

Community Land Scotland – Position Paper on `rewilding`.

Community land owners see their function as bringing about the renewal of their place, its people, its built and natural heritage.

Renewal embraces the social and economic development of the place, and the enrichment of the life, environment and culture of that place.

This happens under the direction of the people of that place, through their participation and ownership of key decisions.

The yield from the investment in the land is opportunity, in perpetuity, for the common good of the people of that place and its environment.

Most community owners are principally motivated by the needs of people, in the face of economic, social and cultural challenge and decline; they want to see the re-population of their place, in part and if necessary, by the re-settlement of once inhabited localities, localities others may perceive as `wild`. Community owners do not see any contradiction between this and their local history, in achieving greater bio-diversity, and an enriched environment and more naturalness.

Particularly in the Highlands and Islands where many owners manage very large acreages of land, when community owners or potential community owners look out onto the land beyond the currently cultivated crofts, they don't see a wild landscape, they see a deserted place, a degraded place, a place far less productive than in times past, a place supporting far less bio-diversity and fewer people, a spoiled (not unspoiled) landscape.

Community owners see people and their interests as part of the natural order and landscape, every bit as much as a diverse range of plants and other species should be.

Community Land Scotland does not believe the term "re-wilding" is a helpful term in this context.

Community owners, on the other hand, understand that some people can perceive some parts of their locations as having characteristics of `wildness`, and some community owners market their area for the experience of `wildness`, solitude and renewal that many can derive from such landscapes. This is a means of attracting visitors and securing economic gain locally, and community owners not only have no desire to threaten those continuing opportunities for the community and for those who wish to experience that environment, they wish to enhance the opportunities and experience.

Many community land owners have an approach to and conduct land management practices and hold beliefs about the renewal and enrichment of their landscape, of which many in the `re-wilding` movement, so called, would approve.

Community owners take, and they support the taking of, human interventions to deliver their vision for their land. This can include renewables at a scale determined locally as acceptable.

As an approach to the long term management of parts of their land assets, a `rewilding` approach, so called, may commend itself to owners, provided it does not compromise their objectives toward people and their place, and the culture of that place.

On community owned land, any matters relating to the re-introduction of species, is a matter for the democratic will of the people locally, with a first priority toward the re-introduction of people.