

Guidance on Local Landscape Designations

Natural Heritage Management

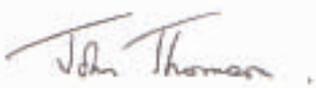
FOREWORD

This guidance has been developed to help local authorities refresh their approach to local landscape designations. It has been prepared through close involvement and consultation with local authorities and other stakeholders and is being published jointly by SNH and Historic Scotland.

The joint publication of this guidance is itself a recognition that a more collective approach to the natural and historic environment are increasingly part and parcel of a modern approach to caring for our landscapes. It is perhaps all too easy to associate landscape with the more beautiful and remote countryside, mountains and coastline for which Scotland is renowned, but the natural heritage is to be equally found and treasured close to, and sometimes within, our towns and settlements. Equally, the historic dimension of landscape is not only evident in our settlements, but also in the land-use and vegetation cover across most of Scotland, as well as in the relict landscapes that have survived of prehistoric, medieval or more recent times.

As part of an all-landscape approach to Scotland's landscapes, we believe that local landscape designations can play an important role in promoting awareness, pride and care of our most valued local landscapes, and also in protecting those which are most vulnerable.

We hope that this guidance will therefore contribute to the wider efforts by local authorities and other stakeholders, both nationally and locally, to care for Scotland's landscapes better. Linking such efforts is the growing recognition of the importance of 'place' in shaping Scotland's future prospects. Seen in these terms, our local landscapes are important to all of us. But they also matter because they provide the setting for our day to day lives. They matter because they offer opportunities to enjoy our rich and varied natural and cultural heritage and to participate in outdoor recreation close to where we live and work. And they matter because they contain a vital record of our past and an insight into the people that we once were.



John Thomson, Director of Strategy and Operations (West), SNH



Sheenagh Adams, Director of Heritage Policy, Historic Scotland

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Photo: L. Gill/SNH

1-1 Local landscape designations are a well-established and valued approach to protecting and guiding change in areas of particular landscape importance in Scotland. Complementing the suite of 40 National Scenic Areas, Scotland's national landscape designation, local landscape designations act as an important tool for safeguarding and enhancing Scotland's rich diversity of landscapes. They can also play an important role at the local level in developing understanding and awareness of the landscape features and qualities that make particular areas distinctive and give communities a sense of place.

The review of local landscape designations

1-2 In Spring 2003, SNH initiated a review of local landscape designations. A number of policy drivers informed this review.

- NPPG 14 provides a continued role for such designations but sought an approach which increases consistency and simplifies current approaches.
- There was strong and continuing support among practitioners for the use of local landscape designations. Local authority-wide approaches to landscape are now being developed to complement the role of local designations rather than replace them.
- The work undertaken by SNH and Historic Scotland/Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) on landscape character and historic land-use assessment provides a more systematic approach to assist the process of selecting areas for designation and developing policies for their protection and management.
- Past and future changes to the strategic planning framework – notably the past loss of the regional councils and the new proposals to create city regions – also have had implications for the use of such designations.

In future, the European Landscape Convention may give further emphasis to taking forward actions for local landscapes in Scotland. This Convention encompasses both the natural and historic dimension of our landscape. Alongside other approaches, local landscape designations are likely to have an important role to play in implementing this Convention.

Box 1 The natural and historic dimensions of Scotland's landscapes

Scotland is fortunate in having a rich diversity of landscapes. Many areas, for example in the Highlands and Islands, possess mountain and coastal landscapes which are valued nationally and internationally for their quality, extensiveness and wild land character. Other landscapes, such as the rolling Border hills, the open plains of Moray, Buchan and Berwickshire, the rich farmlands of Angus, Kincardineshire and East Lothian, and the exposed moorlands of Caithness, contribute powerfully to regional identity and quality of life. Upland ranges such as the Kilpatricks, Pentlands and Sidlaws provide the landscape settings for our towns and cities and, at a more local level, the interplay of features such as hills, watercourses, lochs, woodlands and shorelines makes an important contribution to environmental quality and a sense of place. (NPPG 14, Natural Heritage, para 11)

Our environment, whether rural or urban, on land or underwater, has a historical dimension that contributes to its quality and character. This is most obvious in our tangible built heritage of ancient monuments, archaeological sites and landscapes, historic buildings, townscapes, conservation areas, parks, gardens and designed landscapes, and other remains resulting from human activity of all periods. It encompasses the context, or setting, in which these features sit and the patterns of past use in landscapes and within the soil, and in towns, villages and streets. It also has less tangible aspects recognised as the historical, artistic, literary, linguistic and scenic associations of places and landscapes. These various elements contribute fundamentally to our sense of place and cultural identity. ...Historic environment is used as an umbrella term to refer to these aspects of our environment (from 'Passed to the Future – Historic Scotland's Policy for Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment')

1-3 This review has been supported by a working group comprising representatives from the Scottish Executive, Historic Scotland and COSLA, together with a number of staff from a range of both rural and urban local authorities. During the second half of 2003, input to this work was sought through a questionnaire to all local authorities on their current use of local landscape designations and on their view on key issues which future guidance should address. A draft of this guidance was circulated to local authorities and other stakeholders for comment. A workshop held in June 2004 provided a further opportunity to discuss the issues. During this period, SNH also initiated a wider national debate on how the nation can better care for its landscapes through the consultation paper and follow-up seminar on Scotland's Future Landscapes. Views generated by this wider consultation have also been fed into the preparation of this publication.

Purpose and contents of guidance

1-4 Scottish Executive guidance on local landscape designations is contained in Circular 2/1962 *Development Plan: Areas of Great Landscape Value and Tourism Development Proposals*, NPPG 14 *Natural*



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Heritage (paras 60-62) and PAN 60 *Planning for the Natural Heritage* (paras 38-40). While not referring directly to them, Scottish Executive policy and guidance on the historic environment is also relevant to any review of local landscape designations. Key documents include *Passed to the Future: Historic Scotland's Policy for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*; NPPG5 *Archaeology and Planning*, NPPG 18 *Planning and the Historic Environment*; and the *Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas* (Historic Scotland, 1998).

1-5 Within this existing policy framework, this publication has been prepared to assist local authorities in reviewing their local landscape designations. It seeks to:

- promote greater understanding and support for local landscape designations among local authorities, the public and other key stakeholders;
- reaffirm the role of local landscape designations as part of an 'all landscapes' approach and define the circumstances when they could be used;
- secure greater consistency in the selection and use of local landscape designations by local authorities; and
- clarify the relationship of local landscape designations to the wider family of Scotland's landscape designations.

The advice is intended primarily for local authorities to use as a resource in taking forward their own reviews of local landscape designations. Other stakeholders, notably developers, land managers, community organisations and environmental and heritage groups, may also find this guidance helpful in developing their understanding of local landscape designations.

1.6 The guidance is in three parts. Following this introduction, the rest of Part 1 reviews the changing context for local landscape designations. Part 2 sets out the key elements in refreshing the approach to local landscape designations and reviewing them in practice. Part 3 addresses aspects of policy and management and other practical designation issues.

Box 2: Scottish Executive planning guidance on local landscape designations

Circular 2/1962

Circular 2/1962 recognised the need to do more to protect Scotland's landscapes and sets out the action that local planning authorities should take 'in all districts where there are outstanding areas or localities of scenic attraction which require special consideration under the Planning Acts'. At the time Circular 2/1962 was prepared, Scotland did not have any national landscape designations (though five National Park Direction Areas had been identified), nor was the planning system as sophisticated as it is today. Against this background, the Circular encouraged all local authorities to survey their areas to identify 'areas of great landscape value which can be described as vulnerable in the sense that there are or may be pressures for development that may affect them in one way or other'. The Circular suggests a common sense approach to this task: '...local planning authorities will be aware of areas of this kind in their district: indeed the obvious areas may be said to select themselves.... But the more specific they are the more useful will be such definition'. For each area identified, the Circular suggests that the local planning authorities should prepare a written statement containing a description of the general character and quality of the area or areas concerned; a definition of the boundaries and policy for control and phasing of development.

NPPG 14 Natural Heritage

Published in 1999, NPPG 14 indicates that planning authorities should avoid the unnecessary proliferation of local designations. Nevertheless it confirms the continuing relevance of AGLVs and other local landscape designations alongside new 'wider natural heritage' approaches to landscape encompassed in LCA methodologies. Echoing advice contained in Circular 2/1962, it suggests that the boundaries of sites should normally be clearly defined on development plan proposals and justification should be provided for their selection. While it notes that the level of protection afforded to AGLVs is a matter for each planning authority, it indicates that there should be a clear distinction between this level of protection and that for national designations. Where possible, it advises that local authorities should name such areas as AGLVs, though the use of the name Regional Scenic Areas was also accepted.

NPPG 18 Planning and the Historic Environment

Published in 1999, NPPG 18 defines the historic environment as comprising: 'the tangible built heritage – historic buildings and townscapes, parks and gardens, designed landscapes, ancient monuments, archaeological sites and landscapes. It also includes the wider setting of these features and areas as well as places important for their historic associations'. It recognises that 'the care of the cultural heritage is a fundamental element of environmental stewardship' (para 1) and suggests that "locally significant buildings, townscape, landscape and other areas beyond the confines of formally designated areas are also an important local resource and often merit protection on that basis. The relationship between historic buildings, cultural features and the natural environment can help give an area its particular identity and character. The spaces between buildings, the settings of historic buildings and areas, historic landscapes, urban parks, historic street patterns, historic battlefields and memorials are particularly significant in this respect." (para 6).

PAN 60 Planning for the Natural Heritage

Published in 2002, this PAN contains advice on local designations including AGLVs. It suggests that local designations are 'of most value where they form part of a wider landscape and habitat framework and contribute to the realisation of Natural Heritage Strategy, LBAP or Local Agenda 21 objectives .. to enhance the quality of urban living and help make an area more attractive as a location of economic activity'. They can also 'offer opportunities to develop partnership working between local authorities, landowners, voluntary conservation organisations and the local community' (para 39). More specifically on AGLV's, the PAN suggests that a single tier of sub-national designations should be sufficient for practical planning purposes, with areas selected because of their importance beyond their 'immediate locale'. It also recommends the preparation of specific development guidelines to safeguard their landscape character.

The Changing Context for Local Landscape Designations



Photo: L. Gill/SNH

2-1 The context for local landscape designations has changed significantly since guidance was first prepared by the Scottish Office in 1949. Most notable perhaps has been the increasing use and sophistication of policies for the natural heritage and the historic environment in development plans. A range of other designations which can contribute to landscape objectives have also been established. These changes, together with the development of landscape character and historic land-use assessment methodologies, have enabled a wider appreciation and more sophisticated approach to landscapes to be developed. Any review of local landscape

designations should therefore be seen as one element of wider action for landscape by local authorities. It should also seek to incorporate the broader approach to landscape protection, planning and management now enshrined within the European Landscape Convention.

Box 3: Key definitions used in the European Landscape Convention

"Landscape" means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

"Landscape protection" means actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity.

"Landscape management" means action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes.

"Landscape planning" means strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes.

Action for landscape by local authorities

2-2 Scotland's landscapes are a major asset, contributing to our national and regional identities, adding to the quality of many people's lives and providing attractive settings which help to promote social and economic development. At the national level, our coasts, mountains and moorlands are particularly renowned, but locally it is the distinct identity of our landscapes and the association between people and place which are of particular value.

2-3 Local authorities play a vital role in sustaining this diversity and these associations. They do this in a variety of ways, for example:

- in facilitating discussion of and building consensus locally on landscape objectives as part of the development plan and community planning process;
- in collecting information on and developing understanding of local landscapes, and making this material available to all through local record centres, libraries, schools and colleges;
- in providing opportunities for people to enjoy landscapes through the development of access opportunities and the provision of path networks and countryside recreational facilities such as picnic sites, local nature reserves, country and regional parks;
- by recognising the importance of high quality and attractive environments in the development of strategies for economic development, health and social inclusion and environmental justice; and
- by safeguarding and enhancing landscapes in the planning of new development through the town and country planning system.

2-4 Underpinning these efforts is the growing recognition of the wider connections between local landscapes and local authorities on-going work on sustainable development and community well-being. Landscape is not just another separate issue but one which is increasingly important in supporting other local authority objectives for health improvement and education, for urban regeneration and rural development, and for community planning and social inclusion. It also has important links to greenspace initiatives, for promoting recreation and responsible access, and for the conservation of biodiversity and the historic environment. Investing in Scotland's landscapes therefore has a number of wider benefits.

Box 4: Scotland's Landscapes - Working for Scotland.

Visiting Scotland Scottish tourism is vital to the Scottish economy, contributing around £4 billion and employing nearly 9% of the Scottish workforce (15% in the Highlands). Tourism attitude surveys have consistently confirmed that Scotland enjoys high international recognition as a country with attractive scenery, a distinctive history and culture and an outstanding natural environment. Scots agree too, with an estimated 53 million visits made each year by Scots to the outdoors, many contributing to the local economy of the places they visit.

Branding Scotland's products and places Many of Scotland's traditional products – such as the £2 billion whisky trade – use Scotland's landscapes as a critical part in their marketing, aiming to build or sustain a brand image linked to the traditions and romance of Scotland as a place. More generally, advertising is making increasing use of the unspoiled character of Scotland's landscape as a backdrop, while a growing number of feature and television films and programmes draw on it as both a setting and inspiration.

Supporting Scotland's economic competitiveness In the competitive global market for inward investment, many countries can

offer attractive environments, and although business decisions are primarily driven by economics, poor settings can be a disincentive. Quality of life for employees can be an influencing factor (the third most important according to a recent survey of CEOs), and attractive landscapes are part of the image used to sell Scotland as a desirable investment location abroad.

Improving Scotland's health Research suggests that people are more likely to continue to exercise in the outdoors than in gyms and leisure centres. At a time when there are growing concerns over health and the level of general fitness among the Scottish population, enjoying the outdoors has an important contribution to make. Attractive landscapes invite and encourage physical activity. While high quality greenspace near to where people live has the largest role here, attractive and accessible landscapes of our towns and countryside can also contribute to making Scotland healthier and fitter as a nation.

Developing an all-landscapes approach

2-5 In recent years, local authorities and others have begun to develop a broader approach to landscape planning and management within which to take forward these actions. The main focus of this work has been the national programme of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which SNH has undertaken in conjunction with Scotland's local authorities and others. This programme has enabled all of Scotland's landscapes to be surveyed and described in terms of their key characteristics. A programme of Historic Land-use Assessment (HLA) undertaken by Historic Scotland and RCAHMS provides more detailed information on the historic aspects of the landscape, though Scotland-wide coverage of this programme has still to be achieved. The development by Historic Scotland and RCAHMS of PASTMAP a new interactive web-site, now facilitates the search and collation of data on the built environment across Scotland (<http://www.PASTMAP.org.uk>).

Box 5 Landscape Character and Historic Land-use Assessment

Landscape assessment provides the starting point for local authorities to develop specific zonal policies for their care, enhancement and sustainable use of their landscapes. These spatial policies can be adapted for use in development plans, but also a range of other strategies, most notably forestry, agriculture and design. LCA has also been used as the starting point for more detailed assessment of the sensitivity of landscapes to specific types of development, and HLA can be used in a similar way. Further guidance on landscape character assessment more generally is provided in guidance prepared by SNH with the Countryside Agency in England (Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland, CA/SNH, 2002). Topic Paper 5 prepared to accompany this guidance provides specific advice on HLA and historic landscape character.

2-6 In practice, a number of principles now underpin this 'all landscapes' approach.

- **Both town and country** Landscapes do not stop at the edge of settlements, nor do they necessarily change at the boundary of local authority areas. Rather, it is the landscapes and townscapes of the whole of countryside, the coast and the settlements – be they scattered houses, small villages and townships or larger towns and cities - which should be the focus of effort.
- **Valuing landscapes** Views on what is important in a particular local landscape will vary and reflect personal responses as well as more objective assessments. Some landscapes are recognised to be of national importance but people will also value their local landscapes as the places where they live and work. All these views should be respected and should be used to inform the planning and management of local landscapes.
- **Guiding landscape change.** Landscapes are constantly changing and landscape planning and management at all levels should aim to facilitate positive change – be it the enhancement of existing qualities or the creation of new ones of equal or greater value. Higher standards in the planning and design of new development and management of land-use are essential components of such an approach.
- **A shared responsibility.** Responsibility for local landscapes does not rest with any one organisation or individual. Action for local landscapes should accordingly be broad-based, though local authorities have a particularly important role to play in developing consensus on the direction, nature and extent of landscape change and facilitating a more integrated and collective approach to their planning and management.

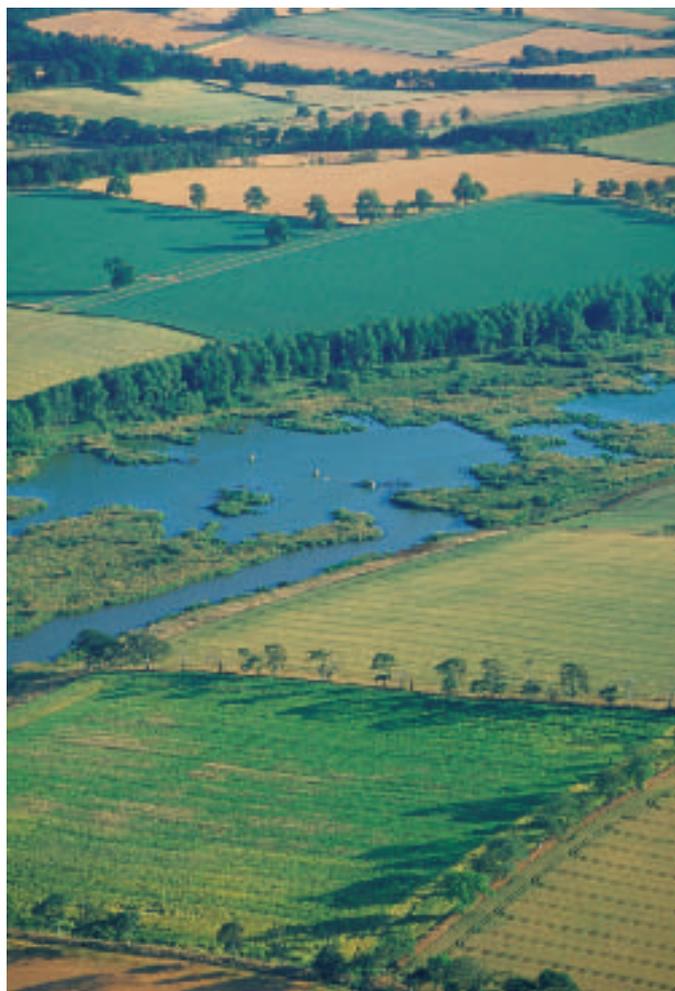


Photo: P. and A. Macdonald/SNH

The role of local landscape designations

2-7 An all-landscapes approach is not itself a substitute for identifying and taking action for landscapes which merit special attention, either because they are recognised as being of particular value and warrant safeguard or because they are degraded and require more active management or positive restoration. Within this all-landscapes approach, local landscape designations can continue to play an important role in protecting and enhancing those landscapes which are recognised as being of particular value and merit special attention. There are three main components to this role: designations as accolades; as a means to focus policies and objectives; and as a tool for management.

Box 6 The potential role of local landscape designations

As accolades

The decision to designate is in part recognition that a specific area has special importance and should be celebrated or promoted as such. While this accolade role has traditionally been important for national or international designations, it is just as applicable to local landscapes which are seen to be the most valued in a local authority area. While often complemented by other roles, the use of local designations in this way can make an important contribution to the image of the area, particular if the selection of areas for designation is focused on areas popular for countryside recreation or around particular settlements. Used in this way, such designations can have important benefits for tourism or for attracting new people and businesses to an area, particular in areas without any national landscape designations.

As a means to identify policy priorities and objectives

Landscapes are not static and continue to evolve. Decisions need to be made about the acceptability of change. Designations can serve an important role in flagging up to decision makers particular landscape values that should be safeguarded. They can also provide a useful focus for involving communities in policy-making. This role for local landscape designations has been most closely associated with the planning system and their protection from less sympathetic development. However, it is potentially equally important in other policy areas such as agriculture, forestry and tourism.

As a tool for management

The identification of specific geographic areas also provides a useful means to concentrate effort and resources for management. Traditionally, the association of local landscape designations with the town and country planning system has meant that opportunities for the positive management of the landscape of these areas has been focused on design issues or through seeking opportunities for enhancement through development. However, a range of countryside management measures, the development of core paths networks and the use of other designations such as regional and country parks, could be used to further the public enjoyment and understanding of such areas and their enhancement and sustainable use by land managers.

2-8 As a tool for local authorities, local landscape designations can be developed to serve one or more of these roles. However, experience suggests that they can be particularly useful in the following circumstances:

- to safeguard important landscapes and landscape features which are particularly valued and may have limited capacity for change;
- to promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character and special qualities of the landscapes of a local authority area;
- to promote some of the most important outdoor settings for recreation and tourism within a local authority area; and

- to contribute to wider policies for guiding urban expansion, by specifically identifying and safeguarding areas of landscape importance within or close to existing settlements.

2-9 Landscape designations are only one tool a local authority may deploy to take forward an ‘all landscapes’ approach. Nevertheless, they are particularly attractive because of the simplicity of the concept and the potential they have to act as a focus for the development of clear and practical planning and management measures. In the context of an all-landscape approach, their potential role as an accolade is also increasingly important, and serves to differentiate them from parallel action for degraded landscapes taken forward by local authorities.

Local landscape designations and landscape characterisation techniques

2-10 In landscape characterisation techniques such as LCA and HLA, local authorities now have an important starting point for the selection and management of local landscape designations. However, it is important that local authorities distinguish between these processes of characterisation (the identification, classification, mapping and description of areas of landscape character) and that of designation (the selection of areas of special landscape value through a process of review) in their landscape work.

Box 7: Landscape characterisation and landscape designation compared

	Characterisation	Designation
Purpose	Describes all landscape character types in the local authority area.	Identifies special landscapes in the local authority area.
Scope	Provides a basis for distinguishing different landscape character types and identifying landscape sensitivity.	Identifies more discrete areas of landscape considered to be of higher merit and which may comprise a combination of landscape character types.
Approach	Based on assessment of defined landscape features.	Based on an assessment of landscape importance.
Outcomes	Informs development of general landscape policies and guidelines for all landscape character types.	Informs development of specific planning policies geared towards enhanced protection and management of particular areas.
Treatment of boundaries	Boundaries are based on landscape character areas and are more transitional in nature.	More precisely drawn boundaries are defined by a range of criteria, including landscape character, visual envelopes and topographic features.

2-11 Landscape characterisation techniques can provide an analysis of the physical component of the landscapes of a local authority area by grouping these into a number of distinct landscape character types. Such



Photo: P. and A. Macdonald/SNH

an approach does not generally seek to assign value to any particular landscape character type but provides the basis for the more detailed policies to be developed for the area as a whole.

2-12 In contrast, the designation of landscapes has traditionally been based on an approach to identifying landscapes of particular merit or value. Typically, such judgements have been based on the qualities that landscape may have, notably in respect to scenery. As a consequence, the coverage of designated areas can often bear little direct resemblance to landscape character areas identified by landscape character assessment. Indeed, because of the importance of visual diversity and contrast as elements of scenic quality, many landscapes selected for designation are often in places where different landscape character types meet.

2-13 Despite these important differences, landscape characterisation should make a number of contributions to refreshing the approach to local landscape designations:

- it can provide a fuller understanding of the distribution and characteristics of local landscapes;
- it can be used as a basis to inform judgements on the particular merits of landscapes being considered for designation; and
- it can inform the development of planning and management guidelines required to guide future development and land-use change.

The first two of these roles are explored in the next section, while the third is given consideration in Section 5.

Refreshing the Approach to Local Landscape Designations

3-1 An essential element in refreshing the approach to local landscape designations is the adoption of a systematic and transparent process for selecting areas for designation. There are two important stages to this: describing local landscapes and selecting areas for designation.

Describing local landscapes to inform the selection of areas for designation

3-2 As part of the first phase in refreshing their approach to local landscape designations, local authorities will need to describe their landscapes and identify both the character and qualities of the landscape considered to be of particular value in the local context. This process of description should begin with the landscape character and historic land use reports prepared for each local authority area (see Box 5), but it also needs to go further in identifying the less tangible and more experiential qualities of landscape.

Landscape character

3-3 The character of the landscape is the product of the type, range and composition of its physical components. As a basis for informing the identification of valued landscapes for designation, it may be particularly important to describe the following aspects of landscape character.

Aspects of landscape character	Definition	Description
Typicality	Elements of landscape character which are particularly common within the assessment area as a whole.	Landscape features or combination of features that recur throughout the area.
Rarity or uniqueness	Particular aspects of landscape character which are rare or unique in the area.	Landscape features or combination of features which are rare or unique within the assessment area as a whole.
Condition or quality	The degree to which individual characteristics of landscape character are in a good state of repair or health.	Landscape features or combination of features which are in a good state of repair.

Judgements on these aspects of landscape character will normally be led by professional landscape architects, and based on the guidance produced by SNH, Countryside Agency, Historic Scotland and English Heritage on landscape character and historic land-use assessment. For the latter, the input of archaeological advisors is also recommended.

Landscape qualities

3-4 In addition to these aspects of landscape character, a number of landscape qualities are also likely to be particularly relevant to the identification of valued landscapes for designation. While linked to the

type, range and composition of the physical components of the landscape, these qualities are a function of our own personal response to landscape. Such qualities can be commonly recognised and valued, though they are influenced by a wider set of factors, including the prevailing social attitudes to landscapes.

Landscape Qualities	Definition	Description
Scenic	Aspects of the landscape and our reaction to it which contribute to its natural beauty and aesthetic appreciation.	Landscapes with strong visual, sensory and perceptual impacts and experiential appeal. May contain a pleasing combination of features, visual contrasts or dramatic elements.
Enjoyment	Aspects of the landscape and our reactions to it which contribute to its potential for recreation and amenity.	Landscapes of importance as local greenspace, as tranquil areas and/or for countryside recreation. May contain viewpoints and landmarks.
Cultural	Aspects of the landscape and our reactions to it which contribute to the understanding of its historic character and the wider cultural record.	Landscapes rich in archaeology, built heritage, literary, artistic and other cultural associations and local history. May include historic gardens and designed landscapes.
Naturalness	Aspects of the landscape and our reactions to it which contribute to its naturalness.	Landscapes with extensive semi-natural habitat, a lack of human presence and perceived qualities of wildness. May include areas of wild land.

3-5 Many of these qualities are interrelated. Thus, landscapes valued for recreation will often have strong scenic appeal. Similarly landscapes with natural or cultural qualities may also be perceived as being very scenic. Because of these relationships, a range of knowledge and experience from across the local authority is likely to be needed to build up a comprehensive picture of the landscape qualities of its area.

3-6 Unlike landscape character assessment, generally accepted methodologies have not been developed for describing these qualities. However, SNH and Highland Council have now completed an evaluation of the scenic qualities of the Wester Ross NSA, while a wider exercise has been undertaken during the preparation of pilot management strategies for NSAs in Dumfries and Galloway. Both these studies have taken different approaches to considering the scenic and other special qualities of landscapes which was appropriate to their particular needs.

3-7 While drawing on this work, local authorities are therefore encouraged to develop and be confident in their own approaches to identifying and describing these qualities. In doing so, they should build on the existing landscape character and historic land-use reports for their areas, other information which may be available on recreational use or aspects of the natural and cultural heritage, and also consultation with communities and other key stakeholders. They may also wish to undertake or commission new studies to inform the review process.

Selecting locally important landscapes for designation

3-8 Having described the character and qualities of the landscapes of the local authority area, the next step is to identify places which may merit designation. This in turn requires a separate series of judgements to be made concerning the particular value of these attributes. While this process should be structured and informed by professional advice, such judgements require wider public debate, both to inform decisions on the character and qualities of their landscapes which local people agree to be particularly important, and also to help identify the specific places which possess these attributes.

3-9 Criteria are an essential element of this process. These should be fit for purpose, developed by agreement with all interested stakeholders and consistently applied. While it is neither possible nor appropriate to develop a 'one size fits all' approach at the national level, the following criteria are likely to be relevant to the selection of areas for designation, though local authorities may adapt them or devise new ones to suit particular local circumstances. These criteria can be divided into two distinct categories, though it is important to recognise that it is the application of these criteria collectively which will allow the selection of specific areas for designation.

Landscape criteria

3-10 The first set of criteria are concerned with the value which might be attached to particular aspects of the character and qualities of particular landscapes. Local authorities can develop these criteria to meet their particular circumstances and to address the issues of specific concern to them. However, in the context of locally important landscapes, then the following criteria are proposed for selecting local landscape designations.

Criteria	Description
Significance	To what extent do the character and qualities of a particular landscape have special importance in the context of the local authority area?
Representiveness	To what extent do the character and qualities of a particular landscape contribute to the distinctive local or regional identity of the local authority area?
Relative Merit	To what extent do the character and qualities of a particular landscape merit designation compared to other parts of the local authority area?

3-11 There are a number of components to these judgements, not least because the landscapes can be valued for many reasons. Traditionally, the scenic qualities of landscapes have been particularly valued and at the national level such an approach continues to underpin the series of National Scenic Areas. At the same time, recognition of the value of other natural and cultural qualities of the landscape described above is increasing. In focusing on the locally important character and qualities of the landscape, local landscape designations are much more likely to address a wider range of values than purely scenic.



Photo: L. Gill/SNH



Photo: L. Campbell

3-12 At the local authority level, landscapes should also be valued because of the contribution they can make to sense of place and local identity. Such landscapes may typically provide the setting of key settlements, or are judged to be strongly representative of, and distinctive to, the area. In making judgements on these matters, particular issues can be raised for local authorities whose valued landscapes share the same character and qualities with those of neighbouring authorities, and therefore contribute to wider regional identity. Similarly, the valued landscapes of some of the larger local authorities may be extensive enough in themselves as to merit regional significance. For local authorities in this position, it will be particularly important, in the interests of consistency, to liaise with their neighbouring authorities on their approach to local landscape designation. They should also seek the views of SNH, Historic Scotland and other bodies with a national or regional perspective.

3-13 As noted earlier in paragraph 2-2, it is the distinct character of our landscapes and the associations between people and place which are often of particular value in the local context. What is considered to be of value may therefore vary between local authorities. By definition, the focus of local landscape designations should be on locally important landscape character and qualities (i.e. the aspects of character and qualities which are considered to be of particular value in the local authority area).

Practical criteria

3-14 In addition to these landscape criteria, there are also a number of practical considerations in the selection of areas for designation.

Criteria	Description
Need	To what extent will designation provide for more effective safeguard, management or promotion of the special attributes of the area being considered for designation?
Integrity	Is the area to be designated both coherent enough and of sufficient size to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, management and promotion?
Support	Is there sufficient support for the area to be designated, among both communities and other stakeholders within the proposed area?

3-15 The potential of an area for designation should be tested against the purposes of the proposed designation itself. For example, if the purpose of the designation is primarily protective, areas with intense development pressure may be more in need of designation than others of similar merit. If, however, the purposes of designation relate to positive management, then very different priorities may emerge. Another important factor to consider is the range and extent of other designations and approaches which may be equally or more effective than designation in delivering the desired objectives. The issues raised by these relationships are discussed further in Section 6.

3-16 Given the great variety of landscapes across Scotland and the range of roles that could be developed for the designation, it is not appropriate for guidance to set upper and lower thresholds for the individual size of local landscape designations in any local authority area. Instead, local authorities are encouraged to develop an approach which suits their particular circumstances – be it the designation of small beauty spots or isolated landscape features or more extensive landscapes associated with coastlines, river systems or upland areas. Nevertheless, when considering smaller areas, local authorities should be guided by the need to be able to identify the boundary of the designated area in the development plan. In considering an upper geographic limit for the extent of any one designation, local authorities should take care as far as practical to include only areas of the highest merit. Specific boundary considerations are discussed further in Section 6 of the guidance.

3-17 Public support for designation is clearly important but is hard to measure. Ultimately it will be tested through consultation on the development plan, or other relevant plans and strategies. As indicated above, a review of local landscape designations should provide opportunities for communities and other key stakeholders across the local authority area to input effectively throughout the process. Further advice on the overall process and techniques for stakeholder consultation is provided in the next section.

The Process of Reviewing Local Landscape Designations

4-1 There are a number of phases to the process of selecting local landscapes for designation, including:

- describing the character and special qualities of the local landscape to inform the designation process;
- deciding on the role of, and need for, the designation;
- developing designation criteria;
- identifying and agreeing areas of search; and
- drawing up and agreeing boundaries for the areas selected and formally designating them.

To illustrate this process and to indicate how the guidance contained in this document can inform it, the table below breaks these phases into a number of discrete steps. In taking forward this process, local authorities are not expected to follow these steps slavishly, but rather to tailor them to other processes they are committed to and also to the resources they have available.

Box 8: Key Steps in reviewing local landscape designations

Strongest links to	Key Steps	Relevant parts of this guidance
Community plan process and consultation	1. Describe the key characteristics and qualities of the landscapes of the local authority area	Section 3
	2. Develop objectives to underpin all-landscape approach	Section 2
	3. Review role of, and need for, local landscape designation	Section 2
Development plan process and consultation	4. Develop criteria to select areas of search for designation	Section 3
	5. Identify and agree areas of search	Section 3
	6. Identify and agree specific areas for designation	Section 3
	7. Identify and agree boundaries for each area to be designated	Section 6
	8. Develop planning and other policies for each designated area	Section 5

4-2 Local authority staff with relevant professional expertise in landscape and planning will be required to service this process, but specialist ecological and archaeological advice will also typically be needed. Early input from GIS specialists may be also useful in building up a picture of the character and qualities of the local landscape and in incorporating the boundaries of the designated areas into development plans and other documents.

4-3 To allow for effective consultation such a review may need to take place over a period of 6 to 12 months, though the precise time commitments during this period will vary. Ideally, the first part of this review process (steps 1-3) should take place as part of a wider debate on landscape and other heritage issues informing the wider Community Planning process. Elements of the second part of the process (steps 4-8) can be taken forward as a separate exercise, though there are clear benefits to pursuing them as part of the development plan process. Links should also be made to other local authority work including the preparation of NSA management strategies, IFS and fish-farm framework plans and also wider social and economic strategies.

Involving stakeholders

4-4 The involvement of stakeholders in each phase of the designation process is critical to its success. A number of techniques are available for achieving this and these should be developed to suit local circumstances and available resources. Particular care should be taken to identify the key stakeholders, including both local communities and the wider public. It may also be necessary to devise strategies which allow for each of the stakeholders to be meaningfully involved without jeopardising the rigour of the selection process to be maintained. Some possible approaches to this are suggested in Box 9.

4-5 Where practical, such approaches should be designed to be part of, rather than separate from, other consultative processes developed for community planning and development plan exercises. Consultation on local landscape designations should also be set within a wider debate on each local authority's approach to landscape, the natural heritage and the historic environment more generally.

Box 9 Some suggested approaches and techniques for involving stakeholders

Designation Phase	Key Stakeholders	Suggested approaches and techniques
Describing the character and qualities of the local landscape	voluntary and professional bodies; community organisations	Review and/or update existing LCA/HIA, and use other sources of in-house information to inform description of landscape character and qualities. Commissioning of special surveys where necessary. Seek wider public views through meetings, surveys and other contacts etc.
Deciding on the role of, and need for the designation	voluntary and professional bodies; community organisations; wider public	Integrate consultation with wider community planning process and internal discussion across local authority on its approach to landscape
Developing designation criteria	voluntary and professional bodies; community organisations; wider public	Consultation paper, together with public meetings and surgeries where appropriate
Identifying and agreeing areas of search	voluntary and professional bodies, land managers and local communities; wider public	
Drawing up and agreeing boundaries	land managers and local communities	Link to final stages of development plan process. Could also include the preparation of notification letters to, and meetings, with landowners.

The Role of SNH, Historic Scotland and others

4-6 Given its expertise and experience, SNH can contribute to the process of reviewing local landscape designations in a number of ways, including:

- inputting to the development of an allLandscapes approach by the local authority;
- undertaking capacity building with local authorities on landscape issues through training and sharing best practice;
- research and technical support for undertaking more detailed landscape work, for further studies on landscape qualities, and also on the process of reviewing local landscape designations; and
- promoting this guidance and monitoring of its effectiveness (including monitoring the changing coverage of local landscape designations in development plans and their relationship with NSAs and other designations).

SNH will look to undertake each of these roles, but the extent to which we get involved in practice at the area level will differ from local authority to local authority, depending on the natural heritage priorities that SNH has set locally. In general, SNH would expect to play a lesser role in relation to single authority local landscape designations, but a more significant one for landscape designations which cross local authority boundaries, or which are suggested for city regions and the larger rural authorities.

4-7 Historic Scotland and other public bodies with relevant expertise may also undertake some of these roles, or provide other assistance to local authorities. For example, Historic Scotland can offer advice on the assessment of the historic environment as part of the review process, while RCAHMS can provide detailed information about aspects of the historic environment. Equally, land-owning bodies such as Forest Enterprise, Scottish Water and the Central Scotland Forest Trust may have a valuable role to play when a local landscape designation is proposed for areas they manage. A number of NGOs and community organisations may also have a contribution to make in terms of their particular experience or landscape expertise.

Revisiting local landscape designations

4-8 Neither the judgements made on the character and qualities of local landscapes nor the selection of specific areas for selection as local landscape designations are necessarily permanent, and both may need to be reviewed during subsequent community and development planning cycles. In particular, the effectiveness of the local landscape designation in landscape protection and the management of the area, and any role it may have in promoting wider social and economic objectives of the local authority, should be carefully examined.

Approaches to Policy and Management

5-1 The current policy framework for local landscape designations is contained in NPPG14 *Natural Heritage*. This indicates that the boundaries of areas so designated should be identified in the development plan, with justification provided for their selection. It also requires planning authorities to distinguish between the level of protection accorded to National Scenic Areas and other national designations and that given to local landscape designations. This section of the guidance develops these policy themes. It also includes consideration of how best to achieve more positive management of locally designated landscapes.

Preparing a statement of importance

5-2 NPPG 14 *Natural Heritage* (para 62) suggests that a brief description of the approach to selecting local landscape designations should be included in development plans or their supporting documents. To secure better understanding and support for local landscape designations, it is also good practice to prepare a *statement of importance* for each designated area which provides the following information.

Name and location	A locally recognised name should be chosen.
Overview	A short paragraph containing a clear, succinct and celebratory description of the landscape of the area and why it has been selected for designation.
Landscape Description	A description of the landscape and historic land-use character and qualities of the selected area, with commentary where appropriate on existing developments, settlements and economic activity, and also any known features of natural or cultural heritage interest.
Choice of Boundary	A short description and justification for the choice of the boundary selected.
Opportunities for Change	The identification of any significant opportunities for social and economic development and the scope for landscape enhancement through planning gain or support for agriculture or forestry.

Such a statement should be short, and normally no more than two sides of A4. It should be accompanied by a map of the area selected for designation at scale which allows for its overall location and boundaries to be clearly identified.

Developing planning policies

5-3 In addition to describing and identifying these areas, the development plan will need to set down planning policies for them. In most cases, a single policy for all the areas so designated should be sufficient. More than one policy may be required for areas when the areas concerned differ significantly in their geographic extent, or when one or more of the designated areas has a particular character or quality requiring the application of more specific planning policies.

5-4 NPPG 14 *Natural Heritage* (para 62) indicates that such policies should be distinct from equivalent policies for national designations, though the level of protection accorded to local landscape designations should be a matter for each authority.

5-5 In terms of best practice, development plan policies should recognise the positive contribution that appropriate development and other land use change can often make to the landscape character and qualities of the designated area. Nevertheless, some development and land use change will be inappropriate for such areas. Development should therefore generally only be permitted within a local landscape designation when:

- i) it will not have significant adverse impacts on the special character or qualities of the landscape of the area;
- ii) the social and economic benefits of the development are considered to be more than of just local significance in the context of the local authority area.

For development that meets these tests, the location, scale, design, materials, and landscaping should be of a high standard and, where appropriate, should seek to enhance the special qualities and character of the landscape. Some examples of development plan policies from both structure and local plans which illustrate aspects of this good practice are shown in Box 10.

Photo: P. and A. Macdonald/SNH



Box 10: Examples of Development Plan policies

Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan	In the Sensitive Landscape Character Areas defined on the key diagram, the protection and enhancement of the landscape shall be given prime consideration in the determination of development proposals. Local plans shall identify boundaries where appropriate and specific policies for their protection and enhancement
Dumfries and Galloway Structure Plan	The siting and design of development should respect the special nature of Regional Scenic Areas. Development within, or which would have a significant impact on the Regional Scenic Areas may be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● The landscape character and scenic interest for which the area has been designated would not be adversely affected; or● There is a specific need for the development at the location which could not be located in a less sensitive area.
Moray Local Plan	Development proposals within Areas of Great Landscape Value (AsGLV) will only be permitted where they incorporate high standards of siting and design for rural areas and where they will not have a significant adverse effect on the landscape character of the area. The Council will require detailed proposals covering the site layout, landscaping, boundary treatment, building design and material finishes to be supplied with planning applications. The Council will seek a Direction from Scottish Ministers to restrict the formation of vehicle tracks above the 150m level within AsGLVs.
Clackmannanshire Local Plan 2002	In Areas of Great landscape Value, development will only be permitted: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Where it is an essential requirement of farming, renewable energy initiatives, appropriate recreational and tourism activities, or forestry which conforms with the Indicative Forestry Strategy;(ii) Where there is a specific need for the development which could not be met in a less sensitive location;(iii) Where the landscape character and scenic interest would not be adversely affect.
Glasgow City Local Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. There will be a presumption against development likely to have a significant adverse effect on the integrity or character of a Site of Special Landscape Importance (SSLI)2. Notwithstanding the above, where proposals come forward within any SSLI, they will only be considered favourably provided they meet all the following criteria:<ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) development proposals should be consistent with the Plan's other development policies and environment policy designations;(ii) development proposals must be of a high quality design and include associated landscape works appropriate to the character of the surrounding area and in scale with the development;(iii) proposals must include details of the methods to be adopted, including legal agreements etc., to guarantee future maintenance arrangements;(iv) proposals must be shown in the context of the SSLI and demonstrate that they enhance established landscape character and visual amenity.
Finalised West Lothian Council Local Plan	The status of the six designated Area of Great Landscape Value (AsGLV) is confirmed. There is a strong presumption against development, which adversely affects the landscape character, scenic interest and integrity of AsGLV. In all cases the highest design quality will required and must conform to Env21-24.

5-6 Local authorities should also consider how other policies in the development plan can be used to support the protection and enhancement of the character and qualities of the locally designated landscapes. Of particular importance will be any general development plan policies which seek high standards of design of built and other development, in keeping with the identified priorities for the conservation, enhancement or restoration of the landscape character of the local authority area, including both its natural and historic aspects. The preparation of design guidance for the local authority area should also pay special regard to design considerations within the designated areas.

Developing a more active approach to management

5-7 Landscapes are constantly changing in response to a combination of natural processes and the impacts of human development. One consequence of this is the need within some locally designated landscapes to develop a more active approach to management of their special landscape qualities. There are a number of possible approaches to doing this, including:

- using other designations covering all or part of the locally designated landscapes to provide for more active countryside management, such as Regional and Country Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes, local nature reserves and green belts;
- seeking to integrate better the objectives of local landscape designations within wider policy and funding frameworks for agriculture, forestry, biodiversity, historic environment, recreation and tourism, both locally and nationally; and
- the development of management statements for specific locally designated landscapes to guide the actions of land-owners.

5-8 The last of these approaches will rarely be necessary. If funding is available such an approach could, however, be considered when the area covered by the designation is extensive and has a complexity of management issues which cannot be properly addressed through the planning system. Examples of such areas could include the coast, land close to larger settlements or within formally designated green belts, and areas identified for their wild land importance.

5-9 The preparation of management statements can be divided into two main stages. The first stage is essentially descriptive and should be common to all locally designated landscapes. The key components of this stage are identified in paragraph 5-2 above, though a more detailed landscape character and historic land-use assessment may need to be carried out together with specific landscape capacity studies. The second phase is the development of management prescriptions to protect and enhance the character and landscape qualities of the area. The process for developing these management prescriptions should be a participative one involving land managers, communities and other key stakeholders. It may need to be informed by a more detailed process of landscape character assessment, together with a clearer understanding of the social, economic and environmental forces which are influencing change in this landscape. To aid implementation, it is important that these statements and the actions they contain are as clear and simple as possible.

Practical Designation Issues

6-1 This final section of the guidance addresses a number of more practical designation issues including: the coverage of local landscape designations; relationship with other designations, boundary definition and name.

Coverage of local landscape designations

6-2 In terms of the coverage of local landscape designations, a number of factors are likely to be important, including:

- the context for designation provided by the 'all-landscapes' approach developed by the local authority;
- the degree of overlap between the local landscape designation and other regional and local designations (e.g. Regional Parks, Country Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes, local nature reserves and green belts etc); and
- the extent of National Parks and National Scenic Areas within the local authority area.

6-3 How much of its area should be designated is a matter for the local authority, although NPPG 14 recommends that authorities should avoid the '*unnecessarily proliferation of designations*' (para 61). Thus, local authorities with a high proportion of their area designated as National Park or National Scenic Area should consider carefully the purpose and extent of their local landscape designations. Equally, all local authorities should explore the relationship between local landscape designations and other national and local designations. The fit with local authority-wide landscape policies may also be important in determining coverage of local landscape designations, particularly if a significant number of these policies are essentially protective in nature.

Relationship with other designations

6-4 Local landscape designations may coincide with a number of other international, national and local designations. Most of these designations perform different functions to those envisaged for landscape designations and do not replace the need for them. In setting priorities for planning and management, international and national designations for the natural and cultural heritage will continue to take precedence over local landscape designations.

6-5 Nevertheless, the relationship with other designations that have a strong landscape dimension can be more sophisticated. Local landscape designation, for example, can play a role in protecting the setting of National Parks, National Scenic Areas, National Nature Reserves, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. In the case of a World Heritage Site, Regional Park, Green Belt and sites



Photo: P. and A. Macdonald/SNH

on the national inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes prepared by SNH and Historic Scotland, local designations can also be used to protect and manage parts of these areas, and their settings.

6-6 At the same time, the use of local landscape designations would normally not be considered to be appropriate for areas already designated as a National Scenic Area or a National Park because of the measures already in place within these areas to protect and manage their landscapes. Local authorities, in close consultation with the Park Authority and SNH may, however, wish to designate areas adjacent to a National Park or a National Scenic Area boundary where these are deemed to merit local designation or which could help manage future development of the area to ensure that it contributes to the landscape aims and objectives of the national designation.

Selecting boundaries

6-7 While the identification of the area for designation should be informed by the criteria proposed in Section 3, the choice of boundary will need to be informed by a more pragmatic set of judgements – what clear and permanent feature which best encompass the proposed area can be tangibly identified on the ground? Equally, how important are views from and into the selected areas? In most circumstances, both desk-based studies and field survey will be required to determine the best boundary features for any particular area. For smaller landscape designations focussing on beauty spots, consideration needs to be given to the extent to which ‘viewsheds’ are included within the designation.

6-8 The precise choice of boundary feature will be determined by the options available and the best fit these have with the reasons for which the area is being designated. While it is not therefore possible to be prescriptive, features which may make effective boundaries include topography, watersheds and rivers. Other physical features such as field boundaries and roads could also be considered. In coastal areas, boundaries may need to extend into the marine environment, though the extent of this will need careful assessment based on:

- the nature of the relationship between the land and water which determines the seascape of the coastal area; and
- the form and significance of any threats to the integrity of the local landscape designation from near-shore uses in the marine environment, such as aquaculture and renewable energy structures.

6-9 Where local authority boundaries are used, close discussion with the neighbouring authority or authorities will be necessary to align planning and other policy measures between them. Alternatively, local authorities may agree to jointly designate an area of shared local or regional landscape importance which crosses the administrative boundary between

them. Discussion with local land managers may also be helpful in informing boundary selection. In some areas, it may also be necessary to avoid difficulties arising from the splitting of land management units.

6-10 Particular challenges also arise in selecting boundaries close to, or within the envelope of, settlements and larger urban areas. In these circumstances, small areas of lower merit may need to be included within the local landscape designation where this allows for a better physical boundary to be used, or to provide for more effective protection and management of the landscape in the longer term. Equally, in establishing boundaries consideration should also be given to the prospect of future growth of settlements close to or within locally designated landscapes. As noted in para 6-5 above, in and around the larger settlements and urban areas, local landscapes designations may also overlap with or lie within designated green belt. In considering the boundary of these local landscape designations, care should be taken to differentiate clearly between the separate functions of these two designations.

Naming local landscape designations

6-11 The naming of specific local landscape designation is a matter for each local authority. Nevertheless as NPPG 14 suggests a more consistent approach across Scotland would greatly aid understanding of these designations and would generally help to make the development plan system more comprehensible to all users. The following approach to the naming of local landscape designations is therefore strongly encouraged.

[Name of place] Special Landscape Area (SLA)

A common approach to the naming of local landscape designations can also assist where local authorities agree to jointly designate an area which crosses the administrative boundary between them. This may be of particular importance for local landscapes identified in city region plans, in joint structure plans and in other development plans outwith the city regions.

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Note

It is the intention that this guidance will be revised in the light of practical experience of using it to review local landscape designations. Enquiries and comments about both the content and use of this guidance should be addressed to:

Pete Rawcliffe, SNH National Strategy, Battleby, Redgorton, Perthshire, PH1 3EW peter.rawcliffe@snh.gov.uk; 01738 45 8660

Lesley MacInnes, Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic Scotland, Longmore House, Edinburgh EH9 1SH, 0131 668 8653, lesley.macinnes@scotland.gov.gsi.uk

Please note that the images used in this publication are purely illustrative of a range of Scotland's local landscapes. Many of these landscapes are not designated, and their use in this publication in no way implies that either the local authority, SNH or Historic Scotland necessarily consider that they should be.

Glossary

	<i>Definition</i>
Historic land-use assessment	The process of mapping the extent of past and present land use areas, categorised according to their form, function and period of origin.
Landscape character	The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape.
Landscape character assessment	The process of systematic description, classification and analysis of landscape, in order to identify, describe and understand its character.
Landscape evaluation	The process of attaching value to a landscape, through the application of a consistent methodology and agreed criteria.
Landscape sensitivity	The degree to which the character and qualities of the landscape are affected by specific types of development and land-use change.
Landscape qualities	Less tangible and experiential aspects of a landscape, such as the appreciation of its beauty or history, its sense of wildness or its challenge for recreation. While these qualities are dependent on individual perception, they are commonly recognised and valued by people.
Natural beauty and amenity	A composite term which refers to those qualities of the landscape which appeal to all our senses, but particularly the visual and experiential.

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