



Location and Context

The *Lochs with Settled Edges* Landscape Character Type includes the inland sections of Loch Linnhe, Loch Leven and Loch Eil along the Great Glen. While these 'ribbon lochs', created by flooding of ice-scoured fault lines, are common in Lochaber, they are distinguished by their relatively high density of settlement, including farms and crofts, towns (including Fort William) and villages, and main road links.

Key Characteristics

- Flat landscape contained between steep loch sides and open water.
- Extensive agriculture and settlement confined within a narrow lochside fringe, whose foreshore is subject to tidal influence.
- Loch heads and river mouths that permit more extensive farming and built development, including housing and small industrial estates.
- Communications confined to narrow loch edges where shingly beaches, rocky headlands, wooded banks and marshy platforms form a diverse water's edge.
- Extensive tracts of oak-birch woodland climbing from the lochside up into the foothills, often engulfing the settled edge and providing an enclosed microlandscape.
- Dense commercial forests descend to loch shore in some locations.
- Occasional policy grounds of big houses along the loch edge give rise to a proliferation of rhododendron and other ornamentals in some places, providing a lush and sheltered character.
- Linearly arranged crofting communities with vivid green croft fields contrast with the more subdued duller colours of surrounding hills.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Lochs with Settled Edges* Landscape Character Type occupies a narrow fringe, squeezed between the loch edge and the steep hillsides, which prevailed after sea levels fell after the last Ice Age. It is usually enclosed by the *Smooth Moorland Ridges* landscape.

Landcover

Broadleaf woodland proliferates along some sections of loch edge and provides a sense of enclosure which contrasts with the expansive views across the loch. The Ballachulish slate quarries, once the most important in Scotland, remain prominent features in the landscape. Grazing land forms the context for much of the settlement of the area.

Settlement

These areas encompass along their edges some of the principal settlements in Lochaber including Fort William and its suburbs of Caol, Corpach and Banavie; North Ballachulish and surrounding villages; and Kinlochleven, at the head of Loch Leven. The type also includes the major industrial areas in Fort William and Kinlochleven as well as core industrial estates. Remnants of the industrial planned villages of Ballachulish and Glen Coe are still visible amidst later housing. Between these centres, houses and crofts are scattered along the edge often set within grazing land. The spatial pattern of these pastures and crofts is distinctive along undeveloped sections of shoreline. The longevity of settlement in the area is evidenced by occasional prehistoric sites such as the fort of Cnocan Dubh and the archaeological features and artefacts discovered under the peat in North Ballachulish. Historic houses sit in prominent lochside landmark positions. Roads circumnavigate the loch edges along the settled strips or cut through rocky headlands where these penetrate to the water's edge. These often main roads are particularly busy in the summer months due to the high volume of tourist traffic.

Perception

The character of the loch edge is generally small-scale and diverse. The loch heads are sensitive in visual terms where views are channelled down lochs and their glens to them. Given its narrow spatial extent within the glen, the settled edge has a strong influence both on landscape character and on one's experience of it. Buildings are often white-washed, sometimes suburban in character, and stand out prominently against the hills and lochs and at night a string of lights seems to hang over dark loch waters. This landscape is frequently experienced amidst settlement when the detail and variety of built development along the loch edge is apparent and contrasts with the scale and homogeneity of the hillside and loch waters that enclose it. Views across the lochs to the opposite settled edges and hillsides above provide attractive visual detail.





This is one of 390 Landscape Character Types identified at a scale of 1:50 000 as part of a national programme of Landscape Character Assessment republished in 2019.

The area covered by this Landscape Character Type was originally included in the Lochaber LCA (Environmental Resources Management), published 1998.