

Millionaire plans to turn estate into safari park

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by Sue Restan

A MILLIONAIRE businessman is hoping to turn his 23,000-acre Highland estate into a Scottish wildlife safari park.

Paul Lister, 45, bought the Alladale Estate - which straddles Sutherland and Ross-shire - last year for £3.2million.

The businessman, who is the founder of a charity that protects wolves in Romania's Carpathian Mountains, has a vision of restoring the landscape to the way it would have been 2,000 years ago.

This would include the re-introduction of wolves, bears and lynx.

He is also considering introducing the European bison, moose and boar to his estate and offering visitors the opportunity to go on safari.

And he is holding a private meeting with conservation experts, other landowners and interested parties to discuss the proposal at Alladale next week.

Mr Lister, whose father is the co-founder of the MFI furniture chain, will also be consulting the local community and national stakeholders.

A spokesman for the millionaire, who has been described as a visionary and passionate environmental philanthropist, said he sees Alladale as one of the few remaining areas of Highland wilderness.

The spokesman said: "The thing that drives him is environmentalism.

Vision

"He wants to return the environment to, as much as possible, what it looked like 2,000 years ago.

"He has had this vision for a long time.

"That is one of the reasons he bought the estate."

He added that the meeting with conservation experts is to "get initial soundings on how to take his vision forward".

But he stressed that the pro-

posal is still in the very earliest of stages.

"These are the first steps in a long, long journey. Nothing is going to happen overnight.

"No decisions have been taken and there is no timescale.

"It is still very much a vision," said the spokesman.

Alladale Lodge, near Ardgay, was built in 1877 and overlooks Scotland's most northerly ancient Caledonian pine forest. It has been fully refurbished and can cater for up to 14 guests in its seven bedrooms.

Sometimes referred to as the "jewel in the crown" of Scottish sporting estates, Alladale includes five glens, two river systems and 10 hill lochs. It is renowned worldwide for its challenging stalking amid some of the most spectacular Highland scenery.

The estate also offers fishing, hiking, canoeing, clay pigeon shooting, mountain biking and horse riding.