

Appendix 13.5

Landscape Character

Assessment Impacts

Transport Scotland

August 2018



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1. Introduction

1.1.1 This appendix sets out the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and the Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) identified through desk-based assessment and field work using the following resources:

- Cairngorms National Park Landscape Character Assessment 2009¹
- Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment: Scottish Natural Heritage Review No. 114 (Richards, J., 1999)²;
- Moray and Nairn Landscape Assessment: Scottish Natural Heritage Review No. 101 (Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership, 1998)³;
- A9 Dualling Programme. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Appendix F – Strategic Landscape Review Report (2014)⁴;

1.1.2 For the area outwith the Cairngorms National Park (CNP), the LCA area has been sub-divided following the approach set out in the A9 Dualling SEA Strategic Landscape Review. For the purposes of this assessment, these have been further broken down into LLCAs. The location of all the LCAs and LLCAs are shown in Figure 13.3.

1.2 Assessment

1.2.1 The LCAs through which the A9 and the Proposed Scheme runs have been assessed. This assessment includes identification of the key characteristics of the LCAs/LLCAs and of their respective value, susceptibility and sensitivity. The methodology used to establish these is set out in Chapter 13: Landscape along with the key characteristics of each LCA/LLCA. The value, susceptibility and sensitivity has been summarised in the Table 1.1 below along with detail of the potential impact upon each LCA/LLCA, considering magnitude of impact and mitigation, at construction and operation phases, in the winter of year one and the summer of year 15 (Table 1.2).

¹ Cairngorms National Park Authority (2009) Cairngorm National Park Landscape Character Assessment prepared in partnership with the British Geological Survey by Alison Grant.

² Richards, J. (1999). Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No. 114.

³ Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership (1998). Moray and Nairn Landscape Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No. 101.

⁴ Transport Scotland (2014). A9 Dualling Programme. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Environmental Addendum. Appendix F – Strategic Landscape Review Report.

Table 1.1: Potential Impact on LCA During Construction

Key Characteristics of the LCA	Description	Construction Impact
Badenoch: Loch Alvie to Inverdrue LCA (approx. chainage 0-4900)		
<p>Value: High Susceptibility: Medium Sensitivity: Medium</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steep sided, densely wooded outcrop hills; • Irregularly shaped, steep sided hills; and • Diverse vegetation cover. 	<p>Potential construction impacts within this LCA include changes to embankments and felling of roadside vegetation associated with the introduction of Aviemore South Junction, new underpasses and retaining walls, mainline widening and drainage features. Lighting associated with working during hours of darkness will be evident. Traffic management measures will be in place. All these likely impacts are temporary in nature, but nevertheless are considered to be of high magnitude of change. Mitigation will include the construction programme being kept to the minimal practicable time to reduce duration of impact on the landscape, careful consideration of the location of construction storage and site working areas, keeping the construction site tidy, minimising the time spent working during hours of darkness and use of directional lighting where that is unavoidable, and retention of all existing trees and shrubs not affected by the permanent works [SMC-LV1-7].</p>	<p>Moderate – Substantial adverse</p>
<p>The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4)</p>		
Strathspey: Inverdrue to Pityoulish LCA (approx. chainage 4900-8000)		
<p>Value: High Susceptibility: Medium Sensitivity: Low-Medium</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steep craggy wooded slopes; • Wide meanders of the River Spey; and • The town of Aviemore. 	<p>Potential construction impacts within this LCA include changes to embankments and felling of roadside vegetation, construction activity for the mainline and drainage features, including NMU underpasses at Craigellachie, Milton and the underpass at High Burnside. A number of retaining walls will also be constructed at Macdonald Hotel and at the Milton area. Lighting associated with working during hours of darkness will be evident. Traffic management measures will be in place. All these likely impacts are temporary in nature, but nevertheless are considered to be of high magnitude of change. Mitigation will include the construction programme being kept to the minimal practicable time to reduce duration of impact on the landscape, careful consideration of the location of construction storage and site working areas, keeping the construction site tidy, minimising the time spent working during hours of darkness and use of directional lighting where that is unavoidable, and retention of all existing trees and shrubs not affected by the permanent works [SMC-LV1-7].</p>	<p>Moderate adverse</p>

Key Characteristics of the LCA	Description	Construction Impact
The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4)		
Strathspey: Pityoulish to Boat of Garten LCA (approx. chainage 8000-15100)		
Value: High Susceptibility: Low Sensitivity: Low		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undulating terrain; • Steep wooded slopes; • Lochs & lochans; and • Conifer woodland fringed with Birch. 	Potential construction impacts within this LCA include changes to embankments and felling of associated roadside vegetation associated with Granish Junction and mainline widening and drainage features. Lighting associated with working during hours of darkness will be evident. Traffic management measures will be in place. These likely impacts are temporary in nature, but nevertheless are considered to be of high magnitude of change. Mitigation will include the construction programme being kept to the minimal practicable time to reduce duration of impact on the landscape, careful consideration of the location of construction storage and site working areas, keeping the construction site tidy, minimising the time spent working during hours of darkness and use of directional lighting where that is unavoidable, and retention of all existing trees and shrubs not affected by the permanent works [SMC-LV1-7].	Slight-Moderate adverse
The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4).		
Strathspey: Dulnain Strath (approx. chainage 15100 – 17500)		
Value: High Susceptibility: Medium Sensitivity: Medium		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad flat floodplain narrowing at A9 crossing; • Commercial/managed pine woodlands; and • Development of Carrbridge. 	Potential construction impacts within this LCA include changes to embankments and associated felling of roadside vegetation predominantly associated with the addition of the new bridge structure and retaining wall at the Dulnain crossing, and the addition of drainage features. Lighting associated with working during hours of darkness will be evident. Traffic management measures will be in place. All these likely impacts are temporary in nature, and are considered to be of medium magnitude of change. Mitigation will include the construction programme being kept to the minimal practicable time to reduce duration of impact on the landscape, careful consideration of the location of construction storage and site working areas, keeping the construction site tidy, minimising the time spent working during hours of darkness and use of directional lighting where that is unavoidable, and retention of all existing trees and shrubs not affected by the permanent works[SMC-LV1-7].	Slight-adverse
The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4).		
The Slochd LCA (approx. chainage 17500 – 23600)		

Key Characteristics of the LCA	Description	Construction Impact
<p>Value: High Susceptibility: Medium-High Sensitivity: Medium-High</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep, steep sided gorge, a dramatic pass (previously widened to accommodate A9); • Western hills covered with conifer woodland; • Northern hills covered with heather moorland; • Regularly shaped 18th/19th Century fields; • Properties tucked below A9 in gorge; and • Drama upon entry to the National Park from the north through a narrow pass – contrast between enclosure of gorge and exposure of the basin. 	<p>Potential construction impacts within this LCA include changes to embankments and associated felling of roadside vegetation, construction activity for the mainline and drainage features, and for the bridge at Slochd Beag. Major rock cuts at Slochd will be temporarily disruptive due to blasting of rock. Lighting associated with working during hours of darkness will be evident. Traffic management measures will be in place. All these likely impacts are temporary in nature, but nevertheless are considered to be of high magnitude of change. Mitigation will include the construction programme being kept to the minimal practicable time to reduce duration of impact on the landscape, careful consideration of the location of construction storage and site working areas, keeping the construction site tidy, minimising the time spent working during hours of darkness and use of directional lighting where that is unavoidable, and retention of all existing trees and shrubs not affected by the permanent works [SMC-LV1-7].</p>	<p>Moderate-substantial adverse</p>
<p>The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4).</p>		
<p>Southern Uplands: Strathdearn/Tomatin LCA (approx. chainage 23600-25030)</p>		
<p>Value: Medium Susceptibility: Low-Medium Sensitivity: Low-Medium</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale, smooth rounded hills; • Heather moorland; • Occasional rocky outcrops; • Sense of remoteness; 	<p>Potential construction impacts within this LCA include changes to embankments and associated felling of roadside vegetation, construction activity for the mainline and drainage features, and major rock cuts at Slochd. Lighting associated with working during the hours of darkness will be evident. Traffic management measures will be in place. All these likely impacts are temporary in nature, but nevertheless are considered to be of high magnitude of change. Mitigation will include the construction programme being kept to the minimal practicable time to reduce duration of impact on the landscape, careful consideration of the location of construction storage and site working areas, keeping the</p>	<p>Slight adverse</p>

Key Characteristics of the LCA	Description	Construction Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coniferous plantations with linear edges; and Cuttings and embankments tend to appear particularly visible within this landscape due to the general smoothness of its surface. 	<p>construction site tidy, minimising the time spent working during hours of darkness and use of directional lighting where that is unavoidable, and retention of all existing trees and shrubs not affected by the permanent works [SMC-LV1-7].</p>	
<p>The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4).</p>		

Table 1.2: Potential Impact on LCA During Operation

Key Characteristics of LCA	Description	Impact Winter Year 1	Impact Summer Year 15
<p>Badenoch: Loch Alvie to Inverdrue LCA (approx. chainage 0-4900)</p>			
<p>Value: High Susceptibility: Medium Sensitivity: Medium</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steep sided, densely wooded outcrop hills; Irregularly shaped, steep sided hills; and Diverse vegetation cover. 	<p>Formation of new embankments and drainage ditches associated with mainline widening will result in loss of roadside vegetation. Where the road remains in cutting or where mitigation planting is factored in, the change is considered not to be significant beyond 15years. The LCA is heavily wooded especially to the east of the LCA (ancient woodland and policy woodland), although there are views towards the proposed Aviemore South Junction area from some open elevated areas. The proposed Aviemore South Junction will add an additional man-made element to the landscape south of Aviemore. The Craig Dhu Underpass, which is currently lit, will continue to be lit. Two retaining walls (B9152 south of Aviemore, and part of the Craig Dhu Underpass) will be added south of Aviemore which will have natural stone treatment as embedded mitigation [P11-LV11]. Mitigation planting will have established by year 15 whereby it is expected that it will integrate the structures with the existing landscape character [P11-LV18]. Retention ponds S4 and S5 at Lynwilg will have woodland [P11-LV18] which will align with the landscape character. Combined otter/badger fencing with intermittent areas of wildcat fencing will</p>	<p>Significance Slight-Moderate adverse</p>	<p>Significance Slight adverse</p>

Key Characteristics of LCA	Description	Impact Winter Year 1	Impact Summer Year 15
	run both northbound and southbound through this LCA. Generally, this will be screened by mitigation planting [P11-LV18] though sections along the northbound cutting at Loch Alvie may be intermittently visible. The birch-covered Craigellachie outcrop, and the rocky Torr Alvie and Ord Ban will remain key characteristics. Overall the magnitude of change is considered to be medium in WY1 and low for SY15 and the impact significance is locally moderate but is considered to be slight-moderate for the LCA as a whole in WY1 and slight for SY15.		
The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4)			
Strathspey: Inverdrue to Pityoulish LCA (approx. chainage 4900-8000)			
Value: High Susceptibility: Medium Sensitivity: Low-Medium			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steep craggy wooded slopes; • Wide meanders of the River Spey; and • The town of Aviemore. 	For the part of the LCA which lies west of the A9, changes from mainline widening would be largely restricted by the topography, the built environment of Aviemore and both conifer and mixed woodland cover combined. The LCA is wooded around much of Coylumbridge and the western slopes of Creag Phitiulais. Within Aviemore, reformed embankments will occur at the High Range House and Macdonald Hotel complex, and again at Avanside, Milton and Burnside, where embankments and/or drainage ditches would result in reduction of woodland and intervening vegetation. Retaining walls will be introduced as part of mainline widening at Macdonald Hotel, and at Milton/Burnside. The underpass at High Burnside, currently lit, will continue to have lighting provided. Combined otter/badger fencing with intermittent areas of wildcat fencing will run extensively through this LCA. Generally, this will be screened by mitigation planting [P11-LV18] though sections may be intermittently visible. Embedded mitigation includes the provision of a bund [P11-LV16] and squaring off of landform on the embankment at Macdonald Hotel [P11-LV8]. Both Macdonald Hotel and Scandinavian Village will benefit from the use of large specification birch and pine trees [P11-LV20]. A retaining wall at Milton-High Burnside to facilitate new housing development at Allt Mor will have a localised impact reduced by application of a natural stone treatment [P11-LV11]. Woodland planting and scattered trees will afford a level of	Slight-moderate adverse	Slight adverse

Key Characteristics of LCA	Description	Impact Winter Year 1	Impact Summer Year 15
	screening by SY15 [P11-LV18]. Locally changes are limited to the road corridor, but for the LCA overall would barely be perceptible. The magnitude of change is considered to be low for WY1 and SY15. The impact significance is considered to be slight-moderate locally adverse for the winter of year 1 and, with mitigation planting established to provide integration with landscape character, slight adverse in the summer of year 15.		
The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4)			
Strathspey: Pityoulish to Boat of Garten LCA (approx. chainage 8000-15100)			
Value: High Susceptibility: Low Sensitivity: Low			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undulating terrain; • Steep wooded slopes; • Lochs & lochans; and • Conifer woodland fringed with Birch. 	Changes to the area from Granish to Avie Lochan are concerned mainly with the loss of Ancient Woodland associated with road widening and the addition of the proposed Granish Junction. The junction lies to the southern extent of the LCA. The addition would reduce Ancient Woodland in this area, and reform the hummocky topography to the immediate east of the junction. Lighting will be introduced to the roundabout linking the junction to the A95/B9152 and to the junction underpass. Lighting column heights will be restricted to avoid being apparent above the tree line and luminaires selected to avoid upward glare [P11-LV25]. Low level vernacular stone walls will align with local landscape character [P12-LV12]. At Avie Lochan, the loch and the contrasting textures of broadleaf woodland and pastoral land use are special qualities. Northbound widening will minimise changes on the pastoral character to the east of the A9 [P11-LV8]. A number of retaining walls are required between the A9 and the HML at Kinveachy which will be new elements, but will not be visible beyond a very localised area of the LCA. The addition of drainage features (retention ponds C3, C5, C11, C12, C13 and C14 and infiltration basins C8 and C9A) will incorporate woodland to integrate with local character or scattered trees [P11-LV18]. Combined otter/badger fencing with intermittent areas of wildcat fencing will run extensively through this LCA. Generally, this will be screened by mitigation planting [P11-LV18] though sections may be intermittently visible. The LCA is extensive so that, although the magnitude of change at a localised level is medium, for the LCA as a whole the magnitude of	Slight adverse	Negligible-slight adverse

Key Characteristics of LCA	Description	Impact Winter Year 1	Impact Summer Year 15
	change is low. The significance of impact with sensitive design of planting and landform is assumed to be slight in the WY1 and negligible-slight in the SY15.		
The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4).			
Strathspey: Dulnain Strath (approx. chainage 15100 – 17500)			
Value: High Susceptibility: Medium Sensitivity: Medium			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad flat floodplain narrowing at A9 crossing; Commercial/managed pine woodlands; and Development of Carrbridge. 	The proposals will introduce mainline widening southbound over the open Dulnain Strath. This will introduce a new bridge structure and associated retaining wall, increase the embankment footprint and reduce Ancient Woodland south of the crossing. Mitigation in the form of conifer woodland [P11-LV18] will have established by the SY15. The juxtaposition from enclosed woodland to open strath would not be impacted. Otter fencing is restricted to the Dulnain crossing within this LCA. Generally, this will be screened or softened by mitigation planting [P11-LV18] though sections may be intermittently visible. Given the extent of the LCA and the inclusion of the proposed structure in close vicinity to the existing A9 and HML structures, the whole will be read as part of the crossing point of the strath rather than an addition to that. Magnitude of change, therefore, is considered to be low in both winter year one and summer year 15. Significance of impact is considered to be slight in WY1 and negligible-slight for SY15 when the mitigation planting will have established to a level whereby it is expected to soften the structure and integrate it to the north and south banks of the strath.	Slight adverse	Negligible-Slight adverse
The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4).			
The Slochd LCA (approx. chainage 17500 – 23600)			
Value: High Susceptibility: Medium Sensitivity: Medium			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deep, steep sided gorge, a dramatic pass (previously widened to accommodate A9); 	Mainline widening, the proposed Black Mount Junction with retaining wall and associated drainage features (detention pond N4 and retention pond N5) will result in reduction of trees in the Baddengorm Woods area, some of which are	Slight adverse	Slight beneficial



Key Characteristics of LCA	Description	Impact Winter Year 1	Impact Summer Year 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western hills covered with conifer woodland; • Northern hills covered with heather moorland; • Regularly shaped 18th/19th Century fields; • Properties tucked below A9 in gorge; and • Drama upon entry to the National Park from the north through a narrow pass – contrast between enclosure of gorge and exposure of the basin. 	<p>ancient woodland. Tree loss will also occur at Black Mount Wood. Mitigation planting comprising of conifer woodland [P11-LV18] will integrate the junction into the existing woodland character. Use of large boulders [P11-LV13] and large specification multi-stem trees [P11-LV20] as part of the design will reflect local historic character and help the junction in its role as gateway to Carrbridge</p> <p>The introduction of an additional man-made structure, parallel to the existing, in the form of a bridge at Slochd Beag, will become part of the pinch point of infrastructure at this location (along with the existing A9, the former A9 and the HML railway). These layers of historic and more recent infrastructure are part of the localised character at this location and are part of the reason for the drama of the rock faces here. At Slochd Mor and Slochd Summit major rock cuts and reformed embankments would comprise the main impact to the LCA. Here, the dramatic rock faces (a key characteristic of the LCA) which contrast with the upland moorland LCA immediately adjacent, are at risk due to the scale of the rock cuts and widening of the narrow pass. Therefore, sensitive rock cut design is part of embedded mitigation [P11-LV8]. The rock cut treatments will include the removal of mesh at Slochd Summit and application of mesh to the iconic pinnacle/rock plug at Slochd, enabling the retention of the rock plug. The application will follow best guidelines for aesthetic effect [P11-LV8]. Changes to the slope profile as part of embedded mitigation- P11-LV8 - (from 1:3 to 1:1 varying to 1:2/1:2.5) at chainage 22100-22650 will retain the drama of steep rock while balancing heath habitat (see Appendix 13.1). Lighting of the new underpasses incorporating the NCN7 at Slochd will be restricted to the underpasses where practicable. Retaining walls to facilitate the access tracks to retention ponds N8 and N9 will be new elements as will a cascade/drainage channel associated with the Slochd Mhuic South underpass.. Two limited areas of otter fencing will be located within this LCA. This will be screened by mitigation planting [P11-LV18].</p> <p>The ZTV indicates views are extensive across this LCA. The magnitude of change is potentially medium-high for the Slochd area and low-medium for the Black Mount area in WY1 – but for the LCA overall is low-medium. Given the rock cuts at Slochd offer an opportunity to remove mesh and create an improved rock face while maintaining the drama [P11-LV8], the impact is likely to be beneficial. The proposed Black Mount junction mitigation planting [P11-LV18] will have established to integrate the junction into the landscape</p>		

Key Characteristics of LCA	Description	Impact Winter Year 1	Impact Summer Year 15
	character. Therefore, significance of impact is considered to be slight adverse for WY1 and slight beneficial for SY15.		
The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected and are likely to be slightly improved due to new rock face formation and removal of mesh at Slochd Summit (see Appendix 13.2).			
Western Dava Moor Uplands LLCA (sub-LLCA of the Southern Uplands LCA (approx. chainage 23600-25030))			
Value: Medium Susceptibility: Low-Medium Sensitivity: Low-Medium			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale, smooth rounded hills; • Heather moorland; • Occasional rocky outcrops; • Sense of remoteness; • Coniferous plantations with linear edges; and • 'Cuttings and embankments tend to appear particularly visible within this landscape due to the general smoothness of its surface'. 	A very small section of the A9 lies within the LLCA. At the Slochd Pass rock cuts and reformed embankments would comprise the main impact for a small part of the LCA. Here, the dramatic rock faces and contrasts with the characteristics of the upland moorland (the juxtaposition of which is one of the special qualities of the CNP). Therefore, localised experience of change (beneficial due to improved rock cuts and reduction in the extent of mesh – P11-LV8) between The Slochd LCA and the Western Dave Moors LLCA, the magnitude of change is low. The significance of impact is considered to be locally slight beneficial but for the LLCA as a whole, negligible-none in the winter of year one. Given that the impact is mainly concerned with rock cuts, which will be softened by natural weathering and the establishment of planting, the significance of impact is likely to be slight beneficial beyond the summer of year 15.	Negligible-None	Slight beneficial.
This LLCA lies outwith the CNP but in close proximity. The special qualities will not be significantly adversely affected (see Appendix 13.4).			