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## LA4'S LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

LA4's brief is to carry out a landscape assessment of the landscape value of, and potential management strategies for, the landscape of the Central Otago District. More specifically, in order to help the Council to meet its obligations under the Resource Management Act 1991, the landscape assessment sets out to:

- Identify landscape units and landscape categories on the basis of consistent homogenous landscape character, and describe their main physical characteristics. As part of that process LA4 will include aspects of the history of the land, particularly in terms of their effects on landscape;
- Assess landscape values in order to identify:
  1. natural character values;
  2. landscape quality including aesthetic, heritage and rarity values;
  3. iconic landscapes or landscape features;
- Determine the landscapes visual absorption capability (i.e. its ability to absorb change), and its vulnerability to change taking into account different viewing audiences and user groups - leading to an evaluation of overall sensitivity to subdivision, use and development or change in general;
- Come to conclusions about the values and sensitivities of all the units and categories;
- Develop a landscape ranking. This is likely to include:
  - proposed outstanding natural features and outstanding landscapes;
  - proposed regionally significant landscapes;
  - landscapes in which a landscape assessment must accompany development proposals;
  - areas with potential for expansion of settlements or countryside living areas.
  - significant Landscape features.

(This ranking may change depending on what other landscape architects have done in the surrounding areas districts)

- Work with Mike Garland and Ian Brown re focus groups;
- Input into the formation of objectives and policies for the statutory management of the Central Otago landscape.

- Prepare maps that identify the landscape units, the landscape features and the outstanding and regionally significant landscapes. These will use the Land Information topographical maps (1:50,000 and 1: 100,000 scale) as a base.
- Prepare final landscape report.

## Detailed Methodology

### Landscape Assessment

An intensive field survey is being carried out and a photographic record obtained (both standard and digital). Each landscape unit is identified and assessed using a “Landscape Assessment Worksheet”. Where appropriate boundaries were revised and units subdivided to more accurately relate to the landscape themes present in the landscape. A photographic record for each landscape unit will be attached to each worksheet and the individual units were assessed on a scale of 1 - 7 (high) for a number of criteria to provide composite ratings for VALUE (quality) and VULNERABILITY. These are then combined to establish SENSITIVITY ratings for each unit.

The next step was to identify and record on the Landscape Assessment Worksheets the specific factors that contribute to the value and vulnerability ratings, and to assess their relative importance. These factors are important at both the micro and macro level. They include:

- *Physical elements that enhance landscape character and value;*
- *Patterns and compositional factors that enhance landscape character and value;*
- *Elements and patterns that adversely affect landscape character and value*
- *Elements that contribute to visual absorption capability*
- *Audiences exposed to the unit and their relative scale.*

As part of this stage of the assessment the important iconic or distinctive landscape features for each unit will be identified.

### Overall Sensitivity Ratings

For each landscape unit an overall sensitivity rating is assigned on the final page of the Landscape Assessment Worksheets. The sensitivity classes range from 1 (no or very low sensitivity) through to 7 (extreme sensitivity). These sensitivity classes, which are derived from the value, the vulnerability and the influential factors in each unit, are then related to the requirement under the Resource Management Act 1991 to protect outstanding landscapes (Section 6 - Matters of National Importance) in the following way:

Rating	Sensitivity	Protection level RMA
7	Extreme sensitivity	Outstanding Landscape
6	High sensitivity	Outstanding Landscape
5	Significant sensitivity	Regionally Significant
4	Moderate sensitivity	
3	Limited sensitivity	
2	Low sensitivity	
1	No / very low sensitivity	

The sensitivity ratings, which are achieved in this methodology, are a combination of landscape quality (value) and landscape vulnerability.

### **Natural Character**

Natural character effects are considered in relation to:

- natural processes,
- natural patterns, and
- natural elements.

### **Landscape Character Categories**

Once the landscape units had been identified, these were amalgamated into landscape character categories. These categories incorporate landscape units of consistent landscape character, thereby facilitating the definition of objectives and policies for types of landscapes.

Overall the assessment establishes the relative importance that should be attached to different types of landscape and their individual components, enabling analysis of the likely effects of different types of development upon the wider landscape. This is based on the implications for individual landscape features and components and identification of specific audiences that would be affected.

### **Significant Landscape Features**

These are features which are either significant in the local area or its immediate surroundings or over a much wider area. These features can be part of an outstanding landscape or isolated. They add interest and character to an area. Such features as specific peaks, headlands or landforms (Sugar Loaf) could be identified as significant.

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