

Appendix A13.2: Special Qualities of the River Tay (Dunkeld) National Scenic Area

1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix provides an assessment of the impacts of the proposed scheme upon the Special Qualities (SQs) of the River Tay (Dunkeld) National Scenic Area (NSA) and has informed the development of appropriate mitigation proposals during the landscape and visual impact assessment at DMRB Stage 3.
- 1.1.2 The SQs have been identified through review of Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH's) Commissioned Report No.374 (Scottish Natural Heritage (2010) The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas: SNH Commissioned Report No.374). This document defines the SQs of each NSA in Scotland and expands upon each one. These NSA SQs are presented by SNH to clarify "*what needs to be safeguarded to maintain its outstanding scenery*" and to provide a "*basis for future consultation and policy development, particularly in relation to managing development and land use change within NSAs.*"
- 1.1.3 River Tay (Dunkeld) NSA covers the landscape surrounding the cathedral town of Dunkeld. It is characterised by beautiful woodlands and a fertile, lowland strath situated below the rugged hills of the Highland edge. At King's Seat, the narrow defile serves to act as a 'gateway' and transition point for travellers on the existing A9 as they journey from the landscapes of the lowlands to highland scenery.
- 1.1.4 The north western portion of the NSA covers the southern part of the study area and the River Tay, existing A9 and the Highland Main Line railway all run broadly parallel through the NSA, passing King's Seat, Dunkeld and Birnam, the confluence of the River Tay and River Braan and Craigvinean Forest.
- 1.1.5 The Strath Tay: Mid Glen LLCA, partially lies within the River Tay (Dunkeld) NSA, the LLCA being directly impacted upon by the construction and operation of the proposed scheme between ch570 and ch2700. The Strath Tay: Lower Glen LLCA also lies within the River Tay (Dunkeld) NSA and would be directly impacted over a short section of the proposed scheme between ch400 and ch570.
- 1.1.6 The Special Qualities of the River Tay (Dunkeld) NSA are listed in SNH's Commissioned Report as being:
- the beauty of cultural landscapes accompanying natural grandeur;
 - the 'Gateway to the Highlands';
 - characterful rivers, waterfalls and kettle-hole lochs;
 - exceptionally rich, varied and beautiful woodlands;
 - the picturesque cathedral town of Dunkeld;
 - drama of The Falls of Braan and The Hermitage;
 - Dunkeld House policies;
 - significant specimen trees; and
 - the iconic view from King's Seat.

2 Assessment of Impacts on the Special Qualities of the River Tay (Dunkeld) National Scenic Area

- 2.1.1 For the assessment, relevant SQs for the relevant character areas have been identified. Locations where the landscape characteristics underpin these SQs have been identified and assessed, mitigation measures which are proposed are outlined and an assessment made as to whether these impacts would present a significant risk to the defining qualities of the SQs.

2.1.2 The table below provides assessments of the SQs of the two LLCAs which would be directly impacted upon by the proposed scheme.

Table 1: Assessment of direct impacts on the Special Qualities of the River Tay (Dunkeld) NSA

Relevant and Related SQs	Locations where Landscape Characteristics underpin SQ	Assessment of Impacts of the Proposed Scheme on SQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SQ post Mitigation?
Strath Tay: Mid Glen LLCA				
The beauty of cultural landscapes accompanying natural grandeur	The NSA comprises extensive cultural landscapes of managed policies, designed landscapes, compact settlements, farmland and forest/woodland throughout its entirety.	The majority of the landscape encompassed within the boundary of the NSA would be largely unaffected by the proposed scheme, impacts being largely limited to the area immediately adjoining the existing A9.	The use of engineered slopes and /or retaining structures to lessen the extents of cuttings into hill slopes would reduce impacts on the existing landscape pattern and landform (Mitigation Item P03-LV8) and the reinstatement of lost mixed woodland with a similar species composition would ensure that the qualities of the SQ are preserved. (Mitigation Items P03-LV14, P03-LV15, P03-LV16, P03-LV17 and P03-LV19) The retention and protection of existing woodland would be undertaken as far as practicable. (Mitigation Item P03- LV13)	No Following maturation of the proposed woodland planting and the planting and grading out of earthworks there would not be any significant impact on the SQ.
The 'Gateway to the Highlands'	The modern 'gateway feel' is experienced when travelling north on the existing A9 with the descent towards Dunkeld then on past Inver Wood.	The widening of the A9 would result in the loss of woodland and vegetation adjoining the existing road corridor. Furthermore, there would be changes to landform due to earthworks associated with the proposed scheme however there would be limited overall impact on this SQ.	The retention of views through careful design of areas of woodland and new planting, in addition to the selection of appropriate species where new or reinstated areas of woodland are proposed would maintain the sense of transition from the Lowland to the Highland landscapes. (Mitigation Items P03-LV14, P03-LV15, P03-LV17, P03-LV19 and P03-LV21)	No Retention of views and maturation of the proposed planting would ensure that there would not be any significant impact on the SQ.
Characterful rivers, waterfalls and kettle-hole lochs	The rivers, waterfalls and lochs within the NSA vary greatly and display a range of characteristics. Of particular note are the great loops of the River Tay and the turbulent, tumbling course of the River Braan.	The proposed scheme would not result in any new bridge crossings over the River Tay and would have no impact on the River Braan. Furthermore, the proposed scheme would not result in the loss of vegetation on the banks of the River Tay (or the Braan). In this regard, the proposed scheme would have no impact on the SQ.	None required	No There would be no impact on the SQ.

Relevant and Related SQs	Locations where Landscape Characteristics underpin SQ	Assessment of Impacts of the Proposed Scheme on SQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SQ post Mitigation?
Exceptionally rich, varied and beautiful woodlands	The woodlands are experienced throughout the NSA and comprise a range of different tree species. Of particular note is the plantation of Craigvinean Forest and the Hermitage woodland planted in the 18 th century.	The proposed scheme would result in the loss of areas of woodland immediately adjoining the carriageway between chainages ch600 and ch2800.	The use of engineered slopes and/or retaining walls where appropriate will lessen impacts upon existing woodlands (Mitigation Item P03-LV8) and the reinstatement of lost mixed woodland with a similar species composition would ensure that the qualities of the SQ are preserved. (Mitigation Items P03-LV14, P03-LV15 and P03-LV19) The retention and protection of existing woodland would be undertaken as far as practicable. (Mitigation Item P03-LV13)	No Following maturation of the proposed woodland planting and the planting and grading out of earthworks there would not be any significant impact on the SQ.
Dunkeld House Policies	The Dunkeld House policies make up a major portion of the NSA along the riverside from Dunkeld westwards and northwards.	There would be no impact on this SQ.	None required	No There would be no impact on the SQ.
Significant specimen trees	Very old trees, typically with historic significance, these trees include: The Birnam Oak, Niel Gow's Oak, the Parent Larch and the Hermitage's Douglas Fir.	The proposed scheme would not impact upon any of the significant specimen trees within the NSA.	None required.	No There would be no impact on the SQ.
The iconic view from King's Seat	At the summit of Birnam Hill the King's seat affords views of the hills and glens of the Highlands to the north and south across the fertile fields of the Lowlands. To the east the views extend across Strathmore and to the west across the Perthshire Hills. Views of the existing A9 are experienced from this location the road being viewed to the north, running parallel to the River Tay.	The proposed scheme would result in the loss of woodland and vegetation adjoining the existing road corridor. Furthermore, there would be changes to landform due to earthworks associated with the proposed scheme and the introduction of lighting columns at the A9 Southern Tie-in Roundabout (ch650). All of these elements would be visible from the King's Seat albeit in the context of the existing road corridor and wider surroundings. While the proposed scheme would result in impacts in views to the north, there would be no impact on the wider views experienced from the King's Seat. There would be no direct impact to the King's Seat as a result of the proposed scheme.	The planting of woodland with a similar species composition and grading of earthworks would ensure that the nature of views experienced from the King's Seat would be reinstated over time. (Mitigation Items P03-LV8, P03-LV14, P03-LV15, P03-LV17 and P03-LV19) Special attention will be given to minimising the landscape and visual impacts of the lighting columns and fixings and to prevent unnecessary glare or light spill (Mitigation Item P03-LV22)	No Following maturation of the proposed woodland planting and the planting and grading out of earthworks there would not be any significant impact on the SQ.

Relevant and Related SQs	Locations where Landscape Characteristics underpin SQ	Assessment of Impacts of the Proposed Scheme on SQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SQ post Mitigation?
Strath Tay: Lower Glen LLCA				
The beauty of cultural landscapes accompanying natural grandeur	The NSA comprises extensive cultural landscapes of managed policies, designed landscapes, compact settlements, farmland and forest/woodland throughout its entirety.	The majority of the landscape encompassed within the boundary of the NSA would be largely unaffected by the proposed scheme, impacts being largely limited to the area immediately adjoining the existing A9.	<p>The use of engineered slopes and /or retaining structures to lessen the extents of cuttings into hill slopes would reduce impacts on the existing landscape pattern and landform (Mitigation Item P03-LV8) and the reinstatement of lost mixed woodland with a similar species composition would ensure that the qualities of the SQ are preserved. (Mitigation Items P03-LV14, P03-LV15, P03-LV16, P03-LV17 and P03-LV19)</p> <p>The retention and protection of existing woodland would be undertaken as far as practicable. (Mitigation Item P03- LV13)</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Following maturation of the proposed woodland planting and the planting and grading out of earthworks there would not be any significant impact on the SQ.</p>
The 'Gateway to the Highlands'	The modern 'gateway feel' is experienced when travelling north on the existing A9 with the descent towards Dunkeld then on past Inver Wood.	The widening of the A9 would result in the loss of woodland and vegetation adjoining the existing road corridor. Furthermore, there would be changes to landform due to earthworks associated with the proposed scheme however there would be limited overall impact on this SQ.	The retention of views through careful design of areas of woodland and new planting, in addition to the selection of appropriate species where new or reinstated areas of woodland are proposed would maintain the sense of transition from the Lowlands to the Highland landscapes. (Mitigation Items P03-LV17, P03-LV19 and P03-LV21)	<p>No</p> <p>Retention of views and maturation of the proposed planting would ensure that there would not be any significant impact on the SQ.</p>
Characterful rivers, waterfalls and kettle-hole lochs	The rivers, waterfalls and lochs within the NSA vary greatly and display a range of characteristics. Of particular note are the great loops of the River Tay and the turbulent, tumbling course of the River Braan.	The proposed scheme would not result in any new bridge crossings over the River Tay and would have no impact on the River Braan. Furthermore, the proposed scheme would not result in the loss of vegetation on the banks of the River Tay (or the Braan). In this regard, the proposed scheme would have no impact on the SQ.	None required	<p>No</p> <p>There would be no impact on the SQ.</p>

Relevant and Related SQs	Locations where Landscape Characteristics underpin SQ	Assessment of Impacts of the Proposed Scheme on SQs	Proposed Mitigation Measures	Significant Risk to SQ post Mitigation?
Exceptionally rich, varied and beautiful woodlands	The woodlands are experienced throughout the NSA and comprise a range of different tree species. Of particular note is the plantation of Craigvinean Forest and the Hermitage woodland planted in the 18 th century.	The proposed scheme would result in a very minor loss of woodland immediately adjoining the carriageway between ch400 and ch570.	The use of engineered slopes or retaining walls where appropriate will lessen impacts upon existing woodlands (Mitigation Item P03-LV8) and the reinstatement of lost mixed woodland with a similar species composition would ensure that the qualities of the SQ are preserved. (Mitigation Items P03-LV14 P03-LV15, P03-LV16, P03-LV17 and P03-LV19) The retention and protection of existing woodland would be undertaken as far as practicable. (Mitigation Item P03-LV13)	No Following maturation of the proposed woodland planting and the planting and grading out of earthworks there would not be any significant impact on the SQ.
Dunkeld House Policies	The Dunkeld House policies make up a major portion of the NSA along the riverside from Dunkeld westwards and northwards.	There would be no impact on this SQ.	None required	No There would be no impact on the SQ.
Significant specimen trees	Very old trees, typically with historic significance, these trees include: The Birnam Oak, Niel Gow's Oak, the Parent Larch and the Hermitage's Douglas Fir.	The proposed scheme would not impact upon any of the significant specimen trees within the NSA.	None required	No There would be no impact on the SQ.
The iconic view from King's Seat	At the summit of Birnam Hill the King's Seat affords views of the hills and glens of the Highlands to the north and south across the fertile fields of the Lowlands. To the east the views extend across Strathmore and to the west across the Perthshire Hills. Views of the existing A9 are experienced from this location the road being viewed to the north, running parallel to the River Tay.	The proposed scheme would result in a minor loss of woodland and vegetation adjoining the existing road corridor. Furthermore, there would be changes to landform due to small scale earthworks associated with the proposed scheme and Detention Basin A1 (ch250). All of these elements would be visible from the King's Seat albeit in the context of the existing road corridor and wider surroundings. Indirect effects from the introduction of lighting columns at the A9 Southern Tie-in Roundabout (ch650) would be discernible from King's Seat at night time. There would be no direct impact to the King's Seat as a result of the proposed scheme.	The use of engineered slopes or retaining walls where appropriate will lessen impacts upon existing woodlands (Mitigation Item P03-LV8) and the planting of woodland with a similar species composition and grading of earthworks would ensure that the nature of views experienced from the King's Seat would be reinstated over time. (Mitigation Items P03-LV14, P03-LV15, P03-LV16, P03-LV17 and P03-LV19) A 'naturalistic' design approach to the detention basin with associated riparian woodland and wet grassland planting would aid integration into the receiving landscape. (Mitigation Item P03-LV9) Special attention will be given to minimising the landscape and visual impacts of the lighting columns and fixings and to prevent unnecessary glare or light spill (Mitigation Item P03-LV22).	No Following maturation of the proposed woodland planting and the planting and grading out of earthworks there would not be any significant impact on the SQ.

3 References

Scottish Natural Heritage (2010). The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas. SNH Commissioned Report No.374.