

## Landscape and the Historic Environment – A Common Statement <sup>1</sup>

**Our shared vision is for the historic dimension of landscape to be fully acknowledged and valued. It is at the core of a shared and unifying approach to managing change in our landscape in ways which maximise public benefit for present and future generations.**

1. The Scottish Historic Environment Forum recognises that Scotland's landscapes are a highly valued and widely appreciated aspect of our natural and cultural heritage that collectively make a significant contribution to the Scottish Government's national outcomes for the economy, health, place-making, and sense of identity. Three national indicators, on Scotland's reputation, improving people's perception of their local neighbourhood and visits to the outdoors, capture some of landscape's contribution to achieving these outcomes.
2. To fully deliver the ambition of [Our Place in Time](#), Scotland's strategy for the historic environment, the Scottish Historic Environment Forum therefore sees the need for action to increase understanding and appreciation of the historic dimension of our landscape and influence decision making about its future. It believes that to do this will require collaboration, coordination and cooperation between local and national government, organisations, land owners and managers, and communities of place and interest.

### Conditions for success

3. The implications of the climate change and social and economic globalisation are laying great challenges on our society to sustainably manage our resources and balancing competing demands. Furthermore, communities are increasingly concerned that they do not have a voice in influencing how we shape our landscapes. Experience of landscape change from Europe and elsewhere also highlights the need to recognise the evolving nature of landscape and the changing and varied values of the many people that live in, work in and visit Scotland.
4. Effective action for landscape therefore needs to be a shared endeavour, involving people and organisations who own, use, manage or have an interest in land. Organisations from both the historic and natural heritage sectors need to work collaboratively and in partnership with these stakeholders. This includes communities of place, communities of practice and communities of interest. To do this better, we need to develop a common language and approach which encapsulates the natural, historic and cultural dimensions of Scotland's landscapes.
5. At times, landscape can to some people have many meanings or to others can be limited to sectoral interests. Tensions and conflicts do arise. For some people, landscape is seen in terms of a special place with a distinct set of qualities while others see it as the ordinary and everyday interactions of people and their place. Rather than dwell on these competing

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<sup>1</sup> The preparation of this statement was undertaken by a working group comprising HES, NTS and SNH. Further information on the activity and outputs of this working group, including engagement with stakeholders, can be found here - <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/ArtsCultureSport/arts/Historic-environment/Strategy/Delivering-the-Strategy/Workstreams>

views, our aim should be to focus on interrelationships between all the dimensions of landscape to encourage dialogue and collaboration. Where trade-offs between different interests are required then decision makers should have all the relevant information available.

### **The importance of a holistic approach**

6. The starting point for this statement is therefore the holistic and place-based definition of landscape adopted by the [European Landscape Convention](#) adopted by the UK and Scottish Governments i.e.: landscape is '*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of the natural and/or human factors.*' Taking this definition, landscape encompasses

- nature and people – and how they interact to create a distinct place
- past and present – and how landscape provides a record our natural and cultural history
- tangible and intangible values – and how these come together in the landscape to give a sense of belonging and identity

This wide range of connections within landscape means that it can provide a common framework or “meeting place” within which communities of both place and interest can debate and agree what we want our country to value, manage and celebrate in our heritage.

7. This holistic approach also provides the basis for managing change in our landscape. Building on the Convention, [Scotland's Landscape Charter](#) established five principles to provide the common approach to the planning, management and conservation of landscape. At the heart of these principles is an all-landscapes approach that seeks to manage landscape change to maximise public benefit for present and future generations, clearly supporting an outcomes focused approach at both the national and local level.

### **Valuing the historic dimension of landscape**

8. The international image of Scotland is one which that draws extensively on the scenic qualities and perceived naturalness of many of our landscapes. The historic dimension is equally important in all landscapes. *Our Place in Time* stresses the connection of people to their surroundings: 'people cherish places, and the values of the historic environment lie in defining and enhancing that connection of people to a place'. The strategy emphasises that it is not only the material evidence that makes up the historic environment but also the associations developed through stories, tradition and practices that 'we can see, feel and understand'.

9. The Scottish landscape is an important record of our past and is a source of significant local and national social, economic and environmental history. When characteristic features of the historic dimension of landscape are lost or changed, the integrity and ability of the landscape to tell this story is diminished. Change is inevitable, but often a more

purposeful integration of historic characteristics in our evolving landscape has the power to enhance and continue a sense of local and national identity and belonging. We should work towards achieving this outcome in more of our decision-making.

10. To explore how different disciplines and communities think about landscape and find common ground on which to build collaboration, the following principles should guide landscape planning and management:

- All landscape has a historic dimension;
- This historic dimension is a major cause of, and contribution to, landscape character and sense of place;
- Understanding the historic environment and its contribution to landscape character is a key step to inform and manage change; and
- While embracing change, we should seek to retain as many of the key aspects of landscape character shaped by the historic environment as practical.

### **Connecting People and Place**

11. Future work, guidance and policy should anticipate and capture what communities think about change in the landscape. It is important that communities should have the opportunity to engage fully with the process of decision making from start to finish rather than simply reacting to change once it has been decided or implemented.

12. The Scottish Government's emphasis on community empowerment, place-making and land reform provides natural opportunities for developing a shared language and approach to landscape. Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland have increasingly been undertaking activity on place-making, working with local communities to consider what they value in their place, to help celebrate it and also to get more engaged in its planning and management. By making links to local priorities on the economy and health, there is scope to also include greater consideration of landscape and the historic environment within Community Planning Partnerships. The requirement to prepare new local outcome improvement plans (LOIPs) provides a further opportunity to increase the contribution that landscape and the historic environment can make to local outcomes to improve well-being.

13. While this work has been approached from each organization's different perspectives, a key lesson from this engagement is that people see their place holistically and value both natural and historic aspects of their local landscape. It is often the specialist who separates out different features, and emerging projects offer considerable potential for a different, more holistic approach in future.

### **A common understanding**

14. Working practices reflect the statutory and policy interests of organisations. The adoption of this common statement will encourage dialogue between specialists and conservation

professionals to find common ground for collaborative working as part of their day-to-day work, thus contributing to a stronger outcomes focused approach at both the national and local level.

15. The idea of landscape is familiar to many, but their perspectives, knowledge and experience will vary, from planners who assess change at a landscape scale to those who concentrate on managing individual sites. In light of current resource constraints and statutory functions, a key issue will be to develop new ways of working that can encourage dialogue and collaboration. More also needs to be done to translate specialist knowledge developed by agencies and academics into resources that can be used by the public – especially local communities - and decision makers.
16. The value and appreciation of Scotland's landscapes extends well beyond our shores, with our scenic heritage one of the key draws for tourists estimated at bringing some £420 million into the Scottish economy each year<sup>2</sup>. To ensure that both visitors and the people of Scotland benefit from landscape, a common understanding of landscape and its values must reach beyond sectoral or specialist views, to communities of practice and the wider public. Our understanding of landscape must acknowledge these differing perceptions, and the resulting tensions that might arise when drawing together views from all.

### **Smart informed policy**

17. Change is a normal part of how landscapes evolve. To enable clear, informed decision making on the type, extent and acceptability of change that delivers most public benefit, our policy frameworks need to recognise and better integrate the many values that are contained in our landscapes, including the historic dimension. These policies should be driven by the significant contribution that the landscape and the historic environment can make to outcomes for the economy, health, place-making, and sense of identity. At the same time, policy and guidance for landscape and its historic dimension should be broadened to be seen as proactive and not just simply protectionist.
18. Scenic value and biodiversity have been two of the main drivers for recent landscape policy. While there have been clear links with the historic environment, the policies and guidance for both these areas should better reflect historic environment aspects. The historic environment sector also needs to do more to engage on landscape issues and move beyond its traditional site-based approach now that it has completed the Historic Land-use Assessment (<http://hlamap.org.uk/>).
19. The current requirement across a range of Scottish Government's policies for both land and sea to consider landscape and the historic environment provide a solid foundation which to build on. For example, [Scottish Planning Policy](#) and includes two principle policies that influence all plan making and development management decisions – place-making and sustainability. The implementation of this approach assists everyone in the planning process to understand and create successful places that promote a distinctive identity and

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B732000.pdf>

sense of belonging The greater appreciation of landscape and its historic dimension can enhance consideration of these issues and can provide a more inclusive approach for communities to think about what is best for their areas.

20. Similarly, in its statement on the key principles for sustainable land-use, Scotland's [Land Use Strategy 2](#) recognises the need to consider landscape at the same time as other considerations. Principle E refers directly to landscape change and reflects the all-landscape approach contained in the European Landscape Convention <sup>3</sup>. Effective consideration of options for future land use can be strengthened further by the better understanding of past landscape change which has shaped current landscape character. A range of mechanisms for discussion between land owners, managers, and communities of place and interest are also needed to identify the range of public values in landscape that may be affected by past land-use change.

### **Next Steps**

21. Within the framework provided by *Our Place in Time*, this Common Statement makes clear the ambition and commitment of the Scottish Historic Environment Forum to understand, manage and promote the contribution of the historic environment to the evolving Scottish landscape.

22. To take this work forward, an action plan will be prepared by Historic Environment Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, in discussion with local authorities and other key stakeholders. Implementation of this action plan will be dependent on available resources across key delivery partners, though early action is underway on reviewing current HES/SNH guidance on local landscape designations and landscape monitoring and characterisation. Key indicators of success will also be developed, building on current measures by Scottish Government, HES and SNH. Progress with the implementation of this statement and the contribution of this work to the delivery of *Our Place in Time* will be reported regularly to the Forum through the Historic Environment Operating Group.

**Strategic Historic Environment Forum  
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<sup>3</sup> Principles for Sustainable Land-Use e) - Landscape change should be managed positively and sympathetically, considering the implications of change at a scale appropriate to the landscape in question, given that all Scotland's landscapes are important to our sense of identity and to our individual and social wellbeing.

## **The European Landscape Convention**

Para 38, of the explanatory report for the Convention (<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Reports/Html/176.htm>) defines landscape as 'a zone or area as perceived by local people or visitors, whose visual features and character are the result of the action of natural and/ or cultural (that is human) factors. This definition reflects the idea that landscapes evolve through time, as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings. It also underlines that a landscape forms a whole, whose natural and cultural components are taken together, not separately.'

Para 42 '... it should be remembered that the aim is not the preservation or 'freezing' of the landscape at a particular point in its lengthy evolution. Landscapes have always changed and will continue to change, both through natural processes and through human action.'

Para 50 – article 5 lays down measures necessary for implementation, which includes actions to '...recognise the landscape legally as constituting an essential component of the setting for people's lives, as reflecting the diversity of their common cultural, ecological and socio-economic heritage and as the foundation of local identity.'

In the guidelines for implementation adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 6 February 2008), the general principles recognise the fundamental role of knowledge, stating (1.1b) 'the identification, description and assessment of landscapes constitute the preliminary phase of any landscape policy. This involves an analysis of morphological, archaeological, historical, cultural and natural characteristics and their interrelations, as well as an analysis of changes. The perception of landscape by the public should also be analysed from the viewpoint of both its historical development and its recent significance.'

Para 1.2 states 'attention is focused on the territory as a whole, without distinguishing between the urban, peri-urban, rural and natural parts, or between parts that may be regarded as outstanding, everyday or degraded; it is not limited to cultural, artificial and natural elements; the landscape forms a whole whose constituent parts are considered simultaneously in their interrelations.'

### **Scotland's Landscape Charter - Five key principles**

1. All landscapes are important and everyone has a right to live in and enjoy the benefits of high quality surroundings.
2. Our landscapes are a shared asset and everyone has a responsibility for looking after them to high standards, to make sure each part of Scotland maintains its own distinctive sense of place.
3. Landscapes change but change needs to be managed, to ensure the character and quality of the landscape is respected in all land management and development decisions.
4. Better awareness of the diversity, distinctiveness, history and character of our landscapes is needed, so that all action affecting them is based on sound understanding.

Shaping tomorrow's landscapes requires a forward-looking approach to national and local policy that involves people in decisions about change to the character and quality of their surroundings.