

**Island of Mull – Loch na Keal NSA
Landscape Capacity for New Housing
Final Report**

31 May 2006

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1 Introduction

This methodology therefore needed to embrace a landscape survey that

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character and scenic qualities of the islands, and which
would be removed or significantly compromised by
development

4 Settlement in Loch na Keal NSA: An Overview

Loch na Keal NSA has been designated because of its spectacular coastal scenery, dominated by juxtaposition of the expansive horizontal scale of the seascape and the dramatic verticality of the interior mountain peaks around Ben More.

It is further enhanced by the variety of interplay between land and sea, the contrast between the tiny scattered skerries and the solid massif of the mountains, the ever changing light conditions, and the presence of specific features, such as the sweep of the cliffs at Gruben and the distinctive silhouettes of the distant Treshnish Isles.

Much of the appeal of the NSA lies in these natural features and characteristics, and the way they are experienced as a sequence of views and vistas from a winding road which ensures that new panoramas are opened up at every corner and crest. Whether travelling on foot, by car or by boat, the alternating experience of small intimate spaces, sheltered by rock, intricate shoreline or woodland, followed by the sense of expanse when space opens out into the far distance, is exhilarating.

Settlement is generally sparse, and the balance between areas where built development is more obvious, and where more semi natural terrain prevails, contributes to the positive experience of the NSA particularly when travelling along the road, which loosely links the settled areas.

4.1 Settlements, Landscape Character and Scenic Quality

Settlements and individual dwellings contribute to the landscape character and scenic quality of the Loch na Keal NSA by:

- creating a pattern of more developed and less developed landscapes which alternate along the length of the northern loch shores
- informing the historic character of the landscape, particularly where buildings are located on the locations which have previously been more intensely managed
- reinforcing the sense of exposure in the landscape, which is demonstrated by the way houses occupy only sheltered locations
- reinforcing the linearity of roads as they wind their way through the landscape

5 Loch na Keal NSA: Identifying Study Areas

Four main study areas were identified for Loch na Keal NSA:

- Inner Loch na Keal, which focuses on the inland reaches of the loch, where steep slopes give way to level land created by alluvial deposits
- Outer Loch na Keal, which focuses on the settlements overlooking Ulva and the scattered islands and skerries at the mouth of the loch
- Inner Loch Tuath, which focuses on the settlements along the inner northern shore of the loch
- Outer Loch Tuath, which focuses on the largely linear sporadic settlement at the very western end of the loch