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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Landscape concerns the relationship between people and places; it provides the setting for our day-to-day lives. The term ‘landscape’ is not restricted to the countryside but can mean anything from a small patch of urban wasteland to a vast mountain range.

1.2 Landscapes result from the interaction of natural and cultural components within the environment and our experience of these, including factors such as geology, soils, climate, plants, birds and animals, as well as the human actions of constructing buildings and settlements, linking these with roads and providing these with electricity etc, in addition to working the land for agriculture and forestry. The patterns that arise from combinations of these components provide a ‘sense of place’ to our surroundings and our landscapes are valued for many different reasons — aesthetic, historical, cultural, recreational and economic to name a few.

1.3 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) has developed as a method of analysing and categorising landscapes, to better understand their distinctiveness and value, and to help in future planning and management of landscape change to protect and/ or enhance their qualities.

1.4 A LCA provides the framework by which the landscape of Applecross, in Wester Ross, is assessed by this study. The study area, shown in Figure 1, extends around the coast of the Applecross peninsula as well as including the interior corridor over the Bealach nam Bó (also known as ‘Bealach na Bà’).

1.5 The aim of the LCA is to:

- describe what it is that makes the Applecross landscape distinct from other places for which it is considered special;
- identify and analyse the distinctive landscape characteristics that occur across the area, including for what and how the landscape is experienced;
- Assess potential changes likely to occur within the landscape that may affect its character in the future;
- Identify potential opportunities and sensitivities offered by the key landscape characteristics in terms of landscape change; and thereby identify projects or works that could potentially help protect or enhance the distinctive landscape of Applecross.

1.6 The LCA described within this document has been carried out at a local level, with site assessment based upon analysis at 1:25,000 map scale. This assessment of local landscape character builds upon the regional LCA produced by Scottish Natural Heritage as part of its National Programme of Landscape Character Assessment. The regional LCA covering the study area is the ‘Ross and Cromarty Landscape Character Assessment’ (Ferguson McIlveen, 1999). This document can be downloaded at the following website: www.snh.org.uk/publications/on-line/LCA/rosscromarty.asp. The landscape character types identified by this assessment and the neighbouring Skye and Lochalsh Assessment are shown in figure 2.
2. KEY FEATURES OF THE APPLECROSS LANDSCAPE

2.1 The following chapter introduces some of the distinctive features of the Applecross landscape in advance of more detailed descriptions and assessment within the following chapters and figures.

2.2 The Applecross peninsula has been described as a microcosm of Highland Scotland. It seems to have everything - mountains, moorland, sea, islands, woodland, archaeological and historic features, focal settlements, a distinct and active community etc. Most importantly as well, the Applecross landscape has a clear identity. Almost like an island, it possesses a strong sense of place, emphasised by a definite edge around its perimeter – formed by the sea on the south, west and north sides, and by Glen Shiel and the River Kishorn (the line of which is marked by the A896) on the east.

2.3 Not only does Applecross seem to possess all the essential components of Highland landscapes, but also it presents these in dramatic juxtaposition, the experience of which culminates over the Bealach nam Bó. This is a famous pass over which a single-track mountain road twists and turns around hairpin bends, up slopes of 1:5, switching back and forth, to rise up 626 metres. This is Scotland’s best example of an alpine-like pass, offering the experience of the upland landscape to many people who would not otherwise brave this environment.

2.4 Sgurr a’ Chaorachain (792 metres) is one of two hills that flank the Bealach nam Bó and is part of a range of hills which have been eroded on their east faces to form an impressive line of crags which form the spectacular southern gateway to the peninsula. Beinn Bhan (896 metres) is a complex hill with mainly steep craggy slopes, the exception being the south east slopes which allow easy access onto the south east ridge. The main summit ridge is crescent shaped, with an additional long ridge to the south east. The western slopes into Coire Attadale are steep and craggy, as are the southern slopes into Coire nan Arr. The slopes are carved into ridges and spurs producing six corries, all of them craggy and steep, which are popular for winter climbing. These two hills physically and visually isolate the study area from the interior of Wester Ross.

2.5 Elsewhere, the topography is more forgiving, with the lower hills around Croic bheinnn (493m), Meall an Doireachain (626m) and An Gharbh mheall forming a generally south west to north east ridge, effectively separating the northern portion of the study area from the southern part. Notable within the moorland areas, but more pronounced in the southern half of the study area, are numerous lochs and lochans generally lying at elevations of around 300m and higher.
2.6 The area supports very small areas of commercial forest, mainly around Applecross Bay and near Arinacrinachd in the north. Some clear felling of this forest has taken place over recent years, with consequent short term impacts upon the character of the landscape, but with the promise of long term woodland improvement. There is similarly limited coverage of mature broadleaf woodland within Applecross and this tends to be limited to steep inaccessible slopes; however, there has been extensive planting of a 1500 hectare new native woodland scheme in the north of the peninsula.

2.7 Notable for their maturity and diversity of tree species are the Estate policies and the dense native woodland and wind-pruned scrub to the south of the village. Both the policy trees and areas of commercial forest suffered substantial losses during the gales of January 2005.

2.8 Given the nature of the topography and associated ground conditions, together with the historic communication pattern, which relied heavily on the sea, it is no surprise that the settlement pattern is one where the village, townships and other dwellings are located along the coast.

2.9 Between Shore Street and Toscaig (the point of departure by ferry to Kyle from the 1950s), the settlement pattern varies from the coastal terrace on Shore Street and the linear arrangement of dwellings at Milton, both with generally seaward aspects, to the clusters of houses around the bays at Camusteel, Camusterrach, Lower Toscaig and Colliegillie (the isolated houses on the promontory at Ard dhubh), and the slightly elevated properties at Upper Toscaig and Culdie which lie further inland. Within this composition, Applecross House dominates the head of the bay.

2.10 Along the western coast, there are only a few inhabited houses and numerous ruins at Lonbain and Callakille, with clusters of traditional houses and some new properties in the townships along the north coast. These properties are generally situated to take advantage of the sheltering landform surrounding the small bays in Loch Torridon.

2.11 Light, weather and the changing seasons play an important role in the appreciation of the landscape of Applecross. These influences are perhaps strongest on views from around Applecross Bay and the western side of the peninsula, which are directed to Duncaan on Raasay, Glamaig and the Cuillin Hills on Skye, and for areas on the northern side of the peninsula which have, different, but equally spectacular vistas over Loch Shieldaig to Liathach, Beinn Eighe and Slioch.
3. PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE APPLECROSS LANDSCAPE

INTRODUCTION

3.1 The character of all landscapes reflect their evolution. The physical processes that create and shape the landform provides the foundation for colonisation by plants, animals and humans, which in turn modify their environment in tune with the prevailing climatic and social conditions. These changes leave legacies that affect future generations and which can become inherent characteristics of the landscape. This chapter summarises the evolution of the Applecross landscape by examining the two main influences - physical and cultural.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology

3.2 A report titled ‘Geodiversity of Applecross: Statement of Significance and Identification of Opportunities’ was prepared by the British Geological Society in 2007. The following section of this LCA extracts and summarises information from this report that is particularly relevant to the landscape character of the Applecross peninsula.

3.3 The geology of Applecross can be divided into four main elements. These are: the Lewisian gneisses, the oldest rocks in Britain, which are exposed on the peninsula’s north coast; the Torridon Group sandstones, which make up the hills that form the main part of the Applecross peninsula; the younger sedimentary rocks around Applecross village itself; and the glacial features formed during the last Ice Age. Each of these four elements represents a different part of the Earth’s history, and they provide a fascinating record of the changing environment and land surface of western Scotland.

Geological History of Applecross

3.4 The oldest rocks on the Applecross Peninsula are the Lewisian gneisses, which are exposed along the peninsula’s north coast, around Kenmore and Ardheslaig. Recent dating work on gneisses within the area has put these at over 3100 million years old, making them the oldest known rocks in Britain, and among the oldest rocks in Europe. These gneisses were formed at depths of several kilometres, in the roots of an ancient continent, where magma (molten rock) slowly cooled, crystallised and solidified. These rocks were subsequently buried so deeply that they heated up to the point that new minerals were formed, these becoming banded due to the pressure under which they were formed and the forces of compression.

3.5 Around 2400 million years ago, a change in the forces acting on this piece of continental crust meant that it began to stretch and rift apart, and magma from deep within the Earth was forced up through cracks in the crust. This magma eventually cooled in those cracks, forming dykes – narrow, near-vertical sheets of dark-coloured rock. These dykes, known as Scourie Dykes within the North
West Highlands, can still be seen within the Lewisian gneisses, although they are now of a confusing pattern due to subsequent continental collision.

3.6 After the last continental collision, the Lewisian gneisses of Applecross lay within the interior of a continent. As rocks above them were eroded, they were uplifted, until eventually they were exposed at the Earth’s surface. By around 1000 million years ago, the segment of crust that would become Scotland was part of a vast supercontinent. At this time, the Applecross landscape was located much further south (at about the same latitude as modern-day Athens) and comprised low hills from which angular fragments of rock and grains were eroded and thus accumulated in the valleys. This mixture of sand and rock fragments eventually became cemented together to form rocks called breccias, which can be seen in northern Applecross today, between Ardheslaig and Kenmore.

3.7 Eventually, the Lewisian gneiss land surface was buried by the deposits of large braided rivers flowing from a mountain belt, many hundreds of miles to the west. This eventually formed a bed of red sandstones several kilometres thick, that today forms all the high ground of the Applecross Peninsula and part of the ‘Torridon Group’ of rocks. The lower part of this sequence, which has abundant pebbly layers, is known as the Applecross Formation after the area in which it is best exposed.
3.8 After deposition of the red sandstones, the Applecross area remained within the supercontinent, until continental rifting and the formation of a new ocean. This then closed around 430 million years ago, which led to a mountain-building event known as the Caledonian Orogeny and the formation of the Moine Thrust Zone a short distance to the east. This meant that the Applecross area became positioned on the edge of an upland area that comprised most of the present-day Highlands.

3.9 During the Jurassic period, around 205 to 140 million years ago, the Minch basin gradually subsided, and was flooded by warm, shallow seas. The lime-rich sediments that were deposited on the seafloor contained fossils and formed limestones that are exposed around Shore Street, with their most prominent exposures being the coastal pavements south of the Applecross Inn.

3.10 Gradually, the continental crust in this area began to be stretched and thinned, until a point when hot magma broke through from below, forming volcanoes such as those on the Isle of Skye. By 55 million years ago, this volcanic activity had ceased.

3.11 The final sculpting of the landscape came in the last 2.6 million years of history – the Ice Age. The most recent major glaciation in Scotland (known as the Main Late Devensian) reached its maximum extent about 22,000 years ago. The upper surface of the Late Devensian ice sheet in Applecross reached at least 850m over high ground – only the highest summit, Beinn Bhàn, may have protruded above the ice. Striations (small scratches in rock formed by subglacial abrasion) indicate that ice over much of Applecross flowed in a north-westerly direction towards the Minch.

*Maximum extent of Applecross icefield and surrounding glaciers during the Loch Lomond Stadial 12,500 to 11,500 years ago.*
3.12 Climatic warming had melted much of the ice cover over Applecross by about 14,000 years ago. However, a small icefield re-developed over the mountains of Applecross during a subsequent, short-lived cold spell 12,500 to 11,500 years ago, known as the Loch Lomond Stadial. During this period low temperatures would have promoted freeze-thaw activity on exposed ground, shattering rocks and giving rise to down-slope creep of soil and scree.

3.13 During these glacial periods, the weight of ice over Scotland depressed the earth’s crust beneath (a process known as isostatic depression). This meant that, when large parts of the ice sheets melted, releasing water back into the oceans, sea-level rapidly rose before the depressed land was able to rebound, allowing the sea to reach higher levels than today and creating raised shorelines as found around the western coast of Applecross.

3.14 As a result of the events described above, it can be seen that geology underpins many of the key characteristics of the Applecross landscape that make it special. The report ‘Geodiversity of Applecross: Statement of Significance and Identification of Opportunities’, prepared by the British Geological Society (report OR/07/020), describes in further detail evidence of these processes within the Applecross landscape, seen as distinct geological features.

Soils

3.15 Soils within Applecross are generally poor, containing a high proportion of inorganic material and existing as thin layers over the bedrock. Complexes of peat and bog are found where the organic component is higher. This gives rise to a highly characteristic feature of the landscape where layers and outcrops of sandstone and gneiss rock show through the overlying vegetation.

3.16 In the straths and crofting areas, successive generations of people have worked to improve the soil through removal of stone, tillage, drainage and additions of organic matter. This is reflected by deeper layers of organic material, smoother surfaces, and improved drainage and fertility.

Topography

3.17 The topography of the study area is dominated by the Bealach nam Bó and the adjacent mountain mass. The pass rises from sea level to a height of around 626 metres in the space of five miles. A succession of outcropping buttress-like summits flank the pass and extend to the north, forming a series of north, north east and east facing corries.

3.18 To the west of the Bealach, the ground falls away more gently to undulating raised moorland with abundant lochans, rivers and burns, before falling more steeply to the coast at Culduie and Camusterrach.

3.19 To the north west, the Allt Coire Attadale flows from the Corrie through a deeply incised glen, while the River Applecross flows through Srath Maol Chaluim, which is bounded to the north and south by steeply sloping shoulders of land.
3.20 Further north, the interior comprises undulating moorland with occasional prominent hills.

3.21 The coastline is varied, including: steep south facing slopes between Uags and Kishorn; a steep narrow inlet at Toscaig; craggy, indented shorelines around the Crowlins and the western seaboard between Loch Toscaig and Camustee; a wide, shallow bay at the mouth of the Applecross River; and the steep sea cliffs interspersed with beaches at Sand and Reaulay on the western coast.

Hydrology

3.22 The hydrology of Applecross is closely linked to rainfall and topography. The area is characterised by many short, relatively steep catchments, which respond quickly to high rainfall, resulting in significant and rapid runoff. This results in many of the water systems being highly responsive to rainfall and demonstrating rapid and dramatic variations in water levels.

3.23 Over much of the area there are shallow soils and surface exposure of bedrock which leads to displays of temporary waterfalls and streamlets running off the hills during and immediately after rain. Across the peninsula however, and particularly in the south, there is a significant number of small water bodies which buffer to some extent variation in rainfall levels.

3.24 The water systems of the study area are generally free from artificial influences such as hydro development, canalisation and abstractions although there is a small weir on Loch Mhuilinn and a small scale hydro-electric scheme close to Inverbain, near the north coast.

Climate

3.25 The climate is characterised by high rainfall, low temperatures (based on a UK average), frequent strong winds and highly localised climate variation. The temperatures are relatively stable throughout the year and are higher than would otherwise be expected at such latitude if it was not for the warming currents of the North Atlantic Drift.

3.26 The mountainous relief creates areas of shaded land, notably in the Bealach, and the varying altitude creates dramatically different microclimates, from sheltered coastal inlets to the north facing and exposed peaks. In the north facing corries, lower ground temperatures will often mean that snow will linger at high altitudes into summer.

3.27 Winter hours of daylight are few; however, there is some compensation with the long daylight hours in summer and extended periods of twilight.

3.28 A stream of westerly Atlantic depressions hit the west coast, lifting over the mountains on Skye. They tend to be fast moving, leading to rapidly changing weather conditions. The exposed coasts, open moorland and peaks provide good vantage points from where to watch both the changing weather coming in from the west and stunning sunsets in clear conditions. However, prevailing
cloud with a low base often shrouds the hills and coast, at times limiting visibility for travellers near the top of the Bealach nam Bó to a matter of a few feet before emerging to clear visibility conditions a hundred feet or so down the pass.

**Natural habitat**

3.29 Preserved pollen in peat bogs and lake sediments show that during and immediately following final glacier retreat, the wider area around Applecross was dominated by an open grassland environment, similar to parts of northern Norway today. Taxa such as crowberry became established, followed by juniper, birch and hazel. Expansion of pine woodland occurred between about 8000 and 5000 years ago, followed by a significant decline shortly after. An expansion of plants of wet blanket-mires occurred at that time suggesting that the pine decline in northwest Scotland was associated with the climate becoming wetter.

3.30 Deforestation was pretty much complete by the 18th century and little remains of the Caledonian Pine Forest in the Highlands. None exists within the study area, although remnants occur at Coille Creag-loch, below the western crags of Ben Shieldaig. The peat bogs which characterise much of the study area owe their origin partly to human interference with the native woodlands, as the bogs arose as a result of soil erosion, increased run-off, waterlogging and acidification of the soil, which prevented trees from re-establishing.

3.31 The present day landscape of Applecross includes a wide range of habitats. These have been listed within a *Natural Heritage Audit*, produced by the Applecross Landscape Partnership Scheme in 2008. This describes 11 habitat types as follows:

- Heather Moor
- Blanket bog & peat lands
- Montane
- Fresh open water
- Rivers and streams
- Crofting grasslands
- Coastal grassland
- Unimproved grassland
- Unimproved grassland Road verges
- Salt marsh and Mudflats
- Boundary drystane dykes and stone fanks

3.32 Some of these habitats occur within designated areas as described further within chapter 5 of this LCA.
HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

3.33 This section of the LCA considers archaeological and cultural influences on the present
day landscape character of the Applecross peninsula. Although these two aspects are
addressed separately, as informed by two different audits, these subjects obviously
overlap in their influence on the landscape.

Archaeology and built heritage

3.34 A report, ‘A’Chomraich/ Applecross Archaeology and Built Heritage Audit’, was
produced by Arceòlas in November 2007. It is stated that this summarises the extent of
known archaeology and built heritage of Applecross and highlights links between cultural
heritage and the landscape of the peninsula, although it also warns that this provides
only a provisional outline due to the considerable gaps in current knowledge of the
archaeological and built heritage resource. For Applecross, the report provides a
statement of heritage significance, describes conservation issues, and provides an audit
of the archaeology and built heritage resource, including an inventory of Scheduled
Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and other recorded sites of interest (with
photographs and maps).

3.35 By means of an introduction to the historic landscape of Applecross, Arceòlas state:
“The diversity of landscapes within the peninsula store an imprint of many communities
and cultures, past and present. This human presence is in evidence from the coastline,
through to the moorland peat lands and the upland and more mountainous areas. The
various interrelationships between people and the coast, sea and inland areas are
fundamental to understanding the landscape in its present form”.

3.36 Key aspects of the tangible heritage of Applecross are present in the monuments,
structures and field systems that provide direct, visible evidence of the past 8-9000
years of human habitation. It is the combination and diversity of remains, their density and condition in
the landscape, enhanced by the natural setting that is the source of their significance.

3.37 Section 3 of the audit report summarises the extent and character of the known
archaeology and built heritage of Applecross, and highlights links between cultural
heritage and the distinctive landscape. This information is described under the following
headings: prehistoric environment; early settlers; early monuments, ritual and funerary
sites; early historic habitation; the coastal islands; later historic habitation; industrial
heritage and present-day habitation. The following section of the LCA draws out key
aspects of some of these stages in relation to the landscape character of Applecross.

Early Settlers

3.38 Prehistoric sites ranging chronologically from Mesolithic to Iron Age are represented in
the earliest archaeological records for Applecross and include domestic sites such as
middens, rockshelters and settlements as well as ritual and funerary sites such as
Cairns, Standing Stones and Stone Circles.

3.39 The rock shelter site of Sand, just to the north of Applecross, provides considerable
evidence of one of the earliest recorded habitations in the peninsula (Hardy, K. and
Wickham-Jones, C., 2001). The importance of the sea in the Mesolithic, both as a
resource and for transport, is a dominant feature of these early landscapes. The site at
Sand comprises a deeply stratified shell midden with stone tools suggesting Mesolithic
activity. It is clear that the inhabitants of Sand were part of Mesolithic communities that
operated across the Inner Sound and further afield.
3.40 Around five thousand years ago, people began increasingly to live a more settled way of life, cultivating fields and clearing land. The characteristic settlement evidence of the Bronze Age is the hut circle, and these are evident on the Applecross peninsula at Torr Mor, Rubha Na Guailne, and along the banks of Allt Loch Meall Nam Feadan. Throughout mainland Scotland, the late Bronze Age was a period of large scale expansion into marginal areas and it is highly likely that this would also have happened in the Applecross area.

3.41 Sites of “earth houses” or souterrains are thought to date as far back as the Iron Age and one has been uncovered on recent excavations at the broch at Applecross.

*Early monuments, ritual and funerary sites*

3.42 There are currently no records of chambered cairns within the Applecross area. However a standing stone is recorded at Fearnmore, a double stone circle at Shieldaig, and a possible stone circle at Borrodale.

3.43 A series of duns and broch-like structures lie along the west coast of mainland Scotland and on the coastal islands offshore. These sites are thought to demonstrate evidence of the later prehistoric period known as the Iron Age. The remains of a broch can be observed at the highest point of a low ridge, west of Applecross Mains Farm. This site, known as Applecross Broch, at Borrodale was the focus of a ‘Time Team’ excavation in 2005 and is currently the subject of seasonal excavation by the local archaeology society. Other dun or possible broch sites are known at local level at Toscaig, Camusteel and Camusterach.

*Early historic habitation*

3.44 Within Applecross, there are very few known Norse settlement sites, despite many place names having Norse origins, for example, Shieldaig (sild-vik = herring bay) and Borrodale (borgr or burgh = stronghold); however, there is the possible presence of two Norse barrows near the broch at Borrodale according to local accounts.

3.45 The remains of the monastery established by St Maelrubha at Applecross in 673 survived in 1963 (A C Thomas 1971) as an oval enclosure, almost ploughed out, and a low mound known as Claodh Maree was alleged to contain St Maelrubha's grave. The topography is thought to suggest that the modern church, built in 1817 partly on the site of an older church extant until 1792, occupies the site of the actual monastery. This was situated about 250m from the head of Applecross Bay, on the NW bank of the Applecross River, and opposite what are now the policies of Applecross House.

*Later historic habitation*

3.46 A variety of settlements, shielings and steadings that may date back to the medieval period and earlier, exist upon the Applecross peninsula. The historical development of these features is not completely understood; nevertheless, these represent invaluable evidence of rural life during a fascinating period of change that spans the agricultural and industrial revolutions and the clearances.

3.47 Dotted around the hill slopes can be seen the remains of *airighean* or summer shielings, and the ruins of many pre-clearance houses. The settlement pattern and characteristics of early dwellings show a remarkable adaptation to physical conditions. The practice of transhumance is well documented in oral tradition and probably continued until perhaps the 18th century (on Skye shielings have provided dates ranging from the 12th-15th centuries and the first millennium BC).
3.48 The remains of two pre-improvement settlements occur at Airigh-drishaig and Drairag (as recorded on John Thompson's map of 1823). Both settlements appear to have been cleared by John, 6th Mackenzie laird of Applecross, and Airigh-drishaig converted to a small sheep farm of 2500 acres, with 3-4 acres of arable land.

3.49 Taigh dubh, single storey double walled thatched dwellings (known as black houses), some deserted and some ruined, are evident on the Applecross peninsula. At Lonbain, a substantial settlement is still partly occupied and farmed and includes a thatched building which is B-listed and formerly occupied by the late Duncan Mackenzie. After around 1850, houses were built with single walls and were known as taighean geal or white houses.

3.50 Cultivation probably extended as far north as Kalmakill, though rig traces are only evident as far north as NG 690 537. It was previously thought that runrig dated far back into antiquity but is now considered to replace an earlier system of enclosure. Like the pre-Clearance settlements on Applecross, the rigs await detailed recording and analysis for to understand their development and relationship to other settlement evidence such as enclosures, boundaries and field systems.

3.51 Tacks of the mid-18th century required tenants to enclose and sub-divide the farms for both arable and pasture, and also to maintain a boundary around their farms. Enclosure was the process whereby farmland was divided into areas, each surrounded by dykes (walls). Stone was an abundant natural resource and therefore widely used to form the enclosures by building dry-stone walls which are such a feature of the landscape. Many of the 19th century agricultural changes have left their greatest mark on the landscape particularly on the larger estates such as Applecross, evidenced in the tree planting programmes, and improved farm houses and steadings together with the stone dykes which enclose the fields and plantings.

3.52 Two villages were cleared to make way for Applecross Mains Farm which was one of the very early model farms of its day. Local people report that the settlement of Langwell once lay in this area, with map evidence available among the Applecross estate papers. There are a series of house remains on the ground and a double field boundary approaching from the north which was the old access track.

**Cultural heritage**

3.53 A report titled ‘Applecross Cultural Audit’ was produced by The Applecross Historical Society for the Applecross Trust in December 2007. This describes the cultural heritage of Applecross, under the following headings:

- History of Settlement Pattern;
- Aspects of a Way of Life;
- Fishing and Crofting;
- Employment;
- Division of Labour;
- Building and Other Skills;
- Education;
- Religion;
- Changes;
- Gaelic;
- Customs and Traditions;
- Myths and Legends; and
- Literary References and Travellers’ Tales.
The culture of Applecross comprises many facets. The Applecross Historical Society highlight the fact that this has been particularly influenced by the area’s isolation. In this respect, they quote Robert Louis Stevenson, writing his novel Catriona, who causes Stewart to tell David Balfour: ‘the next thing we’ll be hearing, James will have made his peace, or else he’ll have escaped; and you’ll be in Benbecula or Applecross’, to indicate remoteness. It is this isolation, however, that is suggested as being also largely responsible for Applecross developing into a very distinct ‘microcosm of Highland Scotland’.

Emphasising the uniqueness and importance of Applecross, the Historical Society also highlight a number of key facts including: its role in the development of Christianity in 7th century Scotland as a sanctuary; its unbroken ownership by the Mackenzie Lairds for over 300 years, seeing the Clan System from its prime to its extinction; and the involvement of the men of Applecross at the Battle of Largs with the Earl of Ross in 1263, at Harlaw in 1411 and at Sheriffmuir in 1715, as well as being mobilised in 1914 as the Ross Mountain Battery.

The following section of this LCA draws out just some of the key facets of the Applecross culture that are highlighted by the Audit and are of particular relevance to the landscape character of the area.

**History of Settlement Pattern**

The settlement pattern of Applecross is very much dictated by the harsh landscape and terrain in which it is set. The modern view of the Highlands, as a landscape of picturesque beauty, is a relatively recent notion, which gradually became prevalent from the late eighteenth century onwards. Timothy Pont travelled throughout northern Scotland in the 1590s, gathering information for a new map. He described the area around Applecross, outwith the populated area, as ‘great deserts and wilderness’.1

Initially the most fertile land around the Bay was the main centre of settlement from the Bronze Age, and perhaps earlier, through the Pictish, Norse and Gaelic periods. Proximity to the sea was also an important factor in the days before roads and wheeled vehicles were common. The sea was the highway on the west coast of Scotland until the early nineteenth century, and until the 1970s it was still the only method of access to Applecross in bad winters when the road over the Bealach nam Bó was blocked by snow. For these reasons the good land around Applecross Bay was very attractive and has been occupied for over two thousand years.

The longest continuous place of settlement in Applecross is probably the area of the present campsite and farm. It is here that the foundations of a broch have been found, as discussed previously. Pictish evidence relating to the broch is lacking, but the name Applecross is itself originally Pictish. It was written ‘Apor Crossan’ in the early Irish chronicles (eg Tighernac 673 AD), and Apor was the Pictish word for estuary. Applecross appears in the Irish chronicles because of the arrival of Maelrubha, an Irish missionary, who set up his monastery on the other side of Applecross Bay from the broch site, at Clachan - the present churchyard. It is unlikely he would have done so without the permission of the local chieftain. Here the community of monks lived and worked, probably until the Viking raids made the area untenable for them around 800 AD. As well as these settlements at Borrodale and the monastery at Clachan, there were probably other early settlements or farms on smaller strips of good land around the coast of Applecross, for example at Toscaig and Callakille.

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Around 1810, there was a shift of the population from around the farm to the present day hamlets as, in common with other clan chieftains of the period, the Mackenzie owner of Applecross removed his tenants upon the best land so that he could create large farms. These people were moved to new townships in more marginal, less fertile areas such as Camusteele and Camusterrach, and encouraged to supplement their means of subsistence through fishing and working for the laird in the kelp harvesting industry.

The early part of the nineteenth century saw a significant growth in population, in Applecross, as in elsewhere in the Highlands, due to better diet, medical advances, and social changes. The population of the parish reached its peak in 1831, at 2,892 persons (see Table 1 within the Cultural Audit). This growth led to intense pressure for land and increasingly marginal and peripheral areas being settled, before gradual depopulation began, as evidenced by the deserted settlements and abandoned houses at places like Collieghillie, Ardban, Sand, Arigh Driseag, Draoraig, the Crowlin Islands and Eilean na Ba. The houses of "Shore Street", known locally simply as "The Street", were not built until around the turn of the nineteenth century, as houses for people who worked for the Estate.

Fishing and Crofting

Fishing, in the sense of collecting fish and shell fish had existed from the first arrival of people in the Mesolithic age. At the head of Applecross Bay one may still see the remains of the great caraidh or fish trap which a century ago was the resort of the poor of the parish. But fishing had to be undertaken if the crofters were to make a living for their families. The most important development for the Applecross fishermen was the advent in the early 20th century of the Kelvin petrol/paraffin engine which meant that boats were no longer dependent on sail and they were able to move from Pol Domhain to the safer and more commodious Pol Creadha. Boats became larger and better equipped. After the subsequent depletion of herring stocks, local fishermen concentrated on ground net fishing for white fish and later moved into creel fishing for shell fish. Throughout all this time, the concept of the crofter/fisherman operated and, although progress to trawlers didn’t match that which occurred on the east coast of Scotland, the east coast boats were partly crewed throughout the 19th century by men from places like Applecross who were obliged to travel for work in season. At the same period, men travelled to the fertile farms of Easter Ross and further south at harvest time when, in the era prior to combine harvesters, balers and other machinery, the work was both skilled and labour intensive.

Crofting, the other half of the subsistence life-style of Applecross, began as a side effect of the clan system, as discussed previously, when tenants were cleared from the better farmland. As with fishing, the crofters proved themselves to be resilient, making the best of their situation, although emigration was a common option taken by those who were unable to obtain land. It would take until 1884 and the reporting of the Napier Commission for the concept of security of tenure for crofters to be accepted and for the institution of the Crofters’ Commission. Subsequently the crofting situation was regularised in a system that remains largely unchanged today, although provision now exists that gives the crofter a right to purchase his croft.

Today in Applecross, a high number of crofts remain -110 in total. However, these are often very small in area, extending to only about 2 – 3 acres and typically used only to graze a few sheep, although cultivation of vegetables occurs on a few individual crofts.

Buildings

Until the early part of the 20th century, housing was rudimentary and typically constructed by local crofter/ fishermen using the materials that were readily available, such as turf or wattle for walls with heather and bracken to thatch roofs and adjacent
rooms, one with a fireplace in the centre or the room and the other to house livestock. However, subsequently, mason-built stone houses with slated roofs became a regular feature in Applecross. Most men were skilled in the use of stone as demonstrated where drystone dykes still stand.

3.66 The Third Statistical Account holds an article on the Applecross parish where it is pointed out that legislation covering security of tenure made provision for one house on each croft. Unfortunately, this left room for only one of a family to remain after their parents’ decease. Although, according to Morrison this law was given a liberal translation elsewhere, it was strictly applied in Applecross, having far reaching implications for marginalized and emigration. For more details about the buildings of Applecross see the Archaeology and Built Heritage Audit.

Religion

3.67 From the coming of the Irish monk, Maelrubha, in 673, who set up his Christian settlement at Clachan, and travelled widely to bring Christianity to the Picts, Applecross, or A‘Chomraich (The Sanctuary) was to be a special place. The sanctuary that was formed by the girth of the monastery in due course included the whole peninsula. Those who availed themselves of the sanctuary included refugees from ‘Butcher’ Cumberland’s troops after Culloden. In addition, at the time when MacBeaths were being cleared from Sutherland, many made their way down the coast to Applecross.

3.68 Following the time of Maelrubha, it is not surprising that the people of Applecross had a reputation for a Christian way of life. Through the transition from Celtic to Roman Church and then during the Reformation, the change seems to have been smooth. That from the Roman Catholic faith was particularly sensible, the incumbent priest becoming the first minister of the parish!

Gaelic

3.69 When Maelruba sailed to Applecross in 673 he would have brought his Irish Gaelic with him to what Kenneth MacDonald of Applecross describes as ‘the northern limit of the Scottish kingdom of Dalriada.’ The Picts of the time spoke British Celtic similar to the Welsh. P-Celtic) while the Irish (and Scottish) Gaelic was from Goidelic Gaelic. (Q-Celtic).

3.70 As time saw the unification of Pict and Scot, the insular nature of Applecross, its poor, or non existent, roads and the barriers of its towering hills made travel difficult and this reflected in a way of life in which people only travelled of necessity in either direction. Thus the outside influences of a gradual anglicising, including, it is alleged, those of Margaret, the Anglo-Saxon wife of Malcolm 111, in the 11th century, that progressively changed the culture of southern Scotland, would not touch Applecross until much later than the rest of the mainland.

3.71 The 1931 census showed over 75% of the Applecross population as speaking Gaelic, and in 1971 it was still the language of more that 50% of the population. During the last century, however, support of the language suffered as some influential persons held that the speaking of Gaelic hindered progress in education, following a line that had been taken earlier by Thomas, the 8th Mackenzie Laird and a Member of Parliament. This attitude ensued to the point that, by the end of the 19th century, Applecross teachers were noted for appointing senior pupils to ensure that Gaelic was not spoken in the playground.

3.72 Regional variation in Gaelic can be marked and, in Applecross, it has had its differences, traditionally between the Street and Milton on the one hand and the villages further south
on the other. There is a marked difference in accent too between the north and south of the peninsula.

**Literary References and Travellers’ Tales**

3.73 Applecross appears occasionally in literature, giving an indication of not only how the landscape was experienced and perceived in the past, but also its physical and visual condition. There are a number of well-known travellers which have mentioned Applecross in their writings. Thomas Pennant, who toured the western Highlands in 1772, sailed past Applecross and regretted that he couldn’t stop: ‘… by Applecross Bay, small, populous and well-cultivated shores. The back ground most uncommonly mountainous. Applecross House is inhabited by a most hospitable gentleman as same reports: we lamented therefore our inability to pay our respects.’

3.74 John Knox (1720-1790) toured a little later in 1786, and reported that:

“… we had an agreeable passage to Applecross Bay, which is finely skirted with highly cultivated fields, and much timber. Many of the trees are of considerable magnitude, though upon the edge of the sea; which confutes the assertion that timber will not grow within the influence of sea air … the house of Applecross is large, and the garden contains more fruit than the family can possibly consume. It may be supposed that a part of the fruit is sent in presents to those who have none, or that it is given to the poor of the place. Here as usual is a river stocked with salmon and trout; the hills abound in deer and game, but there is a want of neighbourhood and society, which must render life solitary, if not burthensome, even amidst the luxuries of nature. There is however, a church, and a clergyman in this bay, which help to fill up the vacuity. The minister is Mr Macqueen, son of the minister of that name in Sky, whom Dr Johnson imagined he had foiled on the subject of Ossian’s Poems. The old gentleman is since dead, and the son defends his memory against the Doctor’s pretended victory.”

**Place names**

3.75 Many of the place names within the study area derive from Gaelic although evidence of Viking invasion remains evidenced in some place names. ‘A’ Chomraich’, the Gaelic name for the peninsula, means the sanctuary in recognition of the Christian settlement founded by Maelrubha in 673. The name ‘Applecross’ is thought to derive from ‘Apor’ (Gaelic for ‘mouth’) and ‘Crossan’ (‘stream’). The River Applecross is known locally as the Crossan. The river name derives from ‘Crossan’ (‘little cross’) and may be associated with the monastery.

3.76 The meanings of some other Applecross place names are provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place Name</th>
<th>Possible meaning/translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ardrishaig</td>
<td>Promontory of thorny brambles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bealach nam Bó</td>
<td>Pass of the cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuaig</td>
<td>Dog Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culdulie</td>
<td>Ridge – dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearbeg</td>
<td>Alder Tree – small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearnmore</td>
<td>Alder Tree – big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenmore</td>
<td>Headland – big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonbain</td>
<td>Standing white water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides, pages 334-335
3 A Tour through the Highlands of Scotland and the Hebride Isles in 1786, John Knox. 1787. Pages 124-
4 The dictionary of Place Names in Scotland, Mike Darton, 1994
Recent landscape development

3.77 The changes long delayed in Applecross by its insulated geographical nature came swiftly in the latter half of the last century. It is doubtful if any other part of mainland Scotland has experienced the same amount of change in such a short time. The population of Applecross peninsula in 1951 was 735 but, by 2001, it had reduced to 230.

3.78 Over recent centuries, a key instrument to change over the peninsula has been transport. Long after most of the Highlands had been opened up by good road and railway links, Applecross remained dependent on access by sea. Passengers and goods were transported by the MacBrayne’s mail boat that plied between Stornoway, Kyle and Mallaig until, in the mid 1950s, a boat service was introduced between Toscaig and Kyle.

3.79 The Bealach nam Bó was completed as one of the last Parliamentary Roads in 1822, and was finally tarred between 1956 and 1958; however, it was not a guaranteed means of access to Applecross, either then or today.

3.80 Prior to 1976, the communities in the north and south of the peninsula were isolated from each other, connected only by a path suitable for pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders. Despite a thriving community of around 400 on the northern side of the peninsula, and a strong case for a road connection, the northern road was not constructed until the 1970s when the Ministry of Defence development at Sand provided the catalyst necessary.

3.81 Historical depopulation of the north and north western coast could not have been helped by the absence of a road. However, even today, the population of these settlements in these areas suffer from a high proportion of holiday homes and/ or abandoned properties.

3.82 On the south of the peninsula, the oil platform fabrication yard at Kishorn, which operated from 1975 until 1987, saw a 2 mile section of access road constructed in just twelve days and the construction of the largest concrete structure in the world. By 1977, the yard employed over three thousand people who were housed in temporary accommodation and one or two retired cruise liners were moored in the loch. Today, the yard is no longer used for large-scale fabrication, although it remains in a ‘dormant’ condition that would enable future re-development if the opportunity arose. In the meantime, the site is used for a number of light industrial purposes, including facilities for an aquaculture company, a transport depot and small quarry.

3.83 Located in the Inner Sound at Sand, the British Underwater Test and Evaluation Centre (BUTEC) was established in the 1970s as a range for testing torpedoes and other equipment such as sonar.

3.84 In 2000, Crofting townships along the north coast of Applecross combined with the Applecross Trust to develop 1500 hectares of native woodland, the largest ever Crofter Forestry Scheme in Scotland. This was developed mostly upon crofting township common grazings and involved the fencing of over 23,000 acres of North Applecross with a deer exclusion fence extending over 20km long between Lonbain on the west coast and Ardhieslaig in the north east. The scheme is based upon an integrated management policy that provides multiple benefits for the community and the environment. Some of the objectives of the new woodland are to provide local employment, community development, a path network for public enjoyment and, in the longer term, to provide shelter for domestic stock, wood for fuel and a seed bank for future woodland expansion.

3.85 In addition to the key changes described above, the Applecross peninsula has also seen gradual increase in the numbers of tourists, improved communication via the internet,
some new homes to cater for increased housing demand, and changes in land use management. In relation to the latter, the character of the landscape of south Applecross is significantly affected by the impacts of deer grazing, although numbers of sheep seem to be gradually declining, reflecting common changes in agricultural practice. In addition, in line with standard forestry practice and the difficulties of extracting timber, proposals exist to remove the exiting conifer plantations upon the peninsula and expand more sensitive native woodlands.

3.86 In relation to deer numbers mentioned above, a Deer Management Plan is currently in place for the duration 2002-2007 covering the area of the ‘South West Ross Deer Management Group’ which includes Applecross estate in addition to 12 others and Forest Enterprise woodlands. The current plan provides proposals and recommendations for each estate as well as on a group basis. Nevertheless, in terms of landscape character, there remains evidence of high deer numbers in some parts of Applecross, which creates landscape impacts, primarily in response to reduced habitat diversity and a lack of natural regeneration, ground poaching and the continued expansion of fencing. Review and revision of the Management Plan is currently underway and a final draft document has now been produced; it is expected that this LCA will directly inform this plan. Nevertheless, it is understood that there are limitations to what the Deer Management Plan can deliver in relation to specific and detailed landscape issues within Applecross, given that this is essentially a strategic plan based on satisfying the interests of all the estates and consultees involved.

3.87 Predicted future change within the landscape is discussed within Chapter 4 for each landscape character type.
4 DESCRIPTION OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

Regional landscape character types

4.1 The SNH ‘Ross and Cromarty Landscape Character Assessment’ (Ferguson McIlveen, 1999) identifies a total of 16 Landscape Character Types of which 9 occur within the Applecross study area as shown in figure 2. These provide the regional framework into which local landscape character types fit and are important when considering strategic issues across the area.

Local landscape character types

4.2 Within the framework of regional landscape character types, described above, local landscape character types are identified by this study as shown in figures 3 and 4. These character types reflect distinctive landscape characteristics at a local level in relation to key pressures for change. For each of these local landscape character types, the following section of this report provides information on:

- The key characteristics of the local landscape character type, including for what and how the type is experienced;
- Predicted changes within the local landscape character type that may affect its character;
- Potential opportunities and sensitivities offered by the key landscape characteristics in terms of landscape change; and thereby identify projects or works that could potentially help protect or enhance the distinctive landscape of Applecross.

4.3 It should be noted, that the text provided for each character type is intended to be read as a reference tool in relation to the plans in figures 3 and 4. It is not anticipated that the text for each landscape character type would be read in sequence, and thus repetition occurs between some of the types.
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE 1 | RUGGED MOUNTAIN

General description

This landscape character type encompasses the mountain area within the south eastern part of the Applecross peninsula that surrounds the summits of Meall Gorm and Beinn Bhân, rising from sea level to 710 and 896 metres respectively. The character type is mainly experienced by motorists travelling over the hill pass between Loch Kishorn and Applecross Bay – the Bealach nam Bó, that is widely renowned for its very high, steep, narrow and twisting route. Much of the character of the area depends not only upon the mountains themselves, but also views to the wider ‘borrowed landscape’ beyond – particularly across the sea to the islands of Skye and Raasay.

Key characteristics

• There is an overriding *vertical emphasis* to the mountains, which is stressed by the steepness of the slopes that allow the peaks to be viewed at fairly close proximity from below.

• The mountains vary in their profile, responding to their geological form. On some sides, the hills comprise simple slopes and plateau, while steep, dramatic cliffs, corries and glens occur upon others. Some of the moorland slopes that seem very simple at the broad scale, are actually quite complex at the local level due to the slope undulations and rock outcrops that restrict views. The arrangement of all these various elements of topography seems fairly haphazard, meaning that it is often difficult to orient in the landscape.

• There is a variety of ground cover and drainage conditions, responding to the landform and geology, ranging from slopes of rock outcrops and mixed grassland and heather, to high altitude grass and scree slopes, to lochans and bogs. These elements create a visible texture to the landscape, punctuated by the occasional foci of lochans and peaks.

• The landscape character type is experienced by most people from the public road that passes over the Bealach nam Bó between Loch Kishorn and Applecross Bay. This road is renowned for its narrow, steep and winding route and its high spots that offer panoramic views across Applecross to Lochalsh, Skye and Torridon.
beyond. For many visitors, the main viewpoint area at the summit above Bealach nam Bó, provides a rare and sometimes their only experience of being within an upland mountain landscape.

During the peak visitor season, the road can be very busy with motorists; in addition, there is often a collection of people and cars at parking areas upon the pass, with associated elements such as cairns and signs. In combination with telecom masts, these elements compromise the sense of remoteness that occurs throughout the remainder of the landscape character type that is otherwise experienced mainly by hillwalkers and stalkers, and is uninhabited.

Associated with the road, some distinctive historic structures occur such as stone retaining walls, bridges and drainage channels. The pattern, form and intricacy of these form key features along the roadside and serve in highlighting the severity of the road’s gradient as well as its historic character. Unfortunately, however, these features have been partially or completely demolished in places, creating a negative image of care. The structures erected in replacement, such as metal barriers, generally appear less sensitive to the environment and its distinctiveness, seeming much more industrial and universal in character.

- **Wildlife**, such as Golden Eagle, is evident within this mountain area and emphasise its elevation and remoteness. Red deer are commonly found within the landscape and are often visible from the public road.

- **Deer** occupy the open hill ground and are commonly visible from the public access road over the Bealach nam Bó. The deer appear to be partially responsible for a reduced diversity of vegetation and little or no woodland regeneration as well as trampling along some preferred routes. This pressure seems to result in an increasing demand for new deer fencing.

- The public road over the Bealach nam Bó frequently requires maintenance works, exacerbated by its high elevation and steep sides in addition to the impacts of snow clearance works in winter. While, in the past, the Bealach was often closed for long periods during snow conditions, there now seems to be an increased expectation that the road should be passable at all times (especially to four-wheel drive vehicle drivers).

**Opportunities**

- Opportunity exists through the Deer Management Plan to review and develop a strategy for the existing management of deer that relates and responds to the distinctive landscape character of Applecross, particularly how management could help reduce grazing.
pressure and enable natural regeneration of a greater diversity of vegetation. As part of this strategy, the various options for deer fencing should be considered as they would affect landscape character over time, for example dividing spaces, limiting access and creating dominant lines in the landscape.

- Potential exists for mitigation of the existing impacts of road maintenance works. There may also be opportunity to design new roadside barriers, perhaps that build upon a metal frame, but incorporate stone walling that relates to existing features within the landscape. These would heighten the historic character and the distinctive qualities of the Bealach nam Bò as an entrance to Applecross, while enabling easy snow removal and providing a safe barrier. Opportunities also exist to remove and prevent further spoil deposits by the edges of roads and parking areas, improving the image of care.

- Rationalisation and redesign of existing parking areas along the public road could enhance the experience of the distinctive qualities of the Applecross landscape and arrival via the Bealach nam Bò. This could include removal of the profusion of ‘cairns’ (randomly placed so that they confuse visitors about which direction to walk) and the provision of interpretation panels, signs and the development of a path network to encourage people to experience the wider landscape character.

Constraints

- The simplicity and openness of the landscape means that built features, particularly those that are linear, are highly prominent.

- Built features tend to reduce the sense of remoteness within the mountain landscape, although this can sometimes be mitigated through sensitive siting and design.
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE 2  MOORLAND AND SLOPES

General description

This landscape character type covers the majority of the area of the Applecross peninsula, varying in slope, access and elevation, but predominantly comprising wide open spaces of rough grassland and heather vegetation, with occasional lochans and burns, that possess a simple composition and a strong sense of remoteness. These areas often occur as a transition between higher mountain areas and lower coastal and glen landscapes.

The main character type is split into 4 landscape character subtypes: Undulating Moorland; Rugged Slopes; West Coastal Strip; and Remote Coastal Slopes.

Key characteristics

• There is an overriding simplicity, openness and horizontal emphasis to the moorland, resulting in a sense of exposure and dynamic visual movement, which tends to move back and forth, without resting on a specific focus.

• The landscape is of a large scale, although it is typically difficult to perceive its size and distance without obvious scale indicators within the mid and far distance of views.

• The moorland is sloping or undulating in landform, with a simple and varying mosaic of vegetation that responds to subtle changes in rock outcrop, slope and drainage. As part of this pattern, lochans and burns create occasional foci.

• The landscape possesses few built features and is largely uninhabited, resulting in a sense of remoteness.

• The overriding simplicity of the landscape and its lack of prominent features mean that it is often difficult to orient within the landscape, although distant mountains sometimes form landmarks upon the skyline when visible in good weather.

• Some areas possess native woodland. This tends to occur either within steep glens that have been difficult to
graze, or have been planted within recent years and are contained within fenced exclosures. This woodland tends to be wind pruned and, in open areas, this results in it seeming 'moulded’ to the landform undulations.

**Predicted change**

- The open moorland is mainly occupied by deer, although the grazing of sheep and cattle also occurs, particularly close to settlements. In some places, high numbers of deer has resulted in reduced diversity of vegetation, while concentrations of both deer and stock within and around the edges of some of the settlements and roads sometimes causes nuisance. Consequently, there is typically an increasing demand for new fencing.

- Woodland forms a key feature of some parts of this landscape character type and the landscape contains remnant native woodlands, old coniferous plantations and new native woodland. In relation to these, there are proposals to extend the native woodland and restructure the old plantations that typically appear incongruous to the character of the landscape and are at risk of wind throw. Plans for woodland development are significantly affected by the current requirement for fencing as discussed above.

- A number of pathways cross this landscape character type, many of which possess historical and cultural value as they acted as the main access routes over the peninsula prior to construction of the north coast road. However these paths require repair and maintenance works in many places to improve accessibility.

- There may be proposals for small scale renewable energy development within this landscape, led by adjacent communities.

**Opportunities and constraints that may lead to and affect future landscape projects**

**Opportunities**

- Opportunity exists to review management practices for deer and stock (through the Deer Management Plan for deer), developing a strategy that relates and responds to the impacts of these on the distinct landscape character of Applecross. Reduction of grazing pressure may enable natural regeneration of a greater diversity of vegetation and reduce pressure for additional fencing.

- The landscape and visual impacts of existing conifer plantations could be reduced by restructuring so that retained and new woodlands closely relate and enhance distinctive landscape character. This will need detailed planning, most likely through the development of a whole-landscape planning and design plan; however, it is likely to identify complete removal of existing plantations (outwith the estate policies) to enable redesign and development of new native woodland across the estate, building upon existing remnants.
- **Access** across the site could be improved by **repairing existing pathways**. Opportunities also exist for **extension of the path network** across the sub-types of this landscape character, so that the landscape experience of all areas can be appreciated. This facility would benefit from **strategic consideration of access points onto the network** and **circular routes**, so that this might, for example, be combined with small scale and low-key car parking provision and public interpretation in key locations.

**Constraints**

- The **simplicity of the landscape pattern** means that built features or obvious edges to land management practices tend to be particularly prominent and may appear incongruous to the underlying landscape character. They may also seem to create foci and divide spaces that contrast to the characteristic **openness and undifferentiated texture** of the landscape.

- Built features, such as fences and tracks, typically **reduce the sense of remoteness** within this landscape. Within the undulating areas of this type, this may be mitigated to some extent by very sensitive siting and design; however the scope for mitigation upon the simpler slopes, either steep or flat, is more difficult due to increased visibility and less defined edges to which features can fit.

- Areas of this landscape character type often act as buffers between adjacent coastal or mountain landscape character types, emphasising the distinctive characteristics of these in contrast. For this reason, it is important that landscape change does not seem to **reduce the distinction between adjacent areas**, for example by transcending different types with the same development type.

- Although it may be possible to locate small scale run-of-river hydro schemes within this landscape, **it would be extremely difficult to site a commercial wind turbine** (over 20m high) within this landscape, apart from perhaps at the coast, without this seeming to dominate in scale and focal prominence and, in this way, seem to diminish the sense of simplicity and open space within this landscape.
Distinction from main landscape character type

This landscape character sub-type is distinguished from the main type by appearing as a fairly even ‘platform’ of undulating moorland, with similar elevation of both low and high points. This type largely extends over the interior of the Applecross peninsula.

Opportunities and constraints that may lead to and affect future landscape projects

Opportunities
- This area offers opportunities in terms of access and recreation within a wide open moorland where there is a sense of remoteness and panoramic views to the sea and mountains beyond. Some existing pathways and roads exist; however, it would be useful to review this network, the condition of existing routes, and opportunities to enhance circular routes and access points, for example including parking provision and interpretation.

Constraints
- This landscape character type is very sensitive to the introduction of new built features, particularly within interior areas, as they typically contrast to the strong sense of remoteness.
- The simplicity of this landscape character type means that it is very difficult to accommodate new structures such as tracks, paths and fences, without these seeming to contrast to the landscape by creating prominent lines within the landscape which contrast to its largely undifferentiated ground cover. In addition, vertical features such as fences will typically appear incongruous by dividing spaces and contrasting to the openness of the landscape, as well as limiting movement through the area.
- New extensive features, such as woodland, may seem to mask the detailed character of the undulating moorland landform and thus should be designed and managed sensitively to retain visibility of this characteristic.
Distinction from main landscape character type

This landscape character sub-type is distinguished from the main type by its steeper slopes and broad hill forms. These define spaces and create local landmarks, marked not only by the difference in topography, but also the resultant variation in vegetation and rock outcrops that occurs in some places.

Opportunities

- On account of its slope, this landscape character sub-type offers opportunities for siting features that are able to appear to relate to the edges created by the landform and thus seem less prominent or contrasting to the wide open spaces that predominantly occur within this landscape character type.

- This landscape character sub-type offers opportunities for recreation, particularly via footpaths through the moorland interior that possesses a distinct sense of remoteness and offers elevated views towards distant mountains and to the sea.

Constraints

- The slopes of this landscape character sub-type are prominent and features located upon them will tend to be highly visible, including pathways and fences.

- Due to steepness, is difficult to locate built structures upon the slopes of this landscape character sub-type without the need for excavation. Such works are highly visible, typically seen against a backcloth of dark vegetation, and appear to contrast to the intrinsic characteristics of the landform and the undifferentiated landscape pattern.

- This sub-type appears to gradually extend into surrounding gentler-sloped types. This means that it is important that new features do not seem to separate or isolate the hills from the surrounding moorland.

- The scale of the moorland slopes is typically difficult to perceive. However, the introduction of a new feature of definite size can seem, in comparison, to diminish the perceived scale of the landscape. It is particularly important that the vertical scale of new features does not seem to dominate the scale of the moorland hills in direct comparison.
This landscape character sub-type is mainly distinguished from the main type by its coastal location and how it is typically experienced along the public road. This causes features to be typically encountered sequentially and from an elevated route along the coastal fringe, with key views directed over the sea to offshore islands in addition to marine activity within the sound, including fishing boats and submarines. These views are emphasised by being directed offshore by simple and high slopes on the interior side of the road.

There is a strong cultural influence to the landscape character within these areas, evident by the presence of many historical features, such as caves, cottages, kilns, rock shelters and remnant cultivation patterns, and numerous references within recitals about the area, particularly in relation to the building of the north coast road.

The experience of the landscape depends not only upon the character of the immediate vicinity, but also on the wider 'borrowed' landscape experienced via distant views (during good weather), particularly across the sea to the islands of Raasay and Rona in addition to the mountain profiles of Skye to the south west and Torridon to the north east. The views out to sea can also encompass fishing boats and naval vessels.

**Opportunities**

- This landscape contains a wealth of historical features. These offer opportunities for **further exploration, survey and documentation**, as well as the development of **interpretation for local people and visitors**.

- This landscape possesses a number of **abandoned and ruined buildings that could be renovated for future use**. Transferring tenancy/ ownership would be a challenge however, and thus it would be useful to carry out a **review of the existing building stock, ownership and scope for future purchase and/ or rent**.

- Travel along the north coastal road offers a very different
experience of landscape character to that of the route of the Bealach nam Bó and yet it is less popular for its landscape qualities. Thus there may be scope to further publicise a circular route to and from Applecross that enters by one route and exits by the other.

- This landscape character sub-type is bordered along its length by the coast. This offers opportunities for recreation in terms of access down to the sea, possibly served by parking areas and pathways and linked to interpretation facilities in relation to historic features discussed above.

Constraints

- The distinction of each settlement within this landscape character type relates to their relative position along the coast in addition to their obvious separation. Thus it is important that development does not compromise appreciation of these characteristics and occurs within areas between existing settlements (apart from where settlement would have occurred in these areas the past).

- Key views tend to be from the public road to the sea. Thus it is important to limit development or landscape change that would either obstruct or distract from these coastal views.

- Historically, concentration of settlement and features has been upon the seaward side of the existing access road. Consequently it would be very difficult to accommodate any new features upon the interior side of the public road without this seeming incongruous.

- As discussed above, scope exists to restore existing ruined or abandoned buildings within the crofting settlements. However, the functional and aesthetic requirements of buildings in the present day are often different to that offered by traditional buildings. There are various ways in which these concerns can be accommodated; however, most importantly, restoration or new building works should be planned and designed to respect the existing positioning, scale, form and architecture of traditional buildings. If multiple developments are envisaged within a distinct landscape character type or area, it would be useful to develop overall design guidelines to which individual developments could relate in order to maintain the cohesion and distinction of settlements.
Distinction from main landscape character type

This landscape character sub-type is distinguished from the main type by its increased remoteness, on account of its distance from public settlement and access routes, and also the rugged character of its slopes that descend to the sea. The slopes are oriented towards landmasses and islands upon the opposite side of the loch, with a resulting predominance of views in this direction to the mountains beyond as well as a broadly defined sense of enclosure.

Opportunities and constraints that may lead to and affect future landscape projects

Opportunities

- This landscape character type contains remnant trees and woodland, including a large block at Airigh – drishaig, from which further woodland expansion could develop. This potential could be considered as part of ongoing development of management proposals for the estate, responding to the distinctive qualities of the landscape character sub-type. This should include consideration of deer management (even within the current fenced exclosure) that would be likely to enable regeneration of native species to result in a greater diversity of vegetation.

- This landscape offers great recreational opportunity for remote hill walking. A review of the condition of the existing paths to Uags and Airigh – drishaig, in addition to signage, may identify opportunities to link and extend these routes, possibly with the creation of a parking area at Toscaig, a coastal route linking to Kishorn and/ or a boat links across the loch.

- There may be potential to renovate existing buildings within the settlements of Uags and Airigh – drishaig (some works already underway), or build additional structures within these locations to reinforce the character of these remote settlements.

Constraints

- The difficulty in accessing this landscape, together with its remoteness and sensitivity of habitat, means that construction and management works tend to be costly in time, effort and money.

- This landscape character sub-type is very sensitive to the introduction of new built features, such as tracks and fences, as they typically contrast to the strong sense of remoteness within the landscape.
• It is very difficult to accommodate new structures within this landscape character sub-type such as tracks, paths and fences, without these seeming to contrast to the landscape by creating prominent lines within the landscape which contrast to its largely undifferentiated texture. In addition, vertical features such as fences will typically appear incongruous by dividing spaces and contrasting to the openness of the landscape and limiting access.

• The current level of deer grazing may need to be reduced if natural regeneration is to take place without the use of fences which have adverse impacts as described above. Even with these, there may be a requirement for culling within exclosures due to the difficulty of securing fences at the coast and because maintenance works are difficult within such a remote location.
**General Description**

This landscape character type occurs in three locations around the coast of Applecross – at Toscaig, Fearmmore and Arinacrinachd, while an interior sub type occurs at Cuaig. These settlements are most distinctive by their focus of houses, visually linked due to their proximity, but otherwise varying in their elevation and orientation in relation to variable ground conditions. These days, activity within the settlements often seems limited, with little evidence of past agricultural practices such as cropping.

**Key characteristics**

- This landscape character type comprises a cluster of houses that forms a focus within the surrounding landscape. The buildings seem linked by their proximity that creates a sense of cohesion; however they vary in spacing, elevation and orientation and their relationship to the underlying landscape, so that the settlement possesses a complex image at the detailed level.

- The landscape has an overriding rural character. However crofting activity and land management, which would have once been responsible for much of the layout and function of the settlements, does not seem to be a strong factor affecting present day character, although extensive sheep grazing occurs within and surrounding most settlements. The changing emphasis of land use is highlighted by the presence in some places of abandoned croft houses, barns and field boundaries, which can convey a sense of low landscape value and care. In addition, a common lack of obvious activity within the landscape, contributes to a sense of tranquillity.

- Generally, the landscape is small scale in character, reflecting a predominant undulating landform that offers only small areas of open and/or flat space. In combination with built features and occasional clusters of trees within the settlement, this results in a sense of localised shelter in contrast to the overriding openness of moorland and sea beyond.
The various combinations of elements within the settlements, as discussed above, result in a complex visual image, in addition to variable spaces and edges. However, generally the focus of views is towards the sea.

Within some locations, woodland patches occur within the settlement, as well as on its margins. These trees are typically of native species, mainly birch, and are wind-pruned and gnarled as a result of their exposure to coastal winds and grazing by sheep and deer.

Over the last century, management of croft land has become less intensive and there has been a move away from self-sufficiency. Extensive sheep grazing has become the prevalent land use within and surrounding these settlements. The move away from subsistence agriculture has reduced the need to maintain traditional field boundaries, so that many are now disappearing. Many croft outbuildings, whose present day use is limited by their small scale, also show evidence of decay.

There is demand for crofts within the area, both from existing crofters and those wishing to enter crofting. Restricted availability of croft land, together with the rules governing crofting tenure, can make it difficult to satisfy this demand.

Houses are increasingly being occupied by non-crofting residents. In some places, this has resulted in a demand to restore and upgrade existing properties and construct new houses.

Given the extensive nature of sheep grazing within and surrounding some of these settlements, in addition to high deer numbers within some places (excluded from the northern area of this character type), there is widespread demand for new stock and deer fencing.

There may be demand within some areas for new native woodlands or the extension of existing woodlands. There is also an appetite for a move towards more traditional land use practice that supports and develops local species and habitats that are fragmented and under threat.

There may be proposals for increased facilities for rural industries, including those that act as visitor attractions such as studios. In some places, this may require the development of local car parking provision.

The intrinsic pattern of these settlements provides a
structure into which new features can be integrated if sited and designed sensitively.

- This landscape contains existing abandoned buildings that could be renovated for new uses and croft land that could be accessed by existing or new crofters. Scope for these works/activities could be further explored.

- Opportunity exists to review existing land management practices, to strategically plan for associated services such as fencing, drainage, water supply and access, to ensure that this does not develop in a piecemeal fashion that compromises the character of the settlements.

- As discussed above, opportunities may occur for developing small scale rural industries within these settlements, possibly utilising existing abandoned properties. It may also be possible to develop visitor attractions and services within these settlements, capitalising on the distinctive and local experience of the landscape in these places.

Constraints

- There are constraints to the development of existing abandoned/ run-down properties within these settlements due to ownership and tenure restrictions. This may limit works that could improve the condition of the landscape resource.

- Many of the properties within this landscape character type were designed for a function that is no longer applicable to present day living and working, for example being small in scale. This may limit their suitability for new uses, although innovative conversions and uses may be found. Most importantly, restoration or new building works should be planned and designed to respect the existing position, scale, form and architecture of traditional buildings. For this reason, it may be useful to establish design guidelines for areas within the Applecross peninsula to which individual developments could relate in order to maintain the cohesion and distinction of settlements.

- This landscape possesses a distinct pattern to which new development should relate. This can be difficult, when the established pattern developed in response to requirements than were different to that of the current day, for example crofting land management. However, it is important to the perceived cohesion of the settlement that new elements relate in siting, scale and design, including the typical spacing of properties leaving open space in-between.
It is important that new development within the settlements does not obstruct or distract from views to the sea as this forms a key feature from the settlements, contributing to the intrinsic sense of place and acting as a simple backcloth to the complexity of elements within the foreground.
Distinction from main landscape character type

This landscape character sub-type occurs in just one location within the Applecross peninsula, at the township of Cuaig in the north west. It is distinguished from the main type on account of its interior location, set away from the coast, within an area of moorland. In the absence of the sea as a key feature, there is not an obvious focus to the settlement, although it is located either side of the Abhainn Chuaig river, and houses seem inward facing, set against prevailing winds and tucked into the landform.

Opportunities and constraints that may lead to and affect future landscape projects

Opportunities

- This landscape contains existing abandoned buildings that could be renovated for new uses, such as for ‘affordable housing’, and croft land that could be taken on by others. Capacity for this could be explored through a feasibility study and plan of action. New building could also be potentially accommodated, to re-establish historic pattern and density and reinforce the existing distinction of the landscape character type from its surroundings if this was sensitively sited and designed to relate to existing structures.

- Opportunity exists to review existing land management practices in the interests of habitat diversity and the condition of landscape characteristics, to strategically plan for services such as fencing, drainage, water supply and access, to ensure that this does not develop in a piecemeal fashion that compromises the character of the settlement. The existing landscape pattern would be reinforced by the repair of distinct landscape features such as stone boundary walls.

- Opportunities may occur for developing small scale rural industries within this settlement, possibly utilising existing abandoned properties.

Constraints

- There are constraints to the development of existing abandoned/ run-down properties within these settlements due to ownership and tenure restrictions. This may limit works that could improve the condition of the landscape resource.

- Many of the properties within this landscape character type were designed for a function that is no longer
applicable to present day living and working, for example being small in scale. This may limit their suitability for new uses, although innovative solutions may be found and it would be useful to consider this scope within a landscape and design strategy.

- It is important that any landscape change or development relates to the existing intrinsic characteristics and features within the landscape, for example not contrasting in scale, form and spacing, and having a similar relationship to the landform, for example avoiding building on top of rocky knolls. This can pose a challenge when the established pattern developed in response to requirements than are not the same as the present day, for example crofting land management. However, it is important to the perceived cohesion of the settlement that new elements relate in siting, scale and design.
**General Description**

This landscape character type occurs in a number of locations around the Applecross coast, generally around the fringes of crofting settlements, where the predominant land use is extensive grazing and/or native woodland. Within these locations, evidence often exists of more active management and cropping occurring in the past, associated with ruined structures such as ruined croft houses, boundary walls and run-rig patterns.

**Key characteristics**

- Within this landscape, there is a mixed pattern of croft grassland and woodland, with occasional houses. The pattern of vegetation tends to respond to the variable ground conditions, particularly slope and drainage, in addition to aspects of landscape management such as grazing regime.

- The prominence of elements within the landscape pattern varies between seasons, particularly the colour of grass between winter and spring/summer, and the screening effect of views by deciduous woodland.

- There is a strong sense of history within these areas, as the landscape shows evidence of more intensive management in the past with remnant drainage patterns, patches of semi-improved ground, run-rig patterns and stone fanks. In addition, there are a number of ruined and abandoned croft houses and outbuildings. The current low levels of activity in this landscape partly contribute to a strong sense of tranquillity.

- The focus of views tends to be to the sea, sometimes framed over bays and to islands, although some distinctive knolls also exist within the local area, creating local foci.

- Generally the landscape is intimate and small scale in character, with a sense of enclosure afforded by landform slopes in combination with patches of woodland.

**Predicted change**

- The intensity of croft management within these areas seems to have diminished, with extensive grazing of sheep over wide areas and reduced maintenance of
traditional features such as field boundaries and croft outbuildings. It is understood that there may be some demand for land by prospective crofters within the area; however, a lack of available land may make this difficult to achieve.

- Given the extensive nature of sheep grazing within these areas, in addition to high deer numbers within some places, there is often demand for new stock and deer fencing.

- There may be demand within some areas for extension of the existing woodlands, both utilising natural regeneration and new planting. As discussed above, these proposals generally require fencing to exclude stock and deer.

- There may be demand for increased facilities for rural industries, including those that act as visitor attractions. In some places, this may require the development of local car parking provision.

Opportunities and constraints that may lead to and affect future landscape projects

Opportunities

- This landscape contains existing abandoned buildings that may be renovated for new uses and croft land that could be managed more intensively and thus possibly enhance the robustness of the landscape character. It is advisable to further explore capacity and scope for these actions.

- Opportunity exists to review existing land management practices and to strategically plan for associated services such as fencing, drainage, water supply and access, to ensure that this does not develop in a piecemeal fashion that compromises the character of the landscape.

- Opportunity may exist for the expansion of the existing woodland resource, improving the robustness of this habitat. This should be considered by an area-wide woodland capacity and design study.

Constraints

- It is important that development of this landscape does not lead to domination of either the woodland or crofting grazing land use and thus change the intrinsic mix of these components within these areas.

- There are constraints to the development of existing abandoned/ run-down properties within these settlements due to ownership and tenure restrictions. This may limit works that could improve the condition of the landscape resource.
• **New buildings should be avoided** within this area, unless an existing structure occurs or the nearby settlement is at full capacity. Otherwise, dispersed structures within this landscape can appear to create an image of ‘sprawl’ on account of the lack of a clear landscape pattern to which these elements could relate.

• It is important that new development **does not obstruct or distract from key views to the sea** as this forms a key feature of the landscape, contributing to the intrinsic sense of place and acting as a simple backcloth to the complexity of elements within the foreground.
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE 5  LINEAR SETTLEMENT

General Description

This landscape character type occurs in a number of locations within the coastal areas of Applecross, from isolated situations upon the north and west coasts and within the south of the peninsula, to the busy focus of Shore Street. The character type is distinctive for its linear pattern of buildings, most typically arranged along the coastal edge and/ or a hill footslope.

Key characteristics

- This type is characterised by the linear arrangement of dwellings. This is most pronounced on Shore Street that comprises a slightly angled single row of terraced cottages with views out over the Inner Sound to Raasay and the mountains of Skye. However, this pattern also occurs in more remote locations and where houses are spaced apart to fit a linear pattern of land division.

- The linear pattern is formed not only by the line of features, but their similarity of form, scale and architecture that creates rhythmic cohesion as a group.

- The line of the settlements is often strongly related to the adjacent coastal edge; however in other places, the line relates to the break of slope and flat land in front. In both circumstances, this line is often also emphasised by an access track running along the line.

- Generally the linear form of dwellings is set against a steep slope behind that provides shelter, but also highlights the presence of the dwellings due to its dark backcloth.

- The linear feature created by the houses, in combination with the backcloth slopes, tends to direct views in the opposite direction, most commonly towards and across the sea. This is even more heightened where offshore foci occur such as the islands of Raasay and Skye.

Predicted change

- Generally the greatest change within this landscape currently seems to be the rebuilding/ renovation of existing properties and the construction of new properties. With this change may come pressure for additional infrastructure such as access tracks and
Due to the reduced role of crofting within many areas of this landscape character type and the reduced condition of elements that define the landscape pattern, such as field boundary walls and drains, the distinctive arrangement of croft land and the rationale for the linear spacing of properties is becoming less obvious.

In some locations differences of management of outside spaces are pronounced between different properties, for example because some are rented for holiday accommodation. This variation between properties can reduce the apparent cohesion of the settlement pattern.

Opportunities

The distinct pattern within this landscape character type means that there is a clear organising structure in which additional elements can be added and appear appropriate as long as they relate in line, scale, form and spacing. This may enable infill or extension to the linear pattern.

There are a number of ruined or abandoned buildings within some of these settlements that could be renovated to provide accommodation, subject to restrictions of ownership and tenancy. In addition, there are a number of historic features within some of these settlements which would benefit from further survey and study, to establish a long term management plan and possible scope for local/visitor facilities.

These settlements often include built features that, if restored, would greatly improve the condition and distinction of the character type, for example restoration of stone walls, particularly along the coastal edge. Thus it would be useful to carry out a review of the existing condition of these structures and plan for their repair and ongoing maintenance.

Constraints

Development or expansion of the linear settlements, or existing properties within these, is often restricted by landform, sandwiched between the sea and backcloth slopes, the prime example of which is Shore Street. This means that there may be pressure for development that contrasts to the landform, such as platforms that rise out from the steep slopes or new houses upon high slopes. Nevertheless, it is important that any landscape change or development relates to the existing intrinsic characteristics and features within the landscape, for example typical siting and
not contrasting in scale, form and spacing. For this reason, it may be useful to develop overall design guidelines that build upon the key characteristics of the landscape, but to which individual developments can relate in order to maintain the cohesion and distinction of the settlements.

- There may be constraints to the development of existing abandoned/ run-down properties within these settlements due to ownership and tenure restrictions. This may limit works that could improve the condition of the landscape resource.

- **Poor access and infrastructure** may restrict development in some locations, such as at Ard Ban.
### General Description
This landscape character type is located at a number of locations around the coast of the Applecross peninsula – both in the north and south west. The nature of the settlement, arranged around a bay, focuses attention on the sea, both in terms of views and activity via the use of boats.

### Key characteristics
- A key characteristic of these settlements is their close relationship to a central body of water, reflecting this in the orientation of buildings and access roads. Views within these settlements tend to focus on the bay, typically directed by interior slopes and woodland.

- Generally the bay provides a semi-enclosed area of water, surrounded by shielding slopes. This creates a sense of shelter and refuge within the land/seascape, often emphasised by the presence of woodland upon surrounding slopes. To utilise this shelter, while accommodating some flat space, dwellings are typically located within a ribbon of flatter land along the shore, although buildings are sometimes accommodated upon shelves cut mid way into the coastal slopes.

- The landscape pattern often contains ruined houses and outbuildings as well as new buildings – both residential and for local marine industries.

- Most of these settlements are notable for their marine activity, reflected not only in present day activity, but also in terms of historic features such as old hard-worn slipways.

- Associated with some centres of marine activity is the accumulation of marine litter and abandoned artefacts that can result in a negative image of care for the land and seascape resource.

### Predicted change
- In recent years there has been an increase in local fishing activity, with 8 boats fishing out of Ard Dubh where there was only 2 boats operating 25 years ago. Challenges continue, however, with regards to the sustainability of the industry; nevertheless, current returns from fishing are generally fairly good. In addition, there is
an demand for tourist-related activities such as boat trips and canoeing.

• Similar to other settlements upon the Applecross peninsula, there may be demand for renovation of existing ruined properties within these settlements and the construction of new buildings both for residential and local industrial use.

• There may be scope for the extension of existing woodland around many of these settlements, improving the condition of remnant habitats.

Opportunities

• The intrinsic pattern of these settlements, organised around the bay, provide a structure by which new features can be integrated, if respecting the typical siting, layout, scale, elevation and orientation of buildings.

• This landscape contains existing abandoned buildings that could possibly be renovated for new use. Demand and capacity for this could be explored through a feasibility study and strategic plan.

• It may also be possible to develop greater visitor attractions and services within these settlements, capitalising on the distinctive coastal location, for example with the provision of accommodation and eating facilities and boat trips. Generally, opportunities may occur for maintaining and developing small scale rural businesses within these settlements, possibly utilising existing abandoned properties.

• Many parts of this landscape character type contain native woodland that could be extended through natural regeneration.

• The display of fishing equipment such as creels and nets within harbour/ bayside settlements can be a great source of interest to visitors, particularly if the catch is served locally. Nevertheless, the perceived condition of the landscape could also be improved in some places by the containment/ removal of coastal litter/ waste that may be associated with marine operations.

Constraints

• Given the character and location of these settlements, scope for development is often restricted by a lack of suitable ground between the sea and the surrounding slopes. It is imperative, however, that development does not involve considerable excavation upon the side slopes that would seem to contrast to the intrinsic landform characteristics.

• There may be constraints to the development of existing
abandoned/ run-down properties within these settlements due to ownership and tenure restrictions. To fully understand this situation, it may be beneficial to carry out a review of these properties and the demand for them.

- Many of the properties within this landscape character type were designed for a function that is no longer applicable to present day living and working, for example being small in scale. This may limit their suitability for new uses, although innovative conversions and uses may be found.

- This landscape possesses a distinct pattern to which new development should relate. This can be difficult, when the established pattern developed in response to requirements than were different to that of the current day, for example access to the sea. However, it is important to the perceived cohesion of the settlement that new elements relate in siting, scale and design.

- It is important that new development within the settlements does not obstruct or distract from views to the sea as this forms a key feature from the settlements, contributing to the intrinsic sense of place and acting as a simple backdrop to elements within the foreground.

- Development of areas near to water bodies must be carried out in an extremely sensitive manner because of the risk of adversely affecting water and habitat quality. Thus it is likely that new development in these areas will require detailed environmental assessment.
General Description

This landscape character type effectively comprises the policies and immediate environs of Applecross House. It is characterised by a distinctive historic design of buildings, walls and bridges, as well as policy parkland, woodland and fields of improved grassland.

Generally the policies have suffered from insufficient management in the past, allowing a predominance of mature trees and insufficient regeneration, invasion of exotic species and pressure from high numbers of deer. This has meant they have been vulnerable to occasional and naturally destructive events such as winter gales.

The character of this landscape is closely associated with the very distinctiveness of Applecross, occurring within a very prominent part of the peninsula and directly affecting the character of the main settlement. It is experienced by a wide variety of people, ranging from people attending Venture Trust courses at Hartfield House, through to visitors renting accommodation on the estate and visiting the Potting Shed Restaurant within the walled garden. In addition, many people use the footpaths within the policies for local recreation, often specifically appreciating the shelter these offer in contrast to the more open landscape within the surrounding area, as well as for routes to the higher hills to the east.

The historical development of the house and policies is described within the document ‘Applecross House Management Plan for the Policies’ (Bell, 2007).

Key characteristics

- There is a distinct pattern of fields, policy parkland and woodland. Within this composition, clusters of buildings occur, characterised by distinct estate architecture. Many of these buildings form focal points within the landscape, especially when surrounded by open space and/or painted white.

- There is a hierarchy of elements and features within the landscape, with the main house appearing as the primary focus and the ground immediately surrounding tending to appear most formal, gradually leading out to
The distinct character of the area is reinforced by its landscape pattern marked by **stone walls and lines of trees** as well as common characteristics such as the distinct architecture of buildings.

- The woodland and trees within the area contribute to a **sense of enclosure and shelter** within the landscape.

- The estate contains a **number of access tracks and pathways** which are well-used by local people and visitors for recreation, the network of which is publicised within a leaflet. These include a riverside path and paths up onto the higher hill ground offering views across the estate to the sea and mountains beyond.

- There is a distinct **sense of history** within this landscape, portrayed by its obvious designed layout as well as **historical and archaeological features**, such as houses, bridges and stone walls. The prominence of some of these structures has been diminished due to the fact that they are no longer required, such as the ice house and lime kiln, and because of land management practices.

- Within some areas of the estate, **views are limited by woodland**. However at the edges of the estate and at higher elevations, the position of the **estate in relation to Applecross Bay, Srath Maol Chaluim and the surrounding hills** can be appreciated.

- There are **high numbers of deer** within the estate. These can often be seen grazing within the fields and parkland areas, but have particular impact upon the trees and woodland. This pressure has meant that regeneration practices within the estate have generally required **exclosure of deer by fencing**. These fences have significant landscape and visual impacts, including the definition of edges and spaces that distract in places from the historic pattern of the estate. They also limit open access.

- The **estate policies appear generally in poor condition** due to the effects of past wind throw of mature trees, the invasion of *Rhododendron*, the prominence of incongruous forest plantations upon some of the slopes, disrepair of many of the historic features such as the stone walls, as well as grazing pressure as discussed above.

**Predicted change**

- This landscape character type is located within the most populous part of the Applecross peninsula and thus there is pressure for **recreation within the estate**, as well as **use of the buildings for local residential and business purposes**.

- There are proposals to improve the condition of the
estate landscape by restructuring existing forest plantations, replanting/ managing the policy woodlands where wind throw has occurred and improving access through the estate. There is an ongoing programme for removal of Rhododendron within the policies.

- In addition to the use of existing estate buildings, there is demand for the provision of plots for new housing.
- There is likely to be diminishing numbers of sheep within the estate landscape and a possible increase in cattle numbers, reflecting general trends in Highland agriculture.
- There is pressure for additional fencing within and surrounding the estate, especially at the margins of the main settlement, to restrict the movement of deer.

Opportunities and constraints that may lead to and affect future landscape projects

Opportunities

- Existing records of the history and archaeology of Applecross would benefit from further study and site investigation that could feed into additional local and visitor interpretation provision. This work may highlight hidden features that, if revealed, could contribute to the intrinsic historic landscape pattern, reinforcing this characteristic. Generally, the condition of many areas of this landscape character type could be easily improved, for example repair of stone walls and replanting. However restoration works should be carefully planned to avoid piecemeal works and ensure that ongoing maintenance of restored features can be sustained.

- The intrinsic pattern of the estate settlement provides a structure by which new features can be integrated, if respecting the typical siting, layout, scale, elevation and orientation of buildings.

- Access across the site could be improved, by repairing some existing pathways and removing some existing fences. Opportunities could also be considered for extension of the path network, so that the landscape experience of all areas can be appreciated. This facility would benefit from strategic consideration of access points onto the network and circular routes, so that this might, for example, be combined with small scale and low-key car parking provision and public interpretation in key locations.

- It may also be possible to expand or develop additional visitor attractions and facilities within this character type, capitalising on both its coastal location and provision of shelter and access routes.
Constraints

- Given the historic character of the estate, it is imperative that any landscape change or development relates to the intrinsic character of the estate, including the siting, scale, form and architecture of buildings, the distinction between open space, parkland and woodland, and definition of the landscape pattern.

- Many of the buildings within this landscape character type were designed for a function that is no longer applicable to present day living and working, for example being too small or cold and dark. This may limit their suitability for new uses, although innovative conversions and uses may be found. Whatever the scope for change, it is important that this relates to the existing intrinsic characteristics and features within the landscape, for example typical siting and not contrasting in scale, form and spacing. For this reason, it may be useful to develop overall design guidelines that builds upon the key characteristics of the landscape and but to which individual developments can relate in order to maintain the cohesion and distinction of the character type.

- This landscape possesses a distinct pattern to which new development should relate. This can be difficult, when the established pattern developed in response to requirements than were different to that of the current day. However, it is important to the hierarchy, perceived cohesion and distinctiveness of the estate that new elements relate in siting, scale, design and prominence.

- It is important that new development within the settlements does not obstruct or distract from key views to the sea and from prominent buildings as these contribute to the intrinsic sense of place.

- Pressure from deer grazing within the estate is high in some places. This needs to be reduced if woodland regeneration is to be successful. A review of existing deer management practices in combination with existing and proposed fencing should be undertaken as part of the Deer Management Plan to inform estate management proposals as well as help develop an access strategy for the estate.

- Rhododendron ponticum occurs as an invasive species within some parts of the estate. This is very difficult to remove; however total eradication is required to improve the condition of the existing woodland and enable regeneration, even where the existing Rhododendron is valued for its aesthetic qualities.
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### Distinction from main landscape character type

This landscape character sub-type comprises the ‘heart’ of the estate landscape - Applecross House and its surrounding estate buildings and designed policies. This includes a formal walled garden, a large expanse of lawn, protected to a limited extent by a low ha-ha, and policy parkland and woodlands that include exotic tree specimens. In contrast to the wider farm and woodland area that seems fairly functional and/or ‘natural’ in character, this sub-type comprises an area that appears obviously designed for aesthetic effect.

### Opportunities and constraints that may lead to and affect future landscape projects

**Opportunities**

- The historical character of the estate offers a clear structure in which new development and management works can fit. The ‘Applecross House Management Plan for the Policies’ (2007) provides guidance on woodland management works. In addition, however, there may be capacity for additional buildings, both residential and local business, if designed very sensitively to fit the historic character of the estate.

- The designed landscape contains many historic features and spaces that would benefit from restoration, for example the walled garden. These areas would not only improve the condition of the designed landscape, but may also provide useful spaces for local and visitor interpretation and gatherings.

- This landscape character sub-type contains a woodland and tree resource that could be improved through management works, as long as this is carefully planned in an integrated way that takes into account issues such as access and fencing.

- It may also be possible to develop visitor attractions and services within this area, capitalising on the distinctive qualities of locations such as their shelter, historic character, restaurant and pathways.
Constraints

- Given the importance of the historic character of the estate, new development and landscape management works should closely relate to the traditional character of this landscape character type, including its intrinsic pattern, the existing hierarchy of foci, key views, and the siting, scale, form and architecture of existing buildings.

- It is important that new planting relates to the intrinsic composition of species within the policies. This may require removal of natural regeneration of native species in some places, where these impinge upon specimens.

- Current levels of deer grazing need to be reduced to enable improved condition of the existing woodlands and trees if this is not to require considerable additional deer fencing. This should be considered as part of the strategic review of deer management as part of the Deer Management Plan, to minimise the erection of fences that divide spaces, impinge upon access and obstruct views. The use of fences can also result in the creation of hard edges between areas of alternative management.

- Many of the properties within this landscape character type were designed for a function that is no longer applicable to present day living and working, for example being small in scale. This may limit their suitability for new uses, although innovative conversions and uses may be found. Whatever changes or additions are proposed, it is vital that these relate to the intrinsic siting, scale, form, architecture and hierarchy of structures within this landscape character type. These characteristics may be best established through the development of simple design guidance.

- There may be constraints to the development of existing properties within these settlements due to ownership and tenure restrictions.

- It is important that new structures or tree planting does not obstruct or distract from key views within and outwith the estate, including to the sea, as these contribute to the intrinsic sense of place.

- Rhododendron ponticum occurs as an invasive species within some parts of the estate. This is very difficult to remove; however total eradication of the Rhododendron is required to improve the condition of the existing woodlands and enable regeneration, even where the existing Rhododendron is valued by some for its aesthetic qualities.
This character sub-type appears linked to Applecross House and its policies by distinctive features such as stone boundary walls, a formal pattern of fields and mature policy trees. However it also seems slightly distinctive from this area on account of its layout that seems more strongly influenced by either the agricultural focus of the Mains of Applecross farm, or the open strath of the River Applecross.

The area encircles the focus of the Applecross policies on their north, east and southern sides. In the north, the area comprises the open mouth of Srath Maol Chaluim, marked by the prominent feature of the church, manse, river and formal pattern of grassland and woodland. Within the east, the character type mainly comprises woodlands that seem to form a transition between the designed landscape and the open strath and hillside and conifer plantations beyond. Finally, to the south, the Mains of Applecross extends over an elevated shelf formed by a raised beach that encompasses a formal pattern of open agricultural fields, delineated by stone walls and mature hedgerow trees and adjacent woodland. Within this pattern, a number of distinctive farm buildings and houses are located, in addition to a cluster of new houses and a campsite with key views across the bay.

Opportunities

- Opportunity exists to reinforce the existing historic character and landscape pattern by repairing the existing stone boundary walls and managing/replanting hedgerow trees. Within some locations, this may enable removal of wire netting that has been added along some walls, reducing the quality of these features. These works should be planned further to a review of the existing condition of existing walls and the current and future requirements of these in terms of landscape management.

- A number of archaeological features occur within this
landscape; however it is predicted that additional field survey may reveal additional features. Awareness and knowledge of these could be increased with interpretation provision, possibly linked by trails.

- Opportunities may occur for developing small scale rural buildings within this character sub-type, both for residential and business use, and possibly utilising existing properties in alternative ways as well as constructing new buildings. It may also be possible to further develop existing visitor services within these areas, capitalising on the distinctive and local experience of the landscape in these places.

- The intrinsic pattern of this landscape character sub-type provides a clear structure by which new features can be integrated, if respecting the typical siting, layout, scale, elevation and orientation of buildings.

Constraints

- This landscape possesses a distinct pattern to which new development should relate. This can be difficult, when the established pattern developed in response to requirements than were different to that of the current day, for example agricultural land management. However, it is important to the perceived cohesion of the estate that new elements relate in siting, scale and design. In addition, it is important that the current balance between open space and woodland is maintained for retention of the distinct landscape pattern.

- To relate to the existing landscape pattern, it is important that any new element relates to the existing arrangement and hierarchy of foci, ensuring that new features do not compete for focal attention with historic features. This means that there is likely to be minimal capacity to accommodate new elements within the northern part of this landscape character sub-type around Applecross Church and Manse.

- Many of the properties within this landscape character type were designed for a function that is no longer applicable to present day living and working, for example being small in scale. This may limit their suitability for new uses, although innovative conversions and uses may be found.

- There may be constraints to the development of existing properties within these settlements due to ownership and tenure restrictions. This may limit works that could improve the condition of the landscape resource. A feasibility and capacity study could explore the feasibility and capacity of such changes.

- It is important that new development within the settlements does not obstruct or distract from views
to the sea as this forms a key feature from this landscape, contributing to the intrinsic sense of place and acting as a simple backcloth to the pattern of elements within the foreground.

- There are high numbers of deer within this character type that puts pressure upon the existing vegetation. A study should consider how deer numbers can be reduced and managed to enhance landscape characteristics (with scope further than the existing management strategy).
General Description

This landscape character type is located either side of Applecross Bay and extends to the south as far as Culduie in the south. It comprises steep slopes that contain views and form the backcloth to these when seen from lower elevations. Generally the slopes are very simple in form and landscape pattern and thus act as a ‘visual buffer’ to more complex landscape character types or features that occur within adjacent areas. The slopes are generally very steep and thus appear almost ‘2 dimensional’ as a strong vertical edge within views from below. They also provide shelter to areas around their base.

Key characteristics

- This landscape comprises simple slopes, which are mainly open and form a horizontal skyline, except when seen in profile.

- The slopes typically form the backcloth to views within the area from lower elevations, their simplicity acting as a buffer to adjacent areas so that these are highlighted in contrast.

- The slopes create a strong sense of containment within adjacent areas, and direct views outwards, towards Srath Maol Chaluim, Applecross Bay and to the open sea.

- In most locations, access across the slopes is limited due to their steepness. However, a public road does pass through this character type, following the glen of Allt Beag. In this location, the road is required to zig-zag to achieve the required gradient. In addition, a public footpath passes over the slopes at the head of Srath Maol Chaluim. In these locations, where the access routes pass over elevated sections of this character type, key views occur along the glen/strath.

- At the broad level, these slopes are simple in texture and pattern, mainly clothed in heather and grassland species with some areas of rock outcrop, although conifer plantations exist in some locations. However, at a more detailed scale, they may comprise a
mosaic of moorland vegetation.

- Generally the slopes are **free draining** on account of their steepness.

- These slopes generally act as a **transition between the higher hills and plateau and lower coast/strath areas.**

**Predicted change**

- The open hill ground is occupied by deer. These are partly responsible for **a low diversity of vegetation and little or no woodland regeneration** as well as trampling along preferred routes. This pressure means that there seems to be **increasing demand for new deer fencing.**

- The **public road frequently requires maintenance works**, exacerbated by its high elevation and steep side slopes in addition to the impacts of snow clearance works in winter. These works sometimes results in **damage to the roadside walls.**

- Linked to the public roads, there may be pressure to provide **additional parking areas and public interpretation linked to the local path network.**

- The **existing forest plantations** within this landscape character type are at or coming to maturity and are increasingly liable to wind throw. There is likely to be **proposals for their clearance/restructuring and/or replacement** by native woodland. Access to these areas is typically difficult however due to the steepness of the slopes.

- There may be proposals for **extension of existing remnants of native woodland** within this landscape character type, particularly at Allt Mór.

**Opportunities and constraints that may lead to and affect future landscape projects**

**Opportunities**

- The base of these slopes offer opportunities for siting features to **relate to the edges formed by the landform** and thus seem less prominent or contrasting than if located within the surrounding wide open spaces.

- Opportunity exists to reduce/remove existing landscape and visual impacts by **removing existing forest plantations** and replacing these, where appropriate, with a scale, shape and form of woodland that better relates to the landscape character type.

- Opportunities exist to highlight the characteristics of this landscape type for motorists travelling towards Applecross from Drochaid an Uilt Bhig with the provision of a **parking/interpretation area** along this route.
Constraints

- The slopes of this landscape character type are highly prominent and features located upon them will tend to be highly visible, including pathways and fences and contrasts in vegetation due to differing land management practices either side of boundaries.

- The introduction of new features (either built or because of contrasting land management practices) upon these slopes may compromise their value as a simple backcloth and thus the relative focal prominence of adjacent places in contrast. Linear elements tend to appear particularly incongruous by contrasting to the existing largely undifferentiated texture of the hills.

- Due to steepness, is difficult to locate built structures upon the slopes of this landscape character type without the need for excavation. Such works are highly visible, typically seen against a backcloth of dark vegetation, and appear to contrast to the intrinsic characteristics of the landform and the undifferentiated landscape pattern. Generally it is very difficult to cross these slopes, either for access or for land management purposes.

- This type appears to gradually extend into surrounding gentler-sloped types. This means that it is important that new features do not seem to separate or isolate the hills from the surrounding moorland.

- The scale of the moorland slopes is typically difficult to perceive. However the introduction of a new feature of definite size can seem, in comparison, to diminish the perceived scale of the landscape. It is particularly important that the vertical scale of new features does not seem to dominate the scale of the slopes in comparison.
**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE 9**

**COASTAL ROCKY MOORLAND**

| General Description | Areas of this landscape character type occur along the northern coast of Applecross and in an area in the south west of the peninsula, typically occurring at close proximity to the dispersed pattern of crofting settlements around the coast. It is characterised by an undulating landform with rock outcrops, that forms small scale sheltered spaces. Some of these harbour woodland and buildings.  

The landform creates undulating and interlocking horizons and, typically, there is no dominant focus. In some locations, areas of this type extend out into the sea to form peninsulas and islands, offering panoramic coastal views; in these locations, the character of the sea typically dominates the experience of the land. |  
| Key characteristics | This landscape character type is dominated by a deeply undulating landform that creates variable spaces – both sheltered and low lying, and elevated and exposed. Lochans sometimes occur within low-lying locations.  

Typically there are no dominant foci within the interior landscape and, rather, views tend to be directed back and forth over the landform and out to the adjacent sea and islands. When passing through the landscape, however, visibility does vary between focused foreground views within the low points, to panoramic and distant views when elevated.  

It is often difficult to orient oneself within this landscape and to perceive distance and scale, with a lack of foci and distinct size indicators.  

Access routes that pass through this landscape typically wind around and over the landform in a curvaceous way that amplifies the alternating landscape experience.  

Within some areas, native woodland ‘hugs’ the landform. Even in these relatively sheltered locations, the trees that make up this woodland are generally small |
and wind pruned on one side.

- The ground cover appears mottled in texture, largely comprising a mix of grass, heather and rock that varies in relation to slope and drainage conditions.

- A large number of historic features occur within this landscape character type, including rock shelters, standing stones, remains of cultivation and ruined houses. These mainly reflect more extensive settlement within this landscape in the past.

- Within many parts of this landscape, especially where moorland protrudes out into the sea, there is a strong sense of isolation and remoteness. In combination with a sense of inactivity within some parts of the landscape, this can create a perception of tranquillity.

**Predicted change**

- Given the marginal location and small extent of this landscape character type, pressure for change is likely to be localised and linked to existing community/crofting activities.

- The moorland is mainly occupied by sheep, although deer also extend into these areas around Toscaig. In some locations, this results in grazing pressure and/or nuisance upon the roads and within neighbouring settlements. Consequently, there seems to be increasing demand for new fencing.

- Woodland forms a key feature of some parts of this character type and the landscape contains remnant native woodlands, old coniferous plantations and new native woodland. In relation to these, there may be proposals to extend the native woodland and restructure old plantations that appears incongruous to the character of the landscape and are at risk of wind throw. Plans for woodland development are significantly affected by the requirement for fencing as discussed above.

- A number of pathways cross this landscape character type, many of which possess historical and cultural value as they acted (or still act) as the main access routes to some settlements. However these paths require repair and maintenance works in many places to improve accessibility.

- Within this landscape character type, there may be demand for additional visitor attractions and/or facilities, such as small parking areas and public interpretation areas, possibly linked to the access routes discussed above and also the many historic features that occur in this landscape.

- There may be proposals for renewable energy developments, particularly onshore wind and small
Opportunities and constraints that may lead to and affect future landscape projects

Opportunities

- **Existing historic features** within this landscape offer an opportunity to develop heritage interpretation facilities, both as a resource for local people and visitors to this landscape. In addition to links to historic features, there may be opportunity to generally develop more **visitor attractions and services** that capitalise on the very distinctive and high quality landscape within these coastal locations.

- Opportunity exists to **review existing land management practices**, to **strategically plan for associated services**, such as fencing, to ensure that this does not develop in a piecemeal fashion that compromises the character of this landscape.

- **Expansion of the existing native woodland** within this landscape would result in habitat enhancement. However, this needs to be carefully planned to avoid or minimise the use of fences that tend to contrast in line, shape and openness to this landscape, as above.

Constraints

- The **landform of this landscape character type may restrict development** due to its undulating character. Technically, this can be modified by earthworks at a local level; however these typically appear incongruous due to contrast to the landform and its typical spatial characteristics.

- Developments should **relate to the small scale of this landscape** character type and **relate to the typical siting of features at the base of cnocs and on the lee side of slopes**, avoiding high points.

- Due to the patchy pattern of this landscape character type, **linear elements (both horizontal and vertical) introduced into this landscape tend to appear particularly prominent** and may seem to divide spaces.

- There may be difficulties in developing facilities associated with historic features due to **ownership and tenure restrictions**. This may limit works that could improve the condition of the landscape resource.

- It is important that new features **do not obstruct or distract from views to the sea** as this forms a key feature from this landscape, contributing to the intrinsic sense of place and acting as a simple backcloth to the complexity of landform within the foreground.
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE 10  REMOTE STRATH

General Description
This landscape character type occurs in one location upon the Applecross peninsula, along Srath Maol Chaluim which extends inland from Applecross Bay. The character type is distinctive for its open strath floor marked by steep and simple hill slopes, and its sense of remoteness within the interior of the hills. An access track runs along the length of the strath that is well used by walkers passing between the north and west coast of the peninsula. This route has historic/cultural value due to its importance as the main access link between these areas prior to construction the north coast road.

Key characteristics
- This landscape character type is defined by its flattish strath floor that runs between steep side slopes. Within this composition, a meandering river forms a linear focus, forming an attraction at the local level with the activity and sound of running water.
- Within the strath there is a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity, distant from the main focus of activity and settlement around the coast.
- Typically views are directed along the line of the strath, encouraged by the descent in elevation and the widening space. However views also pass between the opposite slopes of the strath, where features appear almost in ‘2 dimension’ against the steepness of the slopes.
- Towards the bottom of the strath, a number of buildings occur at the edge of the strath. These appear as isolated foci within the landscape.
- A number of forest plantations occur along the strath. These contrast in form, shape, colour, edges and texture to the surrounding strath and intrude into the linear space, obstructing views along the strath.
- A track runs along the length of the strath, improving accessibility through the landscape. The route of this along the western side of the strath means that walkers tend to mainly see views to the opposite eastern side, while distant views from the south side of Applecross
Bay and from the public road from Bealach na Bà typically view the western slopes.

- **The hills surrounding the strath are very simple in visual composition**, which means that views are typically directed towards the strath floor and along this to the focus of the coast.

**Predicted change**

- The strath is mainly occupied by deer. In some places, current numbers of these has resulted in grazing pressure. In the future, this may result in demand for new deer fencing.

- Existing forest plantations within the strath are mature and are at risk of wind throw. As a consequence, there are proposals to **remove or restructure the existing plantations**. However, because of the remote location, potential sales of timber may not cover extraction costs and, thus, it may be necessary to fell to waste.

- As part of the proposals for restructuring/ removal of the existing plantations, there may be scope to consider **new native woodland proposals through the glen**, possibly building upon the existing Ancient Woodland along Allt Mòr.

- The tracks and pathways that run through this landscape would benefit from repair and maintenance works in many places to improve accessibility. In addition, some partial restoration works could reduce existing landscape and visual impacts.

- There may be proposals for **additional structures or facilities associated with the Venture Trust at Hartfield**, which is situated at the edge of this landscape character type.

**Opportunities**

- Opportunity exists to review and develop a strategy for deer management through the **Deer Management Plan** that relates and responds to the distinctive landscape character of Applecross, particularly how management could help reduce grazing pressure and enable natural regeneration of a greater diversity of vegetation. As part of this strategy, the various options for deer fencing should be considered as they would affect landscape character over time, for example dividing spaces, limiting access and creating dominant lines in the landscape.

- **Removal or restructuring of existing conifer plantations** in this landscape character type offers the opportunity to **improve or remove existing landscape and visual impacts**. It would also provide the opportunity, via a capacity study, to consider the potential role of native woodland within the strath to
**Enhance landscape character** and the most suitable scale, siting and design of this, in addition to issues of establishment such as mounding and fencing. This study should also consider potential habitat networks and links to existing remnants of Ancient Woodland in addition to the need for woodland within such an open area to appear rational, eg adopting the most favourable sites and appearing similar to pioneer woodland in the early stages, running along the lower parts of the side slopes and along the river.

- Opportunity exists to **strategically consider the network of paths within and linking to the strath**, to consider their routes and condition. There may be potential to improve access within the landscape by **repairing existing paths**. In addition, **restoration works** may be appropriate to mitigate the effect of existing routes where the line and construction of these results in adverse landscape and visual impacts. Finally, there may be potential for the development of **circular routes**, perhaps up onto the neighbouring hills and back via an upland route, and this might be combined, for example, with small scale and low-key car parking provision and public interpretation at key access points.

### Constraints

- The **simplicity of the strath floor and sides** means that built features or obvious edges to **land management practices tend to be particularly prominent** and may appear incongruous to the underlying landscape character. They may also seem to **create foci and divide spaces that contrast to the characteristic openness and undifferentiated texture** of the landscape and the **linear movement of views through the strath**.

- Built features, including fences and tracks, typically **reduce the sense of remoteness** within this landscape. Within the undulating areas of this type, this may be mitigated to some extent by very sensitive siting and design; however the scope for mitigation upon the simpler slopes, either steep or flat, is more difficult due to increased visibility and less defined edges to which features can fit.

- **The felling of existing forest plantations will result in significant landscape and visual impacts in the short term**; however, acceptance of these impacts can be improved with on-site interpretation and a reassurance that these impacts will diminish over a longer period and should have minimal impact within 4-8 years onwards.

- It is very **difficult to accommodate new native woodlands within this landscape without reducing**
the existing pressure from deer grazing. This is because, otherwise, there is likely to be a requirement for the creation of exclosures using fences that will have significant impacts in their own right by creating dominant lines and edges in the landscape, contrasting to the sense of remoteness and limiting open access, as well as resulting in the woodlands appearing as isolated blocks over time as they expand up to the fence lines. For these reasons, it would be useful to carry out a strategic woodland plan to consider the most appropriate siting, design and management of woodland within this area.

- This landscape character type often acts as a transition between adjacent coastal and hill landscape character types, emphasising the distinctive characteristics of these in contrast. For this reason, it is important that landscape change does not seem to reduce the distinction between adjacent areas, for example by transcending different types with the same development type.
General Description

This ‘landscape’ character type comprises a distinct area of open sea that is contained by surrounding land, with a resultant focus of views. Areas of this type extend around the north side of the Applecross peninsula, across Loch Torridon, Loch Shieldaig and the various bays along the indented north coast. They also occur on west coast, extending across Applecross Bay and around the coast between Poll Creadha (between Camusterrach and Ard dhubh) and Loch Toscaig.

Key characteristics

- This landscape character type comprises an area of open water that is semi-contained by surrounding land. Coastal areas, lying in between the open expanse of the sea and inland slopes, offer both a sense of ‘prospect’ looking over the water, and ‘refuge’ because of the shelter of slopes behind.

- Views from the surrounding area are typically focused to and within the bay and loch, with islands and skerries often forming secondary foci.

- The open waters within the bay have an overriding horizontal emphasis that appears in stark contrast to the diagonal/vertical edges of the surrounding land mass.

- The key characteristics of this character type and how it is experienced varies considerably between different weather conditions. In rough conditions, the sea can seem very active and ‘disturbing’ while, in calm conditions, there is often a strong sense of tranquillity, and the presence of wildlife is more clearly evident.

- Within the lochs/bay, boats occasionally operate, evident by their noise and activity within the open waters. Aquaculture structures such as fish farm cages are also located within some of the lochs and bays, creating focal features.

- Typically, settlements and roads are located around the edge of the lochs and bays, oriented parallel to the coast. These have traditionally developed to take
advantage of the shelter offered by the surrounding slopes and the calmer waters within the bays. As a consequence, there is a **concentration of historic features** within these areas. In addition, **native woodland** is often set into the coastal slopes to also benefit from the shelter of the side slopes.

- The open expanse of water within the loch/bay typically forms a **simple visual midground to more complex forms and features around the coast**, both within the foreground and on the distant horizon.

- In some locations, **coastal litter** occurs along the edge of the bay, resulting in a negative image of care for the environment.

**Predicted change**

- There may be demand for **new infrastructure** within this landscape character type associated with marine activities, such as for a **new pier** to serve woodland extraction. These structures may be temporary or permanent, depending on resources and the timescale for operations.

- Additional proposals for **aquaculture developments** may occur within the bays as well as for associated buildings and infrastructure on shore.

- There may be demand for **additional boat trips** from and within areas of this character type for **tourism**.

- There may be proposals for **additional facilities at the edge of this character type** for local people and tourists to enjoy the coastal landscape, for example local car parks and pathways serving beaches.

**Opportunities and constraints that may lead to and affect future landscape projects**

**Opportunities**

- This character type offers great opportunities for **recreation and visitor attractions**, such as boat trips or canoe instruction, based at the coast, but extending over the open water. In addition, **greater interpretation of the historic importance of the coast** could be achieved through restoration and/or development of historic features around the edges of the lochs/bays.

- The bays provide an **important resource for wildlife**.

- The bays provide an **open expanse of water against which adjacent features can often be accommodated** because of their relative insignificance in scale.

- Opportunities exist for **local fishing and aquaculture within the lochs/bays**.

- In some locations, particularly next to settlements, **improved access, restoration and litter removal** along
the edge of the loch/ bay, could **improve local amenity** and the sense of linkage between the adjacent land and seascape.

**Constraints**

- Features introduced into this character type tend to be **very prominent** and may distract from the characteristic simple visual composition. If numerous, they can collectively appear to ‘**dominate** or **distract from the open space of the bay**’, contrasting to its characteristic openness, horizontal emphasis and visual simplicity.

- **Wildlife** within the bays tends to be **vulnerable to disturbance from human activity**.

- **Development upon the coastal slopes** tends to be **highly visible** from within this landscape character type and may be **vulnerable to erosion by the sea and/or coastal winds**.

- **Sounds often seem amplified** across the semi-enclosed lochs/ bays. If these sounds are mechanical, they can seem to contrast to the quietness that occurs during calm conditions.
5 Designations and Planning Policy

Designations

5.1 There are different levels of designation for landscape quality and nature conservation value present within the study area. Areas of designated and recognised landscape and scenic value are shown in figure 5, while additional areas of landscape importance identified within the Wester Ross Local Plan are shown in figure 6.

International Designations

5.2 The Local Plan states, under Policy 2 Countryside, that ‘In areas of international importance we will allow developments if they will not adversely affect the integrity of the site. Proposals that would adversely affect the relevant interest for which the site is designated will only be allowed if there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. Where a priority habitat or species (as defined in Article 1 of the Habitats Directive) would be affected prior consultation with the European Commission is required, unless the development is necessary for public health and safety reasons’.

5.3 The Wester Ross Local Plan identifies internationally important sites for Nature Conservation. These are Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsars. There are no SPAs or Ramsars within the study area but a SAC is located to the east of the Bealach as shown in the image adjacent.

National Designations

5.4 The Local Plan goes on to state ‘in areas of national importance we will allow developments that can be shown not to compromise the amenity and heritage resource. For national designations, where there may be any significant adverse effects, these must be clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance. It must also be shown that the development will support communities in fragile areas who are having difficulties in keeping their population and services.’

5.5 The eastern portion of the study area lies within the Wester Ross National Scenic Area (NSA) as shown in figure 6. NSAs are nationally important areas of outstanding natural beauty and therefore put high importance on the areas they cover. They contain the most outstanding examples of Scotland’s best scenery and are one of Scotland’s premier landscape designations.

5.6 The citation for the NSA states that ‘the area combines six of the great mountain groups of Scotland. The names of the outstanding individual peaks and their profiles are perhaps better known that the slopes of the mountains themselves, and the literature is full of hyperbole, at which few beholders of the scene would demur. To traverse the area from the beetling crags and precipitous corries of the Applecross Forest to the jagged teeth of An Teallach is to experience a sustained crescendo of mountain scenery which could leave no spectator unmoved…The area is frequently described as the last great wilderness of Scotland, but contains much that is of a serene and gentler beauty than the
rugged splendour of mountain fastnesses….Of Loch Torridon, Wainwright writes: Without the loch, Torridon would be a fearful place, but with it, there is not a grander prospect found anywhere in Scotland. Many other water bodies, notably Loch Shielding…contribute variety of character to the scene…these lochs have in varying degrees shores which between rocky headlands are frequently wooded with semi-natural woodlands of oak, birch and Scots Pine, which together with moorland and scrub soften the lower lying parts of the area to make a gentle foil for the starker mountains.’

5.7 Designations for nature conservation at a national level include National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), inventoried Ancient and Long Established Woodland (IALEs).

5.8 There are no NNRs or TPOs within the study area. The site of the SAC east of the Bealach is also designated as an SSSI and there are five sites of IAEL as shown in figure 6.

Local and Regional Designations

5.9 The Local Plan concludes under Policy 2, ‘in areas of local/regional importance with:

- no local designation we will support proposals as long as they meet the Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability, particularly where it can be shown that they will support communities in fragile areas who are having difficulties in keeping their population and services.

- local or regionally important features we will allow developments if we believe that they will not have an unreasonable impact on the amenity and heritage resource, particularly where it can be shown that they will support communities in fragile areas who are having difficulties in keeping their population and services’.

5.10 Local and Regional Designations include Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLVs), Amenity Trees, Views Over Open Water, Remote Landscape of Value for Recreation, Settlement Setting, Inventoried Semi-Natural Woodland and Geological Conservation Review Sites.

5.11 The south western tip of the peninsula and the Crowlin Islands are designated as an AGLV in the Wester Ross Local Plan as shown in figure 5.

5.12 There are no trees designated as Amenity Trees within the study area.

5.13 A number of Areas with Views Over Open Water are defined within the Local Plan as shown in figure 6.

5.14 There are no areas of Remote Landscape of Value for Recreation.

5.15 The Local Plan identifies areas of Settlement Setting and this is defined for Applecross, Camusteel, Camusterrach, Culduie, Ard Dhubh and Toscaig are shown on the image above.

5.16 Inventoried Semi-Natural Woodland within the study area is shown in figure 6. There are no Geological Conservation Review Sites on the peninsula.
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