



Press release from:

Mountaineering Scotland and The Scottish Gamekeepers Association.

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Gamekeepers and mountaineers voice landscape fears

Two unlikely allies have joined together to press Scottish Government to develop a land use policy which protects Scotland's world-renowned landscapes, and ensures access for recreation.

The Scottish Gamekeepers Association and Mountaineering Scotland have written a joint letter to Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham MSP, concerned at the potential impacts fragmented policy may have on Scotland's rare open landscapes.

Both organisations fear a lack of joined up thinking could see the loss of internationally rare landscapes as Scottish Government pursues a policy of large scale afforestation without a blueprint to preserve its celebrated vistas.

In the letter to Ms Cunningham the two organisations, who accept they do not agree on all matters but whose memberships share a passionate interest in the nation's landscapes, say: "While Scotland's open landscapes and upland moors are classed as rare in global terms, there is currently no policy position safeguarding them. Some areas are designated as of special ecological or scenic interest but most are unprotected and disregarded."

Highlighting the example of forestry, the SGA and Mountaineering Scotland point out that successive Scottish administrations have published detailed forestry strategies and targets, with 10 000 hectares of new planting earmarked to take place each year until 2022.

But while neither the SGA nor Mountaineering Scotland oppose well sited, planned tree planting, both question whether enough weight is being given to the significant changes this will have on the landscape and access.

In particular, they are worried that the dramatic open views and vistas, regarded as iconic of Scotland, may disappear.

Both bodies welcome Scottish Natural Heritage's preparatory work on scoping a strategic vision for the uplands, arguing that, without such a vision, key areas may be given up to agriculture, energy and afforestation, with insufficient attention paid to what is being lost.

However, they are seeking a meeting with the Environment Minister to discuss what they see as a "failure to join up what is required from the land to meet forestry targets and what we might want to keep in terms of internationally rare and valuable landscapes and ecosystems."

Specifically, the two organisations would like Scottish Government to share its own thinking on the relative values of woodland and moorland and have offered joint support in developing a strategic vision and plan for Scotland's uplands.

Mike Watson, President of Mountaineering Scotland, said: "The SGA and ourselves have different views on a number of issues, but we have a common interest in the development of a Land Use policy that will protect the landscapes that we both value. Mountaineering Scotland will continue working to ensure access to mountain areas for our members, and it is imperative that the landscape of these areas is protected from inappropriate development. We hope that a joint approach to the Scottish Government from our two organisations will demonstrate the wide ranging concern over this issue, and the need for development of a coherent policy that takes into account the views of all interested parties.

Alex Hogg, Chairman of The Scottish Gamekeepers Association, said: "Recent dialogue between both organisations established a great deal of common ground when it came to the pride our respective memberships have in the land, but also their worries about upland landscapes and how different they may look, in the not too distant future, if we don't have a landscape policy which gives them the emphasis required. We have lost so much open moorland since the 1940s and a narrow view, now, may fail what we have left."

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Free to use photos available to download below

Pic 1: Perthshire gamekeeper Josh Burton (left) points out a path to Mountaineering Scotland President Mike Watson and Mountaineering Scotland volunteer, Dave Gordon.

[http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/sga_ms_joint PR Pic 1.jpg](http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/sga_ms_joint_PR_Pic_1.jpg)

Pic 2: Best foot forward: Gamekeepers and Mountaineering Scotland are expressing joint concerns for iconic landscapes. (from left, Josh Burton, Mike Watson, Dave Gordon).

[http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/sga_ms_joint PR Pic 2.jpg](http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/sga_ms_joint_PR_Pic_2.jpg)

Pic 3: Perthshire gamekeeper Josh Burton (seated), Mountaineering Scotland volunteer, Dave Gordon (left) and Mountaineering Scotland President Mike Watson discuss joint landscape concerns.

[http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/sga_ms_joint PR Pic 3.jpg](http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/sga_ms_joint_PR_Pic_3.jpg)