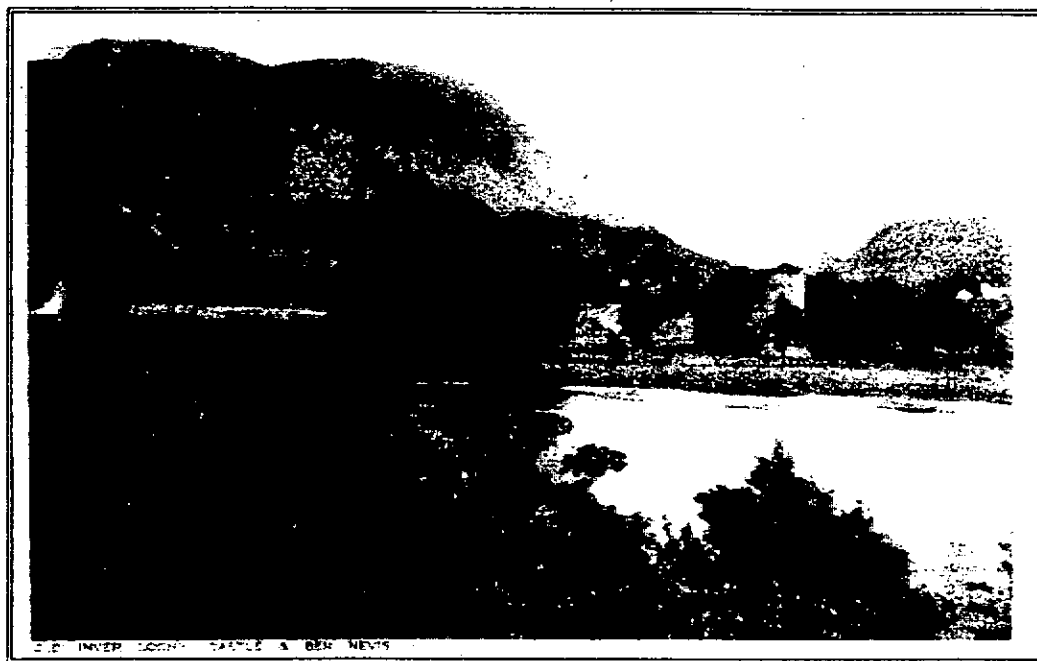


# Inverlochy Castle

**DRAFT**

**AN INTERPRETATIVE PLAN**

October 1998



## OBJECTIVE

*To provide an interpretative plan for Inverlochy Castle,  
demonstrating how the site might be interpreted  
and presented to the public.*

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Location Plan At back

## I ~ Know Your Property

Inverlochy was built in the mid-13th century by the Comyn Family. Following Bruce's destruction of this family's power in 1308 it became a royal base in the area. The most famous events associated with Inverlochy though took place outside its walls rather than within them with two Battles of Inverlochy in the history books. In 1431 James I, in an attempt to control the Lord of the Isles, sent the Earl of Mar to seize the lands of Alasdair Carrach, the Lord of the Isles' uncle. However Donald Dubh, Carrach's nephew, attacked Mar from the sea while Carrach harried Mar's flanks with 200 archers "in the hills". After this defeat James I came to a negotiated settlement with the Lord of the Isles.

The second Battle of Inverlochy was a very different affair when Montrose, finding his way up the Great Glen blocked by Seaforth, turned and attacked Argyll's covenanter troops at Inverlochy on 2 February 1645. The battle started to the SE of the castle near the present Aluminium works before moving to the plain to the South. Argyll's troops were routed and retreated to the castle before fleeing.

During Inverlochy's long period of royal control the castle appears to have been largely neglected. The result is that, because there was virtually no additional building, Inverlochy is a structure which, in its nature, is essentially 13th-century. In 1504, prompted by a movement to reinstate the Lordship of the Isles, the Earl of Huntly, acting on behalf of the Crown, repaired and garrisoned Inverlochy. While probably making adaptations for artillery, these repairs appear to have been slight.

The castle consists of a roughly square courtyard enclosed by substantial stone walls. There is a tower at each corner with that to the west (Comyn's Tower) providing the premier accommodation in the building. The interior of the courtyard contained timber-built ancillary buildings; a hall, kitchen, bakehouse, brewhouse, stabling etc... Around the castle is clearly visible the silted up moat which connected directly with the river Lochy to the NW. Also visible on the exterior are the traces of harbour structures as well as the traces of buildings associated with the castle's use in the 18th century as a depot for the Invergarry Iron Works. In the 19th century the castle, with Ben Nevis in the background, became a popular landmark. Its owner, the 3rd Lord Abinger, carried out some repairs during this time as well as adding the crenellations to the SW elevation to improve the prospect and building the outer perimeter wall with its small corner towers.

## II ~ Know Your Public

Inverlochy lies on one of the busiest tourist routes in Scotland, the Great Glen. According to HOST's figures over 400,000 visitors passed through Fort William in 1997. (Although numbers for this year are lower, 1998 has been a poor season throughout the Highlands and the visitor numbers to the Fort William area are far more stable than other parts of the region.) The SW end of the Glen has comparatively few sites for these people to visit. Inverlochy is in an ideal position to become a major attraction in the area with so few rivals.

Inverlochy has never been open to a paying public so there are no accurate visitor statistics. The following information is based on the Tourism in Scotland 1997 figures from the Scottish Tourist Board. These figures are purely a guideline to give some idea of the visitor profile of those visiting the Highlands who are likely to visit castles.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	%AGE
Scotland	30%
UK (other)	31%
English speaking overseas	16%
Germany	5%
France	2%
Italy	2%
Other	14%

### III ~ Know Your Price

Inverlochy, despite being a fine castle next to water on the Great Glen is never going to be as popular a site as Urquhart. However, the large number of visitors in the area should not be forgotten. Any interpretation scheme therefore should be capable of expansion and elaboration, responding to the visitor demand as Inverlochy becomes established as a visitor attraction.

This Interpretation Plan aims to set out the first phase of full interpretation at Inverlochy which should be simple but comprehensive, a case of learning to walk before you run. It should provide what is, essentially, an infrastructure for later expansion of interpretation provision. A scheme based on exterior quality boards can be augmented with written guides and other forms of interpretation, such as live interpreters or thematic displays, as demand develops.

In a basic board scheme of this size (at least initially) we would not advocate the use of foreign languages where the visitor profile indicates English as being the first language of 75% of visitors. Given Inverlochy's position in the West Highlands the interpretation should incorporate Gaelic.

Currently the castle is largely obscured and inaccessible and the immediate area unattractive. A certain amount of investment is required to rectify what might be termed a "conservation deficit"; carrying out environmental improvements to the area. Other relevant parties such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Highland Council and the Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board may be suitable partners in organising and funding this improvement.

## A ~ The Core Issues

### A1 Visitor comprehension

A1.i The survival of historic fabric at Inverlochy is largely confined to the hard shell of the building. The essential parts of the working castle were wooden structures which have not survived. This means that there is little visible clue to how the castle might have functioned.

A1.ii The castle site at Inverlochy is now hemmed in by the 19th-century railway and the 20th-century Aluminium smelter tailrace. This has divorced the castle from a contemporary relevant setting.

### A2 Blighted setting

A2.i The area around Inverlochy is subject to blight, from both past and present industrial use.

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## B ~ The Core Issues Addressed

### B1 Visitor comprehension

B1.i The loss of the wooden internal structures at Inverlochy can be compensated for, to some extent, by the use of interpretation boards. However site presentation techniques, such as the laying out the approximate footprint of vanished ranges in quarry dust, would help to dispel the feeling of the interior as a featureless courtyard.

B1.ii With the loss of interior features and considerable number of significant sites and features in the surrounding area, interpretation should emphasise Inverlochy's importance in the context of its immediate surroundings. This should involve not just those sites which are associated with the active life of the castle, such as the Battle Field, but also the castle's strategic position at the mouth of the Great Glen.

### B2 Blighted setting

B2.i Carry out environmental improvements in the area. This will involve rehabilitating derelict land, improved land management, screening of unsightly features and felling selected trees to open up the best views of and from the castle.

B2.ii Interpret the industrial heritage of the area (of which the later history of the castle forms a part) to give the tailrace and railway line a value in the mind of the visitor. It should be pointed out that Industry is here for the same reasons as the castle, sitting at a communications hub in the area.

## C ~ The Constraints

C1 Conservation - The archaeology of the site and the integrity of the historically significant remains in the area should not be compromised.

C2 Access - There is a privately owned house within the guardianship area as well as an access route to the Alcan social club. These access requirements are unlikely to change.

C3 Current Usage - The tailrace and the railway line are still in active use and any alterations to the site must not conflict with this usage.

## D ~ The Possibilities

### D1 Initial Phase of Interpretation Work

#### D1.i Presentation

##### a. Guardianship site

Inside the castle walls presentation work should concentrate on removing the works depot from the courtyard, (possibly to the SE of the castle). The lost ranges of timber buildings can be evoked by laying a broad border of quarry dust between 5m and 10m wide around the perimeter walls.

Outwith the walls the unsightly security fencing should be removed. The cutting down of selected trees should reconnect the castle with the river, from which it is currently screened. While some of the finer trees in the immediate area should be retained, many of them should be removed to give the castle "breathing space" and to avoid ongoing damage to archaeology. Planting of new trees for the purposes of screening features such as car parking at the Alcan Social Club, the tailrace and railway embankments should be carried out where there are no archaeological implications.

##### b. Outwith the Guardianship site

Any works beyond the guardianship site will require the co-operation of the local landowners and local authority.

Car parking - There will be a requirement for increased car-parking for the castle. There are two options available;

- Use of the Social Club car park which is largely empty during the day.
- Rehabilitation of derelict ground south of the tail race.

The latter option has the benefits of allowing coach parking (coaches cannot cross the bridge over the tail race) and keeping traffic well back from the monument.

The Burial Ground and Battefield - There is already a path to the ridge to the South of the castle. This could be extended to the prominent graveyard and on to the castle. This ridge was occupied by Argyll's troops in the 1645 Battle. It is an ideal site from which to interpret the course of the both battles with views in all directions allowing the course of events and the relationship with the castle to be understood despite the later developments.

Environmental Improvements - As part of these works the amenity of the whole area should be reviewed; clearing or screening the most unsightly features and reviewing access needs beyond the bridge over the tailrace.

## D1.ii Interpretation

### a. Guardianship Site

Inverlochy has no interior spaces and therefore any on-site interpretation will be based on exterior quality boards. These should concentrate on themes such as "The stone walls protected the timber buildings which were the centre of castle life", "Inverlochy uses water for both defence and transport", "Inverlochy is a statement of power at the gateway to the Great Glen".

### b. Broader Vicinity

The importance of the battles at Inverlochy is such that interpretation of the wider area will add greatly to the appreciation of the castle. Further exterior boards at key locations should interpret the Battles of Inverlochy (probably at the burial ground) and the industrial heritage of the area (Iron industry, railways, aluminium smelting).

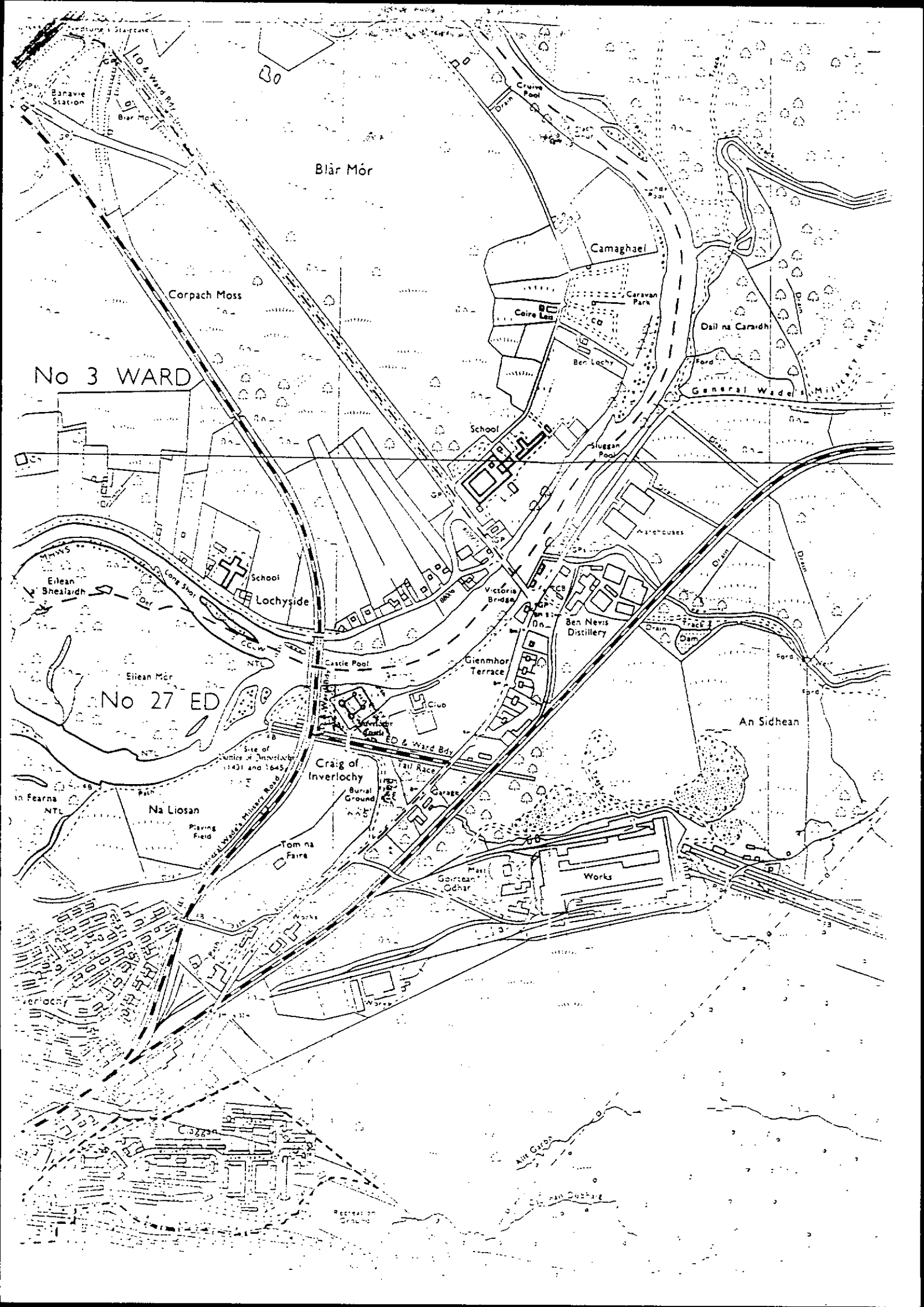
## D2 Long term possibilities

D2.i Written Guides - a brief guide to the castle is a simple and effective way of making available a much greater range of information. The content of a guide should complement the on-site interpretation scheme. It will also allow for foreign language provision.

D2.ii Visitor facilities - It is hoped that Inverlochy Castle will become established as a popular stop for visitors to the Great Glen. If this does happen then some basic visitor facilities will be required. In selecting a location for these facilities consideration should be given to archaeological sensitivity, visitor flow and the setting of the monument. The conversion of the cottage adjacent to the castle, currently a private house, would be an obvious solution but there may be other options such as the Alcan Social Club or new build.

D2.iii Displays - Visitors to major attractions have become accustomed to thematic displays. Such an introductory display could, potentially, be housed with the visitor facilities.

D2.iv Site Animation - The absence of the internal buildings at Inverlochy leaves the building feeling empty and lifeless. While the laying out of the approximate footings of the ranges may break up the expanse of the courtyard to a certain extent there is more which could be done. The use of live interpreters, demonstrating suitable activities and bringing the history of the castle to life may well be viable at high season.



Blàr Mòr

Corpach Moss

No 3 WARD

Camaghael

Coire Leò

Caravan Park

Dail na Caraidh

General Wades Military Mill

Ben Lochy

School

Sluggan Pool

School

Lochyside

Victoria Bridge

Ben Nevis Distillery

No 27 ED

Eilean Mòr

Glenmhor Terrace

An Sidhean

Craig of Inverlochy

Burial Ground

Trail Race

Garage

Works

Na Liosan

Playing Field

Tom na Faire

Mill

Gourcean Odhar

In Fearn

NTL

NTL

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NTL

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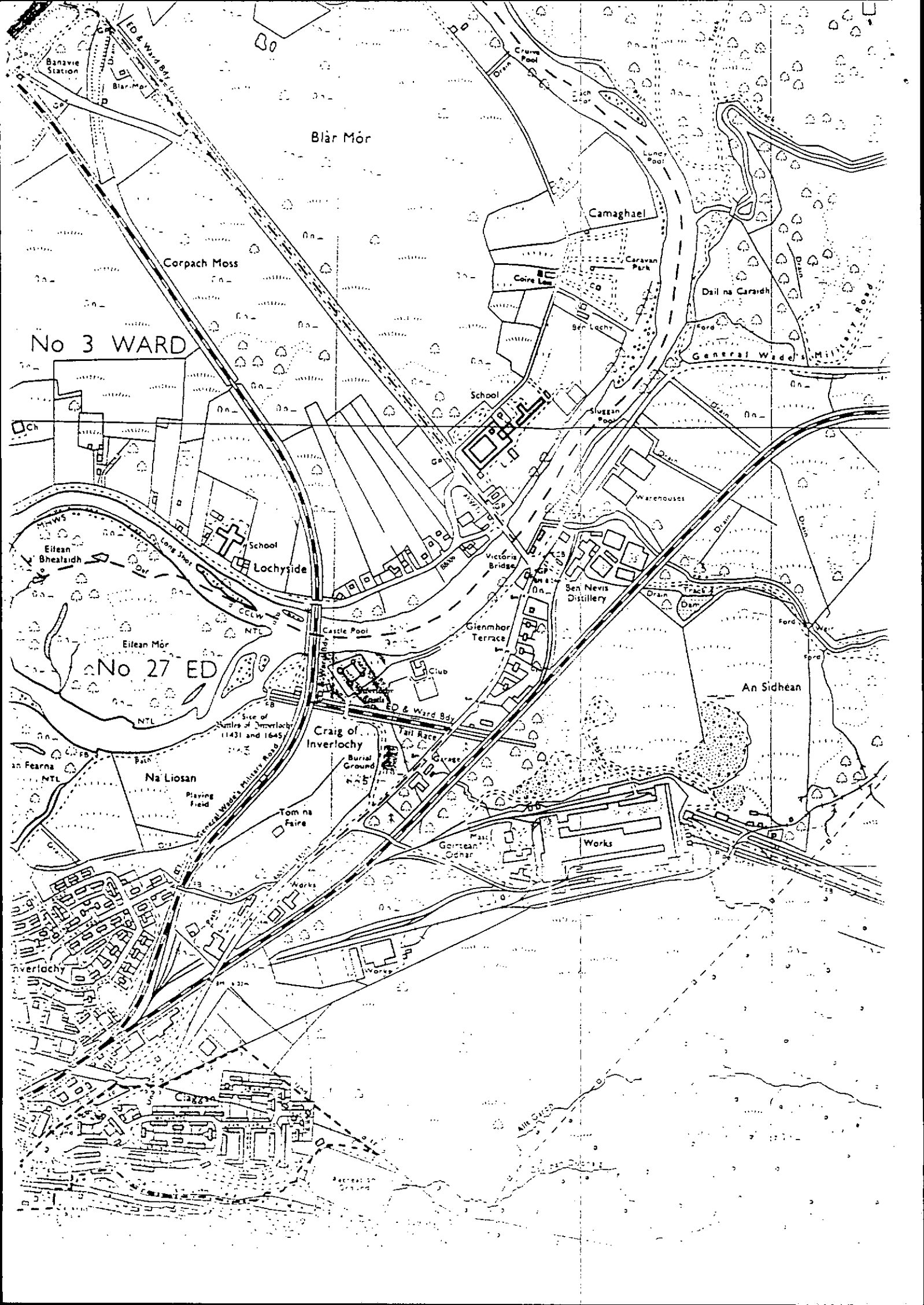
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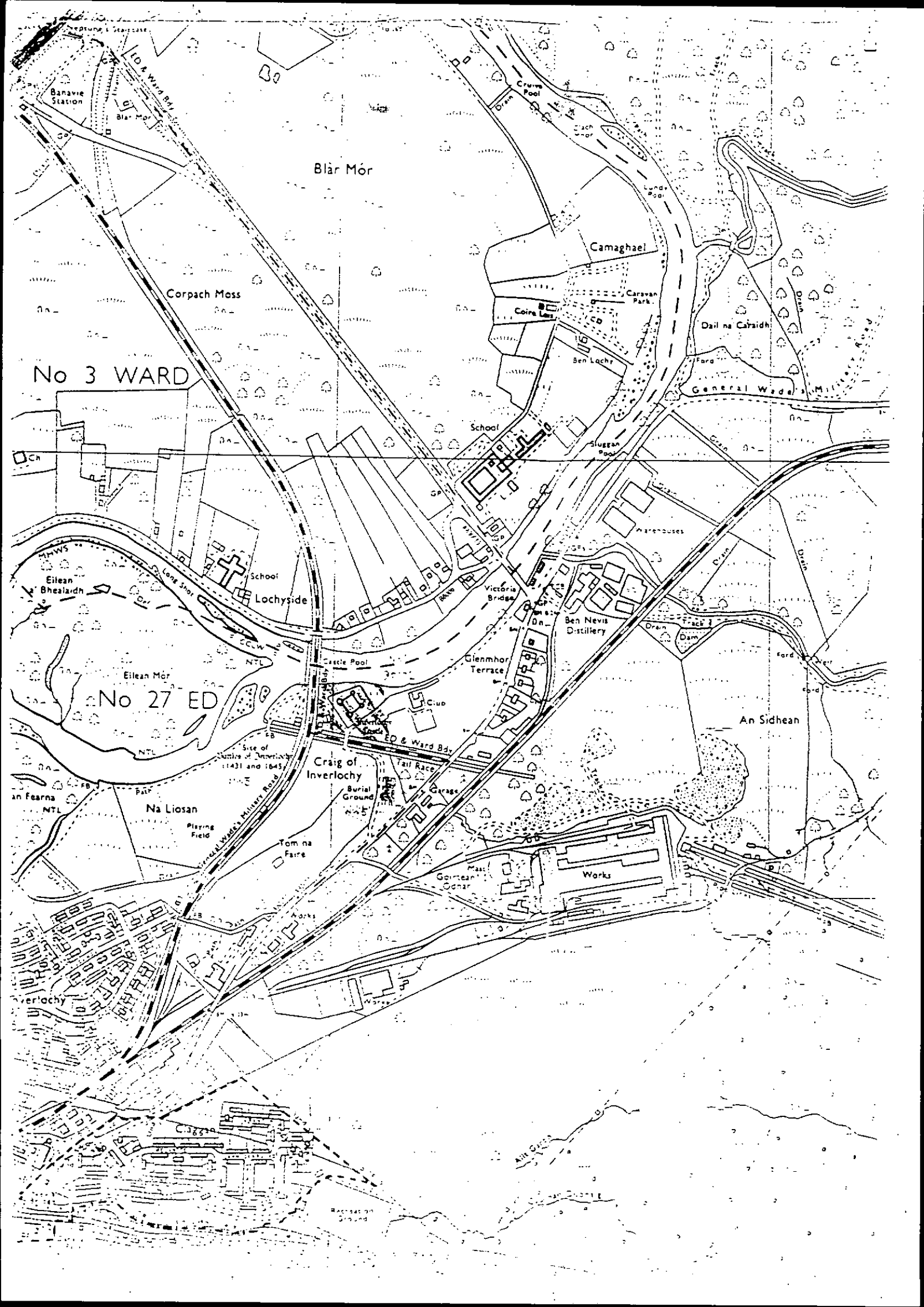
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No 3 WARD

No 27 ED

Blar Mór

Corpach Moss

Camaghael

Banavie Station

Crane Pool

Coire Leat

Caravan Park

Dail na Cairidh

Ben Lochy

General Wade's Mill

School

Sluggan Pool

School

Lochyside

Victoria Bridge

Ben Nevis Distillery

Eilean Mór

Glenhar Terrace

An Sidhean

Craig of Inverloch

Burial Ground

Tail Race

Garage

Works

Na Liosan

Playing Field

Tom na Faire

an Fearnna

Inverloch

Caravan

Backyard on Ground



The  
Highland  
Council  
Comhairle na  
Gaidhealtachd

Lochaber

Your Ref:

Our Ref:

Date:

EDS/FP:JCH/JM

1 September, 1998

12/11/98  
**FIRST CLASS**

**To: All Parties as per distribution below**

Dear Sir/Madam

**INVERLOCHY CASTLE MEETING -  
WEDNESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 1998 AT 10AM**

I refer to my letter dated 31 August 1998 and now enclose the "Draft" Interpretative Plan marked "to follow" on the Agenda.

Yours faithfully

J C HUTCHISON  
Lochaber Area Manager

Encl.

**Distribution:**

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Scott Dingwall, Lochaber Limited  
R Mainland, Chairman, Lochaber Historical Society  
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COMMUNITY

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