

NORTH EAST MOUNTAIN TRUST

A QUALITY
FUTURE FOR
MOUNTAINEERS
AND HILL-
WALKERS

Scottish Charity SCIO Number 008783

NEMT, c/o 1 Brighton Place, Peterculter, Aberdeen AB14 0UN



To the Scottish Government

NEMT reply to Question 4 on NPF4

North East Mountain Trust (NEMT) is a Scottish Charity based in the Grampian area, which represents the interests of hill-goers and those who enjoy visiting wild land. NEMT membership, comprising twelve hillwalking and climbing clubs along with individual members, totals over 900 people. While NEMT has a particular focus on the wider Grampian area, it acts in the interests of its members in respect of issues affecting hill country, coastal and remoter areas across the whole of Scotland.

Wild Land, as mapped by Scottish Natural Heritage, shortly to become Nature Scot, and published in 2014 is an important part of what both constitutes our national identity and what draws people from other countries to come and visit as tourists. Income from tourism is a vital part of the fragile rural economy throughout the country.

Wild land has an important role to play in addressing the challenges posed by the Climate Emergency. Projections from the Climate Change Committee show that we need to increase the coverage of native woodlands and increase the rate at which we are currently restoring peatland very significantly. Restoration of river systems can reduce flood risk and improve biodiversity. The Heart of Scotland Forest and Cairngorms Connect projects demonstrate how well thought-out initiatives can bring multiple benefits in human, ecological and climate terms, bringing increased permanent employment and increased visitor spend. Planning needs to play its part to ensure that even developments that address climate change do so without detracting from the special qualities of that land.

The wording in the SPP concerning Wild Land Areas has essentially protected these areas over the past six years. This wording, when transferred to the new NPF4 needs to be strengthened, making clear that any proposed development that could lead to part of the land losing its wild land status would be refused.

While we fully support developments such as affordable housing, improved public transport and renewable energy infrastructure we urge care in the siting of such developments. They need to fit into the current landscape, which typically brings in tourist income.

The work of partnerships between private, community and public landowners on landscape-scale restoration has produced some results that the whole country can be proud of, as mentioned above. NPF4 should set out a plan for further partnerships to be developed across the country.

Local Development Plans need to address the following

- Land use is an important factor in how the country meets the requirements of "Net Zero by 2045" and this needs to be reflected in LDPs. Being clear about where land is appropriate for expansion of native woodland will be important going forward.
- They need to specifically address any Wild Land in their areas, stating how these will be preserved or, if developed as above, how their special qualities will be maintained. An important part of this will be identifying what land could be rather than using a baseline of its current degraded state.
- Suitable evidence that a proposed development is appropriate and that decision-making is consistent.

Yours Sincerely

George Allan (Trustee- North East Mountain Trust)