

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 21 NOVEMBER 2023

LOCAL LANDSCAPE AREAS IN ANGUS – CONSULTATION DRAFT

REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval for consultation of the proposed designation of Local Landscape Areas in Angus and accompanying background study. The designation of Local Landscape Areas will protect and celebrate those landscapes within Angus which are special. The study which supports the designation provides detailed guidance on appropriate land management and development. Designated areas will be protected through policy within National Planning Framework 4. Following the consultation period and analysis and consideration of responses, the finalised study will be submitted to Council for approval and formal designation of Local Landscape Areas in Angus.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Approve the proposed designation of Local Landscape Areas in Angus;
- (ii) Agree to the draft Local Landscape Areas study in Angus (Appendix 1) to be consulted upon for a six-week period between November 2023 and January 2024; and
- (iii) Note that following public consultation and analysis and consideration of responses, a further report will be submitted to Council for formal approval and designation of Local Landscape Areas in Angus. This report will also detail the comments received and any changes made.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

Commitment to delivery of this project contributes to the following priorities in the Angus Council Plan 2023-2028.

Caring for our Place

- Take action to mitigate against climate change by delivering our Transition to Net Zero Action Plan: 2022 to 2030 and leading on the delivery of a Sustainable Energy Climate Action Plan (SECAP) for Angus to reduce area wide emissions.
- produce a Local Development Plan for Angus.
- Enhance and restore Angus Biodiversity, corporately and with a range of stakeholders.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The landscape is important and nationally important areas in Scotland are designated as National Scenic Areas, covering 13% of the total land area. There are defined as areas “of outstanding scenic value in a national context” for which special protection measures are required and have a statutory basis. As well as this national recognition many landscapes and scenery are also highly valued in a more local context and these areas can be given a local designation “Local Landscape Area” (formerly often called Special Landscape Area or Area of Great Landscape Value) with the locations and associated policy identified through the Local Development Plan.

- 3.2 Guidance on Local Landscape Areas was first published in 2006 and updated in 2017. [Map data](#) from around this time showed widespread coverage across Scotland, however no designations with the Angus local authority area. A local landscape designation is not about preservation and/or protection given that landscapes continually change but they can have an important role in:
- Helping to protect a landscape from inappropriate development
 - May encourage positive land management
 - Play an important role in developing an awareness of the landscape qualities that make particular areas distinctive
 - Promote a community's sense of pride in its surroundings
- 3.3 In recognition of the important local value attributed to the landscape in Angus Policy PV6 of the Angus Local Development Plan 2016 identified that further work was required to identify these special areas and through the related Action Programme included an action to identify local landscape areas in Angus.
- 3.4 [National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4) sets out the Scottish Governments long-term spatial strategy and includes national planning policies which form part of the statutory development plan. Policy 4 – Natural Places, advises that Local Development Plans will identify and protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally important natural assets, on land and along coasts. This policy includes Local Landscape Areas.
- 3.5 The designation of Local Landscape Areas in Angus will help meet the requirements of implementing the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) and NPF 4 in respect of the next Local Development Plan for Angus and will form an important part of the evidence report. The study report provides detailed guidance on land management and how development can take place without eroding the special qualities of the landscapes.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The process of identifying Local Landscape Areas in Angus was undertaken in-house and overseen by a steering group which included Angus Council officers and NatureScot. The process for undertaking the study was in accordance with guidance on the subject published by NatureScot which whilst not prescriptive, provides guidance on the process.
- 4.2 In order to identify the Local Landscape Areas, a number of assessment stages have to be undertaken. The first assessment stage was to identify the “areas of search”. This assessed the special qualities by landscape character types identified in the Tayside Landscape Character Assessment. This process identified five areas of search:
- The Angus Glens
 - Airlie to Ruthven
 - The River South Esk & Aberlemno
 - Lundie Crags to Auchterhouse Hill
 - The Angus Coast
- 4.3 The next assessment stage was to engage members of the public and other stakeholders with regards to the five areas noted above. Public engagement was undertaken between 12 October and 3 November 2018 via the Social Pinpoint engagement platform. Feedback was encouraged via an interactive map, which showed the proposed areas of search, and the map enabled structured feedback by using a pop-up questionnaire for each area of search, and a “my special landscape” option to allow respondents to drop a pin to identify other parts of Angus special to them and for further consideration in the identification of Local Landscape Areas.
- 4.4 A total of 38 responses were received through the public engagement exercise. Of these, 35 response forms related to the Areas of Search. Whilst all five Areas of Search received responses, the majority related to The Coast and The Angus Glens. All 35 responses answered that they considered that the area (relating to their response) should be an Area of Search.

Area of Search	Number of Responses
The Angus Glens	14
Airlie to Ruthven	3
The River South Esk & Aberlemno	1
Lundie Craggs to Auchterhouse Hill	2
The Angus Coast	15

- 4.5 Special Qualities were assessed for each Landscape Character Type, which was derived from the Landscape Character Assessment. Whilst the boundaries of the landscape character types do not completely match the areas of search consulted on, there was generally a good level of correlation between the Council's assessment of special qualities and the answers in the questionnaires.
- 4.6 The results demonstrate high levels of support for Local Landscape Areas in both The Angus Glens and The Angus Coast areas of search. The number of responses in relation to The River South Esk & Aberlemno and Lundie Craggs to Auchterhouse Hill was relatively low, but nevertheless they were very positive in relation to both areas.
- 4.7 Following further detailed assessment and having regard to the limited responses, the steering group considered that there were insufficient special qualities to merit a local landscape area designation within the Ruthven to Airlie area of search. This process and the results are contained within appendix 4 of the study.
- 4.8 The consultation draft of the study has been prepared in discussion with the steering group taking account of the consultation responses. It has also been updated to reflect the new policy environment and in particular NPF4.
- 4.9 The intention is that the process to approve Local Landscape Areas for Angus be concluded in order that it can form part of the Evidence Report for the forthcoming Local Development Plan and provide landscape designations in support of NPF4. It also provides detailed guidance on how land management and development can take place without eroding special qualities of the local landscape areas.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The study proposes the identification of four local landscape areas. The following gives a summarised version of:
- The unique features of each area
 - Why they should be protected and proactively managed.
 - What is being proposed to protect them and the positive guidance which pro-actively supports the designation to inform Members.
- 5.2 A more detailed analysis of these matters is contained within the study itself at Appendix 2.

The Angus Glens

- 5.3 The Angus Glens are a mosaic of pasture, native woodland and heath which combine to form patterns and scenic views, often with marked contrast between green pasture of glen floor and the native woodland, forestry, heath and unimproved grassland on the hillsides.
- 5.4 The glens have high scenic qualities, with glacial landforms; rivers with gorges, rapids and waterfalls; dykes enclosed and unenclosed pasture; birch woodland and heather moorland, with frequent scenic views across the area. The glacial landscape is particularly prominent in Glen Clova.

- 5.5 The area contains a number of important natural heritage, built heritage and archaeological areas of interest for example the Airlie and Cortachy Castles and their protected gardens and designed landscapes; birch woods in many of the glens; hillforts at the White and Brown Caterthuns; and the dramatic highland boundary fault line which has created the waterfall at Reekie Linn on the River Isla.
- 5.6 The study has analysed the patterns of built development within this area as a basis for development guidance. It provides detailed guidance on how development can integrate into the landscape without eroding special qualities as detailed above. A summary is provided below – it is not an exhaustive list - and Members should refer to Appendix 1 for the full detail of the guidance in relation to both land management and to encourage development which does not erode special qualities.
- New development should reinforce traditional patterns of development in existing villages, hamlets and groupings of farm buildings, located within the mid highland glens and the foothills.
 - Development should avoid impacting on the setting of listed buildings; the overall character of the designed landscape and the more important views in or out of such landscapes, particularly to and from the focal building(s) of the design.
 - New farm buildings should not be in isolation but be grouped with existing buildings on lower ground and use existing trees and woodlands to soften impacts by partially screening new development or use backdrop of existing trees to integrate it into the landscape or provide backdrop of existing trees to integrate it into the landscape.
 - Development should work sensitively with landforms, positioning buildings where they are less likely to be viewed as skyline. Landform can reduce prominence by partially screening or providing a backdrop to development. Underbuilding should be minimised with careful choice of site and building size and the use of recessive colours is important in reducing prominence in views.
 - The setting of historic sites should be assessed as part any development proposal in accordance with Historic Environment Scotland and LDP guidance.
 - Guidance is also given in relation to hill tracks, Climate Change and Renewable Energy

The River South Esk

- 5.7 The proposed area follows the route of South Esk River, linking together a chain of designed landscapes from the edge of the Angus Glens to Montrose Basin and including the historical landscapes around Aberlemno. The River South Esk and its tributaries, together with associated riparian habitats form a nature network which is often a focal feature in views, with the river and its tributaries being designated as a Special Area of Conservation.
- 5.8 The area contains a number of important natural heritage, built heritage and archaeological areas of interest. The area around Aberlemno is a rich historic landscape with Pictish carved standing stones by the roadside and at the nearby Aberlemno church. Iron Age / Pictish period hillfort at Hill of Finavon and a small number of castles with associated landscapes. Statutory Historic Gardens and Designed Landscape at Brechin Castle and at Kinnaird with extensive woodlands, parkland and an avenues. Distinctive hilltop woodlands at Burghill and Finavon Hill, much of which is ancient or semi-natural woodland.
- 5.9 The study provides detailed guidance on how development can integrate into the landscape without eroding special qualities as detailed above. A summary is provided below and Members should refer to Appendix 1 for the full detail of the guidance:
- Whilst traditional design and materials would be supported, modern designs which reflect traditional building proportions and respond well to their landscape context would also be suitable.
 - Within designed landscapes, development should avoid impacting on the setting of listed buildings; the overall character of the designed landscape and the more important views in or out of such landscapes, particularly to and from the focal building(s) of the design.
 - Outwith designed landscapes, trees are less common but where they exist, trees and woodland can soften impacts by partially screening new development. Development viewed against a backdrop of existing trees can effectively integrate it into the landscape. In some locations, landform can provide a similar function.

- Guidance is also provided in relation to the positioning of new development in the landscape; the protections of the settings of historic sites; quarrying; land management; Climate Change and Renewable Energy

Sidlaw

- 5.10 This proposed area contains the picturesque Lundie Crag, together with the scenic Kinpurney observatory and the iron age hillforts on both Kinpurney Hill and Auchterhouse Hill.
- 5.11 It is characterised by a distinctive profile of smooth rounded hills with panoramic views across Strathmore towards the Braes of Angus to the north and southwards over the Tay Estuary. There are abrupt landscape changes from the Sidlaw Hills to the relatively flat Strathmore, with the village of Newtyle nestled at the northern edge of the Sidlaw. The dramatic cliffs at Lundie Crag with a small loch, forestry and farmland below add picturesque qualities and, alongside, the ruined observatory on Kinpurney Hill, they form a scenic landmark.
- 5.12 The area contains a number of important natural heritage, built heritage and archaeological areas of interest, such as the hillforts at Kinpurney Hill, Balkello Community Woodland Site, Ballederon Hill Local Geodiversity Site. There are non-statutory Gardens & Designed Landscape at Kinpurney around Newtyle with woodland and extensive tree lines, notably along all approaches to Newtyle. Lundie Crag, Kinpurney Hill and Auchterhouse Hill are popular hilltop destinations and often the focal point of path networks.
- 5.13 The study provides detailed guidance on how development can integrate into the landscape without eroding special qualities as detailed above and a summary provided below. Members should refer to Appendix 1 for the full detail of the guidance.
- Hill tracks in the Sidlaws sometimes extend to the highest summits. Hill tracks sometimes extend close to the hilltops and ridges principally for forestry and access to wind turbines. Inappropriately located or designed hill tracks can significantly erode wildness and scenic qualities. New tracks or track upgrading should not be proposed where they would erode scenic or wildness qualities.
 - Intensive muirburn in parts of the type can lead to the erosion of peatlands, reduces biodiversity, particularly in the ground flora and also can inhibit scrub and woodland regeneration. Encourage moorland management practices which create more diverse flora and increased biodiversity, with the expansion of native woodland onto higher ground and providing greater resilience to climate change
 - Guidance is also provided in relation to integrating developments within the landscape eroding special qualities, land management, biodiversity and the natural environment, Climate Change and Renewable Energy.

The Angus Coast

- 5.14 This proposed area contains dramatic rugged cliffs with promontory forts combined with majestic sweeping beaches and the magnificent Montrose Basin. There are sweeping sandy bays at Montrose, Lunan, Arbroath, Carnoustie and Monifieth. It is a highly scenic area with dramatic cliffs with stacks, arches, shingle beaches, extensive inter-tidal rock slabs and a gloop (collapsed cave) at Gaylet Pot. The abrupt change in character between cliffs and sandy bays, particularly at Lunan Bay, adds drama and scenic qualities.
- 5.15 The area contains a number of important natural heritage, built heritage and archaeological areas of interest, including Montrose Basin which also has a rich natural heritage with its mudflats and associated habitats provide important areas for internationally important numbers of birds. Designed landscapes at House of Dun and Craig, north and south of Montrose Basin respectively are important nationally and add features of interest. There are a number of highly visible promontory forts on the cliffs including six between Arbroath and the southern end of Lunan Bay. The medieval Red Castle, a Scheduled Monument, is a focal feature at the mouth of the Lunan Water at Lunan Bay as well as being an important viewpoint. Stone built lime kilns dating from the 18th Century at Boddin Point which are Category B Listed structures occupy a low promontory and are a prominent landmark on this stretch of coastline.
- 5.16 The coast is landmarked with a number of listed Stevenson lighthouses at Bell Rock, Scurdie Ness and Barry Buddon and the Signal Tower in Arbroath linked to the Bell Rock lighthouse.

- 5.17 The study provides detailed guidance on how development can integrate into the landscape without eroding special qualities as detailed above. A summary is provided below – it is not an exhaustive list - and Members should refer to Appendix 1 for the full detail of the guidance to protect this area from inappropriate development.
- Outside the towns, small scale new development should reinforce the existing development pattern within villages, hamlets and groupings of farm buildings.
 - Whilst traditional design and materials would be supported, modern designs which reflect traditional building proportions and respond well to their landscape context would also be suitable.
 - With trees and woodlands being less common on the coast, it can be particularly important that development works with existing landform to integrate development into the landscape.
 - Where development is necessary close to sand coastlines, new landforms can sometimes mimic sand dunes to effectively mitigate impacts as done at the wastewater treatment plants at Hatton and Montrose.
 - New farm buildings in these open landscapes should not be in isolation but be grouped with existing buildings, work sensitively with landforms, positioning buildings where they are less likely to be viewed as skyline and landform. The use of recessive colours is important in reducing prominence in views.
 - Guidance is also provided on caravan and chalet development, land management, Climate Change and Renewable Energy.

Next Steps

- 5.18 It is proposed that the proposed Local Landscape Areas in Angus and draft study, attached as Appendix 1 be subject to public consultation during a 6-week period between November and December 2023. Public consultation will take place using the Engagement HQ platform and publicised through the council's social media channels.
- 5.19 Once the public consultation has ended, the responses will be collated, and any appropriate changes will be made to the document. After that process has been concluded, a report will be submitted to the Committee to approve the final Local Landscape Areas in Angus. The report will also detail the results of the consultation exercise and detail any appropriate changes made to the document.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications that arise from this report. Work has been undertaken within existing resources.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Risk

- 7.1 NPF4 requires Local Development Plans to identify and protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally important natural assets, on land and along coasts. Therefore, the identification of Local Landscape Areas is important to meet this requirement and provide the evidence base for the new Local Development Plan for Angus. If the draft is not approved for consultation by this committee meeting, the resulting delay may leave a gap in our evidence base and will not accord with the requirements for NPF4. Without a designated suite of Local Landscape Areas, there would be increased risk that the special qualities of these areas would be eroded through inappropriate development or land use changes.

Strategic Environment Assessment

- 7.2 In April 2018, after undertaking a screening process, the Local Landscape Area document was determined, in consultation with Nature Scot, SEPA and Historic Environment Scotland, to be unlikely to have significant environmental impacts and therefore no further SEA process was required.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 A screening Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared and accompanies this report.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Consultation has taken place with NatureScot as part of the steering group overseeing the study. In addition, a public engagement exercise was carried out prior to the consultation draft being prepared. The guidance contained within the study has been reviewed by Development Management within the Planning Service.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1: Local Landscape Areas in Angus Study – Consultation Draft
Appendix 2: Local Landscape Areas in Angus – Location Map



Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Form

(To be completed with reference to Guidance Notes)

Step 1

Name of Proposal (includes e. g. budget savings, committee reports, strategies, policies, procedures, service reviews, functions):

Committee Report: LOCAL LANDSCAPE AREAS IN ANGUS – CONSULTATION DRAFT

Step 2

Is this only a **screening** Equality Impact Assessment Yes

(A) If Yes, please choose from the following options **all** reasons why a full EIA/FSD is not required:

(i) It does not impact on people Yes

NB: It does not refer to amenity landscaping in urban areas

(ii) It is a percentage increase in fees which has no differential impact on protected characteristics No

(iii) It is for information only No

(iv) It is reflective e.g. of budget spend over a financial year No

(v) It is technical No

If you have answered yes to any of points above, please go to **Step 16**, and sign off the Assessment.

(B) If you have answered No to the above, please indicate the following:

Is this a full Equality Impact Assessment Yes/No

Is this a Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Yes/No

If you have answered Yes to either or both of the above, continue with Step 3.

If your proposal is a **strategy** please ensure you complete Step 13 which is the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.

Step 16: Sign off and Authorisation. Please state name, post, and date for each:

Prepared by: Stewart Roberts, Countryside Officer 25.08.23

Reviewed by: Doreen Phillips, Senior Practitioner – Equalities 25.08.23

Approved by: Antony McGuiness, Manager - Development Planning, Environment and Climate Change 25.08.23

NB. There are several worked examples of separate EIA and FSD Assessments in the Guidance which may be of use to you.
