



*Scotland's Caledonian Forest is returning. The highland dream of Glen Affric and a sheaf of other reforestation projects show how the old growth ways illuminate the future of the future*

#### **Wilderness remains**

High in the northerly reaches of Scotland, where rugged open moorland stretches as far as the eye can see, wild land remains. Population is low and where it exists, hugs the shoreline and valley passes. On the north east coast some miles in from the narrowing Moray Firth the only sizeable town, Inverness, nestles at the first river crossing. Other than Inverness, and Aberdeen 100 miles south if you travel round the shore, the centres of population are small, few and far between.

Since the early summer 1997 British election which brought to power a new Government committed to devolving power from the rich metropolitan south east, the formation and shape of Britain is in flux, with referenda first for Scotland, next Wales and most recently Northern Ireland voting on the future of their political and constitutional make up. Of these three, Scotland has surprised many across the border with the speed and pace of change. Scottish Parliament is months old, already. There's a new confidence about the country's future, and about its identity, a vivid contrast with the nagging debate in England as to what exactly the fragmented English identity consists of.

At the same time and influenced by, and arguably interwoven with the same generation of seventies' Scottish Nationalist radicals is another far reaching, if quieter, cultural revolution, embodying, even if in a different way, resurgent Scotland. All across rural Scotland small community groups are involved, albeit in differing ways, in reforestation projects; first steps to bring back the great, ancient Caledonian Forests which covered vast tracts of the country for thousands of years before man began the progressive clearances which have left so much of the country's present landscape

photo Sarah Kawasugi

The dream life of trees  
*(people like trees)*