












SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT NEWS IN OCTOBER NOVEMBER 1987

	CONTENTS	
	CONSERVATION	0
	FARMING	0
	FORESTRY	0
	FISHERIES	0
	GENERAL COUNTRYSIDE	0
	MINISTRY OF DEFENCE	0
	ENERGY & NUCLEAR	0
	POLITICS	0
	RECREATION & TOURISM	0
	NEWS OF ORGANISATIONS	0
	ABBREVIATIONS	0

SCENES is an independent, monthly news digest giving up to date information on what is happening in the Scottish countryside. It contains **only news** not comment or opinion.

It is for everyone with an interest in the land, whether professional or amateur.

This is a free specimen issue covering the months of October & November 1987.

The first full issue will be in February 1988 to cover the months of December 1987 & January 1988, and thereafter it will appear monthly.

Deadlines

Organisations (and individuals) are encouraged to send in their news. The deadline for copy is the last day of each month.

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CONSERVATION

CONCERN ABOUT SSSIs

The NCC has formally notified tenants and owners that it plans to designate the Rhinns of Islay, a 32 sq mile area on Islay, as an SSSI.

Argyll & Bute District Council are concerned that this will adversely affect the social and economic welfare of the area and are objecting to the designation. The District Council is suggesting to COSLA that there should be a public enquiry on the issue with an independent chairman.

COSLA is also concerned about such designations, and is contacting all Scottish local authorities to find out their views on SSSI designation, particularly if they think that the designation process can be made more democratically accountable.

Highland Regional Council's planning committee is suggesting that the Secretary of State for Scotland should be given the power to designate SSSIs rather than the NCC. Western Isles councillors would like to see the NCC made more democratic by having a representative on the NCC's council.

Badenoch and Strathspey District Council have also been complaining about the number of SSSIs in the area where at least 25% of the land is designated as such. Councillors say that farming and development is being stifled, and that the NCC acts as both judge and jury.

However, in reply Dr John Francis, Scottish director of the NCC, says that the number of sites is a proper reflection of the area's natural richness and one of the reasons why it is so popular with tourists.

SHETLAND

The first ever 'stop order' in Shetland under the Wildlife & Countryside Act has applied by the Secretary of State on a land-improvement scheme at a farm in North Fetlar.

The tenants wished to cultivate, drain and fence the land, increase the stock and build a hill road. The NCC objected as it is a site for the rare whimbrels, Arctic skuas and red-necked phalaropes.

The tenants and the NCC could not agree on a compensation sum for not carrying out the work. The stop order lasts for nine months after which time the NCC will have to let the work go ahead or compulsorily purchase the land.

Also on Fetlar, the Shetland Conservation Volunteers had a record turn-out for their autumn work programme carrying out habitat improvement work for the red-necked phalaropes on behalf of the RSPB. Anyone wishing to join should contact the NCC on Lerwick 3345.

HABITAT DESTRUCTION

A planning enquiry chaired by a Reporter from the Scottish Office has recently taken place in Dunfermline into damage to Swallowcraig Den (a tributary of the River Black Devon) by the owner.

In April the owner had begun earth-moving work with the aim of constructing a fish farm; concerned neighbours had noticed this and, after visiting the site, Dunfermline District Council put a 'stop order' on the work.

At the enquiry the Council stated that it had planning policies designed to conserve this site which were incompatible with fish-farm construction.

The NCC stated that it was one of the few remaining areas of ancient, semi-natural broadleaved woodland in Fife with a rich botanical interest. Although it had been in the pipeline for three years it had only been designated a SSSI officially in June.

The SWT stated that, recognising the importance of the site, they had tried unsuccessfully to purchase it in the 1970s. Other objectors were local residents concerned about the destruction of landscape, and the Region's Roads Department.

The Reporter will give his findings at a later date but there are fears that the Council will have to lift its enforcement notice because of a legal technicality.

EDINBURGH SURVEY

The NCC has awarded a £4000 contract to the Environment Centre in Edinburgh to employ Alison Ratter to carry out a habitat and wildlife survey of Edinburgh District.

This survey will then form the basis of a Nature Conservation Strategy for the District. The work is being done in close collaboration with the City Planning Department, with assistance from the SWT and local school and community groups.

The project was launched by the Lord Provost on November 18th. Similar projects have recently been set up in Aberdeen and Dundee.

AROUND THE SCHOOLS

St Combs Primary School, Fraserburgh, has been helping clean up rubbish from the Waters of Philorth; most of the rubbish is believed to be that dumped overboard by fishermen.

This is part of an environmental awareness project organised by the Grampian Schools Conservation Project, which is supported by SCPT, NCC, SWT & CCS.

Lochpots Primary School, Fraserburgh, is one of the seven winners of the Glenfiddich 'Living Scotland' awards. It wins £1000 which will be used to build a wildlife garden at the school.

All **Wick and Thurso** first year pupils will receive a visit over the next six months from 'Binman', a local hero sponsored by the Keep Caithness Tidy group; the aim is to try and persuade school children to drop less litter.

Graemsay School, Orkney's smallest school with only two pupils, has won £1000 in a national competition organised by the aluminium industry, the Conservation Foundation and the Forestry Commission.

The pupils collected more empty aluminum cans per pupil (700) than any other school; the money raised in the competition is to be used to provide trees for planting in third world countries.

St Abbs School, Berwickshire, has been planting trees in the school grounds to form a bird feeding shelter. They were helped by the NCC and Kevin Rideout, the NTS/SWT ranger at St Abbs Head.

Banavie Primary School, by Fort William, have also been planting a variety of native trees in their school grounds with the help of the NCC.

The Beastie Boys, the Bellarmine Beasties Nature Club at Pollok, Glasgow, have won the £2000 first prize in the Kodak Conservation Awards organised by WWF; this is for their local anti-litter campaign.

In the same competition the **Forth Valley Scout Troup**, Wallacestone, came third equal for cleaning up the Union Canal; **Ellon Academy**, Aberdeenshire, won £250 for their tree nursery and the **Ayrshire Scout Group**, Kilmarnock, won £250 for restoring an outdoor activity centre.

Ullapool High School has received a £200 grant from the NCC for a wildlife garden in their school grounds.

Balfroon High School, Stirling-shire, is to build a broadleaved woodland and a wetland habitat within school grounds; NCC is to provide the trees and the project is sponsored by Central Conservation Projects (supported by SCPT).

LOSS OF HEATHER

The Glasgow Evening Times of 27th November has a two page feature article bemoaning the loss of heather in Scotland: "Monday is St Andrews Day, when Scotland happily wallows in the wha's like us syndrome and views the rest of the world through tartan-tinted spectacles.

"But have we any right to do so when we are quite prepared to sit back and watch what is the most famous feature of our unique environment slowly vanishing from the face of the countryside?

"Think about it. When did you last see what used to be a common sight - that of a visitor to this country fixing a piece of heather to the radiator grill of his car?

"Does it rarely happen these days because it is a twee thing to do in the sophisticated eighties.....or because unsuspecting tourists simply cannot any longer find a sprig of heather to pin on?"

This article is prompted by a NCC survey showing up to 95% loss of heather in north-east Fife, and similar large losses throughout lowland Scotland.

Eddie Idle of the NCC says that heather appears more in Scotland than

anywhere else in Europe; it is one of Scotland's great tourist attractions.

Michael Thornton of FOE says every year 12,000 hectares of heather moor are disappearing: 'No-one notices it because it happens a bit at a time. There is absolutely no control under planning regulations'.

Because of the impact of heather loss on tourism the STB says that serious thought will have to be given to the problem.



FARMING

ADP ANNOUNCED

On 5th November Lord Sanderson of Bowden, Minister of State at the Scottish Office, officially announced the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) for the Scottish Islands; this is a five-year programme for all the islands (except the Outer Hebrides where a £20million Integrated Development Programme has just finished).

The ADP still needs final approval from the EEC, but it is hoped it will be in operation in the spring.

There will be £38 million available from the government over the five years (£15 million of this from the EEC) but farmers and crofters would be expected to contribute a further £25 million. So as to prevent the larger enterprises taking most of the money, no individual farmer or crofter will be able to claim more than £20,000.

In order to qualify for the grants, which will range from 25% to 60% (except for particular environmental items), farmers and crofters will have to produce an approved development plan for their land. Once a scheme is approved two-thirds of the grant will be paid in advance of any work being done, which will ease the cash flow problems of the applicant.

It is expected that most of the money will be spent on farm development and livestock improvement, although there is £2m put aside for fish farming, £1.5m for advice and training, 1m for housing, £2.5m for environmental management, £70,000 for infrastructure improvement and £700,000 to fund a local project team.

However, to the disappointment of the SCU and NFUS, no money is available for marketing and processing projects. The SCU and NFUS have, though, cautiously welcomed the scheme as an essential boost to the islands' agriculture and see the production of development plans as a positive step.

The proposals have been less well received in Shetland where full-time farmers and crofters see little benefit from the scheme.

The HIDB is soon to decide on a pilot area for a scheme on the mainland to give increased grant aid to farmers and crofters, similar to the HIDB's Skye Development Programme.

CRISIS IN THE NORTH EAST

The North of Scotland College of Agriculture has published a report saying that after two bad harvests, and the fall in

land prices, many farmers in the region are not able to support the borrowings they took on board when profits were higher and land worth more.

Up to half the region's farmers may not survive the crisis, and the consequences on employment in the region could be disastrous; currently about 10,000 farmers and workers depend on about one million acres of crops and grass in Grampian. One estimate suggests that a 20% decline in farm output would lead to 1000 job losses.

NFUS president, Ian Grant, is telling the Scottish Office that a coherent rural development strategy is needed in order to stabilise farm incomes and maintain farm units, and is suggesting a rural development scheme similar to the islands' ADP mentioned above (although for Grampian alone more than £38m will be needed). This would be a change from the past policy of encouraging increased agricultural output.

FIELD DRAINAGE

The secretary of the Scottish branch of the Land Drainage Contractors Association has warned that Scotland could soon be left without a skilled field drainage industry, and that this will result in lower agricultural productivity.

He said that the amount of land drained in 1986 was only 34% of the 1984 figure, and this year could be only 20%. One of the reasons for this was that the cost of drainage schemes was often more than the value of the land.

Most drainage schemes were not environmentally damaging and were essential to replace old, now ineffective, systems.

PERTSHIRE FARM SURVEYS

The Highland Perthshire Farm Development Project is a scheme funded by the Highland Perthshire Development Company (HPDC) and Scottish Agricultural Colleges.

Farmers in the area will be asked to pay a nominal sum for a complete farm survey with the aim of identifying new opportunities for them.

HPDC is an enterprise trust designed to help sustain the rural population and essential infrastructure.

VENISON SUBSIDIES

The British Deer Farmers Association, with the backing of the HIDB, is discussing with DAFS the possibility of extending hill livestock subsidies to farmed deer.

They say that at present deer are having to compete with subsidised cattle and sheep. The EEC has given the go-ahead for such deer subsidies.

FEW TAKERS FOR ESA GRANTS

There are about 180 farmers in the Atholl/Breadalbane ESA (Environmentally Sensitive Area) eligible for grants if they adhere to 15 government conservation guidelines. These guidelines are described by Ken Runcie of FFWAG as very reasonable and no more than simple rules of good husbandry.

There is £500,000 available for the first year in Scotland's two ESAs (the other is Loch Lomond) and any money not taken

up will go back to the treasury. However there has been very little interest in the scheme so far.

£1500 is available to farmers for simply subscribing to the scheme, and another £3000 for specific conservation projects. Farmers have until the end of January to lodge a conservation plan with DAFS.



FORESTRY

FLOW COUNTRY CONTROVERSY

Highland Region Working Party

In order to help diffuse the tree-planting controversy on the peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland, Highland Regional Council (HRC) have set up a working party to look into the conflict. It is chaired by HRC's Director of Planning and has representatives from the Forestry Commission, HIDB, CCS & HIDB.

The working party has heard evidence from the RSPB which disputes Fountain Forestry's claim of 204 jobs created by forestry in Caithness and Sutherland. Using FC and Aberdeen University figures, RSPB claims that only 59-74 jobs were created in 1986.

Lord Strathnaver, Chairman of the SLF's Highland Region, has told the working party that both the NCC and the forestry interests need to leave their entrenched positions and get together to decide which areas can be planted; and that a forestry organisation independent of the FC or Fountain Forestry needs to be brought in to judge the viability of timber production in the area.

Other organisations giving evidence to the working party are DAFS, SWLG, SWT, Red Deer Commission, Highland River Purification Board, Naver District Fisheries Board, Crofters Commission, TGUK, Fountain Forestry and the Home Timber Merchants Association.

HIDB Report

The HIDB have given a report to the Scottish Office giving their views on the NCC's controversial 'Birds, Bogs & Forestry' report which was released in July, and recommended a ban on new tree planting on the peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland.

The HIDB says that a continuous programme of new tree planting is needed to secure employment in forestry and to maintain a balanced rotation of plantations; that 200 jobs would be put at immediate risk if a blanket tree-planting ban was applied (equivalent to £2m in wages), and over the next 70 years up to 1800 potential jobs in forestry and related industries would not materialise.

This would be equivalent to a loss of potential revenue to Caithness and Sutherland of £25m by the turn of the century. These figures are based on doubling the forest area to 115,000 hectares - about one quarter of the peatlands or 15% of the total area.

The HIDB states that it must be possible to determine areas for planting in the less sensitive areas in order to provide continuity until the government is in the

position to determine a long-term land use strategy for the area.

Bettyhill meeting

Bettyhill Community Council, at a public meeting with Robert MacLennan MP for Caithness and Sutherland, had three main points to discuss: the run-down of FC local employment, the fact that private forestry was not filling this gap adequately, and outside environmental bodies endangering employment by suggesting a planting ban.

The audience also raised questions about the danger of locals being squeezed out in the clash between big business and conservation, the problems of monoculture, and the dangers of aerial spraying.

Mr MacLennan said he supported the Forestry Commission and was also broadly in favour of private forestry as it brought in money which might otherwise be invested elsewhere. But he condemned the NCC for not taking into account economic factors and rural interests, which was in disregard of their statutory duties, when proposing a forestry ban.

Scottish Wildlife Trust

Writing in 'Scottish Wildlife', the magazine of SWT, John Baldwin, SWT chief executive, says that the SWT is in favour of a temporary moratorium on new tree planting in the region until broad agreement has been reached between the various interests. Certain projects, though, were not acceptable on nature or landscape conservation grounds.

"We live in an age where technological progress and market-place economics allow us to destroy utterly our natural environment if we so wish, and in so doing we destroy ourselves".

"Another article in the same magazine criticises the NCC for its handling of the flow country controversy: The NCC's scientific correlations between bird numbers, bog areas and afforestation are largely accepted by sympathetic conservation bodies, but it's the human relations that give grave cause for concern".

FORESTRY OBJECTIONS

Dumfries & Galloway Regional Council are still objecting to the amended FC scheme to plant 217 hectares of conifers at Ardwell Hill, west of Gatehouse of Fleet, in the Fleet Valley National Scenic Area.

The current objections centre around the lack of plans to upgrade the public road for later timber extraction.

At a planning committee meeting of Borders Regional Council, **West Tweeddale** councillor Mrs Nan Burnett expressed concern about a forestry grant application at Ratchill near Broughton; this application follows a more extensive one for the same area that the owner recently withdrew after considerable adverse public reaction.

She said that there was a need for wider advertising of forestry developments - often the people affected only found out by good luck what was being proposed.

She was neither in the forestry nor conservation camp: "Our area is unique. People come here to see our hills. If we cover them with black conifers they will no longer come here. This application is not

unique. It is the start of a spread down the Tweed Valley, and may not stop until we cover all the hills with black trees all the way to the sea".

By 16 votes to 8, **Perth & Kinross District Council's** development control committee voted against a scheme referred to them by the FC for the planting of 149 hectares at Scotston Farm in Glen Cochill south of Aberfeldy.

The committee said that the scheme, together with proposals already approved, would result in virtually the whole of the glen being planted which would provide no visual relief to the motorist; it would represent an unacceptable amount of afforestation in the area.

NEW TRAINING POST

The Forestry Training Council has recently been constituted as the Non Statutory Training Organisation for Forestry with an aim to cater for the wide range of training needs in the forestry industry.

Graham Robertson has been appointed as Technical Secretary and his job is to co-ordinate training and education. Plans afoot include compiling a national register of approved chain saw instructors, developing a package to help self-employed people with finance, the publication of a two year forestry youth training scheme, and training in pesticide use.

The Forestry Training Council is at: 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh EH12 7AT, tel. 031 334 8083.



FISHERIES

LOCH ERICHT

Badenoch & Strathspey District Council's divisional planning committee has given the go-ahead for Marine Harvest Ltd (part of Unilever) to moor 24 salmon fish cages at School Bay, south of Ben Alder Lodge on Loch Ericht.

There had been objections to the scheme from the Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group, Mountaineering Council of Scotland, Perth & Kinross District Council, the Spey Fishing Trust Ltd and the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board.

Objections have centred around loss of 'wilderness value' in an area popular with walkers and climbers, and also disease and genetic contamination of indigenous salmon stocks. Loch Ericht is connected to both the Spey and Tay river systems.

A report from DAFS, however, said there was no threat to wild fisheries. Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group also claim that the large fish farming companies are applying for potential fish farm sites in case they need them in the future, which would be detrimental to smaller, locally-based enterprises.

LOCH NESS

After Highland Regional Council gave the go-ahead by one vote for the fish farm at Dores on Loch Ness, objectors have formed the Loch Ness Preservation Association.

They have lodged formal notice with

the Court of Session asking for a judicial review of Highland Region's decision.

SPEYSIDE FEARS

Aviemore & Spey Valley Tourist Board in their annual report express concern that any precedent set on Loch Ness for fish farm development could result in developments on Lochs Morlich, Insh, Erich and Laggan.

'Perhaps this is a case where the conservation and tourist authorities can work together' the report says.

NAIRN BAY

The North of Scotland Yachting Association and the RSPB are objecting to a proposal put forward by a Nairn property developer for a shellfish farm within the popular Nairn Bay.

RENTAL DISPUTE

The Shetland Salmon Farmers' Association and the Crown Estate Commissioners (CEC) are to go to court over the disputed payment of rents for salmon farms.

The islanders claim that under Shetland udal law they do not need to pay money to the crown (as represented by the CEC) for sea-bed rental. The Association claims that if rental is paid then £100,000 a year would be taken out of the islands and given to the treasury.

Grampian Regional Council now backs Highland Regional Council's bid to have the responsibilities of the CEC transferred to the local authorities.

FISH FARM LICENCES

In the parts of the Western Isles where Comhairle nan Eilean is the harbour authority (principally Loch Roag in Lewis and Loch Kallin in Uist), prospective marine fish farmers will have to apply to the Council for a works licence (similar to the system in operation in Shetland).

The Council's draft policy suggests a maximum fish farm size of 80,000 sq metres with a minimum 1 km between different developments. The Western Isles Fish Farmers Association generally welcomes the proposals, but has still to look at them in detail.

FISH FARM CONFERENCE

The 1988 Scottish Fish Farming Conference and Exhibition is to take place at the Eden Court Theatre, Inverness, 23rd-25th February.

The Trade Exhibition will be the biggest ever, and potential exhibitors can obtain brochures from:

Dr Peter Landless, Fish Farm Consultant, 45 Ashcroft Road, Cirencester, Glos GL7 1QZ.

SHELLFISH

The HIDB has recently sponsored the first course in Scotland on 'shellfish farming' at Portree. Highland Regional Council sees as many as 300 jobs being created over the next ten years by local people setting up shellfish farms.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Shetland Isles Council (SIC) has just granted a licence for an experimental oyster farm at Trondra.

SIC is to spend £3000 per year to join the newly formed British Halibut Association; this has been set up after successful experimental rearing of halibut at the Sea Fish Industry Authority's research station at Ardtoe. SIC hopes to get a foot in the door if commercial farming starts.

SIC is also helping finance an experiment to equip a small fishing boat with squid lures, to investigate the possibility of setting up an inshore squid fishery.

SIC has commissioned Robert Gordons Institute of Technology to undertake a £8500 study investigating the training needs of all aspects of the Shetland fishing industry.

NEW FISHING FEDERATION

The Federation of Highlands and Islands Fishermen has just been set up to promote the interests of full and part-time sea fishermen. It is made up of representatives from the Fisheries Associations of the Orkneys, Western Isles, Highlands & Islands and Ullapool Boatowners.

RE STOCKING

Marine Harvest Ltd have released 90,000 salmon parr into the **River Lochy** system to enhance wild salmon stocks. The fish are all genetically pure Lochy stock, descendants of the original salmon Marine Harvest used to set up their Loch Arkaig fish farm in 1984.

The **River Carron**, which flows into the Forth at Grangemouth, used to be one of the most most polluted rivers in Scotland and has had no salmon for many years (although it was noted for salmon at the turn of the century).

The river is now clean enough to be restocked so Stirling University's Buckieburn Fish Farm (near Bannockburn) is introducing 60,000 salmon parr. The Inveresk Paper Company, which discharges waste into the river but has now installed an effluent treatment works, has also introduced 750 salmon smolts.

The **Arctic charr** is a fish related to trout and salmon and is a relic from the ice ages, and found in a few deep, cold lochs in Scotland. However its range is contracting, partly because of acid rain; for example it used to occur in St Marys Loch in the Borders.

To help conserve the charr, eggs and fry are to be introduced into the Megget and Tulla reservoirs in Lothian; these are from stock taken from Loch Doon in Galloway where the population is under threat. In the long term the introduced charr could be fished.



GENERAL COUNTRYSIDE

CAIRNGORM PLAN

Roger Smith, editor of 'Environment Now' and a founder member of the Scottish Wildland Group, suggests in an article in November's issue of 'The Great Outdoors' that the Cairngorms be taken into public ownership.

He estimates this would cost £5 million which is less than that of some stately homes of more dubious value to the

nation; they could be managed by a body such as a 'Cairngorm Trust'. Public access would be allowed, but, in order to protect the fragile environment, not actively encouraged - "a crucial difference" he says.

COASTAL EROSION

Angus District Council has just spent £140,000 on a coastal protection scheme to prevent erosion at Carnoustie's golf courses. However recently there has been further erosion further along, close to the town's paddling pool. The council will now be asking for grant-aid from the EEC.

A £44,000 project (promoted by Grampian Regional Council) to build a concrete sea wall to protect a car park at the popular beach of New Aberdour, near Fraserburgh, has come in for criticism from Banff & Buchan District Council and the EEC.

A council planner said that this would turn the beach into a 'Blackpool prom', indistinguishable from those of Peterhead, Fraserburgh and Banff. However the local Aberdour & Tyrie Community Council are in favour of the scheme, which would result in increased car parking.

ARGYLL GOLD

Dublin-based Ennex International is about to complete test drillings for gold at Beinn Chuirn in Argyll. It has invested £1m in the area over the past four years, and is expected to announce potential gold yields of a third of an ounce per tonne.

If developed this would be the first hard rock gold mine in Scotland.

ASBESTOS DUMP IN LOTHIAN

Malcolm Rifkind, Scottish Secretary, has given the go-ahead for an asbestos dump at Clippens Tip, Old Pentland, near Loanhead. This is in spite of objections from Midlothian District Council, the local regional councillor, local community councils and residents.

CHALET DEVELOPMENTS

Three separate planning applications are being considered by Perth & Kinross District Council for development of the wooded surrounds of Loch Monzievairst just outside Crieff. In total these amount to about 50 chalets, 12 permanent houses and two bar/restaurants.

Visitors to the area are objecting on the grounds that these developments will spoil the beauty of the area.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

The **Macaulay Land Use Research Institute** is to carry out a survey of the fuel peat resources of Islay, while taking into account the afforestation and conservation value of the peatlands.

This work is for Argyll & Bute District Council and part funded by NCC, HIDB, Strathclyde Regional Council and Scottish Malt Distillers.

Dr Paul Selman of **Stirling University** has been awarded a £14,270 grant by the Economic & Social Science Research Council to study the conflicts of rural land use. He will use the Highlands & Islands as one of his case studies.

The **Royal Highland & Agricultural Society** has commissioned the Arkleton

Trust to identify the future training needs of rural people. The £50,000 project is being carried out under the auspices of the Manpower Services Commission and is part funded by the SDA and HIDB.

Other organisations involved in the project are the Agricultural Training Board, Scottish Agricultural Colleges, COSLA, NFUS, FC and the Institute of Aquaculture at Stirling University.

HIGHLAND CONFERENCE

The Scottish Wildlife Trust and Rural Forum were joint sponsors of a weekend forum in Inverness called 'Land, Wildlife & Community'. Its aim was to bring together local people from the Highlands & Islands to discuss the conservation-development debate, and find solutions to land use problems.

One of the main outcomes of the debate was the demand for outside agencies, whether government, NCC, FC or DAFS, to be more responsive to local people's opinions. Also local communities needed to be more active in identifying and resolving their own land-use problems, and at the end of the forum steps were taken to begin this process.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

PURPLE WARRIOR

Operation Purple Warrior was an exercise in the first half of November which involved 20,000 troops, 40 aircraft, 50 helicopters and 39 ships; this force was to recapture Galloway, Arran & Kintyre which had been taken over by a hostile force.

Liaison between the MoD and the NCC meant that most SSSIs were to be avoided during the exercise. The MoD gave assurances that no damage to wildlife would be done on the few SSSIs that would be used.

Local authorities, the Royal Navy, DAFS and other environmental agencies had a plan to deal with any major oil spillage at sea; and the Army had a comprehensive system for dealing with any damage to land or property. £1.5m had been put aside for damage limitation'.

OVER THE HORIZON

The MoD is reported to be planning the deployment around Scotland of several large 'Over the Horizon' radar stations. This radar system can see over the horizon by bouncing radio waves off the ionosphere.

It is thought that Caithness, Shetland, Aberdeenshire and the Western Isles are likely sites. Because of health risks associated with the high-powered radio signals used, these radar stations will need to be near the coast in relatively unpopulated regions.



ENERGY & NUCLEAR

NUCLEAR WASTE DUMPS

The environmental news item receiving the most Scottish press coverage in October & November was NIREX's consultative document listing potentially suitable dumping sites for low & intermediate level nuclear waste.

NIREX says that it has not yet identified a particular site but is looking for one site that will take Britain's waste for the next 50 years, that will cost £1 billion, and take 100 lorry loads and 5 train loads of waste a week.

NIREX has said that there are three options for waste dumping:

1. Burial under land 200-1000m deep
2. Seabed burial with access via a tunnel from the land
3. Seabed burial with access from an offshore structure

NIREX seems to rule out the last option because of high cost. It appears to favour option 1, because of the political and legal ramifications of under-sea burial

There are three potentially suitable types of rock formation:

1. Hard rocks in a landscape of low relief (*parts of the east & north coasts of Scotland from the Firth of Forth northwards, parts of the Western Isles & Anglesey*)
2. Small islands (*100 around Britain, but most off the west coast of Scotland, Orkney & Shetland*)
3. Seaward dipping and offshore sedimentary rocks (*all in England*)

NIREX appears to favour the first rock type, and as it also stresses that the waste will not be put in areas of high population (more than 5 people per hectare). It can be seen why many people in Scotland fear that the Highlands will eventually be chosen.

NIREX says that there are still questions to be answered, one of which is whether an adequate site which has local support will be better than a superior one without local support.

It also states that "these wastes already exist and it would be irresponsible to ignore the problem because it is too controversial". The NIREX chairman says that the biggest problem will be gaining public acceptability for dumping.

To get a free copy of the NIREX discussion document 'The Way Forward' write to:
NIREX, Curie Avenue, Harwell, Didcot, Oxfordshire.

SCOTTISH OBJECTIONS

Anti-nuclear groups in Scotland have formed a new federation SAND - Scotland Against Nuclear Dumping - to fight any proposals for waste dumping in Scotland. In early November there were 14 member organisations.

Opposition against dumping has so far come from: Alex Salmond (Banff & Buchan MP), John Home Robertson (East Lothian MP), Jim Wallace (Orkney & Shetland MP), Andrew Welsh (Angus East MP), Ray Michie (Argyll & Bute MP), Margaret Ewing (Moray MP), Menzies Campbell

(NE Fife MP), Calum Macdonald (Western Isles MP), Grampian Regional Council (which has recently declared itself a nuclear free zone), Fife Regional Council, Western Isles Council, Angus District Council, all 3 Fife District Councils, East Lothian District Council, HANG (Highlands Anti Nuclear Group), HAND (Hebrides Against Nuclear Dumping), Shetland Campaign Against Dounreay Expansion, Jura Anti Dumping Group, Raasay Community Council's Anti Waste Committee, Shetland Fisherman's Association, SNP, Scottish Liberal Party, Scottish Trade Unions Congress, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, SCRAM (Scottish Campaign to Rid the Atomic Menace).

In Caithness one district councillor, at least, has given a cautious approval to a dump there.

In Dumfriesshire, the Scottish Conservation Society has set up a Chapelcross Watchdog and Action Group to try and prevent Chapelcross power station being used as a buffer store for spent fuel rods, and to investigate alternatives to nuclear jobs in the Annan area.

Meanwhile, Fife MPs are concerned that decommissioned nuclear submarines will be permanently berthed at Rosyth alongside HMS Dreadnought. Dreadnought, Britain's first nuclear submarine, is currently berthed there while the Government decides how to dispose of its radioactive parts.

DOUNREAY

The Dounreay public inquiry opened for a final two day session in October for discussion of the Reporter's 'findings of fact'. It is hoped that the final report of the 95 day hearings will be ready for the Secretary of State to study by Hogmanay.

A UK Atomic Energy Authority study has revealed that overall radioactive contamination of the Pentland Firth was well within international safety limits.

More than half the radioactivity came from Sellafield, with much of the rest coming from atom bomb tests; only a small fraction came from Dounreay itself.

ORKNEY WIND POWER

Cecil Parkinson, the Energy Secretary, on 10th November formally turned on a 3 megawatt wind turbine on Burgar Hill, about 20 miles from Kirkwall.

The generator is the largest in the UK, providing enough power for about 2000 homes, and will feed into the Orkney Grid. It was built by the Wind Energy Group (a joint venture of British Aerospace, Taylor Woodrow Construction and GEC) and funded by the Department of the Environment and the North of Scotland Hydro Board.



POLITICS

BOUNDARY CHANGE

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland is proposing the transfer of land near Black Loch, Limerigg, from Monklands District to Falkirk

status, which aims to manage woodlands on a community basis. David Bellamy launched a fund raising drive in October, and the SNP has also given support to the project.

For further information about BCW contact Tim Stead (Chairman of the Steering Committee) at: *The Steading, Nether Blainslie, by Lauder, Roxburghshire.*

BUCHAN COUNTRYSIDE GROUP

David Bellamy visited Buchan for the first time as president of BCG. He was shown some of BCG's tree planting projects, and visited local schools to encourage children to plant more trees.

He also signed a lease for 40 miles of disused railway line, which the group is leasing off Grampian Regional Council in order to create a long-distance footpath network in a £100,000 project.

BCG have until December 8th to raise enough money to buy the 25 acre Slains Castle Wood, near Cruden Bay, which is being put on the open market by Barratts after abandoning development plans. BCG is being supported by both the Cruden Bay Community Council & the Community Association.

CENTRAL SCOTLAND COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

CSCT, responsible for many environmental improvement schemes throughout the Central Belt has appointed Rita Crowe as the Trust's new Development Officer, and Betty Rae as the new Finance Officer.

The Trust is offering 500 free trees to anyone in the area who owns land in the countryside, and is willing to plant and maintain the trees. Anyone interested in this scheme should contact at CSCT HQ tel. 0501 22015.

COSLA

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in October published a report on forestry called 'Forestry in Scotland: Planning the Way Ahead'.

The report says that forestry is a vitally important land use but that there is an urgent need for more effective planning of forestry at a strategic level, and that plans indicating how the other land use interests have been taken into account should accompany all forestry proposals.

It also states the need for planting licences.

COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND

European Year of the Environment

As part of EYE, every primary and secondary school in Scotland in October received an education pack to help teachers raise awareness about the need to conserve and improve the environment. This was jointly compiled by EYE Scotland (based at CCS headquarters) and the Scottish Environmental Education Council.

Forestry Controls

Welcoming COSLA's recent report on forestry 'Forestry in Scotland: Planning the Way Ahead', Roger Carr, CCS Chairman, states:

"There is every indication that public concern in Scotland over the siting of new forest blocks is increasing . . . The existing

consultation procedure is a failure . . . Local people rarely learn of proposals . . . Respectable bodies with specialist knowledge often find it difficult to learn what is being proposed, or find it difficult to contribute to the debate . . . The acrimony aroused undermines everyone's confidence in forestry . . .

"The industry would be greatly encouraged by the preparation of Regional Forest Strategies . . . More information needs to be presented with planting plans . . . There must be confidence that forward planning and conditions on grants are implemented . . . which should be done by the means of a statutory planting licence.

"COSLA, NCC, TGUK, House of Lords Committee on European Affairs & the English Countryside Commission all support our proposals."

CROFTERS COMMISSION

The chairman of the CC at the annual conference of the panel of assessors, said that the Commission is looking into the problem of absenteeism and subletting of crofts; it is considering applying a simple condition such as the application of lime or phosphate to a quarter of every croft each year to maintain its fertility.

He said also that, as a result of efforts of the CC, HIDB & Scottish Agricultural Colleges, SAC were offering advice to crofters at a reduced cost and were also advertising for two Rural Development Advisers for the Western Isles.

FFWAG

Christine Hall has been appointed as the first full time conservation adviser for Perthshire & Angus FFWAG (Farming, Forestry and Wildlife Advisory Group), based at Scottish Agricultural Colleges, Oakbank Road, Perth (tel. Perth 36611).

FORESTRY COMMISSION

Forest Life

The FC in September published the first issue of its new magazine 'Forest Life' which is to be published three times a year.

In the first issue Gwyn Francis, Director General of the FC, states that expansion of the forest area is a force for change in the countryside, but this expansion needs to take into account the wide variety of interests which concern themselves with changes of landscapes and habitats.

He adds that 'Forest Life' will help the debate and "will examine how we [FC] develop our policies and carry them out in practice. In a period of change . . . a better understanding of the reasons behind forestry policy can only be of benefit."

Rural Employment

The FC has just published the fifth of its 'Forest Facts' leaflets titles 'Forestry and Rural Employment'.

In this it states that in Scotland in 1986 the FC employed 3500 people, private estates employed 3300 forest workers, forest management companies 1800, harvesting companies 250 and wood processing industries 2350; this gives a Scottish total of 11,200 (the GB total is 39,540). It also states that the trend away from direct labour to the use of contractors is continuing.

Both these publications, and another just issued 'An Ancient Forest - the Black Wood of Rannoch' are available free from: *Public Information Division, Forestry Commission, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh EH12 7AT.*

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH (SCOTLAND)

Mike Thornton has been appointed the new FOE campaigner at the Edinburgh HQ.

FOE have published a leaflet listing garages selling lead-free petrol in Scotland.

KEEP SCOTLAND BEAUTIFUL

The Prince of Wales, as president of European Year of the Environment, has congratulated the Keep Scotland Beautiful organisation for its project to clear all Scottish Munros (mountains over 3000ft) of litter using volunteer help. It is hoped that all Munros will be cleared before the snows set in, but some may be left until the spring.

NATIONAL FARMERS UNION OF SCOTLAND

The NFUS wants the farm woodland scheme structured in such a way that it benefits hill as well as lowland farmers. The vice-president, Mr John Goodfellow, at a Scottish NFUS council meeting said that "Suitable incentives must be available for the hill farmer to integrate small-scale forestry with his farming enterprise." He added that the NFUS was also insisting to government that tenant farmers be allowed to participate in the farm woodland scheme (with current legislation the landowner retains all rights to timber on his land).

NATURE CONSERVANCY COUNCIL

New Reserves

The NCC has recently expanded its Ben Wyvis National Nature Reserve (after consultation with Ross & Cromarty District Council who are leasing the area with skiing potential).

It has also declared as NNRs Mealdarroch, along the west coast of Loch Fyne, which is noted for its rich woodland, and the Moine Mhor, a raised bog north of the Crinan Canal.

In Clydesdale it has added three deciduous woodlands to the Clyde Valley Woodlands NNR; these are Jerviswood and Cartland Craigs on the Mouse Water, and Jock's Gill Wood in Carluke.

The Loch Lomond NNR has been extended by the addition of the Aber Bogs, a flood plain mire and former wet hay meadow.

The NCC has recently bought all the sites mentioned above.

Other news

The NCC has just published a book jointly with Colin Baxter called 'Scotland - The Nature of the Land'. This well reviewed book contains photographs taken by Colin Baxter of Scottish National Nature Reserves (with a short description of each reserve), and shows off their richness and diversity. It costs £12.95.

The NCC is to employ a person on Islay to monitor goose numbers on farmers' land,

and is also waiting for the go-ahead to employ an MSC team to keep unwelcome barnacle & white-fronted geese off this land.

The NCC is co-ordinating 'Coastwatch', a UK wide survey of Britain's coasts to discover which are the best for nature conservation. The project has started in Fife and now the NCC is looking for volunteers in Shetland.

The complete herd of NCC's Highland ponies at the Beinn Eighe Nature Reserve (Wester Ross) are being sent to the Marais D'yves Nature Reserve in France on permanent loan to help control the vegetation, which is affecting the bird life. They are no longer needed for management purposes at Beinn Eighe, although the NCC will still keep its Rhum herd.

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND

The Pollok Estate is a 1100 acre island of countryside only three miles from the centre of Glasgow, and also the home of the Burrell Collection in Pollok House. In 1939 the estate owner, Sir John Stirling Maxwell (a founder member of the NTS) entered into a conservation agreement with the NTS to protect the estate.

However Strathclyde Regional Council wants to build the new Ayr Road through the estate, and there is to be a public enquiry to discuss this.

Writing in 'Heritage Scotland' (the NTS magazine) Findlay McQuarrie, NTS Director West, says that the current proposals are unacceptable and that this will be the first real challenge to any conservation agreement under the Trust's Acts.

He says "The confidence which the nation places in the Trust to protect land and buildings of merit will be put to the test when the Secretary of State gives his decision on the proposal."

RSPB

In a report by two RSPB researchers, Dr James Cadbury and Alan Woods, the RSPB claims that almost 1,200,000 acres of heather moorland in the Scottish uplands have been lost to forestry or agricultural improvement since 1946.

The RSPB says the current agricultural policies will result in this trend continuing because hill farms will become uneconomic as livestock production increases on the lowlands; hill land will then be sold for forestry. The remaining hill land will continue to be agriculturally improved and overgrazed.

They are recommending to the government that the hill livestock support system be changed so that total livestock numbers are reduced, and so that cattle are favoured rather than sheep (sheep grazing tends to convert heather moorland to grassland); at the same time farm incomes should be maintained.

They are also recommending that incentives for environmentally sensitive farming be set up, similar to those currently available in Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs). The RSPB stresses that it is aware of the social and economic problems of rural communities.

The RSPB has recently launched the first issue of a new annual publication 'RSPB Conservation Review' - a summary of the Society's conservation work; cost £3.

RURAL FORUM

Dermot Grimson has been appointed RF's director designate. He is a planning officer with Banff & Buchan District Council, and also chairman of the Buchan Countryside Group.

SCOTTISH CONSERVATION PROJECTS

SCP have opened a new office at 25a Russel Street, Falkirk.

They have also received a £10,000 donation from the National Westminster Bank, which will be used for an audio-visual demonstration room and a residential wing for disabled trainees at their Stirling HQ.

SCOTTISH CROFTERS UNION

The SCU has produced a discussion document 'A Better Crofting Future - Getting Croft Land into Active Occupation'.

In this it criticises the Crofters Commission for its lack of effort in preventing whole crofts being decrofted. It also says that there is a lack of accurate information on the status of every croft, which hampers a more progressive crofting movement.

It also makes recommendations which would help new entrants into crofting.

SCOTTISH LANDOWNERS FEDERATION

The SLF's annual review paper claims that Scottish farmers and estate owners are making negative returns on agricultural investment capital. Figures produced by the CBI for 1986 show that the average return for agriculture was minus 0.7% compared to +8% in other industries.

Despite the urgent search for alternative sources of income for the land, the SLF claims that agriculture will remain the mainstay of rural Scotland. It makes a number of recommendations for consideration by the government in its assessment of the future of Scottish agriculture.

These include specific points on taxes, rates & grants, planning controls, the development of forestry, tenancy agreements, and the imposition of ceilings, stocking limits and quotas. The SLF stresses the major role the landowners have to play in diversification, with their experience of managing multiple land-use estates.

SCOTTISH SCENIC TRUST

In a letter to the chairman of the STB, HIDB and CCS, SST chairman Neil Jamieson is asking for an official survey into the effects of fish farms on tourism. He points out that in some areas the tourist trade has voiced opposition to fish farm proposals - Loch Ness, East Ballachulish Bay and Loch Leven.

He states that many of the tourist businesses depend on the undisturbed scenery and the peace and quiet; many visitors would not complain about fish farms, but just not come back.

He also has written to Highland Regional Council asking for a moratorium on new fish farms on Loch Eil and Upper Loch Linnhe. He says that if applications currently in the pipeline are approved then other interests such as angling and yachting will suffer.

The SST has also written to the Scottish Secretary asking for a ban on the shooting of seals by fish-farmers, and for investment in anti-predator nets.

SCOTTISH WILDLIFE & COUNTRYSIDE LINK

SWCL, the umbrella body for the voluntary conservation organisations in Scotland, has just appointed a full-time secretary. She is Jennifer Anderson and she is based at: *Southesk Bank, St Magdalene's Lane, Perth PH2 0BW; tel. Perth 30804.*

SCOTTISH WILDLIFE TRUST

In its recently published 1987 Annual Review the SWT says that it is expanding fast, and over the past two years has:

- *Established some 20 new wildlife reserves
- *Published a new conservation strategy
- *Published a paper on Flow Country afforestation
- *Planned two new visitor centres
- *Recruited 2577 new members
- *Established four new support groups
- *Appointed a Highland-based Northern Officer
- *Raised nearly 75% of the initial Scottish Wildlife Appeal of £592,000.
- *Helped co-ordinate UK2000 in Scotland.

ABBREVIATIONS

- CEC Crown Estate Commissioners
Responsible for Crown land, including sea bed
- CCS Countryside Commission for Scotland
Government financed, responsible for landscape
- COSLA Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Umbrella body representing all Regions & Districts
- DAFS Department of Agriculture & Fisheries for Scotland (*government*)
- FC Forestry Commission (*government*)
- FOE Friends of the Earth (*voluntary*)
- HIDB Highlands & Islands Development Board
(government financed)
- MSC Manpower Services Commission
- NFUS National Farmers Union of Scotland
Umbrella body for farmers
- NCC Nature Conservancy Council
(government financed)
- RSPB Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
(voluntary)
- SCPT Scottish Conservation Projects Trust
(voluntary)
- SCU Scottish Crofters Union
Umbrella body for Crofters
- SDA Scottish Development Agency
(government financed)
- SLF Scottish Landowners Federation
Umbrella body for landowners
- STB Scottish Tourist Board
(government financed)
- SWLG Scottish Wildland Group
(voluntary)
- SWT Scottish Wildlife Trust
(voluntary)
- TGUK Timber Growers UK Ltd
Umbrella body for woodland owners
- WWF World Wildlife Fund
(voluntary)
- UK2000 Government sponsored environmental improvement initiative