

8. Support for 'Wild Land'

Support and ongoing debate about the concept of establishing 'wild land' in the UK is raising the profile of its potential in Britain. Scotland already leads the way with the designation and protection of tracts of wild land such as the Cairngorms, and benefits from 'wild land' policy advocated by organisations such as Scottish Natural Heritage, National Trust for Scotland and the John Muir Trust. South of the border, interest is growing in the wild land concept, demonstrated by the recent forming of the Wildland Network in 2005 and wild land being incorporated into policy planning and growing media interest generally.

Detailed below are a number of events and documents/papers from recent years which provide support for Wild Ennerdale and the wild land concept generally.

- Council for National Parks 1997 report "Wild by Design"
In the introduction to this report it was recommended that *"A number of experimental schemes on a limited scale should be set up in the national parks, where farming is withdrawn entirely and the natural succession of vegetation is allowed to take its course"* Edwards 1991.

In Chapter 5, a list of Current and Future Opportunities for creating wild areas is identified against each National Park. In the Lake District National Park Ennerdale is identified as one such place and its potential is described as:- *"Ennerdale - Naturally regenerated broadleaved woodland and dwarf scrub heath communities (>400ha). Possible future-natural conifer woodland."*

- Wilderness Britain Conference 1999-2000
During 1999 and 2000 a number of research funded seminars were run on the topic of "Wilderness Britain Social and Environmental Perspectives on Recreation and Conservation". Whilst Ennerdale was not mentioned in these seminars the fact that they were held and attended by a wide range of organisations is evidence of a growing support for the creation of wild areas.

- Friends of the Lake District , Kirby Lecture by Sir Martin Holdgate 2002
Sir Martin Holdgate is a highly respected conservationist and was invited by the Friends of the Lake District to be the speaker at the annual Kirkby Lecture. In his lecture, Sir Martin spoke about his hope for the future of the Lake District landscape and he mentioned Ennerdale saying:

"Ennerdale is a wild valley"

"That dale head could be allowed to revert to true wilderness"

" The main question is what to do with the Sitka spruce, which is seeding freely on the grand crags under Pillar. I confess to mixed feelings here, for Sitka spruce on Vancouver Island, its native home, is a magnificent tree growing up to 300 feet high – left to survive as best it may under Pillar it could add a diversity to the Lakeland landscape."

- Land Use Planning Group – New Wildwoods project 2000-2003
The Land Use Policy Group (LUPG) of the GB statutory conservation, countryside and environment agencies comprises the Countryside Agency, Countryside Council for Wales, English Nature, Environment Agency, Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Scottish Natural Heritage. The LUPG aims to advise on policy matters of common concern related to agriculture, woodlands and other rural land uses. It seeks to improve understanding of the pros and cons of policy mechanisms

related to land use, particularly farming and forestry; to develop a common view of desirable reforms to existing policies; and to promote these views.

In 2000 a report entitled "New Wildwoods in Britain: The potential for developing new landscape-scale native woodlands" was commissioned by the LUPG. The report was commissioned to explore the potential for creating extensive areas of native woodland which might in some respects eventually form a modern equivalent of the original 'wildwood'. The report identified the developing partnership in Ennerdale as a case study. In late 2002 consultants held discussions with the Partnership about the development of Wild Ennerdale which was then published in a report in 2003.

The commissioning of a report by the main statutory conservation, countryside and environment agencies shows continuing interest in developing ideas for creating wild places in the UK. The reports' inclusion of 'Wild Ennerdale as a case study further adds support to the partnerships idea.'

- Lake District National Park Management Plan – 2004
Special Qualities

Opportunities for quiet enjoyment – the tranquility of the fells, valleys & lakes provide a sense of space and freedom, an opportunity for spiritual refreshment, and a release from the pressures of modern day life. These are vital components of the concept of quiet enjoyment.

Open nature of the fells – The relatively open character of the uplands, and their lack of modern development, is especially important. To walk freely across the fells, or climb their crags, is liberating and gives a sense of discovery. There is a feeling of wildness, offering personal challenges for some and impressive open views for everyone.

Government advises, in its Circular 12/96 that National Park Authorities are best placed to identify the nature of the special qualities of their National Parks. It states that '*particular emphasis should be placed on identifying those qualities associated with their wide open spaces, and the wildness and tranquility which are to be found within them*'

- Local Community Support

The process of community involvement is an essential part of the 'Wild Ennerdale' partnership, both to guide and inform it, and to ensure that the benefits of Wild Ennerdale reach throughout the community in West Cumbria. How 'the community' is defined and how far it extends will emerge as the project develops. Stakeholder meetings, farm tenants meetings, parish meeting and organised events in the valley are some examples of networking implemented at local level. Establishing the right structures to develop community liaison in order to sustain interest and support is an important part of future planning.

- Wildland Network (www.wildland-network.org.uk)

The Wildland Network is a group of people from a range of backgrounds brought together to give a voice to wild land values in Britain and to promote and explore the environmental and human potential of wild land. The network encompasses a broad spectrum of approaches within an ethos of wilder land management that takes in natural forest regeneration, the creation of large core areas and inter-connecting corridors in both upland and lowland areas, the return of exterminated species, and the rewilding of rivers and coastal areas.