

Appendix A13.2: Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park

1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix provides an assessment of the impacts of the proposed scheme upon the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) and has informed the development of appropriate mitigation proposals during landscape and visual impact assessment at DMRB Stage 3.
- 1.1.2 The SLQs are set out in Cairngorms National Park Commissioned Report No. 375 'The Special Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park' (SNH, 2010) and are presented as a list of *'the characteristics that, individually or combined, give rise to an area's outstanding scenery'*. Specifically, the SLQs are about the experience of the landscape and the response that a landscape tends to evoke in people.
- 1.1.3 The assessment has been informed by the "Cairngorms Landscape Toolkit" (CNPA, 2015) which is a resource to help developers assess the sensitivity of landscape character to development, and contains guidance, descriptions and maps of the characteristics and sensitivity of each of the SLQs within defined CNP Landscape Character Areas.
- 1.1.4 The assessment has focused principally on the SLQs relevant to each Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA) that would be directly impacted upon by the proposed scheme. The LLCAs largely correspond with the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) identified in the Cairngorms Landscape Character Assessment and comprise:
- Glen Garry: Upper Glen LLCA;
 - Glen Garry: Mid Glen LLCA; and
 - Glen Garry: Lower Glen LLCA.
- 1.1.5 A separate but related assessment of the impacts on the Special Qualities of the Loch Tummel National Scenic Area where the proposed scheme passes through the Pass of Killiecrankie LLCA and Lower Glen Garry LLCA is included in Appendix A13.3 (Special Qualities of the Loch Tummel NSA).
- 1.1.6 The general SLQs of the CNP relevant to the proposed scheme include:
- magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath;
 - vastness of space, scale and height;
 - strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes;
 - a landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland;
 - the harmony of complicated curves; and
 - landscapes both cultural and natural.
- 1.1.7 In addition to these general SLQs, this assessment has identified from the list of specific SLQs identified by SNH, those which are relevant to each LLCA or LCA, whether physical, visual, cultural, natural, recreational or sensory. It is rarely the case that only one SLQ is experienced or that one SLQ dominates all others and so relevant SLQs that tend to be experienced together have been grouped together, for the purposes of the assessment.
- 1.1.8 Within those LLCAs which would not be directly impacted by the proposed scheme, relevant SLQs still form a part in its experience and perception, for example the *"Magnificent mountains towering over forest and strath"* with the mountain ridges some distance from the proposed scheme but these may still 'dominate' distant views and accordingly these SLQs have also been considered.

- 1.1.9 The southernmost part of the CNP is known as the Blair Atholl to Glenshee section by the CNPA. This part of the CNP contains the proposed scheme from the Pass of Killiecrankie northwards towards Dalnacardoch Lodge in Glen Garry, with the southern boundary of the CNP either broadly following the southern bank of the River Garry, or in places, the route of the A9. The existing A9, River Garry, Highland Main Line railway and other more minor roads/paths/cycle routes all run broadly parallel in a south-easterly to north-westerly direction along the glen, lying just within the periphery of the CNP boundary.
- 1.1.10 The Blair Atholl to Glenshee part of the CNP is characterised by deeply cut, flat and fertile glens with dense forests and agriculture allowing views to the surrounding enclosing hills and mountains. The area is popular with tourists, offering a wide range of outdoor recreation, is rich in wildlife, and includes landscape and cultural/historical attractions such as the House of Bruar and Falls of Bruar Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL), Blair Castle GDL and Killiecrankie Battlefield. As noted by the CNPA, 'its landscape is very different from other areas of the Highlands with its flat, fertile glens supporting agriculture and many thick forests. The forests have some of the tallest trees in Britain; consequently, it is known as the "Big Tree Country"'.

2 Assessment of Impacts on the Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park

- 2.1.1 For the assessment, relevant SLQs for each LLCAs have been identified and related SLQs grouped together. Locations where the landscape characteristics underpinning these SLQs have been identified and assessed, mitigation measures which are proposed outlined and an assessment made as to whether these impacts would present a risk to the defining qualities of the SLQs.

Tables 1 to 3 provide assessments of the SLQs of the three LLCAs which would be directly impacted upon by the proposed scheme.

Table 1: Assessment of direct impacts on the SLQs of the Glen Garry: Upper Glen LLCA

Glen Garry: Upper Glen LLCA				
Relevant and Related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations underpinning the landscape characteristics and their experience	Assessment of Potential Impacts of the A9 on SLQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SLQs post Mitigation?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland; • steep glens and high passes; • dramatic, historical routes; • extensive moorland, linking farmland, woodland and the high tops; • wildness; • vernacular buildings; and • renowned rivers. 	<p>These SLQs are experienced throughout the LLCA and are particularly evocative for northbound travellers of the existing A9 who leave the settled/wooded landscapes of Mid and Lower Glen Garry and begin the climb towards the wilder, more remote pass through Drummochter (the converse being true for southbound travellers as they descend towards the 'safety' and refuge of the lower glens).</p> <p>Travellers also gain a sense of the history of the route and the role it has played in linking the Highlands to the Lowlands.</p>	<p>Online widening of the A9 would generally limit impacts on the SLQs however the proposed scheme would, to a relatively minor extent, result in the loss of moorland, farmland (pasture) and forestry due to the formation of the additional carriageway and associated earthworks. The 'newness' of the dual carriageway, signage, crash barriers and verges would initially detract from the experience of the SLQs but would become 'embedded' over time particularly through the establishment of roadside planting.</p>	<p>Species selection for the proposed planting would replicate existing woodland types present at individual locations and would marry in with the existing woodland and heathland, focussing on use of locally occurring native species to reflect the 'wildness' of the surrounding landscape. Planting specifications would adhere to the open structure of the woods mentioned and reflect the simplicity of the local landscape character whilst enhancing the palette of colours and textures (Mitigation Items P05-LV10 and, P05-LV15)</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>The impacts on the farmland, the moorland and the woodland of the strath landscapes would be mitigated over time with the establishment of the planting proposals.</p> <p>Furthermore, the proposed scheme would not significantly diminish the drama of the A9 route and the sense of wildness and at times exposure which northbound travellers experience.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes; • attractive and contrasting features; long association with forestry; • a landscape of many colours; and • dominance of natural landforms. 	<p>The juxtaposition of the contrasting 'layers' of landscapes within the CNP is experienced across the LLCA. This experience is strong with the wildness of the river and the open uplands contrasting with the more developed nature of the linear transport corridor and managed agricultural pasture at lower elevations.</p> <p>Native coniferous AWI woodland at Clunes Wood adds textures and colours, in addition to native coniferous woodland at Dalnamein Forest.</p> <p>Coniferous plantation woodland to the east of Dalnacardoch Lodge adds further textures and colours to the glen.</p>	<p>The contrast between the 'developed' nature of the valley floor and the 'wild' nature of the land at higher elevations would be increased by the introduction of the development with the widened carriageway and the associated cuttings and embankments, side/access roads at Clunes Lodge and Dalnamein Lodge, new structures at Calvine, Clunes Lodge, Dalnamein and Tigh-na-Coille, mammal fencing, signage and seven SuDS.</p> <p>Field boundaries would be disrupted by the proposed scheme but these realigned boundaries would not alter the landscape of 'layers' and 'horizontal stratification' cited in the SLQ.</p> <p>The proposed scheme would result in the loss of relatively minor amounts of pasture and woodland. This reduction of the resource would not affect the overall</p>	<p>Where possible, cuttings would retain a 'natural quality' with exposed rock outcrops. Elsewhere, earthworks would be sculpted in order to appear less engineered, more natural with variation introduced in order to tie in with the existing landform. The gradients of embankments and cutting slope faces would be varied in response to the existing undulations in the landform. Grading of the earthworks at Dalreoch, Tigh-na-Coille and close to Dalnamein Forest.</p> <p>Woodland planting proposals would reflect species found locally in order to help integrate the proposed scheme into the landscape in the longer term.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>The impacts and sense of strong juxtaposition of the landscape and its range of contrasts would be maintained.</p> <p>The forestry and forestry operations would be largely unaffected by the proposed scheme.</p>

Glen Garry: Upper Glen LLCA				
Relevant and Related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations underpinning the landscape characteristics and their experience	Assessment of Potential Impacts of the A9 on SLQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SLQs post Mitigation?
		<p>experience of the landscape as described in the SLQs.</p> <p>Only relatively small areas of forestry would be required to be felled in order to accommodate the proposed scheme and the majority of forest blocks and accesses would be unaffected/undisturbed.</p> <p>The proposed scheme would result in the modification of the landform, particularly smaller scale features.</p> <p>In addition, the earthworks would have the potential to remove/alter rock outcrops associated with the existing A9 that are currently exposed and have been naturally colonised.</p>	(Mitigation Items P05-LV5, P05-LV10 and, P05-LV15)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark skies; and • wildness. 	Aside from the transport corridor there is little development within the LLCA and combined with the enclosed nature of the landform this lends to dark skies.	No lighting columns are proposed along the mainline and in this regard the proposed scheme would not impact upon the SLQ.	None	<p>No.</p> <p>Whilst there would be an increase in traffic on the A9 there would be no significant impact on the dark sky qualities of the LLCA.</p>

Table 2: Assessment of direct impacts on the SLQs of the Glen Garry: Mid Glen LLCA

Glen Garry: Mid Glen LLCA				
Relevant and Related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations underpinning the landscape characteristics and their experience	Assessment of Potential Impacts of the A9 on SLQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SLQs post Mitigation?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand panoramas and framed views; strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes; • a landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland; attractive features; • broad, farmed straths; 	<p>This LLCA can be considered as comprising the transitional landscape between the more settled landscapes of the lower glen to the east and the wilder landscapes to the north and west. The SLQs are experienced throughout the LLCA.</p> <p>Infrastructure development is high within the LLCA as indicated by the ratings in the Landscape Toolkit. The House of Bruar, the Highland Main Line railway and the existing A9 all add to a strong</p>	<p>Online widening of the existing A9 carriageway would generally limit impacts on the SLQs however impacts of a greater magnitude would occur as a direct result of the proposed junction arrangement at Bruar. This junction would partially alter the pastoral areas of the flat strath floor.</p> <p>The dramatic large scale landscape would be largely unaffected by the proposed</p>	<p>The proposed planting specifications have been selected in order to reflect the local landscape character whilst enhancing the palette of colours and textures.</p> <p>Earthworks would be graded and engineered so that they fit with the existing landform and</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>There would be no significant impacts on the SLQs, the impacts associated with the proposed scheme being mitigated as the planting proposals mature.</p>

Glen Garry: Mid Glen LLCA				
Relevant and Related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations underpinning the landscape characteristics and their experience	Assessment of Potential Impacts of the A9 on SLQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SLQs post Mitigation?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> steep glens and high passes; the surrounding hills; and renowned rivers. 	<p>feeling of development within the valley floor and this contributes to the landscape of 'layers' with the wilder more natural landscape above.</p>	<p>scheme, with views to ridge lines and mountains from within the LLCA unchanged.</p> <p>The framed views to the east towards Ben Vrackie would be unaffected by the proposed scheme.</p> <p>The contrast between the 'developed' nature of the valley floor and the 'wild' nature of the land at higher elevations would be slightly increased by the introduction of the proposed scheme.</p>	<p>afford opportunities to restore the land to pasture.</p> <p>Planting proposals would not impact upon the framed views to the east towards Ben Vrackie and the Pass of Killiecrankie.</p> <p>Vegetation establishment is integral to the design of the cuttings and embankments in order to reduce their engineered nature and has been designed in order to promote integration with the existing landscape character. SuDS have been designed so that they exhibit varied naturalistic bank profiles and edge vegetation and avoid straight canalised edges. (Mitigation Items P05-LV5, P05-LV6, P05-LV10, P05-LV15 and, P05-LV17).</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parkland and policy woodlands; landscapes both cultural and natural; a landscape of many colours; attractive and contrasting textures; long association with forestry; spirituality; renowned rivers; and a landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland. 	<p>The parkland and policy woodlands SLQ and related SLQs within the LLCA are experienced within the Falls of Bruar Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) to the north of Pitagowan and the House of Bruar GDL and viewed from the existing A9 and the B8079.</p>	<p>The proposed scheme would not directly impact the parkland and policy woodlands and would not detract from related SLQs such as the attractive and contrasting textures.</p> <p>From within the parkland, views of the proposed scheme would be limited by the extent of existing woodland. Furthermore, it is anticipated that noise levels would not be significantly louder than the levels currently experienced (generally less than 3dB in the baseline and future do-something scenarios, as shown in Figures 17.6 and 17.7) and that in this regard the proposed scheme would not diminish the sense of tranquillity and spirituality that may be experienced by visitors.</p>	<p>Ensure that all introduced features are designed to fit with the existing character of the LLCA and thus not disrupt the existing layered nature of the landscape.</p> <p>Species selection to the proposed planting would replicate existing woodland types present at individual locations and would marry in with the existing woodland. (Mitigation Items P05-LV10 and, P05-LV15)</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>There would be no significant impacts on the parkland and policy woodland SLQ and no significant impacts on related SLQs.</p>
	<p>Aside from the transport corridor there is little</p>	<p>No lighting columns are proposed along</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>No.</p>

Glen Garry: Mid Glen LLCA				
Relevant and Related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations underpinning the landscape characteristics and their experience	Assessment of Potential Impacts of the A9 on SLQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SLQs post Mitigation?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dark skies. 	development within the LLCA and combined with the enclosed nature of the landform this lends to dark skies.	the mainline and in this regard the proposed scheme would not impact upon the SLQ.		There would be no significant impact on the dark sky qualities of the LLCA.

Table 3: Assessment of direct impacts on the SLQs of the Glen Garry: Lower Glen LLCA

Glen Garry: Lower Glen LLCA				
Relevant and Related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations underpinning the landscape characteristics and their experience	Assessment of Potential Impacts of the A9 on SLQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SLQs post Mitigation?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Magnificent mountains towering over forest and strath; grand panoramas and framed views; focal cultural landmarks of castles, distilleries and bridges; the surrounding hills; dramatic, historical routes; renowned rivers; and landscapes both cultural and natural. 	<p>Highly scenic views across the strath landscapes to the surrounding mountains and hills can be experienced throughout the LLCA, including glimpsed views towards Beinn a'Ghlò to the north of Blair Atholl. These views are appreciable from the existing A9 in addition to views towards Ben Vrackie and the Pass of Killiecrankie to the east.</p> <p>Views of Blair Castle from the existing A9 are limited, the roadside planting maturing such that it screens views.</p> <p>Travellers also gain a sense of the history of the route of the A9 and the role it has played in linking the Highlands to the Lowlands.</p>	The views and the panoramas of the dramatic large scale landscape would be unaffected by proposed scheme, with views to ridge lines and grand panoramas from within the LLCA kept intact, or, in the case of the proposed scheme, enhanced so that travellers gain a higher quality visual experience of the surrounding landscape.	Views of the landscape would be retained and enhanced (refer to Appendix 13.6: Project Landscape Objectives). Views of Blair Castle would be provided for so that travellers can experience views of the castle and its upland setting. (Mitigation Items P05-LV10, P05-LV15 and, P05-LV17)	<p>No.</p> <p>The mitigation measures and landscape objectives associated with the proposed scheme would enhance the opportunities to experience these SLQs, and would not result in significant impacts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes; a landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland; landscapes both cultural and natural; extensive moorland, linking the farmland, woodland and the high tops; steep glens and high passes; broad, farmed straths; renowned rivers; vernacular stone buildings; and surrounding hills. 	The variety and contrast of these SLQs within the LLCA can be experienced from throughout its extents including the existing A9.	The contrast between the 'developed' nature of the valley floor and the 'wild' nature of the land at higher elevations would be slightly increased by the introduction of the proposed scheme. Increased infrastructure would include the widened carriageway with associated cuttings and embankments at Killiecrankie, realigned side roads at Shierglas Quarry and Garry Bank, new bridge structures over Allt Girnaig and Allt Chluain, the new junction at Aldclune, the Essangal Underbridge and eight SuDS basins/ponds.	Where possible cuttings would retain a 'natural quality' with exposed rock outcrops. Elsewhere, earthworks would be sculpted in order to appear less engineered, more natural with variation introduced in order to tie in with the existing landform. Where particular consideration has been given to the form of the proposed earthworks include the embankments at Shierglas, the Aldclune junction and west of Killiecrankie.	<p>No.</p> <p>The impacts on the farmland, the moorland and the woodland of the strath landscapes would be mitigated over time with the establishment of the planting proposals.</p> <p>Furthermore, the weathering of rock cuttings and the establishment of planting upon the earthworks would integrate the proposed scheme into the varied landscapes found across the</p>

Glen Garry: Lower Glen LLCA				
Relevant and Related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations underpinning the landscape characteristics and their experience	Assessment of Potential Impacts of the A9 on SLQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SLQs post Mitigation?
		The proposed scheme would result in the loss of areas of pasture and woodland. Field boundaries would also be disrupted but the essential qualities of the farmed strath SLQ would not be impacted. The widened Essangal bridge crossing over the River Garry would have a relatively localised impact on the river and the way it is perceived.	Species selection for the proposed planting would replicate existing woodland types present at individual locations and would marry in with the existing woodland. Within the boundary of the policy woodlands to Blair Castle this may include the use of non-native species. (Mitigation Items P05-LV5, P05-LV10 and, P05-LV15)	strath floor.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominance of natural landforms; • broad, farmed straths; and • renowned rivers. 	The variety and contrast of these SLQs within the LLCA can be experienced from throughout its extents including the existing A9.	<p>There would be an impact upon these SLQs with the formation of steep visually prominent cuttings, particularly at the cutting south of Black Island (ch7300 to ch8700) and sections of retaining wall between Shierglas and Glackmore.</p> <p>Earthworks at Shierglas, the Aldclune junction and to the west of Killiecrankie have the potential to impact on the qualities of these SLQs.</p> <p>Generally, the proposed scheme would follow the same route as the previous road and thus limit impacts on the SLQs not already impacted upon by the existing A9.</p>	<p>Grading of the earthworks where possible, including the embankment slopes at Shierglas, the Aldclune junction and west of Killiecrankie.</p> <p>The design of SuDS has avoided canalised edges and adopted varied naturalistic bank profiles and edge vegetation to integrate with the natural landform. (Mitigation Items P05-LV5 and, P05-LV6)</p> <p>High quality design of the new Essangal Underbridge (ch4500) in keeping with the landscape character (Mitigation Item P05-LV10) to minimise impact on the perception of the River Garry.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>Where impacts on the landform cannot be fully mitigated by grading of slopes etc. the impacts on these SLQs would be mitigated in time with the establishment of the planting proposals which would integrate the proposed scheme into the landscape.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A landscape of many colours; • attractive and contrasting textures; • long association with forestry; • parkland and policy woodlands; and • vernacular stone buildings. 	<p>Extensive commercial conifer woodlands across the LLCA on steeper slopes.</p> <p>Some native roadside mixed woodland at Glackmore and Garryside add contrasting textures and colours.</p> <p>AWI mixed woodland close to the A9 at Garryside, Aldclune, near Killiecrankie and to the south of</p>	<p>Roadside trees would be lost to the south of Black Island and here the loss would be limited and would not significantly reduce the local resource or impact on any of the SLQs.</p> <p>At Glackmore, Garryside, Aldclune and near Killiecrankie the loss is more substantial and locally has the potential to impact on the SLQs.</p>	<p>Reinstatement of lost mixed woodland with a similar species composition would ensure that SLQs are preserved, using a mix of woodland types and species rich grassland. Use of locally occurring species to integrate with neighbouring policies and parkland. (Mitigation Items P05-LV10 and, P05-LV15)</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>The use of woodland species similar to those that are found within the LLCA would ensure that the contrast in colours and textures would be maintained.</p>

Glen Garry: Lower Glen LLCA				
Relevant and Related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations underpinning the landscape characteristics and their experience	Assessment of Potential Impacts of the A9 on SLQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SLQs post Mitigation?
	Black Island adds colour and texture.	Other forestry on more elevated slopes within the LLCA would not be affected.		

3 References

Scottish Natural Heritage and the Cairngorms National Park Authority (2010). SNH Commissioned Report 375: The Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park.

Cairngorms National Park Authority (2015). Cairngorms Landscape Toolkit. Available from: <http://cairngorms.co.uk/park-authority/planning/landscape-toolkit/> [9 February 2017].