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## **SCOTTISH LANDSCAPE**

Further to our meeting on January 31st, we very much welcome the positive response you expressed to the need to make new provisions to protect and enhance Scotland's landscapes. Your recognition of the need for action is a most valuable step in addressing the matter.

LINK has a longstanding interest in this area and has recently stepped up its efforts for public and political recognition of both the necessity to protect Scotland's world class landscapes which are vital to Scotland's biggest industry – tourism and also to emphasise the importance that everyday surroundings have to people across the country, recognising many live in degraded landscapes. Our local environment can both enhance everyone's daily well being but also, where there is need of improvement, have a detrimental effect on quality of life.

LINK has recently established a new Landscape Task Force (LTF), with the aim of raising the profile of Scotland's landscape as a massively under-recognised resource and as an opportunity, both politically and publicly which is inextricably linked with planning and policies on tourism, recreation, farming, forestry including industries such as quarrying and mining . The grouping has strong support and interest from LINK's recreational, natural, and historic environment representatives as well as from the key landowning NGOs who are committed to enhancing and conserving the landscape. We must emphasise that the LTF is concerned with the provision for landscape in all its forms, including natural and man-made, coastal and inland, wild land, gardens, designed landscapes, battlefields and green belt type places and all in between. They include those precious landscapes that need our care as well as those that need to be improved.

At our meeting it was suggested that we might put forward some proposals for practical provisions, including possible legislation, that would strengthen landscape care in Scotland. The LTF has drawn up the attached and we append those as proposed. They include firstly, a duty on authorities and agencies to protect and enhance landscapes they have a responsibility towards and secondly, new strong statutory provisions for National Scenic Areas which cover some of our most precious surroundings.

Recognising these are early days for the LTF, it has also set out sample ideas for targets and policies that we would be pleased to explore with you further. We are also at pains to emphasise that action is needed not only in the showcase landscapes but that we need to follow up on the benefits of land reform and access legislation. We need to enhance the attraction of countryside around towns. We are very keen to work with the Scottish Executive to make these ambitions a success and look forward to hearing from you.

## **SCOTLAND - THE LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITY.**

### *PROPOSALS FROM SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT LINK LANDSCAPE TASK FORCE.*

Scotland's landscape is what we see around us every day but is also what people flock from all over the world to experience. It varies considerably from the most deprived and abandoned urban estates, to that which stands in global comparison to any elsewhere, due to the combination of its varied geology, North Atlantic island, mountain setting, cultural and historic heritage and relatively recent changes in landscape terms.

Our surroundings affects the quality of life, both positively and negatively, of all Scots whether living adjacent to the finest beach, mountain, edge of town country park, area planned by a 19th century draughtsman or living in a small village surrounded by quarries or landfill sites. The unique diversity of our landscape inheritance whether natural or man-made, is fundamentally linked to our identity.

The LINK Landscape Task Force believe it is important that the UK becomes a signatory to the European Landscape Convention, as it provides for greater involvement of local populations in decisions affecting their landscape surroundings. We urge the Scottish Executive to recommend adoption of the ELC to the UK Government.

The Romantic movement of two hundred years ago involved the nation's resident artists, writers and poets who were among the first to take up the case for our magnificent surroundings. Centuries on we still, given its 'golden goose' importance, need to connect landscape protection better with the modern demands of the visitors seeking out our landscapes.

We have as a country, for a host of reasons, not fully recognised that unique heritage. What is needed is a combination of legislative, policy and fiscal commitments. Scotland's landscape continues to have an impact on the daily lives of all its population, across the country.

### **The Scottish Environment Link Task Force propose the following:-**

#### Legislative Provisions.

- A duty upon all government bodies and local authorities to provide for natural, wild land and cultural heritage landscape protection, improvement and enhancement in the same manner as required under the Nature Conservation Act 2004.
- Statutory provision for protection of National Scenic Areas, similar to that for AONBs in England & Wales, including the ability to create new NSAs; and allow review of boundary, management and promotion provisions. Scotland's most precious landscapes need robust formal protection, provided for in an Act of Parliament if the world class tourist resource is to be maintained.

#### Policy

- CAP land management contracts must ensure that beneficiaries have a duty to ensure landscape is fully protected - just as biodiversity offers an opportunity for farmers diversifying into new public benefits so does landscape enhancement.
- Early national spatial policy guidance (within 1 year) for the siting of wind farms, both onshore and offshore (below and above 50MW and transmission lines at all scales) - a tool to enable a strategic approach for responding to the spate of applications that are spread across the country and threaten Scotland's diverse landscape distinctiveness.
- Updated national planning policy recognition of the experiences offered by wild land to both local and recreational communities.
- Clear new guidance to local authorities clarifying irreversible designation of recognised landscape important areas such as Areas of Great Landscape Value; which can currently be recognised by one local planning team and then not by another a few years later, even though the surface appearance has not changed.
- Commitment to robust green belt guidance, which seeks an effective balance between essential growth and strong protection and enhancement of the attraction of green spaces for health, community well-being, heritage and biodiversity benefits as the lungs of our towns and cities.
- Implementation of recommendations contained in the 'Review of Land Managed by Forestry Commission Scotland' and setting realistic targets for the various recommendations – see example below.

## Targets

- A defined purpose for the restructuring of 5% of Scotland's forest land for landscape, heritage and/or recreational functions by 2010.
- reduction of grazing by red deer by 20% by 2010 to afford natural woodland and plantlife regeneration across most Highland Glens.
- a strategy which demonstrates a 5% improvement in visitor satisfaction of views from present baseline levels along Scotland's transport routes (rail, roads, paths and cycleways).
- National Park Plans which demonstrate best integrated rural management practice where it does not presently exist
- 5 demonstration projects where community village planning and design can be adopted as templates for the rest of the country.