



the National Trust  
for Scotland  
a place for everyone

PE1383/F

**SUBMISSION TO THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ON  
Petition PE1383**

**Response from National Trust for Scotland**

The National Trust for Scotland (the Trust) welcomes the opportunity to respond PE1383:

*Petition by Helen McDade on behalf of the John Muir Trust calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve the protection for the best areas of wild land by introducing a new national environmental designation.*

**Introduction**

The National Trust for Scotland (the Trust) is Scotland's largest conservation charity with over 310,000 members. The Trust owns some 76,000 hectares of land across Scotland including some of Scotland's most valued mountain landscapes. The Trust has from its creation in the 1930's promoted the cause of wild land conservation.

The Trust produced its own Wild Land Policy<sup>1</sup> in 2002 and this guides the management of Trust properties with wild land areas.

**Comment**

The Trust welcomes the opportunity to respond to the petition raised by the John Muir Trust (JMT) on the protection of wild land in Scotland.

The Trust congratulates the John Muir Trust (JMT) on its Wild Land Campaign and for raising this petition to Parliament. The Trust works with the JMT and other organisations, including Scottish Environment LINK to promote the protection and enhancement of landscape in Scotland.

The Trust is responsible for managing several important mountain landscapes including Mar Lodge Estate within the Cairngorms. At Mar Lodge the Trust has been working to remove and repair old tracks as part of its commitment to the large-scale landscape restoration of this property.

Scotland has had a national landscape designation for over 30 years. The list of National Scenic Areas (NSAs) developed by the (then) Countryside Commission for Scotland, was based on a Trust report from 1962 on Highland Landscapes. National Scenic Areas were first designated in 1980 and are nationally important for their scenic quality. The majority of the areas are upland including remote mountain landscapes or seascapes. The aim of the designation was to protect landscapes from 'inappropriate development' and recent legislation has confirmed them as having 'outstanding scenic value in a national context'.

The Trust's considers that NSAs and National Parks should provide sufficient legislative basis to protect landscapes including wild land. The NSA designation could encompass core wild land areas and afford them protection. However in the Trust's view the present system to protect landscapes is not working. The responsibility for the protection of NSA's lies with local authorities. The Trust would like to see local authorities give more recognition to the legislation and be encouraged and supported to provide better protection and enhancement of landscapes of national and local importance. In spite of a few pilot projects,

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nts.org.uk/conserves/downloads/wild\\_land\\_policy\\_2002.pdf](http://www.nts.org.uk/conserves/downloads/wild_land_policy_2002.pdf)

positive landscape management within NSA's has not been taken forward. The Trust would like to see the existing system of national landscape designations strengthened and made more robust.

The Trust wishes to see more wild land in Scotland protected and conserved and is supportive of efforts to raise awareness of the need to do so. The Trust understands that protection of the best wild land using existing designations will require significant expansion of the extent and number of designations. We are aware of the considerable pressures for development, particularly for renewable energy generation and associated infrastructure, not least from many concerned correspondents to the Trust seeking support for their objections.

We are also aware of the concerns over the construction of hill tracks in upland areas. The Trust understands that there will be consultation later this year on the issue of permitted development rights which allow the construction of hill tracks in certain areas.

The launch of Scotland's Landscape Charter in October 2010 summarised the importance of Scotland's landscapes and it encouraged action from all sectors of society to ensure our landscapes are protected and managed for future generations. However there is now a vacuum left following the demise of the Landscape Forum which developed the Charter.

### **Conclusions:**

- The National Trust for Scotland welcomes the JMT petition as a means to raising the issue of the protection of wild land.
- National Scenic Areas (NSA) and National Parks should provide sufficient legislative basis to protect landscapes including wild land and have the added potential benefit to protect where appropriate, associated coastal edges and settings.
- Existing landscape designations should be strengthened and this requires a lead from central government and a commitment from local authorities.
- The Trust will continue to press for more protection and positive management for all our landscapes in partnership with JMT and others.

**The National Trust for Scotland**  
**3 February 2011**