

Scottish Natural Heritage

Landscape Considerations in Strategic Environmental Assessment



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Purpose of the guide

1/

The purpose of this guidance is to outline an approach to the consideration of landscape in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process. It is aimed at those who have to prepare plans, programmes and strategies and carry out SEA as a Responsible Authority or as consultants. It is also guidance for consultees in the process (the Consultation Authorities) e.g. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Historic Scotland (HS).

Background

2/

The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”¹. The landscape is formed by the ways in which different physical components (geology, soils, fauna and flora) have both influenced and been modified by humans (through historic and current land uses including settlement).

3/

Scotland is “renowned for its distinct and diverse range of landscapes ... their varied character and the historical record they contain defines what is distinctive about different parts of Scotland and contributes to a sense of identity both nationally and regionally”². Coasts and seascapes are part of the landscape too, an aspect in which the UK and especially Scotland are particularly rich.

4/

Strategic Environmental Assessment allows for better consideration of impacts on the environment arising from plans, programmes or strategies (abbreviated to ‘plans’ for ease of reading). It allows the Responsible Authority or plan maker the opportunity to take into account the impacts from their plan early in the preparation process.

5/

The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 came into force in February 2006 and provides for the systematic assessment, mitigation and monitoring of significant environmental effects from qualifying plans prepared by public bodies.³

The main stages of SEA are

- Screening – establishing whether the plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment
- Scoping – establishing the environmental issues to be taken into account in the plan making process and the methodology and level of detail to be used in the assessment.
- Environmental Reporting stage – reports on the findings of the assessment and likely significant environmental effects, with or without mitigation
- Post adoption – reports on how the findings of the Environmental Report have been taken into consideration
- Monitoring – to check the impacts and effectiveness of the plan and how effective the mitigation measures are.

6/

Further detail on these stages can be found in the Scottish Government’s SEA Tool Kit – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/13104943/0> And it is worth emphasising that the level of detail of the assessment should always be appropriate to the scale of the plan and the likelihood, nature, scale and location of significant effects on the landscape.

¹The UK ratified the European Landscape Convention in 2007

²SNH’s Landscape Policy Framework, Policy Statement 05/01

³For UK plans: The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 SI 2004 No 1633



7/

Landscape, along with 11 other environmental topics such as biodiversity, soil, cultural heritage etc are included in the legislation as issues to be considered in the SEA process and are often used to form the basis of SEA objectives. SEA objectives and related indicators provide a measure against which the effects of the plan can be assessed. Figure 1 below illustrates diagrammatically how landscape should be embedded into the SEA process. Each box in the figure is explained in more detail in this guidance note.

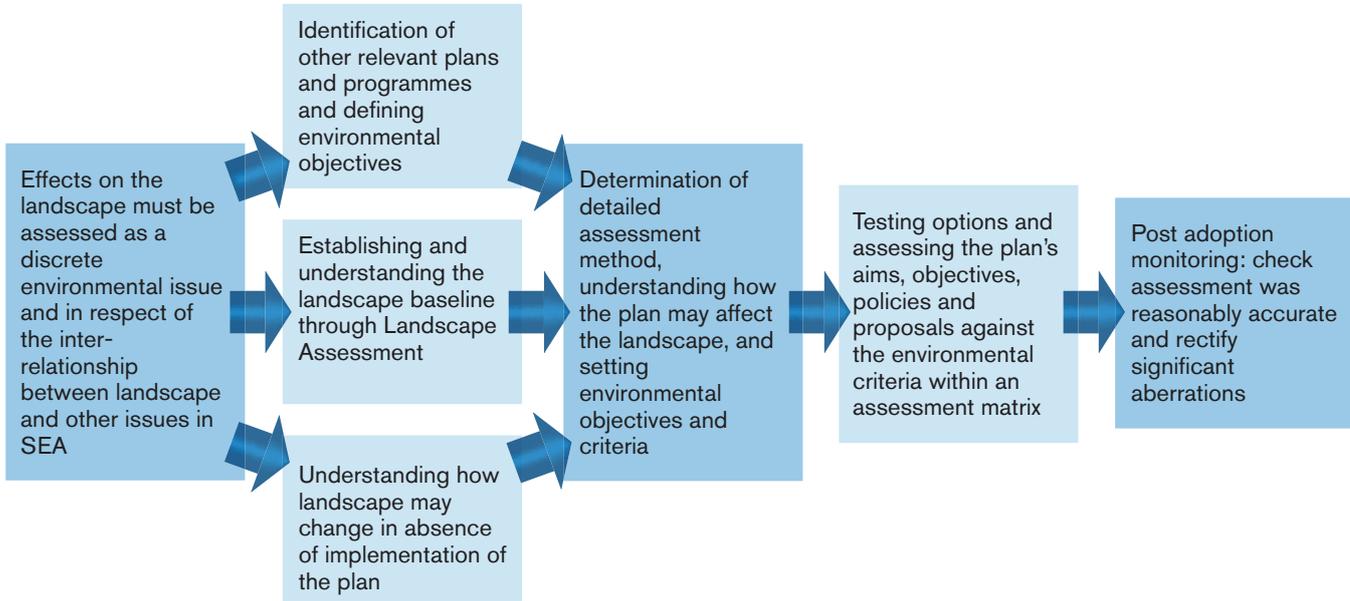


Figure 1

Definition of landscape

8/

The Convention's definition of landscape emphasises the fact that landscape is about the relationship between people and place. SNH's landscape policy, in considering the nature of that relationship, notes that "landscape is more than our physical surroundings. It encompasses our experience and perception of all the elements of the physical environment that surround us – the natural and the cultural"⁴. We experience landscape mostly by sight, but the noise or calm of a place, or the play of the wind or tang of salt by the seaside can all contribute to our experience of what it feels like to be in a particular place.

9/

None of these definitions mentions landscape designation. Instead, they highlight that the term does not mean just special landscapes, and it does not just apply to the countryside. The landscape provides the setting for our day-to-day lives. It is what we see from our home, workplace, and when travelling.

The landscape resource

10/

People value landscape for many different reasons. These include its role in providing habitats for wildlife and the way it provides a cultural record of how people have previously lived in a place. Landscape can have social and community value, and it contributes to a sense of identity. For many it is the environment in general, and the landscape in particular, which makes informal recreation appealing. Thus, landscape is a source of well-being and enjoyment that, more widely, includes health benefits. Aspects such as tranquillity, wildness, or a more natural character are important and, for many people, invigorating. Landscape is also a source of inspiration: literature, music, and the visual arts draw upon distinctive landscapes, and language, customs etc. often celebrate it.

⁴SNH's Landscape Policy Framework, Policy Statement 05/01



The landscape is a resource enjoyed as part of informal recreation

11/

For all of these reasons, landscape also has considerable economic value. It attracts people and visitors who seek its various qualities.

12/

The diversity of Scotland's landscapes means that these qualities can be found to varying degrees, in a variety of places, and at different times. Maintaining this distinctiveness is an important goal. Plans and policies are therefore important because they can help guide where things will go and will consequently influence change in the landscape.

13/

Landscape is dynamic. Change in the landscape is not inherently positive or negative. Landscape will change because of natural processes such as vegetation growth, erosion and flooding. It also changes due to human intervention and development. Everyone is aware of differences in the landscape, and individuals react differently to changes in it.



The landscape is influenced by natural forces such as flooding



Landscape character assessment

14/

Landscape is not easy to quantify. Some of its individual elements can be counted or measured, such as lengths of drystone walls or areas of woodland. However, the 'amount' of a landscape cannot be gauged. Taking account of landscape in plan-making processes, including SEA, is informed by the use of landscape character assessment.

15/

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the recognised technique for identifying what gives a locality its "sense of place" and makes it different from elsewhere. It is a structured approach to identifying, classifying, mapping and describing what makes one place distinct from another. Landscape character assessment is not about landscape evaluation, i.e. ranking some areas as better than others.



Coastal Flats landscape character type



Upland Glen landscape character type

16/

As the Assessment guidance for England and Scotland notes, LCA is not designed to resist changes that may influence the landscape. Rather, it is an aid to decision-making – to help understand what the landscape is like today, how it came to be like that, and how it may change in the future. Its role is to inform decisions about change and development, so they are consistent with landscape objectives and do not undermine what is valued about any particular landscape, and that ways of improving the character of a place can be considered.

17/

The LCA approach now underpins much of SNH and others' landscape work. The process of characterisation provides a baseline against which change can be monitored and to inform decision-making.

18/

Scotland has complete coverage of LCA⁵. This is mostly at 1:50,000 scale and mostly related geographically to local authority areas. This classification into landscape character areas is extremely useful. However, the assessments were undertaken and published in the 1990's and some of the identified 'forces for change' may need to be considered in light of subsequent changes. For example, modern wind turbines are considerably larger than those envisaged when the LCA series was produced. The majority of the guidelines to steer change remain valid and helpful.

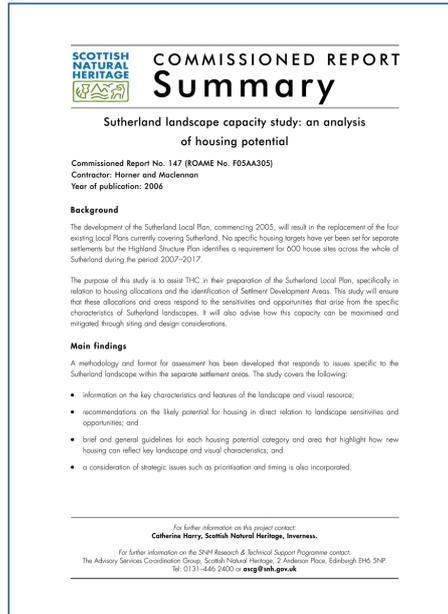
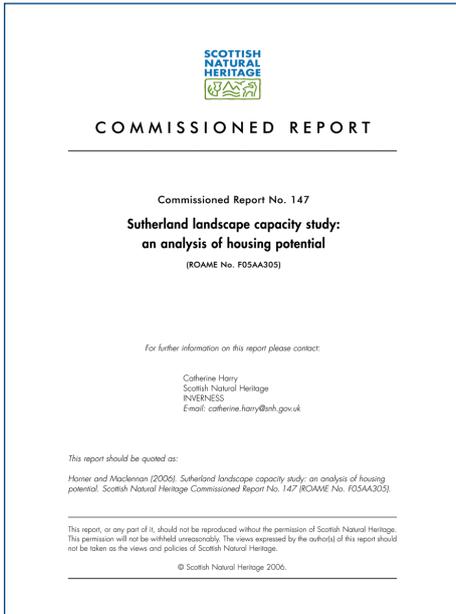
19/

SNH's 'An assessment of the sensitivity and capacity of the Scottish seascape in relation to offshore windfarms' commissioned in 2005⁶ is a high level assessment. It divides the coast of Scotland into a number of different coastal character types at a very broad scale.

⁵Produced by Scottish Natural Heritage, available via <http://www.snh.org.uk/pubs/results.asp?Q=landscape+character+assessment&rpp=10>

⁶http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications.commissioned_reports/F03AA06.pdf

A further resource which is helpful in identifying landscape change and forces for change are landscape sensitivity and capacity studies. These build on the descriptive inventory provided by the LCA reports and seek to identify the degree to which particular landscape character types are able to accommodate specific kinds of change. In this type of study, a list of relevant criteria is identified (e.g. impact on settlement pattern), and these criteria are then assessed for each character unit or place. The result is usually a map and explanation of the areas where specific types of change can be more readily accommodated without detriment to the character of the landscape and/or where change would be least appropriate. Recommendations regarding mitigation and design considerations may be added. Whilst most capacity studies have been implemented for wind farms of built development, they have included such varied issues as mineral working and golf course development and they could also apply to forestry or other land uses.



A number of landscape capacity studies are available as Commissioned Reports on SNH's website. www.snh.org.uk/pubs/cr.asp?title=landscape+&author=&year=&OB=title



The introduction of wind turbines and forestry will result in landscape change.



21/

SNH's Natural Heritage Futures series provides another source of information that may be useful – particularly for high level plans. The Natural Heritage Futures series set out a vision for the natural heritage within different regions of Scotland. The series comprises six national prospectuses, covering Hills and Moors, Forests and Woodlands, Farmland, Freshwaters, Coasts and Seas and Settlements; plus twenty-one local prospectuses, each covering a region of Scotland.

22/

SEA is about identifying how significant the impacts from these changes might be and how they may occur. It separates them from the changes that would happen anyway and identifies opportunities to avoid, reduce or mitigate adverse impacts and seek enhancements where possible.

How landscape fits with wider natural heritage and other SEA topics

23/

Landscape often overlaps with several other SEA topics. As noted in paragraph 2, it is the result of interactions between geology, ecology and human endeavour. In assessing impacts on landscape, there is a need to consider how impacts on these underlying components, and on land use, affect how the landscape is perceived and experienced.

Trends in landscape change

24/

There are many causes of change in the landscape. Table 1 below lists key examples of changes and possible resultant changes to the characteristics of the landscape. The focus of an SEA should be on the effects of the changes the plan may cause, not on the evolution of the landscape.

25/

For some plans it will be readily apparent which potential changes are relevant. Development plans will need to consider recent changes to land use, built development and infrastructure; forestry plans will need to consider recent deforestation and new forestry proposals. The way in which some other plans may affect the landscape will be less obvious, but trends in landscape change may still need to be considered. For example, a regional tourism strategy may aim to increase visitor numbers and this may affect people's perception of the tranquillity of the landscape (see row C of Table 2 below).

26/

The timescale of changes that should be considered will depend on the type and period covered by the plan being prepared and the nature of the changes. A five year development plan will need to consider different trends to a forest design plan, which may span a period of several decades. However, cumulative change over many years will be potentially relevant to all plans.



Policies in development plans or supplementary planning guidance, for example, for windfarm development, new housing estates or individual houses in the countryside all have the potential to affect the landscape.

How Plans can affect the Landscape

27/

The 2005 Act, at Section 5, requires responsible authorities to undertake SEA in respect of all qualifying plans, including those which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent for projects listed in Schedule 1 of the Act. The likelihood, nature, scale and location of landscape change arising from plans in these sectors will vary, but all have a potential to affect the landscape.

28/

The more sensitive a landscape is to the kind of change that may flow from a plan, the more likely it is that the effect would be significant. Conversely, where landscapes are less sensitive to the kinds of change being promoted, the more likely these changes could be absorbed without a significant impact. It is also important to bear in mind that change can be beneficial as well as adverse. Plans that help to strengthen, restore or create landscape character and distinctiveness can trigger a SEA just as readily as those that have potential adverse effects. This will apply particularly:

- in areas where landscape character has been eroded,
- where good landscape fit, design, scale and use of materials is used in new development,
- where appropriate restoration and management practice is employed.

29/

Some landscape values have been identified via designations such as National Scenic Areas (NSAs) or National Parks or through local landscape designations such as Special Landscape Areas. It is worth emphasising that in addition to assessing the plan's potential to change the landscape, it is important to think about how those changes might affect its enjoyment and other values. These could include recreation and wild land, particularly for cumulative impacts.

30/

In SEA it is not possible or appropriate to assess landscape change in the same level of detail as that which would apply in respect of an Environmental Impact Statement for a project. Nevertheless, SEA should aim to identify the potential **broad changes** in characteristics of the landscape including

- land form;
- land use and land cover, including water, woodlands and agriculture;
- relationships between land form and land use;
- field pattern and boundaries; especially cumulative impacts on these features
- buildings and structures in the landscape including roads and other infrastructure;
- urban landscape / settlement pattern and
- our experience of the landscape's qualities that do not have a physical manifestation, such as openness, scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations.

The level of detail which can be incorporated will depend on the level at which the plan is pitched. For example, a high level national policy may only be able to reflect nationally significant landscape trends, such as the erosion of the total area of wild land in Scotland, whilst a Local Development Plan SEA could explore locally important features in more detail.

31/

Table 1 below summarises the scope for landscape change in respect of the sectors listed in Section 5(3) of the Act and Article 3(2) of the Directive. The list is not exhaustive but can be used as an aide memoire to consider the nature scale and location of changes likely to be promoted, stimulated or controlled by the plan.

See also SNH Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook, 2009, especially Technical Appendix A.



Table 1
Landscape changes by topic

Sector	Examples of changes promoted, stimulated or controlled by plans with the potential to affect landscape	Possible resultant changes to the landscape characteristics
Agriculture	Changes in types of farming Changes in crop patterns and rotations Changes in stock and grazing regimes Changes in ownership or tenure Extension or diminution of spatial extent of agricultural land Intensification of use of land Changes in unit and field size Agricultural buildings and dwellings	Land form, land use and land cover: agriculture Relationships between land form and land use Field pattern and boundaries Buildings and structures in the landscape Linear and / or point features Scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations
Aquaculture	New fin-fish or shellfish farms Changes in size or number of cages or lines New or altered shore bases or facilities Intensification of development Expansion of development to allow lower stocking densities New types of development	Coastal and seascape characteristics. Buildings and structures in the landscape and offshore Linear and / or point features. Scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations
Forestry	Afforestation Deforestation Changes in woodland type and cover Changes in woodland rotation and management Forestry buildings and dwellings Forestry industry (sawmills etc) Forestry tracks Forestry transport infrastructure	Land form, land use and land cover: forests, woodlands and trees Relationships between land form and land use Buildings and structures in the landscape Linear and / or point features Openness, scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations
Fisheries	Replacement, upgraded, new or extended fisheries and fish farms and service areas Changes in type of fishing and fisheries Intensification of fishing activity River or coastal engineering works Extension or diminution of spatial extent of fishing activity Fisheries buildings and dwellings Fishery industry (processing etc) Fishery transport infrastructure	Land use and land cover: water Buildings and structures in the landscape seascape / 'waterscape' Linear and / or point features Colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations
Energy	Replacement, upgraded, new or extended renewable energy development; bio-fuel energy production; coal, gas, or oil power stations; underground or open cast coal mines; oil or gas fields; refineries or other energy processing plants Management of waste arising from energy developments Decommissioning of power stations or other energy related development and infrastructure Replacement, new, upgraded or extended energy distribution infrastructure – overhead lines, pipelines Energy transport infrastructure Offshore and inshore wind energy developments Wave or tidal energy developments	Land form; land use and land cover: water, coasts, seas, forests, woodlands and trees; and agriculture Relationships between land form and land use and offshore or inshore development Buildings and structures in the landscape including offshore/inshore Linear and / or point features Openness, scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations

<p>Industry</p>	<p>Replacement, new or extended industrial installations and other development Decommissioning of industrial development Redevelopment of former industrial installations and areas Industrial transport infrastructure Restoration or remediation of contaminated land</p>	<p>Land form; relationships between land form and land use Buildings and structures in the landscape Urban landscape / Settlement pattern Linear and / or point features Scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations</p>
<p>Transport</p>	<p>Replacement, upgraded, new or extended: ferry terminals, harbours, ports or other maritime transport infrastructure; airfields and airports; railways; canals or river navigation systems; bridges, tunnels, causeways; motorways, trunk or other roads</p>	<p>Land form; land use and land cover: water; forests, woodlands and trees; agriculture Relationships between land form and land use Field pattern and boundaries Buildings and structures in the landscape Settlement pattern Linear and / or point features Openness, scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations</p>
<p>Waste management</p>	<p>Replacement, upgraded, new or extended: waste management sites and installations including landfill, land-raise, incineration and waste to energy plants, mineral waste disposal, recycling facilities and waste transfer installations Waste management access and transport infrastructure</p>	<p>Land form; land use and land cover: water; forests, woodlands and trees; agriculture Relationships between land form and land use Buildings and structures in the landscape Urban landscape / Settlement pattern Linear and / or point features Openness, scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations</p>
<p>Water management</p>	<p>Replacement, upgraded, new or extended: water storage and supply, waste water treatment areas and installations, hydro schemes Water management access and transport infrastructure including roads, tracks and pipelines Flood management schemes</p>	<p>Land use and land cover: water Relationships between land form and land use Buildings and structures in the landscape Linear and / or point features Openness, scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations</p>
<p>Tele-communications</p>	<p>Replacement, upgraded, new or extended telecommunication installations Telecommunications access infrastructure</p>	<p>Relationships between land form and land use Structures in the landscape Point features Scale, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations</p>
<p>Tourism</p>	<p>Replacement, upgraded, new or extended: tourism, recreational, leisure, sport, retail and hotel centres, sites, buildings and facilities Replacement, upgraded, new or extended access facilities Tourism transport infrastructure</p>	<p>Relationships between land form and land use Buildings and structures in the landscape Settlement pattern Linear and / or point features Scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations</p>
<p>Town and country / land use planning</p>	<p>New or extended urban development Redevelopment of previously used land Land use change including military use and installations, mineral working and processing New or extended rural development Transport infrastructure</p>	<p>Land form; land use and land cover: water; forests, woodlands and trees; agriculture Relationships between land form and land use Buildings and structures in the landscape Urban landscape / Settlement pattern Linear and / or point features Openness, scale, colour, texture, visual diversity, line, pattern, movement, sound, solitude, naturalness, historical and / or cultural associations</p>



Strategic environmental assessment stages

Screening

32/

This stage of the SEA determines whether any particular plan would be likely to have a significant effect on the environment. Schedule 2 (of the 2005 Act) sets out criteria that help to determine whether, in this context, the effects of a plan are likely to be significant. The screening of a plan should address the following considerations when determining whether it would be likely to have a significant effect on the landscape.

- a) Are the environmental problems in the plan area related directly or indirectly to its landscape? If so, does the plan make a significant contribution to resolving those problems or does it significantly exacerbate them?
- b) What is the magnitude and spatial extent of effects on the landscape, including the geographical area likely to be affected?
- c) What is the magnitude and spatial extent of effects on people's enjoyment of the landscape, including the number of people likely to be affected in the context of their sensitivity to change in the landscape?
- d) What is the value of the landscape likely to be affected and its vulnerability to change due to its special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (e.g. wildness)?
- e) What are the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised local, regional, national, EC or international protection status?
- f) What is the probability / likelihood or risk of these effects on the landscape occurring and being significant if they occurred?

33/

Table 2 below expands on these points and provides a simplified and general 'checklist' for helping to screen landscape issues in the screening stage of SEA

⁷See also Annex II of the Directive

Table 2
Screening Checklist assessing whether effects on landscape would be likely to be significant

Criterion	Indicators of significant effects
a) The presence of, or potential for, environmental problems in the plan area related to landscape and the potential for the plan to make a significant contribution to resolving those problems or significantly exacerbating them.	Would the plan beneficially or adversely affect degraded or despoiled landscapes, or areas where landscape character is eroded / eroding; or where cumulative change has the potential to affect landscape character?
b) The magnitude and / or spatial extent of effects on the landscape, (such as those in Table 1 above) including the geographical area likely to be affected	Would the plan beneficially or adversely affect more than small localised areas of landscape; or result in more than minor changes to landscape character; would the plan affect a significant area of a particular landscape type?
c) The magnitude and spatial extent of effects on people's enjoyment of the landscape, including the number of people likely to be affected in the context of their sensitivity to change in the landscape	Would the plan beneficially or adversely affect the landscape experienced by a large number of people as part of their every-day life? Is it a landscape enjoyed by fewer people but largely by those seeking out the relative solitude, naturalness or wild land qualities of more remote landscapes?
d) The value of the landscape likely to be affected and its vulnerability to change due to its special natural characteristics or cultural heritage	Would the plan beneficially or adversely affect an area which is sensitive to change owing to its strong artistic, cultural or historical associations; or its pronounced antiquity or historical continuity; or its high degree of 'naturalness', or its role in separating settlements or providing the setting or backdrop to settlements?
e) Effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, EC or international protection status	Would the plan beneficially or adversely affect the natural heritage of a World Heritage Site, a National Park, a National Scenic Area, a Regional Park, a site on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, or a locally designated landscape (Special Landscape Area) or their settings where setting is important?
<p>f) If the answer to any of the above questions is "yes", and the effects are likely to occur, are the effects likely to be significant? If "yes" the plan should be subject to SEA. If "no" the plan may not need to be subject to SEA in terms of its effects on landscape, but may have significant effects on other environmental factors.</p>	

For further guidance on the screening process, see also Scottish Government Planning Advice Note – SEA and Development Plans; A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive, 2005, section 2 pages 12 – 14; and the SEA Tool Kit at Chapter 4.

34/

As part of the consultation process on the scoping stage, SNH looks to the scoping report to:

- Ensure that landscape is either included in the SEA process or a full and transparent justification for its exclusion (scoping out) is made;
- Outline the environmental baseline for landscape in the plan area and how it may change in absence of implementation of the plan. Where this cannot be provided at scoping stage, details on the sources of information that will be used in the assessment must be given. ;
- Identify other relevant plans which may interact with the subject plan including any relevant wider objectives for landscape;
- Set out how effects on the landscape will be assessed, if appropriate, against environmental objectives and, where relevant, the criteria and checklists derived from those objectives (see paragraph 43);
- Prescribe the level of detail that will be applied to the SEA process showing that it is appropriate to the scale of the plan and the nature, scale and extent of the potential effects;
- Summarise the likely significant effects on the landscape to allow SNH to check that all relevant changes will be anticipated. This could include identifying trends such as encroachment or loss of particular landscape character types or local areas where change has been concentrated.

These points are clarified in the following sections.

Scoping in/out landscape effects

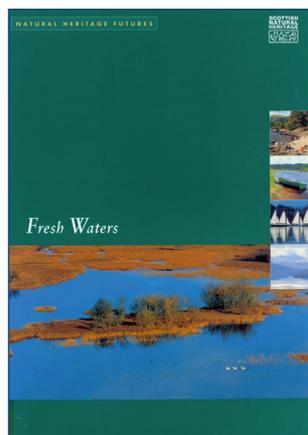
35/

Many plans will generate landscape impacts, and where that is the case, SNH expects landscape to be 'scoped in' to the SEA process. Where there is doubt as to whether landscape effects would be significant, it is better to proceed with at least a preliminary assessment, allowing the process of SEA itself to determine whether the effects on landscape are significant. Landscape should only be scoped out of the assessment at the scoping stage where the potential changes to landscape fall clearly below the tests indicated in Table 2 above.

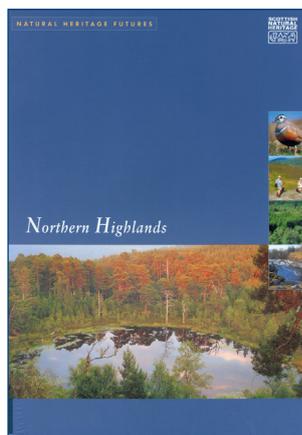
Environmental baseline and predictions

36/

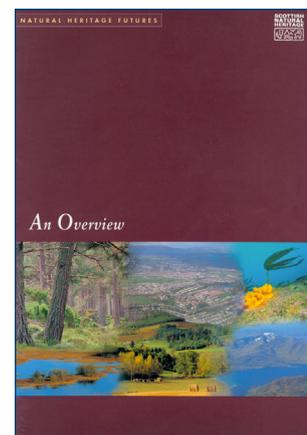
SNH would expect to see the relevant Landscape Character Assessment(s) (see paragraphs 14 – 18) for the plan area used as the appropriate environmental baseline data for landscape in SEA. For spatial plans it would be beneficial to include the mapped data, possibly adapted or simplified to suit the scale of the assessed plan programme or strategy. For topic or policy based plans or strategies, the relevant LCA information is likely to be the forces for change or descriptions rather



LCA Dumfries & Galloway



Natural Heritage Futures



Natural Heritage Futures
– overview

than the mapped details. In some cases LCA will be too detailed and broader scale information such as **Natural Heritage Futures** will be more appropriate.

37/

Where the Landscape Character Assessment has been updated, or more detailed work has been undertaken locally, this too should be included in the environmental baseline where it reflects the scale and level of detail of the plan. The LCA data has also been merged to produce national databases with the landscape character types generated at different levels, available from the SNH website (<http://www.snh.org.uk/pubs/results.asp?Q=landscape+character+assessment&rpp=10>). However, the LCA descriptions may still need to be taken from the individual studies, particularly for plans being prepared at the local level.

38/

The Scoping Report should not merely reiterate the findings in the Landscape Character Assessment, or just report that this is the document that will be used. Rather, SNH would like to see Scoping Reports explain how Landscape Character Assessment will be used to analyse the changes to the landscape that are likely to be brought about by the plan. Environmental reports should focus on the outcomes from analysis of the information, and consideration of how it can inform the actual assessment of effects, avoiding excessive description or detail.

39/

Where appropriate, the landscape baseline information should also include:

- Designations e.g. National Scenic Areas, local landscape designations, National, Regional and Country Parks;
- Other significant outdoor recreation resources, e.g. Long Distance Routes
- areas valued for their wild land character;
- parks and open spaces of recreational amenity or wildlife value;
- green belts;
- green corridors or wedges of green land important because they penetrate or separate urban areas; and
- important open areas which contribute to the distinctive setting, identity or back drop of settlements
- any landscape capacity studies.

How the landscape may be changing or would change in the absence of the plan

40/

Again, the Landscape Character Assessment will often be the starting point for identifying changes and trends in the landscape and how the landscape may change in the absence of the implementation of the plan. Each Landscape Character Assessment has a section for each landscape character type that summarises the 'pressures for change' in the landscape. The pressures for change help to inform the guidelines in the Landscape Character Assessment.

41/

Bearing in mind the date of the Landscape Character Assessment (mostly undertaken in the 1990's), it may be necessary for the responsible authority to update, or otherwise review, the pressures for change and consider whether new changes need to be added, especially in relation to the subject plan. Not all pressures for change will be relevant to all plans and the assessment should concentrate on those most applicable to the changes likely to arise as a result of the implementation of the plan, or those which the plan may be able to help to promote, stimulate or control.

⁸<http://www.snh.org.uk/pubs/cr.asp?title=landscape+&author=&year=&OB=title>

⁹ADD hyperlink reference to ELC



Interaction with other qualifying plans and programmes

42/

The UK is a signatory to the European Landscape Convention . Accordingly, requirements of the Convention need to be reflected in all relevant plans. Like the policies of SNH and other bodies, the Convention establishes an all-landscapes approach and the importance of including people in decisions affecting landscape.

43/

This will require the responsible authority to identify, collate and consider the wider policy framework for landscape with which the emerging plan is likely to interact. In order to keep this task a manageable one, bearing in mind that landscape is only one of several environmental issues, it will be necessary to apply a rigorous and focused approach to the identification and examination of other qualifying plans and programmes. For other plans and programmes to be relevant there should be a clear link in the hierarchy of policy framework, whereby either:

- the proposed plan helps to deliver the landscape objectives of a higher tier plan; or
- the proposed plan provides an explicit framework for landscape policy that lower tier plans will implement; or
- the other qualifying plans interact at the same level in the policy framework as the subject plan but aim to implement policy in different ways or through different mechanisms.

Table 3
Indicative list of potentially relevant qualifying plans and programmes

International	National	Regional / local
The European Landscape Convention	The National Planning Framework Scotland's Scenic Heritage	National Park Management Plans National Scenic Area Management Strategies and Plans ¹⁰
UNESCO World Heritage Sites	SPP Parts 1–3	Strategic Development Plans Local Development Plans
	SNH Landscape Policy Framework	Landscape Character Assessments
	Scottish Forestry Strategy	Forestry and woodland management plans and Indicative Forestry Strategies
	A Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture – Next Steps?	
	Scottish Biodiversity Strategy	Biodiversity Plans and Strategies which address landscape scale habitat actions / objectives
	Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007 – 13	Local landscape plans and initiatives including landscape sensitivity and capacity studies etc
	SNH Natural Heritage Futures national prospectuses	SNH Natural Heritage Futures prospectuses
	Scottish Landscape Forum “places for people”	

¹⁰Management plans for National Parks and NSAs are not in themselves national plans but cover parts of Scotland equivalent to regions / local areas

44/

Table 3 above is an indicative list of plans and programmes, which may be potentially relevant and interact with the plan being assessed. The indicative list should be seen only as a starting point, which will change over time and will need to be adapted to the type, scope and geographical area of the plan being assessed. A diagram in the Scoping Report and the Environmental Report showing the inter-relationship of the other plans and the relative positions in the policy framework can be helpful. Figure 2 (below) illustrates the process of drawing down landscape conservation objectives from international, EU and national policy, feeding in landscape objectives from other, more local policies and generating the specific objectives for a qualifying plan, from which the SEA tests are drawn. It also shows how the landscape character assessment is an integral part of the process of SEA.

Defining landscape objectives, indicators, and checklists

45/

This is likely to be a critical element within the scoping stage, and of the overall process of SEA. It is the setting of the environmental 'objectives' and subsequent 'tests' against which the emerging plan will be assessed. This task is therefore central to the effectiveness of the SEA process. It may be necessary to refine the objectives as the SEA progresses. The objectives can be tailored to reflect the priorities and challenges within the area covered by the plan, by building in information gathered during the baseline and contextual analysis. This in turn can help to focus the assessment findings.

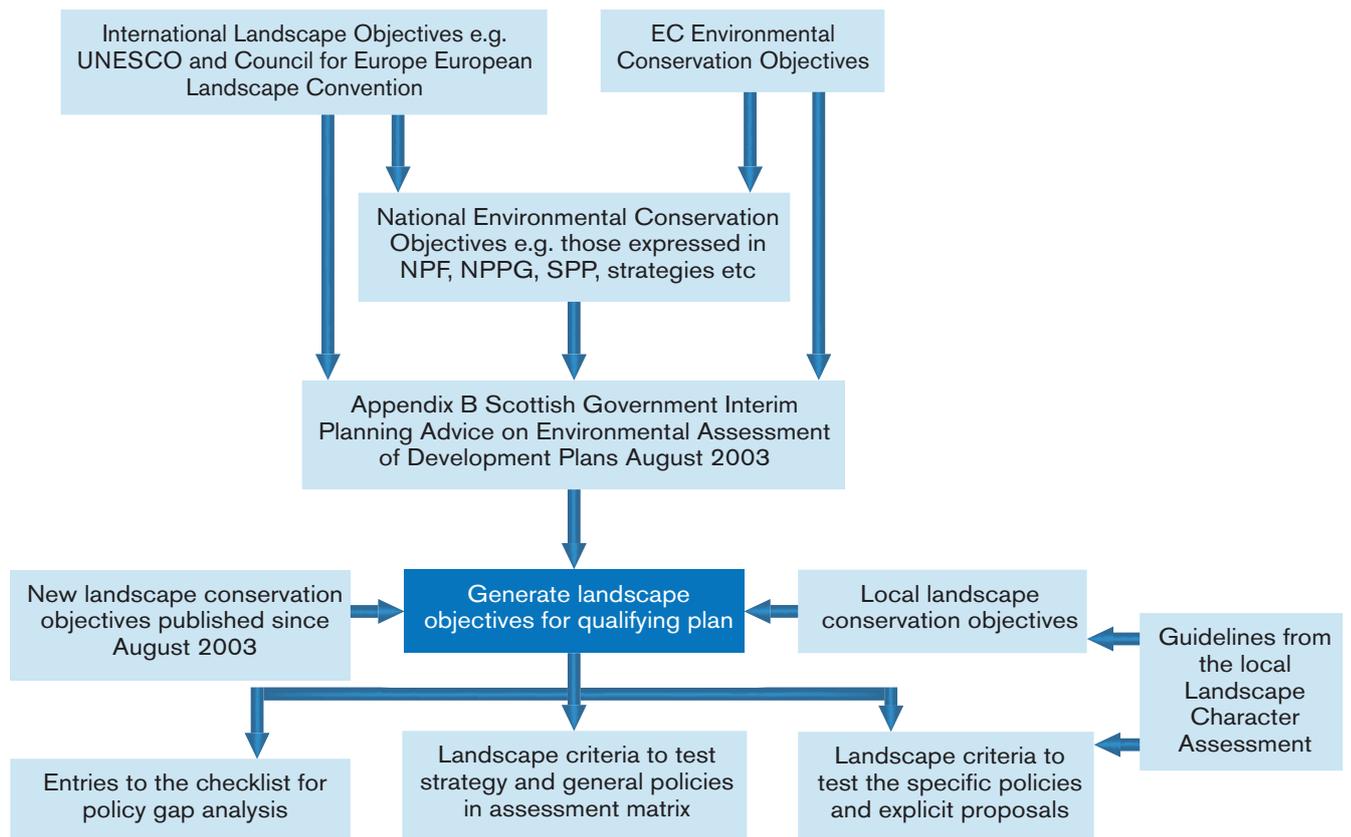


Figure 2

46/

As explained elsewhere , and illustrated in Figure 2 above, the environmental objectives are adopted from international, EU and national policy frameworks and by definition, tend to be broad in nature. However, setting environmental objectives is still considered to be a valid approach but needs to be tailored for more local landscape policy frameworks. An appropriate environmental objective for landscape could be:

To protect, enhance and – where appropriate – restore landscape character, local distinctiveness and scenic value.



47/

An environmental criterion that would help to test this broad policy objective against the international, EU and national policy framework could be:

Is the aim / policy / proposal likely to significantly help to protect, enhance or restore, or is it likely to significantly damage or diminish landscape character, local distinctiveness or scenic value or the enjoyment or understanding of the landscape?

48/

This general and wide-ranging criterion will still be applicable to higher tier plans and programmes, and also to the assessment of the overall aims or strategy of a more detailed level plan, where the assessment is relatively coarsely grained. However, for more detailed analysis of policies and proposals, especially in lower tier plans and programmes, it will be appropriate to break down the different elements of the criterion, and apply a finer grained test of the plan's provisions. This more detailed approach should not lead to over-elaborate assessment or to the landscape assessment being out of proportion to other assessment criteria in the SEA, which deal with effects of similar proportions to those on the landscape.

49/

The SEA Tool Kit suggests one approach to undertaking SEA is through objectives and indicators. Within landscape some generic objective and indicators which could be applied to most of the sector plans might include:

Possible SEA objective	Possible SEA indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To conserve and enhance landscape character and scenic value of the area - Protect and enhance the landscape everywhere and particularly in designated areas - Value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness - Improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space - To restore landscapes degraded as a consequence of past industrial action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number and area of designated landscape areas - Percentage of land designated for particular quality or amenity value, including publicly accessible land and greenways - Number of and extent to which landscape character types/areas would be affected - Extent to which popular recreational routes are affected - extent to which areas with wild land qualities or remote landscapes are affected <p>See Table 4 for examples of possible indicators for landscape change for some sector specific plans</p>

50/

SNH supports SEA methodology where the total number of assessment criteria is carefully managed. Many criteria result in a large number of assessment interactions between criteria and individual policies or proposals in the plan, thus increasing significantly the time input and cost of the assessment. Whilst this may result in more rigorous and thorough assessment, a balance needs to be struck between resources available and effective assessment. Good practice suggests that about 8-16 criteria is sufficient for the majority of plans. Accordingly, it is critical that the landscape criteria are carefully selected to be as effective in testing the plan as possible, whilst recognising that the other 11 environmental issues listed in Schedule 3(6) of the Act will need their assessment criteria too.

51/

It will also be necessary for an appropriate level of skill to be available to undertake the assessment. The broader the criteria and the higher the tier of the plan, the more likely it is that specific landscape expertise will not be essential. The information in Landscape Character Assessments should be a sufficient basis for informed

judgement. However, the further down the plan hierarchy and the more detailed the assessment criteria, the more likely it will be that a landscape specialist will need to be part of the assessment team.

52/

Consequently, it is recommended that the assessment of landscape effects is undertaken in stages as follows:

For very **broad scale**, national or regional, plans; and also to the overall aims or strategies of more detailed plans, use a single assessment criterion. For example:

Is the plan / programme / aim / strategy unlikely to have a significant effect on landscape, or are the effects likely to be consistent with protection, enhancement, or restoration and sustainable management of landscape character, local distinctiveness and scenic value and the enjoyment or understanding of the landscape?

See Worked Example 1 below

53/

To test all the **general policies** in a plan for their potential effects on landscape, apply a checklist of no more than three landscape criteria. The three suggested criteria are:

- Are the effects of the implementation of the policy likely to be consistent with the protection, enhancement or restoration of landscape character and local distinctiveness (as described in a landscape character assessment)?
- Are the effects of the implementation of the policy likely to be consistent with the protection, conservation and sustainable management of the special qualities of (list relevant to the area of the plan) the X World Heritage Site, the X National Park, the X and X National Scenic Areas, the X and X Special Landscape Areas?
- Are any opportunities to enhance landscape character and distinctiveness or people's understanding and enjoyment of the landscape recognised and promoted in the policy?

Many will have no likely effect on landscape at all, and it will be possible to quickly complete all three criteria with a 'no effect' responses (see for example, the Worked Example 2 and Table 6 below). Others will require more careful analysis.

54/

For more **specific policies and explicit proposals** for change, a closer examination of their implications for landscape objectives will be necessary and a number of criteria may need to be applied, via a checklist. The importance of locally specific landscape objectives and criteria cannot be over-emphasised. The Landscape Character Assessment should be used to narrow down the criteria and to make them locally relevant and effective. A suggested checklist for specific policies and explicit proposals for change could take the following form:

- Is the proposal located in a designated landscape or its setting, where setting is important?
- Would the proposal be consistent with the protection, enhancement, or restoration and sustainable management of the designated landscape?
- In which landscape character type(s) is the proposal located?
- Are there guidelines for the type of change proposed?
 - If 'yes' is the proposal consistent with the guidelines or, if implemented in accordance with the plan, can the proposal be made to be consistent with the guidelines?
 - If 'no' in the assessor's judgement, is the proposal likely to be implemented in a way that would not adversely affect the key characteristics of the relevant landscape character type(s) as set out in the landscape character assessment?
- If negative effects on a designated landscape or on landscape character and distinctiveness are likely, can the proposal be modified to ensure consistency with the guidelines – e.g. by adding design criteria, by relocation or by reduction in scale?
- Would the proposal be consistent with policies to protect green belts; green corridors or wedges of green land important because they penetrate or separate



- urban areas; and important open areas which contribute to the distinctive setting, identity or backdrop of settlements?
- Would the proposals be consistent with policies to enhance promote or maintain people's enjoyment and understanding of the landscape.

See Worked Example 7 below.

Worked examples of the assessment of a plan's strategy, a plan's general policies and a specific, but hypothetical, proposal are provided towards the end of this guidance.

Level of detail for landscape assessment

55/

The level of detail of the assessment should always be appropriate to the scale of the plan and the likelihood, nature, scale and location of significant effects on the landscape. The smaller the plan area and the more detailed the provisions of the plan, the more detailed should be the assessment of the effects on the landscape. Site specific proposals will not be likely to be at a scale suitable for SEA

Effects on the landscape

56/

SNH will expect a Scoping Report to include at least a summary or broad outline of the key landscape changes anticipated as a result of the plan, which may be significant in the context of the plan and which will be subject to assessment. The outline need not be detailed, it could take the form set out in Table 1 above, and should be sufficient to re-assure SNH that all **relevant** landscape changes are likely to be assessed.

Assessing effects on the landscape

Introduction

57/

Schedule 3 of the 2005 Act, and Annex 2 of the Directive, require that the assessment must include an analysis of:

- Short, medium and long-term effects;
- Permanent and temporary effects;
- Positive and negative effects; and
- Secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects.

58/

Short term effects on landscape (for example, those lasting less than a year or so) are less relevant to SEA than project EIA. They may also be more difficult to identify at a strategic scale. Consequently, the SEA is likely to concentrate on medium and longer-term effects, and permanent change to landscape.

59/

Positive landscape effects should be identified as well as negative effects. It is important to bear in mind that SEA can be an important mechanism for identifying and promoting ways in which plans and programmes could enhance landscape character and distinctiveness. Where such opportunities are identified they should be flagged up in the SEA process, so that the plan can be improved.

Assessing cumulative and synergistic effects on landscape

60/

Landscape is vulnerable to the cumulative effects of a number of changes over time. Cumulative landscape and visual impact assessment is increasingly used in project EIA and reported in environmental impact statements. However, SEA should be able to identify and evaluate whether areas are likely to experience particular



Individual developments considered cumulatively as part of a development plan could change the character of the open space around or between settlements

concentrations of landscape effects as a result of a plan. Cumulative effects on the landscape can arise in a number of ways:

- As a result of the interaction between plans, for example, two adjacent local development plans where housing allocations could combine to produce significant landscape effects. Similarly, proposals for improving transport links in a remote rural area coupled with changes in woodland type and cover as a result of a forestry strategy could have impacts on landscape character and sense of wildness or tranquility.
- As a result of a combination of policies or proposals within a plan interacting to produce significant effects, for example, proposals for renewable energy development, coupled with proposals for developing the electricity grid infrastructure.

61/

Secondary effects might result for example, from a proposal to reduce travel time to work which encourages development close to population centres which may place more pressure on landscape settings of towns and villages, or on greenbelts.

62/

Synergistic effects (where two or more factors act together, potentially causing a greater level of change than from cumulative effects) are less relevant to landscape assessment in this context. Nevertheless, it is likely that any such effects on landscape would be assessed via cumulative impact assessment to the extent that would be necessary in SEA.

63/

Chapter 12 of the Scottish Government's SEA Tool Kit deals specifically with cumulative, synergistic and secondary effects. It defines them, outlines a methodological approach and provides references to other sources of information. Further research and evolution of practical methodologies is required in this field. It is likely to be related to advancing techniques in assessing landscape sensitivity and capacity. In the meantime, if an assessment team is concerned that there may be scope for cumulative effects on landscape as a result of the implementation of a plan, they should discuss this with SNH and may need to record any difficulties, including lack of technical expertise, in accordance with the requirements of Section 14 and



Schedule 3 of the 2005 Act.

For further guidance on assessing cumulative and synergistic effects in plans and programmes, see also *Planning Advice Note 1/2010 Strategic Environmental Assessment of Development Plans*.

Assessing options and reasonable alternatives

64/

As a plan evolves it is important that the effects on landscape of the various options or alternatives that may be considered are assessed. When choosing preferred options or alternatives landscape should be given the same weight as other effects on the environment. Input from landscape specialists may be required to make the assessment defensible and robust. This may be particularly relevant for plans affecting valued or sensitive landscapes.

65/

Schedule 3 of the 2005 Act requires Environmental Reports to include an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with. This explanation should include a description and assessment of significance of the effects on the landscape of the alternatives examined alongside the other SEA topic areas.

Assessing the range of policies in the plan – policy gap analysis

66/

Checking that the plan has not overlooked any issues is an important step in the SEA process because it helps to ensure that all relevant policies for landscape (and other environmental) conservation issues are included. This will reduce the likelihood of important environmental protection and enhancement issues being overlooked during implementation of the plan.

Assessing the aims, policies and proposals of plans and programmes

67/

The following section illustrates the approach to selecting the environmental objectives and criteria, with some worked examples. This includes how the objectives, policies and proposals of a plan may be assessed for their landscape effects.

Reporting the significance of effects

68/

The use of assessment matrices is almost universal – but is not essential. A matrix allows for the systematic, manageable and easily interpreted presentation of the many interactions between the assessment objectives and criteria and the likely effects on the landscape of a plan's objectives, policies and proposals. Many Environmental Reports have published and presented the findings of the assessment of effects on landscape by way of

- a short assessment table or matrix in terms of the assessment of the effects of the plan's aims and strategy on landscape and other environmental issues, similar to Table 5 below; and / or
- a detailed assessment matrix including representation of the effects of the plan's policies on landscape, similar to Table 6 below; and / or
- a matrix, or checklist of criteria, against which the plan's more detailed proposals have been checked and the outcome in respect of each proposal, similar to Table 7 below.

For further guidance on assessing the aims, strategy, policies and proposals in plans and programmes, see also *Planning Advice Note 1/2010 Strategic Environmental Assessment of Development Plans*



Birnie Loch – sand and gravel pit restored as nature reserve could be a form of mitigation picked up as part of a minerals strategy. This will consider landscape as well as biodiversity impacts.



Blocked ditch on Blawhorn Moss NNR. As part of a wider management plan, this could have significant landscape impacts depending upon the scale of the proposed works and the area covered by the plan.

Mitigation

69/

Mitigation is an essential consideration in SEA. Where adverse effects have been identified it is important to suggest ways in which you can avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for them. Residual effects from mitigation measures also need to be assessed. For example, for major infrastructure programmes a mitigation measure might be to carry out woodland planting to help integrate the development with its surroundings. It is important that any negative as well as positive landscape impacts associated with this are assessed. The strategic nature of this process needs to be borne in mind so that mitigation measures are realistic at that level.

Monitoring

70/

Sections 14 and 18 of the 2005 Act require the responsible authority to make provision for the monitoring of the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan. The monitoring should be designed to identify any unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and to undertake appropriate remedial action. References to other guidance in respect of monitoring techniques, the selection of indicators, information requirements and timescales are considered further below.

71/

In terms of the landscape, monitoring needs to concentrate on the effects of the implementation of the plan, rather than general changes to the landscape, many of which may be caused by factors which have no relation to the plan. Thus, most development plans will need to concentrate on changes brought about by land use change and built development provided for, or stimulated, or controlled by the plan. Conversely, an agricultural plan should concentrate on changes to the landscape caused by changes in the type of agriculture, changes to cropping patterns, grazing regimes or intensification of agriculture resulting from the plan.

72/

Ideally, monitoring indicators (and related targets) should be linked, directly or indirectly, to the landscape objectives and criteria where these have been used in the assessment process. This will help to ensure that monitoring remains focused on the effects and effectiveness of the plan in relation to landscape planning objectives. Thus, where relevant, there may need to be three monitoring indicators related to the three criteria suggested in paragraph 51 related to:

- Objectives for landscape character and distinctiveness;
- The protection, conservation and sustainable management of designated landscapes;
- Enhancement of landscape character and distinctiveness and people's understanding and enjoyment of landscape.



73/

Examples of possible indicators for monitoring plans related to forestry, transport and energy are set out in Table 4 below. These are only illustrative and would need adaptation, especially where they can be tailored to better fit local landscape issues and pressures for change and the information currently available.

Table 4 Examples of indicators for landscape change for plans and programmes

Sector	Possible indicator
Forestry	Net increase in woodland area and percentages of increase consistent / inconsistent with policies in the plan
	Net decrease in woodland area and percentage of decrease consistent / inconsistent with policies in the plan
	Percentage increase / decrease of broadleaved woodland cover in Landscape Character Type A1 where the policy is to increase total extent of woodland cover and proportion of broadleaved woodland, in accordance with LCA Guidelines
	Proportion of total woodland with a management plan less than x years old
Transport	Increase in land take for infrastructure projects
	Percentage increase / decrease in landscape character areas affected by infrastructure
	Area (in absolute or percentage terms) of wild land search areas affected by the construction of new infrastructure proposed, managed or stimulated by the plan
	Increased incidence of land segregation or separation – as an indication of fragmentation of landscape habitat
	Number of occurrences of the severance of a continuous linear landscape feature, such as boundaries or tree belts), contrary to plan policies
Energy	Increased land take for energy developments
	Change in extent of areas from which one or more developments would be visible although this may be difficult to ascertain
	Incidence of man-made features proposed, managed or stimulated by the plan which affect wild land search areas

For further guidance on monitoring see also update reference to new PAN insert link when available

¹²Note these worked examples relate to a specific level of plan and the level of detail may not be relevant in all cases.

Worked Examples for Assessment Stage

Worked example 1

Assessing the overall aim or strategy of a plan

The example used here is that of a recently adopted local plan. Its strategy comprised almost 20 key strategic objectives of which ten are selected here for illustrative purposes.

The landscape criterion used is that suggested earlier in this guidance:

Is each element of the strategy unlikely to have a significant effect on landscape, or are the effects likely to be consistent with protection, enhancement, or restoration and sustainable management of landscape character, local distinctiveness and scenic value and the enjoyment or understanding of the landscape?

The table illustrates that the strategic objectives in the Local Plan are largely compatible with the landscape criterion. Where there are qualified comments the plan authors should consider amendments to the plan, for example, by adding caveats or landscape protection or management policies. They may also need to be followed up in the Post Adoption Statement.

Table 5 Assessment of the Strategic Objectives against Landscape Criterion

	Strategic Objective in the Local Plan	Compatibility Landscape Criterion	Comments
1. 1 2. 1	Protect the area's built and historic environmental assets from inappropriate development	Yes	Consistent with landscape conservation objectives
3. 22	Avoid coalescence and the loss of community identity	Yes	Consistent with landscape conservation objectives
4. 3	Protect and enhance the countryside and rural environment, the landscape setting of towns and villages, and areas of urban green space	Yes	Consistent with landscape conservation objectives
5. 4	Ensure careful integration of new building into the landscape	Yes	Consistent with landscape conservation objectives
6. 5	Seek the reuse of brownfield land in preference to the development of greenfield, especially Green Belt land	Yes	Generally consistent with landscape conservation objectives, although some brownfield land may be more appropriately restored to fit landscape character
7. 6	Promote the use of renewable energy sources where this can be achieved in an environmentally acceptable manner	Qualified	Caveat important in absence of a landscape sensitivity study for wind energy development in sensitive landscapes
8. 7	Seek to achieve high quality of design in all new development including measures to promote community safety and energy efficiency	Yes	Consistent with landscape conservation objectives
9. 8	Safeguard biodiversity and take full account of development impact on the water environment	Yes	Consistent with landscape conservation objectives



10. 9	Provide an adequate supply of housing suited to local needs, including affordable housing	Qualified	Relies on cross-compliance with other strategy objectives and landscape protection policies, a mix of well designed, well located local housing developments can have landscape as well as social benefits
11. 10	Support the growing local economy by creating quality and sustainable business locations and providing positively for the expansion of existing enterprises	Qualified	Potential adverse effects on landscape relies on the qualification that business locations have to be “sustainable”. Expansion of existing enterprises on existing sites may not always be the most sustainable option, could have added “on appropriate sites” after existing enterprises

Worked example 2

Assessing general policies in a plan

By way of illustration of the assessment of general policies in a plan, a recently adopted Local Plan includes the following policies. Each is assessed in the following matrix for its effects on landscape using the three recommended criteria suggested earlier in paragraph 51:

- Objectives for landscape character and distinctiveness;
- The protection, conservation and subsequent management of designated landscapes;
- Enhancement of landscape character and distinctiveness and people's understanding and enjoyment of landscape

Policy ENV 13

New woodlands for community use, and planting for bio-fuels will be supported, where there is landscape and design integration, biodiversity enhancement and multi-use benefits including, where appropriate, public recreational access, particularly near to communities.

Policy ENV 21

The council will protect the six Areas of Special Landscape Control shown on the proposals map from intrusive development in order to retain their landscape character. The council will promote opportunities to enhance the six Areas of Special Landscape Control and their accessibility to the public for recreational and educational purposes in a manner that does not undermine their landscape character and biodiversity value.

Policy EM 11

Outwith settlement boundaries or employment areas, proposals for industrial or business uses will be permitted on the edge of settlements, defined as having a conterminous boundary with the settlement boundary (which are shown on the proposals map), if all the following criteria are met:

- a) the character, scale and location of the proposals are compatible with landscape settings in terms of design, position and materials;
- b) proposals respect areas of natural, built and archaeological importance;
- c) proposals are not sited in a designated landscape area or countryside belt as identified in Chapter 3;
- d) there is a lack of development opportunities within the settlement;

- e) applicants can demonstrate that the use/re-use of vacant or derelict land and buildings is not practical;
- f) traffic generated would not create an unacceptable adverse impact on road safety or amenity; and
- g) proposals would not harm the amenity of nearby residents or other land uses.

Policy HOU 1

The sites listed in Appendix 6.1, and shown on the proposals map, are identified as housing sites which contribute to meeting the housing requirements over the local plan period, and the longer term.

Policy TC 7

Retail, commercial leisure, offices and higher density housing will be encouraged in, and on the edge of, Bxxxxxx town centre. Retail and leisure proposals outwith the town centre, that would prejudice its status as a district centre, will be resisted. The council will work with the other key agencies and landowners in the town centre to promote a re-development strategy that looks to make best use of existing under-used sites in and around the existing town centre, and which aims to integrate the major new housing development site at Wxxxxxxx, and improve local accessibility and circulation.

Table 6 Annotated extract from an assessment matrix reviewing landscape effects of general policies

Policy ref	Landscape character and distinctiveness Are the effects of the implementation of the policy likely to be consistent with the protection, enhancement or restoration of landscape character and local distinctiveness?	Designated landscapes Are the effects of the implementation of the policy likely to be consistent with the protection, conservation and sustainable management of the special qualities of Special Landscape Areas?	Landscape enhancement Are any opportunities to enhance landscape character and distinctiveness or peoples' understanding and enjoyment of the landscape recognised and promoted?
Env 13	Yes Policy could have added that woodlands should be consistent with the LCA	Yes No explicit reference to the AGLV but nevertheless compatible	Yes A good example of this kind of integrated policy for enhancement of the landscape and its enjoyment
Env 21	Yes Two explicit references to retaining landscape character	Yes The object of the policy, notably encourages enhancement as well as protection of the areas	Yes Again a good example of an integrated policy for enhancement of the landscape and its enjoyment
Em11	Yes Landscape compatibility is a mandatory criterion	Yes Explicitly protects designated landscapes	No But limited opportunities in this context
Hou1	Uncertain Example of a policy that requires more detailed assessment of its specific proposals		
TC7	Yes An example of a policy that would have no effect on landscape at all		



Worked example 3

Assessing specific policies and explicit proposals for change

By way of example, the Fife Landscape Character Assessment (1998) is used to illustrate how a specific housing proposal on the edge of a settlement (west of Dunfermline) may be assessed. It is located in the Lowland Hills and Valleys landscape character type. It is further assumed the (hypothetical) proposal is an option for a large-scale housing allocation in the Local Development Plan on rising land close to the edge of the settlement.

Table 7
Extract from a checklist assessing a specific proposal against environmental criteria

Checklist landscape criterion for the proposal	Assessment findings	Comments
Is the proposal located in a designated landscape or its setting, where setting is important?	No	
Would the proposal be consistent with the protection, enhancement, or restoration and sustainable management of the designated landscape?	N/A	
In which landscape character type(s) is the proposal located?	C.5 Lowland Hills and Valleys unit LH37	The most extensive landscape character type in Fife and the one with several of Fife's larger settlements within it, so built development is not incompatible with the landscape type per se
Are there guidelines for the type of change proposed?	Yes see D.5 Settlements and Built Development	The Fife LCA has a section (D) 'Landscape Guidelines' and explicitly addresses small and large-scale built development west of Dunfermline in landscape unit LH37
If there are guidelines, is the proposal consistent with the guidelines or, if implemented in accordance with the plan, can the proposal be made to be consistent with the guidelines?	No, guidelines warn that area has limited capacity for large-scale new built development, explicitly in LH37 steering large scale development to areas disturbed in the past and referring to the need to avoid prominent slopes and skylines	The option has a negative impact and is inconsistent with quite detailed guidance in the Landscape Character Assessment. The option should be reviewed
If there are no guidelines, in the assessor's judgement, is the proposal likely to be implemented in a way that would not adversely affect the key characteristics of the relevant landscape character type(s) as set out in the landscape character assessment?	N/A	

<p>If negative effects on landscape character and distinctiveness are likely can the proposal be modified to ensure consistency with the guidelines – e.g. by adding design criteria, by relocation or by reduction in scale?</p>	<p>Yes, the allocation could either be reduced to become a small-scale development or relocated to an area previously disturbed and away from prominent slopes and skylines</p>	<p>On review the option can be changed and when re-assessed will be compatible with the guidelines and would avoid an adverse effect on the landscape at a strategic assessment level.</p>
<p>Would the proposal be consistent with policies to protect green belts; green corridors or wedges of green land important because they penetrate or separate urban areas; and important open areas which contribute to the distinctive setting, identity or backdrop of settlements?</p>	<p>Yes, however, the LCA specifically refers to the need to avoid skylines, partly because of the important backdrop they provide for the settlement, but this has not been expressed explicitly in policy</p>	<p>Nevertheless the modification to the proposal resulting from the above review would eliminate this inconsistency and protect the setting of the settlement, so avoiding an adverse effect on the landscape at a strategic assessment level.</p>