

Press Release

20 August 2014 - for immediate release

Progress on hill tracks, but more action needed

Following today's announcement by Derek Mackay MSP, the Minister for Local Government and Planning, on the introduction of a prior notification and approval process for hill track construction, Scottish Environment LINK has issued the following comments.

Helen Todd, Co-Convener of the LINK hill tracks campaign group said:

"Scottish Environment LINK and its members will continue to monitor the construction of hill tracks across the Scottish landscape, and we will continue to campaign for these tracks to be brought fully into the planning system. We fail to see why landowners should be able to carry on constructing major tracks across Scotland's hills without the need for any public consultation, and the new prior notification process will do little to address this fundamental inequity which leaves communities, organisations and individuals with little opportunity to comment on new tracks.

"We are pleased that the Minister has listened to our concerns and we recognise that this new process is a step in the right direction. However, we do foresee serious problems in implementing this complex set of arrangements and in enforcing any conditions which are set by planning authorities. In the meantime, we hope we will not see a rush of new hill track construction over the next few months, before the regulations are passed by Parliament."

ENDS

Nine LINK organisations came together to campaign for the removal of permitted development rights for tracks built for agricultural or forestry purposes, in order to bring public scrutiny over these developments, some of which are significant in scale, and better environmental protection for our upland areas. They are: Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, the Cairngorms Campaign, the John Muir Trust, the National Trust for Scotland, the North East Mountain Trust, Ramblers Scotland, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Scottish Campaign for National Parks and the Scottish Wild Land Group.

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



Contact details

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Editors' Notes

(1) Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 30 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

LINK is a Scottish Charity (SC000296) and a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee (SC250899). LINK is core funded by Membership Subscriptions and by grants from Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government and Charitable Trusts.
www.scotlink.org

(2) Minister's full statement available at: <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Protecting-scenic-Scotland-1018.aspx>

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