

PE1383/E

Scottish Wildlife Trust comments on PE1383

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on Petition PE1383 by the John Muir Trust. Given the extremely tight timescale for responses our comments are, by necessity, brief.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust's remit is for wildlife conservation. We are not an animal welfare or a recreation charity. Our charitable purpose is to *advance the conservation of Scotland's biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations*. We pursue this objective through a 25-year Vision to re-establish "a network of healthy and resilient ecosystems supporting expanding communities of native species across large areas of Scotland's land, water and seas."

Wild land of high biodiversity value should have a greater level of protection than it does now. Wild land is often of value to biodiversity and the best supports a range of ecosystem services including carbon storage, water purification and flood prevention.

Some culturally valued wild land is ecologically degraded and is characterised by poor ecosystem function. These areas are typically the product of present or past human intervention and are of questionable "wildness". Such areas should be restored to full ecosystem health and the Scottish Wildlife Trust would support efforts to restore ecosystem function to wild land. Any proposal for greater protection for wild land should, therefore, include careful consideration of biodiversity in the definition of wild land. Biodiversity value should be a prerequisite for protection.

Requiring government and its agencies to ensure the ecological coherence of Scotland's protected areas would, in our view, go a long way to ensuring Scotland's wild land is enriched and continues to provide cultural as well as natural services. Ecological coherence is a corner-stone of the Habitats Directive (see Articles 3 and 10, for example).

Scottish Planning Policy (para 128), if properly enforced, may deliver greater protection for both culturally and functionally important wild land.

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