

Guidance for Assessment of Effects on Special Landscape Qualities (AESLQ) – Consultative Draft, May 2024

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INTRODUCTION

1. This guidance on the Assessment of Effects on Special Landscape Qualities (AESLQ) has been prepared by NatureScot, the Cairngorm National Park Authority (CNPA) and the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA). This guidance applies to Special Landscape Qualities identified for designated National Scenic Areas (NSA) and National Parks (NP) in Scotland.
2. Assessment of effects on ‘special qualities’ or ‘special landscape qualities’ (from this point, referred to as Special Landscape Qualities, SLQs) is carried out where a proposal is within or would affect a National Scenic Area or National Park in Scotland. This guidance has been prepared to assist people in three key ways:
 - a by describing the sequence of steps to follow when carrying out an AESLQs;
 - b by demonstrating how the SLQs can be used to influence the siting and design of a proposal;
 - c and by explaining why and how this information is required to inform judgements on effects in relation to planning and land use policies, ensuring transparency.
3. There is a multifaceted range of issues that may need to be addressed by an AESLQ. This reflects the wide variety of SLQs that occur within the different NSAs and NPs, and the different types and scales of development or land use change that may be proposed including landscape management. An AESLQ will also input different decision-making processes, for example Town and Country Planning, woodland creation applications, energy consents or various grant schemes.
4. National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) strongly supports a design-led approach to managing change in our landscape. Incorporating development or land use proposals sympathetic to these exceptional landscapes requires careful thought and a strong commitment to achieving high quality design from the outset. AESLQ provides a structure to achieve this.
5. This guidance is currently in draft status, after incorporating feedback from representative landscape practitioners. We encourage use of this guidance prior to its formal adoption and publication. During this interim period, the document should be referenced as: Guidance for AESLQ – Consultative Draft.

Special Landscape Qualities (SLQ)

6. SLQs are defined as the characteristics that make a designated landscape special in terms of landscape and scenery, both individually or combined (SNH, 2008). They are qualities that are perceived and experienced by people, affecting the sense of place.
7. In Scotland, we have two national landscape designations: National Parks (currently 2 in number) and NSAs (40 in number). These are highly valued areas that represent the country’s finest landscapes, and the importance of their SLQs is reflected in national planning policies and

NP policies (see additional information in References). Landscapes are not static and will continue to evolve, but this change needs to be managed carefully to ensure the SLQs are safeguarded and enhanced so they can be enjoyed by future generations.

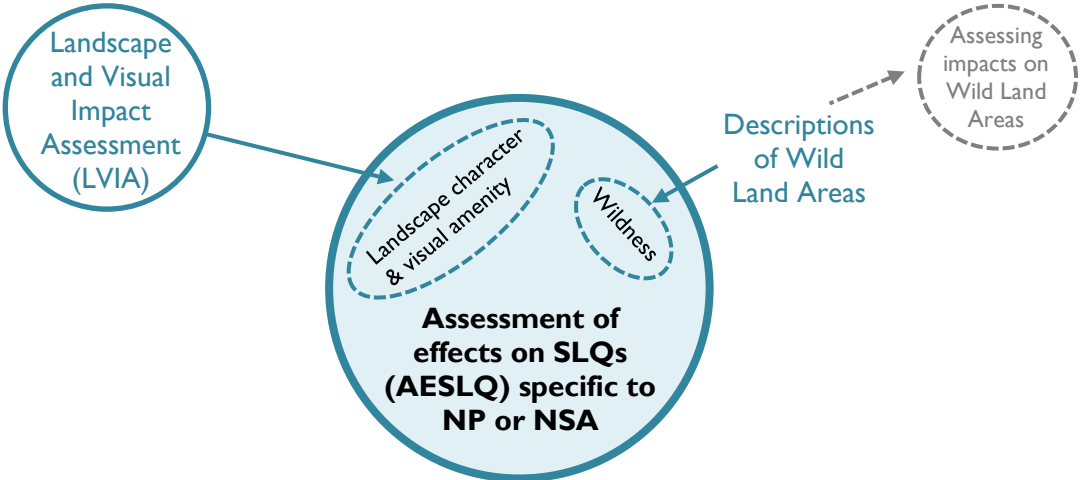
8. Reports detailing the SLQs for each of the NSAs and both the Cairngorms and the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs NPs were published in 2010 (see References). The reports vary in their detail, and some describe SLQs generically across the area whilst others distinguish SLQs geographically. All the SLQs identified and described within the reports are equally important.
9. Within National Parks, any NSA SLQs are subsumed within the National Park SLQs and thus assessment should be for the National Park SLQs.

Using this Guidance

10. This technical guidance describes the approach to take when designing and assessing the effects of a proposed development or other land use change upon the SLQs of a NP or NSA. In this context a working knowledge of SLQs and other landscape assessment methodologies is beneficial.
11. The objectives of designation is the safeguard, conservation and enhancement of the interests for which the area is designated (for NSAs this is their special qualities and character; for National Parks this is a broader range of natural and cultural heritage interests).
12. Overall integrity means the wholeness of the area, the unity or soundness of the whole being unimpaired. Adverse effects even to a part of the designation could be damaging to the unity or soundness of the whole.
13. The alternative policy test of social or economic national benefits clearly outweighing the designation's interest is for Scottish Ministers to determine.
14. The test for the need to carry out an AESLQ is **whether a proposal is likely to result in significant adverse effects on one or more SLQs within a NSA/NP (regardless of whether the proposal is within or outside the boundary of the NSA/NP)**. If you are unsure, you can discuss this with the relevant decision-making authority and/or consultee. Some initial assessment of the SLQs may be required to assist this decision.
15. AESLQ will usually be carried out by a Chartered Landscape Architect, although other suitably qualified and experienced landscape, planning or other environmental professional(s) may be able to undertake the process. The findings of the assessment will inform the advice of those evaluating a proposal such as NatureScot, National Park Authorities (NPAs) and Planning Authorities.
16. **AESLQ assesses the effects on the special landscape qualities of the nationally designated landscapes of NSAs and NPS. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) assesses the effects on landscape character and visual amenity.** AESLQ can be informed by and

complements other established processes for designing, enhancing and assessing the landscape and visual effects of a proposal, as shown in Figure 1 below. **It is important that the findings of these different assessment processes complement and do not duplicate each other** (which could lead to a double-counting of some effects).

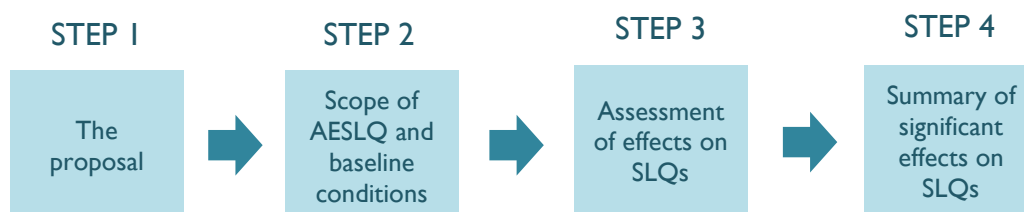
Figure 1: How AESLQ relates to other landscape and visual assessment processes



- 17. An AESLQ is likely to draw on baseline information that forms part of a landscape character assessment, LVIA or WLA descriptions but it should not duplicate information within any of these. This is because it specifically concerns the SLQs of a NP or NSA, not the wider range of landscape and visual sensitivities and effects that may be affected by a proposal. AESLQ may also be a stand-alone assessment when other assessments are not required.
- 18. **All NPs and NSAs are recognised by their designation as being of high value.** In this context, the assessment should focus on the specific aspects of SLQs which are susceptible to change and for which it is possible to site and design proposals to directly respond and enhance the SLQs.
- 19. The detail required for an AESLQ will differ according to circumstances, including amongst other things the nature and scale of the proposal. AESLQ should be tailored to reflect the location, scale and type of a proposal and the potential significance of effects arising. Consultation with relevant decision-making authority and/or consultee especially during the early stages of an assessment (at pre-app and scoping) is encouraged, as the assessment determining whether integrity has been compromised is not dependent on an extensive area or large number of SLQs being significantly affected. Topics to discuss and agree can include whether an AESLQ is necessary (and, if so, how it relates to other assessment methodologies), design objectives relevant to the SLQs, scoping of SLQs for assessment, definition of the study area and choice of assessment viewpoints.

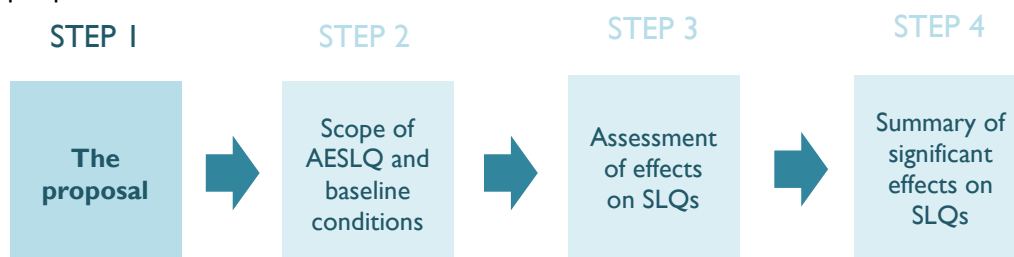
THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

20. Once the need for an AESLQ has been established and consideration has been given to its relationship with other assessment processes, the following section sets out four steps to follow to complete an AESLQ. The findings of this assessment can be reported in a template as included in Appendix 1.



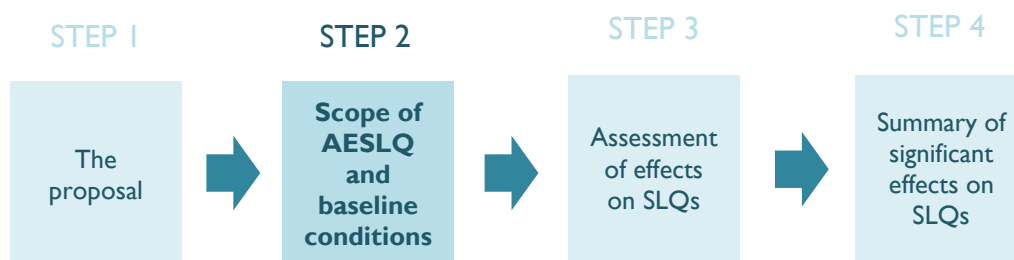
21. The AESLQ should:

- focus on likely significant effects on SLQs;
- be proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposal;
- be focussed, proportionate and transparent so the reasoning which informs judgements can be understood; and
- convey the relationships between effects and how these would be experienced by people.



- Step 1: The Proposal** – to gain a full understanding of the proposal and draw out relevant information

22. To inform the AESLQ, it is first necessary to understand the nature of the proposed development or landscape change. Where possible, specific reference should be made to the project description within the application, EIA Report, LVIA or related documents to avoid duplication of material, drawing out and summarising just the key components relevant to the SLQ assessment.
23. Components to consider include the requirements and potential design of the proposal as well as its location and siting, for example, its scale and extent, colours, and materials. It is only by gaining a thorough understanding of the proposal that the full effects on the SLQs will be able to be assessed in Step 4, as well as the scope for design, mitigation and enhancement options during the intervening steps.



Step 2: Scope of AESLQ and baseline conditions – define the study area, establish baseline conditions and assess susceptibility to the proposal

24. This is a key stage of the AESLQ and covers two distinct tasks: first, to establish the scope of the assessment and the extent of the study area; and second, to establish the specific SLQ baseline conditions and susceptibility of these to the proposal. These tasks will be informed by:
- a SLQs within the NSA/NP;
 - b The landscape and seascape characteristics (informed by [Scottish Landscape Character Types, detailed LCA's](#) and Coastal Character Assessment) and local landscape seascape character assessments where available) and visual amenity which underpin the SLQs and the site of the proposal;
 - c Wildness attributes and SLQs, informed by wildness mapping and WLA descriptions where available;
 - d The predicted extent and distribution of visibility of the proposal (which may be informed by a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map); and
 - e An understanding of how the SLQs are expressed and experienced from different parts of the NSA/NP, individual and combined SLQs, and the experience of SLQs such as from distinct routes, whilst moving through the landscape, and from key locations.
25. Whilst some of the information required for AESLQ can be obtained from a desk study review of existing data, **site visits are essential to provide both a robust level of baseline data on the nature and extent of SLQs, and the assessment of predicted effects on these. SLQs also need to be assessed on site to fully understand how individual or groups of SLQs come together and are experienced in a specific area.** This means, for example, an initial study area and range of possible SLQs might be identified through desk study and then be refined following a site visit.
26. The study area for the AESLQ should relate to the location and type of the proposal and an initial prediction of likely significant effects and should be defined, field-tested, and agreed in consultation with the relevant decision-making authority and/or consultee. The study area may be a part, or the whole of the NSA or NP, but won't extend beyond the designated boundary.

27. Where a proposal is located outside or crosses a NSA or NP boundary, the study area of an AESLQ will only extend to the boundary of the NSA or NP. However, the assessment must consider the contribution of the landscape beyond the boundary, where it influences the experience of the SLQs. This aspect is illustrated in the diagrams below.



Figure 2: Although the assessment of effects on SLQs occurs within the NP or NSA, the SLQs may be influenced by landscape features outside the NP or NSA

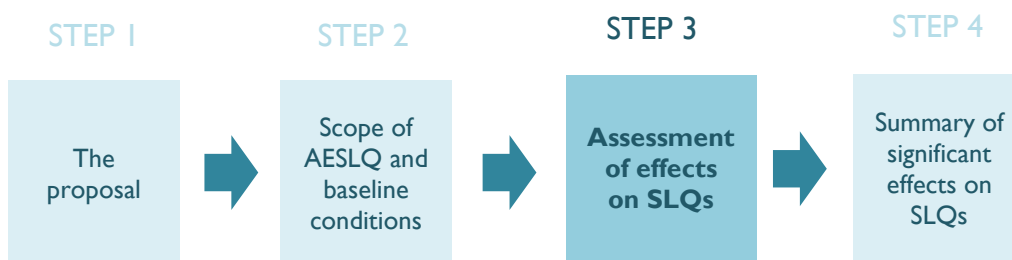
28. The study area for an AESLQ may be informed by, or tangibly different to the study area for an LVIA for the same proposal. **This is because the AESLQ relates specifically to the SLQs within a NP or NSA and how these are experienced**, and not the wider landscape characteristics or visual amenity.
29. To identify which SLQs are likely to be significantly affected by the proposal, information should be gathered and reviewed as follows:
- SLQs should be considered in relation to the site location and the proposal, and informed by fieldwork, map data and discussion with consultees as appropriate.
 - Identify and review the key landscape, seascape characteristics, visual amenity and wildness attributes within the AESLQ study area. Although some of this information may be available in published reports, additional information is likely to need to be gathered through site assessment to provide a full understanding of the SLQs most relevant to the proposal. It is emphasised that, when referring to landscape character, **it is the key landscape characteristics that need to be drawn out in relation to SLQs, not individual landscape character types or areas** (which would be assessed as part of a LVIA).
 - For proposals beyond the boundary of the NP or NSA, the intervening landscape will also need to form part of the on-site assessment. Aspects to consider include whether key landscape characteristics are contiguous across the boundary of the NP or NSA, or does the boundary define a change in landscape character? This assessment also needs to consider the visual relationship between the site and AESLQ study area.
30. Some SLQs may have a definite physical location, such as a ‘named’ view or a built structure or settlement, whereas others incorporate greater perceptual responses, including timelessness and spirituality. Other SLQs recur and are experienced together, such as mature pine woods within an incised glen. Understanding where people go and how people move through and experience SLQs is crucial to the assessment.

31. SLQs can be considered individually or grouped. Where the SLQs interact with each other, contributing to the experience of these within the study area, they are best assessed and reported together as a group. A brief justification for why SLQs are grouped should be reported in the AESLQ. For example, an SLQ which recognises mature specimen trees may also contribute to wider diversity and rich mosaic of a farmland SLQ along a strath and so could be combined.
32. To assess the experience of SLQs, fieldwork for AESLQ should include survey from carefully selected sample points which represent the range of locations from where the SLQs are experienced that are likely to be affected by the proposal. Locations could include, for example: from hill tops and landmarks; along linear, circular and criss-crossing routes through a landscape; along glens or the coast; or across a river or watershed. Some LVIA representative viewpoints may be suitable to double-up for SLQ assessment but they will not necessarily represent the best locations to assess SLQs (for example, because of being selected for their extent of visibility rather than experience of distinct SLQs). Thus there may be a need to provide supplementary assessment points chosen to reflect the experience of the SLQs, which may require visuals (such as wirelines) to inform the assessment.
33. The range of people (termed 'receptors' in LVIA) who will experience the effects on SLQs should be considered in the choice of sample viewpoints for survey and formal assessment. In terms of the susceptibility of the receptor to change this may influence the overall assessment of effect, depending on the type of receptor and context of view. However the **numbers of receptors, whilst useful to record, does not in itself, directly inform this assessment of susceptibility, as different landscapes attract a varying number of people to experience different SLQs.** The less frequented destinations can experience the same level of susceptibility to change on the SLQs as the more heavily frequented destinations.

Summary of baseline SLQs

Template column A: Identify key SLQs and their susceptibility to proposal

34. At the end of Step 2, after analysis and review of the SLQ baseline conditions, only those SLQs which are considered to be susceptible to the proposal and are likely to be significantly affected by it are taken forward to the next stage of assessment (Step 3). This is so the scope of the AESLQ is proportionate and focuses on what is most important. Once these SLQs have been identified, both individually or grouped, these should be summarised within column A of the AESLQ template ([Appendix I](#)).
35. Assigning levels of susceptibility to the proposal for example low, medium or high, are required to understand how the intrinsic elements and experience of the SLQs may be affected in relation to the specific nature and components of the proposed development or land use change. The basis for these judgements must be clear and linked back to evidence developed during the baseline study.



Step 3: Assessment of effects on SLQs

36. This section of the guidance describes the process for ‘up front’ design, enhancements and mitigation of the potential effects of a proposal to relate to the SLQs and, in turn, assessing residual effects. Although the assessment steps (and template columns) suggest a linear sequence, the process of assessment is iterative. It is expected that the assessor will move back and forth through the steps, considering design alternatives, potential effects, mitigation to reduce effects, further design options, and so on until a solution is found which enhances and relates best to the SLQ and minimises adverse effects on these.

Design

Template column B: Develop design objectives in direct response to SLQ susceptibilities to proposal (including management practices) and input into design of proposal

37. Developing SLQ design objectives provides the basis for proposals to maximise positive effects on SLQs and minimise negative effects, within the constraints of the proposal, helping people to conserve and enhance the SLQs. They can also influence landscape maintenance and monitoring, providing a baseline of intent against which proposals can be compared. This may be particularly useful when proposals and schemes are modified or extended over long timescales. There can be multiple potential design options for any specific proposal. In recognising this (and taking on board other constraints) it might not be possible to satisfy every design objective. Nonetheless, establishing clear design and enhancement objectives provides the basis upon which options can be reviewed methodically.
38. The AESLQ will assist this process so design objectives can directly respond to and enhance the individual and combined SLQs (building upon but not duplicating the objectives identified as part of an LVIA if being undertaken). The recording of this process also helps people to understand the approach and reasoning for the final design proposal, including the relative balance of SLQ design and enhancement objectives together with other project objectives.
39. For each SLQ (individual or grouped) identified in column A, this stage involves identifying a design objective in column B. This needs to take into account the requirements of the proposed development or land use change (Step 1). The design measures considered should include management practices and potential effects over time.

40. Some examples of design objectives developed in direct response to SLQs are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Examples of design objectives in direct response to SLQs

<i>SLQ</i>	<i>Example design objective</i>
Views along distinct glens, their landscape pattern emphasised and space contained by simple backdrop of adjacent hills	The proposal should be within either the glens or backdrop hills but should avoid spreading across both and thus eroding the distinction between these
Enclosure, intricacy, diversity and distinct pattern of light within native woodland	Ensure design (extent, density and species) and tailored management of new woodland reflects SLQ of existing woodland even if slightly different in some aspects, eg species
The spatial containment of local hills and/ or distinctive local buildings create 'gateway' features	The proposal should avoid obscuring or distracting from the gateway features or its scale seeming to diminish the focal importance of this / these
Successive layers of landform horizons are seen receding over far distances	The proposal should not interrupt views over the successive horizons, nor seem to diminish the perceived extent of the landscape by its position or scale in relation to the visible layers
Dark, rural skies	Lighting should be designed to avoid illumination of dark skies or the creation of point light features that are incongruous or distract from the experience of dark skies
Sequence of SLQs experienced through journeys, eg from lowlands to highlands, from developed coast to undeveloped coast, and between settlements and open countryside	The proposal should reflect distinction of SLQs when travelling through landscape, eg avoiding introduction of unifying feature or characteristic such as roadside development, consistent land cover or repetition that has collective effects such as houses or wind farms
Wildness, displaying an absence of human artefacts	Reduce the influence of development on the wildness attributes experienced, eg siting the structure closer to settled elements and at lower elevation, also reducing prominence.

41. During the iterative process of design and assessment, when potential significant effects on SLQs are identified, mitigation (see glossary for more detail) options should be explored further to avoid or reduce these through location, siting or design.

Assessment of effects, mitigation, and significance

Template column C: Effects of the proposal on SLQs (incorporating primary mitigation)

42. The assessment at this stage requires consideration of the key components of the proposal and their predicted effects. As for other assessment methodologies such as LVIA, an assessment of the 'magnitude' of effects is necessary, including the scale and extent of effects, their reversibility, and their duration. Assigning levels of magnitude of change for example low,

medium or high, are helpful to understand where different levels and spatial extents of change are predicted. Where used, a definition for these levels of magnitude should be provided.

43. As for LVIA, overly quantitative or formulaic approaches are to be avoided because the intention is that AESLQ takes a more descriptive, qualitative approach that focuses on SLQs and their experience. For larger and/or complex proposals, assigning levels of effect is recommended, but this may not be necessary for smaller and/or simpler proposals. The key test is whether assigning levels would **add value in terms of understanding the baseline conditions and the nature of effects and, importantly, assist in judging whether residual effects would be significant or not** (Column D).
44. Both landscape character and visual amenity influence SLQs, as described in paragraph 5 above. This means that AESLQ needs to consider both these aspects but, unlike LVIA, these do not need to be assessed and reported separately. Conversely, the focus and value of AESLQ is to draw out how landscape and visual aspects combine as SLQs, and how these are experienced and valued by people in a NP or NSA.
45. ZTVs, visualisations, wireline diagrams and/ or photomontages may inform the assessment of effects on SLQs, especially when analysed on site. In LVIA and AESLQ, ‘visibility’ simply refers to something being seen. Being visible, doesn’t necessarily mean that a landscape change will contribute to a notable effect on SLQs; this depends on what can be seen and how this relates to its context and is viewed (visual receptors).
46. SLQs are influenced by how people experience them. Thus, a proposal may have effects on SLQs without necessarily being seen from a specific place if it is visible from other locations nearby or affects the wider extent of SLQs. For example, the journey along a coastal SLQ may be experienced as a sequence of landscape characteristics and views inland and out to sea defined by the coastal hills along an indented coast. Introducing development onto the coastal hills may only be visible for intermittent periods but, taken as a whole, the development could significantly intrude on the qualities of how this SLQ is experienced as illustrated below.

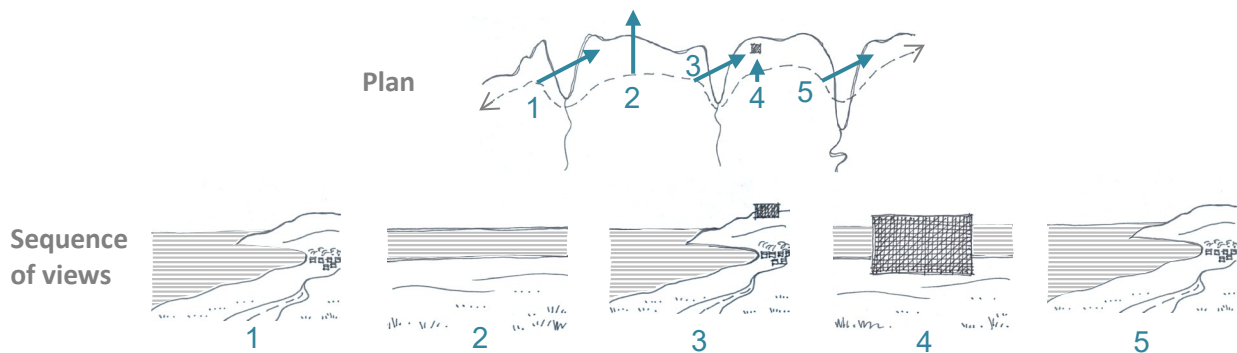


Figure 3: Proposal (represented by block) affects the experience of the alternate pattern of inlets and coastal hills which are a SLQ in this area, even though the proposal is not visible from everywhere along the coast

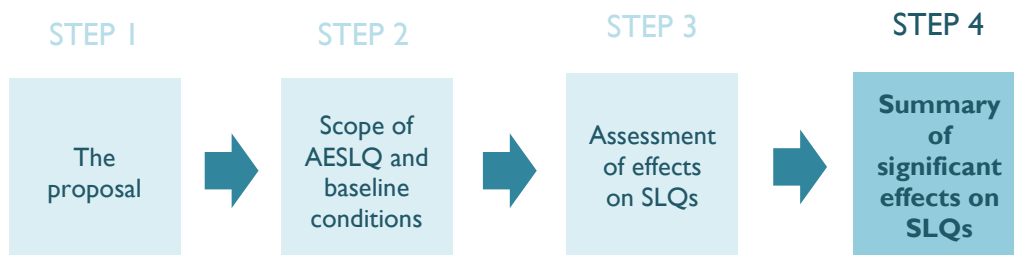
47. When assessing visibility and effects on SLQs, it is useful to distinguish between the following:
- Visibility of the proposal
 - Effects of the proposal which *would not* affect the SLQs (eg being prominent as an isolated feature but not seeming to affect key SLQs within an area such as views to hill horizons, the link with an adjacent river or perception of tranquillity)
 - Landscape and visual effects of the proposal which *would* affect the SLQs (eg, interrupting views across open moorlands or mountains, or introducing a distraction to a distinct local landmark)
 - Landscape and visual effects which *would significantly* affect the SLQs (ie they don't just affect the views of people, but change these in a way that would be significant to pre-defined thresholds (eg the introduction of extensive woodland which alters the balance of SLQs experienced).
 - Potential cumulative effects with other proposed developments or landscape change over time, for example contributing to incremental effects on SLQs within the NP or NSA.
48. This distinction highlights the importance of carefully selecting sample locations to assess a representative range of potential effects on SLQs. For this purpose, some sample points may also be LVIA viewpoints, but some LVIA viewpoints may not be best-suited for assessing effects on SLQs as discussed in paragraph 29.
49. Assessing the combined effect of different individual effects on different SLQs can be a challenging process. Professional judgement is required to consider different influences on SLQs, for example balancing those that are numerous or affect extensive areas with those that occur singularly or affect small areas. The key requirement is for the AESLQ to assess the whole range of SLQs and effects, document these in a methodical and transparent manner, and then assess those that are significant, which may include some that are infrequent or localised as well as those that are numerous or extensive.
50. This highlights that simple conclusions on significance cannot be drawn directly from the numbers, proportions or area of SLQs affected by a proposal, nor maps such as ZTVs overlain on NP or NSA maps.
51. Similar to the process described above for column B, this stage involves consideration of further mitigation measures (known as secondary measures; see glossary for more details) when potential significant effects on SLQs are identified. This assessment should be reported in a narrative manner to understand the direct link from the information reported in the previous columns A-B-C.
52. The following questions should frame the consideration of mitigation during Step 3 (columns C)
- Is there potential for mitigation to avoid or reduce predicted adverse significant effects on the SLQ(s) and their experience (as part of the iterative process for example, through re-siting, design modifications or management)?
 - What are realistic timescales for mitigation to become effective in reducing effects on SLQ(s) (for example length of time for native woodland to achieve maturity and

restoration of land cover disturbance)? What is the certainty that mitigation will become effective?

- Is there potential for enhancement that benefits SLQs?

Column D *Significance of residual effects on SLQs (including all mitigation and reflecting high value of designation)*

53. This stage involves final assessment of effects on SLQs after all mitigation and enhancement measures have been incorporated. This is based on:
- i. The susceptibility of the SLQ(s)
 - ii. The ‘magnitude’ of effects
 - iii. Predicted residual effects on the SLQ(s) once all mitigation is incorporated in the proposal.
54. When determining significance, it is highlighted that this must also recognise the *high value* of all NSA and National Park designated landscapes.
55. Having considered the factors described above, an assessment of overall significance of residual effects (after mitigation) on the SLQs or group(s) of SLQs can be made. When carrying out this assessment, it may be useful to consider how the proposal meets the design objectives (Column B).
56. It may also be useful to distinguish levels of effect, such as high, medium, low or negligible, with medium or higher effects generally considered ‘significant’ for the purposes of applying policy tests. For transparency, all measures of effect need to be defined with direct reference to the SLQs, and the consequences on these such as their enhancement, removal, erosion, change or retention.



Step 4: Summary of significant effects on SLQs (individual and grouped)

57. This step draws together all the strands of the AESLQ to present a summary of predicted significant residual effects on individual and grouped SLQs, including the distribution of effects within the study area and their significance. This will provide evidence to inform judgements made by decision-makers, for example in informing understanding of NPF4 policy 4c. This step

needs not be lengthy and should not repeat information provided elsewhere but should cover the following issues as relevant:

- a **Identification of the SLQs within the study area** for which likely significant effects have been assessed, both individual and/or grouped;
- b **The nature and levels of effects on relevant SLQs within the study area.**
- c **The location, extent and distribution of effects on the SLQs within the study area**, for example whether these are localised, extensive, isolated or repeated within the study area landscape. This should consider the relationship between affected SLQs and the intervening landscape (whether within or beyond the NP or NSA boundary) as well as specific locational issues regarding the way the landscape is experienced, for example gateway experiences, sequential experiences along ridgelines, or specific features or views. It should also consider different effects during day and night and alternative seasons. Assessing extent and distribution of effects is not simply about the percentage of the study area affected but, alternatively, the influence of the extent and distribution of effects on how the SLQs within the study area are experienced.
- d **The nature, level, location, extent and pattern of effects on the SLQs in relation to: study area, extent of the SLQ (which may be mapped) and the wider NP or NSA.** If the study area does not extend across the whole NSA or NP, drawing on the analysis in Steps 2 and 3, it is necessary to consider how the effects within the study area will affect the wider NSA or NP. (For example, **even one occurrence of a significant effect on one or more SLQs could influence the quality of a NSA or NP**). If a proposal lies outside an NSA or NP, the distance of this from the boundary will be a useful consideration but this should not be used as a proxy for the predicted magnitude of change or significance of effects, **as it is the effects on the SLQs and where these qualities are experienced that are important.**
- e **Who will experience the effects on the SLQs and how.** The range of people who will experience effects on SLQs should be considered (although the significance of effects will not directly correspond with their number, as this will be influenced by the value of the resource and the SLQs' susceptibility to change).
- f **How the final proposal meets the design objectives** (column B) and minimises adverse effects on the SLQs through design and mitigation measures.
- g Potential **cumulative effects** with other proposed developments or landscape change over time, for example contributing to incremental effects on SLQs within the NP or NSA.

Consideration of AESLQ findings

58. Once the AESLQ has been completed, the relevant decision-making authority and/or consultee will review the assessed effects on SLQs in relation to the NSA or NP and its integrity. This analysis is used to inform their judgement on whether a proposal would meet or be contrary to relevant policy tests, including those set out at a national level and the National Park Partnership Plans (NPPP).
59. Assessment of whether 'integrity' has been 'compromised' requires consideration of the nature of the locations affected and the nature of their qualities. For this assessment,

compromise is taken to mean where significant effects result in an evident and noticeable material change to any of the NP or NSA's SLQs. For integrity to be compromised, this does not depend on an extensive area or large number of SLQs being significantly affected.

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Additional information

- Information on the designation of NPs under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, available on the NatureScot website at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/national-designations/national-park>
- Information on NSAs available on the NS website at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/national-designations/national-scenic-areas/national-scenic-areas-background-guidance>
- Cairngorms NP policies available at: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/working-together/national-park-policies/>

- Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NP policies available [at: https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/park-authority/publications/](https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/park-authority/publications/)

APPENDIX 1: AESLQ TEMPLATE

Project name:			
Date of assessment:		Assessor:	

Step 1: The Proposal - gain full understanding of the proposal and draw out relevant information

Summary of relevant information for proposal

Step 2: Scope of AESLQ (including study area) and establish baseline conditions

Baseline information prompts

- Relevant published SLQ report, LCA, SCA, and Wild Land Area (WLA) description(s) and/or LVIA (if produced)

Analysis prompts

- SLQs within the NSA/NP
- Landscape characteristics and visual amenity (*reference to LCA, LVIA and relevant visualisations if produced*) underpinning the SLQs (including the influence of existing developments/ land uses of the type proposed which form part of the baseline)
- Predicted extent and distribution of visibility of proposal (*reference to ZTV if available*) in relation to specific SLQs and extent of the NSA/NP
- Wildness attributes and responses underpinning the SLQs
- How the SLQs are experienced from different parts of the NSA/ NP, including individual and combined SLQs, from distinct routes, whilst moving through NSA/NP and from key locations (*likely new assessment including on site*)

Study area

- From analysis and review above, identify study area for AESLQ. Provide summary description of this study area and explain how it has been determined and how it relates to the wider NP or NSA designated area.
- Map of study area (*attach separately*)

From analysis and review above, determine SLQs (individual and grouped) to be taken forward for assessment in Step 3 due to susceptibility and predicted significant effects



From Step 2: Baseline SLQs taken forward		Step 3: The Assessment of effects on SLQs		
Summary of baseline SLQs		Design	Assessment of effects, mitigation and significance	
<i>Column A</i> Identify key SLQs and their susceptibility to proposal		<i>Column B</i> Develop design and enhancement objectives in direct response to SLQ susceptibilities to proposal (including management practices) and input into design of proposal	<i>Column C</i> Effects of the proposal on SLQs (including cumulative effects and incorporating primary mitigation)	<i>Column D</i> Significance of residual effects on SLQs (including all mitigation and reflecting high value of NP and NSA designation)
Individual SLQs				
<i>i</i>				
<i>ii</i>				
<i>iii</i>				
<i>iv</i>				
<i>Add extra rows as required</i>				
Grouped SLQs SLQs may be grouped geographically where they occur and are experienced consistently across a distinct area or thematically where they may have the same susceptibility to a proposed development or land use change. Where SLQs are grouped, give an explanation of the groupings and how derived, for example experiential or spatial.				
<i>i</i>				
<i>ii</i>				

<i>Add extra rows as required</i>			
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Step 4: Summary of significant effects on SLQs (individual and grouped)

Drawing together all the strands of the assessment (Steps 1-3) and the significance of effects identified in column D above for individual and grouped SLQs, present a summary of predicted significant residual effects, including. the nature, level, location, extent and pattern of effects on the SLQs in relation to; study area, extent of the SLQ (which may be mapped) and the wider NP or NSA.

APPENDIX 2: ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

Acronym	Name
AESLQ	Assessment of Effects on Special Landscape Qualities
GLVIA	Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
LA	Local Authority (council)
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
NP	National Park
NPA	National Park Authority
NSA	National Scenic Area
SLA	Special Landscape Area
SLQ	Special Landscape Quality
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage, former name of NatureScot
WLA	Wild Land Area
ZTV	Zone of Theoretical Visibility

The following glossary describes key terms adopted by this guidance. Where possible, these have been reproduced from the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) produced by the Landscape Institute and IEMA (3rd edition, 2013) or other publications, as noted by an asterisk and referenced at the end.

Term	Description
Baseline	The environmental conditions against which any future changes can be measured or predicted and assessed.* ¹
Characteristics	Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a contribution to distinctive landscape character.* ¹
Collective effects and cumulative effects	‘Collective effects’ is used to describe effects that result from the combination of more than one individual effect. These are described differently to ‘cumulative effects’ which tend to be associated with the effects of more than one development, defined as ‘...additional changes to the landscape or visual amenity caused by the proposed development in conjunction with other developments...’ * ¹
Development	Any proposal that results in a change to the landscape and/or visual environment.* ¹
Effect	The change resulting from an impact (within LVIA)* ¹
Impact	The action being taken (within LVIA)* ¹
Landscape	An area, as perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors* ²
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)	A tool used to identify and assess the likely significance of the effects of change resulting from development both on the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity.* ¹

Landscape character	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another (rather than better or worse). ^{*1}
Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)	The process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape, and using this information to assist in managing change in the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive. The process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment. ^{*1}
Landscape Character Types (LCT)	These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of characteristics, including those that are perceptual. ^{*1}
Landscape effect	Effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right ^{*1}
Landscape value	The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons. ^{*1}
Integrity	Overall <i>integrity</i> is taken to mean the wholeness of the area, the unity or soundness of the whole being unimpaired, recognising that the entire area of the designation is valued and adverse effects to part of it could be damage to the unity or soundness of the whole. ^{*3}
Magnitude (of effect)	A term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration. ^{*1}
Mitigation	Measures which are proposed to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects (to avoid, reduce or if possible remedy identified effects). Depending on when these are incorporated these can be known as primary or secondary mitigation. Primary measures are <i>'developed through the iterative design process, which have become integrated or embedded into the project design'</i> , whereas secondary measures are <i>'designed to address any residual adverse effects remaining after primary measures and standard construction practices have been incorporated into the scheme'</i> . ^{*1}
Perception	Combines the sensory (that we receive through our senses) with the cognitive (our knowledge and understanding gained from many sources and experiences). ^{*1}
Primary mitigation	Following this kind of mitigation is distinguished as primary measures: <i>'developed through the iterative design process, which have become integrated or embedded into the project design'</i> . ¹
Receptors	Receptors are aspects of the landscape resource or individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal.
Secondary mitigation	Designed to address any residual adverse effects remaining after primary measures and standard construction practices have been incorporated into the scheme or proposal ^{*1}

Sensitivity (of landscape or visual resource)	A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor. *1
Significance (of effect)	A measure of the importance or gravity of the environmental effect, defined by significance criteria specific to the environmental topic. *1
Special landscape qualities and special qualities	Special landscape qualities are defined as the characteristics that individually, or combined, make a designated landscape special in terms of landscape and scenery. *5 References have been made in different guidance and policy documents to ‘special qualities’ or ‘special landscape qualities’ but, for the purpose of this guidance, these are taken to mean the same.
Susceptibility	The ability of a defined landscape, or visual receptor, or special landscape quality to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies. *1
Value	The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons. Nationally valued landscapes are recognised by the designations of National Parks and National Scenic Areas, which have a formal statutory basis. *1
Viewpoint/ vantage point	Viewpoints refer to specific places from which a view is gained. Representative viewpoints are identified during LVIA to represent the views of visual receptors for which baseline conditions and predicted effects of a proposal are assessed. An AESLQ may be informed by assessment from LVIA representative viewpoints but it will also be informed by assessment from other ‘vantage points’ which act as sample points for assessment of effects on specific SLQ or combinations of SLQ.
Visibility	This refers to an ability to see or for something to be seen. The nature of visibility refers to what can be seen, whilst the extent of visibility refers to from where something can be seen. Importantly, although visibility influences visual effects, there is not a direct correlation between these.
Visual amenity	The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area. *1
Visual effect	Effect on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people*1
Visualisation	An image such as a computer simulation, photomontage, sketch or drawing that illustrates the appearance of an element or composition.
Wild Land Area	Extensive areas where the quality of wildness (see below) is best expressed. Uninhabited and often relatively inaccessible countryside where the influence of human activity on the character and quality of the environment has been minimal.
Wild Land Assessment	Assessment process following guidance published by NatureScot which assess the effects of a proposed development or landscape change on

	the physical attributes and perceptual responses which contribute to the qualities of Wild Land Areas.
Wildness	Experienced as a continuum, by people resulting from the presence of the physical attributes of: perception of naturalness, a lack of modern artefacts little evidence of contemporary land use, a rugged or physically challenging landform, and remoteness and/or inaccessibility. These result in perceptions of a sense of sanctuary or solitude, risk, or a sense of awe or anxiety, arresting and inspiring qualities, and fulfilment from physical challenge.* ⁴
Wireline/ wireline diagram	A computer-generated visualisation which represents the view from a specific place of the landform, based on a Digital Terrain Model. This is typically illustrated as a line drawing (sometimes forming a framework). It may also show other landscape elements in defined locations and to a defined scale and form. Wireline diagrams are often used as the foundation for a rendered photomontage.
Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)	A map (usually produced digitally) showing areas of land from where a development is or would be theoretically visible.

*¹Taken from Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*. 3rd ed. Abingdon, Routledge.

*²Taken from Council of Europe, 2000 *European Landscape Convention*. European Treaty Series No. 176. Florence, Council of Europe.

*³ Taken from SNH (2001) *Landscape Policy Framework: Policy Statement No 05/01*. Redgorton, Scottish Natural Heritage.

*⁴ Taken from SNH (2002) *Wildness in Scotland's Countryside: A Policy Statement*. Redgorton, Scottish Natural Heritage.

*⁵ Taken from SNH (2008) *Guidance for identifying the special qualities of Scotland's National Scenic Areas*. Redgorton, Scottish Natural Heritage.