

## ENCOURAGING NATURAL LIFE – CELEBRATING WILDNESS

In recent years, there has been a great deal of research and better understanding of ‘biophilia’, the positive health effects daily contact with nature has on people. At An Camas Mòr, there would be huge potential to include these health benefits as part of the lifestyle of living in the National Park.

There are two main aspects to consider when addressing the natural life (or wildlife) at An Camas Mòr. The first is the protection and improvement of natural habitat within the development area. The second is the enhancing of the experience and awareness of wildness for the people. These two aspects are vital to the whole ethos of living within the National Park.

The proposed community would be sympathetic with the surrounding natural environment doing the minimum harm to existing flora and fauna. For this reason the first principle has been to completely avoid the areas of greatest sensitivity, protecting these places of natural habitat. Then the principles set about extending the existing natural habitat as well as creating new habitat. This would be achieved by extending the wooded setting, creating dense and diverse shelter. Where possible isolated mature trees would be preserved with their immediate surrounding groundcover, to create micro-environments.

Additional habitat would be created with ‘biotope strips’ throughout the settlement. These would be thick belts of protected planting, composed of dense and diverse (predominantly) native stock. These would effectively form an independent network of nature corridors, accommodating a wide range of wildlife species. These strips would be interconnected with the help of ‘green crossings’ across the roads and streets within the settlement. The biotope strips would be leased to owners to give long term protection.

The entire settlement would be contained within a woodland setting, which would be a minimum of 30 metres deep. This dense and diverse woodland edge would be complimented with wedges of the same biodiverse character, penetrating deep into the settlement. These zones provide a vital buffer between the developed area and the surroundings, as well as giving a strong sense of connection to the landscape. Even within the inhabited areas, nature would be promoted.

An important aim would be to preserve existing top soil and ground cover during the construction period. This would make for a more gentle transformation of the site as well as leaving a natural foundation for future gardens.

The aim of habitat creation would be extended to and include buildings, allowing for sedum and turf roofs and even details such as bird boxes and bat boxes in private and public spaces.

The improved shelter created by the increased wooded areas could be expected to have a significant, positive impact on the local microclimate. This would in turn improve conditions for wildlife habitat, people’s outdoor activity as well as potentially having a significant impact by reducing energy consumption and hence CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.

All of the above measures would also work towards a better awareness and appreciation of nature for the residents of An Camas Mòr. It is an important ambition of the project team to heighten the everyday experience of wildness, offering frequent ‘close encounters’ with wildlife and as a contact reminder of people’s fragile relationship with the greater environment.



- SNH ANCIENT WOODLAND INVENTORY: LONG ESTABLISHED (OF PLANTATION ORIGIN)
- RETAINED AND NEW WOODLAND
- GREEN OPEN SPACE
- BIOTOPE STRIPS & STREET TREES