

John Muir Trust to present petition to Holyrood today

A petition demanding action to protect wild land will be presented to the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday 25 January.

The Trust is submitting the petition, backed by more than 3,500 signatures, to the Scottish Parliament as part of its wild land campaign, which aims to secure greater protection for the UK's best areas of wild land. It calls on the Scottish Government to improve protection for the best areas of wild land by introducing a new national environmental designation.

Stuart Brooks, chief executive of the John Muir Trust said: *"Our vision is that wild land is protected and wild places are valued by all sectors of society. This petition is the first step in making the case for a new designation to protect Scotland's wild land areas."*

"There is inadequate protection for landscapes in our most important wild land areas. Just half of Scotland's best wild land has any environmental protection, and only a third is protected with National Scenic Area status."

"Wild land has a wide variety of benefits. It is home to some of our most iconic wildlife, provides us with things vital to our lives like fresh water. It also brings visitors to Scotland in their thousands. In 2003 visitors coming to Scotland's wild areas contributed as much as £751m to the economy, supporting 20,600 jobs."



Writer and broadcaster Cameron McNeish, who is supporting the Trust's Wild Land Campaign, said: *"For over 40 years the wild places of Scotland have provided me, and countless others, with the sustenance of redemption. It's the wild hills and*

glens that I turn to when I need to flush from my mind the problems, anxieties and stresses of twenty-first century living."

"Our areas of wild land, those rugged regions that have given Scotland its unique character and identity, are under threat as never before. If we go on losing wild land at the present rate then there is a real risk that our nation will lose its unique identity and our society will move into a bland cultural placelessness."

Mapping by Dr Steve Carver of the Wildland Research Institute, University of Leeds, shows the amount of Scotland's best wild land covered by any environmental designation is 49.6%. The amount covered by National Scenic Areas, a designation which is designed to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape, is 33.6%.

According to research by Scottish Natural Heritage, between 2002 and 2008 the area of Scotland unaffected by the visual impact of development fell from 41% to 31%.