



Merry Christmas from the Sustainable Estates team

The 'Sustainable Estates for the 21st Century' project takes an integrated look at estates in Scotland's uplands. Its primary objective is to understand both the complex driving forces influencing these estates, and how their owners and managers make decisions that permit them to ensure that their estates fulfil their diverse roles, and promote sustainability.

To ensure the on-the-ground and policy relevance of the project, our Advisory Board includes representatives from the Scottish Government, the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association, Scottish Environment LINK, the Cairngorms National Park Authority, and the Knoydart Trust.

The project, which began in 2007 and will conclude in 2010, is funded by The Henry Angest Foundation; the research is being supervised by Professor Martin Price, Dr Charles Warren (University of St Andrews) and Dr Alister Scott (Birmingham City University).



Jayne Glass: Integrating sustainability and upland estate management in Scotland: a novel collaborative approach

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Jayne's research explores how sustainability and upland estate management can be integrated in practice through the development, testing and implementation of a toolkit for monitoring and assessing progress towards sustainability on estates in upland Scotland.

Using an anonymous, multi-round interview and questionnaire survey, the toolkit is being developed in tandem with a balanced panel of nineteen researchers, practitioners and policy makers with experience of upland/rural land management, sustainability and rural development. The results from each round are fed back to the panel for their consideration and

amendment/comment, allowing reflection and deliberation to occur throughout the process.

Over four rounds, the panel has identified five themes that facilitate more sustainable management practices: collaboration and knowledge transfer; conservation and restoration; integration and widening options, linking into rural social fabric, and taking precautions. Sustainability outcomes (goals) and corresponding processes (ways to achieve the goals) have also been identified for each theme, with indicators being developed in order to assess progress towards the achievement of each outcome. Indicators are

classified according to generic sustainability classes developed by the panel: progressive/creative, sound/stable, vulnerable/static. This emphasises the point made by most panellists that 'creative' and 'innovative' practices lead to a more enlightened approach to land management that complements sustainability principles.

In the final iteration (fifth round) of the survey process, panellists will comment on the specific indicators developed for each sustainability process. The toolkit will then be redrafted and tested on a selection of NGO-owned estates in upland Scotland.

Annie McKee: The role of private landownership in facilitating sustainable rural communities in upland Scotland

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Annie's research investigates the role of private landownership in facilitating sustainable rural communities. In order to develop best practice recommendations, she is exploring 'good practice' case studies (five completed so far) that demonstrate the positive activities of private landowners in enhancing the sustainability of their estate communities. Case study estates have been selected from the responses to the private landowners' survey, kindly distributed by the SRPBA in 2008. On each estate, Annie has lived and worked with the estate community for 2-3 weeks, whilst conducting a

community questionnaire and in-depth interviews with estate management and key community actors.

This 'ethnographic' methodology has proven extremely worthwhile in obtaining a rich and varied picture of life on these estates, the opportunities and threats facing rural estate communities, and the important role of private landowners in progressing sustainable rural development.

Some key themes have emerged. Of particular importance is the urgent need for affordable housing in rural areas and the prioritisation of 'locals' for

available housing. In each community visited, suitable rural employment and 'sustainable jobs' have been discussed. It is suggested that landowners provide more land or premises for small-scale community enterprises or industry on their estate, to diversify local employment, provide greater opportunities for women, and reduce reliance on big industry and the estate itself for employment. The emerging role of the private landowner appears to be ensuring estate 'business' sustainability in order to maintain rural employment, whilst also supporting community-generated entrepreneurship.

Rob Mc Morran: A study of the experiences of internal and external actors in community-owned estate initiatives in Scotland

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Rob Mc Morran, a post-doctoral researcher at CMS, will explore the sustainability of community-owned estates in Scotland from a participant perspective. His project has three aims. Firstly, to understand how different members of community estate management organizations and those involved directly in such initiatives (including the local community) experience the organization/initiative and how this affects their other roles. Secondly, to understand how other agencies and actors operating in the same arena as the community initiative experience it and its actions on their own activities and behaviours (from a sustainable rural development perspective). Finally, to critically assess the operation of community estate initiatives in Scotland, identifying positive and negative issues.

The research is to be carried out on four community-owned estates. Following initial discussion, it is hoped that these will be: Knoydart (Knoydart Foundation); South Uist (Stòras Uibhist); Assynt (Assynt Foundation); and North Harris (North Harris Trust).

The overall project methodology will incorporate documentary review for each site, interviews and focus groups with key community members, trust/foundation staff and participants, and external agencies.

A limited amount of participant observation will also be carried out where possible, primarily through attendance at relevant meetings. Findings from the individual estates will be compared to identify any key trends and, in particular, the extent to which similar themes emerge.



Pippa Wagstaff: Landowner motivations and perceptions of sustainability: Exploring visions for the future of Scotland's uplands

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The ultimate objective of land use policy is to influence how land is used. Traditional assumptions about how the upland rural economy depends on agriculture may be inappropriate as landowners are often not primarily interested or engaged in farming. Therefore, understanding motivation is essential for the design of effective policy. Pippa's research uses questionnaires and cases studies to understand these landowner attitudes and aspirations.

The questionnaire was completed by 35% of the 250 estates to which it was sent in 2008 by the SRPBA, to whom we are indebted. Answers provided information on attitudes to economic, environmental and social sustainability. Landowners responding to the survey own more than 1.7 million acres and from these, a dozen case studies were chosen. Case study landowners are being asked to rank the importance of

various factors for their estate using Q-sort techniques (nine landowner interviews and Q-sorts have been conducted so far). Through factor analysis, the results will provide a detailed understanding of the variety of subjective opinions. Each case is being studied in depth 'in the real world' through visits and further interviews to add the narratives that are essential to understanding the outcomes.

These questionnaires, Q-sorts and interviews contain real opinions and responses to current issues of concern covering all the difficult issues involved in balancing the conflicting demands of the environment with social and economic priorities. These are not measured responses from employed professionals but a rare insight in to the 'hearts and minds' of those who ultimately control vast expanses of the Scottish uplands.

Fun facts...

- ✓ Case study estates will cover approximately 600,000 acres of upland Scotland
- ✓ Responses to the Private Landowners' Survey (2008) were received from estates that cover over 1.7 million acres
- ✓ Over 200 hours of recorded interviews/discussions will have been carried out with estate owners and managers, community representatives and other stakeholders/external agencies
- ✓ And... Annie has volunteered in 6 pubs, 7 village shops, 3 'big houses', a snack bar, a soup kitchen, a restaurant, a seafood shop, a tree shop and a community centre, as well as doing various jobs with estate maintenance staff, gamekeepers, gardeners and housekeepers!



For more information about the Sustainable Estates project and other research at the Centre for Mountain Studies, visit:

www.perth.uhi.ac.uk/mountainstudies, e-mail info.cms@perth.uhi.ac.uk or telephone 01738 877761