

**JOINT MEDIA RELEASE FROM THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL SCOTLAND, THE JOHN MUIR TRUST, THE MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND, THE MUNRO SOCIETY, THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND, RAMBLERS SCOTLAND, THE SCOTTISH RIGHTS OF WAY AND ACCESS SOCIETY AND THE SCOTTISH WILD LAND GROUP**

TEXT OF JOINT LETTER

**For Publication**

**4 July 2013**

Sir,

As a group of eight organisations with over 350,000 members who value Scotland's high quality landscapes we commend the Scottish Government for recognising the value of Scotland's wild land, which is without price. However, we must emphasise that all impacts upon valued areas need to be managed, not simply developments within such areas. We feel that the Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage and other organisations must now use all relevant policies to safeguard the experiential qualities that make Scotland's landscapes so valuable to residents and visitors.

We welcome the growing recognition in national government of the importance of Scotland's landscapes and the need to ensure their special qualities are not lost through unsuitable development. The current government consultations on the Scottish Planning Policy and the National Planning Framework are an opportunity to set the national planning rules for many years to come.

We support the increased protection proposed for National Parks and National Scenic Areas, though this merely formalises the present *de facto* position. Such protection should apply also where development is proposed beyond their boundaries that would impact upon the very qualities they were established to safeguard. While the current greatest threat is large onshore wind developments, the same considerations should apply equally to any large development proposal, including transmission lines.

We fully support the recognition of the importance of wild land but are very concerned at the level of protection proposed for these and other important areas such as National Nature Reserves. The current draft states that in such areas wind power developments will be acceptable "where it can be demonstrated that any significant effects on the qualities for which the area is identified can be substantially overcome by siting, design or mitigation." This will allow inappropriate developments to be approved because of the lack of clarity in using subjective words such as "significant" and "substantially" when set against the primacy afforded in government policy to economic and energy development. Core Areas of Wild Land as defined by Scottish Natural Heritage should be given the same level of protection as National Scenic Areas, including protection from visually intrusive developments beyond their boundaries. Several current planning applications lie within Core Areas of Wild Land. They must be rejected now if there is to be substance to the government's affirmation of wild land's importance.

We are concerned at the proposal that locally significant landscapes, designated as such by local councils, should be regarded nationally as areas where there are "opportunities for wind farm development". If local authorities and their electorates think particular local landscapes are important then this should not be over-ridden nationally.

The consultations close on 23 July. Our members will expect the outcome to be a planning framework that ensures no more of Scotland's iconic landscapes are damaged.

Charles Strang, Convenor, Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland

John Hutchison, Chairman, John Muir Trust

Brian Linington, President, Mountaineering Council of Scotland

Eleanore Hunter, President, The Munro Society

Sir Kenneth Calman, Chairman, National Trust for Scotland

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