



JOHN
MUIR
TRUST

FOR
wild LAND &
wild PLACES

Wild land: the call for statutory protection

A John Muir Trust policy discussion paper
www.johnmuirtrust.org



Beautiful Quinag in the Assynt National Scenic Area

Our last wild land

Without better protection, we could lose our last areas of wild land and renowned natural landscapes

Wild land is one of the UK's most important assets. It provides us with important natural resources such as clean air, water and food, and it's where we find our most spectacular scenery, abundant wildlife and important habitats such as peatland. Such land draws thousands of people to enjoy its solitude, beauty and challenges – nourishing mind, body and spirit. Wild land is hugely important to our economy, tourism and leisure industries.

In order to identify and improve

its protection, the John Muir Trust, in association with the Wildland Research Institute (WRI), has produced a wild land map (see back page) that shows the remaining wild land in the UK. The map indicates where the best wild land areas can be found, which are restricted to large areas of high scenic and wildlife value with minimal evidence of modern human development.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has completed a similar study of wildness in Scotland. Its map considers only Scotland, and at a higher level of resolution than the Trust's, but there is a broad agreement between the maps. The SNH map shows that much of the wild land resource in Scotland is located in the Highlands, the Islands and the Cairngorms.

Using our map we have demonstrated that less than half of Scotland's key wild land is currently



People and wildlife thrive in wild places

protected by any form of national or international designation, and only around a third receives protection from a specific landscape designation, such as a National Park or a National Scenic Area (NSA). As a result, much of this wild land is being lost or degraded at a rapid rate. This is why the Trust is calling for better protection for a larger area of wild land across its entirety in order to maintain the integrity of the wild land resource. ■

'Less than half of Scotland's key wild land is currently protected by legislation, and much of it is being lost or degraded at a rapid rate.'

A new approach to protection

We must find ways to protect our valuable wild land

There is a huge risk that the unique qualities of over two-thirds of Scotland's best wild land resource could be lost forever. This is already happening at an alarming rate. The Trust believes that developments that are clearly inappropriate, and which threaten the wild characteristics of an area, should not be encouraged. A wild land designation would be a clear marker that development is unlikely to be allowed in such areas.

To be effective, this level of protection for wild land would have to be endorsed by the Scottish Government within the planning system. It would then become material consideration for future planned developments.

A new wild land designation need not be a barrier to achieving UK and Scottish government targets and policy objectives. With input from various government departments, statutory agencies, landowners, communities, and organisations with an interest in, or dependency on, wild land, it should be possible to review existing measures and develop an appropriate response

The Trust believes that four potential approaches to protecting the wild land resource in Scotland need to be considered:

1. A NEW DESIGNATION – this would offer specific protection for wild land as identified by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), either as a new designation or as part of a streamlining of existing designations. Consideration should be given to the ecological function of the landscape in recognition of the growing appreciation of the benefits of landscape scale conservation.

2. NEW NATIONAL PARKS – the creation of new National Parks in Scotland could encompass the wild land resource with a remit to enhance habitats and landscapes while maintaining thriving rural communities.

3. IMPROVED NATIONAL SCENIC AREAS (NSA) – a revision of the existing NSAs could expand boundaries, introduce new areas where evidence supports, and develop management and tourism strategies to maintain local living landscapes.

4. A 'LIGHT TOUCH' APPROACH – an amendment to planning guidance and legislation to acknowledge the importance of wild land protection, as well as voluntary commitments between stakeholders to preserve and enhance the remaining wild land resource.

that supports a cleaner, greener and more sustainable society.

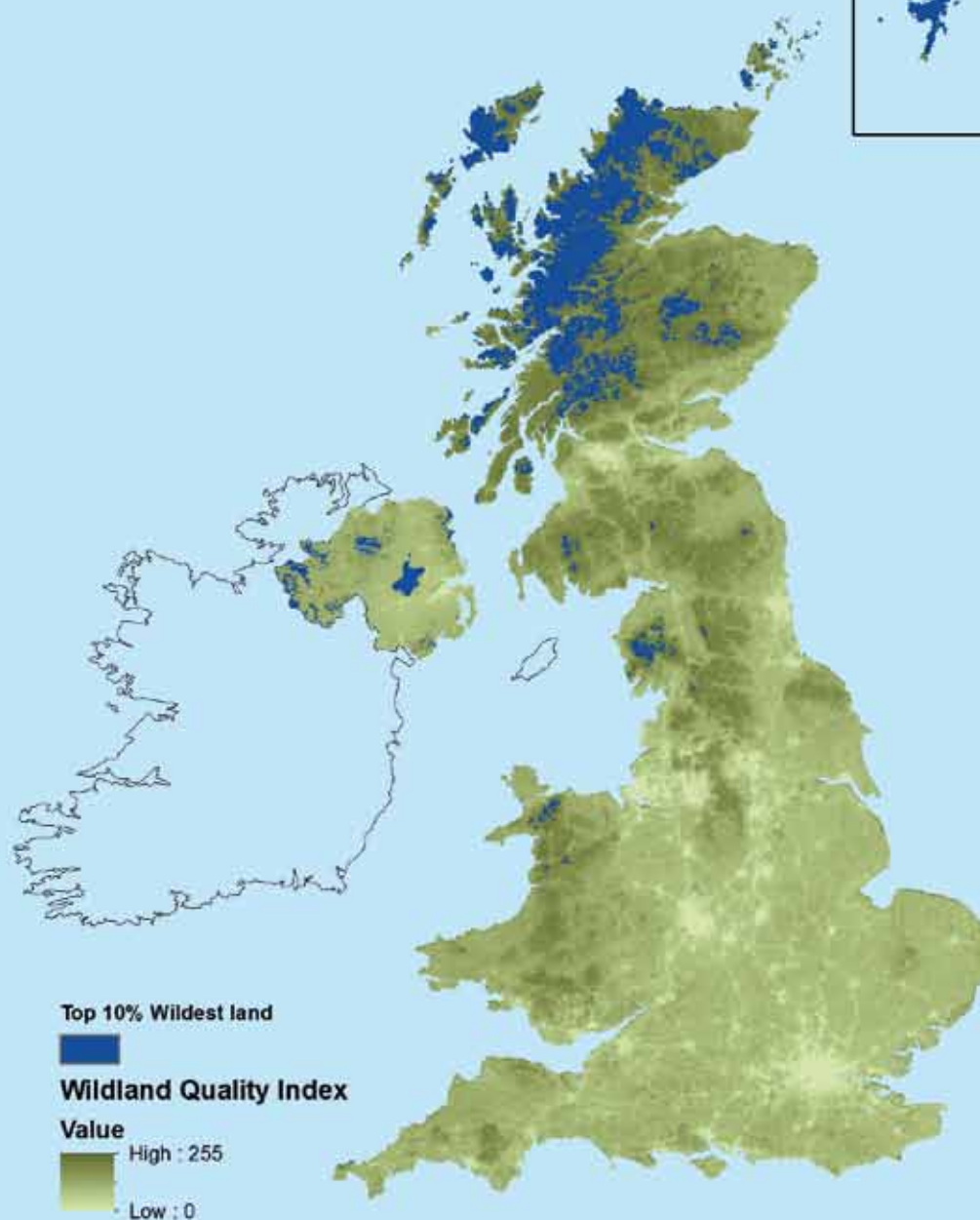
We cannot afford to be distracted by short-term solutions or poorly conceived policies that will result in further damage to society and

the wider environment on which our health and well-being depends. Our wild land cannot be replaced or replicated. We cannot afford to lose it. ■

‘Protected areas are at the core of efforts towards conserving nature and the services it provides us – food, clean water supply, medicines and protection from the impacts of natural disasters. Their role in helping mitigate and adapt to climate change is also increasingly recognized.’ International Union for Conservation of Nature

Mapping wildness

The John Muir Trust map showing the UK's wild land areas



Top 10% Wildest land

Wildland Quality Index
Value
High : 255
Low : 0

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For John Muir Trust Wild Land Policy and maps, download our Wild Land Policy (PDF) at <http://bit.ly/IIJD7m>

For Scottish Natural Heritage Wildness Maps see the SNH website at <http://bit.ly/Az0d7Q//>

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Registered office: Tower House, Station Road, Pitlochry, PH16 5AN