remoteness’, and ‘wildness’ is more to do with the perceptions of individuals. According to these definitions, ‘wild land’ can only be found in some remote mountain and coastline areas whilst ‘wildness’ can be found in many parts of the countryside and even on the edge of towns and cities. SNH make the argument that if ‘wildness’ is based on perceptions, attitudes and preferences of individuals, then some individuals will be able to perceive it in settings very close to towns and cities, or from the comfort of their cars driving through the countryside, while for others it will only be achieved in the most natural and remote settings far from any evidence of human interference. SNH state that:

“Wildness can also be found in more managed countryside settings such as rocky gorges, isolated sections of coast, or expanses of moorland in central and southern Scotland, even close to towns, and these wild places can be of significance locally. ...So we can recognise that places having a wild character, sometimes giving a high intensity of experience, are to be found widely though rural Scotland.”

<sup>17</sup> Scottish Natural Heritage. (2003) Policy Statement: Wildness in Scotland’s Countryside. Policy Statement No. 02/03

- 12) The John Muir Trust make similar arguments pointing out that in the UK, 'wild land' is confined to large expanses of remote and relatively unmodified terrain, which clearly limits the areas where it can be found, but 'wildness' can be experienced at a more local level, in smaller places, even close to centres of population. They suggest that the term 'wild place' could be used to describe any locality, however small, where nature prevails, while the term 'wild land' should be used to refer to larger key areas of a more 'iconic value'<sup>18</sup>.
- 13) The National Trust for Scotland also identifies some key elements needed for wild land and differentiate between 'core wild land' and 'wildness and smaller areas of wild land'. Recent discussions with NTS personnel highlight the view that wild land is considered as a cultural concept rather than a set of physical conditions<sup>19</sup>.
- 14) This distinction between wild land and wildness is re-enforced through the identification of attributes required for 'wild land'. According to the John Muir Trust, wild land is largely unaffected by human intervention, remote (or off the beaten track), rugged or physically challenging and naturally hazardous, grand in scale. JMT also suggest that wild land will provide a refuge for wildlife, a sense of peace, quiet and solitude, a sense of wonder or awe, and inspiration and satisfaction<sup>20</sup>. Aitken distinguishes between 'wild nature' and 'wild land' suggesting that wild land has a stronger role to play in preserving recreation and landscape values<sup>21</sup>. Wild nature is more concerned with allowing ecological processes to operate without human interference.
- 15) The National Trust for Scotland provides a more detailed list of indicators differentiating between those that enhance wild land and those that detract from it (see Box 5).

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<sup>18</sup> John Muir Trust Wild Land Policy. Memorandum of Association Arising from the John Muir Trust Sustaining Wild Land Conference 21st and 22nd October 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Telephone communication with Robin Turner, November 2004

<sup>20</sup> (John Muir Trust Wild Land Policy. Memorandum of Association Arising from the John Muir Trust Sustaining Wild Land Conference 21st and 22nd October 2004

<sup>21</sup> Bob Aitken, presentation given at the Wildness in Scotland's Countryside Seminar, held at the Highland Council, Inverness, 31 March 2004.

### **Box 5. The National Trust for Scotland's Indicators of Wild Land Quality**

#### **Enhancers:**

- Sense of remoteness (linked to distance from roads, tracks and transport)
- Size of area and scale of landscape
- Scenic grandeur
- Surrounded by sea (island)
- Solitude
- Roughness of terrain
- Peacefulness, quietness
- Absence of contemporary human activity or development
- Seemingly natural environment
- Involves emotional experiences whether first hand or at a distance
- Absence of reassurance in a hazardous and challenging environment
- Physically demanding experience resulting in a sense of achievement, (e.g. a long walk-in)
- Scotland's climate
- Ruins and disused structures-where they add scale and fit the landscape

#### **Detractors:**

- Recent signs of human activity, particularly 'man in charge of nature' including intensive agriculture and insensitive forestry
- Recent human artefacts (including litter)
- Presence of crowds or group activity
- Unsympathetic recreation activities
- Man-made noise
- Facilities to make recreation easier or safer
- Ecological imbalance
- Visual intrusions e.g. roads, pylons, fences
- Mechanical transport
- Low flying jets & helicopters

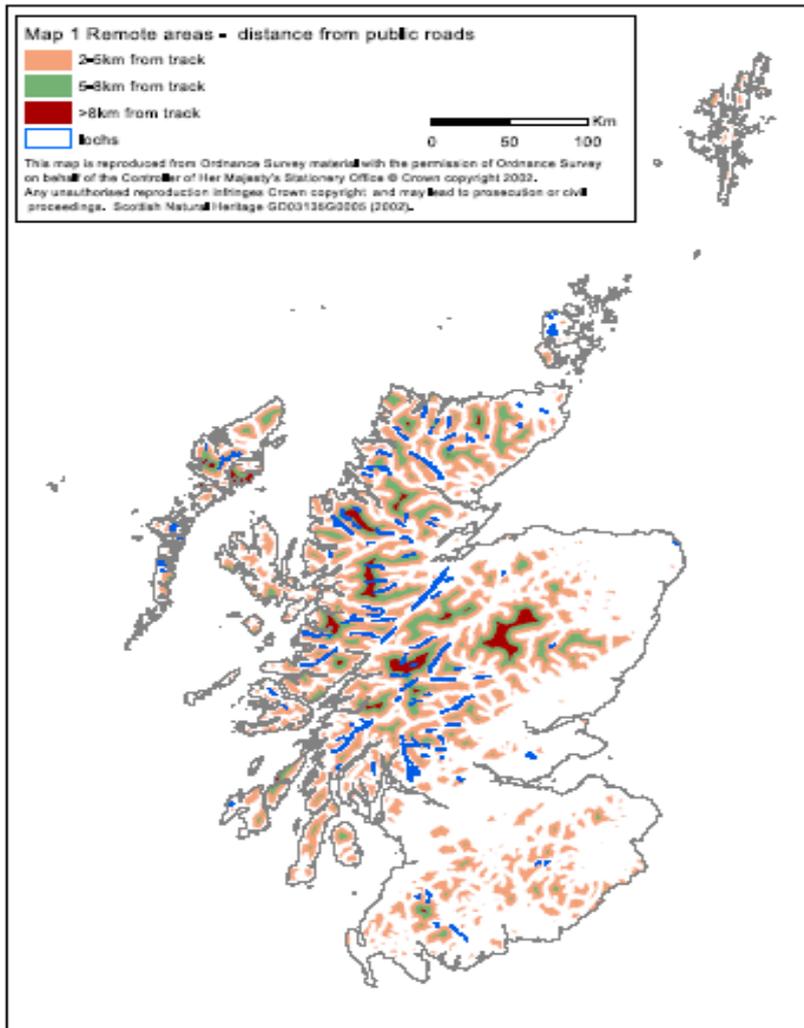
Deer stalking and sites of ancient habitation are both seen as neutral in terms of their influence on wild land character.

16) Both organisations agree on some key attributes: remoteness, physical challenge, solitude, level of risk, and a natural environmental state. These attributes clearly limit the number and location of areas that could be identified as 'wild land' in Scotland. Aitken, however, has discussed the difficulties of reaching consensus on a definition of wild land in Scotland noting the contested value of the land and sensitivities over the concept of wilderness as 'emptied' spaces<sup>22</sup>. Map 1 in the box is one example of a view of wild land in Scotland, assessed in terms of distance from public roads. Most of these areas are in the highlands with one of the largest areas being part of the Cairngorms. The evidence indicates a relatively

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<sup>22</sup> Aitken, R. (1999) Wild Land in Scotland: Some Key Issues. Wilderness Britain Seminar Series, Newsletter 1.

high level of agreement that 'wild land' can be considered as large areas, with limited evidence of human impact, that are more remote from human habitation.



Source: <http://www.snh.org.uk/strategy/pd02c.htm>

### Other Terminology

17) A range of other terms relating to wild land in common use are briefly summarised here (see the appendix for more information).

**Remote land:** land that is designated or identified most often in relation to roads. The Scottish Mountaineering Council identify remote land as land that is more than 5 km or one hour's walk from a public road. 'Wilderness' in Britain, for example has been mapped by Nash using a 'remoteness from access' criteria.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Wilderness Britain Seminar Series, Newsletter 4, 2000.

**Re-wilding:** a relatively recent term that has arisen in central Europe where there are virtually no areas unaffected by human impact. In many cases, human interference over hundreds of years has resulted in habitats with high biodiversity value. With changes in agricultural policy some of these are in danger of being lost (e.g. wetlands through agricultural intensification, heather moorlands through under-grazing). There is a growing interest in the re-establishment of natural processes through a 'hands-off' approach to management (e.g. the idea of natural areas with unmanaged herds of grazing cattle in the Netherlands). Other examples include areas of agricultural land, sometimes small in scale, that has been abandoned and is reverting to a more 'wild' condition (e.g. orchards, vineyards or even closer to urban areas, railway yards and industrial areas). In some places, this has been called 're-wilding', or if taking place in old industrialised or urban areas, 'urban wilderness' development.<sup>24</sup>

**Wild country:** Price identifies wild country as: "...a landscape that is (apparently) not ordered by human beings". It does not have to be remote but in Price's view people visiting must have the perception of little human influence on the land.<sup>25</sup>

## Wild Land Issues: Discourse Analysis

- 18) Discourse analysis is a way of exploring how people perceive, interpret, and articulate a particular issue. It is particularly appropriate to the analysis of situations where there are multiple interpretations of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Discourses are manifested in written documents, spoken language such as interviews, speeches, dialogue between people, and discussions at meetings. Discourses can be held by the professional community (often termed academic or professional discourses), or by the general public (termed lay discourses).
- 19) The aim of discourse analysis is to identify the key themes in the discourse and the 'frames of reference' used by individuals, organisations, and/or groups of people that are discussing the same issues. It is based on the idea that people conduct discussions, or arguments through a particular way of thinking or 'frame of reference'. If that frame can be understood and made transparent, then it helps others to understand the arguments, or at least better understand the differences between different discourses. In this way, the essential elements of an issue can be examined and lessons drawn to assist in resolving problems. This is a particularly useful approach for examining wild land in Scotland, where wild land is being 'framed' in different ways, and there are strong feelings about how particular issues should be managed.

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<sup>24</sup> Diemer, M., Held, M. and S. Hofmeister. (2003) Urban wilderness in Central Europe: Rewilding at the Urban Fringe. *International Journal of Wilderness*, vol.9, no.3.

<sup>25</sup> Price, M. Four dimensions of Wilderness. In, Scottish Wild Land Group (2002) Scotland's wild land – what future?

20) The study has identified three overarching 'discourses' or themes surrounding the wild land issue in Scotland, each with several sub-themes occurring within it. Many of these themes are also found in wild land discourses in other parts of Europe.

1. The **Definitional** theme, which includes articulation of:
  - Wild land as physical resource vs. wild land as perceptions of 'wildness'
  - Criteria for wild land and the amount available
  - The need, or not, for designations and boundary issues – where is it?
2. The **Utilisation** theme, which includes articulation of:
  - Economic values and use by local people,
  - Conflict between potential users (recreation, tourism, agriculture, energy, communications, military)
  - Conflict between recreational users and their perceptions: the wild land purist, the wild land with safety net user, the passive recreationalist (e.g. risk/no risk wilderness), inclusiveness
3. The **Ecological** theme, which includes articulation of:
  - The state of naturalness required for wild land and level of conservation value. How large and how natural does wild land need to be?
  - Natural processes and management issues: hands-off or hands-on.
  - Habitat networks and integration with other designated areas.

Each of these will be examined and key points drawn out.

## 1. The Definitional theme

### *Wild land versus wildness*

21) One part of this overarching theme concerns discussion over the nature of wild land itself<sup>26</sup>. There are two distinct frames of reference here: the first could be called the 'attribute frame' and identifies wild land as a physical resource defined through an established set of criteria or attributes; the second is the 'perception frame' which views wild land as a state of mind, and as different people perceive 'wild land' in different ways the essential element of 'wildness' can vary.

22) Those using the attribute frame of reference use lists to identify where wild land can and cannot exist in order to support, or fight against potential designations and boundaries (or developments). The discussion is thus framed in terms of identifying the 'correct' set of criteria to be used. Certain criteria, however, such as 'remoteness', can give very different

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<sup>26</sup> Fenton, J. (1996) Wild land or wilderness – is there a difference? ECOS, Vol.17(2); ESRC Seminar Series on Wilderness Britain: social and environmental perspectives on recreation and conservation. (2000). ([www.geog.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.geog.leeds.ac.uk))

impressions of the amount of wild land available in Scotland, and where it is located, depending on how remoteness is defined (e.g. contrast the maps of remoteness from roads and potential areas of wild land developed by SNH). The solution, from the perspective of these groups, is to arrive at a mutually agreed set of criteria and then, as long as the criteria can be met, wild land will be deemed to exist.

### *Criteria for Wild Land*

23) The criteria for wild land in Scotland range from the Unna principles to the NTS indicators of wild land, as well as those laid down in policy guidelines such as NPPG 14. Certain elements of the criteria are remarkably stable and indicate that there are some key indicators for wild land that many agree upon. For example:

- Remoteness
- Solitude
- Scenic grandeur
- Uninhabited or unaffected by man
- Physically challenging

Other indicators of wild land appear less commonly. Dave Morris of the Ramblers Association (Scotland), for example, includes risk as an important element of wild land<sup>27</sup>. Weather and climate have also been included in some cases as leading to wild land experience.

24) A key criterion is remoteness (but even this can be measured in different ways, e.g. distance from a public or a private road, visible infrastructure) and inevitably means limitations on the likely location and scope for wild land in Scotland, which largely limits it to the highland areas, of which the Cairngorms form one of the largest potential areas. The Mountaineering Council for Scotland, for example, define remote land as land that is 5 km or one hour's walk from a public road.

25) Those who view wild land as a matter of individual perception identify a much broader set of places across the whole of Scotland where 'wild land' could be found. This frame defines wild land as a subjective phenomenon, a cultural artefact that varies with individuals and over time. Kempe<sup>28</sup> defines wild land as land where "...a person believes they are...free of human influence...". Thomson<sup>29</sup> cites the strong "experiential" nature of wild land and Habron<sup>30</sup> argues that taking a 'perceptual approach' to defining wild land allows a wider range of locations to be considered as wild land. In this discourse, the terms 'wilderness' and 'wild land' tend to

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<sup>27</sup> Morris, D. (2004) The outdoor recreation perspective on wild land in Scotland. John Muir Trust 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Conference, Pitlochry.

<sup>28</sup> Kempe, N. Wild land or wilderness. In, Scottish Wild Land Group (2002) Scotland's wild land – what future?

<sup>29</sup> Thomson, J. (2004) The Nature of Wild Land. Presentation given at the Wilderness in Scotland's Countryside Seminar, held at the Highland Council, Inverness, 31 March 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Habron, A. D. (1998) Defining Wild Land in Scotland through GIS Based Wilderness Perception Mapping. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Stirling.

be replaced by reference to 'wildness', a more intangible and subjective artefact heavily influenced by an individual's, experience, knowledge and attitude towards risk and challenge. The approach is similar to the previous frame of reference in that there is a move to try and develop a set of attributes of experience in order to be able to define areas where wildness can be experienced. The result is that using an experiential or perceptual frame of reference, 'wildness' or 'wild places' with many similar attributes to 'wild land', can be found closer to urban centres and in a much wider range of rural areas<sup>31</sup>. Size is less of an issue because for some, wildness will be found in small areas, perhaps a rocky gorge, a small wood, or a piece of heather moorland.

26) SNH have developed a set of attributes (similar to the attributes for wild land in that the land should be physically challenging and lacking in evidence of human use) to help define 'wildness', which they assert can be found "widely through rural Scotland". Using this frame of reference, the focus of attention is on identifying the physical attributes that give a broad sector of society a sense of being in a 'wild' place. The focus is less on size and remoteness and more on identifying characteristics of places that can stimulate the senses of a broad range of people (e.g. a high degree of perceived naturalness, perceived lack of human interference, perceived ruggedness of landforms).

27) Both frames of reference use physical attributes of the land to identify potential areas where 'wild land' can be found. Wild land, as defined for example by NPPG 14, can be viewed as one end of the spectrum of wildness. It may only appeal to a small percentage of the population as a place to visit, but may find support from a larger proportion who take comfort from the fact that such areas exist. 'Wildness' can be found in many places and will be accessed by a much larger range of people. There are good arguments for developing both wild land and wild 'places', which will be further developed in the discussions below.

### *Wild Land Designations and Boundaries*

28) The different frames of reference utilised by those discussing the criteria for wild land and wildness have inevitably led to differences of opinion over whether or where to draw boundaries and the need, or not, for a specific wild land designation. Map 1 in the box reveals there are a limited number of areas that might qualify as wild land, at least on the criteria of remoteness but the major debate is over whether a new designation is needed for 'wild land'. There is a high degree of agreement between some of the key stakeholders over the main attributes for wild land and agreement that both small and large areas of wild land should be protected

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<sup>31</sup> John Muir Trust Wild Land Policy. Memorandum of Association Arising from the John Muir Trust Sustaining Wild Land Conference 21st and 22nd October 2004; Scottish Natural Heritage. (2003) Policy Statement: Wildness in Scotland's Countryside. Policy Statement No. 02/03

(JMT, NTS) but disagreement over the need for a special designation (e.g. SNH and NTS oppose any move to create a new designation.)

29) One view taken is that given the large number of protected land designations that currently exist (SSSIs, National Nature Reserves, national park, SACs, SPAs, etc.) a new designation is not required as wild land will largely be in the areas already designated and can be adequately protected. In one study<sup>32</sup> 24 separate types of protected area were identified in the UK. Despite this the study noted that a wide range of problems had arisen as a result of the way in which the protected area concept has been applied. These range from failure to integrate protected areas into other spheres of policy (e.g. agriculture, tourism) to inadequate powers and resources to attain objectives. Another view (SNH) is that a wild land designation would result in significant objections from the public and therefore cannot be undertaken. Bishop *et al* argue, however, that developments in both nature conservation thinking and landscape protection have led to ideas of creating areas where the objective is to reduce manage interventions (i.e. undertake a form of re-wilding). This process is being helped by the enhanced potential for land abandonment as farming in marginal areas declines, and a growing public acceptance that, "...there may be intrinsic merit in the existence of truly wild places in Britain".

30) An alternative view is that wild land requires a particular type of management in order to ensure its long-term survival, which cannot be obtained under existing land designations (as the purpose of those designations is very different) and thus a new special designation is needed. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) make the argument that the statutory planning system cannot protect a national objective (such as wild land) when it is specified only on the basis of criteria in policies developed at a local level, thus indicating the weakness resulting from lack of statutory designations<sup>33</sup>.

## 2. The Utilisation theme

### *Economic values and use by local people*

31) The second overarching theme that emerges from studying discourses on wild land concerns the utilisation of the resource base of the area, and its role in supporting the livelihoods of local populations. This 'economic frame' has provided two different perspectives on wild land. One view presents wild land designation as a threat to local economies and traditional uses of the resource base. The lists of attributes of wild land that emphasise 'no evidence of human interference', and 'no infrastructure'

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<sup>32</sup> Bishop, K., Phillips, A. and L. Warren. (1995) Protected for ever? Factors shaping the future of protected areas policy. *Land Use Policy*, Vol. 12(4) pp.291-305.

<sup>33</sup> RTPI (2001) Unpublished response to Scottish Natural Heritage's draft policy paper on Wildness in Scotland's Countryside.

re-enforce the view that all resource use must cease if an area is designated or managed as wild land. The second view presents wild land as an economic opportunity that brings in new sources of income from visitors (both passive and active tourists), and new demands on services and equipment suppliers, as well as recognising potential human use, especially through low intensity exploitation of natural resources.

32) Designation of wild land may significantly alter the exploitability of the economic base of an area and the distribution of wealth through shifts in the manner in which the 'resource' is used<sup>34</sup>. Thomson<sup>35</sup> notes that a wild land resource helps to underpin tourism and field sports in Scotland and the land is of growing economic value when used for these purposes in contrast to much lower economic benefits when it is utilised for other purposes (due to low productivity of the resource base). What is seldom discussed is the proportion of the new income streams that might remain in the local economy, against the proportion that could 'leak away', and whether those that may potentially gain from new opportunities are the same as those that stand to lose from any decrease in the traditional forms of resource use (i.e. a change in the *distribution* of wealth).

33) Those viewing wild land through an economic frame of reference do not always acknowledge that resource use can still occur, even though it may be limited to more extensive forms of agricultural or sporting activity. In many cases, those using wild land for recreation either welcome certain uses as enhancing (or even creating) the landscape, or are not aware of such impacts. Even where wild land is not being actively considered, there are changes occurring due to shifts in agricultural policy. Many marginal (mountain) areas in Europe, for example, with former low intensive agricultural land uses (e.g. transhumance, grazing) are under a process of natural reforestation due to reductions in subsidies that support the low intensive farming. This is generally considered by as a threat to cultural heritage but also in many cases as a threat to biodiversity values associated with mountain grazing, especially in high alpine meadows (or *polonina*).

*Conflict between potential users (local people, recreation, tourism, agriculture, forestry, energy, communications, military)*

34) One important argument associated with utilisation has been the importance of the cultural inheritance to local people through traditional activities that might have occurred in wild land, and place names, and other aspects which contribute to a culturally constructed 'sense of place'. There is a concern that local people and their traditional ways of using the

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<sup>34</sup> John Muir Trust Wild Land Policy. Memorandum of Association Arising from the John Muir Trust Sustaining Wild Land Conference 21st and 22nd October 2004; Scottish Natural Heritage. (2003) Policy Statement: Wildness in Scotland's Countryside. Policy Statement No. 02/03; National Trust for Scotland (2002) Wild Land Policy.

<sup>35</sup> Thomson, J. (2004) The Nature of Wild Land. Presentation given at the Wildness in Scotland's Countryside Seminar, held at the Highland Council, Inverness, 31 March 2004.

resource base, might be dislodged through new user groups such as active recreationalists (walkers, climbers, skiers), tourists (with demands for improved access and services), or energy development (wind farms, hydropower).

35) Arguments developed through this utilisation frame focus on the conflict between different user groups. SNH recognises the problems brought about by increased tourism and recreational use pressures. Particular concerns are expressed over activities that create infrastructure that might be visible or audible over large distances (e.g. ski lifts, communications masts, new roads and tracks). The JMT, for example, advocates no further construction of new paths in or into wild land. NPPG 14 suggests that wild land may have little capacity to deal with new development and the Scottish Wild Land Group<sup>36</sup> are concerned over insensitive siting of wind turbines and the potential impacts of fencing. Increased tourism, which might itself bring benefits to the wider region, as well as to specific localities, often demands increased infrastructure and 'things to do' which conflict with what might be considered key attributes of wild land such as solitude and absence of human activity. Even the most ardent supporter of wild land, however, will have a list of requirements in the form of roads to access an area, car parking, and service provision, each of which has impacts.

*Conflict between recreational users: the wild land purist, the wild land with safety net user, the passive recreationalist (e.g. risk/no risk wilderness)*

36) A different type of discourse occurs between the categories of recreational user. This discourse addresses much of what could be called the divergent lay discourses occurring between different groups over how to identify, designate, manage and use wild land areas. Wild land values reflect very much a human-centred approach (in comparison to the ecological frame of reference), with an emphasis on attributes such as 'solitude', 'closeness to nature', 'risk', and 'engagement with the physical world'. In this paper three broad categories of user can be identified:

*the wild land purist* – the person who wants a wild land area most closely resembling a true wilderness with no signs, paths, bridges or other structures, no interference, no possibility of rescue if trouble occurs, and a minimal number of people making use of it.

*the wild land with safety net user* – those who want a 'wilderness' type experience but, want to be assured there is some infrastructure (e.g. bothies; footbridges) in place, and want to be assured of the possibility of rescue in case of trouble

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<sup>36</sup> Scottish wild Land Group (2002) Scotland's wild land – what future?; Scottish Wild Land Group (2003) Wild Land News no. 56. [www.swlg.org.uk](http://www.swlg.org.uk)

*the passive recreationalist* – those who admire the wild land from a distance; they may drive to the edge, even venture a little way in but are not likely to stay long, and take pleasure in knowing it is there.

37) Seen through the frame of recreational use, the key issues are about access and management, as well as the criteria that would define wild land and its boundaries (described above). Ritchie<sup>37</sup> has noted that tourist boards in Scotland are focusing more effort on marketing “experiences and opportunities” and those activities with the highest potential are the most dependent on high quality landscapes (e.g. wildlife tourism). This discourse supports the notion that wild land is as much about perception as physical attributes. The wild land purists seek specific designations for wild land in large, remote areas where there is no evidence of human activity, to gain the recreational benefits sought. Others may want to access wild land on a less intensive basis and clamour for easier access through improved signage, footpaths and other infrastructure. The Ramblers Association<sup>38</sup> notes that one important feature of Scottish wild land is its easy accessibility to a large proportion of the population, but, the wild land ‘experience’ itself is associated more with physical exertion typified by the ‘long walk-in’. The passive recreationalist, on the other hand, would be content with smaller areas of designation though may still be passionate about designations and lack of human interference, believing that natural processes should work largely unhindered in some areas.

### **3. The Ecological theme**

38) The third main discourse occurring in relation to wild land is based on an ecological frame of reference where concerns are largely over the level of conservation value required for wild land, and the extent to which such areas should be actively managed.

*The state of naturalness required for wild land and level of conservation value. How large and how natural does wild land need to be?*

39) The ecological frame of reference sees wilderness or wild land as a place of high ecological value (in terms of biodiversity or high quality habitat or naturalness) that requires protection from human interference for a number of reasons:

- the plant and animal communities are fragile and cannot tolerate human presence or interference
- the ecological communities should be preserved free of human management as a ‘laboratory of ecological processes’
- such places offer a refuge for certain species

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<sup>37</sup> Ritchie, D. (2004) Landscape in tourism. Presentation given at Scottish Environment LINK’s Landscape Workshop, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2004, SNH Battleby Centre.

<sup>38</sup> Morris, D. (2004) The outdoor recreation perspective on wild land in Scotland. John Muir Trust 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Conference, Pitlochry.

- the rights of species or ecological communities to exist without interference should be respected

For most ecologists, only the highest value ecological areas should be given a wild land designation.

40) This frame of reference goes back to the beginnings of the development of the wilderness idea in the USA. Aldo Leopold, writing in the 1930s for example, viewed wilderness a “laboratory for studying the land community’ in order to learn how nature functions and to find out how to manage the land. Many others have used similar arguments since then to emphasise that wilderness or wild land should focus on protecting high value ecosystems by minimising human impacts. Nelson<sup>39</sup>, for example, has stated that wilderness is no more than a “biodiversity reserve” and in the UK, Adam Griffin has argued (from the perspective of Dartmoor) that wilderness is a term for a pristine collection of interlinked habitats where nature is self-managing and self-regulating<sup>40</sup>. Fenton<sup>41</sup> makes a similar point stating that wild land is:

“land that is ecologically wild – where domestic species take second place to wild species, and natural processes take precedence over artificial processes”.

He sees a possible role for uplands to become ecologically wild places. In a sense, humans are viewed as a minor influence on wild land areas.

*Natural processes and management issues: hands-off or hands-on.*

41) The ecological frame of reference creates a quandary for resource managers, since a basic tenet of wilderness/wild land is minimal management. Yet, even a simple act such as a designation of an area is a form of management and in many cases active management will be required to control numbers going into an area and activities undertaken. A second problem in Scotland is that many areas proposed for wild land are often considered to be ‘ecologically impaired’ landscapes (SNH) and not the highest value ecological areas. In some cases, restoration of biodiversity requires hands-on management. At one extreme wild land is viewed simply as an area where nature predominates and man’s management interference is minimised. This idea has spread from the Oostvaardersplassen in Holland where large herbivores are allowed to roam free with minimal management. The idea has been picked up by some in the UK; Taylor<sup>42</sup>, for example, suggests the creation of “areas of natural sanctuary” in which re-wilding could take place and identifies one area in England and one in Wales where this could occur. At the other extreme is the idea that wilderness or wild land can only be found where ecological

<sup>39</sup> Nelson, M. (2001) The Great New wilderness debate: answering some critics. Presentation given at the Wilderness Britain Conference, University of Leeds, 26 – 28 March 2001.

<sup>40</sup> Griffin, A. (2001) Language of the wild. Presentation given at the Wilderness Britain Conference, University of Leeds, 26 – 28 March 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Fenton, J. (2004) Wild thoughts...A new paradigm for the uplands. ECOS Vol.25(1).

<sup>42</sup> Taylor, P. (1995) Whole system restoration: re-creating wilderness? ECOS, Vol.16(2);

Taylor, P. (2004) To wild or not to wild: the perils of ‘either-or’. ECOS, Vol.25(1).

processes operate in their natural state entirely free of human impacts. This clearly is not going to happen in Europe where there is virtually no area untouched by human influences, and we have prevented some ecological process from occurring (e.g. fire, flooding, natural predation).

*Integration with other designated areas.*

42) A recent extension of the ecological frame sees wild land as one link in a network of protected land that provides for better integration between species, or providing essential 'habitat networks' that allow movement of species, either in the short term (seasonal) or long term (due to climate change)<sup>43</sup>. In addition, there is renewed interest in re-introduction of species (e.g. beaver, wolf) some of which require large areas of land, and minimal contact with humans, in order to survive. Morris<sup>44</sup>, for example, argues that a key aim for wild land should be to restore 'wildness'. He suggests that restoration of wildness could be achieved through letting natural forces predominate without human interference and that ultimately, these processes could be enhanced through the re-introduction of species such as beaver, bear and wolf.

## **Management Issues Associated with Wild Land Identified in Scotland**

43) Some of the key issues identified with discussions about wild land in Scotland are highlighted in Box 6. These issues are addressed in more detail in the paragraphs below.

*Cultural Identity, History and Archaeology*

44) There is a potential for conflict between current inhabitants and their local use of wild land and new forms of recreation, which might demand the cessation of certain types of activity. SNH identifies cultural inheritance as an issue for wild land, as little of the landscape is completely natural and for the most part is formed by human activity. Even though many visitors may perceive the land as unspoiled and untrammelled by humans, this is usually far from the case. On closer inspection there is often evidence of habitation or access routes and, in some areas, archaeological evidence of humans from the more distant past, although it is noted these are seldom on a scale to detract for qualities of wildness. SNH also note that some wild landscapes form the home and workplace for some people and for others it might be a source of livelihood<sup>45</sup>. SNH identifies a potential concern where land might be 'sterilised' from local economic uses, or local

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<sup>43</sup> Wilderness Britain Conference, University of Leeds, 26-28 March 2001.

<sup>44</sup> Morris, D. (2004) The outdoor recreation perspective on wild land in Scotland. John Muir Trust 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Conference, Pitlochry.

<sup>45</sup> Scottish Natural Heritage. (2003) Policy Statement: Wildness in Scotland's Countryside. Policy Statement No. 02/03

people affected adversely through some form of denial of the past use of the land.

- 45) The JMT note that the cultural identity of local communities can be intimately entwined with the surrounding landscape and influenced through the ways in which the land is managed. Aspects of landscape such as place names, folklore and even certain physical features can contribute strongly to the sense of place felt by local inhabitants. On the other hand they note that certain features, such as old ruins, for example, can contribute to the 'wild land experience'.

**Box 6. Management Issues Associated with Wild Land Identified in Scotland**

**Access**

- Paths
- Bothies
- Signs, bridges and other structures

**Agriculture**

- Changes in grazing regimes (increases or decreases)
- Fences
- Game management
- Current land uses

**Infrastructure**

- Car parks
- New roads/tracks
- Ski development infrastructure (e.g. lifts)
- Communications masts

**Ecology**

- Nature conservation quality
- Degraded conditions

*Ecology – Wildlife and Habitat*

- 46) A key point to note is that not all 'wild land' has the highest nature conservation value. Some areas have been so modified in the past that it is not clear what the true 'natural' condition of these lands might be (for example, more woody vegetation might be expected on heather moorland and on better quality lower ground). Wild land areas in Scotland are often identified as being less rich in terms of numbers of species than other parts of Scotland, partly because these areas tend to be in harsher environments and the wildlife is more specialist in terms of its adaptation and/or requirements. This is partly a result of previous land uses (e.g. leading to removal, fragmentation or isolation of habitats) and there is

potential for improvement in species richness through more sensitive management that could restore some of the links between habitats.

- 47) JMT present an alternative argument, that the ecosystems occurring on some areas of wild land are amongst those least affected by human activity. As such, there is a case for preserving what remains in an unmanaged state so that ecological processes can operate without interference by man. By protecting large areas of wild land, existing nature reserves would thus be enhanced through potential for less restricted interaction among species.
- 48) SNH also note that for some people the presence of such wildlife is an important part of the enjoyment obtained from visiting wild land.

#### *Economic Value and Tourism*

- 49) Many of the economic issues are connected either to benefits for Scotland as a whole from visitors attracted to the high quality environment (NTS), or to those benefiting from provision of equipment or services to recreational users of wild land (SNH). SNH identify 'wildness' as being one of the main attractors bringing visitors into upland Scotland either for passive use (e.g. admiring the scenery), or through active use in outdoor recreation, nature tourism, or field sports, thus giving wild land a significant economic value.

#### *Access*

- 50) There is recognition that improved access to wild land brings problems as well as benefits. Benefits accrue from the economic gains at both regional and local scales as well as the other, less tangible, physical and mental improvements brought on by outdoor recreation. More visitors to wild land, however, can result in increased demand for services (e.g. hotels, cafes, equipment suppliers, information centres) and infrastructure (e.g. car parks, bridges, signs, bothies), physical impacts such as erosion of footpaths, or simply the sheer numbers of people making it hard to find the solitude which is often cited as one of the key attributes of wild land. Access might be made easier through road improvements that reduce the travel time to a wild land area for a larger population, or through easier access into a remote area itself through creation of roads, tracks, paths, signs, or ski-lifts. In short, easier access can endanger some of the key attributes that attract people to visit wild land (i.e. its remoteness, solitude, lack of man-made structures).

#### *Infrastructure Development*

- 51) A key criterion of wild land is its elemental quality and lack of significant evidence of man. As 'wildness' can be attributed to individual perception, the creation of new footpaths or construction of bridges over streams may be considered harmful development by some, while for others it may take more significant infrastructure such as the presence of bulldozed roads, or installation of wind turbines or communications masts to destroy the wild

land quality. NPPG 14 has noted that the most sensitive wild landscapes may have little or no capacity to accept new development without destroying this aspect. Renewable energy developments, particularly wind turbines, are seen as a threat by several groups (e.g. Scottish Wild Land Group, Rambler's Association Scotland, SNH), and of more limited concern are ski area developments that have an impact over a wide hinterland through visual, noise and ecological impacts, as well as increasing accessibility. Other impacts mentioned are the increasing intrusion into wild land areas of aircraft both military (for training) and commercial (sightseeing).

### *Agriculture, Forestry and Game Management*

52) Agricultural or sporting land management can have huge impacts on the vegetation and habitat quality over large areas, through increase or decrease in grazing pressures (deer and sheep) or practices such as muirburn. Fences are also a concern in that they both restrict movement of people and wild animals and provide often unwelcome visible evidence of human activity. Forestry has also contributed to landscape change through block plantations of non-native species in areas where they did not previously exist and has further implications for wild land through creation of forest roads. More recent developments in forest strategies emphasise native woodland species recovery and tree line afforestation, both of which might be seen as having remediating effects.



**Derry Lodge: an interface between sporting, forestry and conservation management**

## **Summary Discussion – the Significance of Wild Land in Scotland, the UK and Europe**

### **Scotland**

- 53) Wild land is an important culturally constructed conception in Scotland. It is articulated in long-running debates about designation, use and the protection of ecological values in the remoter, wilder parts of Scotland. Central to the debate about wild land is the extent to which land thus defined should be subjected to a set of management 'rules', as is the norm, for example, in US wilderness areas, or whether existing designations, although not explicitly for wild land, afford sufficient protection.
- 54) The zoned approach to numerous conservation management designations, separating areas into core and buffer areas, creates a model that could be applied to wild land in the core area of existing designations such as national parks. In such situations, wild land would comprise that land on which the most modest intervention, if any, might be permitted, but into which access might be regulated, either by the long walk in or, potentially, by permit system. Wrightham<sup>46</sup> (2002) has suggested just such an approach, suggesting that peripheral areas should be protected from adverse impacts in order to prevent "gradual erosion of the core".
- 55) Wild land cannot be considered in isolation of other policy drivers for rural Scotland and the UK more generally. These include policies (and policy principles) relating to economic development, sustainability and the drive for social justice.
- 56) The core wild land debates surround whether or not to designate, the encouragement of re-wilding and/or the discouragement of development which compromises wild land and the extent to which development opportunities should be foregone in order to protect some of the more 'purist' definitions of wild land.
- 57) Areas within the Cairngorms National Park undoubtedly comprise land that would fall within almost any published UK or European concept of wild land. Some of this land comprises the high arctic alpine habitats of the high plateau, but in addition many remote areas within the national park, which are used for deer stalking, extensive grazing, and outdoor recreation provide what many would perceive as a substantial wild land resource.

### **The United Kingdom and Europe**

- 58) There is little documentary evidence of policy developments in other parts of the UK in relation to wild land although in both England and Wales there has been growing interest in the re-wilding process (e.g. see the Countryside Agency (2002) study of re-wilding in upland areas of

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<sup>46</sup> Wrightham, M. Wild land in Scotland – the policy context. In, Scottish Wild Land Group (2002) Scotland's wild land – what future?

Northumberland). A certain amount of mapping work has been carried out to examine the concepts of remoteness and tranquillity, which have identified very few possible areas where wild land (as defined by NPPG14 for example) could exist, and English Nature contracted work from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology<sup>47</sup>, which identified and mapped 305 areas where active management of land has ceased.

- 59) The concept of wildness and the re-wilding of smaller areas holds more possibilities for other parts of the UK where large, remote, relatively inaccessible and uninhabited areas do not exist. Parts of west Wales, Dartmoor, and the northern Pennines might provide some areas of wild land but there is significant resistance from a range of stakeholders to the idea of wild land in these areas. In the Norfolk Broads National Park, there has been discussion of managing areas as small as 120ha to provide a wilderness type experience for visitors<sup>48</sup>.
- 60) In Europe interest in wild land is growing<sup>49</sup> but it is only in Scandinavia (and possibly parts of Poland and Romania) where there are areas of land large enough to fit the usual criteria (described earlier in this paper) for wild land. Scandinavia has the largest potential for wild land areas but even here the amount of land that fits the criteria is declining in the face of energy, recreational and other development pressures<sup>50</sup>. In Italy, one organisation has been active and succeeded in creating a series of 31 wilderness areas of varying sizes across the country<sup>51</sup>. In the other Alpine countries, however, for so long the 'playground of Europe' there is not much land that could be defined as 'wild' and little incentive to create new wild land although even here, a reduction in agricultural activity on marginal land and extensive areas of lightly managed or unmanaged forest land is starting to change the way people view the landscape<sup>52</sup>.
- 61) In central Europe, references are made to urban and rural "re-wilding" areas such as abandoned orchards and industrial sites less than 500 ha in size, and even to "re-wilding microcosms" of just a few hectares<sup>53</sup>. There is an interest in restoration of environmentally damaged areas such as old industrial workings with a view to creating 'wild' or 'natural' areas close to where people live and can utilise them. But there is very little work to create large areas of wild land in mountainous areas such as the Carpathians, often still heavily used by people as part of the local economic base.

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<sup>47</sup> Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (1998) Production of a database of unmanaged semi-natural vegetation in the English uplands. Unpublished Contract Report for English Nature.

<sup>48</sup> Wilderness Britain Conference, University of Leeds, 26-28 March 2001.

<sup>49</sup> Powell, J. and C. Oonk (2002) Wilderness in Europe: a first investigation. Unpublished CCRU Report.

<sup>50</sup> Skonhoft, A. and H. Solem. (2001) Economic growth and land-use changes: the declining amount of wilderness in Norway. *Ecological Economics*, vol.37, pp. 289-301.

<sup>51</sup> Zunino, F. (1995) The Wilderness Movement in Italy – A Wilderness Model for Europe. *International Journal of Wilderness*, Vol. 1(2).

<sup>52</sup> Hocht, F., Lehringer, S. and W. Konold. (2004) "Wilderness": what it means when it becomes a reality – a case study from the southwestern Alps. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, Article in Press, [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com).

<sup>53</sup> Diemer, M., Held, M. and S. Hofmeister. (2003) Urban wilderness in Central Europe: Rewilding at the Urban Fringe. *International Journal of Wilderness*, vol.9, no.3.

62) In Europe there is little to compare with the characteristic landscape of highland Scotland except in parts of Scandinavia (such as Norway, and northern Sweden and Finland). This means, that in Europe, any sizeable area of relatively remote land, with low levels of human impact, becomes significant as a potential area of wild land. Outwith northern Scandinavia and possibly parts of the highlands of Scotland, there is no wild land in the western part of Europe. In that sense the remote areas that are perceived by some as wild land in the highlands of Scotland are highly significant.

63) The three key issues on wild land, that have to be dealt with, are:

- Identification
- Designation
- Management

Wild land needs to be identified in terms of a limited range of physical attributes. We suggest:

- remoteness
- size
- lack of infrastructure

This avoids the debates about states of 'naturalness' or the ecological quality required for wild land, and amount of human activity allowed, which are both more to do with management than as criteria for identifying wild land in Europe. Management can control both the level of activity and, over time, the ecological quality.

64) The issue of whether or not to create a special wild land designation is important, as it potentially strengthens the management capacity to enhance and protect the special characteristics that people perceive when they visit such areas. Without some form of wild land designation, surrounded by buffer areas, it is unlikely that the attributes required for wild land can be protected and maintained. However, we recognise the opposition to such a designation from many of the leading environmental NGOs in Scotland and their belief that wild land can best be nurtured through their actions as landowners or pressure groups, rather than new and potentially contentious designations.

65) Only when an area has been identified and designated can it be managed to protect both the physical attributes that make it wild, and the perceived attributes that create the experiences valued by a wide range of people, including both local inhabitants and visitors. Management can create the conditions where a wide range of visitors can experience 'wildness' in different settings, while preserving the essential elements of wild land. The Cairngorm National Park has a unique opportunity to lead the way forward in identifying and designating land that is 'wild', in developing management techniques to maximise the experience of 'wildness' to visitors, and to create a highly valued landscape within western Europe.

66) In asserting that wild land is a cultural construct rather than an empirical fact, we acknowledge that any national park seeking to protect and enhance the wild land qualities that many argue exist within its boundaries

must inevitably encounter this contested conception. The principal debates concern what comprises wild land, what should be done about protecting and enhancing it, and whether a specific designation at national level is required or it is used as a park management tool. Whilst there is a strong consensus from almost all groups that significant parts of the Cairngorms National Park are blessed with wild land qualities, the complexities of competing discourses, different styles of landownership, and multiple and complex demands on such space ensure that there are no simple solutions to this complex question.