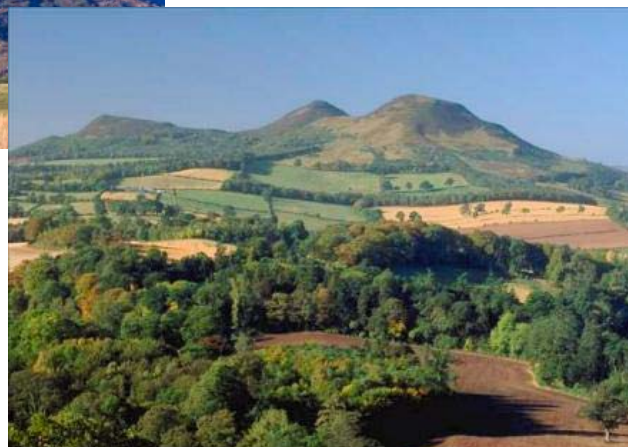
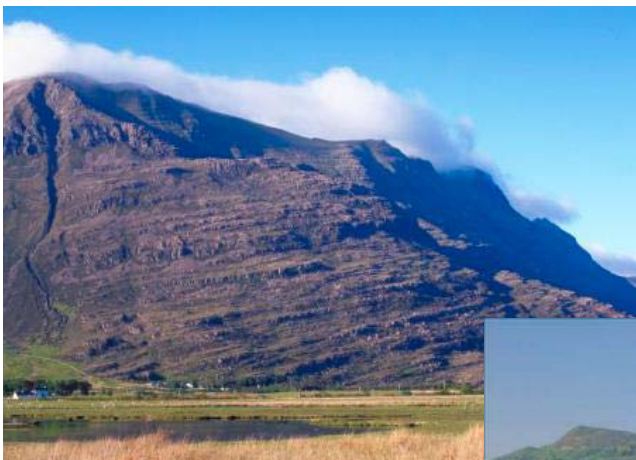




ENHANCING OUR CARE OF SCOTLAND'S LANDSCAPES
DEBATING THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE'S CONSULTATION PAPER

**REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SEMINAR AT
BATTLEBY 9TH MARCH 2006**



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ENHANCING OUR CARE OF SCOTLAND'S LANDSCAPES DEBATING THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE'S CONSULTATION PAPER

This report is the summary of the proceedings of a seminar held at Battleby, Perth, on the 9th March 2006, where the Scottish Executive's consultation paper *Enhancing Our Care of Scotland's Landscapes*¹ was discussed. The aim of the seminar was to promote debate on the issues raised in the paper in order to help those attending prepare their responses to the consultation. About 65 delegates attended, representing a wide cross-section of interests, and the seminar was chaired by Isabel Glasgow.

Scottish Natural Heritage
20th March 2006

INTRODUCTION

Isabel Glasgow, Board Member Scottish Natural Heritage

May I welcome you all to this seminar which is concerned with the important issue of how we care for Scotland's important and cherished landscapes; this debate is particularly timely as the UK Government has recently signed the European Landscape Convention².

I would like to highlight a couple of key points raised in the Scottish Executive's consultation paper. The confusing statutory base to National Scenic Areas (NSAs) means that the issue does need sorting out so that we welcome the proposed new statutory base for National Scenic Areas and its role as an accolade designation.

Likewise, we welcome the recognition of the need for NSAs to have Management Strategies, but we need to discuss further how we can enthuse and motivate local authorities to produce them, and how we can involve the wider public.

Finally, I would like to mention the proposed Landscape Forum, to be set up by the Executive and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). This Forum will agree proposed revisions to National Planning Policy Guidelines 14 (NPPG14) and will also be a vehicle for the wider debate on the future of Scotland's landscapes that the consultation paper wishes to stimulate.

¹ Scottish Executive Rural Group. January 2002. *Enhancing Our Care of Scotland's Landscapes*. Paper 2006/2.

² For details of the European Landscape Convention see the Council of Europe's web-page: <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=176etc L=ENG>

ENHANCING OUR CARE OF SCOTLAND'S LANDSCAPES – THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE'S CONSULTATION PAPER

Ian Hooper, Head of Landscapes and Habitats Division, Scottish Executive

Landscape is a curious issue in public policy as it does not fit neatly into any single box! The current legislative background to National Scenic Areas needs clarification and there are no powers at present to create NSAs or to amend existing designations.

The timetable for this consultation is as follows.

- Consultation paper was launched on 30 January with over 230 consultees.
- Responses need to be in by 24 April.
- Report to Ministers will be around mid-May.
- Provisions would be included at stage 2 of Planning Bill.

Background/ NSA Review

SNH was asked to review the NSA designation in 1997, including what kinds of measures are required in NSAs, the current selection of NSAs, and relationship of NSAs to other designations (National Parks and Areas of Great Landscape Value).

This review resulted in SNH's report *National Scenic Areas: SNH's Advice to Government*³, which included the following recommendations.

- Priority for action should be better care and management of the existing NSAs (including the development and implementation of Management Strategies).
- NSA should continue to be an accolade designation based on preference for natural beauty and amenity.
- A new statutory base for NSAs and a definition of purpose was needed.
- Changes to related provisions under the Town and Country Planning system would be necessary.

The Executive's proposals

The following proposals are included in the consultation paper.

- A new power for Scottish Ministers to designate, de-designate, or modify the boundaries of any NSA.
- A definition of purpose for NSAs.
- Ministers to consult with SNH and other relevant bodies, including the relevant local authorities, on proposed designations.
- Designation should include definition of the NSA boundary on a map.
- Powers to de-designate or to modify boundaries (after consultation with SNH and other relevant parties, including local authorities).
- Notice of any designation, modification of boundaries or de-designation to be published by the Scottish Ministers in the Edinburgh Gazette and in at least one newspaper circulating in the locality.
- Planning authorities required to compile, maintain and make available a list of all designated NSAs in their area.
- SNH and local authorities to have powers to consider and bring forward proposals on NSAs.
- Authorities to consult locally and with relevant national bodies before submitting any proposals to the Scottish Ministers.

³ SNH. 1999 *National Scenic Areas: Scottish Natural Heritage's Advice to Government*.

New Statutory Purpose for NSAs

The proposed definition of purpose is:

- **that National Scenic Areas are areas of land which represent the very best of the landscapes for which Scotland is renowned, and**
- **they are of such outstanding scenic beauty and amenity that they should be safeguarded and enhanced as part of the national heritage.**

The proposed aims of designation are:

- **to manage changes arising from development and other pressures on the special qualities of the NSA consistent with the underlying purpose, whilst recognising the social and economic needs of communities.**

The inclusion of 'social and economic needs' brings a new perspective to the NSA designation. Following enactment of new legislative provisions, guidance would be issued on:

- information to be contained in any proposals for new NSAs;
- the means of consultation;
- advertising requirements;
- publishing of any reports, and
- timescales for their consideration.

National Parks and NSAs

- The restrictions on the General Permitted Development Order that apply to National Scenic Areas do not currently apply to National Parks (i.e. NSAs give stronger protection).
- The need for NSAs within National Park boundaries should be reviewed on an individual basis.

Management Strategies

SNH identified five key components of NSA Management Strategies.

- 1. The landscape of the NSA** – description of the physical, cultural and economic influences that shaped the landscape of the NSA.
- 2. What is special about the NSA** – description of the special qualities for which the NSA has been designated and a vision for their care and enhancement.
- 3. Issues and opportunities** – identification of key issues causing change and opportunities for better landscape planning, management and enhancement.
- 4. Making it happen** - a programme of targeted and costed actions required to address the issues and maximise the opportunities identified.
- 5. Reviewing progress** – selection of measures to monitor progress and to assess impacts for landscape change.

The following are the consultation's proposals on strategies.

- Preparing Management Strategies should not be a duty, although local authorities would be encouraged to prepare strategies both in the guidance to be issued and by financial support via SNH.
- A target of preparing Management Strategies for all of Scotland's NSAs by 2010.
- A biannual review of progress on implementation of the strategies, and a fundamental review at maximum of 7-year intervals.

- Roles for local authorities, SNH, VisitScotland, Historic Scotland and other local and national stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of Management Strategies.

Enhancing our care of Scotland's Landscapes: The Wider Context

- The protection of rural landscape and natural heritage is identified as a key theme in the Rural Development Programme for Scotland, 2007-2013.
- This guides use of EU funds and domestic resources.
- Land Management Contracts could include landscape management elements.
- A complementary consultation on proposals to implement the Scottish Rural Development Programme will be launched shortly.

European Landscape Convention

- UK has signed the Convention and will shortly ratify it; no change in legislation is needed, but it will raise the profile of landscape as a policy issue.
- This NSA consultation signals a commitment to enhancing performance against Convention requirements.

Tourism

- Scotland's largest industry.
- The scenery and the natural environment are overwhelmingly the most important factors in visitors choosing Scotland as a holiday destination and are the highlight of most people's holidays once they get here. (*VisitScotland Tourism Attitudes Survey 2004*).
- Longer walks and hikes are amongst the most popular activities while in Scotland, and opportunities for these are rated excellent. (*VS Tourism Attitudes Survey 2004*).
- NSAs are some of our most important tourism assets.

NATIONAL SCENIC AREAS – A LOCAL AUTHORITY PERSPECTIVE

Fergus Murray, Development Plans Manager, Argyll and Bute Council

National Scenic Areas

- There are 7 NSAs in Argyll and Bute, covering mountainous and coastal areas.
- Argyll and Bute Council are pursuing a growth agenda that can sometimes create conflict with the NSA designation, particularly when it lies adjacent to key settlements.
- The main pressure for development, subject to planning, is housing and tourist facilities; attracts wealthy, multiple home owners/retired/cottage investors who may be resistant to any form of change. There has been a 200% rise in planning applications in the past few years.
- NSA designation provides robust control over significant developments such as quarries and commercial wind farms, but fails to tackle small-scale, cumulative impacts that erode landscape character over time.
- NSAs also very vulnerable to climate change, changes to agricultural practices/subsidy and forestry; for example, estates are giving up sheep farming.

Response to consultation paper

- Agree that a management plan is a good idea and requires local input from the outset; NSAs have been seen as top-down in the past. Landscape management needs micro-management rather than being based wholly on Landscape Character Assessments, which are not detailed enough.
- Target to complete management plans for all NSAs by 2010 is too ambitious with current identified resources. Consultation/involvement will be complex, and there is need to prioritise the NSAs under most development pressure.
- Expansion of NSAs will be resisted in some areas or hijacked by certain interest groups, but will be encouraged by others; needs local input throughout the process.
- Planning Authorities have an intensive agenda over the next few years. Resources will be concentrated on Development Control, the introduction of SEA and scores of other initiatives – none of which have been funded. The new Planning Bill, and its renewed emphasis on the Development Plan, is resource intensive – and the resources are not always there. There is little time or energy left for strategic/policy planning.
- Landscape is given a low priority by Councils in terms of action, due to increasing budget constraints. Members can sometimes be unsympathetic to the need to protect the landscape.
- VisitScotland never get involved in the landscape debate, although landscape is the basis of tourism.
- Councils have insufficient resources in terms of both staff with sufficient skills and project funding; money from SNH will need to be ring-fenced. The identified costs are too low. There are currently 90 vacancies in Scotland in planning: even if the resources are sufficient, will there be staff available to do the work?
- If landscape is considered vitally important, why are NSA officers only resourced for two years? Who will do the biannual reports? Need to be more proactive and positive to counter changing rural economy and development pressures.
- National Park status should negate the need for NSAs to be identified within them.
- Concerned about creating too much of a hierarchy approach to the landscape, as the emphasis should be for good design everywhere – where Design Guides are a help.

ENHANCING SCOTLAND'S LANDSCAPES – A LAND MANAGER'S PERSPECTIVE

Jonathan Hall, Head of Rural Policy, Scottish Rural Property and Business Association

Landscape does not fit comfortably into the current policy framework.

NSAs and Landscape

- National Scenic Areas – our only national landscape designation, of national significance and outstanding scenic interest. 'Unsurpassed attractiveness which must be conserved as part of our national heritage' (quote from original document describing NSAs⁴).
- 40 NSAs, 13% of Scotland, 1 million-plus hectares, managed by many individuals/interests.
- NSA designation should remain an accolade.
- Selection based on aesthetic quality – hence a subjective designation, although the additional values associated with NSAs (eg. tourist potential) are perhaps more objective.
- Management of change within NSAs needs to be consistent with their purpose, whilst, recognising social and economic dimensions.

Landscape and Land Management

- Landscape and land management are inextricably linked, across all Scotland.
- Farming, forestry and field sports are the traditional estate activities, although estates are moving away from these to renewables, recreation and rural housing.
- Land use decisions have both positive and negative influences on landscape... and *vice versa*. The 'product' of the two is highly significant.
- Perhaps 'habitats, species and biodiversity' form the basis of designation, 'incomes, outputs and employment' arise from compliance with the designation, and 'culture, community and identity' need including in the process.

Land Management and Policy

- Land use decisions are driven by public interest (policy).
- Mechanisms can be a prescriptive incentive, regulation or advice.
- National strategies and policy actions tend to be single interest, sectorally divided.
- The trend now is for measurable outputs from measurable inputs.
- Current policy drives management decisions, whether positive or negative; policy drivers are:
 - CAP (pre/post 2005), agri-environment, LFA, SFGS;
 - renewable energy, planning (SPP15);
 - designations (SSSI, SPAs, SACs, National Parks); and
 - Scottish and EU legislation.

Policy and Landscape

- Current policy drives landscape change, whether positive or negative, but tends to be at the individual holding level, rather than at the landscape scale
- Externalities and public goods – there is landscape dimension.
- Should policy be designed with explicit landscape components?
- Are there 'win-win' approaches?

⁴ Countryside Commission for Scotland. 1978. *Scotland's Scenic Heritage*.

- Landscape remains implicit, at best, in policy thinking: all policies need an explicit mention of landscape.
- Policy needs to be based on prescription and output, rather than 'outcome'.
- The landscape dynamics of land use change need to be considered; for example.
 - What will be the result of reduced activity on the landscape?
 - Of increased activity on the landscape?

Landscape and NSAs

- Scotland has a landscape beyond NSAs.
- Landscape is a function of land use.
- Land use is a function of policy.
- Is there need for specific designation/differentiation for landscapes beyond NSAs?
- Should we leave it to existing policy or is an alternative designation needed?
- NSAs are Scotland's only explicit landscape policy instrument.
- The basis of NSA designation needs explaining to land managers. It must meet the NSA's social and economic needs, whilst recognising the needs of the land(scape) manager.

ENHANCING SCOTLAND'S LANDSCAPES – AN NGO PERSPECTIVE

Bill Wright, Director, Rural Scotland

The current debate on the location of renewable energy schemes has brought landscape issues into focus. Scotland is now marketed as 'the best small country in the world', and landscape is a key part of what makes Scotland what it is.

Why National Scenic Areas now?

- The opportunity of the SE consultation and Planning Bill has to be grasped. They are on the political agenda now.
- Any doubts about different labels have to be avoided. Lengthy debates about titles have the potential to divert attention away from what really needs to be done in creating NSAs with proper statutory standing. The term has already achieved sufficient public currency to be understood.
- No doubt that focus has come back onto NSAs and landscape to a large extent because of the present renewables' debate; but we must not frame legislation for our landscape long into the future because of what is regarded as a particular threat during the current decade.
- We have a Deputy Environment Minister who is interested.
- The ratification of the European Landscape Convention by the UK is now imminent and we have the opportunity in Scotland to place Scotland's landscapes where they should be – much further up the political and public agenda: best small country in the world (BSCIW).
- BSCIW is largely a tourism-focussed promotion but NSAs have as much place to play in this as, for example, golf.

What is needed?

- The SNH recommendations of 1999 were largely right.
- We possibly need some more of Scotland covered by NSA designation – compared to AONBs we have actually less designated landscapes. There is actually potential for fewer NSAs but making them larger.
- We need to have logical boundaries, that has actually involved work on the ground, engaging not only draughtsmen and officials sitting in far-away offices looking at maps, but also "give-a-damn type people" who are familiar with the territory and have a clear association with it.
- Often these will be those who visit, and for whom the landscape has real meaning, in addition to those who live in and around the areas. That often means people who are coming from recreational backgrounds as well as residents.
- NSAs need robust management, with duties and obligations on local authorities for Management Strategies as originally recommended, rather than just the power or encouragement to act – where else is the added value in having them?
- There remains an awareness-raising job to be done. To date we have fought shy of promoting them even at the points of entry, which only contributes to obscurity.

Where should they be?

- Where the landscape is special and distinctive, most often that will mean upland and water, sometimes coasts, as well as lochs.
- In Scotland that means largely the wild and natural that plays a big part in making us BSCIW.

- The case for the protection of historic and cultural landscapes is strong, but whether we can best represent them through NSA management and protection is not as clear as that where the land is perceived as having a natural character.

How should they be managed and by whom?

- Local authorities have a key role to play as the lead player in steering groups drawing up management plans, but there needs to be a much more dedicated sense of ownership, with those who are affected having active involvement in preparing them.
- That means drawing on local communities as well as the agencies and owners who can most make a difference.
- Plans need to be more than just a material consideration under the development planning system – that means fuller integration with agencies. We need to identify what are the most significant financial and administrative drivers that can most influence their enhancement and protection. Water, woodland and grazing can alter scenery as much as construction.
- Clearly there is an overseeing, co-ordinating and leadership role for SNH to play where the family of NSAs are championed publicly. SNH needs to be confident that its paymasters will listen to what it thinks on landscape rather than what it thinks the SE wants it to say on landscape.

Resourcing?

- These landscapes are of national, indeed often international standing, so it is logical to fund them largely from national sources. In the case of Highland in particular, where there is presently a disproportionate number of NSAs, there is a strong case for additional financing through added national support steered via SNH budgets.
- Under the Rural Development Strategy for 2007 to 2013, land management contracts surely have a role to play. Hence we need to be responding to not only this 'enhancing landscapes' consultation paper but, through the parallel consultation on rural development, be diverting more money toward landscape enhancement.

Not only NSAs have to be addressed

- In providing for NSAs we need to ensure that our other less known landscapes, but still valuable scenery that makes Scotland distinctive, is not left open to be the equivalent in architecture of being 'Tescofied'. We are already doing enough of that in our villages and small rural towns.
- Political box-ticking for 'all landscape' being done by legislating for NSAs has to be avoided.
- A first step is to update NPPG 14 now, as well as looking forward to the green belt guidance being effective.
- Local landscape designations have to be lasting, and not removed just to overcome local planning problems.
- We must take the opportunity of the General Permitted Development Order review.
- We have to take forward work already done on making the best views from roadsides a more accessible experience.
- There is a real further role for our Parliament to play. With the European Landscape Convention we need a general duty for protecting landscape on all authorities.
- We need to persuade more of our politicians to recognise that landscape is not just about tourism, but the provisions for all our landscapes as set out in the European Landscape Convention can make a much more cost effective contribution to our health, well-being, sense of identity and prosperity.

MANAGEMENT OF AONBS: THE EXPERIENCE IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Mike Taylor, Campaign Officer, National Association of AONBs

There are 40 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England and Wales (together with another 9 in Northern Ireland). They have the following key points.

- An AONB is exactly what it says it is: a precious landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them. At present, though, the Government is unclear as to what exactly is meant by natural beauty!
- They cover around 15% of England and Wales.
- Most cross local authority boundaries, and one straddles the Welsh/English border.
- The first, Gower, was created in 1956, and the last, Tamar, in 1995, with a number still in the pipeline; hence it has been a long process of designation.
- There has been strong local consultation throughout, including consultation on boundaries.

Most are managed through AONB partnerships, comprising mainly Joint Advisory Committees of the relevant local authorities. However, two AONBs have Conservation Boards and one, the South Downs, has a Joint Committee with special powers (where non-elected members have a vote).

Until the 1990s, AONBs were not much other than a planning designation, although with some exceptions (eg. Wye Valley). In the 1990s the Government decided to strengthen their status following pressure from amenity groups and the Countryside Commission, resulting in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Critical new measures were.

- Statutory Management Plans for each AONB were required from local authorities: this is seen as being a particularly important measure.
- A duty to 'have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area' placed on all public and statutory bodies; this has proved beneficial in practice in that statutory bodies now talk to AONB teams before undertaking their activities. For example, it has enabled Ofgem to take seriously the under-grounding of electricity cables in AONBs.
- Powers to create Conservation Boards (although these are not planning authorities).
- Commitment to core funding in medium term, backed up by a big increase in Treasury funding. In practice this has meant 75% central government funding for AONB staff teams varying from 0.5 of a person (Scillies) to 10 people (Cotswolds).

In practice, Ministers gave strong support for AONB Management Plans, whose production has benefited local authority planning generally. Although not coming under planning law, the new legislation does apply to the planning system. Management Plans will be primary documents in the future, informing the planning process – which give particular weight to them.

AONB teams are now regularly consulted on policy developments by the government and its agencies.

The government has also created the Sustainable Development Fund for AONBs, similar to that for National Parks. This fund, amounting to £100,000 *per* AONB *per* year for the next three years, is designed to help AONB Management Plans deliver social and economic improvements.

It is now five years since the new status was given to AONBs, and experience to date has highlighted the following problems.

- Some local authority officers are still unclear about the role of AONB partnerships, and not all have cooperated in the production of sound Management Plans.
- Management Plans took a lot of resources, but to be credible need to be well publicised and with real input from local communities. Consultation takes time and effort, and approaches such as 'Planning for Real' indicate that Parish Council views do not necessarily represent local views.
- There is often poor baseline data for AONBs.
- Management Plans are about to be reviewed and there is concern about a loss of momentum second time round.
- Not all partners delivered their 'promises': although partners were generally happy to become involved in the consultation process during the preparation of plans, it was perhaps a shock for some of them to realise that they would actually have to deliver!
- It will be a challenge to adapt to the new system of preparing local development plans in England and Wales.

The main future challenges are: funding, funding and funding!

NSA MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

Anna Johnson, NSA Officer, Dumfries and Galloway Council

There are three, coastal National Scenic Areas in Dumfries and Galloway: the Fleet Valley, the East Stewartry Coast and the Nith Estuary. All three now have Management Strategies⁵, which took two years to produce; these have now been adopted as supplementary guidance to the Structure and Local Plans. Dumfries and Galloway Council see these strategies as a tool for economic regeneration of rural areas.

This presentation summarises some the key points in the preparation and implementation of the strategies.

Producing the Strategies – why?

- SNH's *Advice to Government*³ recommended that Management Strategies were needed for NSAs.
- Dumfries and Galloway Council were invited to take part in national pilots, and agreed as the 'Advice' recommended it become a statutory requirement in the future and attractive funding support was offered.
- An NSA Officer was appointed in December 2000 to initiate and take forward the preparation of strategies for each of the three NSAs.

Producing the Strategies – what?

The strategies were to be developed through a participatory process engaging as broad a range of people as possible and were to include the following.

- Identification of the scenic qualities of each NSA – an approach to identify these qualities had to be developed as part of the pilot.
- Identification of the forces for change.
- A vision and objectives for each NSA.
- A review of the validity of the boundaries (from Dumfries and Galloway experience settlements are very important part of the NSAs – active thriving communities have helped drive forward the project).
- Action Plans: what? who? when? and the resources needed.
- Relationship with existing plans and strategies.

Producing the Strategies – how?

- A small management team comprising Council and SNH staff oversaw the process and have continued to oversee the implementation.
- A network of key advisers and stakeholders was established (rather than a steering group).
- Wide participation and consultation took place through: an introductory launch, questionnaires, public events, liaison with Community Councils, and workshops with local communities and communities of interest (eg. land managers, local rangers and wardens, SNH staff, RTPI group).
- There were three rounds of consultation.
 - 1) **Information gathering** (Sept. 2001), at which a variety of questions were posed about what was valued about the areas, what changes had occurred, comments on

⁵ See the National Scenic Area section of the Dumfries and Galloway website for details: <http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/dumgal/Services.aspx?id=2550>

the boundaries, identifying special places, problems, places, opportunities and possible actions.

2) **Working papers** (Feb. 2002), at which agreement was sought on the scenic values, the vision, prioritising actions, their timing, and identifying which actions strategies may help deliver.

3) **A consultative draft** (July 2002).

NSA Management Strategies

- Adopted by Dumfries and Galloway Council as supplementary guidance to the Local and Structure Plans (Dec. 2002).
- Endorsed by Scottish Natural Heritage.
- Support from wide range of organisations and individuals who are committed to implementation.
- Formally launched in May 2003.

Implementing the NSA Management Strategies – why?

- There is a high level of community support and expectation to drive process forward.
- Delivery of Action Plans contributes to.
 - Corporate Plan priorities.
 - Supports economic regeneration in the region.
 - Contributes to high quality sustainable development.
 - Exemplifies the community planning approach.

Implementing the NSA Management Strategies – how?

- Continuing employment of Project Officer on a temporary basis into the implementation phase.
- An Advisory Group established for each NSA to enable the ongoing process of participation and partnership. Council Member representation on all three groups.
- The National Trust for Scotland, one of the partners, was successful in securing funding for a temporary NSA Ranger in the Fleet valley NSA. A countryside volunteer team has therefore been established in the Area.
- Project funding: initially funding was sought and secured for a couple of individual small projects, then a successful bid was made for Quality of Life funding from the Council (£82,500 over two years).

Priorities for implementation

In Spring of 2004 the advisory groups prioritised the actions they wanted to see taken forward over the next two years. They included:

- Raising awareness and promoting understanding of the NSAs.
- Encouraging enjoyment of these outstanding areas.
- Conserving and enhance the landscape.

A project programme was then developed in liaison with the groups and the management team, which aimed to consolidate the community interest in the NSA project and to establish some physical outputs that would demonstrate the opportunities the designation can offer.

Implementation: achievements to date

- A communication strategy for the NSAs has been produced which sets out how we can promote the areas 'as a family', looks at branding, etc.
- Developing opportunities for recreation and tourism, including.

- Establishment of an NSA Ranger, supporting guided walks, events and a countryside team.
- Viewpoints and interpretation.
- Opening of the Colvend Visitor Centre.
- Production of the Glencaple Village Design Statement.
- Production of a Japanese knotweed action plan for the Fleet Valley NSA.
- Various cultural heritage projects.

Future Delivery

- A Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership bid – ‘Sulwath Connections’ – which, if successful, will help implement a range of projects that will benefit the NSAs.
- The NSA Officer post has been extended a further twelve months.
- The NSA Ranger post has been extended till summer 2007, and expanded to cover the three NSAs
- Further projects are being developed and funding sought.

Summary and Conclusions

Benefits recognised

- The process of producing the strategies is as important as the strategy itself: getting the process right will bring in commitment from communities and stakeholders. Likewise, community support, and high expectations, is a powerful influence on the local authority.
- The council is enthusiastic to continue with the project and recognise NSAs as a tool in rural regeneration – action for NSAs is written into Community Plans.
- The council has agreed to make the NSA Officer post permanent subject to funds becoming available.
- Advisory groups are growing in confidence.
- Community groups are beginning to understand how to use Management Strategies.
- Working with Tourist Board and other partners.

Wider influence is needed

- SNH Advice 1999 suggests planning powers alone are not sufficient to make designation more effective.
- The experience in Dumfries and Galloway would support this: influence must be much wider – there is a whole range of people, processes and management that must be influenced. Designation must be systematically reinforced and supported through many different channels – particularly land management (key to our Dumfries and Galloway NSAs).

Resource Dependent

- Heritage Lottery Fund provides a fantastic opportunity to deliver key projects.
- This will not however enable continuation of Advisory Groups, and the wider communication and liaison needed for ongoing development to drive forward future delivery of actions.
- For the initiative to build on successful first steps, the project needs to be established with a more secure and long-term footing.
- The future of the wider NSA project in Dumfries and Galloway is thus very uncertain.

REPORT ON THE WORKSHOPS

The seminar had two workshop sessions, each split into five different groups of about 12 individuals. Such workshops tend to be wide-ranging in their discussions, with a range of views expressed. Hence the report here cannot hope to be exhaustive on the topics covered or views expressed, but aims to give a flavour of the discussions.

WORKSHOP 1

What do we want from our national landscape designation?

How does this fit with action for enhancing landscape out with NSAs?

1. Is it clear what the NSA designation is seeking to achieve?

- Broadly yes, it is clear; but we need to clarify landscape/scenery/amenity concepts; and make social and economic duty a positive rather than a negative feature.
- The meaning of 'amenity' is unclear.
- The purpose of NSAs is clear, but the aims are not.
- What is not clear is the relative standing of landscape in respect of social and economic issues: in practice, how will landscape be prioritised against social and economic issues?
- Local people are currently very unaware of and uninformed about NSAs.
- It is not clear to the wider public what benefits NSAs bring.
- The purpose of NSA designation should be to conserve that which cannot be regained if lost.
- NSAs could become exemplars of good landscape management and design everywhere.
- If NSAs are to be an accolade, who decides? In whose eyes are they the best? Does it always have to be mountainous scenery?
- In practice, NSA designation deters large-impact development but not small-scale development.
- Links are often made between landscape and tourism – but 'NSAs' are the missing word in this.
- Are NSAs valued by councillors – who makes the decisions?
- Is it a 'natural' or 'national' heritage designation?
- NSAs can be a distraction from real issues in the country at large.
- European Landscape Convention principles need applying within NSAs.

2. Is there demand for new or revised NSAs?

- Greater need to look at existing boundaries, including seaward boundaries, perhaps with expansion and modification in places.
- Only consider new NSAs in places where other mechanisms to conserve the landscape are insufficient.
- Yes, fewer and larger NSAs, supported by Local Scenic Areas.
- Maybe in some areas where there are existing NSAs (eg. Shetland).
- Need to review existing suite against new values – some additions likely.
- Not sure, but support for 'all landscapes need good management' approach.
- Various people felt that wider landscape care is more important than NSAs.

- If trying to represent the different forms of Scottish scenery then different areas will emerge: the more intensively managed landscapes are under-represented.
- The importance of communities/settlements to NSAs must be recognised – pragmatism is the missing word.
- Should the whole country be resurveyed, against given criteria, with the existing NSAs as a starting point?
- Need to separate national importance from local importance, and to identify a size threshold for NSAs: for example, one workshop concluded, as an example, that Arthur's Seat (Edinburgh) is only of local landscape importance.
- Need to try to capture a local sense of place.
- Any selection needs to be an inclusive process involving a wide range of stakeholders, including, perhaps, VisitScotland.

3. What special measures are required within NSAs to conserve their qualities?

- A stronger statement required than planning authorities required to 'have regard to the designation' in terms of planning applications within NSAs.
- Need to have a duty to conserve the special qualities of the NSAs enshrined in legislation, with best practice all-pervading.
- The strongest statement, such as 'a duty', needs to be placed on those overseeing the design and construction of development (housing, tracks, etc.); best practice has to result in the best landscape fit.
- The involvement of local authorities is crucial, and a need to get their greater understanding and engagement.
- Need to retain call-in procedures.
- Adequate resources essential; dedicated, staffed and resourced units for NSAs are required in local authorities, including resources for enforcement.
- National ring-fenced funding for NSAs is needed.
- Grant from SNH will not be sufficient if local authorities cannot find match-funding: block grant will not work.
- Do not focus too much on planning, but raise profile of NSAs within, for example, agri-environment schemes.
- Grant schemes need to be tailored to the needs of the NSA, and provide adequate incentives for land managers.
- Land Management Contracts will be critical in achieving landscape goals, and Tier 2/3 agricultural grants need to be up to the task.
- Need to 'sell' the NSA concept: people benefits, economic benefits; and encourage local pride in NSAs.
- More teeth need to be given to NSAs.
- Inherent conflict between a designation covering national interests being managed by local authorities. Why are NSAs local authority rather than SNH-led?
- Designation *per se* is not enough: cumulative impact of small developments is one of the biggest threats, which requires 'micro-management', using tools such as capacity assessments, and development briefs leading to supplementary guidance.
- Road design and housing design guidance (including affordable housing) needs to reflect the needs of the NSA.
- Better trained planners and councillors needed – need for necessary skills and awareness raising; some councillors are more alive to the issues than some staff.
- 'Whole landscape' approach needed, including views from/into NSAs.

- There needs to be an understanding of landscape change, and a moving-away from the acceptance of change that harms the NSA: special guidelines are needed, including 'limits of acceptable change'.
- The procedures and thresholds of acceptable change need updating.
- There needs to be protection from damaging large-scale developments.
- There needs to be a stock-take of the existing landscape resource ('special qualities' approach), to include local opinion.
- NSAs are facing major changes in land use.

4. Are NSAs required in the future in Scotland's National Parks?

- No need in principle, but need them in practice because of permitted development issues.
- NSAs should not be necessary, but recognise practicalities and need to retain NSA designation in parks to facilitate essential care of special landscapes.
- Consensus was 'no', but General Permitted Development Order powers need to be passed to National Parks, including, perhaps, the areas of the parks currently not part of any NSA.
- Do not split NSAs which straddle National Park boundaries.
- The overlap has been removed in England.

5. How can we enhance the management of all landscapes, beyond NSAs?

- A better awareness and understanding landscape issues generally is needed amongst all and sundry; identify the benefits that good scenery/landscape brings.
- Clarify what we (the people) want in terms of landscape.
- What is landscape management? Clarify to people what this means.
- Language of landscape: develop a common language.
- Develop better orientated incentives for land managers (in agri-environment and other schemes).
- Action – be seen doing things! Demonstrate best practice and demonstrate added value.
- Land managers need to realise financial benefits from landscape management.
- More landscape professionals are needed in local authorities.
- All authorities should have a duty to manage, protect and maintain their landscapes.
- Integration across Scottish Executive departments is needed.
- Strong views that better management of landscape is vital, but there are some big issues like climate change and reform of agriculture.
- There needs to be more involvement in local decision-making on landscape.
- More specification of landscape outputs needed.
- More meaningful designations are needed – with teeth!
- Adopt principles of European Landscape Convention.
- Big battles often lie outwith nationally designated areas.
- All landscapes matter; there is concern about the current perceived drive for development at any cost behind planning.
- Prioritisation through local plan process.

WORKSHOP 2

Preparing and implementing Management Strategies for NSAs

1. Is it clear what Management Strategies are seeking to achieve?

- The stages of preparation are clear, but their implementation is not.
- Broadly, yes, but the need for a multi-agency approach led by local authorities is essential.
- NSA Management Strategies need to be pitched in the context of current rural and natural heritage priorities.
- There need to be different kinds of strategies for different areas; resources are critical.
- More analysis is needed of scenic qualities, which then form the focus of the plan.
- Is it a strategy or a plan? – actions are the important bit, not the strategy; could 'strategy' elements be covered by other documents?
- What is the influence of strategies over forestry and agriculture (incentives)?
- What is the place of strategies in the wider administrative picture? How do they fit in with other plans?
- A missing word is 'planning'.
- Tourism and rural development need to be part of the process.
- What happens when things go wrong? A clear duty and lead role is needed.
- Who is the strategy aimed at?
- Need to identify landscape features that are vulnerable to provide a framework for a strategy.
- NSAs should come to be seen as exemplars of good practice through the Management Strategy process.

2. What should be the roles of local authorities, SNH, VisitScotland, Historic Scotland, local and national stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of strategies?

- Local authority lead is essential.
- The role of SNH needs to be clearly defined – resources, advice, advocacy, etc .
- The role of other bodies is not clear; all have roles and it is crucial that they pull together or be pulled together. Commitment to action from them all is needed.
- Suggested roles: **SNH**: Money, overseeing role and co-ordination, natural heritage advice and advocacy. **Visit Scotland**: Area Tourism Partnerships, Promotional Role, link to Green Tourism award. **Also**: voluntary societies, public sector.
- Although the involvement of **Historic Scotland** is essential, have they the staff resources to be heavily involved in the Management Strategy process?
- Strategies can be used for resolution of conflict.
- More emphasis needed on engaging local people.
- National and local interests must be seen to work together at the local level (with national leadership).
- Overlap with other rural initiatives/programmes must be recognised.
- The consultation paper does not mention agricultural representation or local communities: the term 'national and local stakeholders' needs expansion.

3. How do we ensure stakeholder commitment to preparing and implementing the strategies?

- There needs to be a statutory duty placed on local authorities to produce them, with funds from SNH.
- The approach must be inclusive.
- The new Planning Bill could include a requirement to engage with stakeholders.
- Promotion/education is a key tool for this, but leadership needed.
- Advertise real early benefits – quick wins; allocate some funds for this.
- Recognise all stakeholders, especially land managers.
- Consult with local communities at the start to find out the key issues.
- Demonstrate the public benefit.
- Use Management Strategy delivery as a performance indicator for senior council officers.

Are the timescales proposed and resources identified adequate?

- Five years after enactment of the legislation would be realistic for preparation of the plans.
- Five years is probably too tight, but a target is needed.
- Resources look okay.
- Timescales and resources not okay. However, action could be targeted through trawling local communities to see who wants strategies, and then prioritising within local authority areas.
- Ring-fenced funding is needed, involving new resources (including people).
- Timescales are okay for some areas but not others (eg. Highland, Argyll and Bute would struggle): three-quarters of NSAs are in three local authority areas.
- Local engagement and support cannot be rushed.
- Funding is critical for success – and is probably inadequate.
- Strategies must be seen to make a difference, with targeted and costed actions.
- There need to be dedicated resources long-term.
- Strategies cannot be imposed if they are not wanted.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Comment: A simplification of designations is needed, and how they fit together.

Ian Hooper: Which designations? Different designations serve different purposes: for example, SSSIs serve a different purpose to NSAs. However, the review of NSAs in National Parks is a case where overlapping designations will be looked at.

John Thomson: The previously undertaken review of designations⁶ concluded that there was a case for all the designations. However, there was confusion between the local and national landscape designations, with consistency within local designations needed; to rectify this, guidance on local landscape designations has recently been published.⁷

Question: How is planning guidance to be tailored to the needs of landscape?

Ian Hooper: The forthcoming review of NPPG14 is how landscape issues will be addressed, and this review will be the main focus of the proposed Landscape Forum.

Comment: You cannot reconcile the 2010 deadline for the preparation of Management Strategies only with the encouragement of local authorities to produce them.

Ian Hooper: SNH grant for the preparation of Management Strategies is seen as a priority, and the obvious benefits of strategies will encourage local authorities to produce them.

Comment: It would be good to get more involvement from the Scottish Executive and the tourism sector in landscape issues.

Isabel Glasgow: The proposed Landscape Forum could be the vehicle for this.

Comment: In terms of stakeholder involvement, you must face up to how awkward people can be!

Isabel Glasgow: The proposed forum will aim to be representative, but not too large, and issues of landscape concern will be discussed.

Question: Will the forum be SNH or Scottish Executive driven? SNH and the Executive should discuss who will take the lead, I favour the Executive. It should also be time-limited.

Isabel Glasgow: It will be a forum and not an SNH body.

Comment: There is need for a statutory duty, as stated in our workshop, for local authorities to produce Management Strategies. These should be adequately resourced, with their funding both long-term and ring-fenced.

Comment: The proposed Landscape Forum is fundamentally important. There are several landscape jobs to be done – to date, landscape has been shamefully neglected. Landscape is the primary resource for tourism in the 21st Century, yet the tourism interest is not here – a crying shame!

⁶ Scottish Office. 1996. *A Review of Natural Heritage Designations in Scotland – Discussion Paper*. Official response to this issued by the Scottish Office in 1997.

⁷ SNH and Historic Scotland. 2005. *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations*.

REFLECTION ON THE DAY

John Thomson, Director, Scottish Natural Heritage

The timing is right for a debate on landscapes, particularly with other policy and funding changes taking place, such as the Planning Bill and the Scottish Rural Development Plan. All landscapes matter and they matter to a lot of people, as evidenced by the interest in the issues raised by the consultation paper, which extend beyond NSAs.

Landscapes are complex, being the meeting place of people and place, past and present, the natural and the cultural. Partly for this reason they tend to have Cinderella status, falling between different responsibilities. Effective action on landscape really does require joining-up, which means having explicit landscape objectives at a scale above the individual holding.

Turning now specifically to National Scenic Areas, SNH's previously published *Advice to Government*³ was broadly right. However, although it is generally accepted that all the NSAs in the present suite justify their special status, the suite arguably does not capture all the special areas. You can compare NSAs covering 13% of Scotland with the 15% coverage of AONBs in England and Wales – as well as there being more National Parks down south.

The production of Management Strategies is crucial, with the process as important as the product. However, without a specific duty placed on local authorities to produce them, there is doubt as to whether they will get done.

There needs to be a mechanism in place to secure a commitment to NSAs from all relevant bodies; the example given today of the Ofgem taking seriously the under-grounding of electricity cables in AONBs illustrates the point.

Adequate resources for Management Strategies are essential, especially if strategies are not mandatory: local authorities will be more likely to produce them if the money is there. Experience to date with the pilot Management Strategies, especially in Dumfries and Galloway, shows that National Scenic Areas can deliver real benefits, socio-economic as well as environmental.

In conclusion, we must thank our colleagues in the Scottish Executive for finally getting this issue onto the Executive's agenda, at such an appropriate time. We have seen that an interest in better landscape care extends well beyond NSAs: but we have to start somewhere, and where better than in some of Scotland's finest landscapes? As with National Parks, perhaps National Scenic Areas can act as test-beds and exemplars for how we manage the wider landscape.

List of attendees.

Mick Pawley	Angus Council
Fergus Murray	Argyll and Bute Council
Robert L Smith	Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
Mike Cheesewright	Association of Scottish Community Councils
Sheila Reid	Braemar and Mannofield Community Council
Frank Lewis-Bowen	Buccleuch Estates
Gavin Miles	Cairngorm National Park Authority
David Bale	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Sue Evans	Central Scotland Forest Trust
Alan Newberry	Chatelherault Country Park
Ann McKillop	Chatelherault Country Park
Jonathan Wordsworth	Council for Scottish Archaeology
Anna Johnson	Dumfries and Galloway Council
Chris Wood-Gee	Dumfries and Galloway Council Planning and Environment
Elaine Melrose	East Dunbarton Council
Martin McKenna	East Dunbarton Council
Steve Hunt	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Ltd
Maggie Gilvray	Forest Enterprise Scotland
Jamie Farquhar	Forestry and Timber Association
Nicholas Shepherd	Forestry Commission Scotland
George Boyd	Friends of Loch Lomond
Sarah Bronsdon	Heritage Lottery Fund
Tim Stott	Highland Council Planning and Development Service
Archie Prentice	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Lesley McInnes	Historic Scotland
Helen McDade	John Muir Trust
Janet Swailes	Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority
Robert Aitken	Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority
Roger Muhl	Mountain Bothies Association
Beryl Leatherland	Mountaineering Council of Scotland
Mike Taylor	National Association of AONBs
Robin Turner	National Trust for Scotland
Emma Shirley	North Ayrshire Council
Joanne Glennie	North Lanarkshire Council
John Sheridan	Quarry Products Association (Scotland)
Ian McCall	Ramblers' Association Scotland
Sarah Spiers	RICS Scotland
Bill Wright	Rural Scotland
Jane Nelson	Scottish Civic Trust
John Foster	Scottish Council for National Parks
Richard Smith	Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association
Alan Marshall	Scottish Executive
Bob McNeill	Scottish Executive
Ian Hooper	Scottish Executive
Malcolm Duce	Scottish Executive
Fiona Rice	Scottish Natural Heritage
Frances Thin	Scottish Natural Heritage

Greg Mudge	Scottish Natural Heritage
Isabel Glasgow	Scottish Natural Heritage
James Fenton	Scottish Natural Heritage
Jane Clark	Scottish Natural Heritage
John Thomson	Scottish Natural Heritage
Mary Gibson	Scottish Natural Heritage
Pete Rawcliffe	Scottish Natural Heritage
Ross Allan	Scottish Natural Heritage
Simon Brooks	Scottish Natural Heritage
Steve Hunt	Scottish Natural Heritage
Jonathan Hall	Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
David Jarman	Scottish Wild Land Group
Alison Grant	
David Cowling	
Esther Woodward	
Frank Bracewell	
John H Scott	
Michael Taylor	
William Baird	