

Fanellan Hub 400 kV Substation and Converter Station

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Volume 4 | Technical Appendices

Appendix 8.2 – Landscape Character Sensitivity

February 2025



APPENDIX 8.2: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER SENSITIVITY

The Table below outlines the assessment to determine the sensitivity of each LCT anticipated to experience significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development.

Table 1-1 : Determining Landscape Character Sensitivity

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA Susceptibility and Value	KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LCT Quotes in italics are from the NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment	SUSCEPTIBILITY/ VALUE CRITERIA SUMMARY	Susceptibility/ Value rating			OVERALL SENSITIVITY Susceptibility + Value
			Lower	↔	Higher	
NATURESCOT LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland						
SUSCEPTABILITY TO CHANGE: High The LCT is extensively vegetated and has an established rural character. Settlement is scattered throughout the landscape, often set against a wooded backdrop. Signs of urbanisation are present in the form of new housing developments, the widening of local roads and the influence of energy infrastructure.						SENSITIVITY: High
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Large areas of intensive agriculture with medium-sized geometric fields divided by rows of mature deciduous trees and woodland, with some stone dykes.Contrasting small scale, intimate croft lands, small rectangular fields, simple arrangement of buildings, narrow lanes, gullies and small scrubby woodlands.	A varied landscape incorporating both larger scale farming and woodlands with pockets of more intimate, smaller scale landscapes		■		The sensitivity of LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland is considered to be High Summary <u>Susceptibility</u> The LCT has a varied, mosaic landscape character, from larger scale farming to more intimate wooded glens and valleys. The landscape is crossed by energy infrastructure, and there are patches of built development throughout. There is limited capacity to accommodate localised land raising without this affecting the wider character. Susceptibility to change is High. <u>Value</u> There are no landscape designations in the LCT. Designated heritage interest includes the private estate of Beaufort Castle Garden and Designed Landscape and scattered heritage assets, including a church and cemetery near Black Bridge. The Core Paths/ designated public path network within the LCT is relatively sparse. A
Landform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Broad undulating glens interspersed with low, rounded ridges sloping to lower plains	A moderately undulating, sloping landscape		■		
Land cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mixed agricultural land-use balanced with a high proportion of trees, woodlands, small scale forests and hedgerows.Throughout this landscape broadleaf woodlands follow stream gorges and line banks of meandering rivers and streams, and are evident in a number of small farm woodlands. Conifer forests are relatively small scale and mainly located upon lower river terraces, where the river forms wide meanders between steep banks.The character of this landscape is strongly influenced by human activity - particularly large houses set in woodlands and parklands with avenues of trees, which create a sense of prosperity.The scattered presence and fairly even distribution of croft houses gives a relatively populated feel to the landscape.Landcover is dominated by small fields of improved and semi-improved pasture which are divided by dry stone walls or fences, narrow lanes, gullies and small woodlands.	A varied mosaic of landscape cover, with areas of larger and more regular agricultural fields and forests balanced with woodlands, meandering streams and rivers, estate parklands, small pasture fields, evenly distributed crofts, narrow lanes and varied field boundaries.		■		
Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The woodland edges are often highly indented and natural in appearance. This creates an intricate, rough textured landscape with visual and seasonal diversity.Trees combine with a mix of arable and pastoral fields to create a landscape which has a broad range of colour, texture and seasonal diversity.	A broad, intricate landscape with a variety of textures and patterns		■		
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Diverse range of settlement with many small farms and crofts, several villages and estates.Large estate houses set in woodlands and parklands with avenues of trees, prominent in the intensive agricultural land.The most common form of settlement comprises small farms, with clusters of farm buildings, generally set against wooded backdrop and linked to the wider landscape pattern by a network of minor roads.Villages are typically associated with road junctions and bridging points.The traditional buildings tend to follow a simple linear pattern. However, some have been extended with new housing developments, which dominate the existing settlement.Some traditional rural settlements have become increasingly urbanised by the introduction of standardised designs for road widening, pavements, lighting and other service facilities.	Built form typically comprised of small farms interspersed by a diverse range of building/ settlement size, style, and ages. Presence of increased urbanisation and modern built form diluting historic structure and distinctiveness.		■		

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			Lower	↔	Higher	
Detracting features	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Network of major and minor roads following geometric field boundaries.</i>▪ <i>This landscape is crossed by many pylon runs which cut across the landform and open spaces, often. undermining the rural character and intimate sense of scale and enclosure.</i>	A network of both major and minor roads and electricity infrastructure crosses the LCT. Beauly substation is located within the north-west section of the LCT, well screened by woodland and low lying, but still creating some concentration of overhead lines and towers around it.	<div><div></div></div>			reasonable number of people pass through the LCT on the A833 and short sections of the A831/ A862 to access Black bridge cemetery, Kiltarlity and paths alongside the River Beauly, so will be familiar with the landscape and any changes to it. Value of the landscape is Medium. <u>Sensitivity</u> Overall, Sensitivity to Change is High.
Perceptual aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Views tend to be limited within this landscape by the landform and woodlands, creating intrigue and a varying range of spaces which constantly change whilst travelling through the area.</i>▪ <i>Areas which are semi-enclosed by landform and trees convey a sense of intimacy, as attention is directed to foreground details within the shelter of the spaces.</i>▪ <i>Areas of trees and woodland afford physical and visual containment for many farm buildings and small settlements, blocking their visibility from the main roads, thus helping retain the strength of rural character.</i>▪ <i>Within crofting areas, views tend to be restricted by the density and close proximity of vertical landscape elements which also increase the sense of enclosure.</i>	Sense of enclosure and visual containment creates intimacy and intrigue, adding to the strength of the rural character.		<div><div></div></div>		
Visual Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Landform and tree cover limit long distance views, creating intrigue and screen many settlements from roads.</i>▪ <i>Restricted views and increased sense of enclosure in crofting areas, due to the density and close proximity of vertical landscape elements.</i>	Sloping, gently undulating and treed landscape limits long-distance views and creates visual intimacy.	<div><div></div></div>			
VALUE OF THE LANDSCAPE RECEPTOR: Medium						
Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Beaufort Castle is the prime example of a tower house and associated designed landscape in the area.</i>	There are no landscape designations within the LCT but there is the locally designated Beaufort Castle Garden and Designed Landscape, along with numerous listed buildings and archaeological sites. The LCT is readily accessible through a network of local roads and a small selection of core paths. Many tourists pass through the area.		<div><div></div></div>		
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Wide distribution and range of historic sites indicating its long history of human occupation, dating from prehistoric cairns and settlements to more recent sporting estates.</i>▪ <i>Tower houses, fortified residences and sporting estates with their attendant buildings, and extensive areas of historic design landscape are also found in the area.</i>	Principally rural, containing many historic features and sites. Tree planting is extensive and forms a key element throughout the landscape. Many features worthy of conservation.		<div><div></div></div>		
Quality/ Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A good quality landscape with historic sites and traditional houses, the quality of the landscape has deteriorated slightly due to development of new housing sites.	A good quality landscape but containing urban detractors such as the Beauly substation, major roads and existing overhead lines, including a 400kv overhead line.	<div><div></div></div>			

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			Lower	↔	Higher	
NATURESCOT LCT 227 Farmed Strath - Inverness						
SUSCEPTABILITY TO CHANGE: High						SENSITIVITY: High
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strathglass, which follows a major fault line, is more clearly defined, having a narrow, open, almost flat strath floor where the alluvial soils are tightly constrained by higher, steep slopes which are almost consistent in their angle.In the lower reaches, the strath floor is characterised by a regular pattern of large fields of improved and semi-improved pasture linked to scattered farm buildings.	Larger-scale farmland across the strath floor and lack of woodland creates an open character with distant views. This contrasts with the steep, wooded slopes adjacent.	<div><div></div></div>			<p>The sensitivity of 227 Farmed Strath - Inverness is considered to be High.</p> <p>Summary <u>Susceptibility</u></p> <p>The narrow LCT is extensively vegetated with woodland on the steeper side slopes, contrasting with more uniform agricultural farming on the flatter strath floor. Settlement is largely limited to the open valley floor of the strath. Detracting features are present in the form of a power station and overhead lines.</p> <p>Susceptibility to change is High.</p> <p><u>Value</u></p> <p>There are no landscape designations in the LCT although Culloden Battlefield is located in Strathnairn (outside the study area). A reasonable number of people pass through the LCT on the A831 and the River Beauly is popular for recreation. Users will be familiar with the landscape and any changes to it.</p> <p>Value of the landscape is Medium.</p> <p><u>Sensitivity</u></p> <p>Overall, Sensitivity to Change is High.</p>
Landform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">These linear to sinuous straths are characterised by a flat or gently undulating strath floor, edged by the steep, rocky side slopes of the surrounding uplands. The straths run in a south-west to north-east direction and following the route of glacial erosion.In Strathglass the river is a distinctive characteristic due to its highly dynamic and natural form. The meanders are pronounced, weaving tightly from one side of the narrow strath floor to the other, and leaving oxbow lakes and curved wetlands as features in the adjoining fields	Larger areas of farmland contrast with the dynamic river corridor and wooded side slopes, creating variation in landform.		<div><div></div></div>		
Land cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Land use consists of a diverse mix of farming and forestry. In the lower reaches, the strath floor is characterised by a regular pattern of large fields of improved and semi-improved pasture linked to scattered farm buildings.There are several extensive pylon runs which are aligned with the valley floor or sides, or cross the valley and ascend to the skyline, forming prominent man-made features. The rivers are popular for recreational pursuits, and the river in Strathglass is dammed for hydro-electricity generation.	More extensive areas of farmland contrast with the river corridor, wooded side slopes and settlements creating areas with a more complex mosaic of land cover.		<div><div></div></div>		
Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Diversity of colour and texture added by river meanders, wetlands, damp pastures and thin bands of woodland.Along the sides of the river, the darker colours and rougher textures of associated wetlands, damp pastures and thin bands of woodland add diversity to the otherwise relatively uniform pattern of surrounding vegetation.In both straths, the bright green colour and smooth texture of these fields contrasts with the more muted colours and rougher textures of the open heather moorlands and conifers which cover the side slopes.	Linear farmland contrasts with the more irregular pattern of the river corridor and woodlands to create varied texture.		<div><div></div></div>		
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Settlements are sometimes focused around cross roads, and small groups of houses also occasionally line the main road which runs along the edge of the strath floor.In Strathglass, apart from a few crofts, settlement tends to be concentrated on better-drained parts of the valley floor due to the steepness of the strath sides.	Settlements fewer but more concentrated in Strathglass area but have typically evolved gradually with evidence of a long history of human settlement.		<div><div></div></div>		
Detracting features	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There are several extensive pylon runs which are aligned with the valley floor or sides, or cross the valley and ascend to the skyline, forming prominent man-made features.The rivers are popular for recreational pursuits, and the river in Strathglass is dammed for hydro-electricity generation.	Numerous detracting features are present	<div><div></div></div>			
Perceptual aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In both straths, and particularly in Strathglass, there is a strong sense of enclosure.The consistency of the strath sides, combined with the flatness of the strath floor, creates a sense of linear enclosure, which directs distant views along the strath and allows uninterrupted views of the flanking hill slopes.The meandering river forms a visual focus and leads the eye along the strath floor.	The sense of enclosure creates a degree of tranquillity, whilst the long-distance views of flanking hills allow some sense of wildness to be perceived.		<div><div></div></div>		
Visual Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An overall sense of linear enclosure, which directs distant views along the strath and allows uninterrupted views of the flanking hill slopes.	An area with generally strong features and focal points		<div><div></div></div>		

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VALUE OF THE LANDSCAPE RECEPTOR: Medium						
Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>The Battle of Culloden was fought in Strathnairn and the adjacent coastal lowlands in 1746.</i><i>The rivers are popular for recreational pursuits.</i>	There are no national, regional or local landscape designations within the LCT but Culloden Battlefield – an historic battlefield – is located within it, albeit outside the study area. There are numerous listed buildings and archaeological sites within the LCT.	<div><div></div></div>			
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Strathglass has a similar range of archaeological sites, including Iron Age fortified sites.</i><i>The Battle of Culloden was fought in Strathnairn and the adjacent coastal lowlands in 1746.</i><i>The battlefield is one of the most popular heritage destinations of the Highlands and is associated with both physical features (archaeological remains, buildings, landmarks and monuments), together with less tangible elements including place-names, openness and sense of place.</i><i>There are several extensive pylon runs which are aligned with the valley floor or sides, or cross the valley and ascend to the skyline, forming prominent man-made features.</i>	Principally rural, the LCT is characterised by open farmed valley floors and a central meandering river enclosed by the forested and wooded slopes. Settlement is largely limited to the valley floor. Contains features worthy of conservation alongside some detracting features		<div><div></div></div>		
Quality/ Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Pronounced and dynamic river meanders of Strathglass</i><i>There are several extensive pylon runs which are aligned with the valley floor or sides, or cross the valley and ascend to the skyline, forming prominent man-made features</i><i>Roads which generally relate well to landform, with a limited number of river crossing points.</i>	A good quality landscape with distinctive features but with some urban detractors present within Strathglass including an existing power station, major roads and existing overhead lines.		<div><div></div></div>		