

West Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan

Kilpatrick Hills

Local Landscape Area

Statement of Importance



MAY 2015

KILPATRICK HILLS LOCAL LANDSCAPE AREA

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Contents

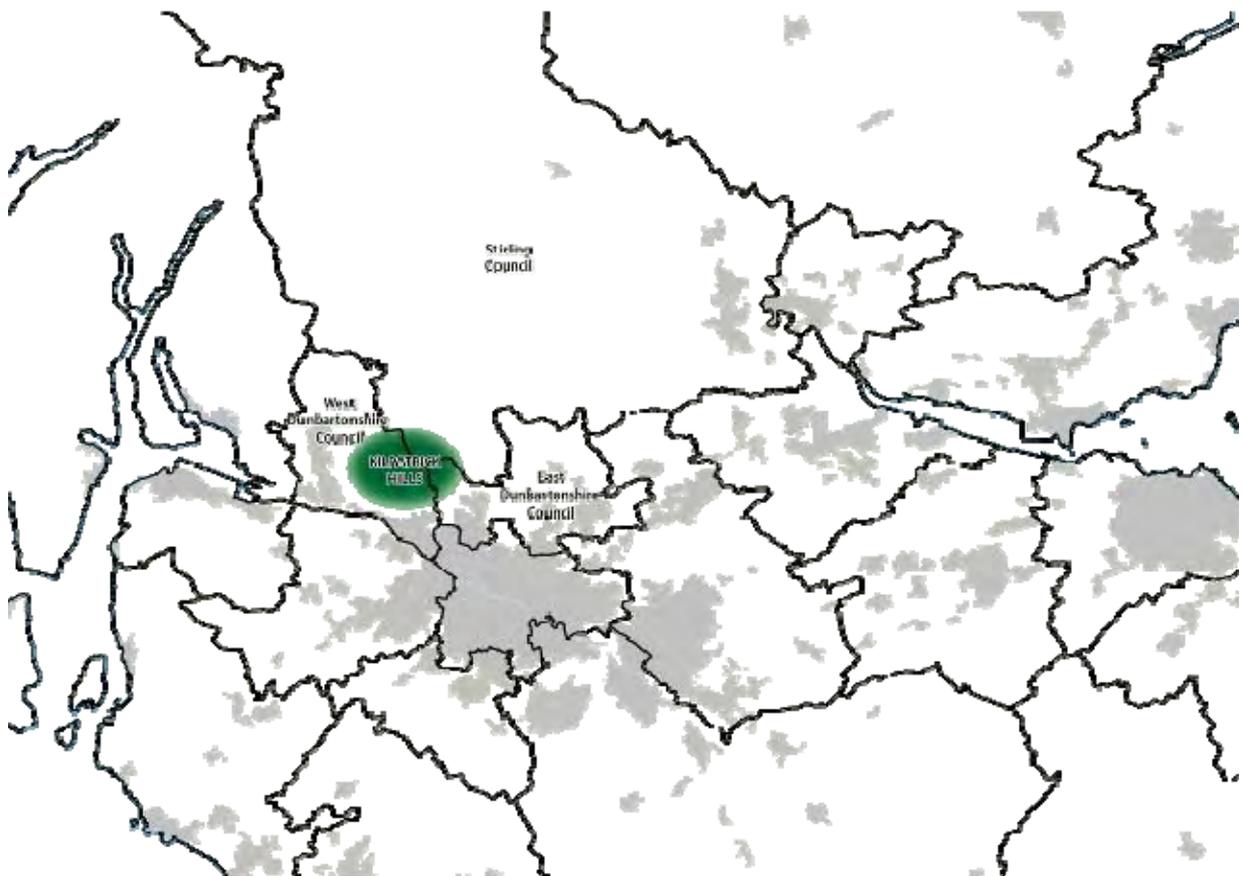
1. Introduction
2. Policy context
3. Study approach
4. Statement of Importance
 - 4.1 Landscape overview
 - 4.2 Landscape context
 - 4.3 Special landscape qualities
 - 4.4 Local Landscape Area boundary
 - 4.5 Landscape change
 - 4.6 Other designations and interests

Appendix 1 – Results of Local Landscape Area boundary assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

The Kilpatrick Hills stretch from Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven in the west to Strathblane in the east. The rugged upland landscape provides a stunning backdrop to the settlements which fringe them, including Balloch, Dumbarton, Bowling, Old Kilpatrick, Clydebank, Bearsden and Milngavie, creating a unique sense of place. To the north of the hills lies the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. The majority of the range is within West Dunbartonshire, although it extends into East Dunbartonshire and Stirling. In connection to the Kilpatrick Hills' special landscape qualities, the area is home to an important habitat network and provides recreational opportunities for local communities.

The Kilpatrick Hills are designated as a Local Landscape Area (LLA) in the West Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan (LDP), with policy support for the designation detailed in Policy GN4 of the Plan. This Statement of Importance explains the reasons why the Kilpatrick Hills have been selected for the designation. It provides a basis for managing change and for protecting and enhancing the area's special qualities.



Map 1 – The location of the Kilpatrick Hills within central Scotland.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

Scotland's landscapes are recognised as a major asset, contributing to national, regional and local identities, adding to the quality of many people's lives and providing attractive settings which help to promote social and economic development. The importance of landscape is acknowledged internationally by the [European Landscape Convention](#), which promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues.

The Convention provides a framework for Scotland's approach to landscape, based on a set of [five principles](#). It defines:

- 'landscape' as an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors
- 'landscape protection' as actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity.

Improving the natural environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it is one of the Scottish Government's 16 national outcomes, which detail how its central purpose of delivering sustainable economic growth will be delivered.

Landscape designations play an important role in protecting and enhancing those areas which are of particular value and merit special attention. National Scenic Areas (NSAs) are areas which are nationally important for their scenic quality. NSAs are complemented by local designations, which protect, enhance and encourage the enjoyment and understanding of locally important landscapes.

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) encourages planning authorities to designate areas based on their local landscape value. The purpose of local landscape designations should be to:

- Safeguard and enhance the character and quality of a landscape which is important or particularly valued locally or regionally; or
- Promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character and special qualities of local landscapes; or
- Safeguard and promote important local settings for outdoor recreation and tourism.

It is important therefore to develop an understanding of local landscape character and its sensitivity to change, which this Statement of Important helps to achieve.

The value of the Kilpatrick Hills as an important landscape has been recognised by development plans for over 30 years. Their designation as a Regional Scenic Area emerged from the 1981 Strathclyde Structure Plan, with its boundaries identified in subsequent local plans. However the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan, approved by Scottish Ministers in May 2012, does not identify and safeguard strategic environmental resources in the same way as previous Structure Plans.

The Kilpatrick Hills Landscape Character Unit does not stop at local authority boundaries. Consistent with West Dunbartonshire's policy approach, East Dunbartonshire Council published its Proposed Local Development Plan in April 2015, which proposes to designate the Kilpatrick Hills as a Local Landscape Area. In October 2014, Stirling Council approved Supplementary Guidance that designates the Stirling section of the Kilpatrick Hills as a Local Landscape Area. These policy measures will help to ensure a consistent approach is taken to managing change within the hills.

3. STUDY APPROACH

The Main Issues Report for the West Dunbartonshire LDP, published March 2012, included the preferred option that the Kilpatrick Hills be identified as a Local Landscape Area. This was widely supported in the response to the MIR consultation. West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), East Dunbartonshire Council (EDC) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) have subsequently worked together to prepare this 'Statement of Importance' for the proposed Kilpatrick Hills LLA which identifies its extent (following a review of the RSA boundary – see Appendix 1) and landscape character, including those qualities identified as special, explaining the reasons for the designation.

Study Approach

The Statement of Importance has been prepared following three key stages:

- i. A landscape designation review meeting held on 8th December 2011 with landscape, planning, area and access staff from SNH and WDC to discuss key views and landscape attributes of Kilpatrick Hills;
- ii. A desk review of the [Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Landscape Character Assessment](#) (1999) and SNH wildness and wild land mapping assessments;
- iii. Fieldwork assessment within the Kilpatrick Hills, carried out over 3 days (30th and 31st October and 30th November 2012) by SNH landscape advisors, area officer and WDC and EDC planning staff.

4. STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE



Photograph 1 – Taken from Middle Duncolm north-eastward towards Duncolm. The panoramic background view includes part of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.

4.1 Landscape Overview

The Kilpatrick Hills form a distinctive rugged upland landscape, inextricably linked with their surroundings: ‘borrowed’ views, unique and relatively accessible panoramas and a plethora of high quality vistas, both to and from the Kilpatrick Hills, make the area key to defining the identity of nearby settlements and in providing a setting for nationally important landscapes.

The Kilpatrick Hills rise relatively steeply from the River Clyde shores and the Leven Valley to around 400m at their highest point at Duncolm. The landform comprises a series of rounded, locally craggy summits set within an undulating plateau, crossed by a series of burns. Land cover is characterised by open moorland including heather and rough grasslands, with extensive areas of blanket bog. Several of the area’s burns have been dammed to create reservoirs and lochs which sit among the summits and several coniferous plantations. Semi-natural and native woodland cover is largely limited to the narrow burn corridors and glens and the edges of the Kilpatrick Hills, notably the designed landscapes of Overtoun, Cochno and Edinbarnet. This woodland forms a key component of the relatively short transition from the urban area and agricultural land to the rugged moorland hills.

This abrupt transition from surrounding areas, the seemingly remote and relatively wild characteristics of the hills, and the ease of access from west Central Belt towns and cities, makes the Hills a popular recreational area, including for hill walking,

mountain biking, fishing and wild camping. The ecological value of the Kilpatricks, both in their internal habitat network and as an upland 'island' within the settled lowlands, greatly enhances their landscape qualities and recreational value.

4.2 Landscape context

Regional Landscape context

Although the Kilpatrick Hills are relatively low lying they are part of a wider landscape character area. To the east the hills tumble dramatically into the Blane Valley, which separates the Kilpatrick Hills from the Campsie Fells and Kilsyth Hills.

The Glasgow & Clyde Valley Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 1999) notes that the Kilpatricks are part of a broken line of rugged upland which encloses Glasgow and the Clyde Valley to the north. The uplands are marked by steep south facing slopes which are visible from much of the conurbation. This 'Rugged Moorland Hills' landscape type crosses west to east from the Kilpatrick Hills, through the Campsie Fells/Kilsyth Hills to the Fintry, Gargunnock & Touch Hills and also the Ochil Hills. The Landscape Character Assessment notes the following key characteristics, features and qualities:

- distinctive upland character created by the combination of elevation, exposure rugged landform, moorland vegetation and the predominant lack of modern development;
- a shared sense of apparent naturalness and remoteness which contrasts strongly with the farmed and developed lowland areas;
- presence of archaeological sites on hill tops and sides.

The Kilpatrick Hills are bounded immediately to the north east by the Cameron Muir and Stockie Muir which are assigned by Stirling Council's Supplementary Guidance on Landscape Character Assessment (adopted October 2014) to Landscape Character Area L22. This is described as a transitional moorland hill fringe landscape owing to its relationship with Strath Blane (L10). Auchineden Hill and the Whangie, which together form one of the best known viewpoints and places of interest within the Kilpatrick Hills, fall within this area. Setting aside the local authority boundary, however, the area can also be considered to form part of the landscape character unit of the Kilpatrick Hills, sharing many of its key landscape qualities.

The relationship between the Kilpatrick Hills and the area around south Loch Lomond is an important element in the Hills' regional landscape context. The Kilpatrick Hills form a key element in the setting and overall landscape composition in views to/from the south-east part of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the Loch Lomond National Scenic Area (NSA).

Local Landscape Character

The local landscape identity of the Kilpatrick Hills is focused around prominent hills, escarpments, plateau moorland and the abrupt transition from surrounding urban areas and farmed lower slopes. There is a high perceived quality of wildness and sense of apparent naturalness and remoteness, particularly in the central areas of the Kilpatrick Hills, derived in part from the limited visual influence of modern development, in contrast to nearby urban areas.

The skylines and edges of the Kilpatrick Hills play an important role in views from the Vale of Leven, Dumbarton, Clydebank and Milngavie. They form a natural setting and backdrop for large areas in the Glasgow conurbation, which visually contrasts with the urban development. With such an extensive visual envelope, and large viewing populations, the hill slopes and skylines have a high level of visual and landscape sensitivity.

Although the Kilpatrick Hills are lower than the mountains beyond the highland boundary fault to the north, their dramatic form and largely open character make them a defining feature in the overall landscape composition.

4.3 Special Landscape Qualities

The following landscape qualities of the Kilpatrick Hills are identified as being of special interest: they justify and explain the Kilpatrick Hills' selection as a Local Landscape Area. The qualities identified consider not only key landscape and visual characteristics but look beyond these to encompass how the landscape is experienced and valued. They identify and explain the importance of specific locations and landscape features which are considered to contribute strongly to what is special about the area.

NB: This section should not be interpreted as a comprehensive inventory or gazetteer of notable locations or features in the area.

i. Strong sense of remoteness, wildness and open horizons

Although the area is partly traversed by tracks and electricity lines and bounded by roads, the Kilpatrick Hills are almost completely uninhabited. At a broad level the landform is very simple and the open moorland appears vast in extent with open horizons. However at a more detailed level there is a diversity of topographical features and upland habitats characterised by mosaics of bog, heath land and grassland, with frequent rocky outcrops, scree and crags. Fragments of broadleaf woodland also occur on the lower ground, and highlight ravines and burn corridors that provide some shelter. Coniferous plantations occur frequently and appear highly incongruous in this landscape as stark, angular, dark blocks which contrast with the muted colours, textures and sinuous patterns of the moorland vegetation.

Pockets of enclosed grazing, stone walls, post and wire fencing and telegraph poles mark the transition from the central area of more remote hills and moorland to the lower slopes and road and urban corridor to the west and south. Infrequently scattered across the landscape are the remains of archaeological or historic features

such as cairns and these add to the sense of a remote historic unchanged landscape.

It is a simple landscape providing a rolling hill backdrop, undeveloped as a natural setting to adjacent urban areas. This contrast and proximity creates an 'accessible solitude' which is enjoyed particularly in the central areas. Here the remote hills, reservoirs and lochs provide an experience of remoteness, isolation and tranquility in a landscape where wild and natural character dominates.



Photograph 2 – View eastwards from the core path above the Kilpatrick Braes



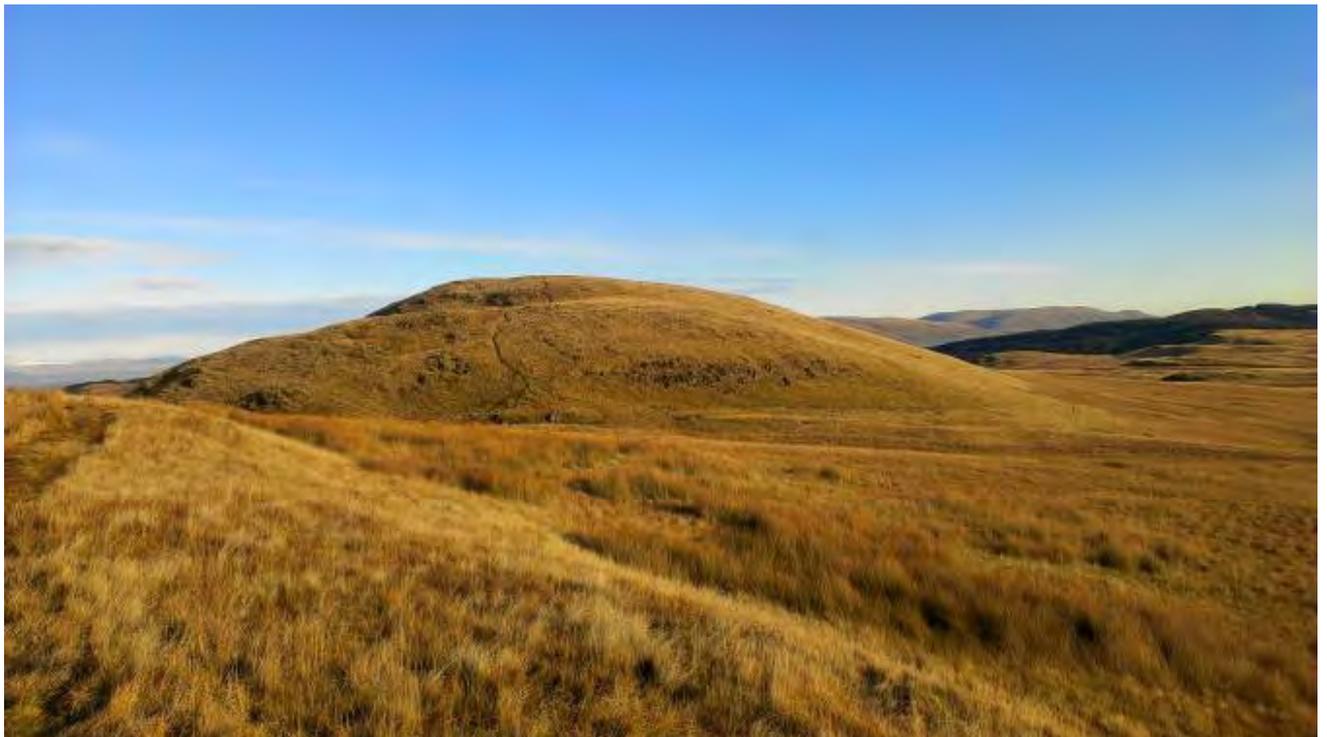
Photograph 3 – Part of the Kilpatrick Hills central area

ii. Distinctive landforms

Within the Kilpatrick Hills, the sweeping open moorland and coniferous plantations are contrasted with the summits such as Duncolm, Doughnut Hill and Auchineden Hill which form distinctive local landmarks. In places, the summits give way to dramatic ridges of rock and escarpments. In the south, distinctive horizontally banded lava flows, eroded into stepped cliffs, top the hill faces shelving gently downwards towards the well-defined transitional area of moorland and fields. Dramatic hill edges, long ridges, exposed rock cliffs and the gentle roll of land forming the lower slopes play an important role in the overall landscape composition. The Kilpatrick Braes, and the Lang Craigs which dominate the skyline above Dumbarton, are the most prominent examples of this feature of the Kilpatrick Hills.

Elsewhere, deep valleys and gullies such as Auchenreoch Glen and Glenarbuck have formed at the edge of the Kilpatrick Hills where the many burns run through towards the River Clyde.

Many of these features are locally or regionally important for their geology. Together they tell a story of how the Hills formed which enhances the experience of visitors (see also section 4.5).



Photograph 4 – The Duncolms are some of the striking landforms within the Kilpatrick Hills



Photograph 5 – The Lang Craigs from Overtoun Estate

iii. A unique diversity of views

The Kilpatrick Hills boast unique and relatively accessible panoramic views in all directions, so that the landscape experience from these small hills is one of being part of and “viewing the whole of Scotland”. For example, there is a sequence of vast panoramic views over the Clyde estuary on the short walk from Old Kilpatrick up over the Kilpatrick Braes. When at Duncolm, within the core of the Kilpatrick Hills, it is possible to see east beyond Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh (approximately 80km or 50 miles) and south to the Carsphairn hills (approx. 50 miles) and the Merrick (approx. 57 miles), in Galloway. From the same vantage point, in views to the north, Ben Lui is framed between Ben Lomond and Ben Vorlich, and Loch Lomond and its Highland setting are clearly visible.

These panoramic views form part of a tremendous range of high quality views both to and from the Kilpatrick Hills. Well over 20 key, panoramic or iconic high quality viewpoints can be identified. These views are very diverse and range from important internal vistas of remote areas with no urbanisation visible, to extensive “borrowed views” of the adjacent nationally important highland landscape. Open horizons and borrowed views lead to the Kilpatrick Hills being experienced as part of a much larger landscape, increasing the sense of isolation and solitude.

Long views across the Glasgow conurbation emphasise the contrast between the remote upland and developed lowlands. In well-known views from outwith the Kilpatrick Hills, from locations such as Carman Reservoir and Dumbarton Castle, the Hills are a key feature seen across adjacent urban and farmed lowlands. The Hills’ skyline makes an important contribution to the setting of views from the north and east of Glasgow city and the Inner Clyde estuary.



Photograph 6 – The Clyde basin from the Kilpatrick Braes



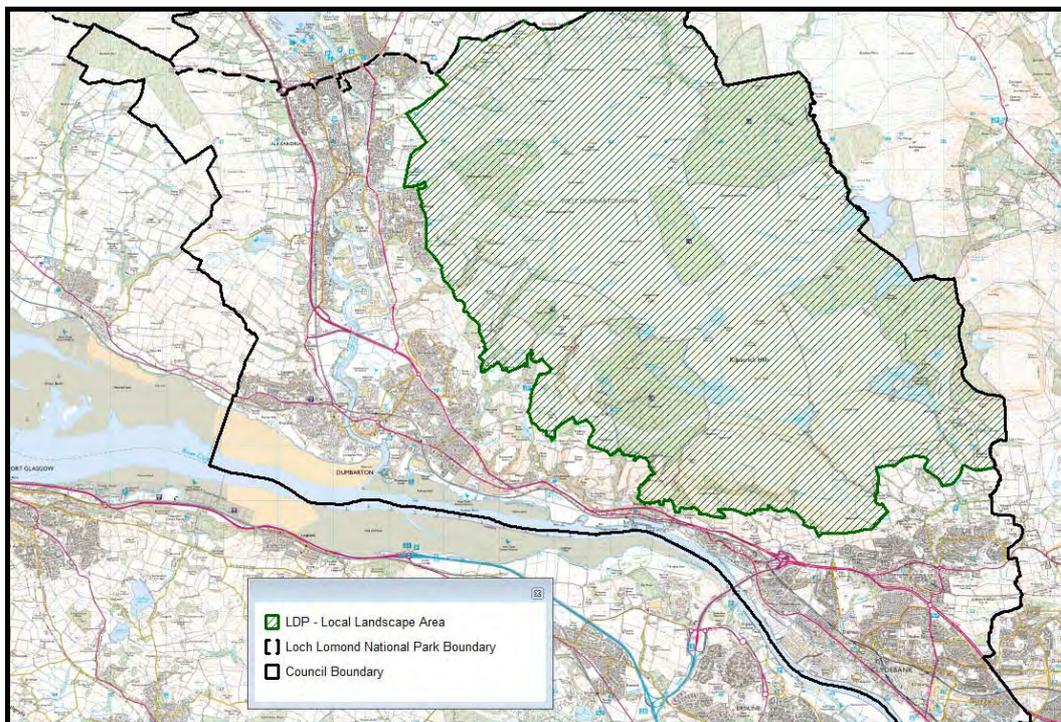
Photograph 7 – View from Middle Duncolm toward the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park

4.4 Local Landscape Area boundary

An important element of the fieldwork undertaken was to determine the boundary of the Local Landscape Area, taking account of the Regional Scenic Area boundary as defined in the adopted West Dunbartonshire Local Plan (2010) and features in the landscape, with the aim of creating a robust boundary which is clearly identifiable.

Lower hill slopes and fringes contribute to the setting and approach to the Kilpatrick Hills' distinctive ridges and crags, acting as an important landscape and visual buffer. These transitional landscapes are generally more diverse in appearance than the open hills. The historic influence of old estate and policy landscapes, such as Overtoun, Cochno and Edinbarnet, is still evident in many of these areas. The historic character, policy woodland, remnant field tree lines and avenues, and vistas associated with remains of former farmed estate landscapes make an important contribution to landscape diversity and setting on the boundary of the Kilpatrick Hills. These areas also provide a unique ease of access to an experience of remoteness and the diverse experience of sharply contrasting landscape. In a short walking time, visitors will pass from urban and suburban town, through farmland or parkland, to wild expansive upland landscape, but be still in close proximity to or have a view of contrasting urban lowlands.

The boundary of the LLA recognises the importance of these transitional landscapes to the overall character of the Kilpatrick Hills, acknowledging that landscape changes in these areas can have a significant effect on the landscape quality of the Kilpatrick Hills, particularly in terms of how it is experienced by local people. The historic RSA boundary has therefore been moved further down the hill slope in a number of locations to create the LLA boundary. Appendix 1 provides a full description and justification for the LLA boundary.



Map 2: Local Landscape Area boundary

Separate exercises have been carried out within the East Dunbartonshire and Stirling Council areas to define the LLA boundary within these authorities.

4.5 Landscape Change

A key principle in the policy approach to landscape is that landscapes are constantly changing and evolving in response to our needs. Positive change should be facilitated whilst maintaining and enhancing distinctive character. Human activity has already had notable effects on parts of the Kilpatrick Hills' landscape, including: management for grazing; the creation of water-supply reservoirs for nearby urban areas; planting and management of commercial forestry and associated infrastructure such as access tracks; and erection of masts and pylons. All of these cumulatively have detracted from some of the special landscape qualities in some locations, particularly the characteristics of remoteness and perceived wildness/naturalness. They do not, however, presently dominate or significantly impact on the overall character of the landscape in the central parts of the Kilpatrick Hills.

Landscape planning and management should aim to conserve the character and special qualities of these Rugged Moorland Hills. Developments and land use changes which undermine the sense of perceived wildness/naturalness and remoteness should be resisted.

4.6 Other designations and interests

In addition to their importance in landscape terms, the Kilpatrick Hills are unsurprisingly home to a number of other natural heritage and recreation interests. This range of habitats, geodiversity sites and formalised access routes enhances landscape experience and the number of people who can enjoy it.

The Kilpatrick Hills feature a network of nationally and locally important nature conservation sites, of both biological and geological interest. Five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are found within the Kilpatrick Hills and much of the rest of the area has been designated as Local Nature Conservation Sites. These provide the SSSIs with a robust framework of buffers and habitat connectivity which contribute to safeguarding their viability and recognise the wildlife value of the Kilpatrick Hill's open mosaic of habitats.



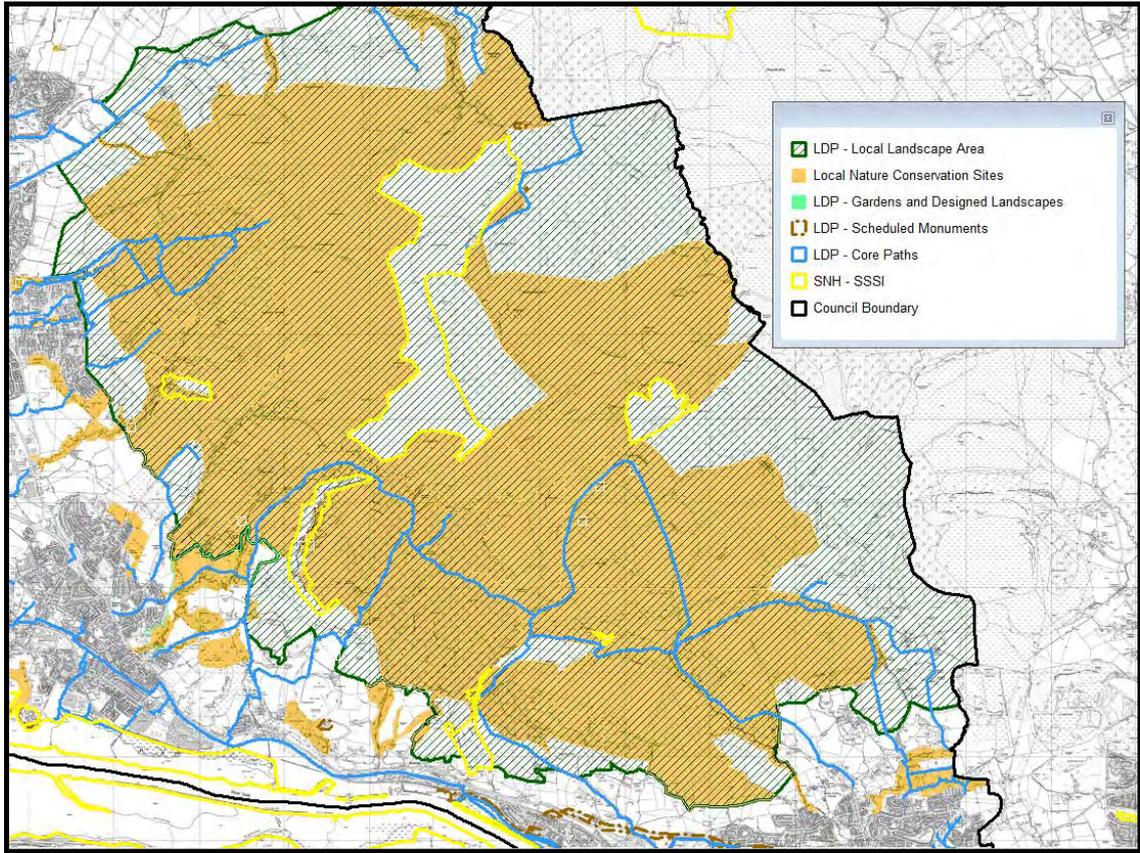
Photograph 8 – Auchenreoch Glen – a SSSI for its nationally important grassland, and a Local Geodiversity Site [or geological LNCS] for its impressive rock outcrops

The hills contain pockets of nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitats, as defined on SNH's (draft) Carbon and peatland map 2014, which for the first time defines and maps soils that are of national importance for their carbon retention properties.

The hills are connected to the wider green network by a number of core paths and burn corridors – key features which both link the habitat network and enable residents and visitors to West Dunbartonshire to enjoy the Kilpatrick Hills.

Historic gardens and designed landscapes form part of transitional landscapes at the edge of the Kilpatrick Hills. Grand houses constructed by wealthy industrialists at Overtoun, Auchentorlie, Cochno and Edinbarnet, mainly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, historically had large gardens, parkland and woodland associated with them, designed and managed to add to the setting and enjoyment of the main house. Overtoun Estate is the best example of an estate as it would have originally looked when the house was built and is recorded on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscape.

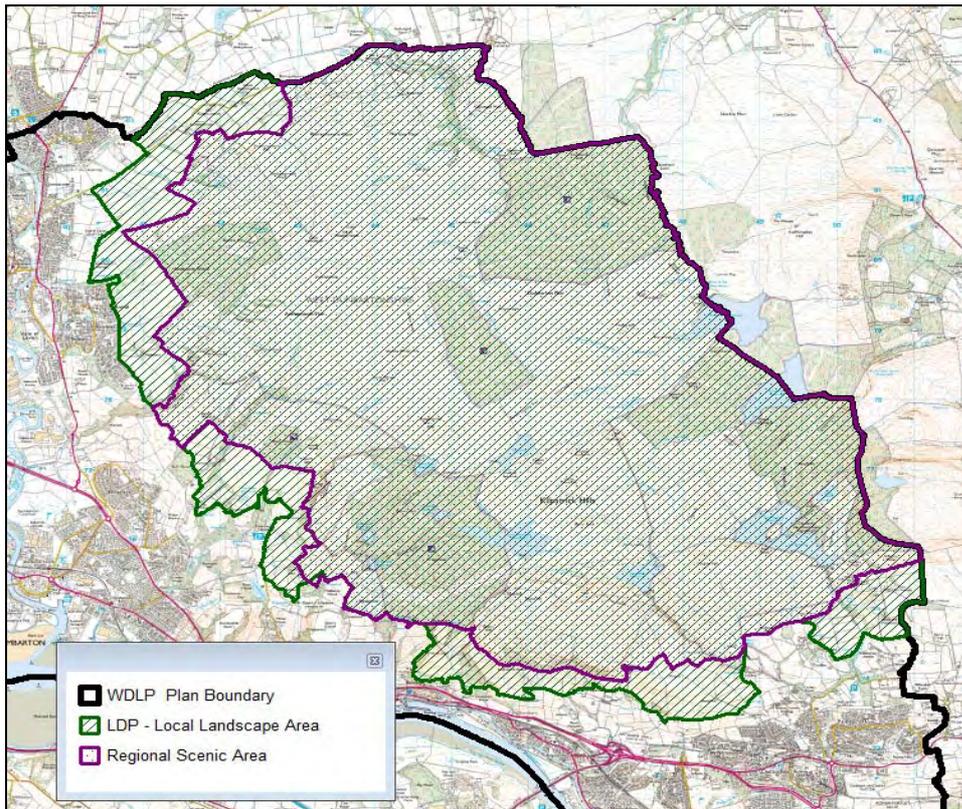
Demonstrating evidence of early settlers, prehistoric cup and ring marked stones and cairns have been found within the Kilpatrick Hills, including at Auchentorlie, Auchnacraig and Gallangad Muir and burn, where they are designated as scheduled monuments.



Map 3: Designations and interests

APPENDIX 1 – RESULTS OF LOCAL LANDSCAPE AREA BOUNDARY ASSESSMENT

As part of the fieldwork assessment (see Section 3) carried out in formulating this Statement of Importance, the boundary of the existing Regional Scenic Area was assessed on the ground to establish if it was appropriate to continue as the boundary of the proposed Local Landscape Area. Utilising advice set out in the SNH document, [Guidance on Local Landscape Designations](#) (paras 6.7 – 6.20) the final Local Landscape Area shows a number of changes from the Regional Scenic Area, which are shown and described below:



Map 4: RSA and LLA boundaries

Northern boundary

The RSA boundary is robust where it follows the Auchincarroch Road but at some locations (e.g. north and west of Auchincarroch Hill to the corner of Nobleston Wood) the boundary is less robust because it doesn't relate well to topography, is located mid-slope, and is difficult to visually interpret or pick out. The boundary appears to be based on a visible change in land cover between unimproved pasture/moorland and improved pasture, generally following the moorland/pasture divide, although it sometimes uses woodland or follows the visible edge of a field.

To address this issue, instead of deviating from Auchincarroch Road west of Blairquhomrie Cottages and moving south along the burn, the LLA boundary follows the burn northwards and instead follows the boundary of the National Park. This means the LLA designation adjoins the National Scenic Area designation.

Although this change leads to the incorporation of areas of improved pasture, including farms at West Auchencarroch, Mid Auchencarroch and Easter Auchencarroch, it is considered that this valley floor is important with regard to the panoramic views out across the National Scenic Area to the lowland/highland boundary fault, where the mountains are inter-visible with an agricultural landscape.



Photograph 9 – View north from Auchincarroch Road. The tree belt marks the boundary with the National Park and the LLA boundary.



Photograph 10 – View towards Kilpatrick Hills, showing the tree belt in the middle.

Close to Haldane, the LLA boundary matches that of the green belt for a short distance, moving from the Carrochan Burn along a field boundary to Auchincarroch Road where it then runs eastwards to Napierston Farm.

Western boundary

The eastern side of the Vale of Leven marks the western boundary of the Kilpatrick Hills, and generally rises quite steeply from the developed valley floor to the rugged moorland of the Kilpatricks. In terms of built development, only New Bonhill extends beyond the valley floor.

The boundary of the LLA has been moved downslope from the RSA, meaning the LLA extends right up to the settlement edge at New Bonhill. The land above New Bonhill now included within the landscape designation is considered to share the same landscape character as the wider Kilpatrick Hills, while transitional slopes to the north have been included as they are important to the setting of the Kilpatrick Hills. From distant views to the Kilpatrick Hills it is evident that it is important and more consistent to include the mid and lower farmed slopes in the LLA, not just the moorland hill tops. The mid and some lower slopes are clearly part of the same landscape unit and provide an important landscape transition to Kilpatrick's ridges and hill tops. The landscape quality of these areas remains the same as the landscape currently within old RSA boundary.



Photograph 11 – View towards western edge of Kilpatrick Hills. Land directly above New Bonhill, visible here, has been included within the LLA.

Southern boundary – Overtoun Estate

Overtoun Estate is designated as a Garden and Designed Landscape. The boundary of the RSA above Overtoun marks the transition from designed landscape, including remnant historic avenue and parkland trees, to moorland and upland walks centered on the focal point of the Lang Craigs. The RSA boundary follows a stone wall (historic boundary feature) and the woodland edge and ridge below Craigs, leaving a gap between the designated formal designed landscape and the RSA, which is also an area currently part of a woodland trust planting scheme. It is important that any changes/planting carefully preserves the current visible transition, from designed parkland to natural hill landscape, and original design and avoid planting potentially obscuring the approach views to crags and moorland.

The RSA boundary is considered illogical in terms of landscape character and although it is relatively well defined by topographical and or physical features in the landscape, the LLA adopts a difference boundary which follows that of the Garden and Designed Landscape designation to close the gap between it and the landscape designation.

Southern boundary - Kilpatrick Braes

The Kilpatrick Braes form an important and highly visible transitional landscape between the urban area, demarcated by the A82, and the rugged moorland landscape of the Kilpatrick Hills. Similarly, the southern slopes of the hills to the north of Bowling, form a prominent section of the hills and offer panoramic views towards the mouth of the Clyde, Dumbarton hills and the distant highlands. The RSA southern boundary is defined by fences and tracks at the base of Craggs, following the former SDP boundary, which is vulnerable visually, and does not include the natural landscape setting to the Craggs and Ridges, which is important in views to the Kilpatrick's LLA/hill features from surrounding areas.

The Local Landscape Area boundary has been moved downslope from the RSA boundary. The inclusion of the lower slopes within the designated area, including the Kilpatrick Braes, Hill of Dun and Haw Craig, will ensure that the importance of the immediate setting of the craggs and ridges is recognised and appropriately managed.