

Appendix 13.3

Landscape Objectives

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	General	1
1.2	Fitting Landscapes	1
2	Landscape Objectives	2
2.1	Landscape Character Objectives	2
3	Landscape Objectives for Project 8	6
3.1	Landscape Character Objectives	6
4	Application of Landscape Objectives for Project 8	6

Tables

Table 2-1:	Potential effects upon Drumochter Pass LCA key characteristics	2
Table 2-2:	Potential effects upon Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA key characteristics	3
Table 2-3:	Potential effects upon Glen Truim LCA key characteristics	5

1 Introduction

1.1 General

1.1.1 The Proposed Scheme presents landscape opportunities to contribute to the environmental value of the A9 road corridor through delivery of a high quality integrated, biodiverse, adaptable and sustainable transport corridor.

1.2 Fitting Landscapes

1.2.1 At the broadest level, these landscape opportunities have been identified with a view to meeting the four key aims of Fitting Landscapes: Securing more Sustainable Landscapes policy (Transport Scotland, 2014), which are to:

- ensure high quality of design and place
- enhance and protect natural heritage
- use resources wisely
- build in adaptability to change

1.2.2 The vision of the Fitting Landscapes policy is to:
“promote the more sustainable design, implementation, maintenance and management of the transport estate and ensure that the landscapes that are created and managed are of a high quality, well integrated, biodiverse and adaptable, and deliver a meaningful contribution to national sustainability targets”.

1.2.3 In addition to meeting the above four key aims, the policy requires Landscape Objectives to be set to inform the planning, design, implementation and management of new transport infrastructure.

1.2.4 Project-specific Landscape Objectives have been developed in accordance with the policy to help achieve the above four key aims. The process of setting the objectives has been informed through engagement with statutory consultees; review of findings from the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process including the Strategic Environmental Design Principles, and collaborative design working of the landscape architects with engineers and other technical and design disciplines such as ecology, cultural heritage, noise, hydrology, land use, community and private assets and architecture.

1.2.5 The A9 Dualling Programme Environmental Design Guide - Landscape Character Area Guidance (CH2MHill for Transport Scotland, 2015) is an internal document developed to support consistency across the various A9 dualling projects. The Design Guide includes ‘key landscape objectives’ for each of the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within which the Proposed Scheme is located. Along with the A9 Dualling Programme SEA Strategic Environmental Design Principles, these have been used to inform the project-specific Landscape Objectives.

2 Landscape Objectives

2.1 Landscape Character Objectives

2.1.1 A Strategic Landscape Review was undertaken and through this process, Objectives were identified for each of the CNPA Landscape Character Areas. These objectives were assessed against the scheme options at DMRB Stage 2. Within this appendix these objectives have been assessed against the DMRB Stage 3 Proposed Scheme. **Drawing 13.3** in **Volume 3** shows the LCAs referred to.

Drumochter Pass LCA

2.1.2 The scale of the landscape is vast, and the Proposed Scheme is small in comparison. All effects will be contained within the existing infrastructure corridor. The assessment below reviews the potential effects on the key features of this character area and how the Proposed Scheme responds to the key objectives established for this area.

Assessment of Key Characteristics

Table 2-1: *Potential effects upon Drumochter Pass LCA key characteristics*

Key Characteristics	Potential Effects
Dramatic and sublime character	Some slight reduction during construction but less on completion.
Hummocky moraines	None
Braided watercourses in valley floor	None
Little tree cover	Minimal
Heather and scree slopes	Minimal

Assessment of Key Objectives

2.1.3 The Proposed Scheme is assessed against objectives established via the A9 Dualling Programme Strategic Landscape Review.

Alignment fits with the dramatic local landscape

2.1.4 The Proposed Scheme involves online widening of the existing A9; there is a gentle curve to the existing road that matches the long sweeps of the moorland slopes to the east. As the Proposed Scheme alignment responds to the existing route, it aids the fit with this LCA.

Minimising of Infrastructure

2.1.5 The Proposed Scheme introduces some new pieces of infrastructure, including access tracks and signage; however, no additional street lighting is proposed and signage will be minimised (as required to meet safety standards).

2.1.6 Within this LCA there will be some local watercourse diversions, extensions to existing culverts and temporary and permanent SuDS features. Landscape Architects have had significant input to the design of permanent SuDS features and earthwork slopes to tie the Proposed Scheme elements into the surrounding landform as naturally as possible; this is detailed in **Chapter 13**.

New tree planting

2.1.7 The existing tree belt to the east of the road will be affected by the Proposed Scheme in a few locations; between chainage (ch.) 20,200 and 20,500 for drainage and at approximate ch. 20,600

for access to the hill track to A’ Bhuidheanach. Any tree planting that is to be removed as part of the Proposed Scheme will be mitigated through replacement planting in suitable areas.

- 2.1.8 Replacement planting will be of a mixed native woodland type rather than the historical functional coniferous tree belt. Winter resilience forms part of the Proposed Scheme between approximate ch. 20,150 to 20,500. This will be planted as mixed native woodland.

Enjoyment of the spectacular views

- 2.1.9 The views from the road that enable appreciation of the surrounding landscape, will remain very much as existing. Views from the road are assessed in **Chapter 9** and reference is also made in **Chapter 14**.

Access to and appreciation of this landscape

- 2.1.10 The inclusion of segregated Type A laybys and underpass crossings allows safer NMU access throughout Project 8 and provide continued access to the surrounding network of paths and the wider landscape, therefore increasing appreciation of the LCA.

Glen Truim: Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA

- 2.1.11 The landscape within this LCA is very open and there is limited tree cover. The landform creates a series of sweeping curves.

- 2.1.12 Other than the proposed Dalwhinnie Junction, the Proposed Scheme is restricted to the parallel widening on the open east side of the glen.

- 2.1.13 **Table 2-2** below indicates potential effects upon this LCAs key characteristics.

Table 2-2: *Potential effects upon Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA key characteristics*

Key Characteristics	Potential Effects
Very open character	Some slight reduction during construction but less on completion
Wide floodplain / strath	In landscape terms, the ‘wide floodplain’ can be associated with the strath. In terms of ‘floodplain’ this is discussed in Chapter 11 . In terms of the spatial qualities of the strath surrounding the River Truim, the greatest effects are expected at the Dalwhinnie Junction
Sweeping curves	None associated with the mainline – the new road could enhance this characteristic Dalwhinnie Junction - The east/ west link road across the strath is however slightly against the landscape grain (the strath and the infrastructure corridor runs north/south)
Simple topography	Possible effects if earthworks fail to be naturalistic. The Proposed Scheme is an online dualling of an existing of a single carriageway road; therefore, there will be minimal effect on wider topography. There may be local landform effects in some locations, identified within Chapter 13, Table 13.10 .
Tree cover	Adjacent to the Proposed Scheme, the woodland of Lechden will be affected around approximate ch. 25,400 and sparse tree planting from ch. 26,000 to the end of the scheme will likely be affected
Heather side slopes	Minimal
Wet heath / poor grassland in floodplain / strath	Potential impact on vegetation in strath associated with the Dalwhinnie Junction.

Assessment against Key Objectives

- 2.1.14 The Proposed Scheme has been assessed against LCA objectives established via the A9 Dualling Programme Strategic Landscape Review, as set out below.

Alignment fits with the dramatic local landscape form

- 2.1.15 The Proposed Scheme fits reasonably well with the LCA. The earthworks slopes have been designed to integrate with the adjoining landscape and take into consideration other sensitive areas, such as the 1:200-year flood plain extent. The Proposed Scheme follows the gentle sweeping curve of the existing road. This fits well with the adjoining smooth western slopes of Leacainn.
- 2.1.16 Towards the north end of the LCA, from approximate ch. 26,200 to 29,600 where this LCA ends, the landscape surrounding the immediate road corridor begins to narrow, forming a pass. The Proposed Scheme responds and fits into this landscape. There are some proposed areas of rock cutting expected at approximate ch. 26, 550 to 27,250, which will need to be designed to fit into the adjoining landscape.
- 2.1.17 The Dalwhinnie Junction arrangement crosses the strath in an east/ west orientation and does not follow the general grain of the infrastructure corridor and strath (north/ south) locally. Therefore, the Junction arrangement is incongruous within this LCA and is a very obvious, large infrastructure feature with extensive earthworks. The proposed junction is a compact loop arrangement and the loops are in cutting, and therefore sit low within the landscape. This does help blend the junction into this area, especially when additional mitigation planting is installed.

Reinforce the existing open character

- 2.1.18 The Proposed Scheme does include some areas of proposed woodland planting. Scrub and grassland planting will be required on embankment and cutting slopes.
- 2.1.19 The northern edge of the LCA, from approximate ch. 26,200, becomes wooded in places as it transitions to the Glen Truim LCA at approximate ch. 29,600. Some native tree planting is proposed in appropriate areas to blend with existing cover.
- 2.1.20 Dalwhinnie Junction will introduce a large new feature into this open landscape; however, the majority of the junction works are in cuttings, and junction slopes will be planted with suitable scrub and grassland mixes.

Minimising of infrastructure

- 2.1.21 Within this LCA, along the road corridor there are a number of culverts/ bridges. These have been considered throughout the design process to minimise effects. The Proposed Scheme includes earthwork slopes that have been designed to fit with the adjoining landform where possible.
- 2.1.22 The proposed Dalwhinnie Junction introduces new roadscape and infrastructure into a very open landscape, between approximate ch. 22,000 and 23,000, in the form of the junction, slip and link roads, earthworks, snow gates, signage and barriers, and a new crossing over the River Truim.
- 2.1.23 At approximate ch. 26,450 to 27,200 local rock cuts will expose new rock faces. As part of the Proposed Scheme mitigation, an outline of design/ profile for proposed rock cuts has been developed with information available. It is anticipated that once works are on site more information for the rock will be available and the profiling/ design of these slopes will be developed through the construction process.
- 2.1.24 There is a large retaining wall proposed between the A9 and Highland Mainline railway from approximate ch. 30,600 to 30,800. The visual prominence of this wall will be reduced via appropriate design detailing and screen planting.

The enjoyment of the spectacular views

- 2.1.25 The Proposed Scheme includes a number of stopping places that will further enable the enjoyment of spectacular views:
- Northbound layby at approximate ch. 24,300 and southbound layby at approximate ch. 24,400 will enable views across the River Truim floodplain to Dalwhinnie and the distillery
 - There is a southbound layby proposed at ch. 28,800 which has good views north to Craig Dubh and the Monadhliaths
 - There is a southbound layby proposed at ch. 29,900 with reasonable views south
 - There is a northbound layby proposed at ch. 30,200 which has attractive views of Glen Truim and Cruben Beag

Glen Truim LCA

- 2.1.26 The transition into the Glen Truim LCA starts from approximate ch. 29,600 and extends to the north of the Proposed Scheme. This LCA has more sparse tree cover along the road side than other parts of the study area; this and topography create an increased sense of enclosure along the Proposed Scheme. A limited section, approximately 1.2km, of the Glen Truim LCA will be affected by the proposals. The assessment reviews the potential effect on the key characteristics and how the Proposed Scheme responds to the key objectives established for this area.

Characteristics

- 2.1.27 **Table 2-3** below indicates potential effects upon this LCAs key characteristics.

Table 2-3: *Potential effects upon Glen Truim LCA key characteristics*

Key Characteristics	Potential Effects
Intimate scale	Some slight effect due to wider road
Narrow glen floor	None
Rocky hill summits to the west	None
Extensive pine/ birch woodland with mosaic open areas	Minimal effect
Sense of enclosure	Potentially slight effects due to wider road

Key Landscape Objectives

- 2.1.28 The Proposed Scheme is assessed below against LCA objectives established via the A9 Dualling Programme Strategic Landscape Review:

Utilise the limited palette of existing trees and retain mixed woodland character

- 2.1.29 Through detailed additional (secondary) mitigation proposals as detailed in **Table 13.17** in **Chapter 13**, pine and birch would be appropriate to propose, to fit in with the existing tree palette, which is predominantly broadleaf species.

Reinforce pinch-point

- 2.1.30 The widening of the road may cause a slight lessening of the pinch-point character; however, there is proposed rock cut within this LCA that will retain this pinch-point character.

Views of the hillsides of Cruben Mhor and Cruben Beag

- 2.1.31 There should be limited change in the view from the road, views are important to landscape as this is how people can gain a perception of the landscape. Laybys are proposed at approximate ch. 30,200 and ch. 29,900 which will allow the scenic asset to be appreciated.

3 Landscape Objectives for Project 8

3.1 Landscape Character Objectives

3.1.1 The Landscape Objectives for the proposed scheme are as follows:

- Enhance and modify existing tree belts where appropriate to LLCAs
- Integrate proposed infrastructure at Dalwhinnie Junction to minimise effects on Dalwhinnie LLCA
- Increased enjoyment of the landscape and existing recreational routes
- Maintain existing key open views including views towards Dalwhinnie Distillery and the Monadhliath hills
- Reinforce open character through Leacainn LLCA
- Integrate proposed infrastructure through Cuaich, Leacainn and Dallanach LLCAs
- Retain and where possible enhance the dramatic local characteristics to the northern end of Project 8
- Sensitive approach to design of SuDS features to blend into the surrounding landscape
- Retain cultural heritage assets and their landscape setting
- Preservation of the characteristics of ‘Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor’ Special Landscape Area (SLA) where the A9 passes through this area in Crubenmore LLCA

4 Application of Landscape Objectives for Project 8

4.1.1 The Landscape Objectives are intended to guide the planning, design, implementation and management of the Proposed Scheme. It is recognised that they will not always be fully achievable. A range of factors need to be taken into account, including engineering feasibility; road safety; effects on landowners; and constrained locations where effects on multiple environmental sensitivities need to be balanced and the optimum solution may be a compromise.

4.1.2 Details on how the Landscape Objectives set out in **section 3** above would be tailored to the receiving landscape are outlined below:

Enhance and modify existing tree belts where appropriate to LLCAs

- Through introduction of broadleaf species to be planted wherever elements of the existing functional coniferous tree belt are removed through the Proposed Scheme
- To ensure sense of enclosure specific to Dail A’Chuirn and Tom a’Bhacain LLCAs is retained

Integrate proposed infrastructure at Dalwhinnie Junction to minimise effects at Dalwhinnie LLCA

- Through sensitive earthworks design surrounding the new Dalwhinnie Junction
- Careful consideration of planting to screen views where appropriate and blend this into the landscape through use of seeding, native scrub and trees
- Through the transition between the riparian character associated with the Truim and the existing functional coniferous shelter belt found within the immediate context

Increased enjoyment of the landscape and existing recreational routes

- Through rationalised underpass crossings, increasing safety for NMUs and retaining access from the A9 into the surrounding area
- By maintaining all existing NMU routes within Project 8 and enhance connectivity through introduction of safer Type A laybys
- Careful consideration of native planting to screen views toward new areas of infrastructure to ensure minimal impact on the enjoyment of NMU routes

Maintain existing key open views including views towards Dalwhinnie Distillery and the Monadhliath hills

- Through careful planting design to screen and frame key views where appropriate

Reinforce open character through Leacainn LLCA

- Through careful consideration of appropriate planting enhancing riparian character

Integrate proposed infrastructure through Cuaich, Leacainn and Dallanach LLCAs

- Sensitive approach to earthworks design around proposed left-in/ left-out access at Cuaich and access roads adjacent to the A9
- Replacement and enhancement planting at Lechden Woods through native mixed woodland

Retain and where possible enhance the dramatic local characteristics to the northern end of Project 8

- Through areas of rock cut and mixed woodland planting to retain characteristic areas of enclosure
- Allowing natural regeneration of plants among areas of rock cut

Sensitive approach to design of SuDS features to blend into the surrounding landscape

- Through careful consideration of seeding and scrub and riparian planting

Retain cultural heritage assets and their landscape setting

- Through carefully considered native planting designs

Preservation of the characteristics of 'Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor' Special Landscape Area (SLA) where the A9 passes through this area in Crubenmore LLCA

- Through retention of key characteristics of Crubenmore LLCA with rock cut and native planting design

