

The Special Qualities of the Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon National Scenic Area

- Epitome of the mountain grandeur of Highland Perthshire
- A clear linkage of land use and landform
- A combination of natural and cultural beauty
- The great diversity of woodland
- Secluded side glens and ancient shielings
- The wild summits
- Peacefulness and tranquillity
- Rich, varied cultural features
- The long, narrow and sinuous Glen Lyon
- The great expanse of Loch Rannoch
- The long, symmetric mass of Schiehallion
- The dominance of Ben Lawers

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Epitomises the mountain grandeur of Highland Perthshire</i> 	
<p>The long, narrow, sinuous Glen Lyon, and Loch Rannoch in its glen to the north, penetrate deep into high mountains and hills, and epitomise the exceptional landscape and scenery of Highland Perthshire.</p> <p>The enclosing mountains create a monumental backdrop, dwarfing the more intricate, human-scale and detailed features at loch side, glen floor and lower slopes.</p> <p>The seasonal changes in texture and colour of vegetation serve to enhance the drama of this vast outer landscape, against which human activity is set.</p>	<p>The dramatic mountains lie for the most part above 610 metres (2,000 feet) with many summits over 1,000 metres including Schiehallion, Carn Gorm, Carn Mairg, Ben Lawers and Meall nan Tarmachan.</p> <p>Essentially, there are three broad mountain ranges, running east-west:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Lawers range – a series of distinctive mountain peaks. • Schiehallion, Carn Mairg and Carn Gorm forming a ridge rising to over 1,000ft between Glens Lyon and Rannoch. • Craiganour Forest, north of Loch Rannoch, a more gently rolling moorland ridge 600-800m high. <p>Mountain passes that cut through, allowing access north-south are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lairig Ghallabhaich, a track which is a right of way leading from Rannoch Basin to Glen Lyon. • Lochan na Lairige, served by a public road linking Glen Lyon to Loch Tay.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A clear linkage of land use and landform</i> 	
<p>The area makes up a substantial part of the historical territory of Breadalbane, covering a great tract of the southern Grampians. Here <i>'fingers of lowland farming and settlement infiltrate into</i></p>	<p>Four major relief zones are mentioned in Whittow (1977):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haughland – where the alluvial floodplain and river terraces are relatively fertile and therefore farmed. • Braes – the rocky benches and pronounced

<p><i>Grampian mountainland'</i> (Whittow, 1977).</p> <p>The landform varies from fertile and farmed alluvial flats, through steep hill slopes to exposed mountain summits. The intensity and type of land-use, the settlement pattern, the degree of exposure and the sense of remoteness is strongly related to the landform, giving a strong structure to the scenery.</p>	<p>hummocks of glacial material on the glen floors which support poorer grazings and smaller, marginal farms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steep hill-slopes - formed by glacial scouring, which support the surviving, varied broadleaf woodlands, (where afforestation has occurred slopes can be blanket forestry). • Open plateaux and summits – of montane grassland, heathland and rock.
<p>• <i>A combination of natural and cultural beauty</i></p>	
<p>The mountain ranges are timeless and unchanging in comparison to the small scale human activity on the lower ground. They frame the scenic views and panoramas gained from within the NSA, and are the focus or backdrop of views into the NSA.</p> <p>Where development does occur, it is closely restricted to loch-side, to glen floors and to the lower hill-slopes. However, this lower ground is a working landscape and possesses an ordered, scenic beauty of its own – from the pattern of fields, dykes, woodland plantings and vernacular buildings.</p> <p>The vast natural background combined with the more intimate scale of human activity creates an area of great visual appeal.</p>	<p>Although human activity over many centuries has modified the landscape, most human activity is concentrated on the lower hill-slopes and, more intensively, on lochside and glen floor. These areas lie at the base of a great untamed expanse of attractive mountain ranges which remain unspoilt by garish and unsightly development. Human impact seen within this broad scale can appear incidental.</p> <p>A matrix of different land uses, including farming, forestry and game management has evolved over 200 years, creating a harmonious pattern which enhances the natural features. Tree-planting in particular has enhanced the low-ground landscape in many places.</p> <p>The Loch of Dunalastair is artificial, a creation of the hydro-electric works. Its reed beds, willow beds and tranquil shallow waters set amongst meadows and woodlands, offer a pleasing contrast with Loch Rannoch – the bigger loch to the west.</p> <p>However, some hydro-electric development is larger-scale with dramatic landscape impact – Rannoch power station, Stronuich reservoir and dam, or the dam at Lochan na Lairige.</p>
<p>• <i>The great diversity of woodland</i></p>	
<p>The woodlands and trees across the area are scenically of great importance due to their richness of form, species and age structure.</p> <p>The ancient Caledonian pinewoods – the Black Wood of Rannoch and the smaller woods in Glen Lyon – stand dark against the hillsides. The lighter, native birchwoods prevalent in many areas are particularly notable in their autumn colours. Rivers, water courses and lochs are often highlighted by trees along their banks, and the policy woodlands of the settlements and big houses provide a</p>	<p>Woodland types other than commercial, conifer plantations are:</p> <p>The <u>Black Wood of Rannoch</u> is predominantly Caledonian pine with some birch and oak, stretching along most of Loch Rannoch's southern shore. The expanse is broken up by contrasting open areas located where major burns issue into the loch.</p> <p><u>Glen Lyon's Caledonian Pine Woods</u> at Meggernie and Croch na Keys, are more open in character. Here the pines develop a variety of statuesque, branched forms with an understorey of heather. Those at Meggernie are especially prominent on the northern flanks of Creag Dhubh, while the stands of pines within Croch na Keys are prominent from the Gallich-Stromich Dam road.</p> <p><u>Birch woodlands</u> are notable along the north shores of Loch Rannoch, the Schiehallion road and along mid Glen</p>

<p>focus on the glen floors.</p>	<p>Lyon, above the bridge of Balgie where they frame views of Schiehallion and views westwards to the distant hills of Rannoch and Glen Coe. Their open character and airy canopies means they form a visually permeable screen, allowing views to mountains, lochs and running water.</p> <p><u>Mixed broadleaved woodlands</u> range in type from ancient semi-natural woods of oak, ash, hazel, wych elm and alder to richly planted amenity woodlands of bird cherry, beech and elm. Riparian woodland along the many watercourses draining the upper hill slopes and along the course of River Lyon is visually prominent.</p> <p><u>Policy woodlands</u> include individual specimen trees, open-grown parkland forms (native and exotic), groups of exotics and formal avenues. These ornament the designed grounds around the major country houses, as well as estate farmhouses, ancillary buildings and lodges. They mainly date from the early 19th century and are found along the principal areas of settlement at Meggernie Castle, Fortingall, Dall House, Rannoch Lodge and around the southern shores of Dunalastair Water.</p>
<p>• <i>Secluded side glens and ancient shielings</i></p>	
<p>Development and human activity is centred along the two main glens running east-west, and most roads also follow these. The side glens, of which there are many, are generally hidden and secluded, limited to access by foot.</p> <p>However, they often contain visible signs of past habitation, in particular the presence of old shielings. These abandoned, historic sites accentuate the current remoteness of the glens, and contrast with the comparatively well settled and managed Glen Lyon and Loch Rannoch areas.</p>	<p>The landscape is heavily dissected, with the two main glens all possessing side glens, generally orientated north-south. The narrow road from Loch Tay to Glen Lyon via Lochan na Lairige provides the one opportunity for the public to experience these glens by car.</p> <p>The glens generally contain previous summer grazings (shielings) and some are long, such as at Gleann Mòr which stretches for five miles along the southern flanks of Schiehallion. This glen also contains caves and wells (e.g. Uamh Tom a Mhòr-fhir).</p> <p>The shielings date from before the change from the transhumance and cattle droving system to large scale sheep farming.</p>
<p>• <i>The wild summits</i></p>	
<p>The high tops, slopes and moors are mountain terrain, only accessible on foot. A climb to the summits is a journey from habitation into a wild landscape of ridges, corries and cliffs, seemingly remote from civilisation and at the mercy of the elements.</p>	<p>The distance to the summits from the nearest road is generally not great, enabling hill walkers to be able to leave the comforts of the Central Belt, drive to the area, ascend the summits and return home easily within one day.</p> <p>The wildness of the hills is emphasised by the absence of built structures, although hydro-electric infrastructure ascends to 500m at Lochan na Lairige between Ben Lawers and Meall nan Tarmachan.</p>
<p>• <i>Peacefulness and tranquillity</i></p>	
<p>The sense of remoteness increases westwards up Glen Lyon or along Loch Rannoch. The roads are not through-</p>	<p>Roads follow the basic alignments of cart tracks and drove roads, and have not been upgraded by major road widening, straightening or evening-out of gradients. Late 18th and early 19th century bridges still carry road traffic</p>

<p>routes and still mirror the landform, with traffic limited to local use. There is a comparative lack of large-scale modern development.</p> <p>These factors engender a sense of peacefulness and tranquillity, reinforced by the predominance of natural sounds of wind and birdsong, and by the presence of water: the broad expanse of Loch Rannoch, with the lapping of waters along its southern shores; the tumbling of the rapids of the River Lyon and its more calmly but swiftly flowing meanders; the sound of the many burns and waterfalls draining the surrounding hill-slopes.</p> <p>The presence of native woodland, where it provides shelter and an intimate feel in an otherwise exposed landscape, also reinforces the tranquillity. Additionally, human settlement and man-made features are dwarfed by the large, expansive landforms, resulting in a peaceful, rural feel.</p>	<p>over rivers and burns, creating focal points along the route.</p> <p>Bridge of Gaur and Finnart at the head of Loch Rannoch are relatively isolated, compared to Kinloch Rannoch. The south shores of Loch Rannoch are sparsely settled with farmsteads spaced regularly along its length.</p> <p>Human-generated noise tends to be highly localised.</p> <p>There are some areas of this NSA where man-made features are prominent, in particular plantation forests and hydro-electric infrastructure. However, in such a large area, there is still a feeling of the dominance of the natural landforms.</p>
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• ***Rich, varied cultural features***

<p>The area boasts many rich and varied cultural features that date from different periods, thereby infusing a great time depth and attesting to man's long settlement and diverse land use.</p> <p>These can take the form of focal landscape features, or imbue the wider landscape with a sense of history – for instance in designed landscapes and field patterns.</p> <p>In themselves they may comprise the major scene as within the estate village of Fortingall; or they may have associations or have given rise to history, folk history, songs and poems. These are more often evoked in the minds of those acquainted with the area and its histories.</p>	<p>Archaeological evidence shows that these areas have been used by humans since Neolithic times.</p> <p>Cashlie is where the legendary Celtic war hero, Fingal, was said to have four castles. His son Ossian, a famous bard, recounted his father's mighty deeds: '<i>12 castles had Fionn, in the dark bent glen of stones</i>' (Glen Lyon). The remains of only five can be seen today, four at Cashlie, close to Loch Lyon at the western point of the Glen. The walls of one of these forts are between 12 and 14 feet thick. Another, at Cambuslaie, is unusual in structure in that within the perimeter are two more circular structures, with the centre one a solid block of masonry 13 feet thick.</p>
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Location-specific qualities

• **The long, narrow and sinuous Glen Lyon**

Glen Lyon is deeply incised, narrow and winding, and reputed to be the longest glen in Scotland.

Scenery in the westernmost, **upper glen** is of dramatic glacial landforms. These distinct, towering, pyramidal summits are scored by numerous waterfalls and burns falling, parallel to one another, down into the River Lyon. Wild, rocky mountain tops and rough grasslands on the upper slopes give way to relatively poor, rough pasture enclosed below head dykes. The mountain slopes enclosing the glen to the south soar upwards from the glen floor, and there is a feeling of being deep within the enclosing mountain ranges.

At Meggernie the glen broadens out to become a strath, marking **mid-Glen Lyon**, which with its wide-ranging woodland diversity, farmed lands, isolated farmsteads and features forms the most complex, rapidly unfolding series of scenes to be found.

A further change in character to **lower-Glen Lyon** is marked by the Pass of Glenlyon at Chesthill and Coille Dhubh (the Black Wood). Here the strath narrows, to become a deeply incised gorge, tightly enclosed by mountains, the steep sides heavily wooded with deciduous trees. The river takes a rapid change of course and character by rounding bends of rocks to leap over Sput Ban (the White Cascade), descend between crags, and then flow a straight southward course until broadening out after the Bridge of Lyon.

'...Glen Lyon has no counterpart in Scotland. Other glens... show a similar change from desolate upper reaches to lower fertility... Others possess some unique feature of gorge, or loch, or waterfall, or forest, not to be seen in Glen Lyon. But there is none that displays such varied loveliness of river and woodland scene and maintains it unmarred throughout so great a length of changing landscape.'
Murray (1963)

The special scenic qualities in the Meggernie area of mid-Glen Lyon derive from:

- The Meggernie Castle designed landscape with its lengthy formal lime avenue; picturesque, curving approach drive; flat, smooth parkland set on the strath floor traversed by the broad leisurely loops of the River Lyon; and its rich and diverse policy woodlands.
- The relict Caledonian Pine woodland of Croch na Keys and Meggernie.
- Substantial woodlands and tree cover – made up of rich stands of deciduous and conifer woodland alternating on the strath sides.
- Open birch woodland on the upper slopes intermixed with glades.
- The barer but colourful higher mountain slopes of heather, bracken and moorland.
- Variations along the strath floor, from the Meggernie parklands to improved pasture, areas of wetter, rougher pastures, enclosed farmsteads associated with their own, smaller, policy plantings.
- Variations in the valley width from broad strath, narrower glen to tightly enclosed gorge.
- The River Lyon's changes in character, with broad-flowing serpentine reaches contrasting with constrained rocky bedded courses.

• **The great expanse of Loch Rannoch**

Loch Rannoch creates a vast sense of space and possesses an air of natural calmness and openness.

Across the waters from the north shore there are spectacular views to the

Loch Rannoch is an expansive loch basin, its linear scale matching the vertical scale of the grand mountain ranges surrounding it. It seems to flood the glen floor so that the surrounding lochside road is tightly constrained between the water's edge and the surrounding hill-slopes.

'The south-facing slopes of the valley are not as steep as those opposing them across the loch; indeed they are called

<p>soaring, almost perfect cone of Schiehallion; and westwards, views along the broad loch focus on the distant hills of Rannoch and Glen Coe.</p> <p>Most settlement, tourist facilities and farming occur along its east and northern shores. Here, drystone dykes and fences establish clear field divisions, and policy plantings around farms and houses create a mature, tended landscape that contrasts with the surrounding, wilder moorlands and mountains.</p>	<p><i>in Gaelic Ann Slios Min – The Side of the Gentle Slopes. The contrast in gradient is partly reflected in the land use, for patches of improved land are common on the gentler (and also sunnier) south-facing slopes.</i>’ Whittow (1977)</p>
<p>• The long, symmetric mass of Schiehallion</p>	
<p>Schiehallion is a prominent landmark, a shapely, symmetrical conical peak with a long east-west axis. It is visible and readily identifiable across a wide area because it stands alone, separate and apart from other summits and ridges.</p> <p>As an elevated viewpoint at 1083m (3,547ft) nearly in the centre of Scotland, its summit of shattered quartzite scree provides extensive views over Loch Rannoch, the expansive Rannoch Moor and the Central Highlands generally.</p> <p>Schiehallion has an important place in scientific history and discovery because in the 18th century its regular form made it suitable for the first accurate determination of the mass of the earth.</p>	<p>Schiehallion or <i>Sidh Chaillean</i>, The Fairy Mountain.</p> <p><i>‘Perthshire afforded us a remarkable hill, nearly in the centre of Scotland, of sufficient height, tolerably detached from other hills, and considerably larger from east to west than from north to south, called by the people of the low country Maiden-Pap, but by the neighbouring inhabitants Schiehallion, which I have since been informed signifies in the Erse language Constant Storm; a name well adapted to the appearance which it so frequently exhibits to those who live near it, by the clouds and mists which usually crown its summit’</i> Maskelyne, quoted in Sillitto (1957).</p> <p>In 1774 the Rev Neville Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal, camped near Schiehallion collecting data on the mountain’s gravitational pull. With the aid of a plumb line and the stars, 237 measurements were taken from two stations, still discernible, on the N and S of the hill. The calculated weight of the earth was substantially correct. Charles Hutton, during his work on the survey data, devised the concept of contour lines.</p> <p>There is evidence of human presence on Schiehallion going back 3,000 years, with settlement and cultivation dating back 1,500 years. The mountain has a rich flora in places, because it is underlain by areas of Dalradian limestone (mainly on its eastern flanks).</p>
<p>• The dominance of Ben Lawers</p>	
<p>The high massif of Ben Lawers and its associated peaks, together with the more uneven ridge of the Tarmachan range to the west, dominate the landscape around Loch Tay. The open hills provide a dramatic and contrasting backdrop to the farmed and wooded shores of the loch.</p> <p>Ben Lawers is internationally important for both its flora and archaeology, and is also readily accessible to the hillwalker. It</p>	<p>Ben Lawers (1,214 metres, 3,984 feet) is the dominant feature of the north Loch Tayside landscape. It is the 10th highest mountain in Scotland and the highest peak in the Southern Highlands. Together with the Tarmachan range to the west, it contains seven Munros.</p> <p>Known as the botanists’ Mecca since the 1760s, it is botanically the most species-rich mountain in Britain, owing to the outcropping of Dalradian calcareous schists at high altitude. The rich soils provide suitable habitat for many arctic and alpine plants rare in Britain.</p> <p>There has been extensive archaeological research in the area through the Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project.</p>

is a spectacular vantage point for vistas to the surrounding highlands, and also down to the gently curving Loch Tay.

Ben Lawers has significant archaeological remains dating from the Mesolithic to the present day. It contains a rare surviving example of an extensive medieval and post-medieval farming landscape of shielings and townships stretching over 400 years, and is regarded as both nationally and internationally important.

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