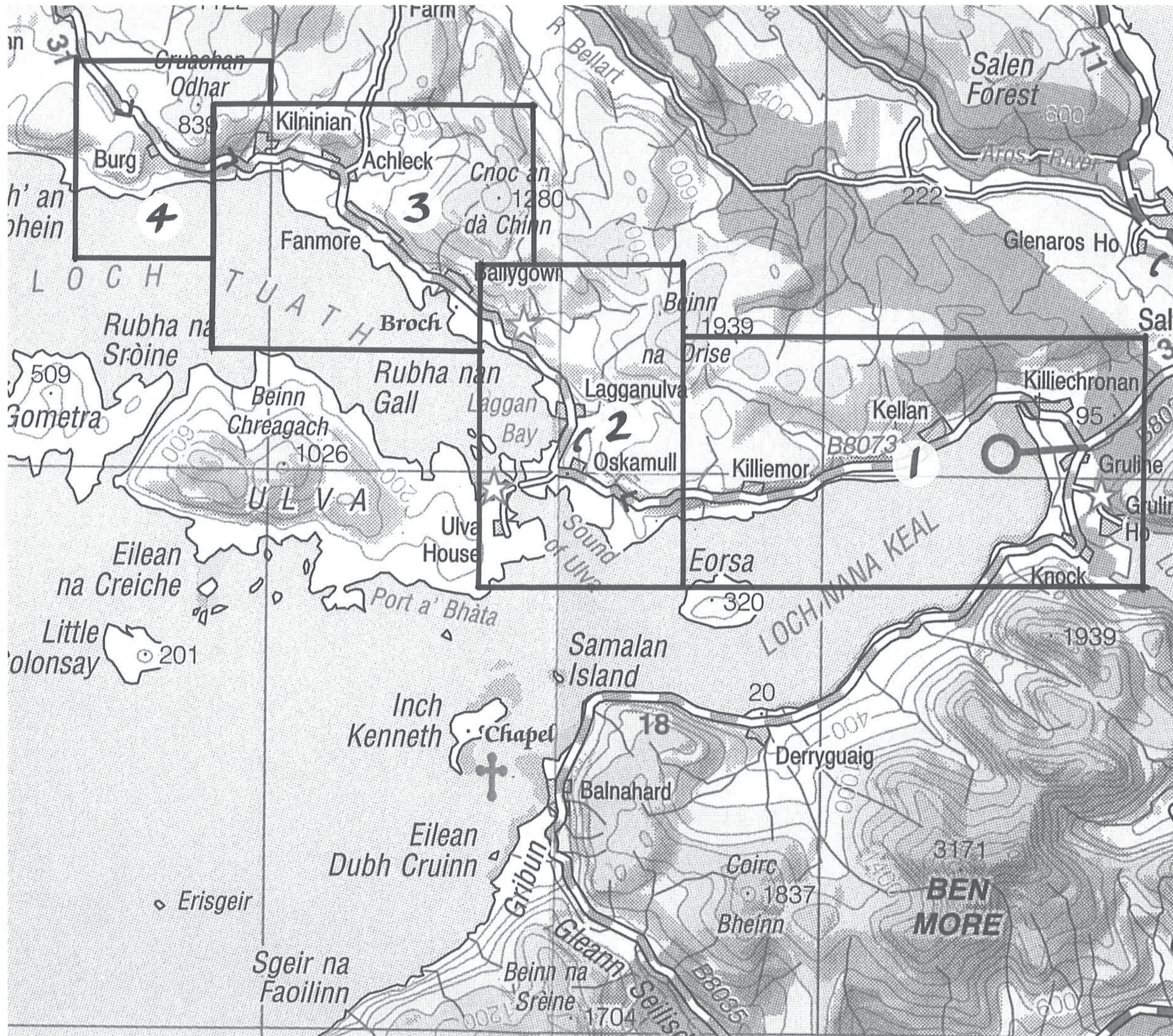


5 Loch na Keal NSA: Identifying Study Areas

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



Island of Mull
Loch na Keal NSA Study Areas

- 1** Inner Loch na Keal
- 2** Outer Loch na Keal
- 3** Inner Loch Tuath
- 4** Outer Loch Tuath

6 Inner Loch na Keal

The steep sided, enclosing slopes which rise up from the lochside give way to an expanse of alluvial land at the head of Inner Loch na Keal.

This part of the loch is characterised by the contrast between the rugged, steep sided landscape of the south shore of the loch, the more cultivated, lowlying, sheltered and diverse structure of the vegetation pattern at the head of the loch and the exposed, irregular terrain fragmented by pockets of native woodland and rock outcrops along the northern shore.

The road winds its way along the shorelines, until at the head of the loch it veers inland, extending through an alternating sequence of enclosed woodland and open fields.

Views of the loch and the more dramatic juxtaposition of vertical slopes and panoramic seascapes are experienced from the lochsides, while at the head of the loch, the detail of fine mature woodland and framed views across the open fields provide a contrast to the more semi natural character of much of the loch.

Settlement is relatively sparse, and as with the rest of Loch na Keal, is placed to coincide with physical opportunities for managing the land, being strongly associated with the more fertile alluvial soils.

Three strategic areas were identified in this area. The survey information and the opportunities and constraints for which have been mapped at 1: 25 000 scale on the following pages. No existing settlement was considered large enough to warrant detailed analysis.

6.1 Inner Loch na Keal Strategy Areas

Three strategy areas were identified in Inner Loch na Keal. Each has its own distinctive landscape and visual character, and the settlement opportunities and constraints have been identified to maintain and enhance the existing character. The three areas are indicated on the survey map which follows and are called:

- Alluvial plain
- South facing fields
- Steep south facing slopes

6.1.1 Alluvial Plain

This relatively level area of fertile soil is characterised by the enclosure created by the mature woodland, which shelters and defines the spaces created by fields of permanent pasture. The alternating sequence of enclosure and open space created by this pattern is the defining experience when travelling along the road.

Views are limited by the woodland, focussing on the detail of the pattern of open spaces, the diversity of the woodland and occasional glimpses to surrounding hills.

Development is always located in sheltered woodland settings, frequently in the interior of the plain, away from the lochside, and nearly always where they can take advantage of views opening out across the grazed fields. Detached buildings therefore are strongly associated with the inland woodland edges, creating a very specific settlement pattern.

6.1.2 South Facing Fields

This area is located at the transition between the fertile alluvial plain, and the steeper, less cultivatable slopes which extend westwards along the lochside. As a result, the pattern of woodland and open fields becomes less structured, while views of and along the loch open up as the slopes become steeper.

Existing settlement tends to occupy similar locations to those within the Alluvial Plain: buildings are sited against woodland or steeper land, just outside the fields. They do tend to occupy more prominent locations, taking advantage of the loch views, but are nearly all associated with burns or distinct knolls.

6.1.3 Steep South Facing Slopes

These largely undeveloped steep slopes are characterised by relatively rugged terrain and occasional rocky outcrops clothed with semi natural vegetation, including some scrub and woodland. Some remnant field boundaries on a more level terrace are associated with the farm of Killiemor, but the fields are relatively indistinguishable from the surrounding unimproved grazing land. The landscape is relatively exposed.

From the road there are extensive views across Loch na Keal to Ben More, to the islands of Eorsa and Ulva and the skerries and islets which are scattered across the bight.


Existing dwellings are associated with very specific landscape opportunities: the mill is tucked into the gulley of a watercourse, the farm at Killiemor in the sheltered lee of a knoll adjacent to a level terrace of fields and the buildings at Cnoc nan Cearc are elevated above the road, semi hidden by rising ground, back against a sloping hillside.

Island of Mull
Inner Loch na Keal Strategy Areas
Site Analysis and Observations

 Strategy Areas:

- 1** Alluvial Plain
- 2** South Facing Fields
- 3** Steep South Facing Slopes




 Existing development associated with woodland edges overlooking open fields

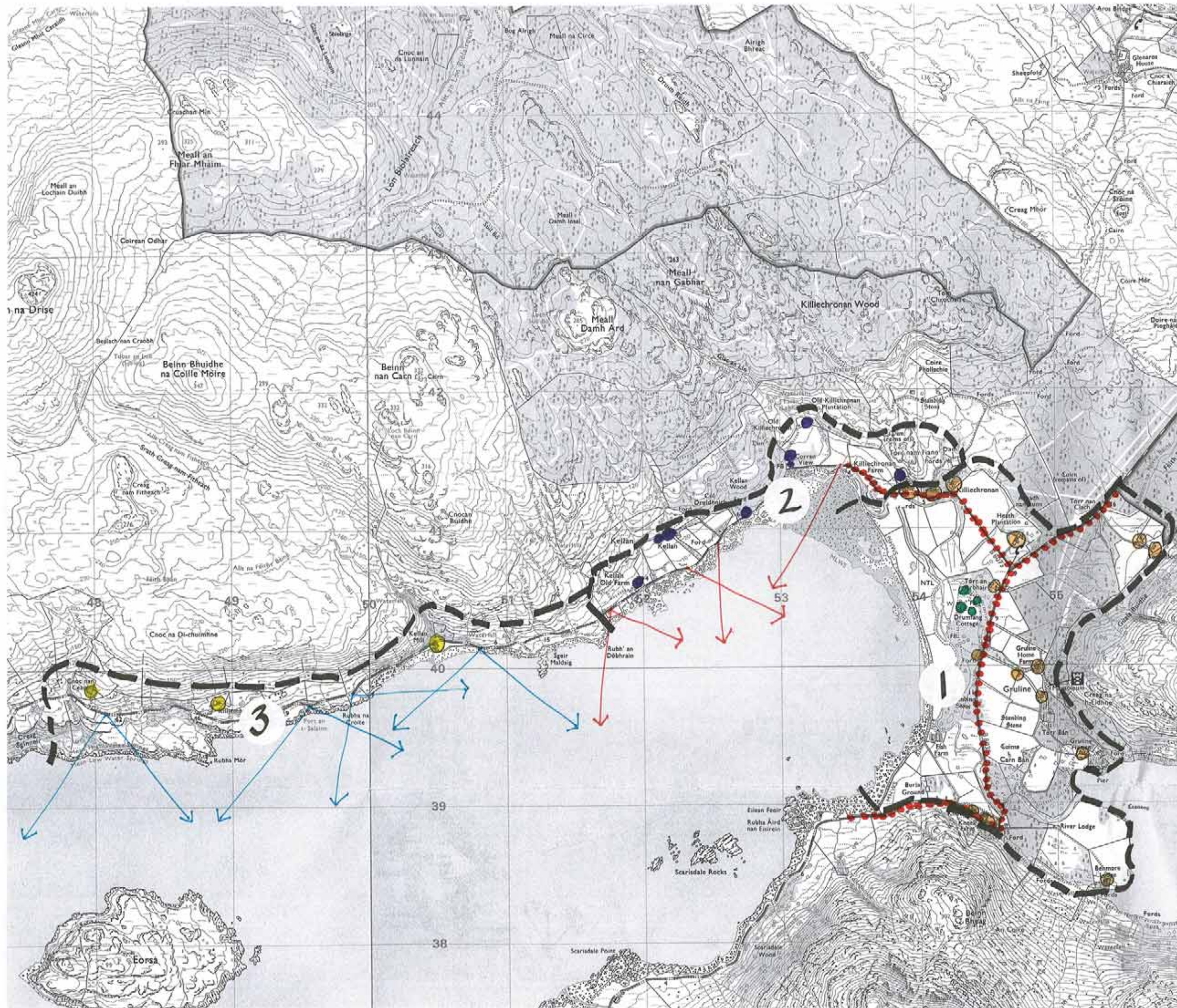
 Existing development associated with more prominent locations, but with a backdrop of woodland or rising land

 Existing development located within woodland

 Existing development associated with specific land form features such as a sheltered gully or enclosed fields

Key Views from Public Road

-  Views from the road alternate between enclosed woodland and views across fields
-  More distant views around the head of the loch and to Ben More begin to open up
-  Panoramic views along the length of the loch and towards the ridge of peaks around Ben More



Island of Mull
 Inner Loch na Keal Strategy Areas
Landscape Opportunities and Constraints



Strategy Areas



Alluvial Plain

Opportunities for housing development are limited to locations which reflect the existing settlement pattern of detached buildings and clusters located at the edge of woodland overlooking the fields. There are likely to be several opportunities for new building which would relate to this existing pattern.

Existing access tracks should be used as far as possible, with new tracks located along field and woodland edges if necessary. No new overhead wires should be permitted.

2 South Facing Fields

Opportunities for housing development are limited to the transition between level fields and rising ground. New sites on the edges or within woodland would make the most of localised shelter in this exposed area of land. There is also a strong relationship between buildings and the containment provided by knolls and rocky outcrops. Additional sites should reflect this relationship to maintain the characteristic.

Development between the road and lochside should be discouraged, as should any development within the more level fields.

Existing access tracks should be used as far as possible, with new tracks located along field and woodland edges if necessary. No new overhead wires should be permitted.

3 Steep South Facing Slopes

These relatively undeveloped slopes offer an important contrast to the more managed and populated head of the loch.

Development here is severely limited, not only by the steep terrain and relative exposure, but also by the sparse character of the existing settlement pattern which reflects these physical constraints. No opportunities for additional development were identified in this area.

