



Location and Context

The *Broad Loch and Glen* Landscape Character Type consists of a long, narrow glen occupied by a deep loch adjacent to the A86 between Kinloch Laggan and Glen Spean. The type differs from *Loch and Glen* Landscape Character Type in that Loch Laggan is slightly broader with a more varied shoreline, and the glen landform is more varied and open, particularly on the south-east side, the slopes are more wooded, and the glen contains a major trunk road. The north-western side is enclosed by the high summits and slopes of the *Smooth Rounded Mountains* and the south-eastern slopes of *Isolated Mountain Plateaux*. The south east side is contained by the high mountains which extend into *Summits and Plateaux* and the *Glens with Lochs* character types in Tayside. To the north east the glen opens through easing slopes to Glen Truim, adjoining the Drumochter Pass. This Landscape Character Type contains the Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve.

Key Characteristics

- Very long, narrow, slightly curved loch, channelled between high mountains to the north-west and lower craggy hills to the south-east.
- Mainly steep slopes on the north-west side, and some more gently sloping land on the south-east side, with flatter land occurring at the junction of occasional side tributaries on both sides of the loch.
- A high proportion of tree cover, which is most extensive on the south-east side, consisting of stands of native woodland and forest cover on lower slopes close to the loch.
- Distinct tiers of landcover on the north-west side, with low-lying stands of native woodlands, open areas of mainly heather and grassland landcover, rising to high alpine cover.
- Areas of smaller scale managed fields and woodlands with buildings around estates, contrasting with the large scale of surrounding landcover patterns.
- Strong contrast in land use between the opposite shores of the loch, related to the presence and busy nature of the trunk road on the north side, and the extent of forest cover on the south side.
- Limited settlement of mainly traditional style buildings occurring on lower ground near the loch, usually associated with estates and often occurring where the intersection with a tributary glen creates an area of flatter ground or requires a bridging point.
- Variety in texture, patterns and colour associated with the different landcover and

- varying openness and enclosure of landforms.
- Views to distant, distinctive, landmark hills along the loch and in more open areas.
- The dramatic combination of the loch, forests, woodlands and peaks with occasional estate buildings.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Broad Loch and Glen* Landscape Character Type consists of a long, narrow loch which dominates a large u-shaped valley formed by glacial erosion along a route previously weakened by faulting. The glen is surrounded by a variety of hill and mountain landforms which give rise to differing degrees of enclosure. This reflects the variation in the underlying geology and how it has been faulted, folded and eroded. The glen is channelled by high mountains on the north side which frequently reach over 1,000 metres above sea level. The junction with the Allt Coire tributary glen housing the Ardair Burn, which passes between these mountains, creates the one area of flatter ground. On the south side the glen is more open and varied, with lower, craggy hills reaching up to 750 metres above sea level. The hills and mountains surrounding the loch, although high, tend to have gentler slopes near the loch. Loch Laggan is a dammed loch over 11 kilometres long, up to 156 metres deep, and often less than one kilometre wide. Occasional tributary burns and rivers enter the loch along its sides, the upper reaches of which are often within forest or woodland cover. To the south the loch is contained by the substantial structure of the Laggan Dam and thereafter flows to the south via the River Spean which meanders over flat wetlands. The loch is slightly curved, echoing the elongated shape of the glen and the shoreline is relatively varied and indented, compared to Loch Ericht.

Landcover

The variety of landforms, slope, shelter, and soils along the loch sides gives rise to a subtle variety of landcover and land uses. The amount and variety of woodland in this Landscape Character Type is distinctive. Woodlands tend to be located along the edge of the loch, with native woodland occurring on both sides, consisting mainly of patches of birch woods, with wet woodlands on the north side. Some woodlands are designated for their nature conservation interest, for example, those on the steep lochside slopes south of Aberarder which contain oak, aspen, rowan and hazel as well as the more ubiquitous birch. Above this tree line the vegetation is principally rough grassland, eventually leading to alpine flora at high altitudes. This range of vegetation from lochside to mountain summit emphasises the distinct tiers of landcover encompassed by the glen. Large scale coniferous forests tend to occur mainly on the south east side of the loch, interspersed with patches of broadleaf woodlands and native pinewoods. Higher ground on the south east side is mainly rough grassland and heather, and there is a large area of wetland on flat ground at the loch's southern outflow.

There is a strong contrast in landuse between the opposite shores of Loch Laggan, primarily determined by differences in the extent of forest landcover and the location of the A86 trunk road which runs parallel to the north-western shore of Loch Laggan. Linked to this road is the activity associated with traffic movement and the relatively frequent presence of dwellings. The trunk road is much busier in summer with the influx of tourists, and activity around car parks, access trails, Creag Meagaidh nature reserve, and routes to Munros (mountains in Scotland of 3,000 feet high or above). Within the estate lands on the south-eastern shore, which form the majority of this type, the primary land use is forestry, with estate management and tourism activities such as stalking and loch fishing. The estate also provides tourism accommodation and is used as a filming location. Associated with the estate buildings near the loch are actively managed areas with a distinct landscape pattern of boundary walls, patches of woodland, concentrations of stone buildings and fields of

improved pasture. The loch is dammed far to the west, at the edge of the Landscape Character Type, for hydro-electricity generation, and there are few associated structures present. The variable water level within the containing landform results in extensive areas of exposed sediments in times of water drawdown, changing the shape of the loch shore.

Settlement

Settlement is limited largely to areas of gentler sloping ground. A few estate buildings are located near the loch, such as the estate lodge and Ardverikie House, often occurring where the intersection with a tributary glen creates an area of flatter ground or necessitates a bridging point. Existing buildings are mainly traditional or estate baronial in style, generally located individually or in small clusters near the road.

Isolated small areas of relict agriculture (ruined buildings, field boundaries and rig-and-furrow cultivation) have been identified around the loch, the most extensive being at Tullochroam. Otherwise the evidence for human settlement is largely confined to the occasional ruins of shielings on the burns feeding into the loch. One significant monument survives on Eilean an Righ, comprising fragments of walling that appear to be the remains of a small castle, possibly a medieval hunting lodge.

Perception

The variety of landcover and land use adds diversity to the colour, pattern and textures in this landscape. The distinct landscape pattern of boundary walls, patches of woodland, stone buildings and fields around estates contrast with the surrounding hills and mountains due to their different colour, texture, and evidence of active management. Areas of native and semi-natural woodland add variety and shelter in contrast to their surroundings, and frame views across the loch. Coniferous forests with dark, dense stands of trees provide further variation, although they can appear unrelated to underlying landform. The simple, horizontal plane and reflection of the loch surface contrasts with the complexity of land form and landcover, unifying these elements and providing added depth and light in views.

The height, steepness and proximity of the surrounding mountains to each other determines the amount of enclosure experienced within the glen. Dominant views tend to be funnelled by the mountains so that, when travelling along the glen, these are often focused across the loch to the opposite slopes. However, the slight curve of the glen prevents the whole length from being visible from any one point along the glen floor. Intermittent glimpses towards distant mountains are afforded by the occasional intersection of glens or lower areas of land mainly on the south side of the loch. From some viewpoints, a layered effect is created when looking down the glen, with a distant peak often acting as a focal point. Frequently, the distinctive shapes of these mountains act as key landmarks.

Overall this Landscape Character Type is relatively accessible compared to adjoining landscapes, although there is a strong contrast in landscape experience between the opposite shores of Loch Laggan, mainly due to the presence of the A86 trunk road on the north shore. Vehicle movement on this road strongly affects the experience of the landscape, causing disturbance by noise and activity and generally preventing a strong sense of remoteness or tranquillity. This effect is pronounced during summer months and heightened by the recreational activity around car parks, trails and mountain access paths. The experience travelling along the road varies with the proximity of the road to the loch shore, its sinuous route, and its alignment through woodland or open ground. Views across the loch are frequently screened by trees. When glimpsed through trees Ardverikie House can be prominent on the far loch shore, the baronial architecture appearing dramatic when reflected in the loch and backed by conifer forests, woodlands and peaks.



This is one of 389 Landscape Character Types identified at a scale of 1:50 000 as part of a national programme of Landscape Character Assessment republished in 2019.

The area covered by this Landscape Character Type was originally included in the Ben Alder, Ardverikie and Creag Meagaidh LCA (Landscape Group, Advisory Services, SNH), published 1999.