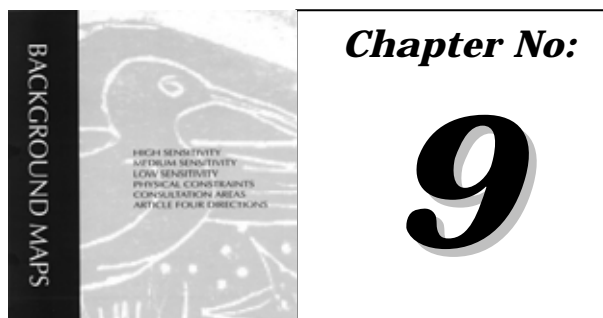


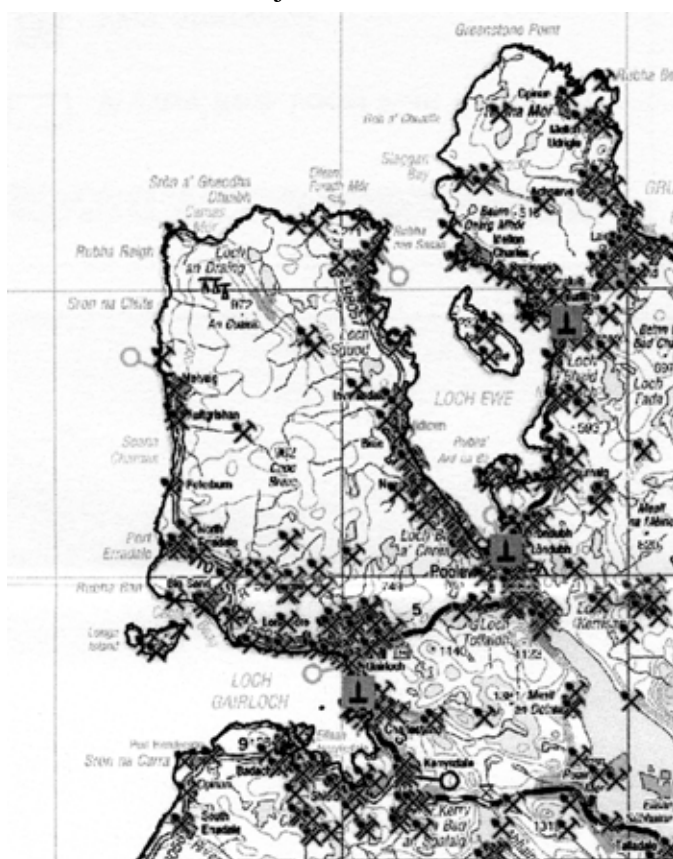
# Background Maps



65	-	Scottish Natural Heritage [Written Submissions]
67	-	The Scottish Environment Protection Agency [Written Submissions]

## BACKGROUND

1. The Background Maps, already referred to in previous chapters, while forming part of the deposit draft of the Wester Ross Local Plan, occupy a separate document. It is to this document that the objectors refer in this submission.



Extract (to identical scale used in actual document) from section of Low Sensitivity Background Map purporting to show locations of war memorials and archaeological sites.

2. The **objectors** considered the maps to be a critical component of the plan and as such, it was essential that they were clear and unambiguous. However, the scale and colour meant that many of the maps were difficult to interpret and many smaller sites did not show up. The objectors cited examples of these and recommended that the council gave further thought to how different features could be identified more clearly. In addition, one of the objectors highlighted a number of errors contained in the maps.

3. The **council** pointed out that the introductory notes explained that,

“The following maps indicate the general location of the individual features which must be considered. If it appears that a development proposal may be within, or impact upon any of these, a more detailed map can be obtained from the council’s Planning and Development Service to determine the exact boundaries.”

4. In regard to the errors highlighted, the council would amend the maps as appropriate.

## CONCLUSIONS

5. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that by attempting to pack all the information relevant to the local plan into maps of too small a scale – a failing of the plan first identified in chapter 2 of this report – it will not provide as efficient and effective a process as a means of guiding change, sought by Scottish Planning Policy 1: The Planning System. I consider that, as a result, the Background Maps currently serve no more of a purpose than to indicate just how widespread any particular displayed feature is, its general distribution, and its quantity within the plan area. At the current scale, the maps cannot identify with certainty a specific location for any of the features they display (see example shown at paragraph 2 above).

6. The council's answer to this is the introductory note shown in paragraph 3 above, but particularly in an area as widespread and generally remote from the council's offices as Wester Ross, I consider that the solution should not be to put the onus on the reader to obtain information which should be included in the plan. By so doing, I consider that the plan fails to achieve the purpose set out for it in Scottish Planning Policy 1: The Planning System (to set out detailed policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land which will guide day-to-day planning decisions – see Appendix 3 to this report). Quite simply, its policies are not shown in sufficient detail to be able to guide such planning decisions.

7. I consider that the actual locations of the many features included in the Background Maps should be identified on the Proposals Map Insets; certainly, the inset maps are of such a scale as to be able to accept considerably more detail without becoming cluttered in any way. If identification of many of the features shown in the Background Maps were to be added to the Proposals Map Inset Maps, I am in no doubt that the latter maps would serve a much more useful purpose than they do at present. The Background Maps will continue to be of use, in particular for their identification of the quantity and distribution of features that will remain outside the areas covered by the inset maps.

8. I am aware from a number of the council's submissions that it is concerned to be able to renew and update information in these maps without the necessity of introducing a formal Alteration to the plan. However first, irrespective of their title, the Background Maps in their present form are already an integral part of the plan, and therefore cannot be altered freely.

9. Second, it seems to me that much of the information in these maps is unlikely to be altered within a ten-year period and still less within five years; in any case, for those features that are more susceptible to change, a covering note could be added that the up-to-date position should be checked with the council's office. This is an entirely different level of referral to that currently suggested in paragraph 3.

10. I am in no doubt that the resultant document would be much more user-friendly and accordingly more compliant with government advice. The only alternative to this that I can envisage is to reproduce the Background Maps to a much larger scale, but this would create an enormous and unwieldy document.

## RECOMMENDATION

11. I therefore recommend that

- (i) detail from the Background Maps be incorporated into the Proposals Map Inset Maps wherever possible;
- (ii) the words “and inset” or “and Settlement Inset” be added to policies and paragraphs of support or justification as relevant and appropriate (and as shown in Appendix 2 to this report), for clarification; and
- (iii) correction of the identified errors be undertaken by the council – as it evidently may already have been.