

## Appendix 3 - Landscape Character Assessment Pàipear-taice 3 – Measadh Caractar a' Chruth-tìre

### Background

The Planning Acts require Development Plans to indicate measures for the conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of each area. This may be achieved by:

- positively guiding development to preferred locations where landscape capacity, services and other planning considerations are most favourable;
- policy protection of or regard for acknowledged features ranging from National Scenic Areas, to maintenance of public views across open water, and to safeguarding of prized local assets such as amenity woodland;
- promoting good quality design, including incorporation of suitable guidelines to assist developers (the Council intends to produce housing in the countryside siting and design guidance in 2009);
- restoration of derelict or otherwise spoiled landscapes through appropriate environmental programmes or land management mechanisms; and
- enhancement and interpretation of landscape features.

The Council's strategic landscape conservation policies are set out in L3 and L4 of the Highland Structure Plan, approved by the Scottish Ministers in March 2001. Structure Plan policies G2 and G6 are also particularly relevant. As Local Plans must conform to the provisions of the Structure Plan it is important to assess and understand the character of the landscape, its quality and relationship with land use activities.

### Landscape Character Assessments

A detailed appraisal of landscape character and change in Lochaber was completed by a Scottish Natural Heritage

consultant in 1998 and in Skye and Lochalsh in 1996. These documents were produced as part of a national programme carried out with the benefit of a steering group comprising officials from the Highland Council Planning Service, the relevant local enterprise company, the Forestry Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Full details of the reports can be accessed via:

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/looking-after-landscapes/lca/>

Paper copies can be inspected at the Highland Council Planning and Development Service, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness or Scottish Natural Heritage, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness.

The aim is to promote a general understanding of the local landscape, character and the forces for change acting upon these. As a broad based study, it highlights the key landscape issues in relation to pressures for development and other land use change. It does not state where, or in what form, landscape development and change should take place. It is intended as a guide to the preparation of landscape policies and consideration of future proposals.

### Landscape Character Types

The studies identify 16 landscape character types within Skye and Lochalsh and 19 in Lochaber. These are described, the key forces for change are analysed and guidance given in each case. The detailed scope of guidance is set out in the full report available from the links above.

### **Potential Uses**

The study can be used to inform planning consultations and public local inquiries where landscape considerations are an issue. They can also be used to help the Area Planning and Building Standards Manager to advise potential new applicants how to integrate a proposed new house in the countryside into its surroundings. In preparing the new West Highland and Islands Local Plan it has been used as one of a range of criteria to help identify broad areas with various levels of sensitivity to and appropriateness for development.