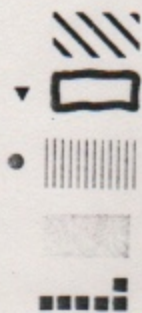


5

NATURAL RESOURCES



- NR16 { NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE
- { SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST
- NR17 : SITES OF INTEREST TO NATURAL SCIENCE
(Incl. River Dee System)
- NR18 { AREA OF REGIONAL LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE
- { NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
- { PREFERRED COASTAL CONSERVATION ZONE



- 7.31 It has been stressed that Grampian Region's tourism potential greatly relies on its natural and cultural resources. There is a need, therefore, to conserve both the cultural and natural aspects of the environment. There are already grants available to assist in the renovation and maintenance of important historic buildings, and the Nature Conservancy Council has powers to protect certain designated sites from adverse developments. There are, though, other aspects of the Region's heritage which often do not qualify for such aid, but which are still worthy of protection. In some cases only limited funding may be available, or in others particular projects may draw on a variety of sources of funding. In these cases the conservation of a particular aspect of the Region's heritage may prove difficult without the availability of extra, if limited, finance. It is to support this type of project that the Regional Council is proposing the establishment of a special joint fund which will provide limited finance to conservation projects of particular Regional significance across the broad spectrum of natural and cultural resources.

Supporting Proposal NR13

The Regional Council will, in collaboration with other agencies, endeavour to set up a Heritage Fund for the conservation of the most sensitive aspects of the Region's archaeology, natural environment and cultural and architectural history.

- 7.32 The projects chosen for funding would be required to make worthwhile contributions to the Region's natural and cultural heritage. In this regard the revision of the Regional Interpretative Strategy as outlined in Policy NR9 would provide some initial criteria for evaluating the suitability of projects. Until that time guidelines for the selection of projects will require to be established in consultation with District Councils and other agencies. The projects chosen should, preferably, contribute to the tourism potential of Grampian Region, but this will not preclude funds being used to protect other important aspects of its heritage. It is important that the fund retains flexibility and that, in addition to assisting specific projects, it can also be used to respond to requests to rescue or preserve particular aspects of the Region's heritage.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- 7.33 Initiatives for managing the environmental assets of the Rural Area must include policies which protect and enhance the environment. These policies must cover the full range of measures for pollution, nature conservation, landscape, archaeology and the built environment.

Pollution

- 7.34 Grampian Region's environment is generally unpolluted. Air pollution is not a problem except in localised areas. However, pollution problems do exist; short sea outfalls on the coast are still a problem in some areas, and inland there is also a hazard to water supply and fish stocks from inadequately treated sewage, industrial effluent and seepage of chemicals from farmland. The River Purification Boards are responsible for the monitoring and control of pollution of inland waterways and this will shortly be extended to cover the entire coastline. Grampian Regional Council is responsible for ensuring that there is adequate provision for sewage disposal and this will entail upgrading several short sea outfalls along the coast in accordance with the priorities stated in the Housing and Rural Economy Chapters.

Recommendation NR14

The Regional Council supports the River Purification Boards in their statutory endeavours to minimise the pollution of inland and coastal waters.

- 7.35 Grampian Regional Council has a contingency plan for dealing with oil pollution on the coast, and the details of the procedures are contained in a report entitled "Grampian Regional Council Technical Advisory Committee on Oil and Dangerous Substances Pollution: Emergency Procedures for Local Authorities"

- 7.36 Due to the geological stability of granite, Grampian Region has been considered as a possible area for the disposal of nuclear waste. The Government is currently searching for disposal facilities for intermediate level nuclear waste, that is assorted waste produced by the nuclear industry and the electricity generating board - sludges, fuel element cladding, ion exchange resins and assorted debris. Although less radioactive than the heat generating wastes (spent fuel reprocessing material), intermediate level nuclear wastes can be long lived and comprise large volumes (up to 70,000 m³ by the year 2000). If the disposal of heat generating and intermediate level nuclear waste was allowed, it could pose a potential pollution threat to the citizens of the Region.

Policy NR15

IT IS THE POLICY OF GRAMPIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL THAT THERE WILL BE NO DISPOSAL OF HEAT GENERATING AND INTERMEDIATE LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE WITHIN THE REGION. IN THE EVENT OF A PROPOSAL FOR THE DISPOSAL OF OTHER NUCLEAR WASTE, THE REGIONAL COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE TO BE SATISFIED THAT THERE WILL BE NO DETRIMENT TO THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF THE POPULATION.

Nature Conservation

- 7.37 The maintenance of the Region's wealth of natural and semi-natural wildlife habitats deserves particular consideration, not least because of the fragile nature of many of the habitats, which can easily be irreparably damaged. The natural environment can be harmed by agriculture and forestry operations which currently are not under planning control, as well as by urban development over which the local authorities are able to exert planning control. It is essential therefore that there is co-operation between all those who are responsible for the management of the countryside and that there is an appreciation of the need to maintain wildlife habitats.
- 7.38 Specific measures are available to conserve sites which have been designated by the Nature Conservancy Council for their special scientific interest but in addition to safeguarding these sites, it is important that the general wildlife value of the countryside is maintained. Habitats such as hedgerows, wetlands, small tracts of woodland, shelter belts and peat mosses all provide refuges for wildlife, particularly in areas where agriculture predominates.
- 7.39 Grampian Region contains National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest which are areas of international and national importance for nature conservation (see Map 5). These have been designated in order to provide a selection of sites representative of the natural habitats in both a regional and a national context as well as to encourage the retention of rare and unique species in Grampian Region. The designations also include sites important for their geological or physiographical interest. Where engineering or other operations may endanger these sites, the Nature Conservancy Council is required to be notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and may decide to enter into a management agreement with the owner to protect the nature conservation value of the site.
- 7.40 In conserving Sites of Special Scientific Interest, *appropriate steps should be taken to reduce disturbance to* ~~it may be important to establish a buffer zone around the site in order to reduce disturbance to particularly~~ fragile habitats or species. Disturbance can take many forms, ranging from inappropriate land uses, to human activities.

Policy NR16

THERE WILL BE A PRESUMPTION AGAINST ALL DEVELOPMENTS WHICH MAY DESTROY OR ADVERSELY AFFECT NATIONAL NATURE RESERVES AND SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST. ~~IN CASES WHERE THREATS TO THESE ARE NOT SUBJECT TO PLANNING CONTROL, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS WITH OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS FOR THE BENEFIT OF NATURE CONSERVATION WILL BE ENCOURAGED.~~

- 7.41 The natural science interest of the Region is acknowledged to extend beyond the statutory Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The Regional Council has undertaken a Study of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (SESA) and has identified, in conjunction with experts from Aberdeen University, Sites of Interest to Natural Science (SINS) which are of Regional importance. This study is subject to regular updating and revision. In 1978 the Council approved a policy to protect the areas so identified and recommended its adoption to the District Councils. The Regional and District Councils have since set up consultation procedures with the panel of SESA experts when applications are received for development affecting these sites.

Supporting Policy NR17

The Regional and District Councils will protect sites of interest to natural science from development which could destroy or adversely affect their special character. *The cases where proposals involve National Nature Reserves or Sites of Special Scientific Interest are not subject to planning control, the establishment of management agreements with owners & developers for the benefit of nature conservation will be encouraged.*

Landscape

- 7.42 The Rural Area contains many scenically attractive areas but there are also some areas, for example in Buchan, where there is a need for landscape enhancement measures, such as tree planting. A small proportion of the Rural Area has been designated as a National Scenic Area by the Scottish Development Department (Circular 20/1980) and Structure and Local Plans are required to adopt appropriate safeguarding measures for these and the Preferred Coastal Conservation Zones. Proposed development in National Scenic Areas must be the subject of consultation between the Planning Authority and the Countryside Commission for Scotland.
- 7.43 It is considered that many other areas of the Region are also worthy of special protection because of their outstanding scenic qualities and the value this plays in tourism promotion. Both the Regional and District Councils have accordingly identified areas of landscape value and adopted policies to safeguard their character. *The areas are to be considered so that development should not detract from the overall quality of the landscape.* There is a need to further define these areas in Local Plans through consultation between the Regional and District Councils.

Policy NR18

ALL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN NATIONAL SCENIC AREAS, PREFERRED COASTAL CONSERVATION ZONES AND AREAS OF REGIONAL LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE, AS DEFINED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DISTRICT COUNCILS, WILL RESPECT THE SPECIAL NATURE OF THESE AREAS. LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES WILL, WHERE APPROPRIATE, ADOPT THESE AREAS IN THEIR LOCAL PLANS.

- 7.44 There are also some aspects of development, not normally requiring planning permission, which can prove damaging to the visual amenity of the countryside. Such developments include vehicular tracks. The Regional Council is particularly concerned over the development of bulldozed roads, and poorly sited and constructed vehicle tracks have appeared in many upland areas since a survey in 1955. There are now approximately 400 miles of these tracks in Grampian Region. Tracks can visibly scar the hillsides, erode and disturb fragile arctic habitats and significantly decrease the area of remote "wilderness" land. Tracks located above 300 metres in national Scenic Areas are now subject to planning control but this still leaves considerable unprotected areas of Regional importance which do not come under the control procedure.
- 7.45 The Regional Council is particularly concerned about the continuing development of vehicular tracks in upland areas. The only method available to Planning Authorities at present to increase the protection afforded to these areas is by making a Direction for specific areas (subject to confirmation by the Secretary of State) under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Development) (Scotland) Order 1981 removing permitted development status and therefore requiring planning applications to be submitted for the formation of vehicular tracks.

Recommendation NR19

The District Councils are recommended to take whatever measures that are open to them to control the development of vehicular tracks within Areas of Regional Landscape Significance.

Archaeology and Ancient Monuments

- 7.46 The Region has a rich archaeological heritage, and the full extent of early habitation is only now being revealed. The great majority of the Region's archaeological sites are not yet classified as Scheduled Monuments and are, therefore, at risk from development. The Regional Council is concerned that these unscheduled sites should be protected against adverse development through planning control. It is envisaged that some of these sites may become scheduled in the longer term but until this takes place such sites are still vulnerable, particularly to changes in agricultural practice and afforestation which are not items subject to planning control. However, it is possible to protect these sites from those forms of development which are subject to planning control.

Policy NR20

THERE WILL BE A PRESUMPTION AGAINST DEVELOPMENT WHICH WILL DESTROY, OR ADVERSELY AFFECT, ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE AND SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS.

- 7.47 The Regional Council wishes to survey and record all field monuments but this survey is at present hindered because Part II of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 has not yet been implemented in Scotland. This part of the Act would enable the Regional Council to designate Areas of Archaeological Importance in the Region. Such a designation would require any person intending to carry out certain operations within the Area of Archaeological Importance to serve notice of his intentions on the planning authority in order that the Regional Archaeologist could inspect the area with a view to making an accurate record of any features of archaeological or historic interest in the area.

Proposal NR21

The Regional Council will undertake a comprehensive survey and classification of all field monuments. To assist the recording of threatened monuments the Regional Council will urge the Secretary of State for Scotland to implement Part II of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979.

Built Environment

- 7.48 Grampian Region contains many buildings of considerable architectural merit. As well as the contribution they can make at the local level in enhancing the visual character of the Rural Area's built environment, they can also be an important asset in attracting tourists to the Region. Responsibility for protecting individual buildings, groups of buildings or conservation areas against unsympathetic development lies with District Councils.

Policy NR22

THE REGIONAL COUNCIL WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT DISTRICT COUNCILS IN IDENTIFYING AND PROTECTING LISTED BUILDINGS, LISTED GROUPS OF BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS.