



Scottish Environment LINK
2 Grosvenor House
Shore Road
Perth
PH2 8BD

Tel 01738 630804
Fax 01738 643290

enquiries@scotlink.org
www.scotlink.org

Rhona Brankin, MSP,
Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development,
Scottish Executive,
St. Andrews House,
Regent Road,
Edinburgh,
EH1 3DG

23rd March 2006

Dear Rhona

SCOTLAND'S LANDSCAPE HERITAGE

Thank you for making time to see us on Monday 7 March. We were heartened by your positive attitude towards our landscape as one of our country's greatest assets, and by your refreshing awareness of the cross-departmental potentials, as well as of some difficult decisions ahead. We reported back to the Landscape Task Force at its recent meeting. We would like to offer our support and assistance towards raising the profile of landscape, both as a central factor in development and energy planning, and as a candidate for investment to restore and enhance its qualities. You wanted to know our 'specific asks' – here are some practical, affordable steps yielding some quick wins, on the way to the longer-term goal of *'best small-country landscape in Europe'*.

RAISING THE PROFILE

1. Find out what the people think – in-depth attitude survey, focus groups.
2. Use the suggested 'landscape forum' to generate ideas – but go beyond it.
3. Identify the economic value of the landscape – and not just for tourism.
4. Flag up the health and wellbeing benefits of attractive, cared-for landscape – both close to home and in scenic destinations.
5. Promote understanding that the **'best small country'** will only attract more people to live here, invest here, stay here if it has the ***'best looked-after, most varied, most accessible landscape in Europe'***.
6. Involve other departments in a celebration of Scotland's landscape (as we sign the ELC) – school projects, arts competitions and sponsorships, recreational events, restoring views from tourist routes, re-wilding projects, a challenge fund for communities to do enhancement schemes. This could be the next 'access charter' type success for Scotland's Parliament to deliver :

⇒ **"it's our landscape – and we're looking after it"**

PROTECTING OUR LANDSCAPE

7. Make National Scenic Areas a success story – strong Guidance to protect them, clear incentives, including 100% funding, to implement active Management

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- Plans. Full funding is necessary to alleviate the disproportionate burden on two local authority areas.
8. 'Mind the gaps' – ensure areas between and around NSAs aren't seen as free-for-alls for major developments.
 9. View Scotland's landscape heritage as an entity – many areas outwith NSA protection are still wild or special landscapes.
 10. SNH need to be encouraged to take a stronger line in defending our landscape inheritance as a whole – and this needs to be backed up by the Scottish Executive and by Councils.

INVESTING IN OUR LANDSCAPE

11. Get across the notion that our 'landscape' is an asset that needs maintained just as a house does. Promote landscape success stories within farm support and forestry budgets, via development gains, through local tourism, cultural heritage, school and community projects – to gain synergy and create an appetite for more.

We hope you will see opportunities for spreading the landscape message within the Executive and the Parliament, and beyond. We would be delighted to help.

David Jarman
Vice-convenor

On behalf of Scottish Environment LINK Landscape Task Force members –
National Trust for Scotland
Rural Scotland
Mountaineering Council for Scotland
John Muir Trust
Ramblers Scotland
Scottish Wild Land Group
Council for Scottish Archeology
Campaign for National Parks
Cairngorms Campaign

correspondence to :

Helen McDade
LINK Landscape Task Force Convenor
John Muir Trust
Tower House,
Station Road,
Pitlochry
PH16 5AN
Tel 01796 470080
policy@jmt.org

APPENDIX - NOTES RELATING TO EACH NUMBERED ACTION POINT

1. Evidence-based policymaking would benefit from clearer understanding of public opinion. The LINK Landscape TF are concerned that the attitude in some official quarters may persist that landscape is just a concern for middle-class, central-belt hillwalkers. Our own experience suggests that lovers of Scottish landscape and outdoor life are 'classless' and span the whole population. But they want to escape from daily pressures to the tranquillity or wildness of the outdoors, not be continually aware of threats and intrusions, nor have to worry about fighting them all the time. They want their leaders to look after their landscape and environment (**see attached editorial from the Scottish Mountaineer**). We suggest that *opinion surveys of the focus group kind* would complement the market research carried out by VisitScotland in demonstrating the extent to which 'landscape' is valued and enjoyed by the people of Scotland as well as our visitors.
2. The proposed Landscape Forum will inevitably be composed of the usual suspects with the time and knowledge! This is fine for technical work like Planning Guidance (as with the Access Code) but is not a substitute for reaching the wider public.
3. We have already suggested an appraisal of the *economic benefits of protecting and investing in our landscape inheritance*. We are glad to learn that an inventory of existing research is in train. As well as the direct benefits of tourist and recreational spending, a proper study should cover the value of a first-class and readily-accessible natural landscape in attracting inward business investment, in marketing Scottish products and services, and in motivating capable, entrepreneurial, and creative people to live, invest and stay in Scotland.
4. Health and wellbeing embrace both physical and mental fitness, in everyday landscapes close at hand as well as in remote places which may only ever be visited once.
5. The First Minister has attached great importance to maintaining Scotland's active population against projected ageing and decline. One of the best ways to reverse this trend is to ensure that Scotland's landscape heritage is protected, restored and enhanced so that we earn the reputation as one of the best places to live in Europe, combining all the assets of the cities with easy access to untrammelled landscapes of mountain, moor, glen, coast, and island.
6. The relatively modest sums devoted to 'access' have yielded huge dividends in communities reclaiming a sense of involvement in their surroundings, with core path networks springing up from Lanarkshire to remote Orkney isles. The same excitement can readily be generated with people taking 'ownership' of 'their' favourite landscapes, whether local or far-flung. The new land management subsidy framework (LMCs) already paves the way for this. A 'celebration of Scotland's landscapes' would make an excellent theme for our Parliament, with numerous local 'wins' from restoring lost views to screening eyesores, and high-profile national landmarks such as sponsorship for new poetry and literature, art competitions, and rewilding challenges. This would involve most branches of the Executive, including education, culture, communities, and tourism.
7. We welcome the consultation taking forward statutory NSAs, providing it is followed up with strong guidance, and in particular encouragement for councils

- to devise and implement positive Management Plans (Dumfries and Galloway set a good example here).
8. 'Boundaries are the enemy of good planning' – they encourage a mentality of pursuing development just outside the pales of protection. When NSAs were first defined, the scale of development threat was modest – recreational, afforestation, or energy projects rarely had impacts of more than a few miles away. Now that developments of previously unimaginable scale are being pursued, often clearly visible many tens of miles away, NSAs must be protected from them by more than token buffer zones. To take one example, a single wind project approved at Glenmoriston is freely admitted in the EA to be fully visible from seven major mountain ranges from Ben Nevis to Affric.
 9. Scotland has a very small extent of 'natural' landscape compared with Norway or the Alps. Only the most dramatic parts are designated as NSAs, yet Scotland's great diversity is one of its prime attractions. The wild and remote spaces beyond the high mountains, and the movement corridors in between them, are as important in their own way to the whole picture of what people appreciate. If our landscape is our most vital long-term asset, it makes sense to look after the whole of it, especially given the sacrifices already made and its fragmentary state.
 10. We think SNH has yet to come to terms with the present, unprecedented wholesale threat to the landscape character of Scotland. It is currently fire-fighting on a case-by-case basis, in the absence of a clear national stance on the over-riding importance of protecting our landscape inheritance (just as much as our cultural heritage). The Minister's recent letter to SNH's Chair is welcome, but it should be followed up with more specific instructions to advise on the cumulative impact (nationally) of numerous very large energy developments.

We indicated a particular concern with regard to the pro-development attitude of one or two Councils, which covers a high proportion of the NSAs and other widely-valued landscapes of Scotland. This is manifest in Highland Council's Renewable Energy Strategy, which identifies fingers where large-scale developments will be supported in between nearly every NSA. We are entirely sympathetic to the history of decline in the highlands, and to the 'repopulation of the glens' – but with employment and residential opportunities suited in scale and character to the special qualities of the highland landscape. Moreover, even the wind power industry acknowledge that wind developments have not delivered on their promises of jobs (said at energy review IPA Conference in Glasgow on 22nd March 2006 by one of the speakers. This was not disputed by anyone.)

Within the Executive (and its Enterprise agencies), we hope that the 'dash for renewables' can be harnessed to achieve economic and employment benefits, and meet climate change targets, without having to sacrifice yet more of our outstanding landscapes. Here we wish to emphasise our support for sustainable energy production and use, including our share of renewable energy in its many forms – but we urge that locational opportunities near centres of consumption, and offshore wind and marine hydro especially on the east side of the country (with subsea cables to landfalls south of the Highlands), should be exploited first.