

MESSAGES FROM THE WORLD PARKS CONGRESS FOR SCOTLAND

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What's happened over the ten years from Durban to Sydney?

I identify the following evolution of thinking and action:

Coverage

- Marine PAs are now top of the politicians announcements, especially in the Pacific, but there must be grave doubts whether they will be more than paper parks unless there are deliverable restrictions on fishing
- Scepticism of the value of 17% and 10% Aichi coverage targets as wrong focus and too small
- Strong arguments in favour of 'half for nature' for land and water

Management

- Greater emphasis on management effectiveness as coverage targets are not meaningful without guaranteed management
- Headline: only 24% PAs globally well resourced, ecologically connected, separated from stressors and have transparently monitored performance

Stakeholder recognition

- Role of private sector trumpeted as key partner and funding source, partly because of declining government funding
- Community conserved areas and role of NGOs much more strongly recognised than in the past
- Role of indigenous peoples praised in their stewardship of natural resources and in shaping the land, but questions remain on claims that they were the perfect stewardships of the environment

Inclusiveness

- Nature/people connection much higher on the agenda, especially through healthy parks/healthy people programmes in Australia and Canada
- Youth had a real voice and contributed very effectively compared to Durban, with the help especially of Parks Canada

The *Promise of Sydney*¹ has many fine words but they are undirected at key targets and are unlikely to achieve anything significant. Notably the final version was greeted with silence at the plenary compared with the unanimous applause for the Durban Accord.

The Big Picture

Looking after nature effectively is the key to all of our human futures: a nature centric approach is the only way forward for human society. Let's not slavishly accept the Anthropocene period of Earth history, but ensure that people and nature are working together. This means changing society's mindset about nature to a positive from the 'keep nature in the box' culture.

1. **It's all of nature** beyond biodiversity to ecosystems and all their functionality, including abiotic as well as the biotic nature, as all are interrelated and interconnected. That's in the IUCN definition of a protected area after all.

¹ http://worldparkscongress.org/about/promise_of_sydney.html

2. **It's at least half for nature:** the Aichi target is just not adequate at 17% of land and 10% of sea as it means ignoring 83% and 90% of land and sea respectively. So why not devote nature-centric approaches to a much larger area, say half of the total, not in the form of protected areas but as land and water requiring a much higher standard of environmental stewardship than is often the case?
3. **It's all the land and sea that's important** the first time that I recall in the last 15 years beyond protected areas formally recognised as needing better stewardship.
4. **It's the effectiveness of management that's the most important rather than coverage of land and sea** without it there is a real possibility of having paper parks which are of course meaningless.
5. **It's for all generations past, present and future** too much of the current agenda is for us now, not recognising nature for its own sake, plus the human inheritance good and bad, and the need for sustaining nature as key ingredient in human futures.
6. **It's an inclusive agenda** focused especially on re-connecting people and nature. This is essential with an increasingly urban population and younger age structure in many developing countries. Also we have not allowed younger generations in sufficiently and are patronising to those who are not one of us 'nature experts'. Involvement and engagement of all sectors, levels and ages in society is essential so that nature and people are seen a parts of the same whole.

The agenda for Scotland: implications, actions and recommendations

In the light of global overview and the recent work undertaken by IUCN National Committee for the UK in *Putting Nature on the Map*², three key implications for Scotland are identified – the big picture, management effectiveness and engaging people. An action agenda and recommendations are developed for each one.

1. The big picture

We have no overall vision for nature and society's relationship with it and dependency upon it. Yes there is the *2020 Biodiversity Challenge* but it is narrow in its purview. Integrated approaches for protected areas are needed not just focusing on biodiversity but should be holistic. The strategy should be for nature overall and society's relationship with it. It is needed urgently now please. Otherwise, we ignore the fundamental geodiversity underpinning biodiversity, we miss the landscape scale and cultural connotations of it, and we miss the nature/society relationship and all of the dependencies and interdependencies. And, we need to ensure that we take a long look ahead. Remember Natural Heritage Futures that innovative approach to nature and people connection? Let's think long and big please!

Recommendation 1 develop Scotland's long-term strategy for the whole of our nature and society's role now

We have to work hard to complete the system as an effective network and ecologically connected, particularly to allow for the effects of climate change to be catered for. We have not ensured that all of the protected areas are ecologically connected, and we have not assessed whether the inter-

² http://www.iucn-uk.org/portals/0/PNOTM_2014_full_report.pdf

connectivity between biotic and abiotic nature is fully recognised because we have protected sites and areas on a features rather than a systems basis. The proposals by SWT on landscape scale approaches have not been followed up in practice. For example, we should at last finish the job in the Flow Country by ensuring that all of the non protected interstices are covered in the umbrella that Natural Heritage Areas were developed for and then dropped by the unwise and narrow thinkers of a decade ago!!! We should use them to mimic the concepts behind UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, now only implemented to meet the new criteria in Galloway and Southern Ayrshire. So the challenge is to develop space for nature. And we need to use relevant spatial units, not administrative boundaries used for the SSSI system. We have these ready-made in Natural Heritage Zones, a purpose-built biogeographic system developed by SNH for precisely that purpose; let's use them.

Recommendation 2 Implement ecologically connected systems to ensure full protection at all spatial scales

There are gaps in the protected areas system in its representation of biomes globally and also in Scotland, particularly for lower plants and for geoheritage. The 'surely we have finished syndrome' is outmoded! We have not assessed whether all of the biomes are fully protected and all of the necessary species, such as lower plants, or all of the features, such as those related to geodiversity conservation, are protected and we have failed to use natural units in the process for designating SSSIs.

Recommendation 3 A review of the completeness of protected areas coverage should be undertaken as a matter of urgency using the Natural Heritage Zones as a framework

The marine environment has been relatively neglected. The new MPAs maybe a step forward, but how do we know when the implications for resource extraction, especially fishing, have not been resolved? That was the conclusion of *Putting nature on the Map*. And yet, we have an amazing marine resource, but the last of the hunter gatherers still do not recognise the error of exploitation beyond the renewable biomass accumulation, the use of gear that does not wreck the sea bed and the need for 'no take zones'. All of these aspects are now widely in place around the world with the active support of fisherman. We need a more scientifically informed approach, taking in account the traditional knowledge of fisherman, to the management of the marine environment in territorial waters, in the EU zone and on the High Seas.

Recommendation 4 Urgently put into place ecological protection of the biomass alongside no take zones within the new MPAs

It also means taking up the challenge from and following up the recommendations in the IUCN National Committee for the UK in the report *Putting Nature on the Map* of ensuring that all of the designation types in use that fail to meet the definition are strengthened to meet it by 2017, the review date set by the WCPA Assessment Panel. Specifically, this means the landscape protected areas, notably National Scenic Areas, having a new statutory basis that meets the IUCN definition.

Recommendation 5 Put all of the necessary measures in place by 2017 to ensure that National Scenic Areas pass the IUCN tests

2. Implementing effective management

Globally there has been recently been too much effort on announcing new protected areas that have existence on paper so that nations can meet the Aichi targets. A similar process has, arguably, occurred in the EU to meet the Natura directives requirements, although the demand for effective conservation is now to the fore. Designating new protected areas without ensuring that they will be effectively managed is a pointless political exercise.

In Scotland, we have spent too much effort on designation and definitely not enough on ensuring whether the protected areas are really functioning to protect nature's features and functions. New international protocols for measuring effectiveness have been developed by IUCN and implemented in other countries, but not in the UK. We should immediately set up a project to undertake a Management Effective Assessment of all of Scotland's protected areas. Particular attention may need to be focused on those designations not covered by SSSI and Natura 2000 protocols, including the two national parks.

Recommendation 6 SNH to undertake a Management Effective Assessment of all of Scotland's protected areas using the standard international methodology with the results used to determine management priorities.

We have monitoring systems for SSSIs and Natura sites that are feature based rather than ecological function based. So we do not have a sufficiently good idea of 'how is our nature doing?' We need one urgently, well beyond the single focus indirect biodiversity indicators we currently use as these do not reflect whether the ecological health of areas is really improving or declining. So ecological scientists we need more direct measures that make ecological common sense and are readily understood by everyone, especially decision makers. I recognise that this is not easy but we cannot wait for the perfect system, so let's use the knowledge we have to develop and implement improved indicators.

Recommendation 7 Develop new indicators of ecological and environmental health of protected areas and whole systems

Also, we need to ensure that what happens outside protected areas does not have a deleterious effect inside them otherwise management effectiveness will be impaired and reinforcement of 'the sea of devastation' syndrome (i.e. "islands of protection in a sea of devastation") will occur. This means that the dilution of environmental stewardship in the reformed CAP must not be slavishly applied in Scotland; otherwise the sound basis of the GAEC will be eroded with resultant wall to wall commercial agriculture. Equally, we need to ensure that the so called 'woodland expansion strategy' is not code for wall to wall commercial forestry with a nod to visual and water impacts at their margins. And, the same principles should apply to large renewable electricity generation installations, which barely make a positive carbon reduction over their lifetimes because of the release of carbon and the loss of biodiversity and landscape value as a result of their installation. So, the Scottish people should demand high standards of stewardship of all of the nation's natural resources on land and at sea by approving a statutory stewardship code in any legislation on land reform to protect and preserve environmental systems and processes outside protected areas as vital to our successors future health and wellbeing as well as for the areas that are formally protected. This is easily justified in terms of environmental sustainability and social justice.

Recommendation 8 New land reform legislation should focus on improved stewardship of land and sea by enshrining in statute a compulsory code of good stewardship of all land and sea for all land and water owners and managers

3. Getting all people fully engaged

The clear message is that we should have an all inclusive approach to protected areas and nature as a whole in recognition of the role of the many stakeholders, in providing knowledge and expertise, experience, finance, skills and competencies, governance and management, and new ideas and approaches. We need to recognise formally that there has been good stewardship in the past, and not always complain that everything from the past was desecration of our land and its natural functions. And, we should not assume that nature is just for nature experts and nature lovers. In-

volving urban, as well as rural populations, and all ages and abilities is critical. There are many ways to improve performance and extend good existing practice.

Recognising the vital role of non-state conservers of nature

It is not just the state that delivers nature conservation. The role of non-state owners is critical, especially private owners and environmental NGOs. This point is one of the key findings of *Putting Nature on the Map*. Also, there should be increasing recognition of the role of private protected areas and community conserved areas as these have only recently been considered relevant in a UK context despite their importance in other parts of the world.

Recommendation 9 recognition of the role of non-government agencies and private in managing special places for nature should be given in the forthcoming land reform legislation

Implementing inclusive governance systems

The state and the NGOs have a tendency towards exclusivity in governance of protected areas. The former rarely engage local or other interest groups in any formal way in the management of the protected areas they administer. The latter have elections to the top governance levels, but on the ground their performance is relatively poor. Much more awareness and acceptance of the role which others can play is needed, including local people, traditional sources of knowledge and experience, scientific experts, younger generations. Above all, a corporate willingness is required to implement new models, using the IUCN governance typology as a guide. Also, new models being implemented in Scotland should be regarded as exemplars, such as the Partnership Board approach under charities legislation (as a SCIO) by the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve.

Recommendation 10 all owners of protected areas should institute modern, inclusive governance systems for each of their ownerships

Securing sustainable financing

With ever declining government funding alongside the need for more expenditure on securing effective management, means that securing secure and sustainable sources of funding is a major issue for now and the future. There is no point in expecting the government to re-prioritise to release funds from other programmes. The best that it can and should do is to ensure that its policies and expenditure do not have deleterious effects on protected areas and that protected areas are a major policy priority in programmes and policies. Leveraging money from non-government sources is therefore a high priority. The environmental NGOs have played a major role and will surely continue to do so in purchase and management of protected areas. And private owners and institutions have also been playing a role for a long time in conserving the areas they own and manage. But more resources are necessary. The Scottish Government appears to be averse to even considering such mechanisms as **biodiversity offsets**: they were trailed in the biodiversity consultation paper but no mention was made in the 2020 Biodiversity Challenge published in 2012. This was a fundamental error. It is recognised that there are concerns about offsetting, but this mechanism has been demonstrated to be effective in conserving nature in many parts of the world by environmental NGOs. We need to take this approach seriously in Scotland. In particular, the developers of renewable energy sources, especially onshore and offshore wind farms, should be putting resources into offsetting schemes as part of their approval permissions.

Recommendation 11 more creative ways for raising resources for the management of protected areas, including funds from developers in lieu of permissions, should be developed by the Scottish Government

Actively engaging younger generations

A new and more radical approach to engaging younger generations should be taken in Scotland, similar to that pioneered by the youth program of IUCN and by individual agencies, such as Parks Canada. Older generations should make a pledge to ensure the full and active engagement of younger generations in decision making and action for protected areas and nature as a whole. Also, there should be development of programmes to engage kids with nature, such as twinning of schools with organisations owning nature sites and twinning urban with rural schools. To stimulate this, the Scottish Government should have a programme for each school child to have a day in nature a year.

Recommendation 12 The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning with the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform should lead the development of a programme for all children to have a day in nature a year

Linking engagement in nature with improved health of individuals

The rubric to be adopted should be that **'healthy parks really means healthy people'**. The key issue to be resolved is for a change in the medical policy and in the approach of the medical profession to recognise and adopt out of doors activity, especially the link to nature, as an epidemiologically proven means of improving individual's well-being. As a result, outdoor activity should be the new medication from the GP: "the outdoors activity pill". The Central Scotland Green Network is an important approach, but access to nature or near nature everywhere is not an exclusive estate. NGOs owning nature sites, NTS, SWT, JMT and RSPB for example, need to be more open in programmes of inviting in those with health problems and those from socially and educationally deprived backgrounds.

Recommendation 13 The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport with the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform should establishment a programme of 'healthy parks means healthy people' accessible to all but especially for those with ill health

The proposals suggested under the heading of **'Getting all people fully engaged'** could all be encapsulated in an ***advocates for nature programme*** led by SNH including existing and new initiatives.

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