

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE

Culture, in this research, refers to the joint production of meaning. For example, previous research has indicated that farming communities have developed a collective sense of what it means to be a 'good farmer'. This research, with lowland arable farmers, found that the 'good farmer' identity is linked to, and symbolised by, intensive agricultural production practices (Burton, 2004).

Similarly, the concept of cultural capital can be used to explain why agri-environment schemes can fail to engender pro-conservation attitudes amongst farmers (Burton et al, 2008). Farmers accrue little cultural capital, or social standing, from managing land for biodiversity as this does not fit in with what it means to be a 'good farmer'.

## RESEARCH RATIONALE AND AIM

This research switches the focus from lowland regions to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Here the natural environment constrains the adoption of more intensive agricultural production practices. As a consequence, the farm and croft land in these regions can provide important habitats for biodiversity. The aim of this research is:

- to explore the cultural meanings that farmers and crofters place on farming and crofting
- to contrast these with the meanings attached to managing land for biodiversity conservation
- to evaluate how farming and crofting culture can be integrated into biodiversity related land-use policies such as agri-environment measures, to engender more pro-conservation attitudes amongst farmers and crofters.

## METHODS AND RESEARCH LOCATIONS

Understanding cultural meanings requires a qualitative research approach:

- face-to-face, discursive semi-structured interviews will be conducted with farmers and crofters in the Cairngorms National Park and in Lochalsh and Skye.
- interview questions are designed to elucidate the cultural meanings that farmers and crofters place on farming, crofting and biodiversity conservation.
- interview data will be analysed using a grounded theory approach using NVivo 8 software.



## OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Literature review

Policy review

Semi-structured interviews:

- 10 crofters in Lochalsh and Skye
- 10 farmers and crofters in the Cairngorms National Park

Qualitative analysis of farmers' and crofters' culturally influenced attitudes towards biodiversity conservation

Evaluation of biodiversity-related land use policies: can culture be integrated?

## BIODIVERSITY RELATED LAND USE POLICIES: TOWARDS THE INTEGRATION OF CULTURE

Based on the findings of these interviews, relevant biodiversity related land use policies will be evaluated to explore opportunities and constraints for better integrating the cultural aspects of farming and crofting with biodiversity goals. The emphasis of the policy analysis will be on measures in axis 2 of the Scottish Rural Development Plan. The analysis will also examine the implications of farming and crofting culture with respect to the management of statutorily protected sites, such as SSSIs, occurring on agricultural land.