

Centre for Mountain Studies: Scotland

Martin Price



Blair Castle, Scotland. Photo: Martin Price

2007 was a year of major developments and growth for the Centre for Mountain Studies (CMS). In September, four new PhD students, chosen from a very strong field, began their work within the project 'Sustainable Estates for the 21st Century'. This is fully funded by Henry Angest and is the first major project to take an integrated look at estates in Scotland's uplands. It recognises three key issues:

- 1) the significant proportion of the land in private ownership, with many very large estates (one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Highlands and Islands);
- 2) the purchase of some of these estates by NGOs with conservation, recreation, sustainable development interests (National Trust for Scotland, John Muir Trust, RSPB, etc.), especially in the last two decades; and
- 3) the purchase of estates by their local communities, especially since the 2003 Land Reform Act.

The primary objective of the project is to understand both the complex driving forces influencing these estates, and how their owners and managers make decisions that permit them to ensure that their estates fulfil their diverse roles, while at least breaking even. Other key issues to be examined will be the economic and employment benefits of estates to local communities, and the connections between land ownership and land management, exploring motivations, objectives, and constraints.

Two of the dissertations will focus on groups of privately-owned estates:

- Landowner motivation and perceptions of sustainability; exploring visions for the future of the Scottish uplands (Pippa Wagstaff)
- The role of private landownership in facilitating sustainable rural communities in upland Scotland (Annie McKee)

The others will focus on community- and NGO-owned estates:

- How successful are community-owned estates? A study into the motivations and management of community land use and its interaction with other land users and government agencies (Amanda Calvert)
- The identification, selection and implementation of indicators for evaluating the sustainability of multi-functional, upland, NGO-owned estates in Scotland (Jayne Glass)

The dissertations are being supervised by Professor Martin Price, Director of the Centre for Mountain Studies, together with Dr. Charles Warren (St. Andrews University) and Dr. Alister Scott (University of Aberdeen). To ensure the on-the-ground and policy relevance of the project, an advisory board has been established, with representatives from the Scottish Government, the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association, Environment Link, Cairngorms National Park Authority, and the Knoydart Trust. The project will conclude with a synthesis phase which will draw on the dissertations and establish a coherent picture of Scottish upland estates, providing an input to future well-founded management and policy.

CMS staff are also active in other parts of Europe. During 2007, the CMS concluded its work within a three-year project on spatial planning in northern Europe funded by the European Commission's Northern Periphery Programme (NPP: see www.spatialnorth.eu), and also organised the final conference. The CMS also worked with partners in Finland, Greenland, Norway and Sweden to plan a major project on local adaptations to climate change. This three-year, €2.5 million project was approved by the NPP in December, and will be led by Clive Bowman at the CMS (see www.clim-atic.org). The CMS is also involved in another European project (2007-9) on quality foods from mountain areas, with partners from Austria, France, Norway, Romania, Scotland, and Slovenia. This work is being done mainly by Rob McMorran, who will also complete the first PhD from the CMS, on multifunctional forestry in the Cairngorms, in 2008. In 2008-9, Professor Price will coordinate a major report on Europe's mountain areas for the European Environment Agency.

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