

Transport And Utilities

2.4.10 Continuing investment in premium and other strategic road improvements and ferry services is vital to basic levels of mobility within Lochaber, plus vital links with Regional and national centres beyond. Together with the West Highland Railway, this network is critical to the economy, notably tourism and the movement of freight, access to facilities and ultimately the environment. Retention of the London-Fort William sleeper facility was a critical achievement in this respect.

2.4.11 Priorities remain for improvements to the urban network through Fort William, on grossly deficient sections of the A82 south of Fort William, A830 to Mallaig, and the A861 and B8007 in Ardnamurchan.

2.4.12 Following recent investment in the new Ro-Ro facility at Mallaig, further improvements to terminals and vessels is essential to the prosperity and viability of remote communities.

2.4.13 Economic changes in the countryside, notably in forestry and fish farming, continue to necessitate improvements to minor roads and structures.

2.4.14 Greater promotion of rail assets following privatisation and possible options to adapt the network to new modes of transport including rail-bus, particularly in and around Fort William in future years, should be investigated.

2.4.15 Whilst seaplane and helicopter services are mooted from time to time, the provision of an airstrip close to the main population/activity centre could bring significant benefits to the economy, the emergency services and recreation. The feasibility of such links to the Small Isles is under consideration.

2.4.16 Given the distance between centres and concern about reductions in personal mobility, an integrated transport system which ensures good access to facilities is essential. There may be greater emphasis in future on the development of community-based transport schemes to supplement existing services and opportunities to maximise travel by cyclists and improve conditions for pedestrians need to be encouraged.

2.4.17 Following very significant improvements or installation of "first time" facilities across the area as a whole, major additional investment has been earmarked against restructuring mains water and drainage in Fort William and upgrading services in rural settlements which remain deficient or otherwise constrain growth. Composite (regional) mains water supplies are gradually being installed to the main settlement groups, except for Ardnamurchan where a more dispersed settlement pattern restricts cost-effectiveness and necessitates services to communities individually.

2.4.18 Considerable ongoing investment in waste water treatment and reduction in the discharge of raw sewage needs to be committed. This will help ensure the highest environmental standards and safeguards for the economy and nature conservation in the coastal waters around Lochaber, consistent with European legislation. However, beyond existing commitments, identifying priorities and resources will rest with the North of Scotland Water Authority and possibly the private sector.

Community Facilities And Mobility

2.4.19 Services and social facilities in Lochaber are delivered through a hierarchy of communities. This derives from the size and the distance between settlements; the distribution of the population they serve; and the infrastructure or transport systems which link them. During the past 10-15 years, management of Lochaber's waste has involved main centralised facilities close to Fort William and outlying landfill sites. Future arrangements for Lochaber are currently under investigation and are likely to emerge in the context of sustainable and long term options for the Highland area as a whole.

2.4.20 This hierarchy is dominated by Fort William's role as the sub-regional centre and the expectation of further expansion in relation to most of the town's functions.

2.4.21 In the hinterland, "area" centres, notably Ballachulish and Kinlochleven (twinned for these purposes) together with Mallaig, are the focus for higher order local facilities. Successive decades of population growth in Ardnamurchan gives rise to optimism that Acharacle and Strontian are poised to develop similar roles and collectively enhance service provision to the wider peninsula. However in North Lochaber, the lower population base and comparative proximity to Fort William suggests a continuing dependence on the town for this category of service.

2.4.22 Other important day-to-day and emergency facilities are provided from the "area" centres and a series of smaller "local" centres. It is in these communities that the pressure to rationalise services has been most acute, notably with the loss of rural schools, post offices and fuel facilities.

2.4.23 Smaller outlying or dispersed populations are able to support only a basic range of essential or "lifeline" services and rely also upon mobile facilities. Relative inaccessibility and cultural influences tend to help maintain a higher level of provision in peripheral and island communities.

2.4.24 Elsewhere, there is a tendency in the extremities for communities to draw on services in neighbouring areas outwith Lochaber, as witnessed by historical links between Invergarry and Fort Augustus and Lochaline and Mull.

2.4.25 The Council recognises this hierarchy as a sound basis for the improvement or reorganisation of services. Maintaining existing levels of provision and rectifying deficiencies is vital to sustaining viable communities. However, resources available to make changes are limited and there is an increasing responsibility on the agencies and private sector providers as well as the communities themselves, to ensure the best use of existing assets and an innovative approach to service delivery. This could include "pooling" resources, where the costs attaching to reinstating facilities withdrawn in the past will inevitably involve higher thresholds.

2.4.26 However given the distance between centres and any reductions in personal mobility, an integrated transport system which ensures good access to facilities is essential. As indicated earlier, there may be greater emphasis in future on the development of community-based transport schemes to supplement existing services.

2.4.27 Taking into account the improving transportation network, Fig. 6 sets out the range and type of existing services, together with the population and proximity thresholds at which these might reasonably be sustained. **These are regarded as desirable minimum standards of service applied for the purpose of identifying gaps and opportunities in provision over Lochaber as a whole.** Similar criteria-based assessment of the Fort William urban area is contained in Chapter 3. Specific proposals are identified in Sections 3-7.

Fig. 6 : Lochaber : Community Services and Thresholds

Level/Centre	Sub Regional
Population	20,000
Area	4468 sq. km.
Centre/Distance	Fort William - 70 km. from Inverness
Facilities	Housing and Residential Support; Major Industry, Business Park, Public Administration, Financial and Professional Services; Further Education, Hospital, Shopping (incl. national retail outlets, supermarkets), Major hotels, Tourist Centre, Leisure Centre, Sports Facilities, Arts Centre, Cinema; Emergency Services HQ., Major Park, Golf Course; Waste Management.
Transport	Strategic Roads, Rail, Bus Services (to main centres), Transport Centre.

Level/Centre	Sub Area
Population	1,500+
Area	600-1800 sq. km.
Centre/Distance	Mallaig; Kinlochleven; Ballachulish; Acharacle; Strontian : 15-45 miles from Fort William.
Facilities	Industrial Estate, Secondary School, Health Centre, Day Care, Bank, Library, Swimming Pool, Shop/Supermarket, Service Point, Emergency Services (Fire, Police, Ambulance), Tourist Information; Cemetery, 9-hole Golf Course.
Transport	Strategic Roads, Bus, Rail, Ferry, Post-Bus.

Level/Centre	Local
Population	150-500
Area	variable hinterlands
Centre/Distance	Ardgour; Lochaline; Achaphubuil; Kilchoan; Arisaig; Morar; Spean Bridge; Roybridge; Invergarry; Glencoe; Duror; North Ballachulish; Onich : generally 2-15 miles from nearest area centre, exceptionally up to 25 miles in Ardnamurchan
Facilities	Primary School, Sheltered Housing, Post Office/Shop, Hall, Church(s), Petrol Filling Station, Hotel, Playing Field, Play Ground, Tourist Information Point
Transport	main road connection, bus service

Level/Centre	Other/Remote/Island
Population	less than 150
Area	variable
Centre/Distance	remainder/variable
Facilities	one from "local" above, post box, telephone
Transport	ferry, minor road

The Council will address deficiencies in service provision throughout Lochaber by allocating land and/or promoting initiatives in conjunction with partner Agencies and the private sector, as appropriate.

Environment

2.4.28 The natural, built and cultural heritage of Lochaber is exceptional in national and international terms. The area combines rich and diverse habitats, landscape of the highest calibre and strong historical and Gaelic associations. These are vital to wildlife and nature conservation, tourism and the economy, leisure and recreational resources, local identity and education.

2.4.29 A sustainable future requires to balance protection for the environment with responsible development and management of the area's resources. This necessitates promotion of biodiversity and an integrated network of habitats, land uses and communities based on the following principles;

(i) international obligations : as applied through EC Directives to rare, endangered, and vulnerable habitats and species; the conservation of wild birds, coastal waters and the wider environment. These embrace existing or candidate SAC's and SPA's (including Ramsar Sites already SSSI's unless below MLWS) where development or damaging operations are not permitted unless there is an imperative and overriding public, economic, social, health or safety interest. These areas include designated upland areas at Ben Nevis, Glencoe, Creag Meagaidh, Beinn Iadain and Beinn na H'uaamha, and Rhum; woodland and coast around Strontian and Loch Sunart; Rannoch, Claish and Kentra moorland and peat bog; together with Loch Morar and inshore waters adjoining Moidart;

(ii) national designations : including notified NNR and SSSI's, NSA's, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Grade A Listed Buildings. Development or land use change which will have a significant detrimental effect will be resisted, although promotion and interpretation are encouraged where features are sufficiently robust or accessible;

(iii) other land : where priority is given to avoiding damage to or fragmentation of habitats or species of high conservation value, such as ancient and semi-natural woodland, local wildlife reserves and other important habitats (including Marine Conservation Areas), AGLV's and the built heritage, footpaths and rights of way.

2.4.30 Whereas the emphasis in (i) and (ii) above leans heavily towards protection, resources and management in the remaining countryside should be directed towards:

- habitat improvement and restoration of spoiled land;
- a sustainable rural economy supporting a broader range of activities to help diversify the traditional land use structure including multiple use of forests and Estates, public access, interpretation and facilities;
- resolving competing pressures for more intensive land use change, including essential services and tighter controls on the siting and design of housing.

2.4.31 Increased assistance for farmers and crofters to help protect habitats could be delivered through a variety of economic and environmental initiatives which should enable revitalisation of traditional land use patterns as well as diversification or innovative measures. These include Countryside Premium Scheme, Rural Enterprise Programme, and Forestry Grant Schemes.

2.4.32 The desire in many communities to reduce the dominating impacts of trunk road traffic needs to be matched by the availability of resources to improve amenity and safety. Greater attention should also be given to local character and identity in the form and scale of village development; to safeguarding and planning for trees and open spaces, and to the setting of communities in the landscape.

2.4.33 A formal Landscape Appraisal of Lochaber is expected to be completed by SNH during 1996-97. This assesses the landscape character of the area and its capacity to absorb change. (The Appendix provides more information on this assessment and a map of landscape character types in Lochaber).

Strategy Summary

2.4.34 Considerable variation in population, economic and social changes has occurred across Lochaber in the last 15 years. These and the implications of the main forecasts for different parts of the area are summarised as follows.

Settlement Policy Objectives

2.5.1 Further to the above key forecasts and the assessment of factors influencing the distribution of population and pattern of settlement, the Council's overriding aim is to secure a sustainable economy and viable communities. The Plan identifies a role for all recognised settlements in meeting housing, economic development and community needs, as follows:

- SUB REGIONAL CENTRE** - Fort William (pop. 10,000+) where the priorities are to consolidate the town's functions in commerce, health and education supported by a wider population of 19-20,000+. Large scale expansion of housing, business, tourism and service networks are planned. Housing market and employment influences embracing the entirety of Lochaber require major funding to open-up a long term land supply; inward investment to support business growth, and essential resources to restructure mobility and transport systems eventually. 730-810 houses;
- AREA CENTRES** - (pop. up to 1000) Acharacle and Strontian, Mallaig, Kinlochleven and Ballachulish. These are the main communities providing services (either individually or on a "twinned" basis) to areas of 2000-3000+. Located 20-45 miles from Fort William on strategic transport routes and commanding localised "journey to work" patterns. The emphasis is on upgrading infrastructure, expanding employment and housing to support the full range of "area" facilities, and scaling-down commuting. 60-100 houses largely dependent on securing significant on-costs in land and services;
- LOCAL CENTRES** - (pop. up to 500) including Glencoe, Duror; Ardgour, Lochaline; Spean Bridge, Roybridge; Morar, Arisaig etc. Villages serving rural parishes, variable distances from Area Centres and Fort William. These support a Primary School and some specialist services, and have potential for sustaining other facilities. New employment opportunities need to be identified to broaden a restricted economic base, utility networks expanded and environmental improvements secured. 20-80 houses largely dependent on harmonising development land requirements and traditional uses;
- SMALLER SETTLEMENTS** - (pop. up to 150) Torlundy/Tomacharich, Fassfern, Gairlochy and Inchree. Located on or close to the

main communications network, well absorbed visually and where recent or programmed service improvements, relative proximity to Fort William, Area or Local Centres enables further house building and basic facilities. Up to 25 houses consistent with the existing character;

- LANDWARD AREAS** - (pop. less than 150) remote or fragile communities dependent on resource based activities and tourism and where specific regeneration initiatives may be appropriate to restore population and vital supporting services. These include the Small Isles, Knoydart and selected peripheral mainland communities such as Achnacarry, Sanna.

2.5.2 The capability of individual communities to fulfil these functions will be depend on thresholds and capacities in land and infrastructure. These constraints and opportunities, together with settlements considered suitable for growth or where development needs to be phased with infrastructural investment or other actions are identified in the following Sub Area Strategies (Chapters 3-7).

similar quarries elsewhere in the Highlands but the coincidental requirements of high quality rock, sufficient reserves, the capacity of the environment to accommodate change and the scope for communities to focus their economic future in quarrying are very limited in occurrence. In addition, a principal Scottish Office guideline (contained in NPPG 4) in respect of further large scale coastal quarry sites, is that they should be dispersed around Scotland. Search areas are identified which in Highland include the north coast. These factors imply a presumption against a further large scale quarry in Lochaber including Kentallen, unless exceptional circumstances should apply.

Hydrocarbons Exploration

3.3.12 The Council will encourage exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons on land or close to shore provided:

- (a) local employment implications and the effects on established businesses are acceptable;
- (b) amenity including noise, traffic generation or other nuisance are acceptable and there are no significant adverse effects on natural heritage, wildlife, scenery, archaeological or cultural interests; and
- (c) developers accept liability for infrastructure or servicing costs and are prepared to enter agreement in respect of site rehabilitation [P18].

Given the national transport networks and existing commitments to harbour expansion at Mallaig, the Council believes the port could be well placed to compete for a share of future oil related servicing should the need arise to develop facilities on the west coast. Accordingly, it will encourage expansion of deep water berthing and appropriate backup facilities in the longer term (see 7.3.16).

Peat

3.3.13 The Council will encourage development of peat deposits in areas of low or degraded conservation value subject to statutory consultation and adequate:

- (a) separation from neighbouring housing and safeguards for tourism, leisure and recreation;
- (b) protection for wildlife and the natural and cultural heritage including archaeology; and
- (c) safeguards for water courses and restoration, [P41- P43].

The Council will also encourage investigation of alternatives to commercial peat extraction. In

accordance with NPPG 4, the Council will consult SNH and Historic Scotland on any peat extraction proposal.

Skiing

3.3.14 The Council will support the development of downhill skiing at the following locations where there will be a presumption in favour of:

- (a) Aonach Mor - further skiing and an improvement to existing facilities within the existing ski area, although any development there will require careful consideration. Any proposed extension of skiing beyond the existing ski area would be subject to an assessment against environmental criteria set out in NPPG 12 to ensure European and nature conservation obligations are not prejudiced, [P55];
- (b) White Corries, Glencoe - limited expansion avoiding skyline development and improvements to existing facilities and support services on the ski slopes, [P64].

Tourism

3.3.15 The Council will encourage promotion and development of tourism, related accommodation and infrastructure (including dedicated housing for staff) throughout Lochaber consistent with safeguarding or promoting the area's exceptional scenic, cultural and heritage resources, services and amenity. Investment and other initiatives to promote facilities, manage visitors, and interpret the local environment should be based on a hierarchy of communities and tourist routes and the following themes:

- major tourist facilities including hotels or similar provision and attractions located within or adjoining Fort William. The suitability of proposals will be determined against the adequacy of access; design quality and layout; site servicing, parking, and landscaping;
- small/medium scale facilities, including smaller localised theme centres/attractions in the main area and local centres supplementing their roles as visitor information points, consistent with the above criteria and at a scale appropriate to the community concerned;
- other accommodation - associated with diversification or use of redundant buildings subject to suitable access, siting and servicing;
- touring caravan and camping facilities - associated with the strategic road network preferably within at least 40-50 miles of one another.

Specific themes and initiatives are identified in Chapters 4-8.

Local Interpretive Strategy

3.3.16 The Council is seeking, in partnership with Lochaber Limited, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Local Tourist Board, local communities and others, to promote the local culture and heritage in the interests of fostering sustainable tourism as a major part of the economy. Further to local strategies for Ardnamurchan and Morvern and North Lochaber, the Council intends to pursue a comprehensive assessment of opportunities throughout Lochaber and will seek to secure funding for related projects as a joint initiative.

Tourism Promotion

3.3.17 The Council will encourage measures to enhance tourist information based on the development and improvement of facilities at;

- Fort William; Ballachulish and Kinlochleven (see 6.3.12a); Mallaig; Spean Bridge; Strontian (5.4.12) and Kilchoan (5.8.11) which are strategically placed on the main tourist routes and contain sub-regional and area information offices;
- local centres, where TIPs could be supplemented by improved parking and picnicking facilities, and simple roadside facilities associated with specific features of interest throughout the landward area.

The Council will encourage Lochaber Limited and the Local Tourist Board to consider investment in these facilities.

Caledonian Canal

3.3.18 The Council recognises the role of the Caledonian Canal in terms of the area's economy, freight transportation and recreational/heritage interests, and will support measures to secure its future. Development opportunities promoted in association with the waterway and related infrastructure (see 8.2.18), will require to be compatible with its character, amenities and integral operational/maintenance requirements.

Recreational Sailing

3.3.19 The Council will encourage recreational sailing of west coast waters and the provision of related facilities at strategic locations on the Lochaber seaboard subject to compatibility with other users, operational and safety factors, and environmental considerations. Scope exists for safeguarding and maximising the use of natural anchorages, investment in moorings and landing facilities together with supporting shore based and community facilities in the following locations:

Fort William/Corpach; Kinlochleven and Ballachulish; Lochaline and Kilchoan; Mallaig, Arisaig and the Small Isles.

By-passed Communities

3.3.20 The Council will promote the following by-passed settlements and other communities where realignment or improvement of the road network could disadvantage local businesses and the economy. In such cases, composite signposting of local facilities and attractions will be assisted:

Fort William; Arisaig; Kinlochleven; and Ballachulish.

Roadside Development

3.3.21 The Council will restrict the spread of commercial development alongside the A82(T), A86(T), A87(T), A830(T), A828(T) and A861 outwith settlements (see 3.1.2), except where proposals are integral and subsidiary to schemes considered acceptable in the context of policy 3.3.2 above [P77].

Advertisements

3.3.22 The Council recognises a degree of advertising is essential to many businesses, but safeguards are required in the interests of amenity and traffic safety. Composite or "by-passed" community signposting is encouraged and the Council offer advice to communities in this respect [P111].

High Technology Business

3.3.23 The Council will encourage the establishment of high technology businesses within the area. Such enterprises require self-contained, high amenity sites with good access and telecommunications [P10]. Subject to availability, satisfactory design and servicing, opportunities may arise in Estate policies as part of future diversification (see 4.5.5 and 6.3.12).

COMMUNITY

Community Facilities

3.4.1 The Council will seek to enhance the provision of community facilities where local need exists, through joint public/private ventures, other funding initiatives and identification of sites. Where necessary, the Council may purchase and retain sites until proposals for community use come forward, [P86, P87].

Treatment Works Safeguarding

3.5.8 The Council will maintain a presumption against permanent development within safeguarding areas around Sewage Treatment Works. These will normally extend up to 90 metres from plant, but may be wider subject to the extent of works and prospects for expansion [P94].

Water Catchment Areas

3.5.9 The Council will safeguard water catchment areas from development or land use change likely to prejudice existing or future supplies.

Flooding

3.5.10 There will be a presumption against any building development within known flood risk areas, except where it is considered essential for agricultural use.

Electricity

3.5.11 The Council will:

- seek detailed assessment of the impact of proposals to reinforce or route supplies and related infrastructure (including switching and sub-stations) through the area on communities, the landscape and nature conservation, including the scope for undergrounding in sensitive localities;
- apply a presumption against development within 6.5 metres of the outermost conductors of 132kv or other high voltage transmission lines.

Alternative Energy

3.5.12 The Council will encourage the development of alternative energy where schemes provide economic benefits, are environmentally acceptable, and public access and safety is not diminished (P85). A Community Wind Turbine scheme has recently been appraised in respect of the Island of Muck. Large scale hydro-electric schemes have in the past been developed by British Alcan and Scottish Hydro-Electric. Small scale hydro-electric schemes are presently being encouraged by the Government's Scottish Renewables Obligation (SRO). A run-of-river scheme has already been constructed on the River Rannoch near Ardtornish.

Wind Energy

3.5.13 The Council has produced non-statutory policy guidelines in respect of Wind Energy (principally Wind Farms). This identifies sensitive areas and areas of search for related developments which accord with Government guidance (NPPG 6 - Renewable Energy). In respect of the development of Wind Farms, search areas

in Ardnamurchan and Morvern (notably central Morvern and central West Ardnamurchan - Sunart) have been identified, where constraints are likely to be of a detailed rather than strategic nature. The Council will seek conformity with its approved guidelines and will:

- (a) apply a presumption against proposals which adversely affect National Scenic Areas and designated areas of nature conservation value unless it can be demonstrated conclusively that there is an overriding national interest in allowing developments to take place, and there is no reasonable alternative;
- (b) permit development within "sensitive areas" only where it is proven that adverse effects on the environment will not be significant;
- (c) require to be satisfied that development would provide local economic benefit;
- (d) will approve proposals for an initial temporary period (usually 25 - 30 years) together with provisions for reinstatement.

Hydro-Electricity

3.5.14 In respect of small scale hydro electric schemes, for which guidelines are presently being prepared, the Council will take account of their suitability against the following factors:

- impact on nature conservation and landscape;
- local fisheries and downstream riparian and abstraction interests;
- compensation flow set and existing consents to discharge;
- local economic benefit.

Wave Energy

3.5.15 In respect of wave energy, whilst the Lochaber coastline offers limited potential, proposals for harnessing this resource must be compatible with local interests including visual amenity, fishing, nature conservation, and other heritage interests and recreation.

Remote or Expensive to Service Areas

3.5.16 Except where development is consistent with the Council's expressed objectives for regenerating depopulated and disadvantaged areas, there will be a presumption against development likely to lead to pressure for inordinate and unprogrammed expenditure on services. Notably, excessively steep ground or locations more than 0.5km from a road or significantly above mains water supplies will not be appropriate.

Waste Management

3.5.17 The Council, as Protective Services Authority has set up a Working Group to prepare a long term Waste Management Strategy for the Highland area. This will be based on the principles of reduction, re-use, recovery and disposal of waste and could be founded upon the following main elements:

- development of strategic waste disposal facilities for domestic waste accessible to the main population centres (outwith Lochaber);
- transfer/collection, recycling and processing facilities together with provision for disposal of inert material locally (within Lochaber).

Pending formulation of a Strategy, the Council recognises that current landfill capacity in Lochaber is limited and that in addition to the present site at Duisky, there may be a requirement to assess the feasibility of other potential disposal sites in locations around Fort William for local needs. As part of a Strategy, the Council may give consideration to the scope for Lochaber to perform a role from which the area may enjoy employment benefits in recycling and processing. Such initiatives may be dependent on viability and available markets for recovered products.

Waste Recycling

3.5.18 Given its statutory responsibility under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council is preparing a Recycling Plan. Subject to this, consideration will be given to broadening the present arrangements relating to recycling of glass, oil and other waste products in order to minimise future landfill requirements.

Oil Spillage

3.5.19 Given concern about possible oil spillage and in the interests of safeguarding the local environment, the economy and communities, the Council has agreed a joint initiative with the Department of Transport and Western Isles Council to encourage laden tankers to use a recommended deep water route west of the Hebrides and to monitor shipping in this regard. A Working Group of interested parties has been set up to examine measures and promote a voluntary code to discourage the passage of tanker traffic through the Minch.

Telecommunications

3.5.20 The Council will only consider favourably, proposals for the erection of radio masts and other telecommunications structures provided:

- (a) existing masts cannot be shared or buildings used;
- (b) existing services are not interfered with;
- (c) the operator is licensed (except in domestic circumstances);
- (d) visual amenity, built heritage and nature conservation interests are not significantly affected including by access arrangements;
- (e) the proposal forms part of a network (except in domestic circumstances);
- (f) redundant masts and equipment are removed, [P81].

Light Pollution

3.5.21 All proposals involving the installation or replacement of external lighting should seek to minimise light spillage. Only lighting which limits the transmission of light above full cut-off lanterns and avoids pollution will be acceptable.



ENVIRONMENT

Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation

3.6.1 The Council will not permit development or damaging operations to an interest to be protected within designated or proposed Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation (see 3.6.3) except where there is an imperative and overriding public, social, economic, health or safety interest as set out in Circular 6/95 in accordance with the Habitats and Birds Directives. Ramsar sites designated under the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance are protected in a similar way to SPA's.

3.6.2 The Council recognises that the designation of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation gives primacy to their conservation. However, the Council expect the bulk of existing activities in such areas to continue and will seek, in

partnership with other Agencies and interests, to maximise resources for interpretation, visitor management and promotion.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

3.6.3 The Council will maintain a presumption against development which would have a significant detrimental effect upon designated NNR's/SSSI's. This will apply to the following locations and to any sites subsequently notified [P98]:

- Fort William - Ach An Todhair.
- Ardnamurchan and Morvern - Ardour Pinewoods#; Ard Trilleachan#; Ariundle#; Beinn Iadain and Beinn Na H'Uamha#; Ben Haint and Ardnamurchan Coast#; Claish Moss#; Cille Phuitchain; Ardnamurchan; Doire Donn; Drimmin to Killundie Woods; Eas Na Broige; Glencripesdale#; Kentra Bay and Moss#; Laudale Woods; Loch Moidart; Poll Luachrain and Druimbuidhe#; Rahoy Woodlands#; Strontian Mines; Salen to Woodend#; Garbh Shlios; Inninmore Bay, Loch Aline.
- Glencoe and Nether Lochaber - Callert; Carnach Wood; Glencoe#; Kingshouse; Leven Valley; Rannoch Moor#; Saint John's Church; Ardsheal Peninsula; Kentallen; Onich Dry Gorge; Onich Shore; Rudha Cuilcheanna.
- West Lochaber - Blar Na Caillich Buidhe; Camas Mor, Muck; Canna and Sanday#; Druimindarroch; An Sgurr and Gleann Charadail, Cleadale, Laig to Kildonnan; Glen Beasdale; Inninmore Bay; Loch Dubh; Loch Morar; Loch Sheil; Lochailort; Mallaig Coast; Rum*#.
- North Lochaber - Ben Nevis#; Creag Meagaidh*#; Garry Falls; Loch Arkaig Pinewood; Lon, Leanachain; Parallel Roads of Lochaber*; Quoich Spillway; South Laggan Fen.

*denotes National Nature Reserve

#denotes designated NNR's or candidate Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation

Local Nature Conservation Areas

3.6.4 The Council will have regard to the value of identified Local Nature Conservation Areas, established Nature Reserves and other nominated sites when considering proposals for development and will seek to minimise related impacts. Such locations (see below) may offer particular opportunity for interpretation, public access and facilities which the Council will seek to promote in partnership with the Scottish Natural Heritage, voluntary and community interests. Scope for creating employment through a local Ranger Service

should be investigated. Sites which embrace habitats or features not affected statutory protection but considered locally important for conservation, have been identified by Scottish Natural Heritage (see 4.5.62; 5.2.29; 6.2.23; 7.2.32 and 8.2.36).

Other Habitat Areas

3.6.5 Elsewhere in the countryside and consistent with European "Habitats Directive" objectives, the Council will also seek to maintain continuity and linkage between habitats where this would help to sustain wildlife. Subject to Scottish Natural Heritage advice as to their specific value, particular features which should be taken into account are, for example, linear tree belts and hedgerows; stone dykes; lochs, reservoirs, rivers and ponds. In appropriate circumstances where development proceeds, the Planning Authority may seek replacement habitat by Section 75 Agreement with interested parties.

Amenity Woodland

3.6.6 The Council will protect established woodland and trees important to the landscape, wildlife and amenity including:

- (a) significant ancient and semi-natural areas (as identified in Scottish Natural Heritage's Inventory);
- (b) mature policy woodlands and exotic specimens;
- (c) other features important to the character or visual structure of urban areas or villages.

3.6.7 The Council will:

- (a) encourage continuity and regeneration through Management Agreements and other measures if necessary;
- (b) consider placing Tree Preservation Orders where important features are threatened by development or other pressures;
- (c) discourage development within the canopy spread of large or mature trees or within felling distance in exposed locations;
- (d) protect trees from damage from services and access;
- (e) promote additional planting including predominantly native woodlands in rural areas and a mix of suitable species within and adjoining settlements;
- (f) encourage management to control invasive species where this would help regenerate or safeguard the integrity of native woodlands;

- (g) support management aimed at preventing Rhododendron invasion of amenity woodland
- (h) encourage community woodland management schemes.

3.6.8 Beneficial tree planting and management may qualify for financial assistance from SOAFD, the Forestry Authority or Scottish Natural Heritage, [P26].

Tree Buffer Zones

3.6.9 Unless essential to the management and mixed use of forest areas, the Council will presume against development within commercial woodlands or within 20 metres of their margins in the interests of safeguarding plantations for their value to the economy and downstream activities, the landscape and recreation, public safety and amenity. The Council will encourage management and felling practices compatible with mixed use of forest areas. These should have regard to the scale of forests, existing activities and patterns of use, and their accessibility or proximity to communities. Consideration should be given to the scope for retaining parts of mature plantations where this would enhance the landscape or be of benefit to adjoining communities.

Structural Landscape and Open Space Initiative

3.6.10 Further to 3.2.6, the Council recognise the benefits of early action by landowners and other local interests to establish a landscape and open space framework for longer term expansion of communities. The Council will seek, in conjunction with other agencies including Scottish Natural Heritage, the Forest Authority and Lochaber Limited, to investigate the scope for a Project Officer to promote and help facilitate structural planting and open space schemes including links to the countryside, in accordance with the land allocations incorporated within the Plan.

Agriculture and Crofting Land

3.6.11 The Council will safeguard agricultural land or croft inbye and grazings where these are important to the viability of a particular unit, township or the wider rural economy [P20]. However, it recognises competing pressures for the use of such land especially within and adjoining settlements. In these circumstances, the Council will seek to integrate essential community development and other building requirements with the prevailing settlement pattern, heritage features, infrastructure, accessibility to services, and to minimise disruption to traditional land use activities [P19].

Landscape Conservation

3.6.12 Pending formulation of Landscape Appraisal guidelines for the whole of Lochaber (see Annex), the Council will safeguard the scenic and landscape character within designated National Scenic Areas, and will encourage:

- high standards of design and siting of development consistent with the scale and pattern of settlement;
- measures to minimise the visual impact of other changes in land use and resource development;
- recreational management and provision of facilities in areas of opportunity of visitor pressure;
- reinstatement or restoration of damaged or degraded habitats.

Scenic Safeguards

3.6.13 The Council will:

- (a) presume against development on the seaward and loch-side margins of public roads outwith communities to safeguard views across open water in the interests of coastal conservation, except where essential for working the land; and will apply this principle to visually intrusive development in the landward margins of open stretches coastal routes [P99];
- (b) seek to conserve areas of landscape importance including open areas above the tree line, designed gardens and landscapes including the "Inventory" sites at Achnacarry and Ardtornish, and scenic views from the main tourist routes;
- (c) seek to designate Areas of Great Landscape Value where special control and management policies will be followed to maintain their character and secure public access, safety and enjoyment.

Access To The Countryside

3.6.14 The Council will encourage increased public access (to rights of way, hill routes and paths) and enjoyment of the countryside, subject to the agreement of landowners where necessary and the need for compatibility with natural heritage interests. The Council support responsible freedom to roam over unenclosed land and in enclosed plantations.

Where such land adjoins settlements, the Council recognises the special opportunities and scope for land management and facilities to cater for walkers, cyclists

and other activities in concert with traditional land uses. In the wider countryside, the Council will encourage a wide range of recreational facilities and activities in the less fragile lowland countryside areas provided these are compatible with rural land use management and heritage interests. Schemes which could be pursued in conjunction with other bodies might embrace:

- an extensive network of signposted footpaths, bridleways and bike/cycling routes (segregated where possible) including more intensive use of forest tracks. These should link up the main communities and adjoin, or provide for cross-boundary routes connecting the West Highland and Great Glen Way;
- related low-key facilities for parking, picnicking and improved public access at selected locations along the existing road network;
- associated archaeological trails and interpretive material;
- new or innovative specialist pursuits and water-based activities at appropriate locations. Consideration should be given by appropriate agencies to investment or support for the above projects and related services.

The Council will seek to safeguard rights of way, other paths and access routes from development and obstruction.

Visitor Management

3.6.15 Given the conservation, recreational and amenity value and the visitor pressures on selected areas of countryside, the Council will pursue with interested Agencies and communities, provision of facilities and management measures to improve public access and avoid damage to land and resources. Candidate sites include Glen Nevis (see 8.2.29), Glencoe (6.2.20) and the West Lochaber coast and beaches (7.2.34).

Conservation Areas

3.6.16 Within urban Conservation Areas, the Council will ensure that new development, alteration or extension to buildings, and environmental enhancement reflects the established character (see 8.5.18) [P109].

Historic Buildings

3.6.17 The Council will presume against development which would adversely affect the character or setting of all Listed Buildings, including the following category A properties:

- Kilmonivaig Parish - the Commando Memorial, Mucomir Bridge by Gairloch, Keppoch Barn by Roybridge.
- Kilmallie Parish - River Loy Aquaduct, Carn Phail Sluice, Torcastle Aquaduct (all Caledonian Canal).
- Fort William - St. Mary's RC Church, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church.
- Ardnamurchan Parish - Ardnamurchan Lighthouse, Glenborrodale Castle, Mingarry Castle.
- Arisaig and Moidart - Castle Tiorim, Glenfinnan Monument, Glenfinnan Railway Viaduct, Kinlochmoidart House.
- Morvern Parish - Ardtornish Mansion/Tower.
- Small Isles - Kinloch Castle, Rum.

3.6.18 The Council will encourage restoration and suitable after uses for buildings not currently listed but of local historic importance. These include:

- derelict Estate properties;
- redundant agricultural buildings;
- former industrial and commercial premises;
- disused churches and other public buildings.

Archaeological Sites

3.6.19 The Council:

- (a) will presume against development which would adversely affect the character or setting of Scheduled Monuments, other recorded sites and areas of archaeological significance;
- (b) in areas of high archaeological potential, may require developments to establish the nature, extent and importance of any remains, to allow an informed decision to be made. Where preservation of archaeological sites is not feasible provision is made, through planning conditions or Agreements as appropriate, for excavation and recording before development commences;
- (c) will encourage public access and interpretation in suitable cases.

The Council in partnership with Historic Scotland has completed a non-statutory register of archaeological sites in Lochaber.

Defence Lands

3.6.20 The Council will support Ministry of Defence use of land only where local views and an Environmental Assessment (if required) confirm its acceptability. Particular emphasis will be given to local employment and adjoining uses; public access, health and safety; water supplies and other utilities; the natural environment and heritage; and reinstatement provisions [P58 & P59].

Settlement Edges

3.6.21 Areas adjoining existing settlements will be protected from sporadic development in order to protect their identity and setting, prevent sprawl or coalescence, promote the orderly development of allocated land and supporting infrastructure, and to safeguard traditional settlement patterns [P62].

Contaminated Land

3.6.22 The Council in concert with other agencies, will take action and encourage measures to restore or rehabilitate contaminated land consistent with its statutory responsibilities.

Environmental Improvements

3.6.23 The Council will continue to give high priority to environmental improvements. The design of schemes, use of materials and treatments should be compatible with their surroundings. [P105].

Major Hazards

3.6.24 The Council will not encourage occupancy-intensive development within prescribed Health and Safety Executive consultation zones. Any development proposal within the vicinity of these (including further notifiable sites and pipelines) will be the subject of consultation with HSE as appropriate.

Environmental Assessment

3.6.25 The Planning Authority may require submission of a formal Environmental Statement in relation to development which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue inter alia of its nature, scale or location.

Existing Uses

3.6.26 Applications for development in areas not covered by any relevant policies or proposals will be considered on their merits. In such cases, the Council will normally seek to ensure consistency with the pattern and character of existing uses.

COMMUNITY

Secondary School

5.2.20 As a matter of priority, the Council propose to build a new High School to serve Ardnamurchan. £4,000,000 is provisionally allocated for the short term.

SERVICES

Strategic Roads

5.2.21 The Council propose to complete improvements to the Strategic Road Network in Ardnamurchan in the short-medium term as follows:

- (a) A861 Dalnabreck;
- (b) A861 Salen-Ardshearlich;
- (c) A861 Strontian Bridge;
- (d) A861 Kinlochmoidart-Drynie Hill;
- (e) A861 Structure Replacements II;
- (f) Drynie Hill.

Other Roads

5.2.22 The Council will give consideration to the following road and structural improvements:

- (a) B8007 Camastorsa;
- (b) B8007 Glenborrodale;
- (c) B8007 Kilchoan Footpath;
- (e) B849 Fuinary;
- (f) B849 Fuinary - Drimnin;
- (g) A884 Creiche and Easgadil Bridges;
- (h) C82 Sanna Bridge;
- (i) C79 Liddesdale Bridge;
- (j) U78 Loch Arienas;
- (k) U79 Glenhurich.

Ferry Services

5.2.23 The Council recognises the importance of ferry services to Ardnamurchan and Morvern and the support locally for retaining these. Consideration is being given to:

- (a) the current options for maintaining and possibly improving the link at Corran

including a replacement vessel (which can accommodate timber traffic) and slipway upgrading; and

- (b) maintaining the Camasnagaul route in preference to an alternative bus service, which is also under assessment.

The Council will continue to work with the local community to improve the marketing of both services to secure their operation for the future.

Water

5.2.24 As part of their capital programme, the Water Authority propose to complete:

- (i) Glenborrodale/Laga first time water supply at a cost of £500,000;
- (ii) Kinlochmoidart first time water at a cost of £600,000.

The Council will encourage the Water Authority to install a "first time" supply at Kilmory.

ENVIRONMENT

Countryside Access

5.2.25 The Council will encourage a major countryside initiative to develop and promote a comprehensive network of footpaths and biking routes, where practical, and mountain bike trails at Fuinary in Morvern, together with related facilities and accommodation in adjacent communities or suitable redundant buildings in the countryside. This might be based upon the following routes:

- (a) Sallachan to Polloch/Garvan;
- (b) Kingairloch to Ardtornish;
- (c) Drimnin to Laudale/Loch Teacuis;
- (d) Lochaline to Drimnin/Fuinary;
- (e) Acharacle to Glenborrodale;
- (f) Polloch to Resipole/Ardshealach;
- (g) Acharacle to Ockle;
- (h) Kilmory to Sanna/Ardnamurchan Point;
- (i) Branault to Ardsignish;
- (j) Alisary to Lochailort.

Visitor Facilities

5.2.26 The Council will consider provision of the following facilities in association with local tourist routes, subject to agreement with landowners:

- (a) picnic site at Sallachan/Inversanda, Drimnin, Ardsignish; Kentra and Sanna;
- (b) car park and access at Fuinary Forest;
- (c) viewpoints and interpretation at Keil Chapel/Killundine Castle, Ardtornish Castle/Point, Ockle, Ardnamurchan Point;
- (d) improved jetties at Kinlochmoidart, Ardtoe and a small scale slipway on the North Ardnamurchan Coast;
- (e) improved parking, interpretation and walks at Dorlin/Castle Tioram, Mingary Castle where the rock face requires reinforcement.
- (f) improved provision and conservation at Sanna and Portuairk beaches;
- (g) interpretation of the Buarbhaig abandoned crofting township on Ben Hiant.

Heritage Trail

5.2.27 The Council will promote a West Ardnamurchan Heritage Trail incorporating improved car parking, viewpoints, signposting, picnic sites at appropriate locations and interpretation of historic sites, including Ardnamurchan Lighthouse, Mingary Castle and the area's crofting history.

Castle Tioram

5.2.28 The Council will encourage the restoration of Castle Tioram in sympathy with its architectural and historic integrity. In the longer term the Castle could provide a suitable venue for local cultural events.

Local Nature Conservation Areas

5.2.29 Further to 3.6.4, the following sites are identified in Ardnamurchan and Morvern:

Montane: Bheinn Mheadhoin;

Cliff/Scree: Coire Slabhaig; Beinn a Chaisil; Leacraithnaiche; Meall a Chaorainn; Little Bonnet - Creag a' Bharra;

Gorge/Ravine: Clounlaid; Alltachonaich; Leac na Saighde;

Lochs and Rivers/Burns: Kingairloch; Loch Tearnait;

Native Woodlands: Eгнаig; Stron na Gaoithe; Allt Camas a Choirce; Inversanda; Glensanda; River Tarbet; Lochan na Criche-Doire Braghaid; Torran na Mointich; Meall a Bhainaiche; Allt na Cloiche; Achleek-Liddesdale; Coire na Craoibhe; Coille Dhubh; Rhuba na Sroin-na Cloiche; Carnoch; A Chreag; Meall nam Fladh; Elgnaig; Allt na Fienne; Kinlochaline; Ardtornish; Beach; Ardtorch; Allt Srath Shuardail; Druimbuidhe; Lochaline; Savary; Fuinary; Ardantoibairt; Allt Coire Reidh; Glen Laudale; Doire na Gad; Rahoy-Kinloch; Kinloch River; Glencripesdale; Durinemast; Acharn; Beinn Bheag; Carnoch; Oronsay; Drimnin; Port Mor; Auchnasaul; Coire an Lagain; Carnacailliche; Bealach Clach-Tom Mor; Creag an Loibein; Torr nam Muc; Linne a Chreagain; Achaphubuil-Treslaig-Blaich;

Saltmarsh/Islands: Kinlochmoidart Bay; Eilean Uaine; Glenuig Bay; Ardantiobairt; Loch Linnhe Islands; Kilchoan Bay;

Exposed Rock/Minerals: Loch Moidart Cuttings, Lochailort-Fassfern Cuttings; Loch Sunart; Allt Feith Dhomhnuill; Allt na Coire Dhuibh; Beinn Gormaig; Bealach Bay; Achleek; Loch Clachaig; Glen Tarbet;

Grassland: Caol Bheinn; Loch Clachaig; Loch Shiel Hotel; Shielbridge;

Heath: Kilmalieu; Monadh Rahuaidh;

Hay Meadows: Anaheilt-Scotstown-Ariundle; Ormsaigbeg;

Bog/More: Leacraithnaich; Srath Shuardail; Braigh na Glaice na Claice Mhor; Claggan; Loch na Sula Moire; Dig na Crich; Moss; Sheilbridge-Cnocan Breac Ard; Braig/Srath Uladail; Braig Dubh Dhoire; Allt an Fhaing; Glenborrodale;

Mudflats: Strontian Bay;

Coast: Kilmalieu;

Wet Meadow: Polloch; Ranachan.