

The Geographer CCS edition: Editorial

Fifty years on from the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 is worthy of celebration and reflection. This is the theme of this edition of *The Geographer*.

The 1967 Act not only established the executive machinery as the Countryside Commission for Scotland, it also set the framework for policy and action for looking after the countryside and improving peoples' enjoyment of it in a new way. To quote from the preamble of the Act: "*to make provision for the better enjoyment of the Scottish countryside, for establishment of the CCS and for improvement of recreational and other facilities.....*".

In its 25 years of operation, CCS developed many initiatives that remain relevant today, struggled with other issues that are still with us today, and laid the basis for others that have since been resolved by the government and parliamentary legislation. There have been two turning points. First, in 1992 the Commission was merged with the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland to form Scottish Natural Heritage, providing a wider basis of operation. There were greater resources and greater political support nationally and locally than had often been the position in the past. And the expertise of the Commission's staff and the ground work they had laid were a vital base for the new organisation to work forward on. Second, 10 days after the devolution referendum in 1997, Donald Dewar, taking the lead from his long-time ally and countryside advocate, announced that national parks and modern access laws would be established. This fulfilled a long-held ambition of CCS.

Some of those directly involved in the Commission's work have given us their personal perspectives. Others who have a view from a distance, including south of the border, and those who were involved as specialist advisers and consultants have also contributed. And your chairman has contributed having been a consultant on the beaches of the Highlands and Islands surveys, the 'man in the ministry' looking after the Commission in its latter days, and then took over, as Chief Executive for its first decade, the functions and the staff with their hopes and aspirations in the newly formed Scottish Natural Heritage.

Many of the articles signal the outstanding issues which still need to be addressed. We hope that this blend of history, reflection and forward look will be of interest to both our members and all who read *The Geographer*.

Roger Crofts