

A CONCORDAT ON ACCESS TO SCOTLAND'S HILLS AND MOUNTAINS

Introduction

Scotland's hills and mountains have great natural beauty; they are of high value for open-air recreation and of great importance for wildlife. They are in various forms of private and public ownership and are the home and workplace for sparse and economically fragile populations.

More people are visiting the hills and patterns of open-air recreation are changing. Recreation is now a major use of the hills alongside the traditional activities of hill farming, forestry, field sports and deer management. All are important providers of employment.

There is a common interest between all these land uses because they depend on the natural resources of the hills. There is also a common responsibility on all who visit and manage the hills to conserve wildlife and landscapes and to have regard for the welfare of livestock.

The parties to the Concordat have come together because there is an urgent need for co-operation between different users of hill land. The aim is to establish better understanding between the various interests in order to promote tolerance and to encourage co-operation.

The Concordat has been agreed by all the parties represented on the Access Forum, which are :

- Bodies representing farmers, managers and owners of hill land, where access takes place;
- voluntary bodies representing many different recreational activities which require access; and
- public bodies which have roles in promoting and facilitating enjoyment of open-air recreation.

The Concordat

There is a long-standing tradition of access to hill land in Scotland - cherished by those who use the hills and long accepted by landowners and managers where this freedom is exercised with responsibility. As more people go to the hills, there is a growing need to encourage sensitive management and recreational practice. The Concordat aims to ensure that people can continue to enjoy access to the open hill in a way which shows consideration for the interests of others.

The parties to the Concordat agree that the basis of access to the hills for informal recreation should be as follows.

- Freedom of access exercised with responsibility and subject to reasonable constraint for management and conservation purposes.
- Acceptance by visitors of the needs of land management, and understanding how this sustains the livelihood, culture and community interests of those who live and work in the hills.
- Acceptance by land managers of the public's expectation of having access to the hills.
- Acknowledgement of a common interest in the natural beauty and

special qualities of Scotland's hills, and of the need to work together for their protection and enhancement.

Making the Concordat work

The success of the Concordat will depend on all who manage or visit the hills acting on the four principles set out above. In addition, the parties to the Concordat will promote good practice in the form of:

- Courtesy and consideration at a personal level.
- A welcome to visitors.
- Making advice readily available on the ground or in advance.
- Better information about the uplands and hill land uses through environmental education.
- Respect by visitors for the welfare needs of livestock and wildlife.
- Adherence to relevant codes and standards of good practice by visitors and land managers alike.
- Any local restrictions on access should be essential for the needs of management, should be fully explained, and be for the minimum period and area required.

Implementation

The signatories agree to:

- promote the general adoption of the principles set out above;
- prepare and promote information and advice on the harmonisation of recreation with other land uses;
- endeavour to resolve differences of opinion through discussion; and
- keep under review the overall framework for the provision and management of access to Scotland's hills.

The signatories to this document will foster a caring and responsible approach to access, both by those who visit the hills for enjoyment and by those who own and manage Scotland's uplands. The public bodies acknowledge their role in assisting the implementation of the Concordat, including providing advice and helping to secure resources necessary for the successful management of access.

The Concordat has been prepared and agreed by:

- Association of Deer Management Groups
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
- Mountaineering Council of Scotland
- National Farmers' Union of Scotland
- Ramblers Association Scotland
- Scottish Countryside Activities Council
- Scottish Landowners Federation
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Scottish Sports Association
- Scottish Sports Council

This Concordat was made public in January 1996, and endorsed by Lord Lindsay, the Scottish Office environment minister.