

# PART I CONSERVATION OF THE SCENIC AREAS

## INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The countryside is one of Scotland's basic assets and has to serve a wide variety of purposes. First and foremost, the land may be seen as the fundamental resource of the farming and forestry industries and it is subject to change on account of the development of new techniques in these industries and on account of changing land-use between one and the other. The countryside also has to accommodate demands for land for new housing and manufacturing industry around towns and cities and for major road improvements. In recent times quite major developments have taken place or have been proposed in areas discrete from established settlements, some of these areas being fairly remote from the main concentrations of population and previously thought of as being comparatively secure from major changes in land use. In some parts of the countryside the scenery is significantly influenced by management for sporting purposes, particularly for deer and grouse. The scenic attractiveness of the countryside is also important to the tourist industry, which has become increasingly significant in terms of balance of payments and as a provider of employment in Scotland. Even more importantly, however, the countryside should also be seen as a place of great beauty and attractiveness in its own right to be enjoyed by the people who live and work in Scotland.
  
- 1.2 It is the nation's responsibility to watch over and cherish this asset and to pass it on to future generations in a way which will show that proper care and concern have been taken to accommodate necessary new developments and to retain the natural attractiveness and amenity which the community has inherited from its predecessors. Outline proposals about how this might be achieved were set out in the Commission's report *A Park System for Scotland* which was submitted to the Secretary of State in 1974 and published in January 1975. These outline proposals were generally accepted by government in March 1976 after wide consultation with local authorities and other interests.
  
- 1.3 In the report *A Park System for Scotland* and the Commission considered carefully the question of developing national parks in Scotland on the lines adopted in many other countries throughout the world and concluded that, for a variety of reasons relating to the form of central and local government organisation and of land-ownership and management, national parks would require a radical new approach to

conservation in Scotland. We concluded that the same objectives of improving opportunities for the enjoyment of the countryside, whilst conserving its recreational and scenic attributes, could be achieved in other ways. The Commission's proposals were then divided into two broad parts. The first relates to the making of recreational provisions where these are required and the second to the development of policies and procedures for the conservation of those areas of countryside of unsurpassed attractiveness which are part of the national heritage, but which for the most part do not need significant recreational provisions to be made in them. The present report takes up the question of conservation of areas of outstanding scenic interest and sets out the results of a major review which the Commission has carried out to identify those parts of Scotland which require this particular care and attention.

- 1.4 We have not found or been able to develop any completely objective system capable of satisfactorily comprehending the selection of scenery in a way which would satisfy the essentially aesthetic aspects of the appreciation of natural beauty and amenity. The review has therefore been carried out on a systematic but subjective basis. In the next and succeeding sections of this report we describe how we have gone about the selection of areas which we consider to be of national significance and then we list the areas which we have so identified. We believe that this identification of outstanding scenic areas is a realistic and informed assessment which provides a useful basis for a review of existing landscape policies. This will enable the development of a new framework for landscape conservation, as forecast in the *National Planning Guidelines for Large Industrial Sites and Rural Conservation*, issued by the Scottish Development Department in May 1977.
- 1.5 In the meantime, the Commission has decided to publish the results of its work as the basis for further discussion of this important subject. In particular the Commission looks forward to discussions with planning authorities throughout Scotland in whom is vested prime responsibility for the development of planning strategies and development control policies for the countryside.

#### **EXISTING DESIGNATIONS AND THE METHOD OF ASSESSMENT**

- 2.1 The existing arrangements under the Planning Acts to secure the conservation of scenic interest fall into two categories. First, there is provision for national

oversight in five areas which were identified in directions issued by the Secretary of State in 1948. These areas were those suggested for designation as national parks in Scotland in reports submitted by the Scottish National Parks Survey Committee (Cmnd 6631, HMSO 1945) and the Scottish National Parks Committee (Cmnd 7235, HMSO 1947). These directions were issued to secure a measure of added planning control in the context of a decision not to apply to Scotland the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949 other than those sections dealing with nature conservation. To safeguard the situation in what were felt then to be the most important scenic areas, the directions required the relevant local planning authorities to submit for scrutiny by the Secretary of State all applications for developments under the Planning Acts within the specified areas, and gave the Secretary of State an ability to call in for determination any which he considered warranted such action. The areas affected by these directions were:—

	<i>Square miles</i>
Loch Lomond/Trossachs	320
Glen Affric/Glen Cannich/Strathfarrar	260
Ben Nevis/Glen Coe/Blackmount	610
The Cairngorms	180
Loch Torridon/Loch Maree/Little Loch Broom	500

The second category of special planning provisions was the designation by planning authorities in their development plans of Areas of Great Landscape Value where the authorities themselves chose to operate special development control policies intended to conserve the particular scenic or landscape interest of the areas so designated.

- 2.2 In addition to the five National Park Direction Areas the Scottish National Park Survey Committee identified three reserve areas which were:—

	<i>Square miles</i>
Moidart/Morar/Knoydart	410
Glen Lyon/Ben Lawers/Schiehallion	140
St. Mary's Loch	180

As part of our background survey work for the preparation of the report *A Park System for Scotland* we prepared a series of descriptive essays on the five National Park Direction Areas, together with the Outer Hebrides, Knoydart, the Inner Isles and Galloway. It seemed to us sensible to begin our examination of the scenic resources of Scotland with these areas which had commended themselves to earlier workers in this field and then to go on to examine other areas which either suggested themselves to us in the course of the

survey or were already covered by other conservation designations signifying a possible scenic interest.

- 2.3 In 1971, in an attempt to further the developments of an objective system of scenic assessment, the Commission published the study *A. Planning Classification of Scottish Landscape Resources* (CCS Occasional Paper No. 1), prepared for us by Land Use Consultants. In an annex to that paper the consultants describe a method for landscape assessment. We tested this method and came to the conclusion that, although containing a good analytical approach to landscape, it attempts to combine objective analysis and subjective judgement in a way which does not produce satisfactory results nor leads, as intended, to evaluative comparisons of different landscape types. We have looked carefully at the work done by the late Professor Linton in relation to landscape assessment in Scotland and at other similar techniques that have been attempted in Europe and North America, but have found none that we have felt able to adopt for this review. Accordingly, as already indicated, we have adopted an approach to the identification of scenic resources which is based on the subjective judgement of assessors.
- 2.4 In summary, we have sought to identify scenery which best combines those features which are most frequently regarded as beautiful. On the whole this means that richly diverse landscapes which combine prominent landforms, coastline, sea and freshwater lochs, rivers, woodlands and moorlands with some admixture of cultivated land are generally the most prized. Not all of these features occur, however, in all the areas we have identified. Diversity of ground cover may be absent in some, but compensated for by especially spectacular landform or seascape. In Scotland, outstanding examples of such scenery are most frequently found north of or on the Highland Boundary Fault. We have recognised that many of the more managed landscapes to the south and east, in areas of intensive agricultural activity, are very beautiful but we have found it difficult to recognise many of these as being outstanding in a national or international sense. We have examined the Southern Uplands of Scotland most carefully, aware that the subtler landforms and more managed landscapes found there make comparison with Highland scenery difficult. We are aware that this is a kind of scenery not replicated elsewhere and one which is very pleasing to the eye attuned to it. We have therefore sought to identify those parts of it which, while not exhibiting the same diversity of form as Highland Scotland,

nevertheless combine pleasing physiography with varied land-use to provide scenery of great charm and soft beauty.

- 2.5 In many of the areas we have identified, the pattern of settlement is a contributing feature. These areas do not include large towns, but crofting townships, ancient ecclesiastical settlements and the planned villages of the nineteenth century improvers often add to the scene. There are exceptions, usually small industrial towns or villages dependent upon a major industry, but where these occur, they have been set in the midst of such fine scenery that we have felt no useful purpose could be served by contriving to exclude the settlements from the identified areas. We consider that this approach, carried out with care and consistency, is a reasonable course to follow in a subject which we have not found amenable to measurement in scientific terms.
- 2.6 The method which we have adopted for carrying out the survey is as follows. First, desk appraisals of maps of the Scottish countryside at 1750,000 scale were carried out to determine the likely extent and character of fine scenery. This work commenced with the five National Park Direction Areas then moved on to the other areas already referred to in paragraph 2.2 and subsequently to others which have commended themselves in the course of this survey, or which in the opinion of our surveyors from their extensive knowledge of the Scottish countryside were worthy of study. Although the method suggested by Land Use Consultants was not applied in full, its approach to the analysis of map information was used as the basis for examining topographical maps. Literary sources (see bibliography) were examined for opinions that had been expressed by others about the character of areas being considered. Planning documents produced by local authorities and by national agencies, such as the Nature Conservancy Council and the Forestry Commission, and by private bodies, such as the National Trust for Scotland, were also scrutinised for information on other designations such as Areas of Great Landscape Value, National Nature Reserves, Forest Parks and certain National Trust properties. With this basic appraisal of the likely extent of areas of fine scenery, the surveyors then made field inspections to form opinions as to the extent of landscape tracts which, for reasons of diversity of landform, vegetation and/or ground cover, or other outstanding visual characteristics, appeared to merit recognition as national assets.
- 2.7 We consider it to be an important aspect of this work that we have been able to use the same surveyors

throughout, thus providing consistency of view to the whole exercise. Not only has the same team carried out all the field survey work, with never less than two officers undertaking field examination of any particular area, but they have reported their findings to a senior staff steering group which has remained unchanged throughout the exercise. The proposals produced in this way have, in turn, been subjected to scrutiny by the Commission which includes members with acknowledged expertise in the fields of assessment of scenic quality and rural land use.

2.8 We have deliberately not analysed scenery in terms of its geology, geomorphology, pedology, climate, natural history or cultural history. This is not because we think these things are unimportant in their influence on the scene, but because we believe that enjoyment of fine scenery is based on a perception of the whole which does not depend on more formal kinds of analysis. In particular, a conscious effort has been made not to let individual specialisations influence choice: nor has an attempt been made to select scenery on a representative basis of all the different types of landscape which occur in Scotland. We hope that it will be recognised that many attractive areas have had to be omitted in the process of identifying and selecting only that which we consider to be the very best.

## NATIONAL SCENIC AREAS

3.1 Using the procedure and methods just described, we have identified 40 areas which we consider to be of national scenic significance and which, in the terms used in Chapter 6 of our report A Park System for Scotland, we consider to be of unsurpassed attractiveness which must be conserved as part of our national heritage. Certain of these areas are already under significant recreational pressure and will be proposed as Special Parks when the necessary legislation has been enacted. The bulk, however, are areas which, for the most part, are not under severe recreational or other specific pressures at present. In total, these amount to 12.7% or approximately one-eighth, of the land and inland water surface of Scotland. In our view this is not an unreasonably large proportion for a country so renowned for its scenic beauty.

3.2 The distribution of the 40 areas which have been identified is shown on the end papers and they are listed over. Descriptions and more detailed maps for each area are given later in this report.

## REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

**Region and Area** **Hectares**  
Areas marked thus \* lie in more than one Region.

### **Shetland Islands**

Shetland	Total	11,600
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### **Orkney Islands**

Hoy and West Mainland	Total	14,800
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### **Highland Region**

Kyle of Tongue	18,500
North-west Sutherland	20,500
Assynt-Coigach	90,200
Wester Ross	145,300
Trotternish	5,000
The Cuillin Hills	21,900
The Small Isles	15,500
Morar, Moidart and Ardnamurchan	13,500
LochShiel	13,400
Knoydart	39,500
Kintail	15,500
GlenAffric	19,300
Glen Strathfarrar	3,800
Dornoch Firth	7,500
Ben Nevis and Glen Coe*	79,600
The Cairngorm Mountains*	37,400
Total	546,400

### **Western Isles**

South Lewis, Harris and North Uist	109,600
St. Kilda	900
South Uist Machair	6,100
Total	116,600

### **Grampian Region**

The Cairngorm Mountains*	29,800
Deeside and Lochnagar*	32,200
Total	62,000

### **Tayside Region**

Ben Nevis and Glen Coe*	4,500
Deeside and Lochnagar*	7,800
LochTummel	9,200
Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon*	47,100
River Tay(Dunkeld)	5,600
River Earn (Comrie to St. Fillans)	3,000
Total	77,200

<b>Strathclyde Region</b>		
Ben Nevis and Glen Coe*		17,500
Loch na Keal, Isle of Mull		12,700
Lynn of Lorn		4,800
Scarba, Lunga and the Garvellachs		1,900
Jura		21,800
Knapdale		19,800
Kyles of Bute		4,400
North Arran		23,800
Loch Lomond*		16,200
	Total	122,900

<b>Central Region</b>		
Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon*		1,300
Loch Lomond* The Trossachs		11,200
		4,600
	Total	17,100

<b>Fife Region</b>		
		Nil

<b>Lothian Region</b>		
		Nil

<b>Borders Region</b>		
Upper Tweeddale Eildon and Leaderfoot		10,500
		3,600
	Total	14,100

<b>Dumfries and Galloway Region</b>		
Nith Estuary		
East Stewartry Coast		9,300
Fleet Valley		4,500
		5,300
	Total	19,100

Region or Islands Area	Scenic Areas (Hectares approx)	% Scottish Land Surface (approx)
Shetland	11,600	0.15
Orkney	14,800	0.19
Highland	546,400	6.93
Western Isles	116,600	1.48
Grampian	62,000	0.79
Tayside	77,200	0.98
Strathclyde	122,900	1.56
Central	17,100	0.22
Fife	—	0.00
Lothian	—	0.00
Borders	14,100	0.18
Dumfries and Galloway	19,100	0.24
Scotland	1,001,800	12.72%

100% = 7,877,500 ha

#### **OTHER SCENIC AREAS**

- 4.1 The corollary to selecting only the very best scenic areas for particular care and attention as part of the national heritage is an inference that the remaining areas of countryside are of less importance and there may be disappointment that some places widely acknowledged to be of considerable scenic attractiveness have not been included in the list set out in paragraph 3.2. However, we have given a great deal of thought to many parts of the countryside which do not appear in this final list and we hope that it will be understood that these areas, while of undoubted scenic merit, do not in our view match up to the high standards which we have set for the areas chosen. This does not mean that we do not consider them also to be of importance since many of these areas will be significant in regional terms. We believe that they also require conservation strategies and development control procedures which recognise this significance. The work which we have done in selecting areas of outstanding national interest has given us an opportunity to look widely at many such areas in Scotland and the information which we have obtained will, of course, be available to local authorities who may wish to consider areas for specific recognition in structure and local plans because of their scenic merit in regional terms.
- 4.2 There are also a number of places which are quite outstanding in themselves, but which are different in character and scale from the areas in our national list by virtue of their limited extent and uniformity or their singular nature. Many of these are already Conservation Areas in terms of the Town and Country Amenities Act, 1974 or would be suitable for recognition as such. We hope that policy statements prepared by Regional Councils on landscape conservation will take these smaller areas into account as well as the wider areas selected as being of national or of regional significance.

#### **SAFEGUARDING SCENIC AREAS**

- 5.1 So far in this report our prime concern has been with the selection of areas of outstanding national scenic significance. The identification of these areas is an important first step towards their conservation and appropriate development, but it is no more than a first step. There must now follow positive action for their protection and development in ways which take full account of their national or local significance. The ways in which this might be achieved are manifold, but we see them in two broad categories, on the one hand

relating to the planning process and on the other to land management.

- 5.2 In regard to the planning process we have had preliminary discussions with the Scottish Office and it is our understanding that the Secretary of State has it in mind to institute new planning procedures to safeguard the nation's scenic heritage. These measures were foreshadowed in the *National Planning Guidelines* issued in May 1977 and the Commission suggests that they should include, first, an interim policy requiring the notification of certain classes of planning application within areas of national scenic significance and, second, longer term proposals for the preparation of appropriate planning strategies and development control policies. Various ways exist in the Planning Acts and in the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 for setting up appropriate arrangements for this purpose and we propose to have further discussions with the Scottish Office about the particular methods to be employed.
- 5.3 Responsibility for the preparation of planning strategies and development control policies is, however, a matter for planning authorities in the first instance and it is on these authorities that the main burden of conserving the nation's scenic heritage rests. We are confident that planning authorities will accept this responsibility willingly and with due regard to the national interest. We look forward to assisting them with advice based upon our broader interest in the whole of the countryside, extending as it does to over 98% of the land and inland water area of Scotland. However, under our existing arrangements for planning, the final responsibility for conserving that which is nationally important must lie with the Secretary of State as the ultimate authority and we think it is essential that some procedure is maintained to ensure that developments in areas of national scenic interest which do not comply with approved development plans should be referred to him before final decisions are taken.
- 5.4 The second category of conservation measures relates to land management. Whilst the basic appearance of our countryside is determined by its geology and geomorphology and the effects of climate and light, there is no doubt that the scenic interest is often greatly influenced by the way in which we use the land, clothing it with a pattern of vegetation and enclosure to produce that which may be visually satisfying. Many of the changes which affect the appearance of the countryside are not influenced by

the formal planning process, notably changes in agricultural practice itself and changes between agriculture and forestry. We believe that it is possible to influence such changes of land-use to accommodate the national scenic interest where necessary, while still meeting land management requirements, for instance by modifying the shape of new planting to safeguard outlooks from public vantage points or by modifying grazing pressures to increase natural regeneration of woodlands in particular situations.

5.5 Where land management is modified to secure the national interest and there is a resultant loss of some financial benefit to the owner or occupier, we believe there is a case for meeting at least part of that cost from Exchequer funds. Proposals for management agreements to meet this kind of situation were included in Chapter 6 of our report *A Park System for Scotland* and we reaffirm that we believe that these management agreements, analogous to nature reserve agreements and forestry dedication schemes, should be seen as an important element of our proposals for the conservation of scenic resources. Since we made this proposal for management agreements in our previous report, however, we have had the benefit of substantial public comment and we are now of the view that it would not be reasonable to expect the cost of conserving the national scenic interest to be met, even in part, by the ratepayers of local authorities rather than by the nation as a whole through the Exchequer. We have therefore proposed to Government that our original ideas should be modified so that management agreements within areas of national scenic interest should be made between land managers and the Commission representing the national interest. It would still be possible, however, for this mechanism to be made available to planning authorities in regard to any areas of regional landscape interest which they later seek to identify in their structure and local plans. Local authority expenditure in this regard should, of course, be eligible for the usual countryside grant at 75% in designated countryside, and to special park authorities at whatever higher rate may be agreed in respect of land falling within Special Parks under our park system proposals.

5.6 We believe that the Commission's broad terms of reference, particularly those concerning the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside, make it possible for us to prepare and put forward fundamental and

comprehensive proposals in respect of the selection and protection of the national scenic heritage in a way and to an extent not feasible heretofore. We think that the matters set out in this report represent such a comprehensive approach which will result in the conservation of our scenic heritage, whilst at the same time accommodating change and development in response to changing circumstances. The Commission looks forward to the discussions which will flow from publication of this report and hopes that these will lead to the action for the positive conservation of that heritage which we think essential for the long-term wellbeing of Scotland.