

Scottish Natural Heritage

# Commissioned Report 293

The View from the Road

*Investing in the 'shop window' for Scotland's landscape asset*





# COMMISSIONED REPORT

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**Commissioned Report No.293**

## **The View from the Road**

***Investing in the 'shop window'  
for Scotland's landscape asset***

(ROAME No. F04NC26)

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# COMMISSIONED REPORT

# Summary

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## The View from the Road

*Investing in the 'shop window' for Scotland's landscape asset*

**Commissioned Report No. 293 (ROAME No. F04NC26)**  
**Contractor: David Jarman – Rural Landscape Enrichment**  
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### Background

For some years now it has been recognised that roads are important features of the landscape. Since the Scottish Office refined its thinking on road design, culminating in the guide 'Fitting Roads', the appearance of the road in the landscape, but also the ability to see and enjoy the landscape from the road, has become more important as a design factor. This study is concerned with making more of these opportunities through the active management of views from the road and places to stop for this purpose.

This report draws on more than 50 interviews with representatives of a wide range of public agencies, non-governmental organisations, and private sector interests, and on a Workshop attended by over 30 delegates in Perth on 21 February 2005. All those contacted were receptive to this initiative, and many are enthusiastic about pursuing the concept of "view management". The study and its recommendations focus on the prime rural landscape of Scotland as seen from public roads, but the concept is applicable to urban approaches, inter-urban routes, and degraded or less attractive areas. It is also relevant to other modes of transport, including railways, cycle routes, and long-distance paths.

### Main findings

- view protection and improvement has many benefits – for sustainable tourism, for biodiversity, for countryside access, for local people, for the mobility-impaired, for rural businesses, farmers and land managers
- this can be an 'early win' – we don't need a lot of research, consultation, legislation, or even large financial commitments – it can grow incrementally, and there are people out there – communities, tourism interests, land managers – wanting to see some action
- the key players should get together, agree the way forward, involve other interests and supporters, and ideally appoint a 'project champion'
- it is recommended that 'View Corridor Management Plans' are put together for four pilot study routes covering all the main problems, opportunities and key players. These plans should be quick and simple – just a way of selecting priorities for cost-effective action.

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## OVERVIEW

### Introduction

This report draws on more than 50 interviews with representatives of a wide range of public agencies, non-governmental organisations, and private sector interests, and on a Workshop attended by over 30 delegates in Perth on 21 February 2005.

All those contacted were receptive to this initiative, and many are enthusiastic about pursuing the concept of “view management”. A list of those who have contributed to this research is contained in the Annex to this report.

The study and its recommendations focus on the prime rural landscape of Scotland as seen from public roads, but the concept is applicable to urban approaches, inter-urban routes, and degraded or less attractive areas. It is also relevant to other modes of transport, including railways, cycle routes, and long-distance paths.

Although SNH commissioned this small ‘scoping study’, the concept can only progress if it is taken up by partnerships of interested bodies and groups, whether at national, regional, or local level.

The recommendations here put forward for next steps and for practical action to make much more of our landscape asset are those of the author alone.

I would like to thank all who gave of their time for an abundance of wisdom, ideas, examples, and encouragement which has far exceeded my initial expectations. My eyes have been opened, as I hope we might now open the eyes and enrich the experience of our visitors and our own people.

The commitment of SNH to this study has made it a pleasure to pursue. The nominated officer for the project was Pete Rawcliffe ([peter.rawcliffe@snh.gov.uk](mailto:peter.rawcliffe@snh.gov.uk)), and he remains for now the first point of contact for future action.

### The Examples

Since a small scoping study could not expect to cover the whole country, it was decided to take the A82 from Glasgow to Inverness as a classic scenic route, and interview bodies and interests along it (as well as national organisations). This had the advantage of covering a good cross-section of regionally-based bodies. Many of the examples which illustrate the themes of this study come from this route or its vicinity, and do not purport to be fully representative of the issues across Scotland:

1. A87 Invergarry-Kyle : Loch Garry	broad views across mountains and lochs on the tourist route to Skye impeded by extensive conifer afforestation
2. A821 Aberfoyle-Brig o’ Turk : Duke’s Pass	classic views in the Trossachs restored by extensive conifer clearance
3. A85 Lochearnhead-Crianlarich : Lix Toll	prime National Park views obstructed by narrow belts of forestry
4. A822 Crieff-Amulree : Sma’ Glen	gateway to the highlands hemmed in by a ribbon of planted conifers
5. B852 Dores-Foyers : Loch Ness	longstanding example of local view protection
6. A82 Luss-Tarbet : Loch Lomond	recent action to restore views from a Trunk Road
7. A82 Fort William-Corran Ferry : Loch Linnhe	fine views across a sea loch to hills opposite obscured by native woodland
8. A82 Inverness-Fort William : Loch Ness	ideas for multiple benefit woodland management on marginal private land



9. A82 Bridge of Orchy-Glencoe : Rannoch Moor	difficulties of stopping to enjoy iconic views of Scotland
10. A9 Perth-Tain	scope for integrating functional and scenic stops on a purpose-built trunk route
11. A9 Bruar	provision and maintenance of a high-quality stop by private enterprise
12. A82/A830 Fort William -view of Ben Nevis	creating opportunities to see Britain's highest mountain
13. M9 Stirling : views to the Castle and the Highlands	scope for an international-standard facility at a major tourist hub
14. A835/A894/A838/A836 North-West Highlands Tourist Route	slowing the pace with a sequence of view-and-info points
15. A9 Aviemore-Dalwhinnie	mast on skyline above Ruthven Barracks
16. A82 Tyndrum-Bridge of Orchy	funding options for upgrading the classic views of Beinn Dorain and the Horseshoe Viaducts
17. The View of Ben Nevis	a private enterprise option

## The Quick Read

### *The resource*

- the landscape of Scotland is one of its greatest and most bankable assets - **most visitors to Scotland come to see the scenery**
- many Scottish people like to travel around to enjoy their country, and value their own local views and landmarks
- people see the scenery mostly from the roads, on car journeys – but also from coaches and trains, and while cycling and walking
- we know very little about what they see, what they like, what disappoints them – visitors don't like to criticise, and there is no-one to complain to

### *The challenge*

- rural Scotland looks increasingly to tourism as its economic mainstay: so you *can* live off scenery
- we do try and protect the scenery (planning system, National Parks) : while it is often being eroded, this study is not about the threats to it
- but **we do very little to manage views of the scenery**, although a few good examples show what can be achieved
- there are many areas where good views have been lost, mainly to forestry : this is a legacy of the past, and some views can be regained by forest redesign
- a new problem is emerging : in some areas, views are rapidly being obstructed by thickets of self-sown trees, both deciduous and coniferous

- this is mainly because grazing by sheep, cattle and deer is being reduced
- it will become ever more costly to combat ‘weed trees’ as they grow and spread – the experience of rhododendron control is salutary
- view protection and restoration is an exciting challenge and opportunity for creative land management – integrating both farm and forestry practice

### ***Places to stop***

- **places to stop and admire the view** are just as important (the great photo with us in the foreground is the prime take-home product for scenic tourism)
- there are many iconic views from main roads where you can’t stop, or if you can it’s a mess with no facilities
- abroad, scenic routes have high quality stops with facilities, refreshment, supervision, short walks... we have a few half-decent examples too
- scenic viewpoints have great potential for communities and businesses to sponsor maintenance, to flag up local attractions, to interpret their heritage, even to develop tourist and recreation services
- the best views could be promoted nationally as ‘the Scottish Collection’

### ***The opportunity***

- view protection and improvement has many benefits – for sustainable tourism, for biodiversity, for countryside access, for local people, for the mobility-impaired, for rural businesses, farmers and land managers
- **this can be an ‘early win’** – we don’t need a lot of research, consultation, legislation, or even large financial commitments – it can grow incrementally
- there are people out there – communities, tourism interests, land managers – wanting to see some action
- the key players should get together, agree the way forward, involve other interests and supporters, ideally appoint a ‘project champion’
- this report recommends that ‘View Corridor Management Plans’ are put together for four pilot study routes covering all the main problems, opportunities and key players. These plans should be quick and simple – just a way of selecting priorities for cost-effective action. And added together, they give a highly promotable ‘Grand Scenic Tour of Scotland’ – hopefully one of many.



## 1. GENESIS OF THE STUDY

For some years now it has been recognised that roads are important features of the landscape. During an era when new road building was predominant, the Scottish Office refined its thinking on road design, culminating in the guide 'Fitting Roads'. This considers the appearance of the road in the landscape, but also the ability to see and enjoy the landscape from the road.

On a suggestion by the Society of Chief Officers for Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS), and with support from the Scottish Society of Directors of Planning (SSDP), the Scottish Executive Roads Directorate commissioned a study entitled 'Rural Road Furniture' from Turnbull Jeffrey Associates. This study, to be published shortly, addresses visual detractors associated with roads, such as signage clutter, intrusive crash barriers, and utility installations. The present author represented both SCOTS and SSDP on the advisory group for this study, along with other local government colleagues.

In the course of this study, it became evident that enjoyment of the landscape from the road is of increasing importance for travellers, whether Scottish-based or visitors. Very little had been done to assess people's experience of the landscape while travelling our rural road network, let alone to maintain or enhance its scenic attributes. The present author drafted a sample study of one trunk route – the A82 from Inverness to Glencoe – to identify the extent of any deficiencies and possible remedial measures. This paper (entitled 'Lochs and Glens – the View from the Road') was submitted to the Roads Directorate as the basis for a possible further study. It quickly became apparent that most of the 'problem' lay beyond the highway boundary, and thus beyond the proper scope of road network management. As the public agency with the lead remit for 'landscape', SNH was therefore approached with a view to taking forward a study.

### 1.1 The landscape question

This study has taken place at a time when the political priority for care and protection of Scotland's landscape has been growing in importance. While public concern has certainly been raised by the scale and number of recent wind farm proposals, several positive factors are also responsible for this. The advent of our Scottish Parliament and Executive has created a greater public awareness of Scotland's distinctive character. It has increased political capacity to address Scottish issues. Pioneering legislation has afforded rural communities a greater stake in their landscape asset, and has encouraged public access to enjoy the landscape. Two National Parks have just been created, with high expectations in respect of landscape quality. We now control our own forests, and Forestry reviews are exploring the potential for delivering public benefits beyond commercial timber production, including landscape restoration and enhancement. Tourism is being recognised as an increasingly important part of our economy: every promotion of Scotland highlights its landscape. Amongst NGOs, this issue is gaining prominence: Scottish Environment LINK has created a new Landscape Task Group\* and is regularly placing this as an agenda item before Ministers. And the UK push for rapid expansion of renewable energy is impacting heavily on Scotland and its landscape.

SNH itself has published a discussion paper "Scotland's future Landscapes ?" (Nov 2003), and held two well-attended events to launch and report back on it. This paper did note the

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\* the author here declares a non-pecuniary interest as Vice-Convenor of this Task Group, representing the Scottish Wild Land Group on LINK. Attaining this position postdates the SNH invitation to tender for this scoping study.

general value of “Scotland’s scenery as a significant generator of economic activity and opportunity” (p.5), but did not come down to specifics such as views and their management.

In sponsoring the present small study, SNH is marking the growing priority being accorded to ‘landscape’ as a positive issue in Scotland, and is seeking to find which partner organisations might want to join in exploring opportunities to make much more of our ‘scenic asset’.

*extract from “Scotland’s Future Landscapes ?” SNH 2003, page 5*

***Scotland’s landscapes working for Scotland***

- *visiting Scotland – Scottish tourism is vital to the Scottish economy, contributing around £4 billion and employing 193,000 people, nearly 8% of the Scottish workforce.*
- *branding Scotland’s products – many of Scotland’s traditional products use Scotland’s landscapes as a critical part in their marketing.*
- *media spotlight – advertising, television and films make increasing use of the unspoiled character of Scotland’s landscapes as a backdrop.*
- *investing in attractive settings – attractive landscapes are part of the image used to sell Scotland as a desirable investment location abroad.*

## 2. WHAT VIEWS ? WHICH ROADS ? WHO ENJOYS THEM ?

This study set out to look at the 'View from the Road' as seen by motorists touring Scotland – the car window as your own moving cinema screen, to quote one contact. It simply intended to reveal the extent to which their views were obstructed as they travelled along the prime scenic routes – and to find out how best to remedy this 'view loss' problem.

Several unexpected findings have changed the course of this study:

- it seems that we know hardly anything about what people actually think of our scenery, or how tourists perceive and value landscape here or abroad
- we have some excellent examples of view improvement, and of good stopping places, but we don't make enough of them
- places to stop and enjoy the view are just as important as being able to see it as you go
- view loss because of afforestation is well-known, and a legacy of the past which can partly be remedied : the new and growing threat, in some areas at least, is uncontrolled natural regeneration (deciduous and conifer)
- potentially powerful sources of funding for view management may exist in grant support schemes for farm and woodland management, augmented in some areas by EU funds
- this is an area where public sector and private sector concerns clearly overlap – with enthusiasm on both sides to tackle the issues identified in this study.

We therefore need to clarify that the scope of this report has grown well beyond that 'trees blocking views as you drive' preconception. Most contacts have questioned the limits of the study, and have added their own dimensions to its possible remit.

They have highlighted two key components in how '**the view**' itself is seen:

- (1) the view from the moving vehicle
- (2) the view from static points at or near the roadside

In addition, several contacts have stressed the importance of the view (or sound) of the road and its traffic from elsewhere in the landscape.

In terms of **the land over which these views extend**, the management task divides into:

- (a) land within the highway boundary (usually only with new or widened roads)
- (b) the highway boundary itself, where walls/fences/hedges/trees may be public/private/mutual/ uncertain responsibility
- (c) land adjacent to the road in separate control
- (d) land away from the road but within its 'visual envelope' (actual or potential).

The possible **beneficiaries of these views** include:

- tourists\* in cars, coaches, and minibuses, on primarily scenic touring holidays, often with a bit of light walking and local sightseeing
- tourists here mainly for other reasons, whether family visits, golf, climbing...
- business visitors to Scotland
- Scottish people travelling in the course of employment, education, etc
- Scottish people travelling for pleasure, but not as tourists
- local people seeing their own immediate surroundings.

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\* 'tourists' are here taken as those spending money on leisure trips away from home, as against day trippers making only incidental purchases eg. petrol, light refreshments

(For simplicity, we accept that the vast majority seeing views from roads do so from motor vehicles: views seen while cycling and walking along roads can also be taken into consideration, while views from trains, boats, cycle routes, and long-distance paths are important minority interests to remember.)

And the **kinds of views** people see from the road include:

- classic Scottish landscapes of mountain, glen, loch, sea, island, moor, forest
- more managed rural landscapes associated with agricultural or lowland areas
- landscapes seen from motorways and main routes in the Central Belt and peri-urban areas
- landscapes altered or degraded by industrial development, minerals extraction, energy production, intensive or non-traditional agriculture, and extensive commercial forestry.

(For simplicity, we here exclude views of cityscapes, townscapes, villagescapes, and urban green spaces).

This study cannot address all these kinds of views, and all types of their beneficiaries. Views seen from our motorways and approaching our cities by visiting business people have long been recognised as vital to the image of areas with investment potential or needing regeneration. Projects such as reclaiming derelict coal bings or the M8 Sculptures have helped to transform impressions of the Central Belt. Some of the ideas proposed here will apply in such areas, but contacts made and issues addressed in this initial study are principally concerned with rural Scotland outwith what is called the Central Belt, and with views enjoyed by rural communities, people visiting from the rest of Scotland, and tourists.

The **speed and purpose of travel** is clearly important to what will be seen. A non-stop journey from A to B on business will glimpse, more or less subliminally, the most prominent aspects of the landscape. A touring journey along a rural trunk road will see less detail, but may give a broader general impression, than a run along country lanes and single-track roads. And a trip with numerous stops will see less overall, but will fix in the mind much more lastingly the selection of views dwelt upon.

These wide differences in journey character across the route network will govern thinking on view design and management for any given sector. A tourist route in a sensitive area may merit very detailed analysis, with sophisticated staging and interpretation of unfolding view sequences, whereas a busy trunk route may simply require protection of key vistas and good presentation of major landmarks at well-spaced intervals.

### 3. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE VIEW ?

For the most part, there is nothing much wrong with the view – providing you can see it. The images of Scottish landscape which entice visitors here are well known:

- views up to bare, rugged mountains and over open, sweeping moors
- views along straight or gently winding glens with handsome lochs and rivers
- views across firths and sea lochs to hills or islands beyond
- views enriched by fringes of natural woodland, by heathery slopes, by remnants of cultural heritage, by scattered settlement and crofting townships, and by fertile straths and lochsides amidst wilder settings
- views of native animals and birds in their habitats, notably deer and highland cattle, geese and birds of prey.

These are enduring features of the landscape, and many contacts have observed that they are taken for granted, will always be there, are not in any obvious need of protection or management (save the native vegetation). Of course, highly visible if superficial alterations to this landscape have been made by the Clearances, by afforestation (now gradually being softened), by energy and telecoms installations, and by one superquarry. It is not for this report to assess their past or prospective visual impacts, other than as elements to be considered in managing views.

The openness of the landscape is a significant factor differentiating Scotland from other mountainous lands. Systematic survey is lacking, but anecdotally at least, foreign visitors find it unusual and attractive to have the whole landscape ‘in the frame’ from water’s edge to summits, with unobstructed views from the road down to the water or up to the skyline commonly available. Such atmospheric views are harder to obtain in densely forested mountains, or where the scale is so great that the peaks are hard to see from roads in the confines of the valleys.

Such openness is now thought by some scientists to be fairly ‘natural’ and not a product of human over-exploitation. Our open mountains and moors are a scarce ecological as well as scenic resource in European and indeed global terms. But Scotland is also noted for the diversity of its landscape, and greater enclosure with emphasis on near views is characteristic of the drier, more fertile east and south of the country and also of some of the crofting landscapes in the north.

These open views of upland Scotland are in many places obstructed, chiefly by vegetation. One culprit – conifer afforestation - is longstanding, fairly well recognised, no longer expanding rapidly, and being addressed. Another – natural regeneration – is relatively new, scarcely recognised, poorly understood, and potentially very extensive as an obstruction to traditional open views. Rank grass, bracken, and gorse can also be a problem and are so different (planned: unplanned) as to merit separate attention. Interestingly, no contacts took any great exception to the notion of cutting trees down for views.



### 3.1 Conifer afforestation

Since 1919, forest cover in Scotland has expanded from a very low ebb to currently 17% of the land area. Planting designs generally ignored views from roads, except at the best known outlooks such as at Loch Eck and Queen's View (Loch Tummel). Only as plantations matured did roads become 'tunnels' extending sometimes for many miles. More recent plantings have held the forest edge back from the road to preserve views, while restocking plans after clear felling have diversified the woodland structure. Even so, there are many places where views remain impeded, or where unplanted zones have been insufficiently generous.

#### **Example 1 – A87 Invergarry-Kyle : Loch Garry**

##### ***broad views across mountains and lochs on the tourist route to Skye impeded by extensive conifer afforestation***

*The road from the Great Glen to Cluanie and Kintail rises over a moorland shoulder giving splendid views across Loch Garry and into the fine mountains around Loch Quoich. The lower part has for many years been a 'tunnel' through a public forest. More recently, private afforestation at Tomdoun has come up to the road. Although the edge of planting has been held back, it is likely that some view encroachment will occur as the forest matures. This route is part of the main 'Road to Skye' followed by a large proportion of visitors doing the Highlands. It is recognised as a 'major tourism corridor' in the Draft Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy. This is a view which can best be enjoyed from vehicles as it unfolds – it is not sufficient to maintain a clearing from one photo-stop. As one of the highlights of a journey through to the west coast, this is a view protection and restoration opportunity which merits appraisal and investment.*

*Within the public forest, clear felling has begun at the west end, considerably improving views, and restocking will not come close to the road. The Forest Design Plan states FCS intention to provide expansive views over the loch to the hills in the long term. Future clear felling at the east end will result in limited restocking, mainly restoring former native woodland of which remnants remain.*

In this example, the terrain is such that view protection affects a wide area, with significant loss of commercially plantable land. Even so, this can be done where the priority is high enough. A recently completed scheme in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park illustrates this splendidly:

#### **Example 2 – A821 Aberfoyle-Brig o' Turk : Duke's Pass**

##### ***classic views in the Trossachs restored by extensive conifer clearance***

*This is one of the most popular 'scenic drives' in the Park, readily accessible from the whole Central Belt. It is also followed by numerous coach tours, with several large hotels in the vicinity. The road crosses an undulating moorland between valleys. As the Queen Elizabeth Forest matured, views became ever more constricted, even though planting had been held back so that the road was rarely in a 'tunnel'. Recent work by the Cowal and Aberfoyle Forest District has removed 7 ha of forest, restoring views of Ben Venue and Ben Ledi, and especially over Loch Achray and Loch Venachar. Visitor numbers at David Marshall Lodge have increased, with many favourable comments in the book, while coach operators and local hoteliers have reported enthusiastically on customer reactions. In this locality, many people will recall the views from before they disappeared.*

While these examples are extensive in their land-take, it is notable that many fine views have been lost to narrow strips of forest, usually between road and river or loch. Such strips were planted as they were deemed useless for other purposes, and to secure available grants, although they are commercially marginal if not now uneconomic.

### **Example 3 – A85 Lochearnhead-Crianlarich : Lix Toll**

#### **prime National Park views obstructed by narrow belts of forestry**

*The A85 here descends from Glenoglehead and turns along the open strath of Glen Dochart, in the Breadalbane sector of LL&T National Park. A large private forestry block extends over several square kilometres. Most of the block above the road is unexceptionable, and a short 'tunnel' above Lix Toll is of little consequence. However, the former fine open views during the descent to Ben Lawers and the Tarmachans are now becoming blurred, and may eventually be lost. The sense of arrival in the strath is marred by another tunnel west of Lix Toll, where views down to the river are cut off by a strip of conifers only 100-150m wide. From here also, the first and finest views of Ben More and Stobinian are glimpsed, but the roadside forestry interferes with them. On good low ground, this is an opportunity for conversion after clear felling to native woodland offering carefully framed views to the highest and noblest peaks in the Southern Highlands, and a gradual opening out of the strath.*

*Harvesting of older parts of this forest has begun, and there has been considerable FCS input into enhancing the restock design to avoid losing good views again. There is scope for further redesign in future felling phases, and it is not impossible that some felling could be expedited if significant view priorities are identified.*

### **Example 4 – A822 Crieff-Amulree : Sma' Glen**

#### **gateway to the highlands hemmed in by a ribbon of planted conifers**

*The Perthshire Tourist Route from Stirling to Pitlochry crosses the Highland Boundary Fault and enters the hills at Sma' Glen. This glen is only 4 km long, but is dramatically incised and craggy. For the first 2 km, views are substantially cut off by a strip of conifer forest between the road and the River Almond. This strip is never more than 100m wide, and often much less. On a steep bank, it is of incidental commercial value and is a prime candidate for early removal and restoration to rough grazing with some native woodland down by the water.*

Because the era of rapid forest expansion is now over, and encouraged by more enlightened forest design practice, contacts have tended to play down conifer afforestation as a view-loss issue. Since they live in Scotland, contacts are likely to have become inured to a proportion of any journey being through dense forestry. There were no widely-deplored examples known to many; rather, each contact might think of one or two cases that had stuck in their minds or generated local concern, for instance:

- A828 Ballachulish-Appin - views across Loch Linnhe;
- B862 Whitebridge-Fort Augustus – views down onto head of Loch Ness;
- A82 Tyndrum-Bridge of Orchy – view to Beinn Dorain/Auch Gleann;
- A83 Inveraray-Lochgilphead – views across Loch Fyne;
- A815/A886 Cowal – generally;
- A712/A714 Galloway Forest Park – generally;
- A939/A940 Nairn/Forres area – too much planting close up to the road; and
- A9 Helmsdale-Wick – views across Langwell valley to Caithness Hills above Berriedale.

The absence of mentions on the east side of the country reflects lack of contacts there, but may also indicate that forestry sits better in the more prosperous, less dramatic and more mixed landscapes there.

With many forests now undergoing clear felling, lost views are reappearing, if on a rotational basis and with lengthy periods when the foreground is distinctly unphotogenic. Continuous harvesting by selective felling has been advocated to avoid the 'unnatural' effects of clear-felling. However, continental experience suggests that selective felling in conifer forests does little to maintain views, and is just as unnatural in that no 'old-growth' trees are seen. Many contacts have observed that a proportion of non-native conifer forest in suitable places is welcomed by visitors, especially where visually appealing (larch copses, giant trees), for diversity, in framing views, and of course for shelter (e.g. Braes of Foss – Schiehallion car park). The proportion of the total forest estate which might beneficially be cleared or heavily thinned to restore prime views from roads is probably much less than 1%.

### **3.2 Native woodland regeneration**

Although the pilot report for this study looked at the A82 Great Glen route, where native woodland impedes views far more than do planted forests, it did not appreciate that this is a recent development. Nor did most contacts recognise this as a 'growing issue' for the future. Remarkably, the contacts most alert to this problem were coach tour operators, long resident in the Highlands, finely attuned to what their customers come to see, and able to spot changes in vegetation patterns before they have become chronic – and costly to remedy.

Forester and ecologist contacts pinpoint several factors behind the resurgence of natural vegetation in upland road corridors (presently definable as 'scrub' but a stage in succession towards native woodland):

- a general reduction in sheep densities, or complete removal of sheep;
- a general unwillingness to replace sheep by hill cattle;
- extension of deer fencing beyond actual planted blocks to enclose whole glens or upland massifs, notably in the SW Highlands;
- clear felling operations disturbing large areas in proximity to native seed sources, and a cessation of 'weeding' by foresters;
- curtailment of roadside vegetation control by roads authorities to that essential for safety and protection of structures and drainage, including serving notices on adjacent proprietors;
- climatic amelioration; and
- possible reductions in rodent populations as a result of disease, cyclical variation, and predator protection.

If the present rate of natural regeneration is left unchecked, it may in some areas become so extensive and continuous as to create 'tunnels' of native woodland. Some contacts drew a comparison with the invasiveness of *rhododendron ponticum*, which in a few areas obstructs valued views, and is very costly to control (an example where it is being removed for ecological reasons, restoring lost views as a side benefit, is along Loch Sunart on the A861 Ardnamurchan road). A few cases of natural regeneration control to preserve views have come to light:

#### **Example 5 – B852 Dores-Foyers : Loch Ness**

##### ***longstanding example of local view protection***

*The road down the SE side of Loch Ness is separated from the water by a strip of native woodland 50-100m wide, owned mainly by FCS. Twenty years ago, a trainee forester undertook a project to open a series of gaps broad enough to glimpse the loch while travelling. 'Gill's Windows' have been maintained by cutting every 5 years or so. They have become colonised by lay-bys giving access to the shore, frequented as much by local people as by tourists.*

### **Example 6 – A82 Luss-Tarbet : Loch Lomond**

#### **recent action to restore views from a Trunk Road**

*The construction of the new A82 over this stretch opened up vistas over the loch, which could previously only be glimpsed through fringing mature native woodland (as today north of Tarbet). With the passage of 20 years, regeneration of alder and willow thickets began obscuring most of these vistas. For some time the Trunk Roads authority resisted calls to clear the vegetation, since this had no priority for safety or maintenance. With the advent of the Scottish Parliament and a desire for 'joined-up government', several large gaps have been cleared, especially where 'scenic lay-bys' are adjacent. Today, in winter at least, visibility is more than adequate, although the thicket-gap-thicket sequence is a little unnatural. More could be done north of Rubha Mor promontory, but here public ownership may not extend to the lochside. Some contacts are concerned about the visual and aural intrusion of the road and its traffic as seen and heard from the islands and the 'tranquil' Balmaha shore, and from Ben Lomond. However, woodland fringes are ineffective in noise reduction: where this is an issue, bunding is required.*

Other routes where natural regeneration has been mentioned as a present or prospective threat to views include:

- A85 Crieff-Oban (notably Loch Earn, Strath Fillan, Dalmally);
- A82 Loch Ness / Loch Linnhe – see *Examples 7 and 8 below*;
- A830 Fort William-Glenfinnan (views across Loch Eil); and
- B8019 Loch Tummel.

### **3.3 Management of natural regeneration**

Natural regeneration is predominantly of birch, which is the main pioneer species in the uplands. It is not favoured by deer or sheep, and seeds prolifically with potential for dispersal and dormancy. Alder and willow occur close to water, while rowan only flourishes where herbivores cannot reach. All these species evolve as dense thickets, gradually becoming sufficiently widely spaced to permit visibility between stems – depending on how broad the wooded strip is. Eventually, oak and other large forest trees will succeed and suppress them, with greater spacing between trunks.

### **Example 7 – A82 Fort William-Corran Ferry : Loch Linnhe**

#### ***fine views across a sea loch to hills opposite obscured by native woodland***

*This prime tourist route winds along the shore of Loch Linnhe here, with arguably the finest views in the Great Glen across to the rugged mountains of Ardgour. Within the 30/40mph limits of Fort William, the view is semi-open but less impressive, and the foreground is in places poorly maintained, with some expanding patches of invasive Japanese knotweed. For the rest of this stretch, there is one glimpse at Heron Bay, and one pull-off at an FCS picnic area, but otherwise the view is almost entirely obscured by a narrow strip of wood. This is mainly of native species, presumably by natural regeneration after grazing was terminated, but with a prominent smattering of maturing conifers. These must have self-sown when the original plantation above the road in the 1920s reached seed-bearing age.*

*Provided that care is taken to ensure the view of the road itself is minimised, the removal of the self-sown conifers and retention of selected native trees and copses would make this one of the finest scenic drives in Scotland. It might also make driving this congested 'tunnel' less stressful, and reduce the risk of deer strike. Traffic along the far side of Loch Linnhe (A861) is very light and local, and visual intrusion would affect few.*

In some places, bracken, gorse, and even heather may grow tall enough to preclude views from lower vehicles. They are more readily controlled.

Ultimately, natural regeneration may evolve beyond the stage where it obstructs views, to a maturity where gaps occur naturally or filtered views reappear between the trees. This may mean waiting decades though, and may depend on grazing animals returning, and on accidents such as fire, gale, and flood. Contacts have pointed to ways of accelerating this process, by returning to traditional woodland management techniques:

**Example 8 – A82 Inverness-Fort William : Loch Ness**

**ideas for multiple benefit woodland management on marginal private land**

*For 20 miles, visitors hoping to see Loch Ness as they travel the trunk road along its NW side are unable to see the water for 80-90% of the time. Contacts advise that this is a relatively recent phenomenon. Centuries ago, these fertile (on sandstone), sheltered slopes not much above sea level were thriving oakwoods. They were managed to supply building timber which could be transported by water to Inverness and vicinity. The opening of the Caledonian Canal allowed exploitation for herring barrel staves and tanning bark. The gentler slopes were crofted. Afforestation above the road has terminated crofting, and discouraged deer from penetrating the long, narrow strip between road and loch. Native woodland regeneration has gone unchecked, with the several landowners seeing no economic value in this strip. Views survive only at some of the lay-bys, the odd improved stretch, and locally at Urquhart Castle and Allt na Criche. For 5 miles near Invermoriston, a new pole-mounted power line runs between the road and loch, requiring regular cutting of alder regeneration, thus creating an ugly thicket. Elsewhere, bracken grows higher than the roadside fence, precluding most views.*

*A return to traditional land management practices would have multiple benefits:*

- selecting and high-pruning standard oaks for long-term timber value (e.g. in heritage building restoration) would secure filtered views between trees and below canopy;*
- coppicing of birch and alder for firewood or biofuel energy would secure a sequence of open views, with clearings migrating over the years;*
- biodiversity would be enhanced by a mix of glades, coppice, and mature stands, as part of a strategically important wildlife corridor across the Highlands;*
- cultural heritage would be revealed and opened to interpretation, from early settlement to crofting, from timber processing to water transportation;*
- a limited return to crofting, with grazing by hill cattle, could be explored;*
- access to the loch shore would be improved, possibly including a more attractive finish to the Great Glen Cycle Route; and*
- road safety and tourism would benefit by making ‘monster-spotting’ (by passengers) less stressful, and by constructing larger off-road stopping areas for queue-busting, viewing (including coaches), interpretation, and land management.*

### **3.4 The problem of self-seeding exotic conifers**

Very few contacts have observed that planted conifers, notably sitka spruce, are now beginning to naturalise beyond forest limits. As with Scots pine, they will colonise thin drier soils as are often found along highway boundaries, and are not much deterred by road salt. Browsing is often least likely in these locations.

Localities where this problem is incipient include:

- A85 Strathyre-Lochearnhead** – roadside conifer ‘hedges’ along fences, which near Kingshouse are about to obscure the classic glimpse of Stobinian up Balquhidder Glen;

- **A82 Loch Lochy** – scattered conifers along crash barrier (deciduous regeneration should be selectively retained to moderate ‘race-track’ stretch); and
- **A9 Aviemore-Carr Bridge** – finest view to Cairngorms shrunk to one open field (with no stopping place to enjoy it) by narrow strip of birch and conifer planting and regeneration within boundary fence of new road and also of adjacent railway line.

This problem has recently been tackled on the A82 at Auch, near Bridge of Orchy, as part of a clear felling operation. Here, roadside conifer ‘escapes’ were beginning to obscure views of Beinn Dorain and the horseshoe viaducts (see *Example 17*). The need for similar treatment has been recognised along the A87 (see *Example 1*) and is included in the FCS Habitat Action Plan.

#### 4. CAN WE STOP FOR A PHOTO ?

Many contacts have stressed that the availability of good quality stopping places is at least as important as the ability to see the view while travelling.

At present, the provision of pull-offs\* is quite arbitrary and rooted in opportunism over the decades, except on purpose-built roads such as the A9. There is no set policy for their frequency or standard, and no priority let alone budget is attached to systematically improving them or filling the gaps. Several contacts drew unfavourable comparisons with provision of 'scenic outlooks' in North America, 'aires' in France, and their equivalents in other European countries.

This is a classic case where several agencies have an interest in an issue, but none has a clear lead role in either policy or implementation. Indeed, there is a tendency for pull-offs to be blocked up without replacement, where they are deemed hazardous, or the informal surface has deteriorated dangerously, or private landowners see them as a nuisance.

##### **Example 9 – A82 Bridge of Orchy-Glencoe : Rannoch Moor**

###### **difficulties of stopping to enjoy iconic views of Scotland**

*The experience of crossing Rannoch Moor is one of the greatest available to visitors on a main tourist route. It is one of the few places in Scotland where such a route is elevated and unconfined for a long stretch (for 10km above 250m). There are iconic views across the Moor and its lochs, and especially of the Blackmount and Buachaille Etive Mor. One or other of these views is de rigeur in every calendar. But there is not one good, well-located pull-off where visitors can take their own versions. There are three or four basic lay-bys, widely-spaced, but you have to walk hundreds of yards (on the road) to the classic vantage points. There is a large and immensely popular scenic pull-off just south of the Moor on the brow overlooking Loch Tulla which demonstrates the demand, but it is minimally maintained (it appears uncertain as to where the responsibilities of Roads Directorate and landowner fall). It has no interpretation or other amenities, except a snack van in season.*

*The Moor is protected by national landscape and nature conservation designations, and any enhanced provision would require extreme sensitivity. The site near the county boundary at the southern end is on the wrong side for northbound visitors, and should be supplemented further north at the prime viewpoint. The River Bà site is useful for recreational access, but is not a good viewpoint except for the corries of Stob Gabhar. At the northern end, a site should be created at the summit of the road, where views both towards Glencoe and east across the Moor to distant Schiehallion are outstanding. Nearby, an isolated 4-hectare block of forestry is now obscuring views across the Moor. Contacts suggest that this would ideally be restructured as more dispersed native woodland creating a sensitive setting for a scenic pull-off, with access required in any case for forestry purposes.*

There are several very good examples of scenic pull-offs, usually created by FCS or other local development interests, e.g.:

- A83 Arrochar-Inveraray - Rest-and-be-Thankful (FCS);
- A82 Tarbet-Crianlarich - Inveruglas (Park Authority, franchised to Loch Lomond Cruises to manage cleaning and toilets);
- A82 Corran Ferry-Fort William - Loch Linnhe picnic area (FCS);

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\* the generic term 'pull-off' is here used to cover any place where vehicles can legitimately pull off the road, whether public or private, or within or beyond the highway boundary. A lay-by is a properly designed and constructed roadside facility, maintained and usually signed as P by the roads authority. A rest area is such a facility but more spacious and well separated from the road.

- A82 Spean Bridge-Invergarry - Commando Memorial (upgrade by LEC);
- A826 Amulree-Aberfeldy - outlook at summit over Strathtay and Schiehallion;
- A835 Ullapool-Durness - Knockan Cliff (SNH) – views of Coigach hills; and
- B9176 Alness-Ardgay - Struie Hill outlook over Dornoch Firth.

#### **Example 10 – A9 Perth-Tain**

##### **scope for integrating functional and scenic stops on a purpose-built trunk route**

*This is the premier entirely new route in the uplands of Scotland, except for the M74 where special rules apply to stopping. Its design provided for emergency lay-bys every mile, and major rest areas were constructed at Ralia (Newtonmore), south of Inverness, and North Kessock, where tourist information is available. None of these stopping opportunities were located as scenic viewpoints, although that at North Kessock gives interesting if uninterpreted views onto the Inverness megaflood fan and the Beaully Firth narrows. Some of the lay-bys were designed with separating kerbs to protect sightlines, and others are now being upgraded to this standard for personnel safety and comfort. A few have basic information but none have interpretative displays.*

*There are several prime views available from the A9 where it is not easy to stop to enjoy and photograph them, e.g.:*

- *Pass of Killiecrankie;*
- *Blair Castle (several contacts observed that one lay-by gives a photo-opportunity through a screen of trees, but is not billed in advance)*
- *Ruthven Barracks;*
- *Cairngorms and Lairig Ghru;*
- *Moray Firth on approach to Inverness and;*
- *Ben Wyvis and Cromarty Firth crossing the Black Isle.*

*Some of these, and the scope for a 'Gateway', are being addressed by the Cairngorms National Park Authority.*

Opportunities to create good scenic pull-offs now arise chiefly with road improvement projects and shorter lengths of new construction. Contacts report dispiriting progress here:

- **A86 Newtonmore-Spean Bridge (Moy)** - viewpoint for Loch Laggan and Ben Alder massif resisted by SNH as potentially damaging to Creag Meagaidh NNR;
- **A830 Lochailort-Mallaig** - viewpoints for Morar and Small Isles rejected by Design-and-Build safety audit; and
- **A832 Achnasheen-Kinlochewe** - numerous informal pull-offs on single-track road adjacent to Loch Rosque closed and not replaced at insistence of landowner.

#### **4.1 Maintaining pull-offs – problems and opportunities**

Before considering the best means of promoting new and enhanced pull-offs, it is worth addressing the vexed question of maintenance. Clearly there is no point identifying funding for capital works if they cannot be maintained to the high standards which our visitors should expect.

Contacts in both national and local roads authorities have stressed the practical problems of maintenance of remote facilities, especially where abuses are commonplace. With limited



resources, the priority will always be for maintaining the carriageway and other safety-related activities. There is also the issue that many informal pull-offs have not been constructed to highways standards and liabilities may arise if ad-hoc maintenance beyond the strict limits of the carriageway is attempted. In other words, motorists using unsigned, unsurfaced pull-offs do so at their own risk (although they may not always know this, since many pull-offs have become 'surfaced' e.g. by contractors wishing to dispose of surplus materials).

The A9 is a special case, as a designated Clearway where no stopping is permitted outwith signed lay-bys. Elsewhere, roads authorities accept the need for safe pull-offs on busy, fast or narrow roads, to permit overtaking, for mobile phoning, and to deal with personal emergencies, but no service standards are set.

Many contacts have welcomed the notion that scenic pull-offs might become primarily the responsibility of local communities, tourism groups, and economic development interests to promote and maintain. There is a growing network of community enterprise groups, evolving out of the 'right-to buy' and forest disposals, or activated by national park, tourist development, and environmental concerns. By adopting scenic pull-offs and village gateways they have the chance to promote their identity, and advertise local attractions. There are potential linkages with heritage interpretation (cultural and natural), and with access to surrounding walks and other recreational opportunities, and even with local waste recycling initiatives. Local businesses may well be willing to sponsor pull-off maintenance, in the same way that they do floral displays on city roundabouts.

More controversially, some prime scenic points may be suitable for commercial development. There has been a long (and possibly counter-productive) resistance to permitting such facilities on main roads outwith settlements, notably those bypassed by the A9. There, one significant exception has arisen.

**Example 11 – A9 : Bruar**

***provision and maintenance of a high-quality stop by private enterprise***

*This is the only point north of Perth where it is possible to find a well-maintained, supervised car park with toilets and refreshments without a long detour off the route (during daytime hours). With the exception of the local path network, neither its capital nor its maintenance costs draw upon the public purse. It seems to be broadly welcomed, and not to have affected Blair Atholl unduly, their markets being relatively separate. It gives access to a scenic walk to Bruar Falls, but is not itself a scenic viewpoint.*

Several contacts have made comparisons with abroad. In the Alps and Scandinavia, it is not uncommon to find substantial private commercial ventures at mountain passes and lakeside views. These have evolved from times when travellers required shelter and sustenance between towns, but are not found to be incongruous today (many now double as ski bases). And along the main roads through the mountains, one expects to find petrol stations with good cafés and car parks at regular intervals. In North America, South Africa, and Australasia, scenic drives are promoted, often over great distances, with lodges offering all mod cons usually located at scenic overlooks.

It would be invidious here to identify actual locations where this might be attempted, but it is not difficult to exercise the imagination. A few examples do exist where wayside inns are located in (or close to) scenic surroundings, to show what might be achieved:

- A82 Bridge of Orchy-Glencoe - Kingshouse (off road);

- A82 Glencoe-Fort William - Isles of Glencoe Hotel (purpose-built on a promontory in Loch Leven, signed as a Viewpoint, but does not command the iconic views of Glencoe or Loch Linnhe); and
- A87 Invergarry-Kyle - Cluanie Inn (a good example of a refreshment stop in a scenic area, but not itself the ideal viewpoint).
- A835 Garve-Ullapool - Aultguish Inn (scenic value compromised by hydro dam)
- A836 Lairg-Tongue - Crask Inn (very modest, noted only for its rarity in a wild moorland with mountain views; compromised by forestry)

While planning policy has firmly resisted such rural commercial developments, new guidance (SPP15 and PAN 73) advocates a more proactive approach to rural diversification. If opportunities are identified in development plans, high design standards can be set, and requirements for public amenities and their long-term management can be specified (and secured by Planning Agreements). Ideally, via existing land ownership or the 'right-to-buy', local community enterprises would have first option to implement the development. An obvious candidate might be the Loch Ness Partnership.

Not all opportunities are isolated or themselves of great environmental sensitivity:

**Example 12 – A82/A830 Fort William : view of Ben Nevis**

**creating opportunities to see Britain's highest mountain**

*It is remarkable, given the iconic status of Ben Nevis as Scotland's highest summit, and with Lochaber promoting itself as 'Scotland's Outdoor Capital', that it is very difficult for the passing visitor to see the mountain. The classic view is from Corpach to the west, but this is only found by visitors detouring to the Caledonian Canal basin there. It is the blandest side of the Ben, disfigured by hydro penstocks and suburban housing estates, and with the great northern cliffs hidden. Visitors approaching from Mallaig along the A830 can only glimpse the mountain above trees and then industrial estates. From the Commando Memorial at Spean Bridge, the Ben is rather distant, and only the upper parts appear above its satellites. Although the Nevis Range ski road has a 'viewpoint' symbol, there is no designated scenic outlook along it, and views of the Ben are poor. Visitors travelling along the A82 in either direction could pass without knowing it was above them.*

*The Lochaber Geopark bid recognises the importance of Ben Nevis for visitor appeal and geological interpretation. It proposes a new viewpoint at the Rural Complex off the ski road. It also notes the possibility of a viewpoint at Trislaig on the west side of Loch Linnhe (A 861), but a much better vantage point on the 'quiet side' of the Great Glen would be on the B8004 Muirshearlich road.*

*To meet the expectations of most tourists, a simple photo point directly on the A82 is essential. A small lay-by just north of Fort William has a view to the cliffs almost in side profile, but it is unsigned. A better view might be obtained near Torlundy.*

**Example 13 – M9 Stirling : views to the Castle and the Highlands**

**scope for an international-standard facility at a major tourist hub**

*Contacts pointed out that many visitors travelling north obtain their first views of the Highlands from the M9/M80 intersection and vicinity (but not from the Service Area within it). A magnificent panorama from Ben Lomond east to the Ochils has Stirling Castle in the foreground, with the Wallace Monument soon appearing. Being a motorway, there is no possibility of stopping to enjoy it. A development opportunity might exist in the vicinity of Junction 10 (Craigforth), with tourist information and a view tower with interpretation. The only designated viewpoint for the Castle is a small lay-by on a B road close beneath it, from which its full setting is not appreciated. Its popularity indicates the demand for a facility of the quality one might expect to find approaching a historic city abroad.*

## 5. JUSTIFYING INVESTMENT IN THE VIEW FROM THE ROAD

Even with voluntary effort or private development, the main financial responsibility for creating, enhancing, and maintaining the view from the road will fall on the public sector. There are several lines of justification for this:

### 5.1 Tourism – investing in the ‘scenic product’

It can be taken as a given that ‘scenery’ is a prime reason for many tourist visits to Scotland. At the moment, broad-brush market surveys suggest that most visitors are well satisfied. Why then spend resources on something which is not a matter of general complaint, and where visitor numbers are reasonably healthy? This scoping study cannot provide an economic analysis of such a critique, but contacts have identified the following as common-sense lines of argument for pursuing the issue.

- If the ‘scenic product’ generates tourist spending of, say, £1 billion per annum, then it is good business practice to invest even a tiny proportion of its annual value in managing it, as is the norm with built heritage, commercial leisure facilities, and so forth.
- The ultimate take-home product for the scenic tourist is the photograph or video/digital clip, ideally an iconic view with self/family/friends in foreground. Good settings in which to capture such images are as essential as traditional backdrops for wedding photos. A portfolio of great pictures taken on holiday is a better marketing tool for return visits and word-of-mouth recommendations than paid advertising.
- It is very difficult to find out what visitors think of the views they get – they are highly unlikely to take the time to comment, and there is no recognised point of contact to complain to. Surveys are highly generalised and quantitative: they rarely make detailed qualitative assessments of satisfaction, or explore visitor perceptions in any depth. When we are abroad, we may have our own criticisms of the signposting in Italy or the tedious forests in Sweden, but the public bodies there will never get to know.
- If the aim is to take tourism up-market (increasing spend, rather than increasing numbers), then those more discriminating customers will be more critical of poor or absent facilities for view-appreciation.
- Scotland is a relatively peripheral, relatively expensive destination, with well-known problems of climate, insect life, and poor service standards. If other countries present their scenery better and more accessibly, then Scotland may gradually lose custom - Norway, France, North America, and even New Zealand were suggested as competitors.
- Scotland suffers from a seasonal attitude to its tourist industry, with attractions and services sparse outside peak periods. Scenery is promotable as a year-round asset, indeed often better enjoyed outside the summer months.
- Tourism is increasingly time-pressured. Visitors expect the most famous assets to be well-signed and readily accessible. If iconic views are not easily available, they will pass on by, rather than hunt about.
- Fundamentally, it is a matter of courtesy and good hospitality to welcome visitors to an area with the best it can offer by way of landscape. The rural Scottish attitude that ‘ye cannae eat scenery’ contrasts unfavourably with the entrepreneurial approach to scenic resources found abroad.

These arguments are framed with visitors from beyond Scotland in mind. Some contacts regard ‘internal tourism’ as a captive market – an argument also applied to coach touring.

However, given the unstoppable growth of cheap travel to foreign destinations, both main-holiday and short-break internal tourism must be regarded as at risk of leakage to more glamorous and better managed destinations.

## 5.2 Sustainable tourism

It may seem perverse to be promoting motor touring in the face of Kyoto agreements and government policy on minimising the need to travel, although few contacts were unduly concerned by this. Several arguments have emerged to suggest that view management may have sustainability benefits:

- good views slow the pace:
  - the more people can see of its beauties as they travel through an area,
  - the more attractive places there are, the more they stop, and
  - the more opportunities they then find to occupy their time in that locality,
  - then **the less far they will travel in a day.**
- both by word of mouth and by 'green' marketing, people will gain the idea that **you cannot 'do Scotland' in one visit.** They will be encouraged to concentrate on one area, and to return to pick up where they left off.
- motor holidays for couples, families and groups are likely to be more transport-sustainable than cheap flights to ever more distant places.

### **Example 14 – A835/A894/A838/A836 North-West Highlands Tourist Route**

#### ***slowing the pace with a sequence of view-and-info points***

*As visitors leave Ullapool heading north, a very large brown sign encourages them to follow this Route to John o'Groats, giving a distance of 160 miles. The subliminal message is that you put your foot down (it is mainly on improved sweeping roads) and get to the other end by tea-time. A number of contacts felt this was an outmoded promotional device. Far better to provide visitors with info boards in Ullapool, and at successive dramatic views on this road, advising of the many things that can be enjoyed within a short compass. With stop-offs and side-tracks for places like Knockan Crag (Geopark), Sandwood Bay, Smoo Cave, and the Kyle of Tongue NSA, it should take at least 4 days to reach John o'Groats. The benefits for disseminating local economic development in such remote areas should be evident.*

## 5.3 National prosperity

We are seeing a subtle shift of emphasis away from attracting inward investment (which justified imagescaping on the approaches to airports, cities, and development sites) towards recognising the importance of Scotland's skilled, professional, and entrepreneurial resources. This includes retaining able people in Scotland and encouraging in-migration in key sectors. For many of these mobile people, quality of environment is a significant factor in their locational choices. The growth of Inverness has been widely attributed to its perceived environmental attributes. All Scottish cities have readier access to fine rural surroundings than most conurbations in England, NW Europe, and the USA.

Managing the landscape so that its attractions can be viewed and enjoyed from the road network is all part of this subtle, long-term promotion of Scotland's special environmental identity.

## 5.4 Local economic development

Obviously, if visitor spending is sustained or increases as a result of investing in the 'scenic product', this will disseminate through the local economy with a typical multiplier effect. The scope for development projects associated with scenic routes and iconic views has been mentioned.

Employment creation in land management taps a different set of local skills. The kind of work involved in traditional woodland and landscape management is more labour-intensive than modern forestry, including fencing, drystone-dyking, extraction from small and awkward sites, and grazing control. It is also better suited to small local operators than to large contractors with mobile workforces. Quality maintenance of pull-offs and rest areas will also create local employment.

More generally, in the words of the National Planning Framework: 'as the rural economy changes, a high quality environment and a strong cultural identity will be key assets in promoting community development and diversification into new activities (para 67).

## 5.5 Road safety

Many contacts identified road safety benefits either as primary justifications for investment, or as useful spin-offs. With stopping places, these include:

- reduction of fatigue-related crashes, by providing attractive rest areas with a chance to stretch the legs (and preferably with coffee at most hours);
- reduction of driver distraction, by providing regular basic stopping places to deal with travel sickness, children, mobile phones; and
- reduction of stress and frustration-related crashes, by allowing faster or tailgating vehicles to overtake.

With roadside vegetation control for view management, safety benefits include the following.

- Reduction of fatigue-related crashes, by increasing positive visual stimuli while driving. Thus the sculptures along the M8 were welcomed by Police as reducing boredom and providing landmarks in featureless areas. In rural areas, the landmarks are more often natural or historical.
- Improvement of sightlines, whether to allow overtaking or to spot hazards
- Reduction of snowdrifting in wooded tunnels.
- Reduction of ice hazard in heavily shaded stretches, and of cost of winter gritting (especially where only a few localities are affected by shading).
- Reduction of gale-blown tree hazard.
- Reduction of deer collision risk, by reducing cover close to roads, and by taking deer fences away from roads.
- Improved safety for cyclists and walkers by restoring roadside verges.

A few contacts wonder if views can distract drivers, and if roads authorities refuse to cut back vegetation for this reason, e.g. along Loch Ness (as if roads authorities would ever invest in landscaping to close off 'dangerous views!'). In fact, driver concentration generally benefits from awareness of surroundings; opportunities to relax the eyes from hypnotically following the road markings are important. Common-sense will indicate where vegetation can usefully be retained, for example to emphasise approaches to sharp bends, and where open views can most safely be created.

Finally, view corridor design can include traffic calming, especially at scenic pull-offs, at junctions, at conflict points with cycle/walking routes, and entering settlements. A visually attractive approach to traffic calming will integrate road engineering, markings, signage, footways, landscaping, and view enhancement. The concept of 'natural traffic calming' with

minimal signage and construction works is being pursued by the Scottish Executive, and in English national parks such as Dartmoor and the Lake District.

## 5.6 Environmental justice

A number of contacts were at pains to stress that views are not just for tourists. They are a vital part of the heritage of the people of Scotland at large, and for local communities in particular. Many people hold their best local views high in their affections, while most people have favourite views somewhere in Scotland, whether seen only once or returned to often. Loss of prime views is a matter for individual or community regret, however inarticulate. Restoration of past-remembered views can bring great pleasure. These factors are inherently unquantifiable and uncostable, although economists have devised proxy valuation techniques which can place reassuringly substantial values on visual amenities.

More practically, a sizeable proportion of the population is **mobility-impaired**, and thus only able to enjoy scenery from vehicles, or from roadsides, or from very accessible paths close to parking places. The present inadequacies in stopping-place provision discriminate unduly against these groups, while they clearly have most to lose if roadside vegetation goes unchecked and increasing proportions of travel time are viewless.

View management should also have benefits for :

- **recreational access**, with related **health enhancement**:
- **biodiversity** (by designing routes and view wayleaves as wildlife corridors):
- **animal welfare** (by reducing roadkill); and
- **cultural heritage** and **natural environment** visibility and interpretation.

## 6. VIEW CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLANS

View Corridor Management Plans (VCMPs) appear to be a new concept, at least in Scotland and within the knowledge of contacts. This scoping study has not been able to conduct a full literature review or explore foreign practice, but well-known, tried and tested models have not come leaping out of the woodwork.

### 6.1 Scope and contents

The VCMP concept is essentially simple – and contacts have urged that it should be kept that way. It should be treated as a practical aid to consultation, prioritisation and implementation, rather than as requiring elaborate landscape and perception studies.

Most contacts have welcomed the idea of VCMPs, indicating that it would assist their own thinking, case-making, prioritisation and programming. It is seen as a useful tool for bringing together partners whose activities are currently quite separate, for mutual and multiple benefits. The scope of such plans is open-ended, but from discussions so far they might comprise:

#### ***...route character and highlights...***

1. map the broad 'visual envelope' of a given route (simply done from published maps backed up by observation)
2. identify the most important elements in the visual envelope likely to be appreciated by visitors (mountains, lochs, castles, etc)
3. record the places or stretches from which they are (actually/potentially) best observed
4. note any classic or 'iconic' views of regional or national importance
5. grade the general scenic quality of each stretch, noting whether its merits depend on openness and broad views or more on enclosure, trees, and near views of managed/settled landscape
6. assess the overall distinctive character of the route – whether singular or diverse – that marks it out from other routes

#### ***...views while travelling...***

7. identify where desirable views are fully visible / filtered / seasonally obscured / obstructed by woodland / likely to become obstructed if growth is unchecked (noting whether woodland is natural regeneration or managed forest)
8. identify proportion of route or stretch where views are presently/potentially obstructed, and suggest target for proportion to be kept reasonably open
9. note specific localities/short stretches which are high priorities to be kept permanently open
10. consider scope for 'stage managing' prime views and varying sequential views, with enclosure and revelation design techniques
11. establish owners' management intentions (e.g. redesign plans after felling; grazing regime; fencing) and suggest any adjustments to preserve/restore/maintain priority views or scenic character
12. record traditional elements of the cultural landscape, e.g. drystone dykes and fanks, which are important in the view and merit protection/restoration
13. record other visual detractors and scope for mitigation

**Example 15 – A9 Aviemore-Dalwhinnie  
mast on skyline above Ruthven Barracks**

*of the many telecom masts in the A9 view corridor, one of the most regrettable is on the skyline directly above Ruthven Barracks as one travels south. It is the clutter of security fencing and base station boxes that detracts as much as the mast itself. The compound is close to a straggle of conifer wood. Extension of the wood around it would do much to mitigate the intrusion, at minimal cost.*

**...stopping places...**

14. record all existing pull-offs, whether official lay-bys, official off-road pull-offs, or unofficial
15. rate them by capacity, availability to coaches/minibuses, construction standard, proximity to road, whether right side/wrong side/both sides of road, safety of access, safety/comfort for walking about/children/mobility-impaired, advance signage, information/interpretation, supervision/security, toilets, refreshments, picnic facilities, standard of maintenance, access to local walks, quality of view (near/broader), suitability of foreground for album photographs (room for people to stand, poles/overhead lines in frame)
16. suggest measures for upgrading existing stopping places to 'scenic pull-off' standard where suitably located
17. identify priorities for new or relocated scenic pull-offs
18. review overall provision of recognised stopping places to ensure it meets combined requirements for road safety, network maintenance, traveller facilities, and view appreciation

**...rural regeneration...**

19. evaluate scope for community/local business involvement in maintaining views and existing pull-offs
20. select best locations for local tourist information
21. select suitable locations for heritage interpretation and access to walks and other recreational opportunities
22. produce literature welcoming visitors to scenic route, highlighting what can be seen from it, best viewpoints to stop, attractions and facilities along it
23. identify possible locations for commercial development incorporating stopping places, facilities, iconic viewpoints, and enhanced view management.

Such 'View Corridor Management Plans' could be prepared at any scale:

- local e.g. Aberfoyle-Inversnaid;
- regional e.g. Isle of Mull (all routes), Cairngorms National Park; and
- strategic e.g. A82 Glasgow-Inverness.

Clearly the degree of detail can vary considerably, depending on resources available, community involvement, and landowner participation.

There is a strong case to be made for encouraging both bottom-up and top-down view corridor management plans, one playing to local strengths and enthusiasms, the other setting national standards of provision which tourists can quickly recognise and depend upon.

## **6.2 A Scottish collection of iconic views**

Contacts favoured the notion of a '**Scottish Collection**' of iconic views, which could be promoted nationally as a package. All would be photographable from or close to a well-designed, well-maintained scenic pull-off. Each pull-off would be discreetly signed in



advance, probably by adding the 'view' symbol to the standard P sign, on a brown (tourist) background. It would be helpful to add the name of the viewpoint or its subject, e.g.:

P< Queen's View ¼ mile

P< Ben Nevis ¼ mile

This national collection might start with (say) 20 locations, well distributed, and be augmented as additional sites were created to approved standard. Each national site might be taken as an introduction to a local 'cascade' of sites or linear views, fleshing out the character and history of the area.

A degree of competition might be introduced, with area organisations or local communities bidding for funds to bring their priority sites up to standard for national certification and promotion.

It is likely that such a scheme would be taken up by publishers of tourist maps and guides – indeed, one might even sponsor it.

To reiterate the opening point, there is always a risk of plan-making becoming an end in itself. View Corridor Management Plans are only worth producing if there is a will to implement something, and they should be seen as quick and dirty guides to early and practical action, to be upgraded as you go along.

## 7. WHERE COULD THE MONEY COME FROM ?

Within this scoping report, it is only possible to flag up possible sources of funding which might be available for view management projects. Some are well known, others are more novel.

### 7.1 Funding sources

The following lists potential sources of funding for different elements of view management discussed by this report.

#### *Initial studies, view corridor management planning, partnership building*

- relevant public sector bodies.
- EU LeaderPlus projects – current examples include Dumfries & Galloway National Scenic Area studies, West Highland Way study. This requires match funding of course.

#### *Land management*

- **Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme** – some view enhancement works are already eligible, for others some refinement to the scheme may be needed. Present levels of grant may not offer sufficient incentive to land managers to ‘tweak’ the relatively small areas that may be involved in view restoration and protection. There may be an issue over further subsidising extraction of timber which has already received standard subsidies but is now uneconomic to harvest. FCS has a good record of responding imaginatively to changing circumstances and new priorities, and with government support this is a prime source of potential funding to address all aspects of view loss identified above.
- **Land Management Contracts (Tier 3)** – under CAP reform, scope is now opening up to pay recognised farmers (IACS registered) to carry out one-off or regular management works of public benefit. The scope under Tiers 1 and 2 already activated is limited, but Tier 3 will set priorities for discretionary payments. SEERAD is currently preparing a schedule of measures which will be eligible. Any view management measures which might be advocated for eligibility must be clearly defined and practicable to implement and monitor.
- Where public land is concerned, it is a matter of making view management a sufficient priority for funding. By far the largest body concerned is FCS, who have made available a map indicating the very considerable extent of main roads in proximity to **public forests**. FCS have already shown in several parts of Scotland what can be achieved with existing resources, and the scope with additional targeted funding is significant.
- Land management **within the highway boundary** is important with purpose-built and reconstructed roads, both with natural regeneration control and planned landscaping. Funding here is a very low priority and has to be addressed. It is worth exploring the scope for transferring surplus land back to adjacent owners or local community groups. Roads authorities might also be more diligent in serving vegetation control notices on adjacent landowners. All this has staff resource implications.

#### *Scenic pull-off development and enhancement*

- The primary source of capital investment is likely to be the **Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise Networks**. Scottish Enterprise has a central tourism team which develops national initiatives, and could for example adopt the concept of a ‘Scottish Collection’ of iconic viewpoints into its strategy for higher-value inward tourism. Its local operations are able to fund capital projects of this kind which meet their own priorities for tourist facilities. HIE has a core tourism function, and devolves nearly all its capital spend to the Local Enterprise Companies.

- **VisitScotland** is essentially a marketing agency, without resources for capital projects or grants. Its product development activity is essentially event-orientated. However its restructuring creates Area Partnerships, into which local authorities will be expected to contribute sums equivalent to their present support for ATBs. It is possible that Partnerships may prefer to invest in ‘tangible outputs’ of direct utility to tourists and visible to communities, as part of the shift of emphasis away from costly marketing work which the internet era is permitting.
- **Councils** may also consider investing in facilities which meet multiple local needs for roads purposes, recycling, and access to the countryside.
- The Scottish Executive as **Trunk Roads** authority could be expected to support schemes which meet criteria for regular, convenient, and well-maintained stopping facilities, and which contribute to road safety, network maintenance, and free flow of traffic.
- The **National Parks** have funds which could support such projects, and the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority expects to make provision for view management and stopping facilities under its Destinations strategy.
- Forest owners should be encouraged to locate roadside extraction facilities near good viewpoints, and to make them available to the public when not in operational use.
- It is possible that Land Management Contracts could extend to funding farmers to create and maintain scenic pull-offs.
- **EU funding** is likely to be available in the Highlands less-favoured area, under headings such as transitional funds, Northern Periphery, and Interreg.

**Example 16 - Forestry and Rural Development Scheme**

*This is currently funded by FCS, HIE, Highland Council, and SNH to match EU funding. It is administered by Highland Birchwoods, which the same bodies support. Among eligible works is -*

*“Redesign of forest blocks in Highland tourist corridors, improving the Highland landscape and providing a more welcoming landscape for visitors”*

## 7.2 Integration of potential funding sources

This will be essential to success. Several contacts stressed the importance of ‘one-stop shops’, whether for land managers seeking grant aid, or for local tourism interests and their customers wanting to report view losses or neglected facilities.

Equally important, promoters of the scenic asset will want to brigade resources from all quarters, conventional and innovative. They will also need to seize opportunities as they arise, rather than have perfect but unattainable strategies.

**Example 17 – A82 Tyndrum-Bridge of Orchy**

***funding options for upgrading the classic views of Beinn Dorain and the Horseshoe Viaducts***

*The iconic view of the cone of Beinn Dorain is in full view for several miles from the A82 heading north. Below it is a classic monument to our cultural heritage in the double railway viaducts on the horseshoe curve around Auch Gleann. There is one rather basic stopping place from which Beinn Dorain can be photographed, but it comes too early to see the viaducts. For half-a-mile, the view has been obstructed by a small block of private conifer forest, an appendage to a large tract of public forest above the road. This block is currently being harvested, and ideally would be converted to native woodland, with the upper parts managed to maintain a filtered view.*

*Auch is also the point of access to the Munro Beinn a’ Mhanaich and several Corbetts. Climbers are prohibited from parking down the private farm track, and must either squeeze onto*

*the narrow verge (creating a safety hazard and visual mess) or park nearly a mile up the road in the forest access, with a safety hazard created by walking along the A82, especially in the dark.*

*Possible investment and funding options might be:*

- *construct a standard lay-by near the Auch track junction, for road safety purposes, acquiring additional land if necessary*
- *construct an enhanced lay-by, with greater pedestrian safety and comfort, suitable as an iconic photo-point (possible Scottish Collection candidate), also capable of accommodating coaches; this would require substantial land take*
- *construct an off-road rest area and view point on clear-felled land as part of a woodland restructuring plan (note that this site does not enjoy the view of the viaducts)*
- *invite the Auch Farm landowner to construct an off-road facility and manage it as a viewpoint and climbers' car park, with funding potentially from LMC Tier 3, from SFGS if native woodland is created around it and linking with the FCS site, from SNH/Council in respect of recreation access, and from HIE/EU in respect of local economic development*
- *encourage through Local Plan policy small-scale visually-unobtrusive commercial development of recreational facilities, e.g. bike hire, pony-trekking, guided walks (farm steading is already converted to holiday accommodation).*

*The scale of development should be restricted to that which does not require road widening to create a right-turn lane; although forward visibility is good on this well-designed road, some traffic calming of the approaches may be needed, associated with discreet advance signage.*

*Unfortunately, Auch is located just outwith the National Park boundary, in a far corner of Argyll and Bute Council / Enterprise areas, and with no significant local population or economy to benefit (Bridge of Orchy does not even merit a speed limit). This project is only likely to happen if adopted as a priority within a strategic VCMP or mountain access plan.*

#### **Example 18 – The View of Ben Nevis - a private enterprise option**

*As a more ambitious alternative to the options mentioned in Example 12, The Lochaber Local Plan could identify a development opportunity in the vicinity of Fort William where, with judicious siting and land management, impressive views of the North Face of the Ben could be enjoyed, in conjunction with other good quality visitor facilities. Such facilities could be privately funded within a suitable commercial/tourism/recreation complex.*

## 8. NEXT STEPS - WHO WILL RUN WITH THIS ONE ?

The Workshop and the individual contacts all supported the view management concept, some with certain reservations or as a lesser priority, but many with considerable enthusiasm and for a healthily wide range of reasons.

Since this is a new and cross-cutting issue, there is at present no obvious lead agency to drive it. We are given to understand that Ministers wish to do more to develop Scotland's tourist industry, both to keep it competitive, and as part of a wider aim towards 'best small country' standards of excellence. Ministers recognise that many public agencies have a role in enhancing the tourist product, and that private sector tourism interests want to see action and want to take a more prominent role in it.

The 'View from the Road' concept has attractions here:

- as an 'early win' and good news story (with few if any negative impacts);
- as having some good pioneering examples to promote and build on;
- as not requiring any legislation or restructuring;
- as capitalising on recent Scottish Executive initiatives such as the 'right to buy', the 'right of responsible access', and 'environmental justice';
- as not having a high entry cost, any significant financial risk, or high continuing liabilities (it lends itself to incremental funding);
- as supporting rural regeneration and community involvement;
- as encouraging private partnership and investment; and
- as demonstrating 'joined-up government'.

### 8.1 Key partners

The key partners should comprise:

- Scottish Executive - a lead contact will help, and might best be located within the Tourism Division, as this is where the highest profile benefits will accrue
- Scottish Enterprise Network / Highlands and Islands Enterprise – as key funders of capital projects
- VisitScotland and its Area Partnerships – as main promoters of the scenic asset
- Roads Authorities – Scottish Executive and Councils – policy, standards, and contributors in respect of road safety and network benefits
- SEERAD – in respect of Land Management Contracts
- Forestry Commission Scotland – in respect of design principles, Forestry Grants, and direct works on Forest Enterprise land
- Scottish Natural Heritage – strategy, environmental safeguards, interpretation, access to countryside.

In addition to these core partners, advisers, consultees and supporters may include:

- Historic Scotland (cultural heritage visibility, protection, re-exposure, interpretation);
- Councils as Planning Authorities and in support of development and access;
- Scottish Rural Property and Business Association;
- Scottish Tourism Forum;
- Tourism and Environment Forum; and
- Environmental NGOs.

## **8.2 Project champion**

It will help enormously to have a 'champion' for the concept, capable of motivating partners, and acting as a visible point of contact for supporters, communities, the private sector, the media, and the public.

Such a champion might be located within one partner, possibly SNH since it has the broadest remit for 'Landscape' as enjoyed by tourists, visitors, recreationists, specialist interests, and local communities. Alternatively, partners might co-fund an independent champion.

## **8.3 Further research**

Contacts were invited to consider what, if any, further work might be worthwhile. Opinions varied widely. Since most contacts were facing this issue for the first time, or had relatively specialised interests or experience in it, this should be given more discussion. Interestingly, those closest to an aspect of the issue tended to see least need for further research: this suggests that the real need is for more collation and sharing of information, an early task for a project champion.

### **(1) market research**

Many contacts would find it helpful to know more about what visitors actually see, what they like and dislike, what they take home, what they most remember, and what they would like to come back to see. Some contacts would like to know how Scotland compares with alternative destinations. However, framing qualitative or perceptual surveys is difficult, and they are costly to conduct if they are not to be superficial. The results might well be inconclusive and a poor guide to investment.

Contacts tended to see this as one of those awkward issues which cannot readily be customer-driven, and where it is our job to do the creative thinking – even to 'tell the customer what they want'. A comparison might be made with road direction signage, on which vast sums are spent, but on which customers are never consulted: local people never notice it because they don't need it, and those who do need it never complain (even the motoring organisations take no interest in it). It is left to the professionals, and investment is financially justified as a basic public service in a civilised society – essentially an act of faith.

Nevertheless, there is a case for some survey work to 'benchmark' view awareness and appreciation before comprehensive improvements are made. Simple questions can be added to the regular national and regional surveys, yielding simplistic results. Possible, more targeted, survey techniques suggested are:

- interviewing people before and after travelling along a scenic route;
- asking motorists making pre-booked hotel tours to keep diaries of views seen, places stopped, best photos taken, and detractors (this taps the high-value market segment);
- asking coach tour operators to survey their customers; and
- organising focus groups in English and European cities.

This is an issue where SNH might wish to lead in specifying research aims, with VisitScotland and FCS advising and assisting in design and implementation.

### **(2) economic research**

Putting a value on the landscape has taxed imaginations and divided opinion for some years. Measuring the economic return from investment in view management is less controversial but not much easier. Contacts have suggested that it should only be assessed as part of a

much wider package of investment in rural regeneration. Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority in conjunction with the Scottish Enterprise and Highland and Island Enterprise Networks (SEN/HIE), has conducted economic appraisal of its early action programme, with positive results, and expects to repeat this for future programmes which will include elements of view management.

This is an issue where SEN/HIE might take a lead.

### **(3) land management research**

This study has only scratched the surface of the wealth of practical knowledge, experience, and ideas within bodies concerned with land management. Not surprisingly, some prescriptions are admittedly incomplete, or are contradicted by others with differing priorities and perspectives. For example, forest managers are strong on ways of clearing views cost-effectively, but less so on ways of keeping them clear other than by cutting them down again. Others have suggested introducing hill cattle, but integrating farm and woodland management may prove even trickier than integrating agriculture and forestry grants. As for the effects of deer fencing on views, the pros and cons of different permutations will keep heads spinning.

As well as land management expertise from the perspective of 'weed control', there are imaginative ideas on turning this problem to positive economic account, for example in biofuel exploitation, or restoring traditional woodland management.

Rather than commissioning fresh research, the first step should be to collate experience and ideas, and produce a guide to best practice. This should be designed primarily to assist those devising and implementing land management grant schemes, and of course land managers themselves. Consultation on this guide will be interesting.

This task might best be led by FCS and SEERAD, perhaps assisted by Scottish Agricultural College / Macaulay Institute.

## 9. PILOT STUDIES

Most contacts welcomed the notion of piloting VCMPs in a few chosen localities. Clearly these should be selected to illustrate a diversity of contexts, problems and opportunities. The Workshop revealed that to identify pilot sites by a process of comprehensive analysis and extensive consultation could be lengthy and possibly divisive.

Following the advice of many consultees to keep it simple, this study recommends the following four routes for pilot studies, for the reasons given:

### A. GREAT GLEN (A82 Inverness-Ballachulish)

- prime tourist route linking iconic landmarks (Ben Nevis, Loch Ness)
- involves trunk roads authority on mostly unimproved route
- involves HIE
- substantial FCS holdings adjacent to road
- strong community interest evident in Lochaber and Loch Ness areas
- potential for commercial development and community enterprise

### B. LOCH LOMOND – TROSSACHS CIRCUIT (A82-A85-A84)

- prime day-trip tour for Scottish residents, scope for social inclusion/ environmental justice
- also prime tourist routes on way to Highlands
- involves SEN and LL&T National Park Authority
- substantial FCS holdings adjacent to road
- informs consultation on A82 Tarbet-Inverarnan improvement

### C. STRATHSPEY (A9 Slochd-Drumochter, A95 Aviemore-Aberlour)

- prime route for business and tourist traffic
- purpose-built trunk road
- involves Cairngorms National Park Authority
- scope for commercial and community involvement
- emphasis on stopping facilities

### D. ROUTES TO THE WEST (A861/B8007 Corran-Ardnamurchan/Lochailort and/or A832 Garve-Gairloch-Braemore)

- scenic routes off main tourist circuit, appealing to visitors with particular interest in landscape and heritage
- maintained by local authority (former includes unimproved stretches)
- traverse areas of high environmental sensitivity (Loch Sunart - oakwoods / Loch Maree – Scots pinewoods in Beinn Eighe NNR)
- include coastal scenery and views to Hebrides
- choice of route(s) might respond to local interest

These recommendations involve all the ‘key partners’ identified above, and are representative of all the main view management problems and opportunities in upland areas that have emerged in this study.

If the findings of these four pilot studies are brought together, they give the basis for promoting a classic ‘scenic tour’ up the A82 and down the A9 with a loop to the west coast (note that National Trust for Scotland possess studies of the Rannoch Moor-Glencoe stretch of the A82 carried out some decades ago, which should be reviewed).

The geographical coverage does not include the Central Belt, the eastern Highlands or the Southern Uplands, and further pilot studies might be considered there.



## 9.1 Alternative pilot concept – a drive across Scotland

The recommended package of pilot studies has the practical advantage that they can proceed semi-independently, each having fairly small groups of sponsors with a strong and direct involvement. There would be a clear local focus on the problems and opportunities of a specific route with a distinctive character. It would fall upon one co-ordinating agency (presumably SNH) to draw them together and promote the lessons learned as guidance for general use.

Another option is to select a single route across Scotland for comprehensive study. This would bring all the key players together to manage the project, perhaps with sector sub-groups for efficient detailed implementation. A possible route taken by a first-time visitor which crosses a wide range of Scotland's scenic diversity from east coast to west might be:

**Berwick-Ullapool via Tweed Valley (Scott's View) – Edinburgh – Queensferry - Linlithgow – Stirling – Trossachs – Crianlarich – Rannoch Moor - Glencoe – Fort William – Great Glen – Inverness – Loch Maree – Gairloch – Poolewe – Loch Broom**

This would achieve a higher political profile, involve more partner bodies, and yield an attractive product readily promotable to visitors.

## 9.2 How soon can we start?

Most contacts were keen to get the idea off the ground quickly. There are no obvious reasons for caution, for prolonged consultation, or for further background work before embarking on pilot studies. There are several good reasons not to delay:

- Prospects for EU funding can only diminish, and several contacts urged that bids should be made quickly for EU funds.
- This is a vital window of opportunity to influence Tier 3 of Land Management Contracts. Close liaison should be kept with SEERAD to include view management measures within this.
- The new VisitScotland structure and the new National Park Plans both offer timely opportunities to get view management 'in with the bricks'.
- There is a sea change in the management of Scottish forestry, with its economics, public benefits, and design principles all in flux; with many prominently located forests at harvesting stage there are opportunities for redesign to achieve view benefits at minimal cost.
- The apparent upsurge of natural regeneration in many areas seems to be a recent phenomenon, and it should not take private sector entrepreneurs to point out that the cost of clearing will escalate alarmingly. With the millions spent on rhododendron control in mind, we have an opportunity to 'nip this problem in the bud' which will soon slip past.

## Annex: Contacts made during the course of the scoping study

Tel - TELEPHONE CONTACTS

Int - INTERVIEWS

\* - ATTENDED WORKSHOP ON 21<sup>st</sup> FEBRUARY 2005 IN PERTH

### Scottish Natural Heritage

John Thomson	Director of Strategy and Operations	*
Pete Rawcliffe	National Strategy	*
Frances Thin	Landscape group – N area	Int 23 Dec
Duncan Stone	Land use group – woodlands	Int 23 Dec
Graham Neville	Recreation & access group – research	Int 23 Dec
Fraser Symonds	Operations Manager – Fort William	Int 7 Jan
Ross Johnston	Operations Manager – Stirling	Int 19 Jan*
Simon Brooks	National Strategy	by email*
Fraser McNaughton	Landscape group	*
Alan Fay	Planning group	*

### Scottish Government

Steve Dowell	Planning	Tel 20 Dec*
Tom Williamson	Planning – transport policy	Tel 8 Jan
Russell Bissland	ScottWilson – A82 Route Action Plan	Tel 20 Jan
Ian Hooper	Head of Countryside and Nat Heritage	Tel 20 Jan
Angus Corby	Roads Division - landscape architect	Int 7 Feb*
David Saldanha	- Network Manager NW	Int 7 Feb
Rab Bain	- Route Manager A82	Int 7 Feb*
John Brown	Tourism Division	Int 7 Feb
Mairi Macpherson	Tourism and major events team	brief tel
Sally Thomas	Countryside and Natural Heritage	Int 7 Feb
Grant Moir	SEERAD – land management contracts	Int 15 Feb*
Mairi Black	Historic Scotland	*

### Local Government

Anna Johnson	NSA officer – Dumfries & Galloway	Tel 8 Jan
Bob Shannon	Asst Director – Highland Council	Tel 24 Jan
Gordon Ireland	Tourism unit – Highland Council	Int 24 Jan
Sam MacNaughton	Director - TEC (Roads) – Highland Council	Tel 2 Feb*
Les Goodfellow	Head of Roads – Stirling Council	
	Chair – SCOTS engineering cttee	Tel 4 Feb
Adam Olejnik	Constr'n and Maint Man – Perth Council	Tel 4 Feb
Colin Wishart	Planning (Env't) – Highland Council	Tel 23 Feb*
Dot Ferguson	Lochaber Development Officer	Tel 23 Feb

### Enterprise Networks

Paul McCafferty	SE – Forth Valley	Int 31 Jan
Katrina Morrison	SE – Tourism	Int 8 Feb*
Mary Burns	SE – Dunbartonshire	Int 10 Feb
Bill Taylor	HIE - Natural heritage and communities	Int 23 Dec*
Charlotte Wright	HIE - Chief Executive, Lochaber Enterprise	Int 7 Jan
Scott Dingwall	HIE - Lochaber Enterprise	*

## VisitScotland

Scott Armstrong	Chief Executive – HOST	Tel 18 Jan
James Fraser	Chief Executive – Argyll, Isles, Stirling ATB	Tel 20 Jan
Neil Black	Product Development Unit (Inverness)	Int 25 Jan
Douglas Ritchie	Chief Executive – Perthshire ATB	Tel 4 Feb
Gwen Raez	Brand Manager - hub tourism project	Int 7 Feb
Richard Pinn		*

## Forestry Commission

Malcolm Wield	District Manager – Fort Augustus	Int 7 Jan
Hugh Clayden	District Manager – Aberfoyle & Cowal	Int 20 Jan
Bob Dunsmore	Conservator – North Scotland	Int 25 Jan
Syd House	Conservator – South Scotland	Tel 9 Feb
James Simpson	Planning manager – FE HQ	Tel 4 Feb*
Nicholas Shepherd	Landscape – FC HQ	Tel 2 Feb*
Gordon Donaldson	District Manager – Fort William	by email
Steve Smith		*

## Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park


Gordon Watson	Planning manager	Int 31 Jan
Janet Swailes	Landscape architect	Int 10 Feb*
Carron Tobin	Director – Rural Regeneration / Interpretn	Int 10 Feb*

## Other organisations

Sandy Dear/ Caroline Warburton	Tourism and Environment Forum	Int 22 Feb
Chris Perkins	Forestry & Rural Devtpt Scheme manager, Highland Birchwoods	Tel 8 Jan*
Bill Wright	LINK Landscape Task force chair / Rural Scotland (APRS)	Int 17 Dec*
Paul Johnson	National Trust for Scotland	Tel 20 Jan*
John Mayhew	National Trust for Scotland	
Fiona Ross	Keep Scotland Beautiful	*
John Butterfield	Countryside Agency	Tel 1 Feb

## Private sector

David Wilson	Tourism business – Fort William	Int 7 Jan
Ian Cleaver	Director – Highland Heritage	Tel 20 Jan
Neil Wells	Director – Lochs and Glens	Tel 20 Jan
Alan Scholes	Director – Shearings	Tel 26 Jan
Willie Cameron	Loch Ness Partnership	Int 24 Jan
Laurence Young	Tourism and enterprise – Lochaber Chair – STF Tourism Innovation Group	Int 26 Jan
Marjory Rodger	Director – Confed for Passenger Transport	Tel 27 Jan
Gavin Ellis	Chair – STF TIG Transport Action Group	Tel 31 Jan*
Johnny Hall	Policy – SRPBA (SLF)	Tel 31 Jan
Jo Fawcett	George Street Research	Tel 4 Feb



Scottish Natural Heritage is a government body responsible to the Scottish Government.

Statement of principles:

Scottish Natural Heritage – the government body that looks after all of Scotland's nature and landscapes, across all of Scotland, for everyone. Our 5 strategic priorities are:

- Caring for Scotland's nature and landscapes
- Helping to address climate change
- Delivering health and well being
- Supporting the Scottish economy
- Delivering a high quality public service

Find out more at [www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)

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**Scottish Natural Heritage**  
All of nature for all of Scotland