# *Loch Kemp Storage - EIA Report*

## *Appendix 8.4: Assessment of Special Landscape Area*

*November 2023*

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# Appendix 8.4: Assessment of Special Landscape Area

## 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The following Special Landscape Area (SLA) was identified in the baseline review as potentially experiencing landscape effects as a result of the Proposed Development (as illustrated in **Volume 2, Figure 8.2: Designated and Protected Landscapes with ZTV**):

- Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.

1.1.2 The above area is assessed in the following table, in accordance with criteria outlined in **Section 8.2** of **Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** of the EIA Report.

1.1.3 Assessment of Landscape Character Types is detailed in **Appendix 8.3**.

1.1.4 The Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA extends through the central part of the study area in a northeast to southwest direction, covering Loch Ness itself and radiating outwards to the lower and upper slopes of the landscapes to the east and west of the shoreline.

1.1.5 This SLA is dominated by the vast linear feature of Loch Ness and its dramatic landform. The waterbody trench is edged on both sides by steep towering wooded slopes that lead to moorland ridges and the contrasting interior plateau comprising of upland inland lochs, small woods and craggy outcrops. The loch and its setting are typical of the Great Glen as a whole, one of Scotland's most important routeways of striking uniqueness.

1.1.6 The detailed assessment of the effects on the SLA follows in Table 1.2.1 below.

## 1.2 Special Landscape Area

**Table 1.2.1: SLA 20: Loch Ness and Duntelchaig**

| **Landscape Baseline** | |
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| Description | This SLA surrounds and includes Loch Ness from Lochend in the north to Fort Augustus in the south. It includes the bounding hill slopes on the loch's western and eastern shores, the prominent hill Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, which lies between Drumnadrochit and Invermoriston, and the elevated moorland and agricultural interior plateau which contains Lochs Ashie, Duntelchaig and Ruthven.<br><br>This area is dominated by the vast linear expanse of Loch Ness within its dramatic landform trench, flanked by steep, towering wooded slopes leading to undulating moorland ridges and a contrasting remote interior plateau of upland lochs, small woods and rocky knolls. Whilst it may not qualify as Scotland's most scenic loch, the sheer scale and the striking linearity makes it special. The loch and its environs also typify the Great Glen as a whole – one of Scotland's most important natural features and routeways. |

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| Landscape Value | This is a highly valued landscape, which is appreciated for its scenic qualities and historical features, and is popular with tourists and visitors. Its recognition as an SLA gives it a generally **High** landscape value. | | |
| **Assessment of Special Qualities** | | | |
| **Special Quality** | **Sensitivity** | **Potential Effects** | **Magnitude of Change** |
| The Dramatic Great Glen, including:<br>• The striking profile of the glen, seen from either end, the water and elevated viewpoints on loch-side ridges and hill tops; | High | The Proposed Development would not affect the landform of the glen. The powerhouse platform and building on the loch shore would be experienced from localised parts of the SLA, from the loch itself as well as from open elevated locations particularly on the western side of Loch Ness, although would be screened by forestry and woodland from many parts of this SLA. The Proposed Development would not be perceptible from either end of the loch. Where it would be experienced the change would be localised and experienced within the context of a vast landscape and would not affect appreciation of the striking profile of the glen. | Negligible |
| • Steep-sided slopes, incised by watercourses with woodland and forest and an open smooth moorland skyline ridge; | High | There would be theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from some of the steep-sided slopes particularly from the western slopes facing the Proposed Development, however due to the high degree of tree cover it would only be experienced from localised areas where gaps in tree cover allow for views of the powerhouse building, track and potentially some of the upper works. During construction, works relating to the access track down to the powerhouse building may be more noticeable on the eastern slope. This may result in temporary effects, although these would be experienced from localised areas which allow for more open views towards the Proposed Development. | Low |
| • The contrast between northern and southern loch-side in relation to access, activity and settlement; | Medium | Construction works and the introduction of new permanent features, particularly on the more quiet eastern (southern) shore have the potential to diminish the contrast between the two loch-sides in terms of access. Both sides of Loch Ness are sensitive to the introduction of built development which may intrude on views up and down the loch and across the loch. There would be theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building from the loch itself and from areas along the eastern (southern) loch side. However due to the wooded slopes surrounding the loch views would often be screened and visibility would be limited to open areas within the vicinity of the Proposed Development. While it may increase the sense of | Low |

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| | | activity and settlement along the eastern (southern) shore in the vicinity of the powerhouse building, particularly during construction, in the long-term it would not appear dominating within the wider landscape and would be experienced in the context of similar types of development e.g. at Foyers. | |
| • Distinctive views of grand proportions and long vistas along Loch Ness; | High | The Proposed Development, particularly the lower works including the powerhouse building and associated infrastructure, would be visible from localised areas along the loch side where gaps in tree cover allow for more open views, and from the loch itself. During construction there would likely be an increase in movement and traffic seen across the loch, including the transport of equipment by boat along Loch Ness, as well as views of cranes and other construction equipment, which may distract in views along Loch Ness. However, in the longer term, it is anticipated that the powerhouse building would become a feature of architectural and recreational interest, and would not appear noticeable in the context of the scale of the wider landscape. | Medium |
| • Atmospheric mists and low clouds; | Low | The Proposed Development would be unlikely to affect any appreciation of the landscape relating to weather conditions. | Negligible |
| • Urquhart Castle and Foyers former British Aluminium Factory, prominent focal points along the loch; | High | There would no visibility of the Proposed Development from Urquhart Castle, although there would be some limited theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building from Loch Ness near Urquhart Castle, as illustrated by the ZTV. However, views would be distant and oblique, and are likely to be barely perceptible. The powerhouse building would be seen in a different part of the view from Urquhart Castle and would be unlikely to affect the focus or value of the castle in the view.<br><br>There would also be no views of the Proposed Development from the site of the Foyers former British Aluminium Factory.<br><br>Visual effects for receptors on Loch Ness in close proximity to the Proposed Development are assessed in **Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessment Tables.** | Negligible |
| • Experience of the striking 'v' shape of the glen, the simple line, large scale and great expanse of the loch and difficulty perceiving scale of the landscape due to lack of scale indicators, as well as the experience of the SLA from the B852, B851, and A82, Great Glen | High | The Proposed Development would not alter the striking 'v' shape of the glen, the simple line, large scale or great expanse of the loch.<br><br>The new man-made structures on the hill sides would be bedded into the landscape and would not compromise the sense of containment or erode the appreciation of the vast scale of the landscape. | Negligible |

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| Way and Caledonian Canal; and | | | |
| • Prominent landmark of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh and role as a vantage point. | High | The lower works of the Proposed Development are obscured from view, screened by the localised topography. Views towards the upper works would include some of the new dams. The maximum inundation area would also be viewed but it is considered that because of the existing Loch Kemp and other lochs in the area, the characteristics of the increased waterbody would not detract from the existing baseline conditions. The dams would be a perceptible change but within the large scale setting it is considered that the dams would be 'absorbed' effectively into the environment. During construction there would be a degree of movement both on Loch Ness and within the upper area of the Site, including vehicles (both water and land based) and cranes. The movement on the water would appear sporadic from the summit however, this increased movement would not be out of the ordinary and may not register. Cranes and vehicular movement, may form part of the experience when viewing activity on the upper area of the Site (see **Volume 3a** and **3b**, **V6 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh**). | Low |
| Contrasting Intimate Plateau, including:<br>• Intimate mix of landscape elements of changing visual interest | High | There would be no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the intimate plateau at Duntelchaig. | Negligible |
| Historic Landscape, including:<br>• The Caledonian Canal and Abbey within Fort Augustus. | High | The ZTV indicates that there is very limited theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building from the Caledonian Canal and Abbey within Fort Augustus (see **Volume 2, Figure 8.4: Potential Visual Receptors with ZTV**), although due to the distant and oblique nature of views it would be barely perceptible (see **Volume 3b, Figure V5b-7: Fort Augustus Shore,** marked up photograph from canal towpath in Fort Augustus). During construction there would be an increase in water based traffic through the canal but it would not be at odds with the type of traffic expected on the canal. | Negligible |

| Assessment of Landscape Effects | |
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| **Landscape Sensitivity** | This is a highly valued landscape, as recognised by its designated status. The long vistas obtained along the loch and from loch side hills, as well as the tranquility of the less accessible shorelines would be particularly susceptible to change. Landscape sensitivity to change of the type proposed is therefore considered to be **High**. |
| **Magnitude of Change** | There would be some direct effects within the SLA within the immediate context of the Proposed Development. The lower works including the powerhouse platform, powerhouse building and access tracks would be located along the eastern shore of Loch Ness, while the dams, reservoir, intakes and access tracks would be located on the moorland plateau surrounding Loch Kemp.<br><br>Construction of the Proposed Development, including plant and vehicle movements, construction of the tunnel, access tracks and dams would be experienced within the immediate surroundings of the upper reservoir as well as some elevated areas mainly west of Loch Ness. here would also be increased vehicle movement along the B862 to facilitate the development, and construction activity including crane and construction vehicles within the Proposed Development site. The construction of the powerhouse building and tailrace structure would be experienced from Loch Ness and from the shoreline across. As some of the equipment would be transported across Loch Ness, this would lead to an increase in movement and activity on the loch.<br><br>In the longer term, the Proposed Development would form a relatively contained feature within the landscape. There would be theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building mainly from Loch Ness itself, and from the western shoreline where gaps in tree cover allow. Visibility of the dams would be largely limited to upper slopes. On the western slopes above Loch Ness there would be some limited visibility of the dams and inundation area from the eastern slopes of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, and from Portclair Forest south of Invermoriston. There would be some intermittent views from the Great Glen way from more open, elevated sections. From the eastern side, visibility would largely be limited to the immediate surroundings of the Proposed Development site, with only isolated patches outside of this area, from elevated areas such as Suidhe summit and Beinn a' Bhacaidh, from where some of the dams would be visible.<br><br>The perceptible change in characteristics for a localised part of the surrounding context is considered to lead to a localised **Medium** magnitude of landscape change during construction and a **Low** degree of change overall, and a **Low** degree of change during operation. |
| **Effect Significance** | Effects on this SLA would be direct, resulting from the introduction of the powerhouse building on the eastern shore of Loch Ness and upper reservoir on the moorland plateau on the eastern side of the glen which forms part of the wider landscape context.<br><br>During construction there may be some localised temporary effects on the quiet qualities of the eastern (southern) loch shore as works on the powerhouse building and tailrace structures on the shoreline as well as transport of equipment across the loch would introduce activity and movement in the landscape. These works may also intrude on views up and down and across the loch, although they would only be perceived within a relatively localised area. Construction works would also be experienced in localised views from elevated areas including the prominent landmark of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh which serves as an important vantage point within this landscape, although there would not be theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building from here, and in general views would be distant. Although there may be a small temporary effect on *"the role of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh as a vantage point"* this |

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| | would not affect the appreciation of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh as a landmark in the Great Glen.<br><br>In the longer term, the introduction of the powerhouse building would form a new permanent feature on the loch shore and be perceived in views across the loch, but it is unlikely to become a dominating feature in the landscape or affect the experience of the striking 'v' shape of the glen or the vast scale of the landscape. The modification to the landform and introduction of permanent features within the upper reservoir site would have some localised effects within this part of the SLA, although this would be within a relatively contained area and it is not considered that this would affect the overall sense of openness and remoteness of the undulating moorland plateau.<br><br>Therefore, the effect on the SLA is anticipated to be locally **Moderate Adverse** (significant) during construction, in the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development, and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) overall. During the operation of the scheme the effect on the SLA is anticipated to be **Negligible** (not significant). The integrity of the designation would therefore not be affected. |