

New and Emerging Rural Researchers Session
RGS-IBG Annual International Conference
Manchester 26-28 August 2009

Title: **'Sustainable' upland estate management in Scotland:
indicating the way ahead**

Author(s): Jayne Glass (Perth College-UHI)
Martin Price (Perth College UHI)
Dr Alister Scott (University of Aberdeen)

Presenter: Jayne Glass (Perth College-UHI)

Abstract: Scotland's uplands have a unique pattern of landownership with much of the land divided into 'estates' owned by private individuals and organisations, public bodies, and non-governmental and community organisations. While 'sustainability' is commonly listed as a core objective in UK, EU and international policies and projects related to upland/mountain management, there is a significant research and policy gap regarding meanings of 'sustainability' at the estate scale.

The process of developing sustainability indicators as a means of monitoring progress towards sustainability is an important pre-requisite. However, rationales for indicator selection can be unclear and their 'top-down' nature can antagonise stakeholders and hinder their effective implementation. To tackle this, the research employs a 'hybrid' indicator framework for developing and applying sustainability indicators for upland estate management.

The methodology uses a systems approach and a social learning approach to build on existing indicator frameworks. By employing an anonymous, iterative method (the Delphi approach) to engage a panel with wide knowledge and experience of land use/sustainability applicable to the estate management context, the indicator selection framework marries both 'top-down' (working with expert knowledge) and 'bottom-up' approaches (using participatory philosophy) to develop a set of sustainability goals and corresponding indicators.