

SNH Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 Map Consultation Paper

Summary

This consultation invites comment on the Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 map published by SNH in April 2013. Following the consultation and consideration of responses, SNH will provide advice to the Scottish Government on this topic.

1. Context and scope of consultation and how to respond

- 1.1. The Scottish Government recently consulted on the Main Issues Report for the National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3), and draft revised Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). These consultation documents outlined the Government's existing approach to areas of wild land character and proposed a policy approach that refers to SNH's Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 map. We published this map in April 2013 at the time of the Scottish Government's consultation.
- 1.2. Both the Main Issues Report for NPF3 and draft SPP consultations focused on questions of policy, in particular the principle of affording protection to the core areas of wild land identified on the map. Many responses to the consultation considered this issue, and also commented on the map itself and the methodology used for its development. In light of these comments, the Scottish Government has asked SNH to provide further advice on the Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 map. This advice is to be informed by the work undertaken in recent years on mapping wild land in Scotland, an analysis of responses to the NPF3 and draft SPP consultations, and the results of this further, focused, consultation.
- 1.3. The purpose of this consultation is to obtain views on SNH's map of Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 and whether it effectively identifies this key natural heritage asset.

Responding to this consultation

- 1.4. Responses should be received by SNH by **5pm on 20th December 2013**. Respondents should use the [on-line form](#) provided (reproduced in Annex 1) for this purpose. Responses can be sent to:
 - email: wildland@snh.gov.uk
 - post: Wild Land Consultation
Scottish Natural Heritage
Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
Inverness IV3 8NW
- 1.5. All responses will be published on SNH's website. Any personal data or other sensitive information will be redacted prior to publication.

What happens next?

- 1.6. SNH will review all comments received and prepare further advice to Scottish Ministers on the map of Core Areas of Wild Land 2013, including any proposed changes to the map.

2. SNH's understanding of wildness and wild land

- 2.1. Wildness is a key quality of Scotland's landscapes which is widely appreciated and increasingly recognised as a high-value asset. Scotland's extensive natural and semi-natural areas - often rugged, relatively remote and showing limited obvious management or development - are an important part of the nation's identity that sets it apart from the rest of the UK. These areas provide significant economic benefits, especially by attracting visitors to Scotland, and are often promoted in the marketing of products and services. Significant health and social benefits accrue from their use as many people derive both physical and mental benefit from recreating in these areas. The habitats found within them are also an important resource for biodiversity and carbon management.
- 2.2. The experience of wildness can be enjoyed widely across Scotland in a range of settings, such as rocky gorges, more isolated coast and even in greenspace close to settlements. However, Scotland's larger and more remote areas where wildness qualities are most strongly expressed are known as wild land. These areas are not empty of human activities or influence, and it is important to recognise that Scotland's wild land is distinct from ideas of 'wilderness'. But the evidence of past and contemporary uses of these areas is relatively light, and do not detract significantly from the quality of wildness that can be experienced.

3. Mapping wildness and wild land

- 3.1. SNH identified 26 '[search areas for wild land](#)' in its 2002 [Wildness in Scotland's Countryside](#) policy statement. These areas were intended to act as a starting point for review, reflecting that it was a preliminary and incomplete map, prepared at a small scale, and based on the opinion of a small number of experts. However, the map was thought to include most of the significant and valued areas of wild land and has been widely recognised and applied.
- 3.2. This map has informed SNH's advice to decision-makers on proposals with potential effects on areas of wild land character. However, whilst intended to be only used as a search areas map, the manner of its preparation has not been documented and its application at a detailed level throws up some inconsistencies. This suggested the need for a more systematic and transparent approach to mapping wild land. To address these issues and produce a map of wild land areas to replace the 2002 search areas map, SNH has developed a new approach to mapping wild land which is explained below.

SNH's new approach

- 3.3. SNH recognises that people's appreciation of wildness will depend on individual experience, perceptions and expectations and is, therefore, a subjective quality. However, SNH believes that there is sufficient common understanding of what wildness is to enable systematic identification of areas of wild land on a consistent basis.

- 3.4. SNH's approach to capturing this common understanding is based on the framework set out in Annex 1 of the *Wildness in Scotland's Countryside* policy statement (2002). This policy identifies those physical attributes which evoke a range of perceptual responses (such as a sense of solitude, risk and of fulfilment from physical challenge), which people experience as a 'sense of wildness', namely:
- i. A high degree of perceived naturalness in the setting (especially in its vegetation cover and wildlife) and in the natural processes affecting the land, as well as little evidence of contemporary human uses of the land;
 - ii. The lack of any modern artefacts or structures;
 - iii. Landform which is rugged or otherwise physically challenging; and
 - iv. Remoteness and/or inaccessibility.
- 3.5. These physical attributes can be recorded and assessed to give a measure of the degree to which wildness is likely to be experienced. Wild land requires these four physical attributes being present across an extent of area that is of a sufficient scale to evoke the full range of perceptual responses. In order to identify the areas fulfilling these requirements a three-phase methodology was developed (described in this [non-technical methodology](#)).

Phase I Assessing relative wildness

- 3.6. Phase I calculated a relative wildness score for all parts of Scotland. This built on the approach developed for a geographic information system (GIS) study of wildness in the Cairngorms National Park¹, adapted to reflect the national coverage of this study. Using a number of existing datasets which best represent each of the four physical attributes listed in paragraph 3.4, each is analysed according to a set of defined rules. The results, presented for almost 126 million 25m² cells across the whole of Scotland, is a calculation of the relative level or strength of that attribute in that cell. The four layers have then been combined, weighting each layer equally, to produce a map of relative wildness, from the least wild cell to the most wild cell for the whole of Scotland.
- 3.7. Phase I and its resulting map of relative wildness was the subject of a consultation in February - March 2012, with responses published on [SNH's website](#). A revised [map of relative wildness](#) (dated January 2013) was published in April 2013.

Phase II Identifying potential new areas of wild land

- 3.8. Phase II identified a long list of broad areas with the highest relative wildness and of greatest extent. Applying a statistical technique (Jenks Natural Breaks Optimisation), individual cells were categorised as belonging to one of eight classes depending on their relative wildness score identified in Phase I. Areas with extensive blocks of land in the highest two classes were then identified using a guideline of 1000+ hectares north of Glasgow/Edinburgh and 500+ hectares to the south (the lower size threshold in the south reflects the different context within which wildness is experienced in these generally more settled and managed landscapes).
- 3.9. High wildness is inherently dependent on an adjacent contiguous area where lower wildness can be experienced. To the extensive blocks identified as having the two highest wildness classes, the next two classes of wildness contiguous with these areas were identified, in order to consider their contribution to the whole.

¹ Carver, S, Comber, L, Fritz, S, McMorran, R, Taylor, S and Washtell, J. Wildness study in the Cairngorms National Park, 2008.

- 3.10. The result of Phase II was a list of potential areas of wild land for further consideration and refinement in Phase III.

Phase III Selecting and defining areas of wild land

- 3.11. Phase III applied informed judgment to the results of the GIS and statistical analysis to allow for limitations with both the GIS data and methodology to be taken into account. For example, the 'snap-shot' nature of the datasets used required SNH to consider subsequently approved and/or constructed developments such as wind farms or hydro developments.
- 3.12. By applying a set of guidelines, such as using physical features to define simple rather than very complex areas, the extent of individual wild land areas was identified in a desk-based exercise. This sought to demarcate areas which capture the highest wildness and their contributing contiguous area. The long list of potential areas has been reviewed by a range of SNH staff and consideration given to the wild land character of each as a whole. This resulted in the setting-aside of seven areas considered not to be of the highest wild land quality. The resulting map of Core Areas of Wild Land was published by SNH in April 2013.

4. Key issues raised through the NPF3 and SPP consultations

- 4.1. The Scottish Government's consultations on the NPF3 MIR and draft SPP attracted substantial comments on the methodology and on the map of Core Areas of Wild Land. Several respondents raised concerns with the clarity and completeness of the description of the [methodology](#), which SNH has, therefore, revised. The following points clarify other common issues raised in responses.

Inclusion of artefacts or evidence of management within or close to wild land

- 4.2. As recognised in paragraph 2.2 of this document, none of Scotland's wild land is entirely empty of human activities or influence. This is the nature of Scotland. Thus, whilst the core areas of wild land identified do contain some evidence of features, they do not significantly detract from the quality of wildness.
- 4.3. SNH has sought to exclude significant detractors found towards the edge of areas identified by the analysis. However, as this has been a desk-based exercise, no assessment of the extent or significance of a structure's effect has been undertaken. These detractors may therefore fall on, or close to, the edge of the area identified.

Extent of wild land areas and inclusion of lower wildness scores

- 4.4. Defining the 'outer edge' of wild land is inherently difficult. Wildness is a quality which strengthens progressively as a person moves into an area. The areas of the highest wildness are inherently dependent on an adjacent contiguous area of lower wildness. SNH's approach to identifying areas of wild land seeks to capture this whole. The inclusion of lower-scoring wildness towards the periphery is therefore not a buffer, but rather it is intrinsic to the area itself.

Gaps in the data used in the analysis

- 4.5. The methodology recognises that the GIS and statistical analysis has limitations – for example, due to the absence or age of particular data. To respond to these limitations,

SNH has applied informed judgement in Phase III, reflecting the belief that the analysis should inform rather than determine decisions about the areas of wild land selected.

Field testing to ground truth the work

- 4.6. Field survey has not been undertaken in support of the analysis as the map is intended to be used as a strategic tool. Reflecting the desk-based nature of this study, consideration of individual proposals in relation to areas of wild land will require field survey work to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis.

5. Core areas of wild land in Scotland

- 5.1. The Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 map identifies those areas of wild land character which are significant in a national context. These areas are especially important and merit particular recognition as they identify Scotland's remaining extensive areas of the highest wildness. This is an increasingly rare characteristic in a Scottish, UK and European context.
- 5.2. The methodology developed to identify these areas has received substantial comment through both the Phase I consultation and recent consultations on the Main Issues Report for NPF3 and draft SPP. SNH has reviewed these comments and will take them into account.
- 5.3. In finalising our advice to Scottish Government on the mapping of this key natural heritage asset, SNH would value comment on three questions:

Q.1. What is your view on the Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 map?

Q.2. Do you have specific comments on any of the areas of wild land identified?

Q.3. Are there any other issues regarding the Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 map, or its preparation, that you would like to raise?

Core areas of wild land map 2013

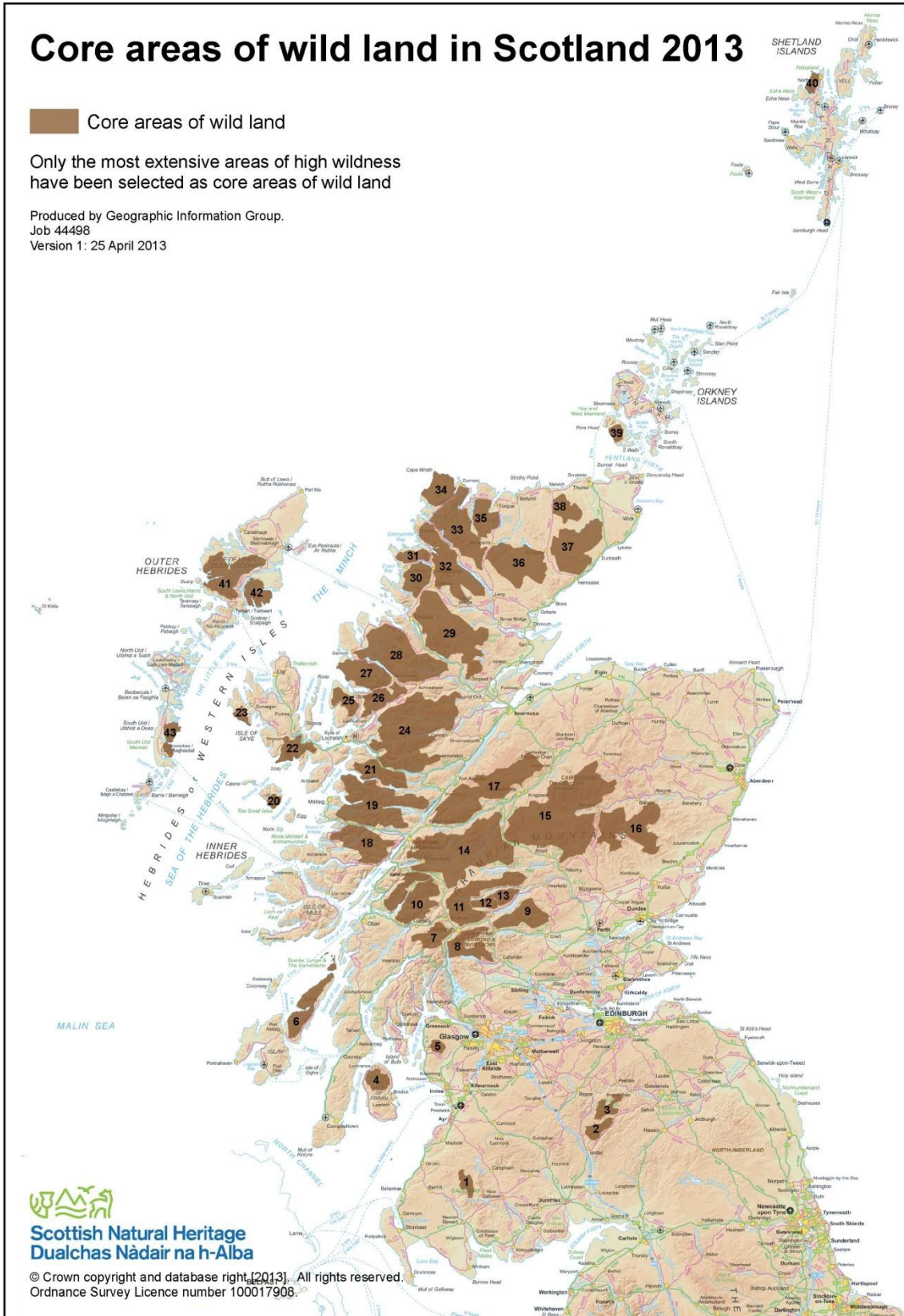
This map can also be downloaded as a PDF from SNH's website ([high resolution](#) 6MB version, [low resolution](#) 1MB version).

Core areas of wild land in Scotland 2013

 Core areas of wild land

Only the most extensive areas of high wildness have been selected as core areas of wild land

Produced by Geographic Information Group.
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Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

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Key to Core areas of wild land map 2013

Area No.	NAME
1	Merrick
2	Talla - Hart Fells
3	Broad - Dollar - Black Laws
4	North Arran
5	Waterhead Moor – Muirshiel
6	Jura, Scarba Lunga and Garvellachs
7	Ben Lui - Beinn Ime
8	Ben More - Ben Ledi
9	Upper Almond
10	Loch Etive mountains
11	Breadalbane – Schiehallion
12	Lyon – Lochay
13	Ben Lawers
14	Rannoch - Nevis - Mamores – Alder
15	Cairngorms
16	Lochnagar - Mount Keen
17	Monadhliath
18	Moidart – Ardgour
19	Knoydart – Morar
20	Rum
21	Kinlochhourn - Glen Quoich
22	Cuillin
23	Duirinish
24	Central Highlands
25	Applecross
26	Coulin & Ledgowan Forest
27	Flowerdale - Shieldaig – Torridon
28	Fisherfield - Letterewe – Fannichs
29	Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis
30	Inverpolly – Glencanisp
31	Quinag
32	Reay – Cassley
33	Foinaven - Ben Hee
34	Cape Wrath
35	Ben Hope - Ben Loyal
36	Ben Klibreck - Armine Forest
37	Causeymire -Knockfin Flows
38	East Halladale Flows
39	Hoy
40	Ronas Hill & North Roe
41	Harris - Uig hills
42	Eishken
43	South Uist hills

ANNEX 1 – SNH Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 Map: Response Form

A copy of this form as a Word document can be downloaded from the [SNH website](#). Response should be received by 20th December 2013.

Q.1. What is your view on the Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 map?

Q.2. Do you have specific comments on any of the areas of wild land identified?

Q.3. Are there any other issues regarding the Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 map, or its preparation, that you would like to raise?

Respondent Information Form

Please complete the two forms below and return with your consultation response. Your contact details are held solely for the purpose of the consultation.

Name or Organisation	
Title	
Forename	
Surname	
Address	
Postcode	
Email	

Release of information contained in consultation responses

SNH will normally publish all consultation responses we receive, although personal data or other sensitive information will be redacted.

Please complete this form.

I am responding as an individual. Yes / No	I am responding on behalf of a group or organisation. Yes / No
Do you agree to your name being made available when we publish your consultation response? Yes / No	The name of your organisation will be published along with your consultation response.