

## **Making sense of sustainability: Working together to develop a sustainability assessment framework for Scotland's upland estates**

**Jayne Glass, Alister Scott and Martin Price (Centre for Mountain Studies, Perth College UHI)**

### *Abstract*

The management of Scotland's uplands is complex, with numerous stakeholders having different interpretations of sustainability in a practical context. While it is common to develop sustainability indicators in order to define context-specific sustainability principles and monitor progress towards environmental, social and economic goals, many indicator sets are 'top-down' in nature and rationales for indicator selection can be unclear. This can antagonise stakeholders and hinder their effective implementation. To tackle this, the research takes a joined-up approach to indicator development, working with a multi-stakeholder panel of researchers, practitioners and policy makers in a collaborative manner over a series of rounds.

In the first instance, a practical context for sustainability in upland estate management was established by the panel. Sustainability management strategies were then proposed and reflected upon in a subsequent round. These strategies were developed into a four-part framework, where practical steps can be assessed under the following themes: biodiversity and ecosystem services; rural business resilience and impact; community vitality and heritage; governance, knowledge and planning. Under each theme, indicators of innovation, adaptability and vulnerability are identified. Following further discussion and amendment of the framework by the panel, the indicators will be implemented on ten case study estates in Scotland's uplands.

---

### *Sustainable Estates for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

The above research is part of the wider 'Sustainable Estates for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' project that is being conducted at the Centre for Mountain Studies between 2007 and 2010. The primary objective of the project is to understand both the complex driving forces influencing Scotland's upland estates, and how their owners and managers make decisions that permit them to ensure that their estates fulfil their diverse roles and promote sustainability. Other key issues that are being examined include the economic and employment benefits of estates to local communities, and the connections between land ownership and land management, exploring motivations, objectives and constraints.



For more information, please contact:

Jayne Glass

PhD Research Student

Centre for Mountain Studies UHI

t: 01738 877265

e: [jayne.glass@perth.uhi.ac.uk](mailto:jayne.glass@perth.uhi.ac.uk)

w: [www.perth.uhi.ac.uk/mountainstudies](http://www.perth.uhi.ac.uk/mountainstudies)