

Technical Appendix 4.3: Designated Landscapes

Designated landscapes within 40 km of the proposed development are presented on EIAR Volume 3: Figure 4.3. Table 4.3.1 below describes only those LCTs which would have potential visibility of the proposed development.

Table 4.3.1: Designated Landscapes		
Designation	Distance and Direction from the Designated Landscape to the nearest Turbine <sup>1</sup>	Key Characteristics & Special Qualities
Cairngorm National Park (NP)	1.5 km W	<p>The special qualities of the NP are set out in Part 2 of SNH’s report of 2010<sup>2</sup>. This publication summarises the general qualities as follows:</p> <p><b>Magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vastness of space, scale and height;</li><li>• Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes;</li><li>• A landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland;</li><li>• The harmony of complicated curves’; and</li><li>• Landscapes both cultural and natural.</li></ul> <p><b>The Mountains and Plateau</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The unifying presence of the central mountains;</li><li>• An imposing massif of strong dramatic character;</li><li>• The unique plateaux of vast scale, distinctive landforms and exposed, boulder-strewn high ground;</li><li>• The surrounding hills;</li><li>• The drama of deep corries;</li><li>• Exceptional glacial landforms; and</li><li>• Snowscapes.</li></ul> <p><b>Moorlands</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extensive moorland, linking the farmland, woodland and the high tops; and</li><li>• A patchwork of muirburn.</li></ul> <p><b>Glens and Straths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Steep glens and high passes;</li><li>• Broad, farmed straths;</li><li>• Renowned rivers; and</li><li>• Beautiful lochs.</li></ul> <p><b>Trees, Woods and Forests</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dark and venerable pine forest;</li><li>• Light and airy birch woods;</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> The distance and direction given are relative to the affected area of the designation rather than the boundary of designated areas:

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Natural Heritage and Cairngorms National Park Authority (2010). The special landscape qualities of the Cairngorms National Park. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report, No.375 (iBids and Project no 648).

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parkland and policy woodlands; and</li><li>• Long association with forestry.</li></ul> <p><b>Wildlife and Nature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dominance of natural landforms;</li><li>• Extensive tracts of natural vegetation;</li><li>• Association with iconic animals;</li><li>• Wild land; and</li><li>• Wildness.</li></ul> <p><b>Visual and Sensory Qualities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Layers of receding ridge lines;</li><li>• Grand panoramas and framed views;</li><li>• A landscape of many colours;</li><li>• Dark skies;</li><li>• Attractive and contrasting textures; and</li><li>• The dominance of natural sounds.</li></ul> <p><b>Culture and History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distinctive planned towns;</li><li>• Vernacular stone buildings;</li><li>• Dramatic, historical routes;</li><li>• The wistfulness of abandoned settlements;</li><li>• Focal cultural landmarks of castles, distilleries and bridges; and</li><li>• The Royal connection.</li></ul> <p><b>Recreation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A landscape of opportunities; and</li><li>• Spirituality.</li></ul> <p>Viewpoints 6, 9, 11, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20 and 22 are located within this designated area (EIAR Volume 3: Figure 4.7) and, are described in EIAR Volume 4: Technical Appendix 4.7.</p>
Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area (NSA)	27 km W.	<p>The NSA within the Cairngorms (CNP) is centred on the highest mountain plateaux at the core of the park. However, it also covers lower hills and areas of moorland, woodland and inhabited strath which characterise much of the park. The key characteristics of the NSA, as described in Scottish Natural Heritage and Cairngorms National Park Authority (2010). The special landscape qualities of the Cairngorms National Park. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report, No.375 (iBids and Project no 648), are described below.</p> <p><i>"The granite plateau of the Cairngorm Mountains forms the most extensive area of land above 1,000 metres anywhere in Britain. Its height is less immediately apparent than its bulk, but there are four summits over 1,200 metres (Cairngorm, Ben Macdhuì, Cairn Tool and Braeriach) while three others, Cairn Lochan, Beinn a’Bhuird and Ben Avon are nearly so. The high plateau is bleak and bare, and it is the immensity of scale, once realised, which impresses. Its edges are glacially sculptured into</i></p>

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		<p><i>huge corries which excel in grandeur anything to be found elsewhere in Scotland, with the exception of Coire Leis of Ben Nevis”.</i></p> <p><i>This scale "...with the vast corries, the massive slopes, the long passes, the wide skies, and the very bareness of the ground, where the elements work with a power not known at lower altitudes gives to these plateaux their distinctive quality.”</i> (Murray, 1962).</p> <p>The edge of the plateau, where not etched by corries, is well defined by long smooth steep slopes which, seen from Spey side or Dee side, rise in tiers. Snow lies for a long time at the top of these slopes. Lower down, deer forest, sheep grazing, and forestry assume a greater importance in the appearance of the landscape. It is the forests around the plateau foot which for many people characterise the Cairngorm Mountains; three extensive and differing remnants of the native Caledonian Pine Forest occur at Rothiemurchus and Abernethy, Glen Feshie, and Mar.</p> <p>In Rothiemurchus the pines on the upper forest slopes give way to a mixture of pine and birch, and then to the rich policy woodlands of Strathspey. The forests are deeply carpeted with heather, blaeberry and other flora, and the woods are interspersed with lochans of varying character, and views culminating in the peaty waters of the Spey itself. Glen Feshie is wilder and sterner, the pines mature and solitary, interspersed with juniper.</p> <p>The river dominates in this forest, a great, braided, mountain stream with shingle beds cast over an uneven flood plain, almost continental in scale.</p> <p><i>"Mar Forest is different yet again. Higher, and therefore less rich than Rothiemurchus in its flora, it graduates from birch, pine, and fir to massive pines alone, again with a ground cover of heather and blaeberry. Like Glen Feshie the rivers are important here but not for their scale and grandeur. They are noisy burns dashing over granite boulders washed brightly pink by their clear waters, a lively element in the landscape. These wooded flanks of the Cairngorm plateau form a setting of rare beauty for the mountain massif, and, are in turn enhanced by the mountain backdrop."</i></p>
Glen Affric NSA	27 km ESE	<p><b>One of the Most Beautiful Glens in Scotland</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Comprising dramatic mountains with high corries above narrow glens, ancient Caledonian forests of beautiful trees and deep heather, grading to open moorland in the west. Lochs and rocky shores, small bays and promontories are present along with occasional beaches and wooded isles.</li><li>Glen of transition, from dense forest to exposed moorland.</li><li>Travelling westwards, at first the glen is heavily wooded, with stands of pine and birch interspersed with glades of deep heather, but by the time Loch Affric is reached the trees are thinning. Open, exposed moorland and bog soon comes to the fore, with the high and pointed mountains of Kintail providing a spectacular backdrop. At the far end of Glen Affric, three glens open up, each leading deeper into the hills.</li></ul> <p><b>A Journey into Wildness</b></p> <p>This long glen leads one further from the inhabited lowlands of the east into the heart of the wild mountains of the west. Travelling westwards gives a strong feeling of leaving civilisation and moving into a harsh environment where nature and natural forces dominate. Roads give way to tracks, which in turn give way to paths. There is often a strong wind funnelling down the upper glen, with the western peaks enveloped in cloud and rain. In contrast, it can at the same time be calm and sheltered amongst the trees of the eastern glen, with the surrounding mountains clearly visible in the sunshine. The general absence of buildings and other man-made features, other than occasional single storey cottages lends a</p>

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		<p>sense of remoteness to the whole length of the glen.</p> <p><b>The Prominence of Water</b></p> <p>In the eastern section of this NSA the valley floor is filled by Lochs Affric and Beinn a’Mheadhoin, in the west the glens contain fast-flowing rivers with their pools and riffles. Numerous rocky burns tumble down the mountainsides from the high corries. The often-present rain, drizzle, mist or snow adds another dimension, emphasising the prominence of water within this landscape.</p> <p><b>A Glen for all Seasons</b></p> <p>The tranquillity of the lochs and woods and the wildness of the surrounding mountains have drawn visitors to the area since Victorian times. The continual changes in mood and colour provide a feast of sensory experiences throughout the year. The light and airy birch woods along the road at Loch Beinn a’Mheadhoin; the darker pine woods, enlivened by the orange of their bark; the beautiful ancient trees, the horizontals of old pines contrasting with the rounded birch; the purples of the heather, the greens of the blaeberry, the oranges of the bracken in autumn. The wind whipping up the waters of the lochs or bringing rain down the glen; the mountains reflected in Loch Affric on a beautiful day; distant panoramas of inaccessible mountains; a glimpse of a deer, the hope of an otter, an eagle soaring overhead; the peace of a landscape where the motor car does not dominate.</p> <p><b>A Historic and Popular Route through the Highlands</b></p> <p>Once a drove road, the glen is still popular with walkers of all description from those out for a day’s stroll, to serious hillwalkers and those wishing to traverse the width of Scotland.</p> <p><b>Venerable Pine Forest</b></p> <p>The eastern end of Glen Affric is famous for its stands of ancient Caledonian pine trees, containing as it does the third largest remnant in Scotland. The mature trees, with their horizontal crowns, orange bark and their dark blue-green foliage are particularly beautiful, especially when in small clumps or emerging singly above the heather. They add a sense of timelessness to the dramatic setting of loch and mountain. In places the dark of the pines is enlivened by the lighter foliage of the birch.</p> <p><b>Beautiful Loch Affric</b></p> <p>Loch Affric is the key to the beauty of this glen. Ancient pine trees, single or in groups, emerge from deep heather to surround the loch, providing a foreground to the dramatic backdrop of Carn Eige and Mam Sodhail. These mountains, with their steep and rocky slopes and burns falling out of the high corries, tower above the water. Views eastward over this long and narrow loch are towards a gentler landscape of rolling hills, westward the eye is led over a sandy beach into a panorama of narrow peaks.</p>
Ben Alder, Laggan, and Glen Banchor Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)	5 km N	<p>This SLA, located at the heart of the Central Highlands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It combines a series of attractive, predominantly wooded glens interspersed with small-scale farmlands, and rising to moorland that leads to distinctive craggy summits and mountain plateaux which are of picturesque quality. Traditional estate farmsteads, cottages, castles and gatehouses occur throughout the glens and enrich the sense of history within the area. Within this area are two of Scotland’s biggest and best-known Munros – Ben Alder and Creag Meagaidh - and the varied constellation of peaks extending between them. The area includes Loch Laggan, with its unusual sandy beach, extensive areas of forest and distinctive baronial fairy-tale castle at Adverikie. It also includes the more rugged, southern part of Loch Ericht, Loch Pattack,</li></ul>

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		<p>and a number of high corrie lochans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This complex and diverse inland area combines an intimate sequence of wooded glens estate policies and loch surrounded by rolling moorlands that lead to knolly hills, craggy ridges and coires and mountain plateaux.</li><li>There is a strong contrast between the glens and the upland areas. In the glens, human influence is clearly apparent for example, in the distinct pattern of fields, enclosed by policy woodlands and forest plantations, and punctuated by buildings, conversely, the mountain and moorland areas are simple in land cover and possess wildness qualities.</li><li>Within the glens, there is a diverse landscape character within the glens. This is derived from the variety of landform, woodland, agriculture, the presence of lochs, and the location of estate cottages, castles and gatehouses.</li><li>The variable landform means that conifer plantations generally can integrate well with some of the open hillsides above. Cascading waterfalls, small gorges, rocky outcrops and a scattering of birch trees further link the moorland areas with glen floor below. The combination of these landscape elements with baronial architecture features can appear picturesque in character.</li><li>A series of mountain ranges orientated to a south west to north east, and, comprising of rocky summits and ridges and crossed by remote high bealachs, lead to the high plateau in the south. Throughout this area, an extensive network of hill tracks and paths, primarily for estate management, penetrate through the interior. These link remote glens over long high mountain passes through an area that has a strong sense of wildness.</li></ul> <p><b>Ever Changing Compositions</b></p> <p>This SLA comprises a contrasting combination of landform and landuse, forming a fairly confusing composition and a varied character of views.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A dynamic sense of place is experienced through ever changing combinations of high mountain, craggy knolls and ridges, smooth moorland, dark coniferous forest and native broadleaf woodland, flat farmed strath and open loch.</li><li>This area includes some striking landscape features: Coire Ardair, on Creag Meagaidh is one of Scotland’s most dramatic mountain corries: Creag Dhubh, near Newtonmore is one of Scotland’s most impressive roadside crags: And the Dirc Mhór, off the beaten track in the hills west of Dalwhinnie, is one the country’s best examples of a glacial meltwater channel.</li><li>Loch Laggan, an extensive body of open water flanked by wooded shores and slopes, separates the Aberarder and Ardverikie Forests. This provides the focus for long ranging panoramas and intimate vistas, particularly for users of the A86.</li><li>Glen Banchor in the north is enclosed by a complex pattern of craggy hills and deep glens and displays a lonely character despite its relative proximity to Newtonmore and the busy A9 corridor.</li><li>The Monadhliath Mountains form a simple landform horizon to the north in contrast to Ben Alder and Creag Meagaidh which are more variable in form.</li><li>Creag Meagaidh which is National Nature Reserve is popular with visitors all year round and particularly in the winter as it provides</li></ul>

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		<p>challenging walking and ice climbing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ben Alder is remote from public access routes and a visit requires a long walk in, with consequent qualities of wildness.</li></ul> <p><b>Historic Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This area comprises a range of features that lend a sense of history to the landscape, including medieval castles such as the ruinous castle on Eilean an Righ in Loch Laggan, depopulated medieval townships with many associated shielings in the hills, and post medieval crofting townships and farmsteads.</li><li>There is a picturesque sequence of contrasts between upland mountains and settled straths which are enhanced by castles and lodges.</li><li>Cluny Castle and Glen Trium House, with their small-scale policy landscapes, give the area an added visual richness.</li><li>Current day settlement is heavily concentrated around the banks of the River Spey and, to a lesser extent, the River Truim. Prehistoric settlement is especially pronounced and present in significant concentrations along the River Spey to the south-west of Newtonmore. This area was clearly of importance in the Bronze and Iron Ages. Also present are more contemporary defensive structures, such as the Fort at Dun da Lamh (Black Craig).</li></ul> <p>Viewpoints 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 16, and 17 are located in this designated area (EIAR Volume 3: Figure 4.7) and are described in EIAR Volume 4: Technical Appendix 4.7.</p>
<b>Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA</b>	<b>19 km SSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This area is dominated by the vast linear feature of Loch Ness and its dramatic landform trench, flanked by steep, towering wooded slopes that leads to undulating moorland ridges and a contrasting remote interior plateau of upland lochs, small woods and rocky knolls. Whilst it may not qualify as Scotland’s most diverse loch scene, the sheer scale and striking linearity of Loch Ness make it strikingly unique. That is before one even considers the popular myth that surrounds its depths. The loch and its environs also typify the Great Glen as a whole – one of Scotland’s most important geological features and routeways.</li><li>The striking, linear landform trench containing Loch Ness offers a dramatic sequence of landscape elements along its 23-mile length. The horizontal water’s surface combines with adjacent steep slopes to create a simple and distinctive profile of contrasting planes and edges. The skyline is generally horizontal although there are occasional features such as hill peaks, pylons, telecommunications mast and distant views of wind turbines.</li><li>The steep sided slopes of the glen are frequently incised by burns, rivers and waterfalls which fall over sheer rocky cliffs.</li><li>There are long vistas of grand proportions and the sheer scale of the loch dwarfs the numerous boats, and yachts which frequent its waters.</li><li>At regular intervals along the loch there are small areas of low lying pasture with associated settlements, which nestle at the mouths of the rivers flowing into Loch Ness. These offer a human scale juxtaposed against the vast extent of open water and dramatic linear landform character. Public access to the loch’s shore is typically limited to these areas of habitation due to the steepness of the glen</li></ul>

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		<p>side slopes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To the east of Loch Ness, an undulating moorland plateau characterised by rocky knolls and small-scale woods and forests, and peppered with upland lochs, creates an intricate landscape mosaic which contrasts strongly with the adjacent simple drama of the Great Glen.</li><li>The few quiet bays and more accessible areas of shore and forest give relief from the unrelenting linearity of Loch Ness and provide opportunity to savour its tranquillity.</li><li>Historic features frequently form point foci within the glen, typically commanding positions of good defence, access or better farmland. These form landmarks while moving sequentially along the glen.</li><li>On the western shore there are more recent crofting townships and older irregular townships.</li></ul> <p><b>The Dramatic Great Glen</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The imposing steep-sided landform trench, formed by a large strike-slip fault which slices through the centre of the Highlands, creates a dramatic linear landscape which is relatively easily to access and readily appreciated. The very striking profile of the glen is typically best appreciated from either end, or from the water, although good views are also obtained from elevated viewpoints upon the loch-side ridges and hill tops.</li><li>The steep sided slopes of the glen are often deeply incised by watercourses, including the notable Falls of Foyers. These slopes are also flanked by a diverse mix of woodland and forests and form an open smooth moorland skyline ridge.</li><li>Strong contrasts exist between the northern and southern slopes in terms of access, activity and settlement which are all considerably more limited on the south side of the loch, reflecting the variations in access, slope, aspect and microclimate.</li><li>There are distinctive views of grand proportions and long vistas along a vast expanse of the loch, with the detail of foreground features gradually diminishing to distant silhouettes.</li><li>Atmospheric mists and banks of low cloud often linger over Loch Ness and enhance its dramatic character. Limited visibility during these conditions may reinforce the myth of the monster which is responsible for the many visitor attractions and facilities in Drumnadrochit.</li><li>Urquhart Castle is a prominent focus along the loch, occupying a magnificent situation on an irregular headland of rock jutting out into the loch and commanding splendid views up and down the Great Glen. Also, of significance is Foyers imposing former British Aluminium Factory which is most clearly seen from the north slopes.</li><li>The landscape is typically experienced from the B852, B851 and the A82. From these routes, however, the loch is viewed at an oblique angle and thus these do not reveal the striking 'v' shape of the glen that is visible at either end. High numbers of walkers and cyclists also view the landscape from the Great Glen Way, while others see it from a high number of boats on the loch, some travelling the length of the Caledonian Canal. From elevated locations along the glen, it is easier to appreciate the simple line, large scale and great expanse of the loch although, even from these places, it is typically difficult to see all of the loch in one view due to its great length. It is also difficult to perceive the scale of the landscape due to a lack of size indicators.</li></ul>

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		<p>From elevated viewpoints, the glen can be seen within its context of a landscape of elevated plateaux and hills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Most of the hills and high points along the enclosing ridges are indistinct in character, however Meal Fuar-mhonaidh is one example of a distinct hill peak, nearly 700 m high, it stands out as a landmark clearly visible from both ends of the loch and is even prominent in views southwest from the castle in Inverness. Meall Fuar-mhonaid is a good vantage point from which to appreciate the massive scale and alignment of the Great Glen fault within a backcloth of the Monadhliath massif to the south and the Balmacann and Affric mountain interior to the northwest, both of which areas possess wildness qualities.</li></ul> <p><b>Contrasting Intimate Plateau</b></p> <p>An undulating moorland plateau of rocky knolls flanked by small-scale woods and forests, patches of pastures and sporadic farmsteads, and interspersed with a sequence of tranquil lochs, that creates an intimate mix of landscape elements of changing visual interest.</p> <p><b>Historic Landscape</b></p> <p>Achculin, accessed from the Balmore road, is a well preserved depopulated township that is now a scheduled monument.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The eastern shore of Loch Ness incorporating Loch Duntelchaig, Loch Ashie and Loch Ruthven were clear foci of intensive prehistoric activity. Numerous roundhouses and field systems, interspersed with ritual and burial monuments such as burial cairns, burnt mounds and standing stones proliferate in this area; three crannogs are located on Loch Ruthven. This was clearly a highly significant area in prehistory supporting a large population.</li><li>Two features dominate Fort Augustus; the Caledonian Canal, with its conspicuous flight of locks, which links Loch Ness to Loch Oich and bisects the town, and Fort Augustus Abbey. The latter was enlarged in 1876 using stone from the original fort.</li></ul>
<b>Loch Lochy and Loch Oich SLA</b>	<b>19 km ENE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This area is dominated by the strong linear form of the Great Glen fault line with Loch Oich and Loch Lochy occupying the deep, v shaped glen. The lochs are bounded by steep slopes which rise to prominent and striking combinations of peaks and north-east to south west orientated ridges, these hills contain views within the narrow corridor of the Great Glen.</li><li>Both lochs, together with Loch Ness and the linking sections of the Caledonian Canal, form part of the “grand processional way” along the Great Glen and which is perhaps best experienced travelling by boat. Views over gentle pastures along the loch shores across clear, reflective water towards wooded banks and rolling hills opposite are often obscured in part by hovering layers of low cloud or diffused by mist.</li><li>The trench-like landform of the Great Glen is very large in scale and consistent in form along its length. This creates a highly distinctive corridor which provides an over-riding coherence within which a diverse range of smaller scale features are accommodated at a local level. Views up and down the glen present a strong sense of perspective, although often influenced by weather conditions.</li><li>The smooth moorland slopes which form much of the lochs’ sides are clothed in mosaics of heather, and grass with woodland upon some of the mid and lower reaches. These slopes are often deeply incised by watercourses over exposed rocky outcrops and crags. Imposing mountains form the visual back cloth and containing edges to the</li></ul>

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		<p>settled glen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Many existing forest plantations contrast in scale, colour, texture and line with the glen slopes. Associated forest tracks are also often prominent, particularly where they cross the steep side slopes of the glen and incorporate cuttings or embankments.</li><li>Settlement tends to occur within small areas of low lying farmland that occurs occasionally upon the lochs’ shores, either clustered at the ends of the lochs or at intersections of side glens. The features within these settlements provide a human scale in contrast to the massive scale of surrounding hills and lochs.</li><li>The loch shorelines are intricate in places creating small bays, inlets and promontories which offer a more varied sequence of views for canal boat users than is typically available to road users. A clearer appreciation of the form of the glen is typically only appreciated from the central part of the glen floor/ loch.</li><li>The Great Glen– scale, striking linearity, long narrow lochs.</li><li>This area covers one link in a chain of lochs and stretches of canal lengths which extend from Inverness to Fort William. These lie in a large and imposing steep sided v shaped glen, formed by a large strike-slip fault which cleaves through the centre of the Highlands.</li><li>The two main lochs in this SLA are bounded by consistently steep slopes which contain and channel the views. In Loch Lochy’s case, these slopes rise to an eye-catching group of peaks over 900m high on its west side. On its east side, a somewhat lower hill ridge parallels the loch for most of its length. This, in turn, parallels similar ridges above the glens Gloy and Roy further to the east, giving the impression of a remarkably regular, corrugated landscape, particularly when seen from the higher Loch Lochy hills.</li><li>The Great Glen Way is a maintained and promoted long distance walking and cycling route which allows visitors the opportunity to experience the area at a leisurely pace, remote from vehicular traffic.</li><li>This is a distinctly interior landscape, part of Highland Scotland, part way along the Great Glen with landmark features including the old railway line, the Glengarry Castle Hotel and the Well of the Seven Heads.</li><li>Most people experience this landscape from the A82, which is one of the main roads between Inverness and Glasgow, this is a route which demands driver attention on the road ahead rather than on the surroundings except at locations where traffic is slowed at bridging points, road junctions and stopping place.</li><li>Classic Highland Scenery, Distinctive Mountain-top Views</li><li>Views from low lying locations over agricultural grazings and lochs to steep wooded slopes and rolling summits are made more atmospheric in some weathers when mists and trails of low cloud roll in from the south west. In contrast, in calm conditions, superlative linear views may be gained along the base of the ‘v’ shaped valley over reflective loch surfaces that mirror the wooded slopes and bare hill tops and blurring the boundaries between land and water.</li><li>Outstanding views occur from higher elevations, most notably from Meall Dubh and Meall na Teanga. These views along and across the Great Glen include Loch Ness more than twelve miles to the north and Ben Nevis a similar distance to the south. The wider views also include the sweep of mountains to the north and west and in clear</li></ul>

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		<p>conditions extend as far southwest as Mull and Colonsay.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Intimate Drama.</li><li>A sense of comfort and shelter is gained from the intimate scale of features at close proximity.</li><li>to the lochs’ shores, including rolling pastures and human settlement contrasts. These qualities are empathised by the contrast with the sense of drama and grandeur of the wider glen.</li><li>The double waterfall at the mouth of Gleann Cia-aig crashing down from the hills north of Achnacarry into a deep pool called the "Witch's Cauldron” adds dramatic movement and noise.</li><li>Càm Bhealach, on the west side of Loch Lochy, is a classic hanging valley and steep mountain pass which is angled in such a way that it is well seen in its entirety from the main A82 road on the main glen floor.</li></ul>
<b>Moidart, Morar and Glen Sheil SLA</b>	<b>32 km ESE</b>	<p>This SLA covers a massive range of landscapes from north to south, including a mountain interior of spectacular grandeur. The combination of high mountains, glens and lochs extending over a vast area, coupled with difficulty of access and sparse habitation, produces a strong sense of remoteness and wildness within the interior. A strikingly diverse and intricate coastal landscape provides an intimate contrast to the vastness of the mountainous surroundings. The extent of this SLA is strongly influenced by its linkage of surrounding landscapes of high value designated as National Scenic Areas (e.g. Glen Affric NSA and Kintail NSA to the north).</p> <p>A highly varied range of characteristics occur within this SLA, reflecting its very large extent and wide range of character types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>There is an extensive series of high mountain ranges, orientated predominantly east–west, in between which run a series of long glens containing natural and man-made lochs. This produces a distinctive ‘grain’ to the overall landscape pattern at the broad scale.</li><li>It is difficult to perceive the scale of elements within the interior of the landscape due to a lack of size references. This helps to convey a sense that the landscape is immense and imposing.</li><li>The combination of high mountain, glen and loch on such an extensive scale produces a distinctive coherence, simplicity and unity to the core of this landscape which is accentuated by the similar vegetation across the slopes and ridges of the high mountains.</li><li>The upland area contains many high peaks over 900m, some of which stand proud and aloof on their own, while others form part of long, complex high ridges.</li><li>Draw-down shorelines along reservoirs appear incongruous within mountain areas, highlighted by the light colour and linear form of these features. These detract somewhat from the sense of wildness within interior areas.</li><li>Towards the coast, the high mountains give way to a landscape of lower, rugged moorland and rocky hillocks, interspersed with pockets of native woodland. This forms a transition zone that borders the coastal landscape.</li><li>The rocky coastland formed from low, rounded peninsulas marks a dramatic contrast in scale, texture and enclosure to the mountainous peaks. This intricate section of coastline, dotted with offshore skerries, and fringed with white sandy beaches and dunes, bays and machair, is backed by dense patches of native broadleaf woodland.</li></ul>

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		<p>This provides an intimate and diverse landscape experience enhanced by a sequence of views towards the distinctive profiles of offshore islands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Road access to Kinlochhourn and Strathan is through straths and winding glens along predominantly single-track roads. Some recent improvements have included re-routing, widening and straightening and in some locations, the intimate relationship with the underlying topography has been reduced.</li><li>Settlement within the area is sparse, and where it occurs, it mainly tends to follow the coastal fringe. There are, however, a number of isolated estate lodges and inns within the hill interior which form prominent foci at a local level. In addition, upon the banks of some rivers and burns are the remains of shielings, buildings, and abandoned croft buildings. Generally, the lack of habitation and access routes within the interior of this SLA significantly contributes to a sense of wildness, affected by its remoteness, the sense of solitude and inhospitable conditions.</li></ul> <p><b>Distinctive West Highland Composition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The pattern of east-west-aligned mountain ridges, deep glens and lochs typifies the West Highland landscape. This is popular with visitors world-wide, and images of the landscape are often used to represent and promote some of the distinctive qualities of Scotland. The opportunity to reach many high peaks and to sustain height over long distances makes this area particularly popular for hill walking and climbing.</li><li>Much of the area represents the “back door” into Knoydart, Glenshiel and Kintail. At Kinlochhourn and the junction of Glen Dessary and Glen Pean at Strathan, long distance walking routes proceed west. Apart from the sporting estates and a limited number of forestry and hydro workers, the main users of this area are hillwalkers and wilderness enthusiasts who typically engage in multi-day treks.</li><li>Loch Morar is something of a hidden gem, a very large, deep freshwater loch, with attractive wooded islands at its eastern end, and a shoreline with many small bays and headlands which is almost completely undeveloped.</li><li>The area is very sparsely populated, particularly in the central and northern areas, with most communities lying close to the A830 road from Glenfinnan to Mallaig and around the southern end of Loch Shiel.</li><li>Quiet, uninhabited glens and isolated peaks create a landscape experience where the sense of wildness, and tranquillity are key qualities.</li><li>Appreciation of the landscape is strongly influenced by the weather with the pattern of systems strongly affected by the Atlantic to the west and able to change rapidly. Spectacular sunsets are often obtained from areas of high ground and coastal locations looking west.</li><li>Within the landscape there is a rich local heritage of battle sites, places of refuge, and historical associations with the Jacobite uprisings and their aftermath, this creates a strong sense of historic connection between the past and present landscape.</li><li>The A830 (Fort William – Mallaig) ‘Road to the Isles’ follows a well-defined glen which forms a major dividing line through the West Highlands - between the higher mountains to the north and the lower, yet still rugged, peaks of Moidart to the south. Running approximately</li></ul>

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		<p>parallel is the West Highland Railway line which crosses Glen Finnan on an iconic viaduct. In the north, the A87 (Invergarry – Kyle of Lochalsh) road hugs the shore of Loch Cluanie before winding through the remote Glen Shiel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>There is an intricate coastline both diverse, and intimate with rocky promontories containing white sandy beaches, impressive dunes and machair habitats, interspersed with scattered crofting and fishing settlements and fringed by rich native woodlands. Popular for its sand beaches and superb vistas, an integral feature of these views is the foreground detail provided by large numbers of skerries. Loch nan Ceall is particularly notable in this regard. This provides a stimulating sense of place and strong contrast of scale with the mountains. It also offers expansive views to the sea and distinctive profiles of the mountainous islands to the west.</li></ul>
Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA	34 km SE	<p><b>Grand Mountain Ridges, Long Glens and Wide Strath</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A series of grand, broadly parallel, high mountain ridges, separated by long, sinuous, steep sided glens and straths combine to form a landscape of immense scale which tend to be experienced in sequentially along the ridges and/or glens and straths.</li><li>There is marked contrasts between the bare, dramatic scenery of the ridges and upper glens - exaggerated by the huge scale of lochs Monar and Mullardoch - and the more tranquil and intimate qualities of the strath and glen floors, with their patch.</li><li>Distinctive sequential changes in the visual and landscape qualities travelling along the glens reflect a transition from lowland strath to mountain interior. There is an intimate sequential travelling experience on the A890 through Strathcarron with ever changing enclosure and exposure and views to adjacent features.</li><li>There are contrasting deep, steep-sided glens and wide, wooded straths on the eastern and western periphery.</li></ul> <p><b>Wildness and Remoteness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>There is a very strong sense of wildness and remoteness within most parts of this landscape, typically evoked by the long journey from the main access points into this area form the east along winding single-track roads to the head of the glens. A sense of wildness is also influenced by the sparse network of rough, isolated paths and tracks, and the spectacular summit views over vast expanses of moorland and hills. The main detractors from these qualities are reservoir draw down scars and tracks compromise the sense of wildness within the interior.</li><li>The mountain interior and upper reaches of the glens are out of sight of public roads, remote from any habitation, and are among the most remote areas of mainland Britain. The only part of this area significantly less remote is within Strathcarron where there are road and rail links.</li><li>Extensive areas of hill slopes and summits are dominated by native vegetation that contributes to the wildness qualities, including mosaics of montane heaths, grasses, and mosses contrast with the afforested side slopes and partly wooded flood plain at Strathcarron. There are also important remnants of native Caledonian pinewood.</li><li>The mountain terrain is physically challenging to access and ideally suited to adventurous ridge walkers. The area is very popular with hill walkers, with a high number of Munro mountains in close proximity. Also, given the large extent of the area and the limited accessibility</li></ul>

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		wild camping is a popular pastime in the area.

