

Rewilding in England and Wales: A Review of Recent Developments, Issues, and Concerns

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Abstract—This paper reviews the emerging wild land policy in the United Kingdom—in England and Wales in particular—and the environmental, social, political and economic drivers that make extensive protected wild land areas a possibility in what is otherwise a crowded and intensively developed island nation. Various future scenarios for wild land and rewilding in England and Wales are described including some warnings about the threats from renewable energy developments. Should there develop a strong political will, the paper concludes that there remains a core of significant wild lands in key areas that can be built on to create a spatially continuous network of wilder areas for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Introduction

Parts of the United Kingdom (UK), the Highlands of Scotland and the northern counties in particular, have regularly been described in recent years as our “last great wilderness.” A romantic notion no doubt, but to those who live and work on the land, and to anyone with an educated eye, it is far from being a wilderness. Thousands of years of human history have created a landscape that is a mosaic of different land uses, in which even those that appear to be wholly natural are, on closer inspection, the product of human action in recent or more distant times. Nevertheless, there are parts of this crowded island that do retain a feeling of wildness; wide, open vistas uncluttered by obvious signs of human action, a sense of remoteness, solitude, tranquility and of nature in the raw. These areas by their definition focus in the main on the uplands, though selected forests and coasts also engender some of the same feelings. It is also a mistake to think of these landscapes as static, since they are, like landscapes the world over, constantly changing.

Some early cultures used the metaphor of interlocking and overlapping circles or wheels to describe the links between humans and nature. This is still relevant today as human induced landscape change is influenced by cycles or systems wider than the landscape itself (for example, the global economy and national planning policies), but are necessarily restricted and molded by the physical possibilities and natural processes of the canvas on which they are played out. Recent changes in the economy of upland agriculture in England and Wales, brought on partly by wider political

and economic forces and partly by crises such as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE, or mad cow disease) and Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), have created a situation widely regarded by some as an opportunity to instigate some more radical changes to the landscape by encouraging “wilderness” attributes in marginal or less profitable areas. This process of drawing back or de-intensifying agricultural or commercial forestry production in carefully selected areas using natural principles and processes is termed “rewilding,” and is the subject of this paper. As should be already apparent, this is not a simple and straightforward topic; there are a great many competing and conflicting issues to consider such as traditional farming practices versus modernization and European Union (EU) policy, as well as some as yet poorly defined issues and a smattering of unknowns such as defining what we mean by “wild” and knowing exactly what we might be aiming at in terms of “natural.” With this in mind, this paper will attempt to identify the main issues and take a holistic overview of their relevance to the question of rewilding in England and Wales before spelling out some of the challenges facing the adoption of rewilding as a strategic option for land management in the future.

Defining Wild

Whenever you get people around a table to discuss issues pertaining to wilderness and wild land there are, more often than not, as many different definitions of the concepts of wildness, wilderness, wild land and natural areas as there are people in the room. Indeed, the number of events I have personally attended or organized on the wilderness issue where the discussion is hijacked or flounders because the very thing we are there to discuss in the first place is not easily nor tightly defined, are too numerous to fully recall. The serious point to note from this is that little or no progress on rewilding can be made in England and Wales unless we can arrive at some mutually acceptable definitions that can be embedded in policy and planning guidelines. This is no mean feat, remembering that it took Howard Zahniser some 15 years and multiple drafts to get the definition of wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act past the U.S. Senate. Fenton (1996) goes some way towards providing us with working definitions of wilderness and wild land that are repeated here:

Wild land: An area where natural ecological processes are paramount (can be of any size).

Wilderness: An area little affected by current civilization where nature and natural processes are in charge, and where people can isolate themselves from other people (Fenton 1996: p. 17).

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Fenton goes on to make the distinction between primary and secondary wilderness as wilderness areas with either fully natural or semi-natural flora and fauna, and the different levels of experience possible in wilderness or wild land. This distinction between wilderness and wild land is useful because in the UK there are no real wilderness areas left (at least not in comparison to places like Greenland, Alaska or Siberia). Defining what may be regarded as natural and what is artificial is central to this discussion. Again, Fenton (1996) fuels the debate by stating (if a little obviously) that humans are natural and therefore everything we do may also be considered natural to some extent, thus blurring the boundary between natural and artificial landscapes. Clearly we need to draw the line somewhere in reference to wilderness and wild land, and removing post hunter-gather humans and their effect on landscape from the definition of natural is probably the most acceptable solution.

The experiential dimension to wilderness and wild land definition is a useful adjunct, if not central, to this discussion since wilderness is widely considered to be a social/cultural concept. To quote from Roderick Nash's classic book *Wilderness and the American Mind*, "one man's wilderness is another's roadside picnic ground" and "to accept as wilderness those places people call wilderness... [with emphasis on] not so much what wilderness is, but what men think it is" (Nash 1982: 3). These oft used definitions stress the importance of the individual and the role of prior experience in defining wilderness as an essentially fuzzy concept that varies remarkably from person to person. Not very helpful in a policy concept, but it does clearly demonstrate the difficulties involved.

It may be that certain lessons for England and Wales can be learned from the development of wild land policy in Scotland. In Scotland, both Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) have developed their own and very similar wild land definitions that have enabled the drawing up of a national wild land policy. The SNH definition of wild land takes its lead from the Scottish Office's National Planning Policy Guideline 14 (1998) that wild land is "uninhabited and often relatively inaccessible countryside where the influence of human activity on the character and quality of the environment has been minimal." The SNH policy document goes on to say that the "appreciation of wildness is a matter of an individual's experience, and their perceptions of and preferences for landscapes of this kind. Wildness cannot be captured and measured, but it can be experienced and interpreted by people in many different ways" (Scottish Natural Heritage 2002: 5); apparently accepting Nash's definitions of wilderness as an individual ideal. The NTS perhaps provides the best all round definition in "Wild land in Scotland is relatively remote and inaccessible, not noticeably affected by contemporary human activity, and offers high-quality opportunities to escape from the pressures of everyday living and find physical and spiritual refreshment" (National Trust for Scotland 2002: 4).

Although some upland areas south of the Scottish border possess some large tracts of countryside that meet the requirements of such a definition, the emphasis in England and Wales might best be placed not only on conserving existing wild land areas, but on developing new wild lands where the opportunities arise. Rewilding or ecological restoration in Britain takes its cue from the 1991 Edwards review of

National Parks of England and Wales, which proposed, "a number of experimental schemes on a limited scale should be set up in National Parks where farming is withdrawn entirely and the natural succession of vegetation is allowed to take its course" (Recommendation 6.3, Edwards 1991). The Council for National Parks (CNP) held a seminar in April 1998 to debate the concept of rewilding and launch their "Wild by Design" report (Council for National Parks 1998). In this report they outline plans for the enhancement of the wild qualities of our National Parks. Two broad categories of wilder areas are described:

Semi-natural areas, which appear natural but are in fact influenced by management for agriculture or forestry.

Near-natural areas, where the land is totally divorced from agricultural or forestry use—in which natural processes are encouraged to maintain the diversity of habitats, and vegetation is free to vary naturally with variations in the physical environment (Council for National Parks 1998: p. 3).

These two categories help define approaches to rewilding based on:

- Promotion of the wilderness qualities of an area while maintaining productive use that may best be applied to semi-natural areas and is in accordance with the aims of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) to conserve and enhance biological diversity.
- Enhancing existing semi-natural habitats and recreating others by, for example, reducing grazing pressure to allow vegetation to develop more naturally, enhancing and restoring natural features such as river restoration schemes, restructuring specific landscape elements such as conifer plantations to give a more natural outline, changes to alternative and less intensive land uses such as agro-forestry.
- Promotion of areas where ecological processes can be paramount, especially in near-natural areas where relatively large areas of land can be left without management for long periods of time.

The National Parks in England and Wales, and now in Scotland, together with other conservation areas such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs), are perhaps the most obvious target areas for rewilding schemes as outlined in recent reports such as Land Use Policy Group's *The New Wildwoods Project* (Worrell and others 2001) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Bird's *Futurescapes* (2001). The Countryside Stewardship Scheme is one example where farmers are offered government grants to manage their land in environmentally friendly ways, and rewilding schemes are a step further in this general direction, though based more firmly on fundamental ecological principles of natural succession and disturbance operating over much larger areas and over much longer times scales. It is appropriate that this discussion is taking place in northern England since a significant number of existing rewilding projects are local to the Northumberland National Park and North Pennines AONB (for example, College Valley, Simonside Hills, Otterburn, Whitelee and Kielder Head) and their respective management plans both make explicit reference to enhancing naturalness and biodiversity through appropriate land management and agri-environment schemes.

Themes and Issues in Rewilding

The main areas that need to be addressed in considering the possibility of rewilding selected areas of the countryside can be grouped into issues of landscape evolution and character, biodiversity and conservation, farming and land management, and socio-economic development. While such theme groupings are convenient in drawing attention to the various issues that are relevant to rewilding, many of the issues cut across and are interwoven with these themes in complex ways. What is needed at the end of the day is a thorough understanding of the wider issues and how they may be addressed in future rewilding programs. These, it is proposed here, can be encompassed within one, if rather unfashionable, view of the world as *landscape* (in other words, the holistic/ecological perspective of nature and humans interacting within the physical space of the landscape unit).

Landscape Evolution and Character

If the landscape is the basic spatial unit in which all processes, be they natural or human, take place, then this is the spatial scale at which rewilding must surely be considered. There are two basic views of role of landscape and human agency, biocentric and anthropocentric. A biocentric view of landscape emphasizes the physical and natural processes that shape the human use of the land—a kind of environmental determinism—and hence the patterns of human land use and settlement we see today (for example, climate and soil type determine which crops can best be grown where and when). An anthropocentric view of landscape alternatively emphasizes the power of human determination over our utilization and shaping of the basic land resource (for example, turning heath land into rough pasture by the human acts of drainage and soil improvement). Whichever view of the landscape we ascribe to, we must recognize that landscapes change over time, sometimes slowly, sometimes rapidly, under the forces of nature and human intervention. With the exception of extreme events, natural change is generally slow and imperceptible through the processes of ecological succession and erosion/building of landscape features by the forces of wind and water. Human induced changes are much quicker resulting from forest clearance, enclosure, farming, drainage, channelization, urbanization and industrialization.

The fact that landscapes evolve and have a history is important for rewilding since landscape change, while inevitable, is rarely seen as a good thing by the living. Recent and modern history (such as in “second hand” narratives or living memory) acts as a kind of cultural veneer over a landscape that shapes the way that we, and particularly those people who work closely with the land, perceive the *status quo*. Archaeological and written history tells us that landscapes have not always been the way they are today or were in the immediate past. Hadrian’s Wall, for example, acts as a very visible reminder of a past landscape in northern England. The geological record, if we take this argument to its extreme, tells of even greater changes. Indeed, the present is but a very short moment in the much longer-term trajectory of landscape evolution. The point I am trying to make here is that whatever our view of landscape, and whatever the drivers of landscape change, be they human or natural, landscapes are transient features constantly in a state of

flux and we must recognize this when working towards a particular goal, be it social and economic regeneration in the face of a collapsing heavy industrial heritage such as in the cities of the northeast of England, or in our case, rewilding in the face of the declining fortunes of upland agriculture and forestry.

Biodiversity and Conservation

Nature conservation in the UK can mean different things to different people. In the past, conservation has been rather too species focused—a kind of “wildlife gardening” approach aimed at favoring the conservation of particular species made rare by human activities. Fenton (2003) describes three broad approaches of nature conservation; the *wilderness approach* where letting nature “do its own thing” with no predefined outcomes is the central theme; the *nature reserve approach* where defined outcomes and focused intervention are more the norm (for example, the wildlife gardening approach described above); and the *fitting in approach* where wildlife conservation is worked around economic activities wherever possible. Rewilding most probably sits somewhere between the first two approaches in that while there may be some predefined outcomes (such as a more natural-looking landscape), the precise ecological mix is not known and the processes of ecological succession are central while human intervention is minimal.

The current interest in biodiversity is a relatively recent phenomena, indeed the term itself is rather new and still somewhat ill defined. It is widely assumed that high biodiversity is a good thing and that conservation planning and land management should work together to preserve and enhance wildlife habitats and so facilitate the survival of a wide range of flora and fauna indigenous to a particular area. This is very much the approach adopted by the government through its program of national and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).

The relationship between biodiversity and wildness is not a straightforward one however, as they are not directly correlated (for example, the Greenland icecap is certainly wild in all senses of the word but has virtually zero biodiversity, whereas a patch of inner city industrial wasteland is likely to have a diverse population of weeds, insects, birds and mammals but is not a wilderness). Spatially it has been shown, however, that relationships do exist between wilderness attributes and biodiversity at regional scales where less modified environments are likely to demonstrate higher biodiversity than their intensively managed neighbors. The relationship breaks down again with increasing **and** decreasing scale as correlated patterns in local and global biodiversity/wilderness quality take over (Dymond and others 2003). On biodiversity grounds, therefore, the arguments in favor of rewilding need to be carefully spelled out for each landscape unit, the ecosystems presented therein and their relative spatial scales.

Returning to the issues of landscape for a moment, one very persuasive biodiversity argument in favor of rewilding is to create a series of linked natural habitat zones that are together large enough to accommodate viable species populations and allow ecological processes/succession to operate largely unhindered by human activities. By this means, islands of biodiversity may be linked and species can

better respond to external drivers such as climate change (for example, through migration) that might otherwise force local or even global extinctions. Such a plan requires a great deal of cooperation between land owners, government and local, national and international conservation bodies, but may well be a prime force in promoting the rewilding concept.

Farming and Land Management Policy

In the previous discussion about drivers of landscape change, the actions of farmers (and foresters) in response to general economic demand for produce (food and timber) are a significant force of change and development in rural areas. The rural landscapes we see today are the result of many generations of people working the land (constructing walls, maintaining hedgerows, creating enclosures, draining wetlands, planting trees, woods and forests, building farms, tilling the land, etc.) to satisfy this demand. It is this historical attachment to the land that generates a strong sense of place and local pride among the rural community that can be fiercely resistant to change; witness recent examples such as the proposed ban on hunting with hounds and the resulting countryside campaigns.

BSE in the 1990s and FMD in 2001 put extreme pressures on an agricultural economy that was already under pressure and had a number of long-term effects that are still being played out. Changes to the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) are likely to accelerate change further as emphasis is shifted from production subsidies to agri-environment schemes. There is an important issue of differing scales here, between policies developed to deal with regional and national problems of agricultural over production and inefficiencies (for example, CAP) and their local implications at a community/farm level, especially in terms of subsidies received and profits made.

The question on many people's minds is what will happen to the marginal lands if they are no longer farmed because it is simply not profitable to do so? Can marginal lands be farmed in other ways using, say, more extensive grazing and harvesting methods? Or can marginal lands be rewilded to create better wildlife habitats and a more tourist focused landscape resource? It is probably true to say that simply abandoning such areas would not be a popular option, though in the long run the resulting landscape might well be seen as a valuable resource for wildlife, tourism and watershed protection. A more carefully managed program of assisted rewilding might be the most acceptable option, particularly if the social and economic arguments in its favor are well researched, developed, marketed and supported.

Socio-Economic Aspects

In most rural areas, agriculture (or forestry or fishing) has traditionally been the primary unit of production, supporting local economies by employment and the processes of "trickle down." In more recent years, rural economies have been forced to diversify in order to continue to compete. Tourism is now the mainstay economic activity in many areas, especially the national parks. Agri-landscapes are, as a result, often seen more as a recreational and landscape resource, than as a primary unit of production. The fact that

it is the agricultural activity, both past and present, that has created the landscape resource that forms the basis of the tourist economy, means that there are some serious issues regarding the sustainability of this symbiotic relationship. This is particularly true considering the current uncertainty over the future of agriculture in the more marginal areas typical of our national parks and upland areas in general.

A peculiar aspect of the local economy of many rural areas is the rise in the number of homes owned by people not linked directly to agriculture or forestry. These include second homes, holiday homes and homes occupied by commuters, retired people, teleworkers and those employed principally in the tourist service industry. This trend represents an urban in-migration that is steadily changing the demographics of selected rural areas, particularly those in attractive landscape locations, with significant portions of the population now having little or no connection to the land beyond a desire for a rural lifestyle. At the same time the popularity of "a place in the country" has dramatically increased house prices in these areas such that lower income agricultural/forestry workers cannot afford to buy their own homes. This is partially responsible for a corresponding rural out-migration, particularly by the younger generations, to find employment, affordable housing and better access to services elsewhere. The net result is a kind of social dilution with an associated reduction in sense of place and community. The effect on attitudes towards landscape change is perhaps a moot point. It may be argued that overall resistance to change may be reduced by the more diverse social mix, but at the same time many incomers may actually be quite vehemently opposed to any changes to their new found rural idyll (as in, "We like it like this... it's why we moved here in the first place").

Wilder Futures?

So, where do we go from here? Well, if any of the above has made sense it can be acknowledged that some kind of change is inevitable and we all need to recognize this (including the diehards in the farming and countryside lobby). What will or needs to change, how things change and, indeed, how rapidly is a matter for serious debate. This debate must be well informed and inclusive, both in terms of points of view and coverage of the relevant issues. Decisions made in planning for change, responding to change and initiating change need to be based on a thorough understanding of the issues and their likely implications. The decision making process could also do well to be as inclusive as possible, involving all relevant stakeholders at all stages.

If we are to develop sensible approaches to landscape changes then we need to be prepared for all possible outcomes. A number of possible scenarios are tentatively developed here to stimulate discussion.

- *Continued status quo.* Despite changes in emphasis to CAP subsidies, upland farming and forestry continues with intensive grazing of the fells by sheep and continued commercial forestry operations supported by alternative government subsidies. The present overgrazed and denuded landscape characteristic of British uplands with its regular patches of spruce monoculture is therefore maintained. The likelihood of this happening is perhaps very low because the UK government is unlikely

to bridge the gap in production subsidy payments to upland farmers and forestry left by CAP reforms.

- *Abandonment.* As production subsidies are reduced and withdrawn, significant upland areas become unprofitable to farm and so are abandoned. Left to nature with little or no grazing by sheep, these areas begin to revert to mixed woodland via the slow processes of ecological succession. Commercial forestry operations are similarly abandoned with remaining forest blocks clearfelled and left to nature. The likelihood of this scenario is also low because of its unpopularity with most people and replacement of CAP production subsidies with more agri-environment grants. Farmers and land managers would not like the idea of hard won grazing land going to waste. The general public would probably not like the look of the scrub vegetation that precedes woodland, preferring the familiarity of our open and close-cropped fells.
- *Rewilding.* As areas of land become unprofitable to farm, existing grazing lands are combined into larger farm units for economies of scale and more extensive grazing patterns are introduced. Commercial forest is removed and replaced, especially in planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS), with native species. This allows for reinstatement of more natural vegetation patterns in the least profitable areas via a program of carefully planned natural or assisted regeneration that is made possible by the reduced grazing pressure and removal of conifer plantations. Benefits accrue to the local economy from increased tourism and maintenance of an agricultural economy base, as well as the obvious benefits for biodiversity and conservation. The likelihood of this scenario is higher because there is something of benefit in it for everyone.
- *Diversification.* A popular economic response strategy to the threats facing the main agricultural base of marginal areas is diversification. In this scenario, farmers, foresters and the local community employ intensive diversification of business as a means of maintaining their individual farm units, forests and village/market town economies as per the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2001) "Task Force for the Hills" Report. The main focus is on tourism related activities and high value/low volume premium produce such as free-range meat from traditional breeds, woodland products collected from low intensity managed forests, cottage craft industry, niche-marketed sporting and recreational opportunities (for example, adventure and eco-tourism, photo-hunting, etc.) and exclusive country resorts. This scenario is also highly likely to happen and may well be linked to or merged with the rewilding scenario. It should be a popular choice for all but the most traditional of farmers as it maintains farm and community units and ensures a sustainable economic future for the younger generation and their families.
- *Urbanization.* In this scenario, planning restrictions on residential development in rural areas are relaxed to enable more housing to be built. This is done to cater to the increasing demand for high quality lifestyle homes from urban in-migration as well as for affordable housing for lower income agricultural/forestry/tourism workers who want to live in the country so stemming rural

out-migration. The likelihood of this scenario is low as it is perhaps difficult to see how planning restrictions might be lifted and because of the negative effects that increased development would have on the rural landscape.

- *Energyscapes.* The final scenario is the one that currently represents the greatest threat to wildland and rewilding in the UK. This is the targeting of the remote and wild areas of the country by the growing renewable energy businesses as potential sites for large-scale wind energy developments. Despite claims that these represent green energy sources, they are highly intrusive when sited in otherwise wild landscapes and can have negative physical and ecological impacts (for example, through construction of foundations and access tracks, disturbance of nesting birds and noise occurs). If the UK government is to meet its targets for CO₂ reduction, many of the country's wild land areas, and just as significant, target areas for rewilding projects, may be adversely impacted by wind farm developments. The problem is perhaps not restricted to wind farms either, with recent examples of hydroelectric and biomass schemes also impinging on wild landscapes.

Playing around with scenarios like these is all well and good, but it is still difficult to accurately predict the probability of them occurring and therefore making suitable plans is not always possible. Setting of goals or objectives is perhaps a more sensible approach if it is possible to agree on what these should be. Working towards these through the planning system should be the aim of all stakeholder bodies involved rather than a more *laissez faire* approach.

Assuming that the rewilding option, most likely combined with elements of diversification, is accepted by the majority of stakeholders, then a number of problems arise that need to be addressed in deciding how exactly to proceed. These include:

- *Knowing what to aim for in terms of flora and fauna.* We have a good idea of what species of plants were present prior to human settlement, from the pollen record, but their pattern, mix and distribution is more difficult to determine. It is often assumed that the pre-human landscape of Britain was dominated by dense unbroken woodland with only the lowland marshes and high fells being free from tree cover. A recent (though not universally accepted) hypothesis by Dutch ecologist Frans Vera (2000) suggests this might be wrong and points more towards a more open landscape of mixed woodland and grassland with dense scrub and woodland kept in check by grazing animals.
- *Defining target areas for rewilding.* Knowing which areas to target for rewilding might be more a case of availability or willing landowners than of exact science. However, it would nonetheless be sensible to have an idea of the best location, size and shape before embarking on any program of rewilding. Using appropriate criteria it is possible to use Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and existing spatial datasets to model wild(er)ness attributes such as remoteness and naturalness (Carver and others 2002; Fritz and others 2000). Such maps could be used as a baseline index on which to evaluate lands proposed for rewilding in terms of their existing wild/natural attributes and how/where they fit

into the overall landscape and policy mosaic. Additional important points to consider here include ecological issues such as connectivity, fragmentation, diversity, etc., as well as potential impacts on landscape aesthetics. Again, these may be assessed using GIS methods.

- *Deciding on natural or assisted regeneration.* Whether to rely on natural regeneration or give nature a hand through tree planting and river restoration schemes is an important issue in the “Wild by Design” discussion. The answer to this question is likely to depend very much on the target area in question (for example, presence of a seed bank/seed trees, grazing pressure, exposure, etc.) and the degree of landscape design required.
- *Deciding on which (if any) human features/artifacts to remove.* Part of the rewilding concept involves the removal (where deemed necessary or appropriate) of human features or artifacts such as four wheel drive tracks, plantation forestry, fences, buildings, bridges, sections of channelized river, etc. Deciding what to remove and what to leave *in situ* depends very much on the ethos of the rewilding that is taking place. A purist approach would be to remove all human features, but a more moderate approach would be to leave those features that are beneficial to recreational use, such as footpaths and bridges, and those that are beneficial to landscape history, aesthetics and sense of place such as archaeological remains and industrial/agricultural heritage sites.
- *Deciding on the level of conservation management to employ.* Once an area has been targeted for rewilding and the process started (such as, planting if necessary and/or removal of artifacts), the degree of conservation management to be employed over the next 10, 20, 50, 100 years is a crucial question if the project is to be successful. Much of the above discussion focuses on the fact that landscapes are dynamic, and this implies that management too needs to be responsive to change, especially over the long timescales required for successful rewilding projects. In primary wilderness areas, management is focused solely on the users and pressures that might act to reduce wilderness quality. In the case of rewilding projects, active management of the environment itself may also be needed to help ensure that the natural processes of ecological succession remain on track and that they respond appropriately to external drivers (such as, global climate change).

Next Steps?

In the *Wild by Design* report, the CNP clearly highlight the obvious challenge of rewilding as having, “the commitment to leave minimal intervention areas on a much larger scale (landscapes of thousands of hectares) and over much longer periods (hundreds of years)” (Council for National Parks 1998: p. 5). Almost certainly the real challenge here is the successful integration of rewilding objectives with the social and economic imperatives of farming and forestry, or in Fraser-Darling’s words, “*Wilderness and Plenty*” (1970). The key to the challenge will be selling the rewilding “package” to the farmers, landowners, planners, politicians, conservationists, pressure groups and local and visiting public

as an appropriate and viable alternative to existing land management practice. Moves are afoot on this front with a number of dedicated individuals and embryonic groups working towards these wider goals. The challenge for us is to debate and arrive at a common understanding of the issues, map out a strategy for promoting rewilding in England and Wales that involves all the relevant stakeholders, sets in place rigorous safeguards within the planning system, and begins to formulate a set of potential projects to start work in the field.

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