

Policy Summary

SNH's LANDSCAPE POLICY FRAMEWORK

This is a summary of Scottish Natural Heritage's Landscape Policy Framework¹. SNH has also published separate policies and guidance on National Scenic Areas², local landscape designations³ and wildness⁴.

Scotland is renowned for its distinctive and diverse landscapes. These are recognised by the Government as “*a national treasure*”, where “*the aim should be to build environmental capital and pass well-managed, high quality landscapes on to future generations*”⁵. Good quality landscapes contribute to economic development, social inclusion, environmental justice, cultural identity, health, well-being and access. Landscape planning and management is therefore part of the wider effort needed to achieve a more sustainable future.

SNH'S APPROACH

SNH's remit places the aesthetic and more natural qualities of the landscape at the forefront of its concerns, along with the enjoyment that people derive from these. Our approach is based on four guiding principles:

- i) **Scotland's landscapes are a shared responsibility** – although our statutory remit gives SNH a lead role, a commitment with others to a more integrated and collective approach is needed to ensure better care of our landscapes, including their historic and cultural aspects.
- ii) **All Scotland's landscapes deserve attention** – our interest encompasses all landscapes: the rural and the urban, the degraded and the well-managed, the ordinary and the special.
- iii) **Scotland's landscapes will continue to change** – our approach is to influence, guide and manage change so that our landscapes will continue to be seen as distinctive and appealing.
- iv) **Scotland's landscapes deserve greater care** – a more proactive approach to landscape planning and management is required, which makes landscape an explicit and integral factor in decision-making

SNH's landscape work will pursue the following overarching aim:

To safeguard and enhance the distinct identity, the diverse character and the special qualities of Scotland's landscapes as a whole, so as to ensure that tomorrow's landscapes contribute positively to people's quality of life and are at least as attractive and valued as they are today.

For the range of Scotland's landscapes this means working to achieve and maintain:

- Attractive and distinctive settlements, with high quality greenspace, which reflect regional traditions of design and materials, fit their wider setting, and contribute positively to people's quality of life.
- Farmed and crofting landscapes of diverse character, within which the significant contribution of designed landscapes to the lowland scene is recognised and safeguarded.
- Forests and woodlands which enhance the landscapes of which they form part.
- Uplands, hills and moorland landscapes characteristically Scottish in their openness and quality of wildness.
- The careful integration of human activity within coastal landscapes and seascapes, that reflects the diverse character of our developed, undeveloped and isolated coasts.

To achieve this aim, SNH will work with others to raise awareness and increase understanding and enjoyment of all of Scotland's landscapes. SNH will encourage care and sensitivity to setting in the location of new development and high quality in its planning and design. It will also promote the provision and enhancement of greenspace in the built landscape and encourage the enhancement of degraded landscapes.

PRIORITIES FOR SNH ACTION

i) Promote debate on Scotland's future landscapes

Greater debate amongst all with a stake in the landscape will help create a shared agenda, thus ensuring better care for our landscapes. SNH will support the establishment of the Scottish Landscape Forum and input positively to its work. SNH will identify and promote the contribution of Scotland's landscapes to other Government policies.

ii) Describe Scotland's landscape resource

A national inventory of Scotland's landscapes has been compiled by SNH through the process of landscape character assessment (LCA). SNH will promote the use of this inventory as one of the key tools for assessing landscape change – the capacity for change varying according to both a landscape's key characteristics and to the type and nature of change being proposed.

iii) Monitor change in Scotland's landscapes

SNH will work to develop and report on indicators that monitor the condition of Scotland's landscapes and the effectiveness of SNH's actions.

iv) Landscape planning and management

SNH will strive to ensure that landscape is recognised as an explicit factor in decision-making under the existing regulatory systems, including the Town and Country Planning system and SEA. Within incentive schemes administered by others, we shall seek prominence for measures designed to enhance the landscape, and make the case for greater priority and resources

to be allocated. And we will promote well managed and enhanced greenspaces for their contribution to the identity and setting of settlements.

v) Action for Scotland's special landscapes

In order to safeguard those landscapes recognised to be of national or international importance (National Scenic Areas, National Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes and World Heritage Sites), SNH will work with local and National Park Authorities, Historic Scotland and other national agencies to achieve the strongest protection and highest standards in their management, supported by the necessary resources. SNH will support local authority efforts to identify locally valued landscapes, promoting the joint SNH/Historic Scotland guidance on the issue³.

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References

- ¹ SNH. 2005. *SNH's Landscape Policy Framework*, Policy Statement No. 05/01.
- ² SNH. 2000. *National Scenic Areas*. Policy Summary No. 00/15.
- ³ SNH & Historic Scotland. 2005. *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations*.
- ⁴ SNH. 2002. *Wildness in Scotland's Countryside*. Policy statement No. 02/03.
- ⁵ Scottish Executive. 2004. *National Planning Framework for Scotland*.