

## 13. Landscape Effects

### 13.1. Introduction

- 13.1.1. The landscape effects chapter outlines the existing landscape character within the identified study area of the Proposed Scheme. Potential effects are identified and detailed mitigation measures set out for the Proposed Scheme. The Proposed Scheme is illustrated in Figure 5.3a-h.
- 13.1.2. The assessment of landscape receptors concerns direct anticipated changes to the landscape and to the landscape character. Landscape character assessment is the systematic description and analysis of the elements and features, such as landform, vegetation cover, settlement, land use and transport pattern, present in the landscape which together make up the pattern or sense of place.
- 13.1.3. Policies and plans are considered in Chapter 19: Policies and Plans.

#### Study Area

- 13.1.4. Following detailed assessment carried out for DMRB Stage 3, a study area of up to 5km from either side of the Proposed Scheme (from Chainage -1000 to Chainage 11150) as shown in Figure 13.1 was considered. This reflects the distance within which it is considered that potentially significant visual effects resulting from the Proposed Scheme could occur, namely the area from the Findhorn Crossing to the northern extent of the Proposed Scheme. As it is considered that there are no likely significant visual effects possible as a result of the proposals for Tomatin South Junction (due to the fact that the proposals are similar in scale and form to the existing junction and baseline condition), including during the construction phase, the study area was not extended to 5km either side of the Tomatin South Junction.

### 13.2. Approach and Methods

- 13.2.1. The assessment approach was informed by guidance from the: Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 11, Section 3, Part 5<sup>i</sup>; Interim Advice Note (IAN) 135/10<sup>ii</sup>, and the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3)<sup>iii</sup>.
- 13.2.2. Given the sensitivity of the landscape and the iconic status of the A9 route, a bespoke methodology was developed through the Landscape Forum with involvement of the consultation bodies - Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), The Highland Council (THC) and the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA). This has been reviewed through the Landscape Forum sub-group (a technical working group comprising of the landscape architects associated with each of the A9 Dualling projects) and considered to be robust for this assessment.
- 13.2.3. Information from the A9 Dualling Programme Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): Strategic Landscape Review<sup>iv</sup> and Fitting Landscapes: securing more sustainable landscapes<sup>v</sup> was used to support this assessment.
- 13.2.4. This chapter describes the landscape associated with the current A9 alignment, modifications associated with the construction and of the Proposed Scheme in relation to the mainline, junctions, associated side roads and potential mitigation.

- 13.2.5. The assessment was undertaken by two Chartered Landscape Architects, and comprised of desk study, field surveys and consultation. Photographs were undertaken at appropriate locations to support the assessment.
- 13.2.6. A desk study was carried out to review previous reports and maps and update existing data. The landscape principles and guidance in the following documents were integral to the approach to the methodology:
- A9 Dualling Programme Strategic Environmental Assessment, 2014 (Transport Scotland)
  - Fitting Landscapes, 2014 (Transport Scotland)
- 13.2.7. In addition to the above, the following documents informed the assessment:
- Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment, Scottish Natural Heritage Review. No. 114, 1999, (Richards, J.)<sup>vi</sup>
  - Natural Heritage Zones, A National Assessment of Scotland's Landscapes, 2002, (Scottish Natural Heritage)<sup>vii</sup>
  - National Planning Framework 3, 2014, (Scottish Government)<sup>viii</sup>
  - Scottish Planning Policy, 2014, (Scottish Government)<sup>x</sup>
  - Highland Wide Local Development Plan, 2012, (The Highland Council)<sup>x</sup>
  - Ancient Woodlands Inventory<sup>xi</sup>
  - aerial photography
  - Geographical Information Systems (GIS) datasets
  - site surveys, undertaken during summer 2015, spring 2016 and winter 2017
  - Ordnance Survey (OS) Maps, 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 scale
- 13.2.8. Updates to site surveys previously undertaken in June 2015 and March 2016 were carried out in January 2017 in order that an appreciation of the landscape during winter months could be established. This helped to refine the understanding and characterisation of the baseline landscape character and supplement information gathered during the desk study. The surveys were taken from accessible public highway and public footpaths; access to private properties was not obtained. The weather conditions during the survey were dry and clear which allowed for an extensive landscape assessment to be undertaken.
- 13.2.9. The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) was generated based on the viewer being 1.6m at eye level and the tallest vehicle at 4.5m, using the existing A9 corridor and a bare earth model. It therefore did not take into consideration land use cover, such as buildings and vegetation, which were subsequently considered during the field survey assessments. The ZTV has been used to assist in establishing the direction and extent of views from areas of landscape character that the Proposed Scheme is likely to influence within the study area.
- 13.2.10. The landscape assessment determines the temporary effect of the Proposed Scheme during construction, and the permanent operational effects anticipated in the winter of the year of opening (year 1) that represents the worst case scenario, and the summer of year 15, once proposed mitigation has matured.
- 13.2.11. Whilst it is feasible that the existing A9, along with any changes arising as a result of the Proposed Scheme, may be perceptible within the wider landscape, i.e. beyond the 5km study area; a combination of distance, intervening landform and/or vegetation is

predicted to avoid the potential for these changes to represent a significant effect. No further assessment has been carried out to inform potential effects beyond the study area, including on landscape designations within the wider landscape.

## Consultation

- 13.2.12. Key consultations that have informed the methodology, and hence the assessment, are set out in Chapter 7 – Consultation and Scoping.
- 13.2.13. Ongoing consultation with SNH, the CNPA and Historic Environment Scotland were established as part of the A9 Landscape Forum and Environmental Steering Group which was established as part of the A9 Dualling Programme. Consultation focused on agreement around approach and methodology for the DMRB landscape and visual assessments.

## Assessment Methodology

- 13.2.14. The assessment has been undertaken using the approach below which considers the value of the landscape resource and its susceptibility to change in order to determine its sensitivity. The magnitude of the effect of the Proposed Scheme on the landscape resource was used to determine the significance of effect of the Proposed Scheme.

### Landscape character

- 13.2.15. In line with guidance produced by the Countryside Agency, now Natural England and SNH - Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland<sup>xii</sup>, the landscape has been described in a series of regional assessments that included landscape character descriptions, which form the basis for the assessment.
- 13.2.16. A suite of regional landscape character assessment reports were produced by SNH, in conjunction with others, for each local authority area. These identify 'landscape types' and 'landscape character areas'. Landscape types are identified at a broad generic scale and consider the components of landform, land use and settlement; areas with similar components are mapped together as a landscape character type. Landscape character areas have their own discrete identity within the landscape character type and are identified at a more detailed scale and are specific areas which exhibit a unity of character. This information is used for considering local planning and development control issues.
- 13.2.17. This regional information was used during the assessment to aid in the identification of landscape character areas within the study area for DMRB Stage 3.

### Landscape Sensitivity

- 13.2.18. The sensitivity of the landscape resource takes account of the value of the landscape and the susceptibility to the specific change proposed (as per GLVIA3).

### Value

- 13.2.19. There is considerable overlap/integration between all the factors that contribute to landscape value; GLVIA3 describes value as *'the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society'*. A review of existing non-designated landscapes was undertaken and an overall judgement of high, medium or low was determined using professional judgement, based on the attributes as outlined in GLVIA3 and set out in Table 13.1 below.

**Table 13.1: Landscape Attributes for Non-designated Landscapes Criteria**

Attribute	Description
Landscape Quality	A measure of the physical state of the landscape, its intactness and condition of landscape elements.
Scenic Quality	Landscapes that appeal primarily to the visual senses.
Rarity	The presence or rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Type.
Representativeness	Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important examples.
Conservation or Cultural Interest	The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest which add to the value of the landscape.
Recreational Value	Evidence the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.
Perceptual Aspects	A landscape valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and/or tranquillity.
Associations	Landscapes associated with artists, writers, or events in history that contribute to perceptions to the natural beauty of the area.

### *Susceptibility*

- 13.2.20. Susceptibility relates to the ability of the landscape to absorb specific changes without undue consequence for the baseline or the strategies, plans and policies relating to the landscape. Susceptibility was assessed in terms of the following criteria, based on professional judgement, as set out in Table 13.2.below:

**Table 13.2: Landscape Resource Susceptibility Criteria**

Susceptibility	Criteria
High	The landscape is unlikely to be able to accommodate the proposed change without undue consequences.
Medium	The landscape is likely to be able to accommodate the proposed change, albeit with some consequences.
Low	The landscape will be able to accommodate the proposed change with little or no consequences.

### *Sensitivity*

- 13.2.21. The evaluation of sensitivity was based on the value of the landscape and its susceptibility to the change proposed. The criteria used to assess landscape sensitivity are listed in Table 13.3 below:

**Table 13.3: Landscape Sensitivity Criteria**

Sensitivity	Criteria
High	Landscape or landscape elements of particular distinctive character, highly valued and considered susceptible to relatively small changes. Landscapes which by nature of their character and value would have little capacity to accommodate change of the type proposed.

Sensitivity	Criteria
Medium	Landscape of moderately valued characteristics considered reasonably tolerant of change. Landscapes which by nature of their character and value would be able to partly accommodate change of the type proposed.
Low	Landscape of generally low valued characteristics considered potentially tolerant of substantial change. Landscapes which by nature of their character and value would be able to accommodate change of the type proposed.

### *Magnitude of Landscape Effect*

- 13.2.22. The magnitude of landscape effect was derived from the size or scale, geographical extent, duration and reversibility of the change on the landscape resource. These are presumed to be adverse unless specifically stated as beneficial. These factors helped inform the magnitude of the landscape effect as shown in Table 13.4 below.

**Table 13.4: Magnitude of Landscape Effect Criteria**

Magnitude of Effect	Criteria
High	Noticeable change to a wide area of the landscape or intensive change to a limited area of the landscape.
Medium	Change to a relatively wide area of the landscape or noticeable change to a limited area of the landscape resource
Low	Slight change to the wider area of the landscape or slight/no change to a limited area of the landscape resource.
Negligible/None	No perceptible change to the landscape resource

### *Significance of Landscape Effect*

- 13.2.23. The significance of landscape effect was determined by the sensitivity of the landscape resource in relation to the magnitude of effect upon it resulting from the Proposed Scheme, refer to Table 13.5 below.
- 13.2.24. The significance of effect has also been determined using professional judgement. This approach relies on a robust and transparent narrative based on the available guidance (DMRB, IAN135/10, GLVIA3).

**Table 13.5: Significance of Landscape Effect Criteria**

Level of Effect	Criteria
Substantial	Adverse: The Proposed Scheme would be at considerable variance with the character (including quality and/or value) and/or special qualities of the landscape receptor, degrade or diminish the integrity of a range of characteristic features or elements or damage a sense of place resulting in an adverse effect. Beneficial: The Proposed Scheme would enhance the character (including quality and/or value) and/or special qualities of the landscape receptor, create an iconic high quality feature and/or series of elements or enable a sense of place to be created or enhanced resulting in a beneficial effect.
Moderate	Adverse: The Proposed Scheme would conflict with the character (including quality and value) and/or special qualities of the landscape receptor, have an adverse effect on characteristic features or elements or diminish a sense of place resulting in an adverse effect.

Level of Effect	Criteria
	Beneficial: The Proposed Scheme would improve the character (including quality and value) and/or special qualities of the landscape receptor, enable the restoration of characteristic features and elements partially lost or diminished by inappropriate management or development or enable some sense of place resulting in a beneficial effect.
Slight	Adverse: The Proposed Scheme would not quite fit the character (including quality and value) and/or special qualities of the landscape receptor, be at variance with characteristic features and elements or detract from a sense of place resulting in an adverse effect.  Beneficial: The Proposed Scheme would complement the character (including quality and value) and/or special qualities of the landscape, maintain or enhance characteristic features and elements and enable some sense of place to be restored resulting in a beneficial effect.
None	The Proposed Scheme would maintain the character and/or special qualities of the landscape receptor, blend in with characteristic features and elements and enable a sense of place to be retained.

- 13.2.25. Landscape effect was considered significant where the significance was evaluated as being moderate or greater.

#### *Limitations*

- 13.2.26. With regards to the assessment of landscape impacts, no limitations to this assessment were identified.

### **13.3. Baseline Conditions**

- 13.3.1. The broader landscape is distinctive in its contrast between high rolling open moorland and straths along which rivers meander and within which the influence of man can be readily perceived in the form of afforestation, muirburn to hill slopes and small nucleated settlements. More detailed information on the baseline landscape is provided below.

#### **Landscape Context**

- 13.3.2. The broader landscape context within the 5km study area comprises the landscape immediately north of the Cairngorms National Park boundary, descending from the Slochd summit to the broad strath of the River Findhorn before rising again to the northern extents of the Monadhliath mountains. The landscape is characterised by a series of rounded hills separated by the narrow Strathdearn that extends to the northeast, crossed by the existing A9 at Tomatin. The strath broadens dramatically to the northeast as the River Findhorn meanders across the valley floor with the rounded hills of the northern extents of the Monadhliath rising to the north, the highest of which is Carn nan Tri-tighearnan at 611m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- 13.3.3. It is from the summits of these hills that both the Allt na Beinne and Allt Odhar watercourses descend, initially westwards, conjoining to form the Moy Burn. The Moy Burn initially continues to flow west before turning south where it is joined by the Allt Creag Bheithin, Allt na Slanaich and Allt na Loinne Mor watercourses to flow into Loch Moy. This discrete body of water lies within the settled Moy valley. Moy Hall sits on its northern banks and the dispersed settlement of Moy flanks its western banks. The landform rises sharply with the summits of Beinn an Uain and Beinn na h-Iolaire Bheag to the northeast and Carn na Loinne to the southwest.

- 13.3.4. Flowing from the southern edge of the Loch is the Funtack Burn, this gently flowing watercourse meanders to the south, joined by the Dalmagarry Burn before flowing east to join the River Findhorn to the southwest of Ruthven. The floodplain of the Funtack Burn forms a narrow enclosed valley, used in part as grazing but also including some areas of unimproved marshy grassland where areas of Cotton Grass thrive.
- 13.3.5. To the north the distinctive summits of Meall Mòr and Beinn a' Bheurlaich rise sharply above the Moy valley, their profiles contrasting with the more rounded hill forms of the surrounding landforms, this is made more obvious by their isolated location at the head of the strath. North of this the landform descends into the River Nairn valley complex.
- 13.3.6. Commercial forestry plantations play an important role in the character of the wider landscape, and they extend along the lower slopes of the straths and glens. The extensive areas of uniform colour and texture are particularly prevalent to the north of the study area, although recent felling highlights the dynamic nature of this form of landscape management. There are a number of long established plantations that extend along the corridor associated with the A9, some of which are included within the Inventory of Ancient Woodland, these areas of woodland are typically classified as being long established of plantation origin.
- 13.3.7. The landscape is one of contrasts; the river valleys that feature lush pasture and areas of deciduous woodland are made all the more distinct against the impressive backdrop of mountains that rise to the northeast and southwest.

## Landscape/ Landscape Related Designations

### *Cairngorms National Park*

- 13.3.8. The 5km study area extends to the south as a result of minor regrading to the verge slopes of the existing dualled section in two locations to allow for the incorporation of road safety signs. As a result the fringes of the study area coincides with the northern extremities of the Cairngorms National Park. However, substantial change would not arise from these minor changes occurring at a distance to the proposed Tomatin Grade Separated Junction (GSJ) and an assessment of the potential effects on the designated landscape has therefore been scoped out.

### *Special Landscape Areas*

- 13.3.9. Rising to the south, the study area encompasses the northern edge of the Drynahan, Lochindorb and Dava Moor Special Landscape Area (SLA), refer to Figure 13.1 – Regional Landscape Related Designations and Character Areas. The landscape has been designated due to the nature of the landform - the high rolling landform is similar, although less extensive than some similar landscape found to the north however its relative accessibility via a local road network makes it unusual. Whilst manmade features are evident through tracks, fences and muirburns, the landscape retains a sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- 13.3.10. The Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA) associated with the designation is identified within the landscape baseline as LLCA D – Western Dava Moor Uplands (refer to paragraphs 13.3.40-13.3.49) and its contribution to the landscape has been taken account of in understanding its value and susceptibility in order to identify its sensitivity to change.

### *Ancient Woodland*

- 13.3.11. Ancient Woodland (identified as such within the Ancient Woodland Inventory prepared by SNH) occurs intermittently along the corridor. Whilst not representing a landscape designation, it is generally considered to contribute to the value of the landscape. As this is a landscape feature that cannot be replaced and is challenging to replicate, its potential removal will increase the susceptibility of a landscape to change. The presence of areas of Ancient Woodland and its contribution to the perception of landscape character has been described within the relevant LLCA. Several areas of ancient woodland lie immediately adjacent to, or in close proximity to the existing A9 and have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Scheme, refer to Figure 13.1 – Regional Landscape Related Designations and Character Areas.

### **Regional Landscape Character Types and Areas**

- 13.3.12. A review of the Regional Landscape Character Types, as defined in the Inverness Landscape Character Assessment, identified the following three landscape character types within the 5km study area that, due to their existing relationship with the A9, have the potential to be impacted upon by the scheme, (refer to Figure 13.1):
- Rolling Uplands LCT
  - Farmed Strath LCT
  - Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland LCT
- 13.3.13. Of these three landscape types, a single type (Rolling Uplands LCT) is of most relevance to the assessment, the Proposed Scheme being entirely contained within the character type. The northern limit of the scheme is situated approximately 500m from the southern boundary of the Farmed Strath LCT, and it is considered unlikely to result in a perceived change to the character type. Therefore the key characteristics outlined in the assessment of the affected character type have been extracted below:
- Rolling Uplands LCT
    - This landscape is dominated by a series of large scale, smooth, rounded hills with summits of a similar height which collectively form broad, undulating upland plateaux.
    - Views from hill tops and plateau areas are expansive, creating a strong feeling of openness and exposure although there is limited enclosure between the hills within the straths and glens.
    - The nature of the groundcover is similar throughout this landscape type. Heather moorland dominates: its uniform colour and texture accentuating the smooth, rounded landforms and the simplicity of the landscape.
    - In some areas the smoothness of the hills is broken by small areas of scree or occasional rocky outcrops which create localised pattern upon upper slopes together with occasional patches. Deeply incised burns cut occasional crevices between some hills, and power lines occasionally cross hillsides.
    - The hills tops or plateaux tend to be spaced far apart and of an even height, and from highpoints, aerial views reveal the interlocking arrangement of the moorland and hill landform. There is also a general absence of elements which indicate scale so that it is difficult to judge distance and size in this landscape.
    - Small windcut trees and clumps of woodland occasionally line watercourses or are sometimes found in remote glens where grazing has been restricted.

- Coniferous plantations tend to occur mainly on the edges of this landscape type, although small plantations are found occasionally in sheltered straths. The colour, texture and shape of these coniferous plantations contrasts with the moorland surroundings and some are particularly noticeable on account of their linear edges, which contrasts with the flowing forms of the rolling uplands.
- There are few roads crossing this landscape and those which do exist are single track and tend to integrate within the landform. A number of hill tracks do cross the moorland, mainly providing access for stalkers and to access woodland plantations.

13.3.14. The Cairngorms National Park Landscape Character Assessment, 2009, identifies three landscape character areas on the northern extremities of the designation; (81.) The Monadhliath: North Monadhliath, (24.) The Slochd and (82.) The Strathdearn Hills. Similarly to the Cairngorms National Park designation, the proposals forming the Proposed Scheme are limited to minor alterations to the verges within the existing dualled section of the corridor and therefore are unlikely to give rise to significant effects on the perception of the character within these areas. No further assessment has been carried out of these areas.

### Local Landscape Character Types and Areas

- 13.3.15. Two regional landscape character types, Farmed Strath LCT and Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland LCT provide sufficient detail at a local level and form the northern extent of the 5km buffer study area, refer to Figure 13.1 – Landscape Designations and Regional Character Areas. As a result, these regional character types have formed Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs), identified on Figure 13.2 – Local Landscape Character Areas as LLCA F – Daviot Farmed Strath and LLCA G – Drummosie Muir Moorland Plateau. The proposals forming the Proposed Scheme are limited to minor additions associated with the formation of a forestry access track and access onto the A9 in an existing dualled section, and are therefore unlikely to give rise to significant effects on the perception of the character within these areas. No further assessment has been carried out of these areas.
- 13.3.16. Of the remaining regional landscape character type the Proposed Scheme is contained entirely within the Rolling Uplands LCT. The SEA suggested that this extensive character type could be subdivided into the three Landscape Character sub Areas: Rolling Uplands – North; Rolling Uplands – South; and Strathdearn/Tomatin. At DMRB Stage 3, this refinement has been undertaken to identify LLCAs which reflect local subtleties within the study area (refer to Figure 13.2 – Local Landscape Character Areas) and which are described below.

#### *LLCA A - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains*

- 13.3.17. This landscape character area forms the northern limits of the uplands associated with the Monadhliath Mountains that extend to the south west. The LLCA is bounded to the north by the strath that forms LLCA C – Moy Estate and also by LLCA B – Meall Mor and LLCA E – Strathdearn/Tomatin to the east.
- 13.3.18. The character area includes the north east facing hill slopes of the summits of Carn na h-Easgainn, Carn Moraig and Carn a Bhothain Duibh, the summits range between 616m to 484m AOD – and the north east facing outlying slopes of these rounded hills descend relatively uniformly to the floor of the strath.
- 13.3.19. The high annual rainfall and seasonal snow gives rise to saturated ground water conditions, as a result the hills comprise extensive areas of upland peat, which comprises moorland, heather and areas of eroded and exposed peat, refer to Figure

13.3, photographs LLCA A-3 and LLCA A-4. The northern edge of these hills are drained by several narrow watercourses that flow into the Dalraich Burn to the north of Loch Moy (LLCA C – Moy Estate) and the Funtack Burn to the south (LLCA E – Strathdearn/Tomatin). Although largely devoid of significant vegetation, these watercourses form narrow picturesque gorges within the landscape as they descend via a rocky stream beds, refer to Figure 13.3, photograph LLCA A-2. On lower slopes and where grazing has been restricted there are a number of groups of birch and pine woodland, some of which is classed as Ancient Woodland. This is interspersed with areas of juniper on the freer draining slopes above Lynebeg.

- 13.3.20. There are very few manmade features within the landscape character area; several tracks, comprising compacted stone ascend the hills and link the summits that form the edge of the hills and are primarily provided for the access and management of the moorland, refer to Figure 13.3, photograph LLCA A-1. The moorland itself is routinely cleared through burning in the form of Muirburns, these frequently form geometric patterns across the hill slopes and are visible at a distance within the wider landscape.
- 13.3.21. At the foot of the slopes associated with LLCA A - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains, the landform eases to form the adjacent floor of the strath; this is a transitional landscape. The existing A9 and Highland Main Line railway lie at the foot of these hills, marking this transition, with the A9 alignment lying to the east of the railway corridor. Both corridors are effectively screened by adjoining woodland for much of their length however are visible from the slopes of Tom na h-Ulaidh and Carn na Loinne. Glimpsed views of the existing A9 are possible from the upper slopes and summits of Carn na h-Easgainn and Beinn nah Cailleach.
- 13.3.22. The scenic qualities associated with the character area are similar to those enjoyed and valued within the Cairngorms National Park that lies to the south. Whilst undesignated, the landscape contributes to dramatic views and this is particularly relevant to the setting of existing A9 and Highland Main Line railway. As a result the landscape value is considered to be medium.
- 13.3.23. Whilst the eastern fringes of the landscape are currently influenced by the presence of the existing A9 and the Highland Main Line railway that crosses the valley floor and which are visible within the strath and the adjoining hills, the majority of the character area does not contain manmade features – the susceptibility of the landscape is therefore judged to be high. As a result the sensitivity of the landscape to the Proposed Scheme is high.

#### *LLCA B – Meall Mor*

- 13.3.24. The character area extends from the farmed straths in the north to the estate parkland associated with the Moy estate in the south that forms LLCA C – Moy Estate. The defining landform within the character area is the locally distinctive summits of Meall Mor at 492m AOD and the marginally lower Beinn a Bheurlaich at 482m AOD, the result is a short ridgeline rising above extensive plantation woodlands that clothe the lower slopes. As a result of the distinctive landform, there is a perceptible boundary between the adjacent character areas, Figure 13.4, photograph LLCA B-2 offers a distant view looking across from LLCA A to the west, the flat ridgeline of Meall Mor forming a distinctive landform, whilst Figure 13.4, photograph LLCA B-3 provides an example of the typical mix of vegetation on the lower slopes of the hills.
- 13.3.25. Forestry is a key contributing feature of the landscape with extensive plantations extending across the lower hill slopes, forming awkward angular shapes that contrast with the flowing landforms as the elevation rises to the local summits. Different forestry species create varying hues within broader views of the hillsides and periodic felling of

the forestry results in stark areas of cleared vegetation within the wider landscape, refer to Figure 13.4, photograph LLCA B-4.

- 13.3.26. The extensive plantation woodland forms angular boundaries within the wider landscape – the result is a landscape that appears to be heavily influenced by man’s activities. This is emphasised by the presence of the existing A9 to the south west of the LLCA, and the Highland Main Line railway and the B9154 to the east and north along which there is increasingly frequent residential and farming activities to the north of the character area around the settlement of Craggie and Daviot. Figure 13.4, photograph LLCA B-1 demonstrates the view from the northern edge of the character area and from the fringes of Daviot.
- 13.3.27. The Dalraich Burn and Craggie Burn are the primary watercourses that mark the eastern and north boundaries to the character area respectively. The Dalraich Burn descending from the northern slopes of Beinn Bhreac, initially westwards before flowing north to form the Craggie Burn before it flows into the River Nairn at Craggie as it flows north east.
- 13.3.28. Although not designated, the combination of landscape components, including distinctive landform, associated vegetation pattern and the existing influence of man results in a landscape considered to be of medium value. With the exception of the upper slopes of the hills, the extensive woodland cover has resulted in the susceptibility of the landscape to change being considered to be low. As a result the sensitivity of the landscape to the type of development being considered is medium.

#### *LLCA C – Moy Estate*

- 13.3.29. The character area extends to cover the estate parkland associated with the Moy estate. The character area is bounded by LLCA A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains to the south west, LLCA B – Meall Mor to the north west, and LLCA D – Western Dava Moors to the north east, tying in with the LLCA E – Strathdearn/Tomatin to the south east. Whilst the landscape character boundary is clearly perceptible to the north, the landscape to the west is less well defined and there is transition between LLCA – Moy Estate and the LLCA A – Eastern Monadhliath and LLCA E – Strathdearn/Tomatin to the south. Figure 13.5, photograph LLCA C-1 is taken from the hill slopes to the south west and helps to demonstrate the setting of the character area within the wider landscape.
- 13.3.30. Whilst forestry is not a key feature of the landscape, associated woodland does form a defining element, which in combination with the rising landform that surrounds the character area creates a sense of enclosure. A significant proportion of this woodland is identified as Ancient Woodland, this is particularly extensive to the north east and north of Moy Hall, whilst smaller more fragmented blocks of Ancient Woodland exist to the south west and south of Loch Moy. On rising landform to the east of Loch Moy are several areas of woodland – some of which is identified as Ancient Woodland but of varying categories.
- 13.3.31. The village of Moy lies to the south west of Loch Moy – it is a collection of dispersed houses accessed off the B9154. The houses are contained by extensive areas of woodland and as a result are not readily visible within the wider landscape – to the west of the A9 is the smaller collection of houses that comprises Lynebeg, these properties lie at the foot of the slopes that rise to Carn na h-Easgainn and Carn na Loinne to the south west.
- 13.3.32. The Moy Burn represents the primary watercourse within the character area. The tributaries of the Moy Burn drain the ground to the east of Beinn Bhreac and the wider landform to the south. It flows south west before turning and flowing to the south to feed

Loch Moy. Loch Moy is surrounded by extensive areas of forestry, some of which is identified as Ancient Woodland. It is a relatively discreet element within the landscape despite it being a significantly sized body of water, refer to Figure 13.4, photograph LLCA C-1 and LLCA C-3. It only becomes visible from its immediate environs when higher ground is reached, where upon the loch and the surrounding hills become increasingly scenic.

- 13.3.33. Flowing from the southern banks of Loch Moy is the Funtack Burn – this canalised watercourse – edged with flood defences in the form of shallow bunds flows through several fields. These form the farmland associated with Dalmagarry Farm, which lies close to the A9 in the south of the character area, and which in conjunction with the property at Tullochclurry form the only settlement within the character area south of the loch, refer to Figure 13.5 LLCA C-4. The Funtack Burn is joined by the Dalmagarry Burn, just south of the farm and flows south eastwards to join the River Findhorn, to the south west of Ruthven.
- 13.3.34. The Moy estate, the focus of which is Moy Hall, lies to the north of Loch Moy. This sporting estate extends to the adjoining hills and glens and it is also home to the Highland Field Sports Fair, an annual field sports event held in August which focuses on demonstrations and events associated with estate management.
- 13.3.35. Moy Hall itself is set within a small area of parkland type landscape. The property is largely screened from broader views by mature parkland trees and small blocks of planting. The associated estate farms and cottages form a cluster to the north of the Hall, around which there are a number of fields, comprising improved pasture, the strong greens contrasting with the rougher texture of the wider landscape. Mature hedgerow trees mark this area of the landscape, contrasting with the plantations and area of semi natural planting within the wider landscape, refer to Figure 13.5 LLCA C-2 demonstrates the distinctive hedgerow trees within the character area.
- 13.3.36. Recent development within the landscape has arisen through the construction of the Moy Wind Farm, positioned within a corrie to the north of the Moy estate, immediately beyond the boundary of the study area. It is partly visible within the character area and particularly from higher ground – the effect of this significant manmade feature is to modify the scale of the landscape – the large scale masts dwarfing natural features within the landscape.
- 13.3.37. The landscape is currently influenced by the presence of the existing A9, B9154 and the Highland Main Line railway that align with the south western boundary to the character area – recognised by the break in the slope that sees the hill slopes of LLCA A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains rise to the west and south west. The B9154 and the Highland Main Line railway diverge to the north west of Moy, the A9 crossing an open area of damp grassland before it becomes enclosed by LLCA E - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains and LLCA B – Meall Mor to the north. The B9154 and Highland Main Line railway heading north, marking the transition from strath to the wooded slopes at the eastern flank of LLCA B – Meall Mor.
- 13.3.38. The A9 corridor itself sits at the transition between the hill slopes to the west and south that makes up LLCA A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains and the strath that extends to the east and north and that forms LLCA C – Moy Estate and E – Strathdearn/Tomatin. This has resulted in several locations where the existing engineered slopes are at odds with the natural landform, giving rise to a number of profiles that have an awkward appearance. Most notable within this character area are the extensive shallow embankment supporting the A9 to the north of Moy and set above the adjacent areas of rough grazing and marshy grassland.

- 13.3.39. The combination of landscape components, including landform, vegetation patterns and existing influence of man, including its visual accessibility results in a landscape that is not designated but is still considered to be of medium value. The extensive woodland cover and containment by the surrounding landform has resulted in the susceptibility of the landscape to change being considered to be low. As a result the sensitivity of the landscape to the type of development being considered is medium.

#### *LLCA D – Western Dava Moor Uplands*

- 13.3.40. This character area extends to the upland landscape to the north east of the study area and shares many of the characteristics of LLCA A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains. The character area is clearly defined by the strath to the west, and the landform rises to a series of hills that extend to the north east and south east, the southern hills linking to the fringes of the Cairngorm National Park as they rise to the Slochd Summit approximately 4km to the south. The fringes of the Drynahan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA are incorporated into this character area and the typically high moorland characteristics of blanket bog and heather highlight the relatively tranquil landscape with isolated built features, refer to Figure 13.6 LLCA D-1.
- 13.3.41. On the fringes of the study area the summits of Beinn Bhreac, Meall a Bhreacaibh, and Cairn a Choire Mhoir, their rounded summits at over 500m AOD create an undulating horizon whilst more distant hills are visible between these summits out with the study area, refer to Figure 13.6 LLCA D-2 and D3. The characteristics of the landscape character area extend far beyond the boundary to the study area to the north and east.
- 13.3.42. Ground conditions are similar to LLCA A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains, the result is an extensive area of upland peat, which comprises moorland, heather and exposed peat. These upland areas are drained by numerous burns within narrow steep channels, these feed the larger watercourses all of which ultimately flow into the River Findhorn. The Allt na Beinne and Allt Odhar feed the Moy Burn to the north of the study area, whilst the Allt na Feithe Sheilich and the Allt Braenrerich flow into the River Findhorn just north east of Tomatin at Inverbrough.
- 13.3.43. The River Findhorn and the broader strath that forms LLCA E - Strathdearn/Tomatin extends to the east, Figure 13.6 LLCA D-2 shows the rising slopes from the strath. The Allt Bruachaig watercourse draining a broad area to the north of the highest summit, Carn a Choire Mhoir before joining the River Findhorn at Inverbrough Lodge. The River Findhorn flows to the north east, crossing into the character area at Ruthven, the broad strath that forms the adjacent character area becomes deep and narrow as the watercourse passes between adjacent hills.
- 13.3.44. Similarly to LLCA A - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains there are very few manmade features within the landscape character area; the compacted stone tracks ascend the hills although these are typically not as well connected. Figure 13.6 LLCA D-4 demonstrates the open nature of the landscape to the north of Inverbrough. The moorland itself appears less intensively managed and evidence of the Muirburns is less visible within the wider landscape.
- 13.3.45. Forestry is more evident within this character area, particularly on western facing slopes, the plantations that cover the western slopes of Beinn an Uain and Beinn na h-Iolaire that mark the western limit of the character area. Some of these areas of woodland are identified as Ancient Woodland. Further and more extensive forestry occurs to the east just beyond the boundary to the study area, the slopes of Tom a'Ghealagaidh having been heavily planted.

- 13.3.46. The Moy windfarm lies just beyond the study area boundary at the north east of the study area, the turbines are located within the broad valley between Beinn Bhreac and Meall a Bhreacraibh. These vertical structures are visible over a considerable distance and in views from the south west and LLCA B - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains.
- 13.3.47. The existing A9 and Highland Main Line railway pass the fringes of the character area to the south of the study area, as they descend to Strathdearn and LLCA A. This combined corridor continues to the west of the strath, as they continue north and they are largely screened from views within the character area. North of Moy the A9 and Highland Main Line railway diverge and the A9 becomes screened by a combination of landform and planting.
- 13.3.48. The scenic qualities shared with LLCA B - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains extend to the south and form the setting to the northern boundary to the Cairngorms National Park that lies to the south.
- 13.3.49. Whilst there is inter-visibility with the adjoining character areas, this is limited to the western edges of the character area and the emphasis is on the extensive scale of the strath within which the A9 represents a relatively discreet feature. The landscape contributes to the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA and the broader setting of the northern boundary of the Cairngorms National Park, it is therefore considered to be of medium value. The exposed nature of much of the landscape and lack of significant development means that this landscape has a high susceptibility to change. The landscape's sensitivity to the type of development being considered has therefore been adjudged to be high.

#### *LLCA – E – Strathdearn/Tomatin*

- 13.3.50. This area is clearly defined by the strath associated with the River Findhorn as it extends northwest and north from the Monadhliath hills that form a broad ridgeline to the south west. The strath is typical of many in this region featuring a settled, farmed valley floor, that transitions to the adjacent character areas (LLCA A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains, via the steep valley sides that quickly become heather clad hills and moorland on rounded hillsides. Immediately beyond the study area and to the south and west of the LLCA the topography of this landscape becomes more defined as the strath narrows and the adjacent hillsides steepen, summits generally rising over 500m AOD, leading to a greater sense of enclosure.
- 13.3.51. Woodland, including areas associated with forestry plantations, occur on the lower slopes that fringe the character area and on slightly elevated landform associated with Inverbrough to the north east. This woodland extends to the north of Tomatin, generally occurring at the break in the slope as the landform transitions from strath to hill slopes. Much of this is coniferous woodland and a significant amount is identified as Ancient Woodland. These areas of Ancient Woodland tie into broader woodland and plantations which are not designated but combine to create a well wooded appearance within the landscape. This becomes less evident within the floodplain of the River Findhorn, where woodland cover is noticeably absent however the adjacent blocks provide for a sense of enclosure, refer to Figure 13.7 LLCA E-1.
- 13.3.52. The scattered village of Tomatin (with its associated whisky distillery) lies at the transition of the clearly defined strath that lies to the south west of the study area. The broader landscape associated with Upper and Lower Inverbrough areas sees the River Findhorn form noticeable meanders in its path before a narrow gorge to the north east, immediately beyond the study area. Figure 13.7 LLCA E-3 shows the broader context of the river to the north of Tomatin.

- 13.3.53. The existing A9 and the Highland Main Line railway cross this landform to the east of Tomatin via elevated viaducts; the railway line being a particularly spectacular brick built curved structure, refer to Figure 13.7 LLCA E-2 and LLCA E-4. With the exception of a relatively short stretch opposite the existing junction with the C112 to the north east of Tomatin, the existing A9 corridor is extensively contained by largely mature coniferous woodland, some of which is classed as Ancient Woodland. This forms an effective year round screen, limiting views of the wider landscape and providing integration with the adjacent broader blocks of plantation woodland that exist.
- 13.3.54. There are several locations where the existing engineered slopes appear at odds with the adjacent landform, including the slopes associated with the embankment between Tigh an Allt and Invereen and the rising embankment slopes approaching the crossing of the Highland Main Line railway from the south.
- 13.3.55. The LLCA has several unclassified roads constructed on the break in the slope to avoid the floodplain in addition to the A9. This results in a landscape that is comparatively accessible, given the wider landscape's sense of isolation. Farmsteads and isolated properties occur intermittently along these local roads, lying just above the floodplain.
- 13.3.56. The landscape of the strath, associated with Tomatin has a number of existing features associated with development and transport corridors. The scenic qualities associated with the less pronounced landform that is perceptible within the wider landscape as the landform softens and the sense of remoteness and scale are reduced, as a result the landscape has been assessed as being of medium value.
- 13.3.57. In consideration of the proposed development the landscape in and around Tomatin has been identified as having a medium susceptibility to change and as a result it will be of medium sensitivity.

#### *Landscape Character Area Sensitivity*

- 13.3.58. The value, susceptibility and sensitivity of the affected LLCAs has been summarised in Table 13.6 below.

**Table 13.6: Sensitivity of Local Landscape Character**

Local Landscape Character Area	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains	Medium	High	High
B – Meall Mor	Medium	Low	Medium
C – Moy Estate	Medium	Low	Medium
D – Western Dava Moor Uplands	Medium	High	High
E – Strathdearn/Tomatin	Medium	Medium	Medium

## 13.4. Potential Effects

- 13.4.1. Direct effects are those that will occur within the landscape character areas defined in the landscape baseline as a result of physical changes to features that contribute to the perception of landscape character, e.g. the loss of woodland. Indirect effects are those that arise as a result of a combination of effects or as a result of a direct effect, these are commonly referred to as secondary effects, e.g. a landscape being re-designated as a result of the erosion of that landscape character through changes in the woodland pattern.

## Construction Phase Effects

- 13.4.2. Whilst effects arising as a result of construction activity are temporary, anticipated to be two years, they have the potential to give rise to changes that are potentially significant in the perception of landscape character. Operations or changes likely to give rise to effects comprise:
- vegetation clearance to facilitate construction is anticipated to occur during the initial mobilisation phase, requiring the removal of landscape features that contribute to the vegetation cover, the result will be newly exposed views of the wider landscape and the construction activity therein
  - areas of additional tree clearance as a result of potential safety concerns relating to the windthrow effect of vegetation removal on the fringes of woodland, particularly associated with plantation woodland
  - temporary spoil heaps, material storage, and site compounds will occur throughout the construction phase, the result will be frequent changes to the perception of the existing A9 and the broader landscape associated with the corridor
  - formation of temporary attenuation ponds within or on the fringes of the construction areas will, in isolated locations require small pockets of additional vegetation clearance and the introduction of engineered slopes to form the ponds
  - plant, machinery and traffic management will be conspicuous in views of the existing A9 corridor, highlighting the presence of the A9 and the changes occurring within it
  - temporary realignments and diversions will result in a broader footprint associated with the existing A9 corridor and adjacent landscape

- 13.4.3. Effects on the perception of landscape character anticipated to arise as a result of construction activity have been described below within the relevant LLCA.

### *LLCA A - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains*

- 13.4.4. No direct effects will occur to the elements and features of this character area as a result of construction activity. Inter-visibility with the existing A9 and changes arising as a result of the construction activities will be limited to the fringes of the character area within the transitional area adjacent to the neighbouring local landscape character areas, LLCA B - Meall Mor and LLCA E – Strathdearn/Tomatin.
- 13.4.5. Effects are likely to be limited to an increased awareness of the construction activity within the corridor resulting from the partial removal of roadside vegetation and the modifications to the landform. This will include the construction of temporary attenuation ponds to the west and south of the A9 alignment, which will be small but perceptible features during the construction period. This is potentially more noticeable where the landform is likely to be increased to accommodate the proposed rise in the vertical alignment adjacent to Dalmagarry Farm and the crossing of the Highland Main Line railway to the north.
- 13.4.6. The construction activity associated with the formation of the Lynebeg Left-in/Left-out (LILO) will give rise to some localised effects, lying on the transition with the adjacent character area LLCA C – Moy Estate. In particular the re-construction of the Lynebeg Rail Bridge will require substantial vegetation removal to accommodate the junction and the laying off areas associated with construction activities and plant.
- 13.4.7. Clearance of some plantation woodland to accommodate the proposed forestry access road will have limited effects upon the existing vegetation which is subject to routine felling operations, a feature of the lower slopes which depending upon the cyclical

planting and felling operations is not likely to significantly modify the perception of the landscape character.

- 13.4.8. Increased activity comprising plant and heavy machinery, including cranes where lifting is required, will result in a greater awareness of construction associated with the existing road corridor and this will increase as relative distance decreases. Woodland, including areas of Ancient Woodland within the intervening landscape will limit this awareness, particularly around the village of Moy and to the north (chainage 4900 – 6800) where retained roadside vegetation will retain its capacity to screen the road and construction activity.
- 13.4.9. The magnitude of effect anticipated to arise is considered no greater than low given the changes will be limited to the fringes of the character area. Given the LLCA's high sensitivity to change of the type of development being proposed, the resulting significance of effect will be **slight adverse**.

#### *LLCA B – Meall Mor*

- 13.4.10. Direct effects will occur to the southern fringes of the character area, at the perceptible transition between this LLCA and the adjacent LLCA A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains. The perception of the broader character area will be unaffected as a result of construction activity occurring within a limited area.
- 13.4.11. The work to broaden the corridor will require the removal of existing roadside vegetation, formation of new embankments to support the wider corridor and the formation of broader cuttings. This will include the formation of temporary attenuation ponds, some of which will require small pockets of vegetation clearance but which are typically located on the edge of construction activity. Changes will occur at a highly local level, the result will be a limited awareness of construction activity, confined to the corridor itself and the immediate landscape, including the transitional fringe of the adjacent character area LLCA A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains.
- 13.4.12. The magnitude of landscape effects on the perception of the character of the wider landscape will be low, the resulting significance of effects on the character area considered to be of medium sensitivity will be **slight adverse**.

#### *LLCA C – Moy Estate*

- 13.4.13. During construction direct effects on the perception of the landscape character will arise to the south western fringes of the character area, within the transitional area, as a result of a rising landform and inter-visibility within the wider character area effects during the construction phase are anticipated to be extensive.
- 13.4.14. Effects will be readily perceptible to the south west, arising as a result of activity in constructing an off line section, as the A9 approaches Dalmagarry Farm, including the formation of retaining structures and a new bridge crossing the Highland Main Line railway. In addition to the slightly elevated position of the existing A9 corridor, effects associated with plant and machinery will give rise to a heightened awareness of activity within the corridor. This will include lifting equipment associated with the required structures. Work to construct the mainline and the Ruthven Tomatin Link Road will occur within a zone of change between adjacent character areas, requiring the removal of broad tracts of woodland, frequently associated with the roadside, reducing the capacity of the remaining highway woodland to limit potential construction effects on the landscape resource.

- 13.4.15. Further effects are likely to occur to the north of Moy – the removal of roadside vegetation is likely to increase the perception of construction activity, increasing awareness within the broader landscape, particularly to the north.
- 13.4.16. Construction effects between the north and south of the dispersed village of Moy will be contained within the heavily wooded landscape – construction activity will be greatly constrained. However the construction of the Lynebeg LILO will result in localised clearance of vegetation to provide lay off space for the re-construction of the new underbridge for the Highland Main Line railway and the formation of a new replacement pond to the north east of the junction. This will include temporary effects of the heavy plant and cranes required to lift in the replacement bridge, resulting in broader effects of construction activity albeit of short duration.
- 13.4.17. The construction of temporary attenuation ponds during the construction phase will require small pockets of vegetation clearance, within and on the fringes of wooded areas where they would be unlikely to significantly alter vegetation patterns. In the more open landscapes to the north and south of Moy, these features although small will be frequent, particularly during the construction of the Moy LILO.
- 13.4.18. The anticipated magnitude of effect will be medium as the majority of effects occur to the south western fringes, however as a result of landform and vegetation removal increasing inter-visibility across the wider character area the perception of change due to construction will be increased. Given that the character area has been identified as being of medium sensitivity to the type of development proposed, the anticipated significance of effect is **moderate adverse**.

#### *LLCA D – Western Dava Moor Uplands*

- 13.4.19. No direct effects will occur within this character area, the nearest changes arising approximately 1km to the south west. Whilst there is the potential for awareness from the south west facing hill slopes, these are generally well wooded and as such the opportunity to be aware of changes and for them to materially change the way in which the wider landscape character area is perceived will be significantly reduced.
- 13.4.20. From open hillsides to the east and south of the Proposed Scheme, where woodland and/or plantations are less extensive there is the potential for distant views, across the strath to construction operations, the temporary effects of additional traffic movements and plant in conjunction with areas of vegetation removal will have the potential for the sense of remoteness to be eroded. This will be confined to the north and western slopes with an orientation towards the Proposed Scheme, with the majority of the character area being unaffected.
- 13.4.21. As a result, construction effects are likely to be in the magnitude of low, the significance of effect on the landscape of high sensitivity is therefore considered to be **slight adverse**.

#### *LLCA – E – Strathdearn/Tomatin*

- 13.4.22. The majority of the substantial works required to construct the dualling will occur within this character area. This includes the construction of the Tomatin North Grade Separated Junction (GSJ) that will require substantial modification to the existing landform to be carried out and the removal of some locally substantial blocks of woodland. Elsewhere within the character area the formation of embankment and cutting slopes, and up to thirty eight temporary attenuation ponds will require the use of heavy plant, including the formation of spoil heaps and the transportation of material within the site.

- 13.4.23. The proposed junction at Tomatin will require large amounts of fill to be imported and formed using heavy plant. Areas of spoil will be required in and around the location of the junction and this will result in a landform that will be constantly changing as slope profiles are formed and the junction constructed. This will be in the context of the existing A9, and its associated traffic movements that will remain throughout the construction phase.
- 13.4.24. Activity to construct the junction to the west of the existing A9 will be within the context of a strong existing framework of plantation and semi natural woodland. The effects of this will be limited to a relatively small area within the broader character area and whilst these will be locally significant, the effect of this activity for the LLCA as a whole will be constrained. To the east of the existing A9 and as the existing landform descends towards the River Findhorn, there will be an increased requirement to modify the existing landform to create the required slip roads and local access roads. This will require the removal of scattered open semi natural woodland resulting in greater awareness of the strath and the river from the A9 and a beneficial effect. This activity will be within the context of the increased awareness of the broader strath, and heavy plant and machinery will be visible in conjunction with haulage routes.
- 13.4.25. Between the Tomatin North GSJ and Tigh an Allt Cottage the anticipated construction effects will be more limited. The formation of temporary attenuation ponds and permanent SuDS ponds (MCB5, MC20 and MC30) and the Ruthven Tomatin Link Road in addition to the dualling of the existing A9 will be within the context of a wooded landscape framework that extends beyond the limit of the works, some of which is designated as Ancient Woodland and is not under commercial forestry operations. The dense blocks of planting are capable of accommodating much of the associated activity thus limiting the effect of construction activity on the perception of the adjacent landscape character.
- 13.4.26. North of Tigh an Allt Cottage the existing landform will require substantial modification to form a new embankment approximately 410m in length, and construction of a large number of temporary attenuation ponds, requiring a significant volume of material to be imported with associated vehicle movements along with plant and machinery that will be required to construct and form the profile of the slope. The effect of this will be significant in terms of construction however will be relatively localised to the edge of the strath, within a landscape of change associated with the rising slopes of LLCA A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains.
- 13.4.27. Further significant fill will be required in order to raise the vertical alignment of the A9 north of this point and as far north as the crossing of the Highland Main Line railway. This will involve extensive movement of plant in forming the elevated carriageway and this will be perceived across an extensive area associated with the north of the landscape character area. The associated vegetation clearance will increase the visual intrusion of the construction activity, temporary spoil heaps and movement of traffic on the A9.
- 13.4.28. The resulting magnitude of effect will be high in that there will be intense activity within limited areas within the character area. The landscape considered to be of medium sensitivity to the type of development proposed will therefore be subject to **moderate adverse** effects during construction.

### Operational Phase Effects

- 13.4.29. Potential landscape effects associated with the Proposed Scheme during operation include:

- alteration of the local landscape character due to loss of existing landscape elements such as established woodland, heathland and drystone walls along the A9 corridor
- introduction of new infrastructure elements such as new structures, signage and attenuation ponds that could affect the overall pattern of the landscape
- changed appearance of landform due to new earthworks such as embankments and cuttings

13.4.30. For the purpose of the assessment, the Operational Effects, outlined in paragraphs 13.4.34 – 13.4.58, have considered the scheme in the winter period of the Year of Opening (Year 1) when it is assumed that mitigation planting will provide little or no effective screening and is unlikely to represent a material contribution to the broader landscape framework, the winter of year 1 represents a residual effect because this stage includes embedded mitigation. The opening year is included in this part of the chapter in order to present the findings before non-embedded mitigation is included. In the summer of the Design Year (Year 15) when mitigation is anticipated to have established and be effective. Operational effects in the summer of Year 15 (Design Year) are considered to be residual and are outlined in Section 13.6. The comparison between the winter of year 1 and summer of year 15 can be found in the summary of residual effect at the end of this chapter.

13.4.31. Embedded mitigation in the form of varying earthwork profiles have been considered as part of the assessment and the approach, methodology and rationale has been described in further detail in Technical Appendix A13.1. A summary of the proposed locations where the gradient of the earthworks deviate from the engineering design gradient of 1:3 is provided below.

### *Landscape Mitigation*

13.4.32. In line with the advice provided within Transport Scotland's Fitting Landscapes document and in order to achieve a best fit with the landscape, slope profiles have been steepened or slackened in several locations and the varying slope profiles have been incorporated into the Proposed Scheme design as specific embedded mitigation, refer to Appendix A13.1 and Figure 13.9a-c. The aim being to slacken slope profiles where this will achieve a more integrated landform, or steepen slopes where the safeguarding of existing landscape cover is desirable. These have included the following locations:

- Chainage 320 – 600 (southbound): Embankment adjacent to the southbound carriageway of the A9 has been steepened to a gradient of 1:2 in order to reduce the potential need for felling
- Chainage 1470 – 1940 (southbound): The cutting adjacent to the southbound carriageway of the realigned Ruthven-Tomatin link road has been eased out to a gradient of 1:6 in order to better integrate the Proposed Scheme into the adjacent landscape and allow for the potential for the land to be returned for productive use
- Chainage 4390 – 4800 (southbound): The embankment adjacent to the southbound carriageway of the A9 has been adjusted to a gradient of between 1:2.3 and 1:4.3 as necessary to tie into the existing B9154
- Chainage 6900 – 7300 (northbound): The cutting adjacent to the northbound carriageway has been eased out to a gradient of 1:4 to integrate the Proposed Scheme into the adjacent landscape
- Chainage 7300 – 8100 (southbound): The embankment adjacent to the southbound carriageway has been eased out to a gradient of 1:8 to integrate the Proposed Scheme into the adjacent landscape and allow for the potential for the land to be returned to the landowner

- 13.4.33. In addition, slope profiles of proposed SuDS ponds were varied to better sit within the existing landscape topography.
- 13.4.34. The profile of the slopes associated with the Proposed Scheme and their relationship with the existing landform has been considered in relation to the effect on each relevant landscape character area.

#### *LLCA A - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains*

- 13.4.35. Whilst no material changes will occur to the fabric of this character area, physical changes to the existing A9 will occur to the east and potentially influence how the fringes of the character area may be perceived as it transitions to the adjacent strath.
- 13.4.36. Post construction there is anticipated to be perceptible changes in the relationship and transition between the adjoining character areas arising as a result of the A9's vertical alignment being approximately 2m higher than existing – this will extend from the north of the Tomatin North GSJ to Dalmagarry Farm. The effect of this will be a marginally increased awareness of the A9 set immediately beyond the Highland Main Line railway, where breaks in the vegetation, that currently serve to provide screening for a considerable length of the existing road arise. This is likely to be most readily perceptible from the slopes of Tom h-Ulaidh, from where the A9 and the Ruthven Moy Link Road and Ruthven Tomatin Link Road will represent physical changes on the periphery of the wider landscape setting to the broader character area that exists to the west.
- 13.4.37. Further effects are anticipated to arise to the north of Dalmagarry Farm as the A9 rises to cross the Highland Main Line railway. Traffic on the A9 is likely to have increased influence above the existing physical barrier of the railway embankment, the combined effect of the increased height of the A9 and the loss of roadside vegetation resulting in increased perceptibility of the road from higher ground to the west.
- 13.4.38. The introduction of the Lynebeg LILO junction will result in a block of mature woodland being removed, this will result in greater inter-visibility between the adjoining character areas, reducing the sense of remoteness currently experienced on the steeply rising slopes to the west above Lynebeg. The effect of this will be the introduction of the traffic associated with the junction and in addition traffic movements on the A9 itself.
- 13.4.39. Loss of roadside planting to the north of Moy and particularly associated with the northbound carriageway will lead to greater awareness of traffic movements, increasing the influence of the A9 within broader aspects from the hill slopes of Carn na h-Easigainn as they rise to the south.
- 13.4.40. There is anticipated to be a marginal increase in the influence of the A9 and associated traffic movements within broader views experienced from the hill slopes to the west and south west. The anticipated changes are likely to be limited and the magnitude of effect low, these effects will occur on the hill slopes and within the transition to the strath landscape, the majority of the wider landscape character that includes the upland landscape will be unaffected by the proposed changes. The resulting significance of effect will be **slight adverse** in the year of opening and remain as such in the Design Year.

#### *LLCA B – Meall Mor*

- 13.4.41. The Proposed Scheme will require the removal of existing roadside vegetation in order to form a slightly wider footprint to the existing A9 to accommodate additional lanes of traffic. The changes will occur within a small area of the wider landscape character area and will only be readily perceptible within the immediate environment of the road corridor

and at a point of change within the landscape, the surrounding woodland that does not form part of commercial forestry plantations, is predicted to limit broader awareness post construction.

- 13.4.42. The extensive woodland cover that extends across the steepest landform as it rises to the summits of Meall Mor and Beinn a B'heurlaich limits inter-visibility within the character area; from the summit of Meall Mor there is limited scope to determine changes within the road corridor to the south.
- 13.4.43. Two SuDS ponds (PX-A and PY-A) are proposed within the context of the character area, these occur within the context of the existing watercourses, Allt na Bheithin and Allt Creag Bheithin, which have the potential to slightly extend the influence of the A9 corridor beyond the immediate environment through slopes and access tracks for maintenance purposes. The profiles of these ponds and associated structures will be varied to integrate into the existing surrounding landform.
- 13.4.44. Improvements to the existing forestry tracks to the south of the existing A9 will result in some loss of plantation woodland, however given the cyclical nature of these changes, the effects are likely to be localised and no significant effects are anticipated to arise on the perception of the wider landscape as a result of these improvements.
- 13.4.45. The effects will therefore be confined to the south of the character area, physical changes will be limited and will not significantly modify the characteristics of the densely planted afforested landscape. The magnitude of effect will be low on a landscape considered to be of medium sensitivity to the type of development proposed and will result in a significance of effect rating of **slight adverse**, that is likely to remain into the Design Year.

#### *LLCA C – Moy Estate*

- 13.4.46. The majority of changes arising from the Proposed Scheme will occur within this character area, the A9 represents one of the few existing detracting elements within the landscape to the north and south of the village of Moy that is contained within extensive woodland cover, the majority of which is broadleaf and is in part designated as ancient woodland. The proposed changes adjacent to the village of Moy will be highly constrained by the existing woodland, which is not anticipated to form part of commercial forestry operations and therefore be felled in the future, however some localised changes will arise as a result of the Proposed Scheme.
- 13.4.47. To the north of Moy the Proposed Scheme will require limited changes, the slightly broader road corridor and adjacent access track will require the removal of roadside vegetation, extending of embankment slopes to reflect local landform and a steepening of cutting slopes to reduce impacts on the wider landform and the loss of some woodland. The effects will be increased awareness of the corridor within the immediate area, however this is anticipated to diminish as the distance from the road increases, and within the wider landscape to the north of Moy Hall the effect will be highly constrained.
- 13.4.48. The changes will also include the formation of the Lynebeg LILO, this will require the removal of a noticeable amount of mature woodland along the roadside, particularly to the west of the existing A9 carriageway and the encroachment of the link road into the slightly higher ground to the south west. The formation of two new SuDS ponds (P7-A and P7-B) to the south west of the A9 will add an element of interest into the landscape, reflecting the presence of the existing pond and replacement pond to the north east. Woodland removal to the east of the existing A9, cleared to provide space for the replacement of the Highland Main Line railway bridge to accommodate the Lynebeg

LILO access road will represent a relatively minor change to the extent of the woodland cover, however within the wider landscape setting this is not anticipated to represent a significant effect.

- 13.4.49. Changes will occur to the south of Moy, the Proposed Scheme modifying the existing A9 alignment with the corridor shifting to the west to align more closely with the existing Highland Main Line railway. The vertical alignment will be raised to allow access for vehicles to pass beneath the A9 from the newly formed Ruthven Moy Link Road to access the upland areas to the west and plant that may be required by Network Rail. The result will be an elevated section of A9 as it passes from the more wooded landscape associated with the quarry to the extensive woodland that rises to meet the A9 to the south of Moy. The effect of this will be an increased influence of the A9 within the broader landscape, particularly to the east. Traffic will be more readily perceived within the landscape over a greater distance, reducing the sense of remoteness associated with the surrounding hill slopes.
- 13.4.50. The changes in the horizontal and vertical alignments of the A9 and the formation of new or modified side roads is anticipated to influence the adjacent character area, LLCA A - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains at a point of change in the landscape, refer to Section 13.4.28 above. Effects within this character area will primarily occur to the south western fringes, but as a result of the open aspect that exists to the north and south of Moy has the potential to influence the broader landscape to the north and east. The magnitude of effect anticipated to arise will be in the order of medium that on a landscape that has been identified as being of medium sensitivity will result in a significance of effect rating of **moderate adverse**. Whilst some regeneration of woodland edge planting is likely to occur, in the Design Year the significance of effect is likely to remain **moderate adverse**.

#### *LLCA D – Western Dava Moor Uplands*

- 13.4.51. The Proposed Scheme will not give rise to direct effects on the fabric of the character area. Whilst the nearest changes are anticipated to be approximately 1km distant, there remains the potential for inter-visibility to be maintained post construction.
- 13.4.52. Effects are therefore likely to occur as a result of the Proposed Scheme giving rise to a change in which the relationship between the identified character areas will be perceived. Changes are anticipated to arise as a result of a broader highway corridor which is elevated within the landscape; structures within the corridor, including SuDS ponds (P4-A/P4-B, PU-A/P5-A/P5-B) and fencing. These new or modified elements are likely to increase the awareness of the A9 and Ruthven Tomatin Link Road which, within elevated views from the east will be perceptible, reducing the sense of remoteness associated with the surrounding hills.
- 13.4.53. The magnitude of change is anticipated to be limited, due in main to the nature of the scheme and the intervening distance, the magnitude of the effect is therefore identified as negligible and the significance of effect as **slight adverse** and is likely to remain as such into the Design Year.

#### *LLCA – E – Strathdearn/Tomatin*

- 13.4.54. The Proposed Scheme would introduce some marked changes to the perception of the landscape character associated with the Strathdearn complex and in particular to the west of the character area as a rise in the landform marks a change and the transition to LLCA A - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains. These changes would arise as a result of the formation of the Tomatin North GSJ, the Ruthven Tomatin Link Road and the substantial

earthworks required to construct the scheme that will involve the removal of existing tree cover and modification to the adjacent landform.

- 13.4.55. The Tomatin North GSJ will require the formation of a wider A9 corridor, slips roads, link roads and access points to adjacent land. The junction layout associated with the northbound carriageway will extend into the adjacent fields via slip roads and a newly formed junction with the unclassified road (C112) that provides access to Tomatin. The majority of these slip roads will be set within cuttings as a result of slightly higher landform to the west of the existing A9. Whilst there will be an increased awareness of the road and the junction to the west, the potential wider effect would be constrained by existing naturally occurring woodland and local undulations in the landform, effects are therefore anticipated to be limited to the immediate landscape resource.
- 13.4.56. To the east of the A9 the existing landform descends sharply to the River Findhorn, the proposed Tomatin North GSJ will extend eastwards approximately 200m from the A9. As a result there will be extended embankments formed to accommodate the slip roads to the GSJ, and access tracks (MCB5, MC20), in addition to SuDS ponds (P1-A and P2-A) to the south east of the junction. This substantial change in the landform will require the removal of some areas of woodland that currently separates the River Findhorn complex with the existing A9. The effect will be closer associations between the corridor and associated junction, particularly within the context of the River Findhorn allowing links to be made with broader direct views from the north and the local road to Ruthven.
- 13.4.57. To the north of Tigh an Allt Cottage the existing A9 gently rises as it sweeps into an extended left hand bend, this increase in elevation is reflected in the adjacent landform that descends sharply to the River Findhorn. The proposed widening of the A9 in combination with the Ruthven Tomatin Link Road will require the widening of the corridor and the formation of a new substantial embankment slope extending approximately 410m, tying into the existing landform to the south of the access track to Invereen Farm. Existing roadside planting and some woodland will be removed as a result, and in combination with the combined and wider road corridor, there will be new links established within broader views of the landscape associated with the River Findhorn.
- 13.4.58. North of the access track to Invereen Farm the existing A9 will be widened to the west, within the existing northbound verge whilst the new Ruthven Tomatin Link Road will be set approximately 20m to the east of the edge of the widened carriageway. This new link road will be set into the adjacent landform and the cutting slope will be profiled at 1:6 to avoid a sharp and incongruous profile to the slope.
- 13.4.59. Whilst the changes to the landscape will be limited to the west of the character area, the elevated nature of some of the changes and the extent of the broader views associated with the River Findhorn give rise to the potential for changes to be noticeable over a considerable distance, albeit reducing as relative distance increases. The effect of the proposed changes on the landscape is anticipated to be of medium magnitude, which on a landscape considered to be of medium sensitivity is anticipated to give rise to a **moderate adverse** effect. Whilst some regeneration of woodland edge planting is likely to occur the more extensive embankment will remain an obvious and readily perceptible change, as such the significance of effect in the Design Year will be **moderate adverse**.

## 13.5. Mitigation

- 13.5.1. The following measures have been identified to mitigate the potential adverse effects on landscape character as discussed in the above sections. These measures are also summarised in Chapter 21 Schedule of Environmental Commitments, with an item code to cross reference. Details of mitigation measures have been informed by the project

specific landscape objectives set out in Appendix A13.2 Landscape Objectives and are not repeated here.

## Mitigation during Construction

- 13.5.2. A number of A9 standard measures aimed at mitigating potential effects have been identified for implementation during the construction phase. These measures are set out in Table 13.7 below, with further detail provided in Table 21.7 in Chapter 21 – Schedule of Environmental Commitments.

**Table 13.7: A9 Standard Construction Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation Item	Description
SMC-LV1	The construction programme will be kept to the minimum practicable time to reduce the duration of any landscape and visual impacts and areas will be cleared for construction as close as possible to works commencing and topsoiling, reseeding and planting shall be undertaken as soon as practicable after sections of work are complete.
SMC-LV2	As far as practicable, plant and material storage areas will be appropriately sited to minimise their landscape and visual impact.
SMC-LV3	Construction sites will be kept tidy (e.g. free of litter and debris)
SMC-LV4	Work during hours of darkness will be avoided as far as practicable, and where necessary, directed lighting will be used to minimise light pollution/glare. Lighting levels shall be kept to the minimum necessary for security and safety.
SMC-LV5	To protect soil quality for the purposes of landscape planting, the following measures will be implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncontaminated topsoil for re-use shall be stored in un-compacted mounds no more than 2m in height, and stored separately from subsoil material. Topsoil stripped from areas designated as Ancient Woodland shall be stored separately to all other topsoil and sub-soil material, in un-compacted mounds no more than 2 m in height.</li> <li>• Stripped topsoil shall be used in areas of the same proposed vegetation type to utilise the existing natural seed bank.</li> <li>• Subsoil in planting areas shall be replaced after construction and ripped to a minimum of 450 mm prior to topsoiling and planting.</li> <li>• Proposed planting areas in existing arable and pasture land, not subject to construction activity, shall be ripped to 600 mm to alleviate compaction.</li> </ul>
SMC-LV6	The construction shall be managed such that the loss of any existing woodland, scrub, heath, mire, grassland vegetation, marshland, swamps and isolated trees and shrubs not affected by the permanent works is limited as far as practicable.
SMC-LV7	All existing trees and shrubs not affected by the construction of the permanent works shall be fenced off with a suitable type of temporary fencing in accordance with BS5837. Fencing shall extend to the drip line of the tree canopies (unless otherwise agreed by an arboricultural advisor), and shall be erected prior to any construction activities in that area and shall remain for the entire period of construction in that area.

## Mitigation during Operation

- 13.5.3. Landscape Mitigation proposals have been designed in accordance with the 'Landscape Principles' identified in the SEA, as listed in Appendix A4.1. The road alignment and mitigation measures have been designed to respond to the landscape qualities and key characteristics along the route, including tying in with and reflecting existing vegetation patterns and landform and using locally occurring plant species and materials.

- 13.5.4. Figure 13.8a-t show the proposed Landscape and Ecological Mitigation, along with cross sections in Figure 13.9a-c. Appendix A13.1 provides details of the modifications to the engineered slopes, identified as embedded mitigation. Key landscape mitigation measures that have been applied across the scheme include:
- sensitive earthworks design to minimise the impact of the cuttings and embankments and enable integration of the Proposed Scheme into its surrounding landscape, refer to Appendix A13.1
  - grading out of earthworks at sensitive locations to avoid disjointed appearance of landform and aid integration of scheme into landscape, introducing rounded slopes at the top of embankments and cuttings and avoiding straight engineered batter slopes
  - sensitive design of attenuation features to naturally integrate into the surrounding landform
  - retention of existing established trees and vegetation wherever possible and incorporation of new native woodland planting to integrate with existing where appropriate
  - planting at junctions and structures to help assimilate the structures into the landscape
  - limited planting within areas of open landscape character to reflect and reinforce existing heathland landscape
  - use of native woodland mixes that comprise a mix of trees and scrub species that reflect the inherent woodland composition and enhance biodiversity
- 13.5.5. Monitoring and review during the construction and maintenance periods will be provided in the form of an Environmental Clerk of Works (mitigation SMC-S2 in Table 21.1 of Chapter 21) who will ensure that method statement and planting proposal requirements are met.

#### *Location Specific Mitigation*

- 13.5.6. Details of location-specific mitigation is outlined in Table 13.8 below, with additional information contained within Table 21.7 in Chapter 21 Schedule of Environmental Commitments.

**Table 13.8: Project Specific Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation Item	Description
P12-LV8	The Tomatin North GSJ will be subject to an extensive planting strategy comprising a mixture of planting types, with woodland planting focused on the eastern side of the junction, extending across the embankments associated with the slip roads, the aim being to limit awareness of the new features within the setting of the River Findhorn. Mixed and coniferous woodland will combine with scattered tree groups to soften the appearance of engineered slopes and tie into broader areas of mixed woodland that exists to the south. Riparian woodland will be used along the toe of the slope, in association with proposed SuDS ponds (P1-A and P2-A), to reflect the location within the context of the River Findhorn.
P12-LV9	Specific planting in the form of feathered trees adjacent to the turning area for Tomatin GSJ to the north of Porter's Lodge and Sandside.
P12-LV10	Planting strategy to focus on the reformation of the edges of these larger areas of planting using coniferous woodland.
P12-LV11	Planting strategy using groups of scattered trees and smaller blocks of mixed woodland.



Mitigation Item	Description
P12-LV12	Mosaic of different planting types, with the focus on extensive blocks of coniferous woodland, reforming the edge of Dalmagarry Quarry. Planting strategy for the re-alignment of the Dalmagarry Burn and proposed SuDS pond (P4-B), with the focus on the use of riparian woodland and groups of scattered trees.
P12-LV13	Screen planting around the proposed crossing of the Dalmagarry Burn, comprising riparian and mixed woodland planting. Dispersed groups of trees will be planted to the north of Dalmagarry Farm, tying into the Moy LILO.
P12-LV14	Planting strategy to include several groups of scattered trees within the slip roads, along with small pockets of riparian woodland associated with the proposed SuDS ponds (P4-A and P4-B). Planting to increase in form and extent to the north of the junction, with blocks of mixed woodland proposed across the embankment between the mainline and the B9154. Additional blocks of mixed woodland adjacent to the northbound carriageway along with several groups of scattered trees to tie into the mature planting that exists along the Highland Main Line railway.
P12-LV15	Planting strategy to avoid extensive areas of planting to reflect the open characteristics of this landscape. Narrow belts of mixed woodland either side of the mainline, between chainage 5300 and 6000.
P12-LV16	Planting strategy for larger blocks of mixed woodland. In addition, blocks of riparian woodland in association with the SuDS ponds (P7-A and P7-B) and replacement pond. Individual tree planting along the B9154, at the tie in with the Lynebeg LILO.
P12-LV17	North of the Lynebeg LILO coniferous woodland is proposed adjacent to the northbound carriageway, between chainage 6600 and 6750. North of this planting to use groups of scattered trees across engineered slopes and in association with the proposed SuDS ponds (P9-A and PX-A).
P12-LV18	Narrow belts of coniferous planting reflecting the broader landscape framework.
P12-LV19	The proposed SuDS pond at chainage 9300 (PY-A), lying within the vicinity of the Allt Creag Bheithin watercourse has riparian woodland and further groups of scattered trees associated with it. The proposed Forestry Access Road to the north of the chainage 10000 and tying back to the above SuDS pond will have linear belts of coniferous woodland planted either side.
P12-LV20	Species rich mixes for the majority of grass verges with the aim of integrating these into the wider landscape character. The exception to this will be the use of less diverse grass species in areas associated with visibility splays which are capable of withstanding regular cutting.
P12-LV21	The construction programme will be kept to the minimum practicable time to reduce the duration of any landscape and visual impacts and areas will be cleared for construction as close as possible to works commencing and topsoiling, reseeding and planting shall be undertaken as soon as practicable after sections of work are complete.
P12-LV22	As far as practicable, plant and material storage areas will be appropriately sited. Where possible, these should be located where existing features such as trees can be used to screen them from visual receptors. Where this is not possible, screening can be achieved if necessary using bunds or embankments which may become part of the permanent works. Alternatively, temporary screens can be erected, designed and painted to be inconspicuous in their surroundings.
P12-LV23	The construction shall be managed such that the loss of any existing woodland, scrub, heath, mire, grassland vegetation, marshland, swamps and isolated trees and shrubs not affected by the permanent works is limited as far as practicable

Mitigation Item	Description
P12-LV24	Between chainage 320 – 600 (southbound), the embankment adjacent to the southbound carriageway of the A9 has been steepened to a gradient of 1:2 in order to reduce the potential need for felling.
P12-LV25	Between chainage 1470 – 1940 (southbound), the cutting adjacent to the southbound carriageway of the realigned Ruthven to Tomatin link road has been eased out to a gradient of 1:6 in order to better integrate the Proposed Scheme into the adjacent landscape and allow for the potential for the land to be returned for productive use.
P12-LV26	Between chainage 4390 – 4800 (southbound), the embankment adjacent to the southbound carriageway of the A9 has been adjusted to a gradient of between 1:2.3 and 1:4.3 as necessary to tie into the existing B9154.
P12-LV27	Between chainage 6900 – 7300 (northbound), the cutting adjacent to the northbound carriageway has been eased out to a gradient of 1:4 to integrate the Proposed Scheme into the adjacent landscape.
P12-LV28	Between chainage 7300 – 8100 (southbound), the embankment adjacent to the southbound carriageway has been eased out to a gradient of 1:8 to integrate the Proposed Scheme into the adjacent landscape and allow for the potential for the land to be returned to the landowner.

## 13.6. Residual Effects

13.6.1. Anticipated residual effects, described below, assume the successful establishment of the proposed landscape and ecological mitigation, assessed for the summer period in the Design Year (year 15 post completion).

### *LLCA A - Eastern Monadhliath Mountains*

- 13.6.2. No material changes to the fabric of this character area have been identified as arising in the year of opening, however physical changes to the existing A9 occurring towards the fringes of the character area and a point of change, may still be perceived.
- 13.6.3. Changes arising immediately beyond the eastern boundary of the character area, would in the medium to long term become increasingly integrated as mitigation measures mature. Planting replacing that removed by the scheme, and additional blocks of woodland, particularly those associated with the northbound carriageway would serve to reduce visual awareness of the changes arising at the break in the slope, although the broader corridor and associated link roads are likely to remain perceptible from higher hill slopes to the west.
- 13.6.4. Effects identified during the year of opening associated with the section of the Proposed Scheme as it passes Dalmagarry Farm will remain into the Design Year, a more extensive planting strategy would not align with the open floodplain landscape character through this section.
- 13.6.5. The introduction of the Lynebeg LILO has been identified as increasing visibility of a section of the A9 and the left in left out junction at the year of opening; over time this will be less visible within the landscape, the proposed planting of woodland blocks maturing to a level whereby they are expected to screen the A9 within the landscape and from the fringes of the character area.
- 13.6.6. The proposed landscape strategy will serve to integrate the Proposed Scheme into the wider landscape with the effects only being perceived on the fringes of the character

area. For the majority of the character area there will be no material change in the way in which the character area is perceived. The assessment has concluded that the residual effect on the landscape of high sensitivity will be **none**.

#### *LLCA B – Meall Mor*

- 13.6.7. The limited effects arising on the fringes of the character area occurring as a result of the dualling of the existing A9 corridor and the rationalisation of the existing forestry access road and SuDS ponds, along with their associated access tracks, will in the medium term be integrated within the existing landscape framework, by the establishment of replacement woodland. Whilst these areas are subject to change as a result of cyclical felling and replanting operations, the areas of mitigation planting will tie into the existing forestry plantations and the effect will be to restore the landscape framework.
- 13.6.8. The planting associated with the proposed SuDS ponds (PX-A and PY-A) will provide some integration of these off line engineered features, reducing their potential influence by the introduction of riparian woodland and scattered tree groups – reflective of the wider landscape character. Access tracks (C1 and the Forestry Road) will form new features, although these already occur within the character area in the form of forestry access tracks and new or modified tracks are not anticipated to rise to significant landscape effects.
- 13.6.9. The changes will typically occur on the break in the slope, with the steep wooded slopes of Meall Mor rising to the north limiting effects being perceived more widely within the character area. The effects will be constrained to the south of the character area and be set within the context of the existing A9, including the tie in with the existing dualled section. The magnitude of effect in the Design Year will be no change, as a result the significance of effect will be **none**.

#### *LLCA C – Moy Estate*

- 13.6.10. As identified within the effects described in the year of opening, the majority of changes arising as a result of the Proposed Scheme will arise within this character area, most of which will occur within the heavily wooded landscape to the south west of Loch Moy. As a result the majority of these changes would not give rise to noticeable changes to the landscape character.
- 13.6.11. The changes occurring to the south of Moy, previously identified as arising in the year of opening will see the existing corridor shifting to the west, perceived within the context of the existing Highland Main Line railway and set at a higher elevation than the existing road, approaching Moy from the south.
- 13.6.12. The Moy LILO will see the new junction substantially extend its footprint into the wet meadows associated with the Dalmagarry Farm holdings. The open characteristics of the junction reflecting the nature of the open fields notable for their lack of substantial vegetation. The re-profiled slopes of the A9 will tie into the existing slopes and the B9154, the planting of this slope will replace the existing planting that currently provides filtered views to the moving traffic, reducing its impact on the landscape to the east. Extensive woodland across this slope will, in the Design Year, substantially reduce awareness of the changes to the slopes and of traffic movements as the break in the landform marks the transition to the uplands to the west.
- 13.6.13. The proposed access track to SuDS ponds (P6-A and B), will require the loss of a linear belt of mature planting within the existing planting, however the loss of this woodland is

not anticipated to be readily perceived within the context of either widened A9 or the setting of the village, due to the Highland Main Line railway and its associated planting.

- 13.6.14. North of Moy the vegetation cover sees a marked change, the dense woodland giving way to scattered trees and open marshy grassland. The open nature of the landscape allowing more open awareness of the broader landscape, of the summit of Meall Mor and the hill slopes associated with Carne na Loinne. Slope profiles having been slackened to reflect local landform, and will have a limited planting strategy associated with them, in keeping with the nature of the open landscape. The proposed access track to the east and SuDS pond (P9-A) will represent a notable new feature within the landscape associated with the northern limits of this character as it transitions into the lower slopes of Meall Mor to the north-west. Establishing planting associated with the SuDS pond will represent a new cluster of planting however this currently ties into the blocks of plantation woodland that exists to the south and within the wider context the effects are not considered to represent a significant change.
- 13.6.15. In addition to the widening adjacent to the northbound carriageway, the Lynebeg LILLO represents the most significant changes to the existing landscape. The removal of existing blocks of woodland to allow for construction activity, including a substantial area of existing planting adjacent to the Lynebeg Rail Bridge will locally reduce woodland cover. However by Design Year extensive areas of replacement woodland, including areas of riparian woodland associated with the SuDS ponds (P7-A and B) and replacement pond adjacent to the Highland Main Line railway, will have reached a level or maturity whereby it is expected that they will provide mitigation for the loss of existing woodland. Within the context for the heavily wooded landscape, some of which is ancient broadleaf woodland, this is not anticipated to represent a significant effect.
- 13.6.16. The character area will be subject to some notable changes as a result of the proposed scheme, and in the year of opening the predicted significance of effect is anticipated to be moderate adverse. Substantial replanting of areas of woodland cleared to accommodate the dualling of the A9 but also including two left in left junctions will result in changes that will in part remain into the Design Year. The broader junction associated with the Moy LILLO are likely to remain noticeable. As a result the magnitude of effect is likely to reduce to low albeit at the upper end of the scale, giving rise to a significance of effect rating of **slight adverse**.

#### *LLCA D – Western Dava Moor Uplands*

- 13.6.17. As identified in the assessment of effects in the year of opening, the Proposed Scheme will not give rise to direct effects on the fabric of the character area. The previously discussed relationship between the character area and the changes occurring within the strath and the existing A9 corridor to the west would remain, however in the Design Year the establishment of the proposed landscape strategy would reduce the influence that the Proposed Scheme will have on the perception of this character area.
- 13.6.18. Whilst certain features or elements e.g. Tomatin North GSJ or the Moy LILLO may still be perceptible from the character area, the degree to which these might modify the sense of the open landscape associated with the open moorlands will have diminished, as a result the magnitude of effect is anticipated to be no change and the significance of effect would be **none**.

#### *LLCA – E – Strathdearn/Tomatin*

- 13.6.19. The marked changes arising as a result of the Proposed Scheme will be moderated by the proposed landscape mitigation strategy, as this matures the woodland, scrub and tree planting will integrate the Proposed Scheme into the wider landscape.

- 13.6.20. Extensive areas of woodland proposed around the Tomatin North GSJ will combine with existing woodland within the wider landscape, some of which is designated ancient woodland, to integrate slopes and reduce the intrusion of the junction into the setting of the River Findhorn. The mixture of deciduous and coniferous woodland types will provide effective screening of the upper slopes, with the riparian woodland on the lower slopes integrating SuDS ponds (P1-A, P2-A) into the lower slopes. To the west of the junction groups of feathered trees will replicate the broader landscape framework along with narrow belts of planting, these providing opportunities for links with more extensive areas of plantation woodland.
- 13.6.21. To the north of the Tomatin North GSJ the Proposed Scheme is largely contained within the broader landscape comprising extensive areas of plantation woodland. Within the substantially broader road corridor the screening effect of the mitigation planting will be strengthened by the maturing coniferous woodland, and integrate with the existing landscape framework, particularly where this provides some visual differentiation between the mainline and Ruthven Tomatin Link Road.
- 13.6.22. At the tie in of the Ruthven Moy Link Road, the Ruthven Tomatin Link Road and the existing Ruthven Road the replacement of planting will coincide with additional planting aimed at integrating the access roads with the existing local road. Areas of coniferous planting will replace that removed by the scheme between chainage 3000 and 3280, whilst riparian woodland will provide further integration associated with the Ruthven Moy Link Road, the diversion of Dalmagarry Burn and the creation of SuDS pond (P4-B). The crossing of the Dalmagarry Burn by the mainline and Ruthven Moy Link Road will provide opportunities for planting aimed at integrating the Proposed Scheme into the existing landscape framework and a point of change from the upland to the strath.
- 13.6.23. The Proposed Scheme would require some substantial areas of woodland to be removed to accommodate the wider footprint of the mainline and the supporting link roads and junctions. By the Design Year proposed planting is anticipated to have substantially replaced the planting lost to the scheme and in places increased woodland cover with more varied habitats. As a result the magnitude of effect is anticipated to have reduced to low, the resulting significance of effect is anticipated to be **slight adverse**.

## Summary of Landscape Effects

- 13.6.24. A summary of landscape effects in the winter of the year of opening and summer of the design year (year 15) is provided as a comparison below in Table 13.9.

**Table 13.9: Summary of Landscape Effects**

Landscape Character Area	Sensitivity	Construction Phase	Year of Opening (winter)	Design Year (15) (Summer)
A – Eastern Monadhliath Mountains	High	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse	None
B – Meall Mor	Medium	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse	None
C – Moy Estate	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Slight Adverse
D – Western Dava Moor Uplands	High	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse	None
E – Strathdearn/Tomatin	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Slight Adverse

- 13.6.25. The assessment of effects on landscape character has concluded that, although moderate effects, which are considered to be significant, would occur during and in the period immediately after construction, these would be of a limited duration. As proposed mitigation measures mature, predicted effects are anticipated to reduce in magnitude, the resulting significance of effect being no greater than slight adverse.
- 13.6.26. The conclusion has been drawn from the assessment of landscape effects that the Proposed Scheme would not result in a significant effect.

## 13.7. References

- 
- <sup>i</sup> Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Vol 11, Section 3, Part 5 – Highways England – June 1993
- <sup>ii</sup> Interim Advice Note – 135/10 Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment – Highways England – November 2010
- <sup>iii</sup> Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition – Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment - 2013
- <sup>iv</sup> Transport Scotland (2014); A9 Dualling Programme Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report Addendum - Appendix F Strategic Landscape Review Report.
- <sup>v</sup> Fitting Landscapes: Securing more sustainable landscapes – Transport Scotland - 2014
- <sup>vi</sup> Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment - Scottish Natural Heritage Review. No. 114 - 1999
- <sup>vii</sup> Natural Heritage Zones, A National Assessment of Scotland's Landscapes - Scottish Natural Heritage - 2002
- <sup>viii</sup> National Planning Framework 3 – Scottish Government - 2014
- <sup>ix</sup> Scottish Planning Policy – Scottish Government - 2014
- <sup>x</sup> Highland Wide Local Development Plan – The Highland Council - 2012
- <sup>xi</sup> Inventory of Ancient Woodland – Scottish Natural Heritage – Updated February 2016
- <sup>xii</sup> Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland - Countryside Agency, now Natural England and SNH - 2002