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**SCENES**, an independent digest of environmental news in Scotland, was launched in 1987 by Dr James Fenton. Issues 49 to 161 were edited and published by Michael and Sue Scott. It is for anyone with an interest in the land and sea, whether professional or amateur. It is based solely on published material, and contains only news, with no editorial comment or opinion.

**SCENES** is published monthly, and comes out in the month following the title month.

**NOTE:** dates in square brackets relate to the most recent reference in **SCENES**.

**WEBSITE:** [www.scenes.org.uk](http://www.scenes.org.uk)

**DEADLINES:** News releases and press cuttings for inclusion in **SCENES** are welcomed from organisations and individuals. Please post, or email, them to the address below, by the end of each month.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** The basic annual subscription is £50. Concessions are available for small firms and charities (£28), individuals, and outworkers with a main subscription (£22), students and seniors (£18) and for extra copies sent to the same address (£12).

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**SCENES** is edited and published by Sue Fenton. Proofreading is by Falkland Islands Proofreading Services. Printed by Printsmith Lochaber Ltd.

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ISSN 0955-226X



## CONSERVATION

### NATURE OMNIBUS

The *BBC News* website reported that the Scottish Nature Omnibus Survey, now carried out every six months, is commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to help measure and evaluate communications and a number of other SNH initiatives and programmes.

Deer were put at the top of the list of animals the public was most concerned about in conservation terms, followed by red squirrels, golden eagles, grouse and wildcats.

The researchers said: "The very fact that deer are shot/culled at all clearly remains a concern for many, but the communications challenge would appear to be greatest in dealing with the manner in which this is done, with the concept of being 'hunted' being a particular concern." The results suggest there has been a steady level of concern about deer since September 2011. However, worries about wildcats have declined over the same period.

See: [www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/customer-care/Scottish%20Nature%20Omnibus%20-%20March%202013.pdf](http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/customer-care/Scottish%20Nature%20Omnibus%20-%20March%202013.pdf)

### RED SQUIRRELS

*Forestry & Timber News* reported that the Moredun Institute in Edinburgh has identified a vaccine which appears to protect red squirrels from the squirrelpox virus in the laboratory. The vaccine will now be tested in the natural environment. See: [www.rsst.org.uk](http://www.rsst.org.uk)

### CHEQUERED SKIPPER

The chequered skipper butterfly, known only in the UK within a 30 mile radius of Fort William, has been recorded for the first time in Glen Etive by National Trust for Scotland rangers. Butterfly Conservation is carrying out a survey of this butterfly as there is a suspicion that it is severely under-recorded.

### BLACK GROUSE

The latest count of black grouse on the Woodland Trust Scotland's Glen Finglas estate in the Trossachs has confirmed 22 lekking males. In 2012, 21 male grouse were confirmed across three leks on the estate; in 2009, just 14 males were recorded on two leks. Wood pasture is being restored on the estate to increase preferred habitat for black grouse.

See: [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/glenfinglas](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/glenfinglas)

### GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

*The Herald* reported that DNA fingerprinting by Salford University, on behalf of SNH, has proved that great-crested newts are almost certainly indigenous to the Highlands. The newts, which live in the inner Moray Firth and Inverness area, are separated by more than 50 miles of unfavourable habitat from the main areas where newts live in central Scotland. It was therefore assumed that they were introduced into the Highlands. The study also showed they are genetically distinct from those in central Scotland

### MOTH

The Blomer's Rivulet has been discovered by Butterfly Conservation at Lochaline in Morvern, a new species of moth to Scotland.



## FARMING

### CAP

Agreement on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform has finally been reached [Apr 13]. One of the original goals of the latest round of CAP reform was to 'green' the payments that are given to farmers to secure greater public benefits, such as clean water and biodiversity.

Jonathan Hughes, of Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), said: "SWT hasn't seen the radical reform of land management payments that we were hoping for. Sadly, this is another page in the catalogue of missed opportunities to turn around the ongoing decline in the quality of Europe's natural environment. It is becoming increasingly hard to justify to the taxpayer what the hundreds of billions of pounds worth of public payments for farmers are actually buying. Really sensible measures such as mandatory Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) have been watered down to the extent that they will be almost meaningless. Now only 5% of a farm's total area will have to be EFA to qualify for direct subsidy, however, almost every farm already meets this description because of features like hedges and streams.

"We are also disappointed that the Water Framework Directive and the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive will not be included in statutory management requirements to keep land in good condition – this will benefit neither wildlife nor agriculture which ultimately depends on a healthy environment. Thankfully, there is still the option for governments to transfer 15% of funds from direct payment budgets to support rural development measures, such as agri-environment schemes, but suggestions for transferring money from agri-environment schemes into direct payment budgets are most unwelcome and could prove disastrous for Europe's biodiversity.

"SWT still firmly believes that the CAP must be made much 'greener' to help restore Scotland's ecosystems to health and protect our water, soils, biodiversity and landscapes."

### HIGH NATURE VALUE

A coalition of nature conservation charities, farming and crofting groups have written to Cabinet Secretary, Richard Lochhead, asking him to take action and secure the future of High Nature Value farming and crofting in Scotland.

The letter asks that High Nature Value farmers and crofters be properly rewarded through the CAP for supporting the country's most precious wildlife and landscapes. The Scottish Government is to decide how to spend an annual funding budget of around £650m.

### WILDFLOWERS

*The Herald* reported that a Plantlife report on Scottish farmlands says that wildflowers are affected by intensive agricultural techniques. Some wildflowers are in serious decline, as are the insects and birds that such plants support. It says that the number of wild cornflowers has dropped by 99% over the last 40 years, for instance, and arable flowers are declining faster than any other group of plants.

Between 1998 and 2007, the area of enclosed, improved grassland in Scotland increased by 9% but the richness of its plant species fell by

8%. The number of plant species in the more extensive rough grazing land has also declined, and lapwing numbers have crashed by more than 50% in the last ten years.

The system of subsidies under the CAP sees 20,000 Scottish farmers getting a combined total of about £575m a year. The payments are heavily weighted in favour of richer, intensive farms in the east of Scotland, and against poorer, less intensive farms in the north-west, like crofters. According to Plantlife, only 18% of rural development funding has been spent on improving the agricultural environment. The report concluded: "Unless we ensure that agri-environment schemes are funded sufficiently to provide support to farmers in areas where the richest biodiversity is found, we run the risk of losing all those benefits that Scotland's farmland can provide."

Dr Deborah Long said: "Scotland's wild plants and fungi have largely been failed by agri-environment schemes. Plantlife is calling for scheme options that enable farmers to provide space for them within and between farms. We want to see these benefits maintained through access to targeted, longer-term support, so future generations can also enjoy Scotland's wild plants and fungi."

Plantlife also called for an advisory service for landowners and managers to help them to increase the numbers of wild flowers on their estates.

Andrew Bauer of NFU Scotland said: "While NFUS continuously pushes for better environmental regulation and a good deal from the next CAP, we're more likely to secure a better deal for Scottish farming if we can harness the power of the environmental lobby."

#### SCHMALLEMBERG

The *BBC News* website reported that Schmallenberg virus (SBV) has been confirmed in a calf born in Aberdeenshire [Apr 13]. The virus is spread by midges.

#### SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE

Scotland's chief statistician has released the *Economic Report on Scottish Agriculture and the Agriculture Facts and Figures Pocketbook*.

Initial estimates suggest that Total Income From Farming (TIFF) fell by £111m to £635m between 2011 and 2012. This represents a fall of 15% before inflation is accounted for but a fall of 19% in real terms. Average Farm Business Income (FBI) in 2011-12 was £45,000, a decrease of £1,000 (3%) from 2010-11, and of £2,000 over five years (accounting for inflation). In 2011-12, dairy farms appeared to generate the greatest incomes, with an average FBI of £80,000 per farm. Average farm incomes have only recently returned to levels seen in the mid-1990s, according to the Net Farm Income (NFI) measure. But some, such as cattle and sheep, dairy and mixed farms, achieved the highest incomes of the last 20 years in 2011-12.

Cereal areas increased by 10,600 hectares (2.4%), while the area of potatoes decreased by 1,500 hectares (4.9%). The value of barley rose £22m (8%), as higher prices and area outweighed lower yields. Several sectors took a greater hit, with the value of potatoes estimated to have fallen £40m (20%) and wheat falling £23m.

Over the past ten years, the output value of crops has increased by £280 million (47%) to £876m. Horticulture (62% increase) has been particularly strong. Accounting for inflation, the average farm business income of cereal farms decreased between 07-08 and 11-12 by around £25,000, from £75,000 to £50,000. General cropping farms saw a fall of £35,000, from

£86,000 to £50,000. The falls were due to a rise in input costs, particularly fertiliser and labour, and some falls in prices. The overall gross margin for crop enterprises ranged from £612/hectare for spring oats enterprises to £3,391/hectare for potato enterprises.

The number of cattle decreased by 15,500 (1%) to 1.79m, sheep fell by 65,200 (1%) to 6.74 million, pigs by 26,600 (7%) to 363,400, and poultry increased by 168,000 (6%) to 14.7m. The dairy sector benefited from 4% higher milk prices, while finished cattle and calves saw a 10% increase in price. Most of Scotland's dairy cows (which totalled 182,184 in June 2012) were located in the South West across three main areas; Dumfries & Galloway (74,530; 41%), Ayrshire (40,259; 22%) and the Clyde Valley (23,679; 13%). Scotland's beef cows (which totalled 452,438 in 2012) were concentrated in four areas; Grampian (89,995; 20%), Dumfries & Galloway (85,317; 19%), Highland (48,850; 11%) and the Scottish Borders (44,151; 10%). Total beef production in 2012 (including cull) was at 170,000 tonnes, a similar level to 2003, though in most intervening years the volume was higher. Clean finished cattle prices have risen by 74% (from an average of £1.82/kg in 2003 to £3.17/kg in 2011), and a further 11% in 2012 to £3.50/kg.

The number of people working in agriculture was 68,400, up 630 from 2011.

See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/9275](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/9275);  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/9275](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/9275)

#### BEEES

Results of the first Scottish bee health study, commissioned by the Scottish Government, have been published. The study was designed to assess the health status of honey bees in Scotland and gain a better understanding of how factors such as husbandry and disease affect them [Dec 12].

It found that 79% of beekeepers in Scotland lost at least one colony during winter 2012-13, compared to 39% the previous year. Beekeepers identified weather, queen health, starvation and Varroa mites as the main factors behind the decline. The highest winter losses in 2012-13 were sustained in the Highlands, with the lowest losses in Tayside.

The government has announced £200,000 of funding to help Scottish bee farmers restock.

Around 1,400 hobby beekeepers are members of the Scottish Beekeepers' Association, with an estimated further 1,000 hobbyists who are not. In addition there are about 25 commercial bee farmers who are members of the Bee Farmers' Association.



#### WOODLANDS

##### ASH DIEBACK

The *Herald* reported that unconfirmed cases of *chalara*, ash dieback, have been reported on young ash trees along the Dighty Water near its confluence with the Tay near Dundee. Forestry Commission (FC) Scotland has predicted that it will spread into Dundee by the end of the summer. More than 2,000 trees are affected, and will be felled if proved to be infected with the fungus.

##### LARCH DISEASE

The *BBC News* website reported that FC Scotland is joining forces with the forestry sector in Dumfries & Galloway to limit the further spread of *Phytophthora ramorum*, first found on a larch in the region in 2010 [Jan 13]. Survey work has suggested that the disease had increased its range considerably across the area. The disease can be

spread over several miles through mists, air currents, watercourses and rainsplash. FC Scotland said that it was clear that airborne spores were the most important factor in the south of Scotland outbreak.

It appears that all larch within a core area in Galloway Forest Park have been infected, and will be felled.

Aerial surveys have also identified 'suspicious sites' in other parts of Scotland. Surveyors will now visit these sites to ascertain if they are infected, or if they have been caused by canker, squirrel or deer damage.

#### JUNIPER

The *Herald* reported that FC Scotland research, in conjunction with Plantlife and Scottish Natural Heritage, has shown that juniper is at risk of disappearing from 45% of sites where it currently found. It is subject to a fungal disease, *Phytophthora austrocedrae*. The disease is being investigated by Forest Research and the FC Scotland.

Plantlife Scotland called on the public to complete a survey form every time a juniper is seen.

#### TREE PLANTING

FC Scotland has released provisional statistics for the 2012/13 tree-planting season. 7,000 hectares of new planting was established in Scotland, three quarters of which were broadleaf.

Charles Dundas from Woodland Trust Scotland said: "Fewer trees were planted in Scotland this season than in the last, although we hope that this is a minor setback in achieving the long term aim of doubling the size of Scotland's native woodland by 2050. 18% of Scotland's land area is covered by trees, but less than a quarter of that is made up of native species. We welcome FC's clear commitment to funding the creation of new native woods in Scotland, after decades of dominance by exotic species such as Sitka spruce.

"The Scottish Government made a clear commitment to increasing forest cover in their election manifesto, and the emerging tsunami of tree diseases such as *chalara* should make creating resilient new woods a higher priority than ever. In order to do this we need to maintain a grant system that recognises the great benefits for biodiversity, recreation and climate change adaption that come from planting native trees. There has been pressure to reduce these incentives and tip the scales to favour conifer plantations. We accept the need for a healthy timber industry, but there has to be a balanced approach to expanding Scotland's woodland."

See: [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/WAPR2013.pdf/\\$FILE/WAPR2013.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/WAPR2013.pdf/$FILE/WAPR2013.pdf)

#### GLASGOW & CLYDE VALLEY

A new Forest & Woodland strategy for Glasgow & the Clyde Valley has been launched, which aims to support the economy, the environment and improve the lives of people living in the area. Over the next 25 years, the strategy will expand woodlands in the area and improve existing ones, especially in post-industrial areas, and inform new planting. Access for communities will be improved, woodland businesses developed and important environmental habitats linked up.

The strategy will also make a significant contribution to the delivery of the Central Scotland Green Network [Jan 12]. See: [www.gcvsdpa.gov.uk](http://www.gcvsdpa.gov.uk)

#### NATIONAL TREE

The Scottish Government is to launch a consultation to see if the public thinks that Scotland should have a national tree [Jan 13]. A survey carried out by the Woodland Trust Scotland found that a majority favoured the Scots pine.





## FISHFARMING & FISHERIES

### SHELLFISH TOXINS

The *BBC News* website reported that routine sampling by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) found evidence of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning in surf clams from Anstruther and Pittenweem in Fife. The fisheries have temporarily been closed with immediate effect.

Raised toxin levels in shellfish have also been found on Traigh Mhor, Barra. Harvesting has been postponed until the algae levels subside.

The FSA has identified raised levels of toxins in shellfish in Loch Roag, Lewis.

### NORTH SEA COD

The *BBC News* website reported that the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), which certifies whether fish are being caught sustainably, has published a report which says that it is too soon to tell exactly when the North Sea cod fishery will be sustainable [Apr 13]. However, an MSC spokesman said that, on current trends, it would be ready for certification within years rather than decades. Stocks would still be in recovery then but they would have passed an acceptable level.

Red gurnard has been suggested as an alternative to eating cod. This used to be caught as a bycatch, but data on its sustainability is very poor.

### DISCARDS

The *Herald* reported results of a trial that encourages fishermen to fish more selectively [Mar 11]. North Sea cod trawl fishing vessels cut discards from 19% of all cod caught in the fishery in 2011, to 0.1% a year later. North Sea plaice discards reduced from 8% to zero, and the western hake beam trawl fishery cut its discards from 18% of the total catch to 1.7%.

### MACKEREL

The *BBC News* website reported that Maria Damanaki, Europe's fisheries commissioner, warned Iceland's new government that it needs to negotiate quickly or face sanctions over mackerel fishing in the North Atlantic [May 13]. Iceland said that it wanted to wait until October before negotiating; however, the commissioner said that was too late and that a negotiating position was needed within weeks.

Siguraur Ingi Johannsson, Iceland's minister of fisheries and agriculture, said: "We must all work together to protect the mackerel stock through sustainable fishing levels based on collaborative scientific research."



## MARINE

### BATHING WATERS

The *Sunday Herald* reported that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has been ordered by the environment minister, Paul Wheelhouse to correct the way it monitors pollution on popular beaches this summer. The official bathing season began on 1 June on Scotland's 83 officially designated beaches.

Last year, SEPA introduced a new monitoring system, which allowed samples to be taken from bathing waters within a five-day monitoring window, rather than on a fixed day.

Andy Cummins, of Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), said: "Actively avoiding taking samples which SEPA feels could fail, and not taking proactive and appropriate steps to warn the public, are not the actions of a responsible regulator."

SAS challenged SEPA to justify its sampling policy, and has also raised the issue at a meeting with the environment minister, Paul Wheelhouse. It argued that using the five-day window in this way breached the European bathing water directive, and threatened to complain to the European Commission.

SAS said that the flexibility to take samples over five days was only meant to be used in an emergency, when conditions were dangerous or when inspectors were unable to access beaches. The EC said that the provision 'should not be used abusively and contrary to the aims of the directive.'

Paul Wheelhouse has consequently asked SEPA to stop using the five-day monitoring window at 60 of Scotland's bathing waters, which would now be monitored on pre-arranged days. It can still, however, be used at the 23 remaining beaches where there are electronic signs warning the public about pollution levels.

Dr William Gaze, of the University of Exeter, warned that SEPA's monitoring technique could have prevented some beaches being classified as non-compliant. He said: "It would seem likely that less pressure will be put on water companies to improve coastal water quality if bathing water status is maintained by discounting non-compliant periods of low water quality."

Calum McPhail, of SEPA, said that it was unable to estimate what difference use of the five-day monitoring window had made to the status of Scotland's official bathing waters in 2012. He denied that SEPA had cheated or broken European law, arguing that sampling had taken place on days when people were 'most likely' to use bathing waters.

- Keep Scotland Beautiful reported that five of its Blue Flag beaches have been demoted in the latest round of awards: Coldingham, Broughty Ferry, Kinghorn (Pettycur), Elie Harbour and Leven. The three remaining Blue Flag beaches are Aberdour Silver Sands, Burntisland and Elie Ruby Bay, all in Fife.

The Seaside Awards recognised 59 beaches in total, including the Blue Flag beaches. They were recognised for excellent litter management, safety procedures and water quality.

See: [www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/coastal](http://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/coastal)

- *The Herald* reported that Broughty Ferry beach in Dundee was covered in sewage less than ten days after being awarded Blue Flag status for the tenth year in a row.

### DALGETY BAY

SEPA has released its latest assessment of the radioactive contamination at Dalgety Bay in Fife [Dec 12].

It details the hazards posed by the contamination and the associated pathways where people using the area could encounter such sources and the chance of such an encounter. See: [www.sepa.org.uk/radioactive\\_substances/publications/dalgety\\_bay\\_reports.aspx](http://www.sepa.org.uk/radioactive_substances/publications/dalgety_bay_reports.aspx)

The *BBC News* website reported that the investigation by SEPA into the history of radioactive contamination at Dalgety Bay in Fife has concluded that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is solely responsible. The *Appropriate Persons* report said that the MoD had routinely incinerated and disposed of aircraft dials from HMS Merlin in the bay; the dials had been illuminated by paint containing radium-226. The base was commissioned in 1939 as a Royal Naval Aircraft Repair Yard and decommissioned in 1959 before being sold off through the 1960s. Subsequently, Dalgety Bay New Town and industrial premises were built in the area.

Dr James Gemmill of SEPA said that it would

be discussing all possible options with the MoD in order to agree a robust, long-term management strategy for addressing the contamination. He said: "It is also understood that solid wastes arising were incinerated and disposed on site. Again this was common practice and witness statements recount the burning of dials and other cockpit parts with ashes being disposed near the shore. The contamination is the result of disposal of contaminated ash during the lifetime of HMS Merlin and this has been identified at depth in the Headland, Boat Park and demarcated areas with no evidence that this material, deposited prior to 1959, has been significantly disturbed other than by coastal action. Contamination on the foreshore at Dalgety Bay is the result of erosion of deposited material and subsequent re-working and re-deposition of contaminated marine sediments resulting from coastal erosion, a process which is considered to be a normal part of life."

Gordon Brown MP said: "Having been named as the polluter, the MoD must now agree to fund the clean-up of the area to remove the contaminated substances from the Dalgety Bay beach, and the work must start immediately."

The MoD said it would consider the report findings in detail and respond to SEPA 'in due course.' However, it said it had concerns over the 'adequacy and validity' of both SEPA's risk assessment and its approach to the *Appropriate Persons* report. A spokesman said: "MoD has demonstrated a serious commitment to voluntarily assisting SEPA, the Scottish Government and the Dalgety Bay Forum in dealing with the situation at Dalgety Bay. Public Health England assess that the risk to human health on the beach remains low."

### MINGULAY SHARKS

Egg cases of *Galeus melastomus*, the blackmouth catshark, have been found for the first time on the Mingulay coral reef in the Outer Hebrides. Heriot-Watt University made the discovery while surveying cold-water corals using a remotely operated vehicle. Researchers said that the deep-sea shark nursery reinforces the need for the area to be designated as a Marine Protection Area.

Over 60% of sport anglers target catsharks when they fish this area, which brings in over £140m to the Scottish economy each year. The sharks are released back into the water, which helps to document and ultimately conserve the populations.

### ROCKALL

Methane, leaking through a vent in the ocean floor, has been found off Rockall by Marine Scotland, the first of its kind to be found near UK waters. Two new species of deep-water clam were found whose food source is a bacteria that harvests the methane gas.

The International Convention on the Exploration of the Seas has recommended a fishing ban for the site for its protection.



## POLITICS & PARLIAMENT

### LAND REFORM

The *Herald* reported that Andy Wightman, a leading land reform campaigner, has criticised the decision of the Scottish Government's Land Reform Review Group (LRRG) not to investigate the plight of Scotland's tenant farmers [May 13].

He said the LRRG had been given the task of formulating radical proposals to take forward land reform but, in its interim report, said it would be taking no further interest in land tenure as it affected Scotland's tenant farmers.

However, a Scottish Government spokesman said: "The LRRG consultation has brought forward a wide range of issues on a broad range of subjects – including farm tenancy. This is an area already being considered by the Tenant Farming Forum and as such the group, as its interim report states, will now concentrate on community-right-to-buy issues."

Andy Wightman also said that the LRRG had decided to discuss its work with Scottish Lands & Estates (SLE), which represents Scotland's landowners, without giving the same detail to the public who are paying for its work.

Professor Jim Hunter, until recently a vice-chair of the LRRG, said that six years under the SNP had left Scotland stuck with the 'most concentrated, most inequitable, most unreformed and most undemocratic land ownership system in the entire developed world' [May 13]. He criticised the group's interim report, and said that the government had been involved directly in its work. He said that there should be a commitment to legislation in 2014/15 on community land ownership, and that the process of getting land into community hands needed to be simpler. He said that the government was doing 'absolutely nothing legislatively' to change the country's 'undemocratic' land ownership system.

The environment minister, Paul Wheelhouse, said that the 'vital work' of the LRRG would require further resource for phase two of the work. Pip Tabor has joined the group, and Robin Callander has been appointed as a special adviser. Malcolm Combe has been appointed to the LRRG's advisers' group.

In a debate in the Scottish parliament, Claire Baker MSP said that the group 'lacked political direction' and said that the 'experience and knowledge of the group has narrowed in the time it has been established.' She said that she wanted to see 'bold solutions' to issues surrounding land reform. Alex Fergusson MSP said that legislation could not be expected midway through the review process. Patrick Harvie MSP said that land reform was 'a crucial issue which is in danger of disappearing from the government's radar.'

First minister Alex Salmond, speaking at the Community Land Scotland conference in Skye, set a target for a million acres of land in Scotland to be under local control by 2020. These measures will be set out in a Community Empowerment & Renewal Bill later this year.

Luke Borwick, of SLE said: "As an organisation, we are supportive of a broad church of land ownership and support community buyouts. We welcome the Scottish Government's view that the process of such buyouts should be simplified but we are fundamentally opposed to the concept of enforcing the sale of land to communities or individuals. All sales should be on the basis of willing seller and willing buyer, which is the foundation of all property transactions. That applies to every property owner in Scotland."

#### SCOTTISH LAND FUND

The £6m Scottish Land Fund was launched a year ago for a three-year period with £1m in the first year, £2m in the second and £3m in the third. A further £3m has now been awarded for an additional fourth year [Jul 12]. The fund will continue to help communities to take control of land at least until the next Scottish Parliament elections in 2016.

The Land Fund has so far helped five community buyouts: Midlem in the Scottish Borders, Colintrave and Glendaruel in Argyll, Coigach in Wester Ross, Mull of Galloway in Wigtownshire and Lossiemouth in Moray.

#### CAPE WRATH

The environment minister, Paul Wheelhouse, has approved Durness Development Group's bid to register interest in taking over the 111 acre site at Cape Wrath [May 13].

First minister, Alex Salmond, said: "Put bluntly, we would see more benefits for the local area rather than more land for bombing – the principal use the rest of the Cape is put to by the Ministry of Defence."

#### CARLOWAY ESTATE

A feasibility study to examine a community buyout of the 11,400 acre Carloway Estate on Loch Roag, Lewis has been commissioned. Atmos Consulting will examine suitable sites for renewable energy schemes to create revenue after a buyout.

#### LAND EXCHANGE

*The Herald* reported that Anders Holch Povlsen, who owns 150,000 acres in Scotland, has exchanged three parcels of land with Forestry Commission (FC) Scotland for 1,000 acres adjacent to his Glenfeshie Estate. The land swapped includes 336 acres near Walkerburn in Peebleshire, which was bought specifically to hand over as part of the overall deal.

Land reform campaigner, Andy Wightman, said that it was quite unusual for Scottish ministers in the form of FC Scotland to obtain land in deals like this, particularly when the parcels of land are 150 miles apart. He called for greater transparency and asked why FC Scotland needed an estate to buy the land on its behalf.

Thomas MacDonell, director of Wildland Ltd which runs the Glenfeshie Estate for Mr Povlsen, said: "There were very sound environmental and land management reasons for both the estate and FC Scotland to simplify the boundaries between them and we were happy to reach an agreement. This will enable us to further improve the habitat for our thriving woodland grouse population."

An FC Scotland spokesman said: "These exchanges have smoothed woodland boundaries and merged 'islands' of woodlands with surrounding forests to create more unified areas that allows us, and the Glenfeshie Estate, to develop more cohesive, effective and over-arching management plans. This will help our woodland creation and restoration plans as well as our conservation work."

#### LANDFILL TAX

*The Herald* reported that the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) has raised fears that funding for biodiversity schemes will fall when the Scottish Government becomes responsible for collecting landfill taxes from 2015. The Landfill Community Fund (LCF) is important because it is one of the few revenue streams dedicated to biodiversity. A number of big waste firms distribute landfill funds on a UK-wide basis. This will end when Holyrood takes over responsibility for setting the tax. Around one-third of the cash levied goes into the LCF for biodiversity schemes. Across the UK it amounts to about £70m per year, with up to £7m spent in Scotland.

In a submission to MSPs, the SWT said that LCF spending in Scotland was 'significantly higher than the amount actually collected here' because grants have included cash raised in England. The SWT warned that uncertainty over funding could hit long-term projects.

A Scottish Government spokesman said: "Scottish ministers have announced their intention to increase the size of the devolved LCF by 10% over the UK system at the point of introduction in 2015. From that date, the UK LCF will no

longer apply in Scotland. When the UK Landfill Tax is discontinued, all revenue raised through the Scottish Landfill Tax credit scheme will be spent in Scotland."

It will be the responsibility of the Scottish Government to make arrangements for the support of existing projects currently covered by the LCF.

#### DECROFTING

Decrofting legislation has been passed by the Scottish Parliament which addresses the difficulties which owner-occupier crofters face when applying to decroft their land [May 13]. Decrofting land can enable a house to be built on the land and facilitate croft land being passed from one generation to the next. It was the intention of the Scottish Government that tenant and owner-occupier crofters be treated similarly under the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010. However, a loophole meant that owner-occupier crofters were unable to apply to the Crofting Commission to decroft land; the bill was bought forward to amend existing legislation.



## GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

#### HILL TRACKS

Nine environmental organisations, under the umbrella of Scottish Environment LINK, have launched a campaign aimed at protecting the Scottish countryside from unregulated hill track construction [May 12]. The organisations are calling on members of the public to take photographs of poorly designed or constructed tracks while they are out in the hills. These will be used to build up a portfolio of evidence to persuade the Scottish Government to bring construction of the tracks within the planning system for the first time.

Beryl Leatherland, of the Scottish Wild Land Group and co-convenor of the campaign group, said: "Hill tracks can serve legitimate purposes, and if landowners and managers had to apply for planning permission and carry out a proper environmental assessment, they would finally come under a level of local authority and public scrutiny. This would help ensure that their visual impact was limited, and that, if approved, they would be constructed to a standard that would minimise environmental damage such as erosion, peat deterioration and drainage problems.

"Our organisations have campaigned on this issue for many years, but the Scottish Government recently dropped its proposal to bring hill tracks with purported 'agricultural or forestry purposes' into the planning system. Such tracks continue to enjoy Permitted Development Rights that exempt them from planning laws and put the landscape at risk through lack of regulation. Even large tracts of our National Parks are without protection from crudely bulldozed tracks."

*The Herald* reported that a Scottish Government spokesman said: "The provision of sensitively designed and carefully located tracks can be important for rural businesses. Such tracks can be beneficial, for example by ensuring that vehicles always follow an acceptable route."

Douglas McAdam, of Scottish Land & Estates (SLE), said: "The issue of hill tracks as permitted development was the subject of a full consultation by the Scottish Government less than a year ago. Derek Mackay, the minister with responsibility for planning, made a clear decision in the earlier part of this year confirming that hill tracks were a very necessary part of rural land management and that more planning control was not required."

He said that Scottish Environment LINK, and others, made their case at the time. He said that it was 'disappointing that this is being raised again



by these organisations following such a full and considered airing.'

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCoFS), whilst not a member of LINK, fully supports LINK's campaign.

See: [www.scotlink.org/hilltracks](http://www.scotlink.org/hilltracks)

**RADON**

The *BBC News* website reported that a new radon map of Scotland has been published by the Health Protection Agency, using past tests and geological information to identify areas with potentially high levels [Jan 12].

Edinburgh, Mid, East and West Lothian, Falkirk, East Renfrewshire and South Lanarkshire have now been classified as 'Radon Affected Areas' and are to be tested further. Work has already been done in other parts of Scotland, including the Highlands and Aberdeenshire where the radon risk was considered greatest. The gas is generally only harmful if it is allowed to accumulate in homes; the risks can be reduced by increased ventilation.

**STALLED SPACES**

The *BBC News* website reported that the Stalled Spaces Initiative, a Glasgow-wide project to bring vacant and derelict land back into public use, has won the 2013 City to City Barcelona Fostering Arts and Design Award. The scheme provides funding and ideas for local people to turn unproductive land into a community asset, such as a play area or green space.

Glasgow's work in promoting temporary land use was commended by the jury and the judges praised the project's success in empowering local people to take over the vacant sites.

The Stalled Spaces Initiative was started in 2010 by Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association.

**BUZZARDS**

The *Herald* reported that an internet petition, started by Raptor Persecution Scotland, to prevent buzzards being culled in Scotland gathered over 23,000 signatures in less than two weeks [May 13].

An RSPB Scotland spokesperson said: "There is absolutely no convincing evidence that licences to kill buzzards are necessary."

The law allows action to be taken against protected species to protect livestock, which includes any animal kept for the provision or improvement of shooting.

**PROSECUTION**

A gamekeeper who poisoned a buzzard with carbofuran on Glasserton and Physgill Estates near Whithorn, Dumfries & Galloway has been fined £4,450 at Stranraer Sheriff Court. He was also found to have stored carbofuran, strychnine and alphachloralose, all illegal pesticides.

**RAPTOR PERSECUTION**

The *BBC News* website reported that the police are investigating allegations that a sea eagle's nest was destroyed on the Invermark Estate in Angus. The tree containing the nest was felled in January; the nest had been built up since November 2012 and the nest cup was already lined and thus primed for use. Conservationists said it was the first nest made by white-tailed sea eagles in the east of Scotland in about 150 years.

RSPB Scotland claimed that the estate had been warned that eagles were nesting in the tree. The loss of the nest meant there would be no breeding pairs of white-tailed eagles in the east of Scotland this year.

A spokesman for Invermark Estate said: "Any

suggestion that the estate or its employees, who are highly trained and implement extensive conservation programmes, would jeopardise or disrupt species that have made this estate their home, is disputed in the strongest possible terms."

An SLE spokesman for said: "There is a worrying trend in these matters that certain people take the irresponsible view that accusations can be made anonymously through the media, in the middle of police investigations, with the objective of hoping that mud sticks and an estate can be portrayed as being guilty until proven innocent."

• The *Herald* reported that a post-mortem has shown that a tagged, female red kite was killed illegally near Aboyne in Aberdeenshire.

**WILDLIFE CRIME**

The Scottish Government has announced new measures to further deter those involved in wildlife crime. It says that there have been a number of recent reports and court cases that suggest wildlife crime is still on-going through the use of poisons, illegal trapping and shooting. Although 2012 saw a reduction in poisoning cases it is anticipated these further measures will help prevent more incidents.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has been asked to examine how and when they could restrict the use of General Licences to trap and shoot wild birds on land where they have good reason to believe crimes have taken place.

A group will be established to review how wildlife crime is treated within the legal system including whether the penalties available are adequate.

The Lord Advocate has instructed prosecutors in the Wildlife & Environmental Crime Unit to work with Police Scotland to ensure that law enforcement utilises all investigative tools at their disposal in the fight against wildlife crime

Environment minister, Paul Wheelhouse said: "Wildlife crime, and raptor persecution in particular, often takes place in remote locations or in the dark of night. By its very surreptitious nature, the likelihood of being seen by a member of the public who can report the matter to the authorities is small. Though through these new measures I am keen to maximise the opportunity for offences to be detected and offenders to be tracked down.

"Eradicating raptor persecution in Scotland remains a high priority for me and for this government. It is not however the sole responsibility of government. Law enforcement clearly has a key role to play. But also everyone should make clear their disapproval to the minority whose actions are tarnishing the reputation of Scotland's country sports."

See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/paw-scotland/news/2013/raptor-persecution-new-measures](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/paw-scotland/news/2013/raptor-persecution-new-measures); [www.paw.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.paw.scotland.gov.uk)

**CARBOFURAN**

The *BBC News* website reported that police are investigating the discovery of poisoned baits on the Leadhills Estate in South Lanarkshire. The inquiry began on 8 March, after a report from a member of the public, but details were only released in June. The baits have been confirmed as containing carbofuran.

**CLYDE SWANS**

The *Herald* reported that a swan's nest, containing two eggs, was destroyed by Clydeport workmen removing a pontoon from the River Clyde in at Pacific Quay in Glasgow. Swans' nests and eggs are covered by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, which gives protection to all wild birds and

states that inhabited nests and the eggs of wild birds must not be destroyed.

RSPB Scotland confirmed that the police are investigating the incident.

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

Scotland has failed to meet its climate change targets for the second consecutive year [Jul 12]. A report, *Scottish Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2011*, showed that emissions narrowly exceeded the official target.

The Scottish Government insisted that the statistics showed Scotland was on track to meet its overall goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 42% by the end of the decade and is committed to a series of annual emission reductions targets, which are currently legislated from 2010 to 2027.

The Scottish Government said that 'methodological changes and new data' made the target for 2011 harder to achieve. Emissions fell by 2.9% between 2010 and 2011, but fell just short of the 2011 target for adjusted figures, which take the EU Emissions Trading System into account. There was an overall 9.9% reduction in the unadjusted emissions figures.

The government said that provisional figures showed almost 39% of Scotland's electricity needs came from renewables in 2012. Between 2010 and 2011, there were large decreases in greenhouse gas emissions in the energy supply and residential sectors. This was attributed to reduced consumption of coal in power stations and a drop in natural gas consumption.

Dr Sam Gardner, of the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland coalition, said the missed target was 'very disappointing.'

See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/1558/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/1558/0)

• The Scottish Government has launched a consultation into the Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme. The government is required to produce this programme by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, and it sets out the policies and proposals that the government believes are needed to help Scotland adapt to huge changes in climate.

See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/7592](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/7592)

**BIODIVERSITY CHALLENGE**

The *2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity* has been launched. It aims to protect and restore biodiversity on land and sea, and to support healthier ecosystems. It also aims to connect people with the natural world, for their health and wellbeing and to involve them more in decisions about their environment. It will maximise the benefits for Scotland and of a diverse natural environment and the services it provides, contributing to sustainable economic growth.

Paul Wheelhouse said: "Peatland soils of Scotland are estimated to store ten times more carbon than in all of the UK's trees and we will be undertaking a major programme of peatland conservation, management and restoration to conserve wildlife and improve capacity for storing carbon. Clear advice to land managers and support for 'High Nature Value' farming and forestry will also help wildlife in the wider countryside, and by supporting communities to improve their local environments we can help biodiversity and improve the quality of life for people across Scotland."

Jonathan Hughes, of the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), said: "The strategy sets out a number of new directions for nature conservation in Scotland, but also builds on what has worked well for wildlife in the past, such as the designation and management of our amazing network of protected areas. As with most countries around the world, Scotland's

environment will face enormous pressures in the 21st century and to deal with these we need to restore nature at a bigger scale than ever before. By taking a so called 'ecosystem approach' where we plan and care for the environment at a landscape scale, not just in small isolated pockets, we may finally begin to halt the relentless decline in Scotland's species and habitats. The Scottish Government clearly recognise this in the strategy and should be commended for their forward-thinking approach.

"It is the explicit link with the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity targets which SWT particularly welcomes, along with a much needed emphasis on natural capital, the importance of nature to health and wellbeing and, perhaps most vital of all, the strong focus on restoring Scotland's biodiversity at the ecosystem scale. However, getting the principles and theory right is one thing, making these a reality on the ground through projects which protect and restore our species, habitats and landscapes are another."

The *2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity* is a supplement to *Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in Your Hands (2004)*. The Scottish Government designates these two documents together as compromising the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/5538](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/5538)

• *The Herald* reported that Scottish Environment LINK published 14 specific biodiversity targets, following the Scottish Government's 2010 failure to meet its biodiversity targets to protect against loss of species.

LINK highlighted the eradication of rhododendron from around 74 protected sites, a need to increase the number of urban green spaces machair restoration projects and the establishment of a National Ecological Network on land and at sea to restore health and connectivity to Scotland's ecosystems. In particular, LINK claimed that ending commercial peat use, for whisky and horticulture, is essential to slow the decline in Scotland's biodiversity of plant life and animal species. LINK also proposed that the companies which have held peat extraction rights could contribute to the maintenance of peatlands post-2020.

See: [www.scotlink.org/files/policy/PositionPapers/Challenge2020LINKbenchmark.pdf](http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/PositionPapers/Challenge2020LINKbenchmark.pdf)

### CAIRNGORMS HOUSING

The *Strathspey & Badenoch Herald* reported that the Woodland Trust Scotland has repeated its objection to housing expansion in Nethy Bridge on Speyside, citing the loss of ancient woodland and valuable habitats [Mar 13]. It recommended a 50m buffer zone around housing to protect sensitive wildlife from light pollution.

• 30 new homes, to be built by Davall Developments, have been approved by the Cairngorms National Park Authority in Boat of Garten [Jan 13]. Adjacent woods are used by capercaillie; dogwalking restrictions will be put in place during the breeding season and a ranger will be appointed to advise the public. Buglife said that a detailed invertebrate survey had not been carried out, and that the mitigation measures were unenforceable and untested.



## ENERGY

### ELECTRICITY MARKET REFORM

The *BBC News* website reported that the UK Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) has announced that it is to consult on the subsidy levels necessary to encourage investment

in the renewables industry, and additional support for renewables projects on islands, where these have clearly distinct characteristics to typical mainland projects.

The UK government is moving towards targeted subsidies for power generated on and around Scotland's islands as the cost of grid connection to mainland markets has held back development. If the market price for energy is below the 'strike price' set by government, a subsidy system would kick in to ensure the producer has a minimum level of income. The UK government also announced the draft strike price for future developments of wind power throughout Britain and offshore.

Alex Paterson, of Highlands & Islands Enterprise, said that the islands announcement was 'groundbreaking, hugely welcome and signals commitment to developing a clearly defined solution.' He said: "Electricity Market Reform has undoubtedly caused investment uncertainty and while there is still some way to go before strike prices are demonstrably better than the existing Renewables Obligation. Today's publication should begin to give industry some confidence of a renewables market beyond 2017.

Wave power is set to get twice as high a strike price as offshore wind turbines.

### SUBSEA CABLE

Scottish Hydro-Electric Transmission Ltd has sent document to Ofgem outlining why a subsea cable is required to carry electricity generated on the Western Isles to the mainland for distribution [Jan 13]. The 'needs case' is a key part of the planning process. Ofgem will assess whether the interconnector is efficient and economic. The project has been beset by delays and a rise in costs to an estimated £780m.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has said that major renewable energy projects planned for the Western Isles cannot go ahead without the cable. It would join Gravir on Lewis to Ullapool in Wester Ross, about 50 miles.

### ONSHORE WINDFARMS & PLANNING

The *Daily Telegraph* obtained correspondence under Freedom of Information laws which shows that Simon Pallant, a Scottish Government planner, emailed Dumfries & Galloway Council in August 2012 about a planning blueprint the local authority was developing for wind energy. He said that the plan wrongly excluded areas that were deemed to be of 'local significance' and said: "We are concerned that the approach used by the council is too stringent and restrictive and will deter development."

He warned that ministers would appoint a Scottish Government planning reporter to produce an 'examination report' if the council ignored their views; examination reports are largely binding on planning authorities.

Mr Pallant wrote again to the same council planner in October complaining that some areas deemed to have potential constraints for windfarms were not consistent with Scottish Government planning policy. These included land identified by the RSPB and Scottish National Heritage as 'bird sensitivity areas' and wild land in Merrick. He suggested that areas of 'limited potential' for windfarm development should instead be presented on a map as 'areas of greatest opportunity.'

Stephen Hall, a Scottish Government principal planner, in a letter to East Ayrshire Council said that there is an 'onus' on all councils to look for 'expanded areas of search' for land. He rejected the local authority's plans forcing windfarm developers to pay into a fund for community projects, stating: "We also question

the assumption that windfarms cause a harm that requires recompensing."

Mr Hall also wrote to South Ayrshire Council in February 2012 complaining that its draft local development plan 'feels restrictive' towards turbines and urging it to act 'positively' towards renewable developments.

Similar advice was issued to council planners in Moray, Angus, East Lothian and East Dunbartonshire, with the latter being told to adopt an approach 'in line with the government's programme for renewable energy targets.'

Another Scottish Government planner wrote to Western Isles Council in November 2011 complaining that its guidance stated that windfarms should 'not have a significant impact on the landscape character of the Outer Hebrides.'

Perth & Kinross and Stirling Councils were also asked to remove wording from draft planning documents deemed to be too negative about windfarms.

Scottish Borders Council was 'pressurised' to allow more turbines despite warnings the area was at 'saturation point.'

The Scottish Government said it was a legal requirement for councils to consult planning officials in Edinburgh on emerging development plans but it was for local authorities to decide how they supported the construction of more turbines.

A spokesman said that ministers are currently consulting on a revised approach on how local authorities should deal with planning applications for onshore wind.

### WINDFARMS & ENVIRONMENT

The Scottish Wild Land Group (SWLG) published *Windfarms gone wild: is the environmental damage justified?* – a special issue of its magazine, *Wild Land News*. It calls into question the Scottish Government's focus on wind power as an effective method of tackling climate change and suggested that far more needs to be done to protect Scotland's communities, environments and landscapes from opportunistic development.

Contributors identify threats to Scotland's internationally important wild land, protected native species, cultural heritage, community cohesion, and democratic processes and argue that windfarms make a vanishingly small contribution to the fight against climate change at best, and may even prove to be counter-productive.

The SWLG considers that wild land and peatland carbon sinks will be destroyed, along with numerous habitats and species. Communities located close to windfarms are divided; resources are allocated by channelling public money to large energy companies with subsidiaries in tax havens, who arbitrarily pass a tiny fraction on to a few communities; the tourist industry is also damaged.

John Constable, of the Renewable Energy Foundation, said: "The general public now realise that they are being asked to make economic and environmental sacrifices that are not only pointless but actually delay more constructive action. The mass deployment of existing and inadequate technologies is simply a dead end."

Sharon Blackie, editor of *EarthLines* magazine, said: "If the price of our current excessive level of electricity consumption is the permanent non-renewable loss of the pitifully little that is still wild and natural in this country, then it's too high a price to pay."

The SWLG believes that energy policy must be the subject of an urgent investigation by an independent commission, and that a robust wild land designation that respects the environmental, cultural and economic importance of Scotland's landscapes must be introduced.



• *The Herald* reported that communities across Scotland receive £5m per year from windfarm operators as community benefit.

#### WILD LAND & WINDFARMS

The *BBC News* website reported that a survey by the John Muir Trust (JMT) showed that the majority of Scots want the country's wild land to be protected from windfarms. The poll of about 1,100 people said that 40% said they would 'strongly support' with a further 35% 'tending to support' the proposal that the 20% of Scotland's landscape identified as core wild land should be given special protection from inappropriate development including windfarms. 2% said they would 'strongly oppose' protection, while 4% said that they 'tend to oppose' it. Of the remainder, 14% said they 'neither support nor oppose' the proposals, with 5% undecided.

The JMT said that this gave ministers a clear mandate to introduce protection, despite the decision by Holyrood's Public Petition's committee not to pursue its petition for statutory designation for wild land [May 13].

#### WINDFARM RESTORATION

A Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) report, *Research and guidance on restoration and decommissioning of onshore windfarms* provides guidance on the development of a Restoration & Decommissioning Plan (RDP) template to help develop good practice guidance. The research was undertaken by SLR Consulting Ltd with support from a steering group including representatives from the renewables industry.

The research proposes a planned phasing out of a site to leave as little trace as possible. The report states that early consideration and regular review of these plans by developers will benefit the environment. Operators are being urged to build up a greater understanding of a site's natural heritage features and how these respond to change before considering it for use.

A potential future option is repowering, where next generation turbines are built on existing sites, and the report also examines the used turbine market. More generally, the report recommends that decommissioning conditions are improved to set the scene for restoration work on areas such as peatlands.

See: [www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2007](http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2007)

#### WINDFARM UPDATES

**Caithness:** Dunbeath Wind Energy's application for 17 turbines near Dunbeath has been rejected by Scottish ministers [Feb 10]. Energy Secretary Fergus Ewing said that the windfarm, between Berriedale Water and Dunbeath Water, would have adversely affected the landscape. He also found a lack of safeguards for nearby wild land, and took into account the significant cumulative impact from neighbouring windfarms..

The joint venture between RDC Scotland Ltd and Falck Renewables had initially been for 23 turbines, before being scaled back. Highland Council did not object to the application, but SNH objected, triggering a public local inquiry.

Aedán Smith, of RSPB Scotland, said: "We are pleased this decision makes it more likely that golden eagles will once again breed successfully in the area."

Stuart Brooks of JMT said: "This decision, along with the recently published wild land map and the proposed changes to planning policy could mark a historic milestone in the battle for Scotland's wild land. In the Year of Natural Scotland and the 175th birthday of John Muir it is good news indeed that the Scottish Government

seems to be taking to heart the words of the great pioneering Scottish environmentalist – 'we need beauty as well as bread.'

"There are still a number of other proposed wind developments in the pipeline in the heart of core wild land areas in the Monadhliath Mountains and near Loch Shin in Sutherland. We would urge the Scottish Government to act boldly and consistently by rejecting these schemes too. We now urge the government to act courageously in the coming months and send a clear message to the rest world that Scotland's wild and rugged land is a magnificent national treasure that is worth protecting."

**Inverness-shire:** The *Strathspey & Badenoch Herald* reported that Nanclach's 39.1 MW Tom na Clach windfarm, near Tomatin, has been approved. However, Eurus Energy's adjacent 102 MW Glenkirk windfarm was refused planning permission as it was considered that there would be a significant adverse impact on wild land and key landscape characteristics, along with cumulative impact [Sep 11].

**South Lanarkshire:** 384 turbines in small scale windfarms of four or more turbines have been given planning permission. A report by the council's planning committee reveals that a further 200 sites have been given planning permission for three or fewer turbines.

Community councils have raised concerns about over the number of small windfarms in the area.

**Western Isles:** The three turbine Beinn Ghrìdeag windfarm near Stornoway has been awarded £999,718 by the Big Lottery Fund's Growing Community Assets programme. It will be the largest community-owned windfarm in the UK.

• *The Herald* reported that a white-throated needletail, a rare swift from Asia, was killed after it flew into the community-owned Drinishader wind turbine in Harris.

• Uisenis Power has submitted a plan for 12 turbines on the Eishken Estate on Lewis. Original plans were to build 30 turbines, next to the 39 turbine windfarm already being developed [May 12]. An estimated eight sea eagles and four golden eagles would be killed by the the larger-scale development over 25 years, according to planning documents lodged by the developer.

#### OFFSHORE WIND UPDATE

The Scottish Government has introduced new subsidies for offshore wind power projects. One of the new subsidies aims to support the generation of electricity from offshore tests and demonstration sites. The other will provide financial support for pilot projects. The two new bands are to be created for the Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROCs) scheme.

**Moray Firth:** Highland Council has approved the Beatrice Offshore Windfarm Limited (BOWL) project, up to 277 turbines in the Moray Firth. BOWL is a joint partnership formed between SSE Renewables and Repsol Nuevas Energias UK. Two experimental turbines are already sited in the Beatrice oil and gas field, the location of the proposed windfarm. The plans now pass to the Scottish Government for the final decision.

**Firth of Forth:** Seagreen Wind Energy has applied to Angus Council for consent for onshore infrastructure required for its Firth of Forth Offshore Wind Zone, which also includes a new electricity substation. 12 miles of underground cables will transmit the power from a landfall location at South Carnoustie onto the grid connection point at the existing substation at Tealing, north of Dundee.

#### GALLOWAY COAL

The *Sunday Herald* reported that Dumfries & Galloway Council has sought legal advice on a bid by New Age Exploration (NAE) to carry out exploratory drilling for coal at Canonbie. NAE's proposed Lochinvar deep coal mine covers 67 square kilometres and stretches into northern England. It is aimed at providing up to 410 million tonnes of coking coal for steelworks south of the border.

The Buccleuch Estate has been working with Dart Energy on plans to extract coalbed methane from part of the same coalbed. The estate was concerned about environmental pollution from NAE's proposed test drilling. The estate informed the council that, if pollution occurred, legal remedies would be pursued.

The estate is also working with another company, Kier, on proposals for an opencast coal mine near Canonbie. The estate has argued that it makes sense to extract methane from the coal seam before digging the coal out via a new deep mine.

#### UNCONVENTIONAL GAS

*The Herald* reported that Dart Energy is in discussions with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) over ending its permits for two hydraulic fracturing (fracking) sites for shale gas extraction near Canonbie in Dumfries & Galloway. Dart said it had shown that commercially viable levels of coal-bed methane could be extracted in Scotland without recourse to fracking technology. The company has been re-assessing the fracking licences it acquired from another company in 2012.

SEPA disclosed that an investigation into an allegation of methane leaks at Canonbie has uncovered no evidence of problems [Apr 13].

Dart Energy lodged an appeal with ministers, following Falkirk Council's failure to decide on its plans to extract natural gas from coal seams at Airth [May 13]. Dart said it wanted 'clarity' on its application as the council had delayed its decision by four months. The company has already drilled 20 wells in the area, and wants to drill at a further 14 sites and build a water and gas treatment plant.

Campaign group Frack Off Scotland received a field development plan for the project under Freedom of Information laws. The plan says that Dart will be allowed to release up to five tonnes of gas per day for safety reasons. The company will also be able to burn off gas in flares 'on an emergency basis.'

#### BIOMASS PLANTS

**Grangemouth:** Planning consent has been granted for Forth Energy Ltd's combined heat and power biomass plant for the Port of Grangemouth [Jun 12]. The plant is expected to generate up to 120 MW of electricity and will also supply local businesses and industry with up to 200 MWh of heat. The consent includes conditions to ensure the plant burns fuel from sustainable and responsible sources, to control the appearance of the development, to protect the environment and air quality and to keep the local community informed about the progress of the development, as well as a condition to ensure that the fuel used in the biomass is from sustainable and responsible sources.

**Dundee:** The *BBC News* website reported that Forth Energy's plans for a 100 MW biomass plant in Dundee have been rejected by councillors [Nov 10]. A study was launched in 2011 after concerns were raised about the levels of nitrogen dioxide the facility would release into the atmosphere. Results of air quality monitoring and computer modelling, published earlier this year, suggested the increase in

NO<sub>2</sub> levels would be less than 1%. The planning application will now be the subject of a public local inquiry by the Scottish Government.

### DOUNREAY PARTICLES

The *BBC News* website reported that equipment used to find radioactive particles on beaches near Dounreay in Caithness has been modified so that it is more sensitive and can better detect particles emitting beta radiation; most particles that have been already located have emitted gamma radiation [Sep 12]. The particles were discharged from the nuclear plant into the sea in the 1970s; surrounding beaches have been monitored and more than 2,000 particles removed.

Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) is leading the demolition of Dounreay and commissioned the monitoring.

- Work to clean up the seabed near Dounreay will not take place this year. A remotely-operated vehicle has been used to recover particles every summer since August 2008. DSRL said it had agreed to clean up an area of 148 acres and by September 2012 had removed fragments from 222 acres. Over 2,200 particles were recovered from the seabed.



## RECREATION & TOURISM

### SCENIC ROUTES

The Scottish Scenic Routes initiative aims to capitalise on the fact that many of Scotland's roads offer the ideal vantage point to admire the spectacular scenery. The project has received £500,000 as part of a £205m package of 'shovel-ready' construction and maintenance projects announced by the Scottish Government to support jobs and growth in Scotland [Dec 12]. Uniquely designed viewing platforms and viewpoints will be created beside the most scenic routes to significantly improve the journey experience by creating new places to stop and enjoy Scotland's landscapes.

Scotland plans to achieve a range of economic and cultural benefits by enhancing visitor's holiday experience; making journeys through the landscape more enjoyable; creating opportunities for young Scottish design talent to re-imagine the landscape; providing job opportunities to local/rural communities and attracting more visitors to spend more time enjoying the Scottish countryside.

It is hoped that the pilot viewpoint projects will be underway later this year and the government hopes that they will be a tangible legacy of the Year of Natural Scotland.

Joint proposals have already been received by the Scottish Government from Scottish Canals and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. The scheme is based on National Tourist Roads in Norway.

### LOCH LOMOND PARK

*The Herald* reported that Fiona Logan, chief executive of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, said that there was potential for greater involvement of the private sector, sponsorship from local businesses and contributions from visitors in the form of donations and charges.

She said that national parks could become self-sustaining in ten to 20 years and no longer rely solely on public funding, whilst remaining in the public sector.

Dave Morris, of Ramblers Scotland, said: "If this is the view of the chief executive, there needs to be serious questions asked in the Scottish

Government about what direction she is taking the national park. All this about commercialisation would seem to us that she is just losing the plot." He said that he had concerns the park was already 'losing its way' due to moves such as banning wild camping on the east shore of Loch Lomond.

Bill McDermott, of the Scottish Campaign for National Parks, described the park as a national asset. He said: "I think if we went down the road of commercialisation, we are more or less selling off the silver. I would hate to have a park where everything was privatised and had to be paid for. That doesn't give a sense of community at all."

Peter Jack, of the Loch Lomond Association, said: "The intention of the Scottish Government when the park concept was first brought in was that it should be there to encourage everybody in Scotland and from further afield to use it pretty well free at the point of use as much as could be achieved. That is not the philosophy that has been pursued by the park."

Ms Logan expressed her personal view on potential commercial opportunities to generate extra income. Among suggestions in a paper presented to the park board last week was charging for a wider range of services and facilities – such as parking, toilets, campsites and non-emergency boat rescues. She said that 95% of the park's annual income of nearly £8m was from Scottish Government grants, meaning that 'all our eggs are in one basket.'

She said: "If we believe protecting the area for future generations is important – which we all do – we believe finding sustainable ways of paying for that and providing for that in the future is important too. Public-sector budgets are predicted to decline somewhat in the next while, or at least hold where they are – they are not going to go up again. Frankly, I think that is a great opportunity to become more creative and innovative ... We are absolutely a public body. This is not about profit, this is about sustainability. This is about encouraging people to use as much of the park as possible. It will be low-level charging in order to maintain and sustain our services and the infrastructure out there."

Nearly £400,000 of park income was generated in 2012/13 from business activities such as leasing visitor centres to private firms and planning application fees.

John Mayhew, of the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, backed the idea of trying to make the parks more financially sustainable, but added: "I could imagine a situation where a commercial operator or resort would say: 'If it is going to help get our proposal through in the national park, then we would be happy to provide some funding. That is a bit worrying, because planning decisions should be made purely on their planning and conservation merits.'"

A Scottish Government spokesman said that it supported the National Park in exploring opportunities for further investment in visitor facilities.

In a letter to *The Sunday Herald*, Ms Logan said: "I want to stress that 'privatisation' is not a goal or word I would ever use in relation to the national park. We are not wholesale selling off public assets and there will always be services and facilities that are delivered through public funding. This debate is about finding additional opportunities to supplement our income through different funding streams to ensure we have the resources to manage and protect a very special place for future generations.

"The National Park Authority must rise to the challenge [of the current economic climate] and be open to appropriate commercial initiatives that

reduce running costs and increase income streams to both safeguard the park's future and create an excellent visitor experience.

"We have invested in the visitor infrastructure over the last few years, in line with our National Park Partnership Plan, formally approved by Scottish ministers. This has generated confidence in the private sector, which is responding by offering a wider range of services to our four million annual visitors. As a result, we are seeing tangible benefits for our communities and visitor economy.

"Recent examples have been our scheduled waterbus initiative on Loch Lomond, where we invested in the pier infrastructure and the private sector runs all boat operations. We are currently improving degraded lochside sites in the Trossachs, where private operators will help to run visitor services such as camping, motorhome service points and toilets."

### CANAL TOWPATHS

Scottish Canals, together with Sustrans, have upgraded more than four miles of canal towpaths on the Crinan, Monkland and the Forth & Clyde Canals. The £1m project has provided an all-weather surface.

### MENIE ESTATE

*The Herald* reported that the Trump golf resort on Menie Estate in Aberdeenshire has been singled out for criticism by the RSPB in the *State of Nature* report [May 13]. The development was criticised for its impact on the Foveran Links Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

George Sorial, of the Trump Organisation, said: "To date we are the only ones that have studied, preserved and actively managed that site, threatened by years of shooting birds, erosion and ongoing urban pressure. The dunes have now been preserved for generations to enjoy with 95% of the SSSI untouched."

"The RSPB shouldn't spend some time studying the facts and should actually visit the site before publishing such nonsense and fiction."

- Aberdeenshire Council criticised the Trump Organisation, in an unprecedented attack, for repeatedly breaching planning legislation at the resort. Retrospective planning permission had been applied for, and received, on five occasions, and a sixth is outstanding.



## NEWS OF ORGANISATIONS

### MILLPORT MARINE STATION

An agreement has been reached over the future of the University Marine Biological Station Millport (UMBSM) on the island of Cumbrae in the Firth of Clyde [Apr 13]. The new agreement will see ownership of the station, including buildings and surrounding land, transferred from the University of London to the Field Studies Council (FSC).

### NTS

The National Trust for Scotland (NTS)'s Mar Lodge Estate on Deeside has been highly commended in the new native woods category in Scotland's Finest Woods Awards 2013. Ancient Caledonian pinewood is being restored in a 200 year programme on the 72,000 acre estate [Apr 12].

### WES

Jamie Williamson, of Alvie Estate on Speyside, has received the first accreditation certificate under the Wildlife Estates Scotland (WES) Initiative, which drives forward higher standards of conservation and environmental stewardship [Feb 13].



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