

Appendix 13.4

Special Landscape Qualities Assessment

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1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix provides an assessment of the effects 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. LLCA’s are shown on **Drawing 13.4** in **Volume 3**. The LLCAs largely correspond with the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) identified in the Cairngorms Landscape Character Assessment and comprise:
- Dail A’Chuirn LLCA
 - Tom a’ Bhacain LLCA
 - Dalwhinnie LLCA
 - Leacainn LLCA
 - Cuaich LLCA
 - Dallanach LLCA
 - Odharaich LLCA
 - Crubenmore LLCA
- 1.1.5 The Proposed Scheme within Project 8 lies entirely within the CNP. The SLQs that may be affected by the Proposed Scheme are highlighted in **bold** below.

<p>General Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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’ • Landscapes both cultural and natural 	<p>The Mountains and Plateaux</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unifying presence of the central mountains • An imposing massif of strong dramatic character • The unique plateaux of vast scale, distinctive landforms and exposed, boulder strewn high ground • The surrounding hills • The drama of deep corries • Exceptional glacial landforms • Snowscapes 	<p>Visual and Sensory Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layers of receding ridge lines • Grand panoramas and framed views • A landscape of many colours • Dark skies • Attractive and contrasting textures • The dominance of natural sounds
<p>Trees, Woods and Forests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark and venerable pine forest • Light and airy birch woods • Parkland and policy woodlands • Long association with forestry 	<p>Wildlife and Nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominance of natural landforms • Extensive tracts of natural vegetation • Association with iconic animals • Wild land • Wildness 	<p>Culture and History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive planned towns • Vernacular stone buildings • Dramatic, historical routes • The wistfulness of abandoned settlements • Focal cultural landmarks of castles, distilleries and bridges • The Royal connection
<p>Moorlands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive moorland, linking the farmland, woodland and the high tops • A patchwork of muirburn 	<p>Glens and Straths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steep glens and high passes • Broad, farmed straths • Renowned rivers • Beautiful lochs 	<p>Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A landscape of opportunities • Spirituality

1.1.6 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.

1.1.7 Within those LLCAs that 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.

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

2.1.1 For the assessment, the SLQs identified above (in bold) have been assessed in **Table 2-1** against the Proposed Scheme. Within each SLQs item, the LCAs and LLCAs that demonstrate these qualities have been identified. Locations where the landscape characteristics underpinning these SLQs have been identified and assessed, mitigation measures are outlined and an assessment made as to whether these would present a risk to the defining qualities of the SLQs.

Table 2-1: CNPA SLQ Assessment for Project 8

Relevant and related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations, underpinning landscape characteristics and their experience	Effects of the new A9 on these SLQs and potential to mitigate	Is there a risk of loss or damage to SLQs?
General Qualities			
Magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath	The central section of Project 8 lacks dramatic mountains, with the hills to the east looming, rather than towering over the strath. However long-distance views of the Monadhliaths to the north creates a dramatic skyline. This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA and LLCAs Tom A'Bhacain, Dalwhinnie and Leacainn.	Around Dalwhinnie Junction there may be some restriction of distant views toward the Monadhliaths, however, the majority of these views will not be affected. Careful consideration of tree planting and location of signage around Dalwhinnie Junction to avoid limiting these views north.	The proposals are small compared with the scale of the landscape
Vastness of space, scale and height	The vastness of the landscape is particularly apparent north of Dalwhinnie The views west over Dalwhinnie and Glen Truim are expansive but undramatic. This is of particular relevance to LCA and LLCAs Leacainn, Cuaich and Dallanach.	The vastness of the landscape will not be impacted by the proposals and experience and scale will not be diminished by the dualling.	The proposals are small compared with the scale of the landscape
Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes	The landscape around Dalwhinnie is relatively uniform although the contrast of rough grazing in the strath floor with heather moorland of the adjoining slopes is striking. This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA and A'Bhacain, Dalwhinnie and Leacainn LLCAs.	The line of the road on the edge of the strath currently emphasises the juxtaposition between the strath floor and the moorland slopes. The dualling may dilute the transition slightly by increasing the separation between the two vegetation types. However careful design of the roadside planting and where possible the central reservation should enable this transition to be reinforced.	No impact on SLQ
A landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland	There are limited 'layers' within Project 8, most noticeable around Dalwhinnie with the moorland slopes to the east. However, the variation of layers is limited with the experience of travelling through the landscape of layers is stronger in other sections. The "time-depth" layers are stronger with the continuing use of this route back to prehistory. This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA and A'Bhacain, Dalwhinnie and Leacainn LLCAs.	The dualling will not impact on the perception of the landscape layers. Interpretation could increase awareness of the continuous use of this route through times	No impact on SLQ
'The harmony of complicated curves'	The undulating hill slopes and ridge lines and meandering River Truim across the Strath is reflect through the gentle curve of the existing road through the landscape. This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie and Glen Truim LCA and Dalwhinnie, Leacainn, Cuaich and Dallanach LLCAs.	The existing road winds gently through this section – following the bends of the strath. The dualling will mirror this curve which fits well with the landscape	No impact on SLQ

Relevant and related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations, underpinning landscape characteristics and their experience	Effects of the new A9 on these SLQs and potential to mitigate	Is there a risk of loss or damage to SLQs?
Landscapes both cultural and natural	This section strongly exhibits this quality. The cultural landscape of Dalwhinnie and the Distillery is set within an austere open moorland. This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie and Glen Truim LCA and Dalwhinnie, Leacainn, Cuaich and Dallanach LLCAs.	The Proposed Scheme will reinforce the cultural element due to greater presence of infrastructure, but this will be minimal in comparison the domination of natural wild landscapes. The increase in safe crossings and segregated laybys will encourage the continued enjoyment of the surrounding landscape and enjoyment of scenic views.	No impact on SLQ
Moorlands			
Extensive moorland, linking the farmland, woodland and the high tops	The central section of Project 8 within Upper Glen Truim LCA is extensively moorland with the contrast of heather covered hill slopes, rough grazing of the strath floor and plantation forestry around Dalwhinnie. This is of relevance to the whole extent of Project 8 and all LCAs and LLCAs.	The loss of moorland to the dualling is almost infinitely small compared to the vastness of the extensive surrounding moorland. The line of the road will reinforce the separation of the moorland from the rough grazing in the strath floor.	No impact on SLQ
A patchwork of muirburn	Some areas of muirburn can be visible from the road on Leacainn and Creag Ruadh for example This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA and Leacainn, Cuaich and Dallanach LLCAs.	The visibility of muirburn on the hill slopes will not be affected by the dualling	No impact on SLQ
Glens and Straths			
Renowned rivers	This area is upper waters of the River Truim - it has a characteristic meandering quality often visible to the west of the A9. The Truim is not a major river – but is a tributary of the Spey and has attractive elements This is of relevance to the whole extent of Project 8 and all LCAs and LLCAs.	The Truim in this location is not particularly dramatic but adds to the attractive scenic quality of views. The Proposed Scheme will not impact this SLQ.	No impact on SLQ
Beautiful lochs	There are distant glimpses of Loch Ericht but this is the only loch visible from this section. This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA and Dalwhinnie, Leacainn, Cuaich and Dallanach LLCAs.	The Proposed Scheme will not impact this SLQ and retain glimpse views west to Loch Ericht.	No impact on SLQ
Trees, Woods and Forests			
Long association with forestry	The extensive forestry plantations at Tom a'Bhacain and plantations to the north and west of Dalwhinnie are important landscape features. This is of particular relevance to Drumochter Pass and Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCAs and Dail A'Chuirn, Tom a'Bhacain and Dalwhinnie LLCAs.	The plantations are remote from the A9 and are unaffected by the Proposed Scheme.	No impact on SLQ

Relevant and related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations, underpinning landscape characteristics and their experience	Effects of the new A9 on these SLQs and potential to mitigate	Is there a risk of loss or damage to SLQs?
Wildlife and Nature			
Dominance of natural forms	<p>This area typifies this special quality – where “natural landforms dominate the scene with any human modification incidental...”</p> <p>The rolling moorland and rounded hills are the key features of this landscape. This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA and Dalwhinnie, Leacainn, Cuaich and Dallanach LLCAs.</p>	<p>Embedded Mitigation has involved detailed discussion with Landscape Architects to inform a more natural embankment that blends into the surrounding landscape where possible.</p>	No impact on SLQ
Extensive tracts of natural vegetation	<p>The extensive heather and Molinia in this area is maintained by grazing and burning and there is an argument that that the landscape character should evolve to be more natural and diverse with increased woodland.</p> <p>This is of relevance to the whole extent of Project 8 and all LCAs and LLCAs.</p>	<p>There will be limited areas of vegetation loss associated with the Proposed Scheme.</p> <p>Planting will aim to replace and enhance vegetation loss where appropriate and enforce the localised landscape character.</p>	Limited impact on SLQ
Association with iconic animals	<p>Golden eagle, osprey, red grouse, wildcat, red deer and salmon are potentially present in this section.</p> <p>This is of relevance to the whole extent of Project 8 and all LCAs and LLCAs.</p>	<p>Limited impact on the key species.</p> <p><i>golden eagle</i>, unlikely – qualifying species of Cairngorms SPA/ Cairngorms Massif SPA, but not in in this area, so no direct disturbance and unlikely to affect feeding behavior/ prey species.</p> <p><i>osprey</i>, as above, not likely to cause direct disturbance or affect feeding behavior/ prey species.</p> <p><i>red grouse</i>, area around Project 8 contains numerous grouse butts, so A9 construction could cause minor local disturbance.</p> <p><i>wildcat</i>, unlikely to cause significant disturbance/ loss of habitat as suitable habitat is limited in this section.</p> <p><i>red deer</i>, possibility of minor impact on deer, if not provided for, the works could simply increase barriers to migration across the route – however, with suitable design mitigation, there could be improved permeability.</p> <p><i>salmon</i>, likely to be limited impact overall, key issues are protection of spawning/ juvenile habitats, noise control during up/ downstream migration periods, and construction/ operational water quality controls</p>	No impact on SLQ
Wild land and wildness	<p>The dualling is outwith the formally designated areas of Wild Land however it will be seen from both the Rannoch - Nevis - Mamores – Alder area and the Cairngorms area.</p> <p>There is a more general quality of wildness that is particularly appropriate to this location; north of Dalwhinnie in particular this area has a wild and remote atmosphere.</p> <p>The absence of habitation and shelter, few trees and bleak terrain can instill a sense of awe and fearfulness.</p> <p>This is of relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA and Leacainn, Cuaich, Dallanach and Odharaich LLCAs.</p>	<p>Whilst the construction of the Proposed Scheme will introduce human activity and disruption into this usually deserted landscape, the activity will be relatively short and the wild atmosphere will not be affected long term.</p> <p>As the road works will be limited to a narrow corridor close to the existing road the wider landscape leading off into the hills will not be impacted</p>	No impact on SLQ

Relevant and related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations, underpinning landscape characteristics and their experience	Effects of the new A9 on these SLQs and potential to mitigate	Is there a risk of loss or damage to SLQs?
Visual and Sensory Qualities			
Layers of receding ridge lines	<p>The landscape experience of travelling along this section of A9 is underpinned by the changing visual relationship of the various passing hills and ridges, notably to the west.</p> <p>For northbound travellers the Monadhliaths form the distant horizon ahead.</p> <p>In varying light conditions and times of day the relationship of the receding ridge lines can appear very different.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to Drumochter Pass and Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCAs and Dail A 'Chuirn, Tom a' Bhacain, Dalwhinnie, Leacainn, Cuaich and Dallanach LLCAs.</p>	<p>The experience of rolling hills and ridge lines will not be affected by the Proposed Scheme with landscape planting intended to retain and enhance key vistas and skyline features allowing the appreciation of this particular quality.</p>	No impact on SLQ
Grand panoramas and framed views	<p>Looking north there are impressive views of the Monadhliaths beyond Dalwhinnie, with the most impressive views from within this section experienced looking north and south.</p> <p>The road offers many opportunities to view Dalwhinnie Distillery, a key feature within this landscape.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie and Glen Truim LCAs and Dalwhinnie, Leacainn, Cuaich and Dallanach LLCAs.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that generally the Proposed Scheme will increase tree cover, where appropriate, careful consideration of placement and grouping will ensure that enjoyment of views should be facilitated and key views protected wherever possible.</p>	Limited impact on SLQ
A landscape of many colours	<p>The rolling landscapes to the west and strath floor are generally muted in colour allowing the white building of Dalwhinnie Distillery to stand out.</p> <p>The seasonal variation of planting is a key feature that should be celebrated and enhanced.</p> <p>This is of relevance to the whole extent of Project 8 and all LCAs and LLCAs.</p>	<p>The local palette of colours will not be directly affected by the proposed Scheme and there will be enhancement to the seasonal colours of changing trees and scrub by introduction of carefully considered mixed broadleaf species, enhancing the seasonal aspect of leaf colour change.</p>	No impact on SLQ
Dark skies	<p>The absence of habitation and street lights in this section allows the night sky to be appreciated.</p> <p>Limited lighting to existing infrastructure and settlements present encourage this enjoyment.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to Drumochter Pass and Glen Truim LCAs and Dail A'Chuirn, Leacainn, Dallanach, Odharaich and Crubenmore LLCAs.</p> <p>This is of relevance to the whole extent of Project 8 and all LCAs and LLCAs.</p>	<p>The Proposed Scheme does not include lighting that would compromise the dark skies policies.</p>	No impact on SLQ

Relevant and related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations, underpinning landscape characteristics and their experience	Effects of the new A9 on these SLQs and potential to mitigate	Is there a risk of loss or damage to SLQs?
Attractive and contrasting textures	<p>The contrast of rolling moor slopes and sparse strath floor is prominent through the central section of Project 8.</p> <p>As you move along the A9 from south to north there are also contrasts in the open and enclosed nature, with attractive exposed rock and cascades a dramatic feature to the north, contrasting to the more dominant open and undulating landscape.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie and Glen Truim LCA and Dallahach, Odharaich and Crubenmore LLCA.</p>	<p>The attractive and contrasting qualities found within each LLCA will be retained and enhanced through careful consideration of the Proposed Scheme and the embedded and additional mitigation.</p> <p>There may be some loss to the more dramatic areas of exposed rock, but it is not anticipated that the Proposed Scheme will impact the contrasting range of landscape textures.</p>	Limited impact on SLQ
The dominance of natural sounds	<p>The traffic noise from A9 is in direct contrast to the natural sounds that can be heard in more secluded landscapes away from the road.</p> <p>Whilst there can be an excitement and exhilaration to the roar of traffic in some locations, it is very much in contrast to attractive and subtle natural sounds.</p> <p>This is of relevance to the whole extent of Project 8 and all LCAs and LLCAs.</p>	<p>It is unlikely that areas where natural sounds dominate are in close proximity to the A9, as traffic noise distracts from the sounds of nature. However, there is also unlikely to be any dramatic change in noise levels from the dualled A9, and it is possible that improved road surfaces may help limit any additional noise.</p>	No impact on SLQ
Culture and History			
Vernacular stone buildings	<p>Some of the vernacular buildings of Dalwhinnie are attractive.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA and Dalwhinnie LLCA.</p>	<p>Dalwhinnie is remote from the A9 corridor and the buildings here will not be affected by the dualling.</p>	No impact on SLQ
Dramatic, historical routes	<p>The A9 corridor is across the strath from the line of the historic routes through Dalwhinnie, with inter-visibility between these features.</p> <p>The dramatic local landscape is concentrated to the north and south of these sections.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen LCA and Dallahach LLCA.</p>	<p>The visual relationship of the A9 and General Wade’s Military Road on the west side of the strath and the railway is important and will be carefully managed wherever possible to create a variation in inter-visibility.</p> <p>Consideration of appropriate roadside planting will ensure the inter-visibility is not compromised.</p>	No impact on SLQ
The wistfulness of abandoned settlements	<p>There are no apparent lost settlements within the road corridor.</p> <p>There are old shieling sites close to the road at Cuaich and Dallahach.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie and Glen Truim LCA and Dallahach LLCA.</p>	<p>The shielings are not very apparent from the road and will not be directly affected by the dualling.</p>	No impact on SLQ
Focal cultural landmarks of castles, distilleries and bridges	<p>The Dalwhinnie distillery is a key focal landmark and the landscape offers clear views of the group of white buildings with slate roofs, the distinctive malting towers.</p> <p>The relatively remote setting makes Dalwhinnie an almost iconic distillery.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie LCA and LLCAs Tom A’Bhacain, Dalwhinnie and Leacainn.</p>	<p>There is no direct impact on this feature although there is the potential for some views around the proposed Dalwhinnie Junction to reduce overall views; however, this is generally associated with views east.</p> <p>Careful consideration of planting can enhance and frame key views and ensure the distillery remains visible from the road.</p>	No impact on SLQ

Relevant and related SLQs	SLQ narrative – locations, underpinning landscape characteristics and their experience	Effects of the new A9 on these SLQs and potential to mitigate	Is there a risk of loss or damage to SLQs?
Recreation			
A landscape of opportunities	<p>The moorland here is an attractive hill walking destination and provide opportunities for the traditional sporting pursuits of deer-stalking and grouse shooting.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to LCAs and LLCAs</p>	<p>The road widening will have little direct impact on recreational opportunities; however, there may be some alteration of access for grouse shooting.</p> <p>It is proposed that stopping places will be positioned to facilitate access to key hill walking routes and link to NMU routes generally.</p> <p>The “simple enjoyment of scenery” will be facilitated by the creation of new safe stopping places.</p>	No impact on SLQ
Spirituality	<p>The Special Quality associates spirituality with peace, escape and solitude. It is clear that this landscape can elicit strong emotional responses. The expansive open views can create feelings of exposure and vulnerability. This is less apparent through the southern and central section of Project 8 where settlement is more pronounced than other sections along the A9. This is of particular relevance to Glen Truim LCA and Odharaich and Crubenmore LLCAs.</p>	<p>The road allows access to and escape from this dramatic sublime landscape and permits an engagement with the landscape.</p> <p>The dualling is very unlikely to impact on those areas of the park that currently facilitate peace, escape and solitude.</p> <p>The dualling, whilst disruptive in the short term, will facilitate easier travelling.</p> <p>By taking away the worries and tensions associated with travelling the current road with limited overtaking opportunities, the dualling will allow a greater receptiveness to the qualities of the landscape and so potentially produce an increased emotional response.</p> <p>However, it is uncertain whether this would have a direct relevance to an individuals’ spiritual experience.</p>	No impact on SLQ