

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE

11 August 2010

Agenda Item	12
Report No	PED 63/10

Special Landscape Areas: Citations

Report by Director of Planning and Development

SUMMARY

This report sets out the results of recent work to confirm the boundaries and description of Special Landscape Areas (formerly known as Areas of Great Landscape Value). These are important areas which will be referred to in the policies contained within the Highland wide Local Development Plan, and Members are asked to approve the draft citations for public consultation.

1. Background

- 1.1 Work was recently undertaken to confirm the boundaries and description of Special Landscape Areas (formerly known as Areas of Great landscape Value. This was undertaken by Horner and MacLennan and has been overseen and jointly funded by the Highland Council and SNH.
- 1.2 The Council had previously identified these areas as part of the Structure Plan in 2001, and many of them were subsequently confirmed through Local Plans. However the descriptions (or citations) for them have not been completed until this study was completed. It is intended that the draft citations be consulted on alongside the Proposed Highland-wide Local Development Plan.
- 1.3 The citations will assist in the determination of planning applications and as a reference to the Local Development Plan. They will do this by highlighting particular landscape values which should be safeguarded and how sensitive they are to change. They can also help inform land management practices, and may be useful for tourism purposes as a succinct description of particular areas which are locally or regionally important for their special landscape qualities.
- 1.4 The study was not intended to constitute a comprehensive review of local landscape designation boundaries. Some changes have however been made to ensure boundaries are contiguous with the National Scenic Area boundary. Otherwise the boundaries remain unchanged from the Highland Structure Plan.

2. Methodology and process followed

- 2.1 The Methodology for drafting the citations was informed by the Guidance on Local Landscape Designations produced by SNH and Historic Scotland and by other guidance on landscape designation including "Identifying the Special Qualities of Scotland's National Scenic Areas". This was refined in the early stages of the study following on site trialling in two 'pilot' areas agreed with the Steering Group.

Preparation of the citation texts incorporated several structured drafting stages, and was preceded by detailed preparatory research, followed by a core field survey component, during which emphasis was placed on capturing experiential and perceptual characteristics to complement the description of physical features.

- 2.2 Cultural heritage features add a historical dimension that contributes to an area's quality and character. The final draft of the report was amended to take better account of the historical dimension by utilising the expertise of the Council's own archaeology team.

3. Content of the Citations

- 3.1 The draft citations are provided in the Members' Library for reference and are also available on the Council's web-site. The brief citation for each area includes a map, summarises its key landscape and visual characteristics, the special qualities for which it is valued, its key sensitivities to landscape change, and possible measures for its enhancement. It also includes an overview which is a clear distinct description of the landscape and why it has been designated. As part of the survey process photographs were taken, and a few of these have been selected for the front page of each citation.

4.0 Integration with the Highland wide Local Development Plan

- 4.1 There is a key link between the citations and the interpretation of Policy 53 Natural Built and Cultural Heritage policy contained within the Highland wide Local Development Plan. This policy states that Special Landscape Areas are identified as having local/regional importance and the Council will allow development if it is believed that it will not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity and heritage resource (in this case the Special Landscape Area).
- 4.2 The text in the appendix to the Local Development Plan provides further guidance by stating that "these areas were identified by the Council by virtue either as being large scale areas of regional importance for scenic quality, or as being small scale areas of local scenic and recreational value. The Council will consider the potential impacts of development proposals on the integrity of the SLAs, including impacts on the wider setting. There may be cases where the setting of an SLA could be adversely affected by development in the foreground which would interrupt important views into and out of the SLA. When determining the impact on the landscape character and scenic quality and overall integrity of the SLA, attention will be given to its citation and in particular the key landscape and visual characteristics, its special qualities, and its sensitivities to change".

4. Assessments of the Guidance

- 4.1 The Study was put through the pre screening process for Strategic Environmental Assessment and it was considered that it would have a positive effect on better protecting the special qualities of our Special Landscape areas.

5. Community Engagement

- 5.1 The citations will be subject to public consultation with the timings to mirror those of the Proposed Highland wide Local Development Plan consultation. The citations

are essentially a technical landscape assessment, which will inform interpretation of policy. However it is recognised that the public may have strong feelings on the value attributed to local landscape features and there may be some future revision.

6. Gaelic Language

6.1 We will provide Gaelic translation of headings and sub-headings in the publications that we are producing.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8. Conclusion

8.1 The Council has worked closely with Scottish Natural Heritage, and Horner and MacLennan, to ensure these citations identify the key qualities of Highland's Special Landscape Areas key qualities as well as how we can protect and where possible enhance them.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- (i) Agree the Special Landscape Area citations will be subject to a public consultation;
- (ii) Agree that following public consultation on the draft guidance and any subsequent changes that the citations are brought back to committee before being finalised as a background paper to the Highland wide Local Development Plan.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Planning and Development

Date: 2 August 2010

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