



MCofS News Release

11 December 2009

For immediate release

Hill tracks threat to Wild Land raised in Scottish Parliament

Ugly and environmentally damaging hill tracks are constructed every year with no requirement that they are considered through the planning system. Beautiful wild areas, iconic for Scotland's residents and visitors, are being blighted by these uncontrolled eyesores. The national importance of this has finally come to the notice of the Scottish Parliament after the issue was raised by Peter Peacock MSP (1) in response to the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS) highlighting the incremental reduction in wild areas. Government figures show that between 2002 and 2005, the area of Scotland unaffected by views of man-made developments fell from 42% to 32% (2).

Hebe Carus, MCofS Access & Conservation Officer, who highlighted the issue to the MSP said, "I regularly receive photographs of outstandingly badly constructed tracks through previously wild areas, even in supposedly protected areas. The sad thing is that these are irreversible and completely uncontrolled through the planning system. The longer the review is delayed the more of wild Scotland will be lost forever."

The President of MCofS, Chris Townsend, further explained; "Many of these tracks in upland areas are horrendous. The MCofS is very concerned about the ever increasing irreversible loss of wildness due to hill tracks being bulldozed throughout Scotland. These areas of wild land are being lost to Scotland."

The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 is supposed to modernise the planning system for the benefit of the people and environment of Scotland, but the implementation timetable is being permitted to slip repeatedly. There has already been more than a 2 year delay since an influential report from Heriot-Watt University, commissioned by the Scottish Executive, recommended an extensive overhaul of the uncontrolled rights of landowners to construct hill tracks through our beautiful wild areas.

For further information contact Hebe Carus on mcofs.accessandconservation@yahoo.co.uk or 01738 493 944 or go to the MCoFS website at: <http://www.mcofs.org.uk>. Photos of bulldozed tracks are available for publication through Hebe.

Ends

Reference sources

(1) The written question is due for answer on 13th January 2010. The Question is, and answer will be, posted at www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/Business/PQA/default.aspx?pg=S3W-29762, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/Business/PQA/default.aspx?pg=S3W-29761> and <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/Business/PQA/default.aspx?pg=S3W-29760>.

(2) SNH Strategic Environment Assessment Environmental Report - September 2008 www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/strategy/Corporate%20Strategy%20-%20SEA%20-%20Environmental%20Report%20-%20Post%20Adoption%20-%20web.pdf

Notes for Editors:

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCoFS) acts to represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering.

MCoFS is a membership organisation with 10,500 members representing hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers, funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, grants, and investment from sportscotland, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain weather information services, mountain leader training and the development and promotion of Scotland. Company number SC322717.