



RESOLUTION #19

TITLE:

Scottish Government Called on to Protect Wild Land from Industrialization



WHEREAS

Scotland has world renowned wild landscapes. In the absence of a specific measure to illustrate loss of or impacts on wild land, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) published an indicator (N3) “visual influence of built development and land use change” which is a reasonable proxy. Issues of relevance include; impacts on biodiversity especially peatlands and raptors, loss of revenue from tourist income and devaluing of wildness characteristics.

The most recent, publicly available figures show that in 2002, 41% of Scotland was unaffected visually by built development. By 2009, this had reduced to 28%. The biggest contributor to this loss were windfarms. Proliferation continues at unprecedented levels, with applications now submitted in core wild land areas and many on deep peat. The importance of peat as a carbon sink is acknowledged.

VisitScotland, Scotland’s national tourism organisation, has admitted that windfarms could harm tourism, a sector that generates more than £4 bn annually to the Scottish economy and supports 200,000 full time jobs. Visitor surveys showed consistently that 80% choose to visit Scotland for its scenery and nature.

The Scottish Government acknowledged this conflict and proposed to exclude windfarm development in 31% of Scotland in 43 core wild land areas through planning policies linked to a map produced by SNH. The planning policies were recently open to public consultation. The Scottish Government has now also opened the map up to further consultation, following lobbying from energy companies and other vested interests. There is a real danger that the map will be heavily modified or ignored altogether and core wild land areas will be open to industrialisation by windfarms and other energy developments.

A YouGov poll of over 1,000 people across Scotland this summer found that over 75 per cent support strengthened protection for wild land with only six per cent opposed, while the recently published Scottish Planning Policy consultation responses showed a two to one majority in favour of strengthened protection for wild land.

THEREFORE

- We recognize that there is a conflict between the need to develop renewable energy schemes to help combat climate change and to protect the integrity of wild land areas.
- We commend the Scottish Government for its original proposal to protect 43 core wild land areas in Scotland from industrialization by windfarms.

RESOLVED

- We call upon the Scottish Government to maintain its support for the published core wild land map containing 43 core wild land areas, produced by its agency, SNH.
- We encourage all those who value wild land in Scotland to support the SNH wild land map.
- We encourage other governments to put in place appropriate measures to protect wild land and wilderness from industrial energy developments.

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