

# LANDSCAPE LEVEL EFFECTS

## Problem

Agriculture is associated with a wide range of “cultural landscapes” in Scotland. Current agricultural practices may lead to the alteration or loss of these landscapes. These losses can be direct eg through removal of landscape features like walls and hedgerows or indirect through reduced management (eg lack of rabbit or bracken control).

## Impact

Changes in landscape patterns can have direct impacts on landscape functions (eg loss of ecological structure) and cultural features (eg archaeological or built heritage). Research on landscape value shows that people are sensitive to landscape character

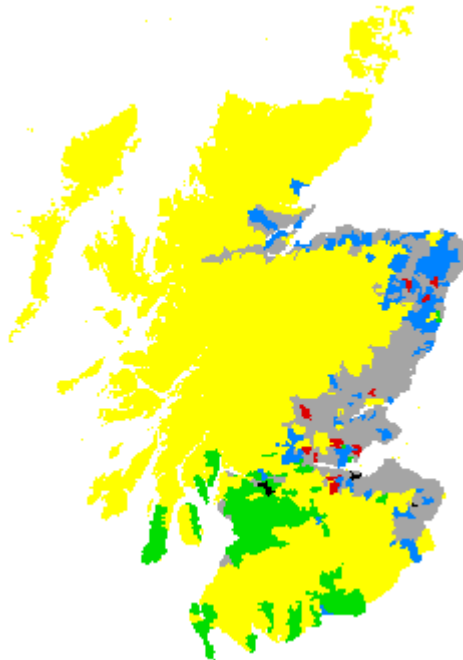
## Areas at Risk

The National Countryside Monitoring Scheme of SNH has shown that landscape change has been a feature of all agricultural contexts in Scotland since 1945.

- arable production has reduced in the west and north and intensified in the east.
- significant areas of rough grazings have gone under forestry.
- crofting systems have become increasingly based on sheep.

Future trends indicate continued restructuring and intensification in the east, and possible extensification of hill and upland systems in the west and north.

All areas of Scotland are therefore liable to change.



Distribution of Main Farm Types

Farm Type	Areas at Risk		
	Localised	Regional	Universal
General Cropping		Loss of landscape features/structure	
Mixed		Loss of landscape features/structure	
Dairy	Loss of landscape features		
Pigs and Poultry			
Cattle and Sheep			Loss of landscape features/diversity

## Practical Actions

Landscape is a holistic, all-embracing concept. Like many water catchments, whole landscapes belong to everybody but are nobody’s direct responsibility. Elements of landscape are, however, the responsibility of local authorities (eg related to development control), and agencies like Historic Scotland concerned with conservation of cultural heritage. The term “natural beauty”, is included in the founding legislation of Scottish Natural Heritage and is taken to include landscape. SNH has developed a system for Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which is used both in National Planning Policy guidance and in Planning Advice Notes. However, the practical use of the LCA system is limited to specific developments (e.g. East Ross Settlement Landscape Capacity Study; Guidelines on the Environmental Impacts of Windfarms and Small Scale Hydroelectric Schemes).

There is little experience concerned with good landscape practice relating to agriculture. This contrasts with extensive experience in the forestry sector with the concept of landscape character being incorporated into the Forestry Commission Guidelines on Forest and Woodland Design.



### **Linkages**

Landscape is an overarching concept and therefore effects all aspects of agriculture/environment interactions. There is a strong continental European tradition, best developed in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, that suggests the adoption of sound landscape management practices yields benefits in terms of improved soil, water and habitat conditions. There are social benefits in terms of conservation of cultural heritage and enhanced quality of life, and economic benefits in terms of the landscape supporting tourism and recreational activities.

### **Research Gaps**

In general, the holistic tradition of landscape planning that has developed in some countries of continental Europe is poorly developed in the UK. ( see for example the Dutch governments recent policy document “Nature for People, People for Nature” which sets out their “strong belief that nature and landscape are essential contributions to a liveable and sustainable society”). The UK and Scottish approaches are more fragmented.

Landscape change has been relatively well documented in Scotland (e.g. SNH National Countryside Monitoring Scheme). The landscape character of Scotland has been classified through SNH’s Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Programme. However, whilst the LCA approach has been well used in relation to specific development issues (eg housing, wind farms) it appears to be poorly developed with respect to the impacts of agricultural change on the landscape. It is likely that this is because agricultural change is not subject to the normal planning process associated with development control.

Nonetheless, agri-environment schemes, like the Rural Stewardship Scheme, do require a plan-based approach and are specifically concerned with the maintenance or enhancement of “particular habitats and landscape features”. Positive guidance, similar to that available for forest and woodland design, is not available for best practice in managing change in agricultural landscapes and there is a clear opportunity to provide this in relation to SNH’s Landscape Character Types.

There is also a need to investigate what landscapes that capable of satisfying the demands for a “multi-functional” countryside might look like. This research could build upon existing work on sustainable agricultural landscapes being done at the University of East Anglia.

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