

# Press Release

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May 2013

Embargoed until 4 June

## **Picture Power will be deployed in fight against unregulated scars on the landscape**

Nine environmental organisations are today launching a campaign aimed at protecting the Scottish countryside from unregulated hill track construction. The organisations are calling on members of the public to take photos of poorly designed or constructed tracks while they are out enjoying the hills this summer. These photographs will be used to build up a portfolio of evidence to persuade the Scottish Government to bring construction of the tracks, which have done so much to permanently scar the Scottish landscape, within the planning system for the first time.

Helen Todd of Ramblers Scotland and co-convenor of the campaign group said:

“We are calling on the public to help us persuade the government to protect our landscapes and wildlife from the uncontrolled spread of these damaging hill tracks. Sending us photos of hill tracks will help us build up a portfolio to present to the Planning Minister demonstrating how important and widespread this problem is. Photos can be sent to us at <http://www.scotlink.org/hilltracks/>”

Beryl Leatherland of the Scottish Wild Land Group and co-convenor of the campaign group said:

"Hill tracks can serve legitimate purposes, and if landowners and managers had to apply for planning permission and carry out a proper environmental assessment, they would finally come under a level of local authority and public scrutiny. This would help ensure that their visual impact was limited, and that, if approved, they would be constructed to a standard that would minimise environmental damage such as erosion, peat deterioration and drainage problems.

“Our organisations have campaigned on this issue for many years, but the Scottish Government recently dropped its proposal to bring hill tracks with purported “agricultural or forestry purposes” into the planning system. Such tracks continue to enjoy Permitted Development Rights that exempt them from planning laws and put the landscape at risk through lack of regulation. Even large tracts of our National Parks are without protection from crudely bulldozed tracks. We believe that the Scottish Government must act to improve protection of the landscape.”

The campaigning organisations have worked hard in recent years to try and prevent any more wild land in Scotland being lost to unregulated tracks, and have now come together under the umbrella of Scottish Environment LINK<sup>1</sup>. 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](http://www.scotlink.org)

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