

Wild land management and rewilding in Scotland – politics, policies and practices

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Including findings from a number of projects led by the Wildland Research Institute, Leeds University

Researching Scotland's Ruralities: Social Science Perspectives
on Current Issues in Rural Scotland, *Perth, 20th March 2013*



University of the
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Perth College

Centre for
Mountain Studies



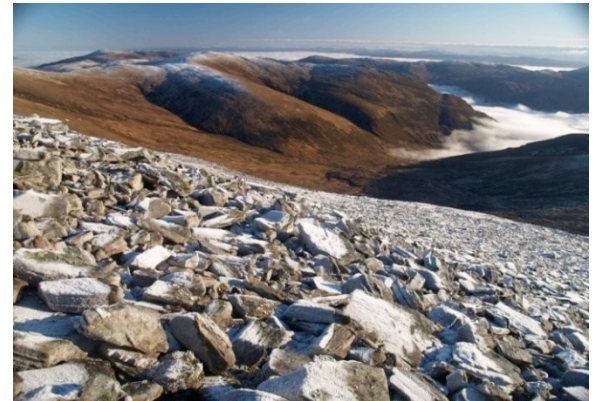
Presentation Outline

- Wild land – history and background
- Conceptual problems
- Conflicts and tensions
- Legitimising wild land – GIS Mapping
- Ecology, rewilding and the European context
- Conclusions



Wild land - history and background

- Romantic revolution late 18th Century
- Walking and climbing clubs late 19th Century
- Unna Principles (National Trust for Scotland) 1937
- Scottish Wild Land Group and JMT 1982/1983
- Surveys – 77/86% (very important/needs protection)
- Parallel emergence of ‘rewilding’ initiatives



Current definitions

**1964 American Wilderness Act – large-scale, pristine areas
Not applicable in Scotland /large parts of Europe**

So.... “wild land”

Scottish Natural Heritage (2002)	“The term ‘wild land’ is.....best reserved for those limited core areas of mountain and moorland and remote coast, which mostly lie beyond contemporary human artefacts such as roads or other development”
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Conceptual problems

- Objective reality or sociological construct?

Is wilderness.....

“a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state, open to lawful hunting and fishing, devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages and other works of man ” [Leopold 1921]

OR

should we: “accept as wilderness those places people call wilderness ” with an emphasis “not so much on what wilderness is but on what men think it is ” [Nash 1982]



Conceptual problems

- Wild nature or cultural relic (emptied land....)?

Wild land as wild nature:

“land that is ecologically wild, where domestic species take second place to wild species and natural processes take precedence over artificial processes” [Fenton 1996]

OR

Scottish wild land – A cultural entity:

Some wild land has: “a relatively uniform and uninteresting vegetation” [SNH 2002]

-Restoration potential

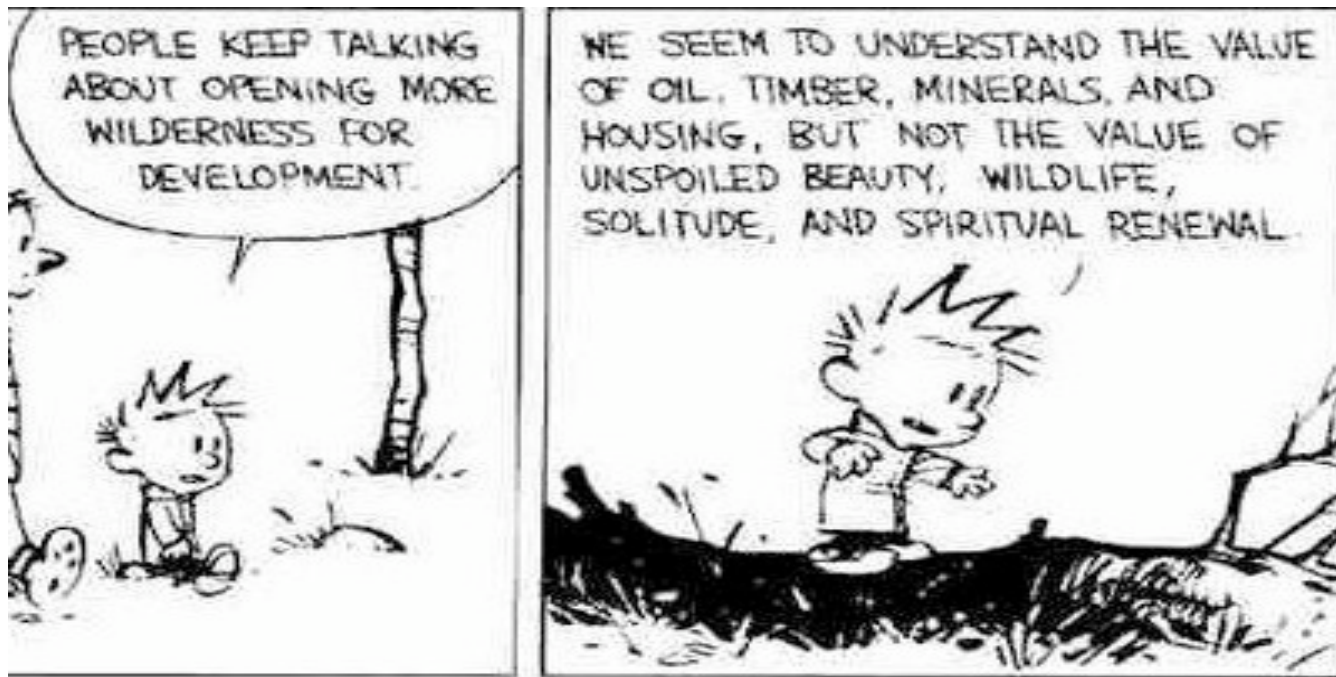
-Historical land uses – most of uplands extensively managed







A poorly understood and poorly defined resource is a undervalued resource



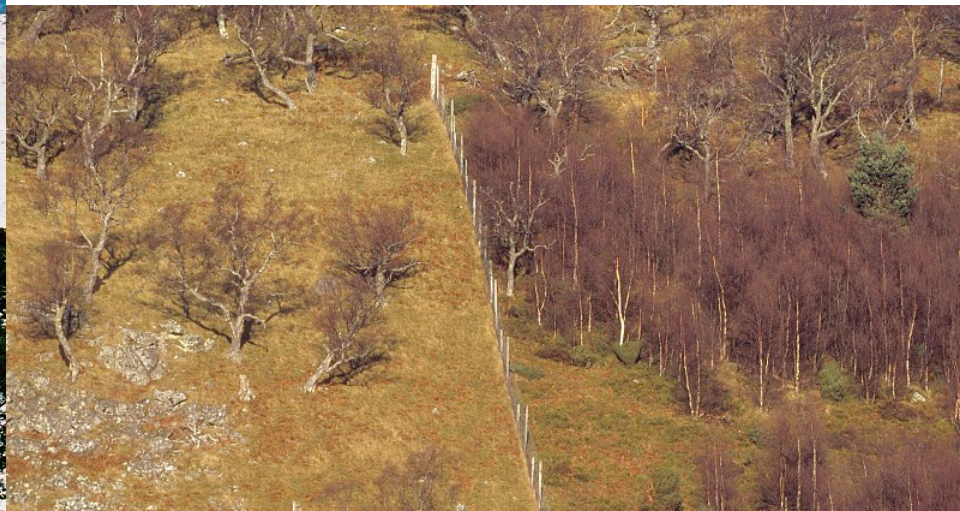
- No spatial definition of wild land in Scotland
- Cultural versus protectionist perspectives
- Traditional land uses and renewable energy







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Mapping wildness.....

Using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to map wildness (Continuum) in Cairngorms NP

4 Key criteria for mapping wildness (attribute maps)

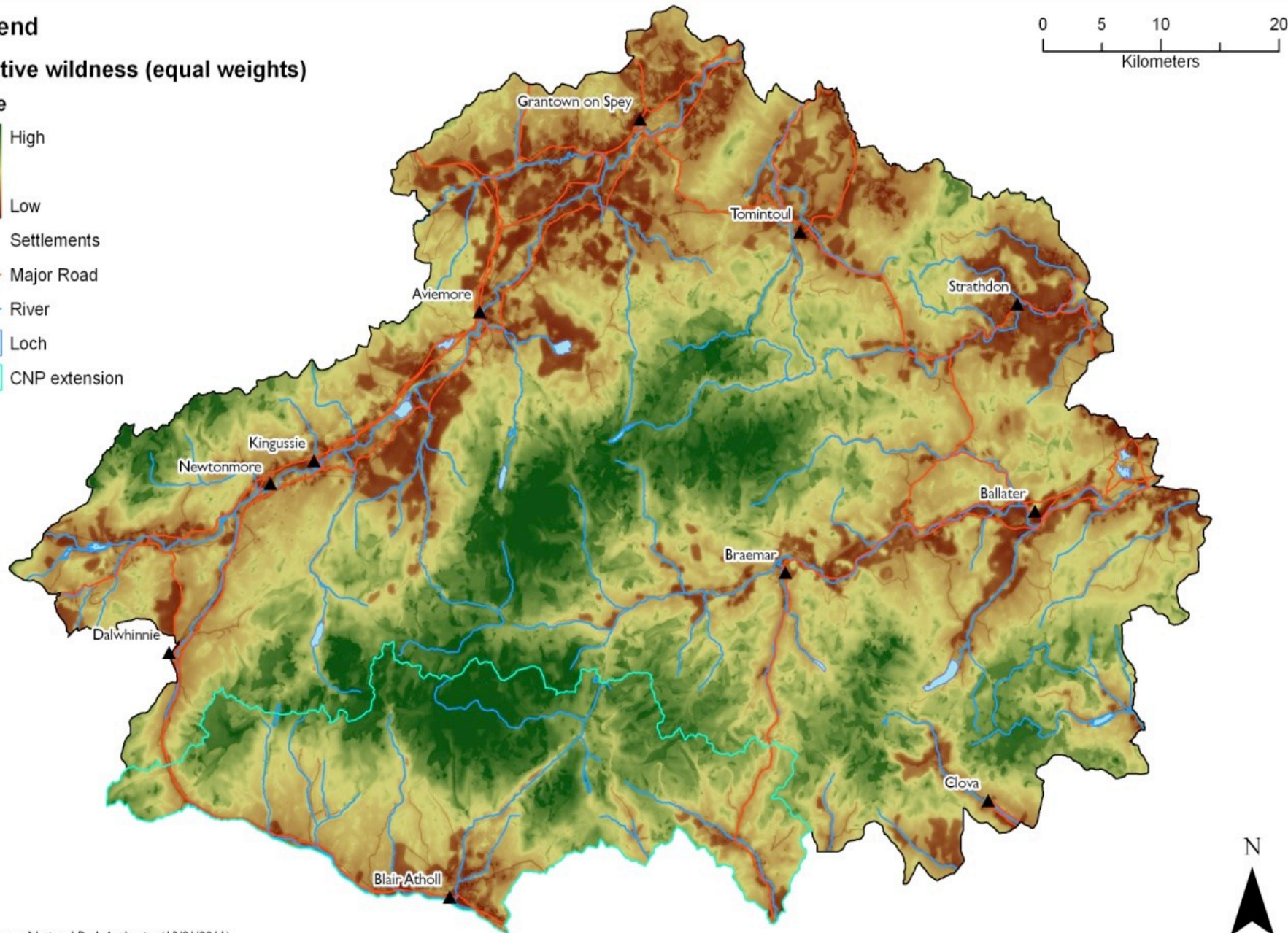
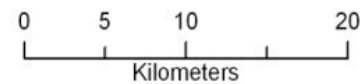
- Remoteness
- Perceived naturalness (vegetation/landcover)
- Density of human artefacts
- Ruggedness

MCE - Supported by perception studies

Legend

Relative wildness (equal weights)

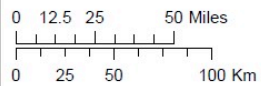
Value



Mapping Scotland's Wildness

Scottish Natural Heritage

Value



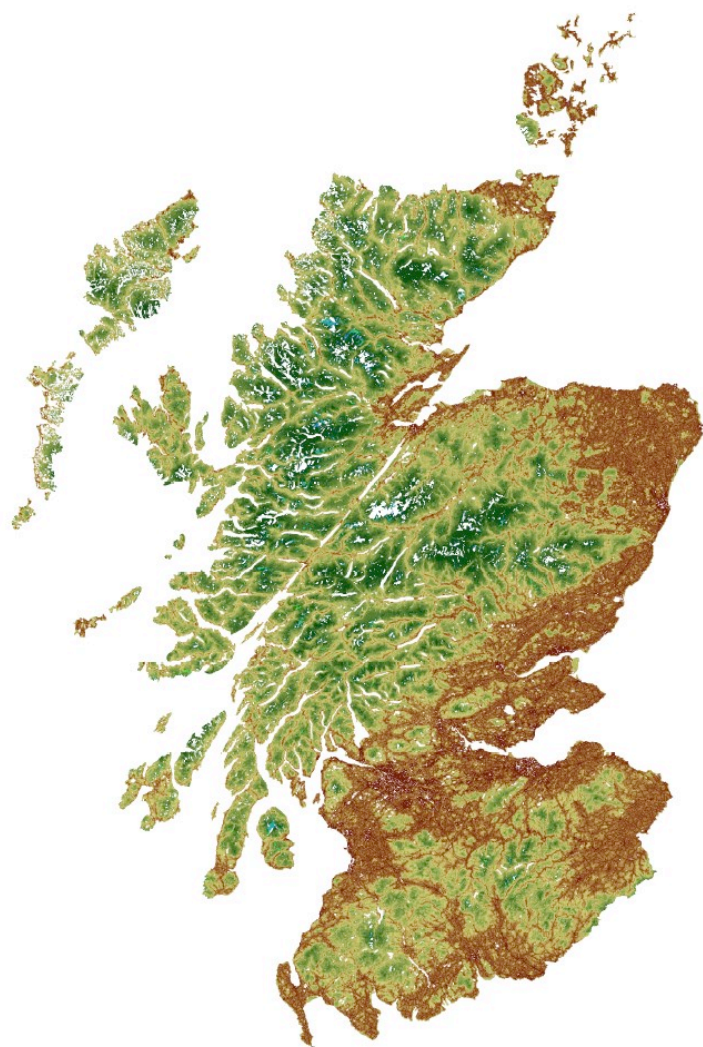
Date: 21 December 2010

Scale: 1:50 metres

Version: 1
(without plantations & wind turbines)

Produced by:
Geographic Information Group


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100017908. Intermap's NE2TMap.



Wildland in the United Kingdom

Top 10% wildest areas

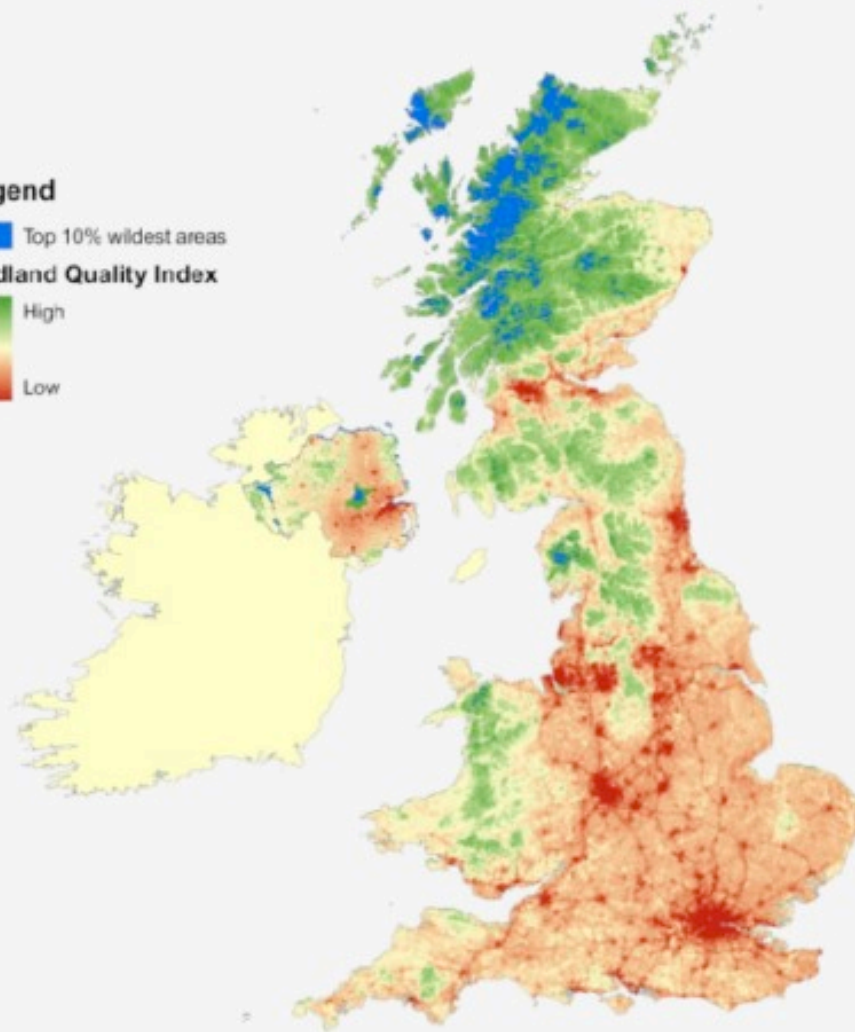
Legend

 Top 10% wildest areas

Wildland Quality Index

 High

 Low



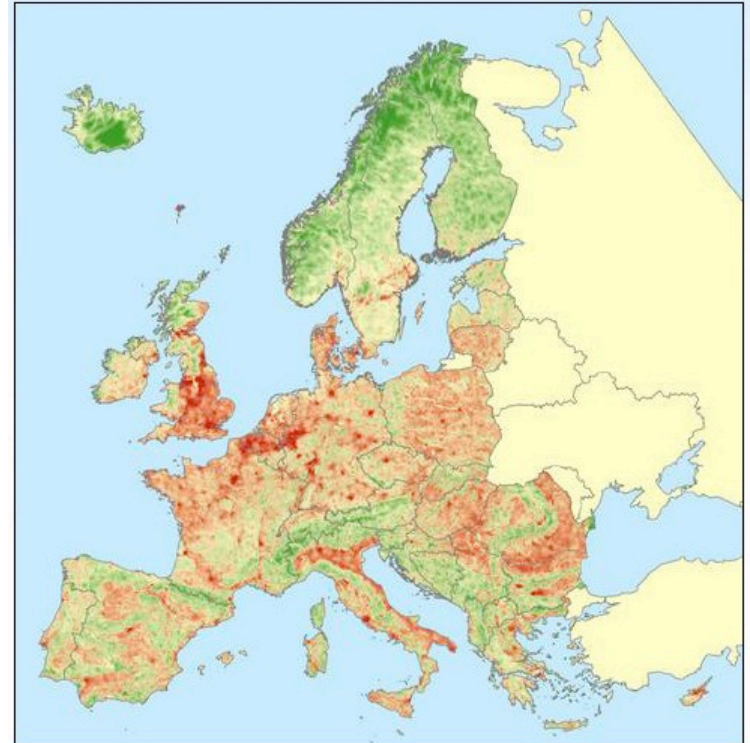
What next?

Maps are of 'wildness' not wild land

- How to delineate core wild land areas?
- Cairngorms National Park
 - Divided wildness across three bands (High, Medium, Low wildness) – specific guidance for planning in each zone
 - Proved difficult! (A work in progress)
- SNH exploring options at national level
- Current approach does not fully account for ecological dimensions

An ecological/European perspective

- EC Resolution on Wilderness (2009)
- Rewilding being proposed as a response to land abandonment
- Protect wildness and you protect sites for brown bear, lynx and wolf
- Protected highly natural areas use zoning and ecological networks
- Current designations do not fully protect areas of high wildness
- **Potential for network approach and biological proxies for wildness in Scotland**



Some conclusions

- **Environmental/cultural context of Scotland has produced a (relatively) distinct sociological construct of wildness (and wild land)**
- **Legitimised using GIS mapping/perception studies/valuation – core wild land remains un-delineated/designated**
- **Concept remains contentious – more in-depth examination of perceptions/conceptual foundations from wider stakeholders perspectives required**
- **Potential may exist to integrate sociological wildness and ecological elements:**
 - Linkage of existing wildness models with ecological data (proxies)
 - Linkage to upland ecological networks, zoning and ecosystem services

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