



EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
Local Development Plan 2

Local
Landscape
Areas

Supplementary Guidance

2024

Contents

1. Purpose of Supplementary Guidance	3
2. Continued Relevance of a Local Landscape Designation	4
2.1 European Landscape Convention	4
2.2 National Context	4
2.3 Local Context.....	5
3. Background to the Local Landscape Areas	6
3.1 Results of the 2022 Review of the Local Landscape Area.....	7
4. Local Landscape Area Profiles.....	10
4.1 River Ayr Valley (LLA1)	10
4.2 Uplands and Moorlands (LLA2).....	18
TABLE 3: Evaluation of Criteria for LLA2: Uplands and Moorlands.....	19
4.3. Doon Valley (LLA3)	29
TABLE 5: Evaluation of Criteria for LLA3: Doon Valley.....	30
TABLE 6: Landscape Character Types and their Significance to LLA3: Doon Valley.....	32

1. Purpose of Supplementary Guidance

East Ayrshire's Local Landscape Areas are areas in which the character and quality of the landscape makes them particularly sensitive to new development. The Local Landscape Areas of **(i) the River Ayr Valley**; **(ii) the Uplands and Moorlands**; and **(iii) the Doon Valley** are each recognised as special landscapes with interesting and valuable landscape features. By identifying these areas as Local Landscape Areas, the Local Development Plan recognises their importance to East Ayrshire and gives priority to safeguarding and enhancing these special areas.

This supplementary guidance is intended to support Local Development Plan 2 **Policy NE3: Local Landscape Area**, by:

- Firstly, providing more detail on the particular landscape qualities of each area, demonstrating why these areas are important and worthy of protection within LDP2.
- Secondly, setting out the characteristics, sensitivities and design principles that should be taken account of when thinking about taking forward developments within the LLAs. By adhering to this guidance, any development proposals should protect and enhance the LLAs and avoid any adverse impact on these areas.

Policy NE3: Local Landscape Area

Within the Local Landscape Areas shown on the Rural Area Map, the Council will give priority to the protection and enhancement of the landscape, in its consideration of development proposals.

All proposals within the Local Landscape Area must be designed to take account of the landscape qualities of the area and seek to avoid adverse impacts where possible. Where not possible, and where there are significant social, environmental or economic benefits of local importance which can be demonstrated and justified, measures should be taken to reduce or lastly mitigate against any potential adverse impacts.

The Council will not support proposals that have unacceptable impacts on the character of the Local Landscape Areas and on the qualities that make them special.

2. Continued Relevance of a Local Landscape Designation

2.1 European Landscape Convention

The [European Landscape Convention \(ELC\)](#) came into force in the UK in March 2007. The Convention establishes the need to recognise landscape in law; to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. It also encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy, including cultural, economic and social policies.

The European Landscape Convention 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.”

2.2 National Context

[National Planning Framework 4](#) recognises the value of Scotland’s landscapes. East Ayrshire is split between the ‘Central’ and ‘South of Scotland’ regions as designated in the NPF4 Regional Spatial Priorities.

The Central region is described as having:

“many high quality environments, from World Heritage Sites, historic burghs and conservation areas to protected biodiversity sites of international importance, ancient woodlands and areas of high landscape quality, including the coastline, country and national parks, and canals. This brings opportunities for outdoor recreation within a short distance of the majority of Scotland’s population.”

The South of Scotland region is detailed to have:

“a strong sense of identity centred on networks of towns and villages, supported by distinctive landscapes and coasts. This is a place with a rich cultural heritage and exceptional environmental assets and natural resources, such as the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere and Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park.”

NPF4 also maintains support for designating areas for their local landscape value. **Policy 4: Natural Places** states that:

“LDPs will identify and protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally important natural assets, on land and along coasts. The spatial strategy should safeguard them and take into account the objectives and level of their protected status in allocating land for development”.

Under Policy 4, development proposals that affect a site designated as a landscape area in the LDP will **only** be supported where:

- I. Development will not have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been identified; or
- II. Any significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance.

[Scotland’s Landscape Charter](#) (2010) encourages action from everyone to fulfil its vision to ensure that all Scotland’s landscapes are protected for future generations. Individuals and organisations are encouraged to sign it to demonstrate their concern and responsibility for Scotland’s distinctive landscapes and to put into practice the actions suggested.

[Planning Advice Note 60](#) (PAN 60): Planning for Natural Heritage (2000) provides policy and planning advice regarding Scotland’s natural heritage. PAN 60 notes that landscape character assessment can provide the means of determining the extent of landscapes to be designated. Landscape designations are stated to be of more value when forming part of a wider land-use framework and habitat network and contributing to the realisation of the national natural heritage strategy. In relation to landscape designations, PAN 60 advises that these “should be valued beyond their immediate locale”. The importance of “development guidelines designed to safeguard landscape character and quality” is highlighted.

2.3 Local Context

East Ayrshire does not contain any national landscape designations. Nevertheless, the area’s landscape is considered one of its key assets that needs to be carefully managed and protected. East Ayrshire has a long history of supporting the energy industry, from deep mining to more recent surface mining and wind energy. This energy sector has played a big part in supporting local communities and the local economy, but at

the same time, has had a marked impact on East Ayrshire's landscape. The need to give appropriate weight to the landscape that has not been affected by development and retains scenic and recreational value is therefore an important matter for the Development Plan to address.

The designation of the three Local Landscape Areas is considered an appropriate means of ensuring East Ayrshire's most valuable landscapes are fully respected in preparing and assessing development proposals.

In addition to the LDP2 **Policy NE3**, a number of other LDP policies and guidance support the protection of landscape qualities in East Ayrshire:

- Policy NE1: Protecting and enhancing landscape and features
- Policy NE2: Development Impacts on Areas of Wild Land
- Policy HE4: Gardens and Designed Landscapes
- Tourism Policies – TOUR1; TOUR2 and TOUR3
- Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and Woodland Strategy
- Renewable Energy and EV Charging Supplementary Guidance

3. Background to the Local Landscape Areas

The Sensitive Landscape Area was first identified at a strategic level in the 1999 Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan. The area was based on the Ayrshire Landscape Character Assessment (1999), which for the first time divided Ayrshire's landscape into defined character areas. Within East Ayrshire, 13 distinct landscape types were identified.

Through the Character Assessment process it became clear that certain parts of the Ayrshire landscape had particular qualities that made them more sensitive to development. A landscape evaluation was therefore carried out, whereby each landscape character type was considered against a set range of criteria, to identify those landscapes with special qualities. The criteria comprised:

- Landscape as Resource
- Scenic quality
- Unspoilt character
- Sense of place
- Conservation interest
- Consensus

Against each of the criteria listed, each landscape character area was awarded a high, medium or low sensitivity score. Once all the criteria had been considered, a judgement was made as to the overall sensitivity of the landscape character type. Those areas considered to have an overall high sensitivity to development were taken together to form the Sensitive Landscape Area (SLA), as introduced in the 1999 Structure Plan.

The 2003 East Ayrshire Local Plan defined the SLA more precisely on the ground. This process looked at natural and other topographical features, such as roads, field boundaries, streams etc. to delineate precise boundaries for the areas concerned. The Sensitive Landscape Area that was included in the 2003 Local Plan was carried forward into the East Ayrshire Local Plan 2010.

In 2015, as part of the preparation of the Local Development Plan 2017, the boundary of the SLA was again reviewed, resulting in one small additional area to the extent of the SLA southwest of Patna.

3.1 Results of the 2022 Review of the Local Landscape Area

As part of the preparation of the East Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2, an external review was commissioned and carried out to discern whether the boundary of the previous Sensitive Landscape Area remained appropriate. The review was undertaken against the associated Landscape Character Types (LCT) as set out in the [NatureScot 2019 LCT map](#) along with the associated descriptions, which are used for new development proposals, plans and strategies, superseding the 1998 landscape character descriptions and mapping.

The review concluded that the designation of an LLA is an appropriate means of ensuring East Ayrshire's most valuable landscape are fully respected in preparing and assessing development proposals. The LLA designation does not preclude development, rather it requires development proposals to fully consider the qualities that make the landscape valuable and to seek sites and design solutions that respect these qualities and minimise adverse impacts. The review recommended that, going forward, the LLA is considered as three distinct areas – **the River**

Ayr Valley (LLA1); Uplands and Moorlands (LLA2); and Doon Valley (LLA3) – to allow a more nuanced consideration of development that is appropriate for the landscape character, qualities and elements of each LLA area.

Considering the LLA as the three areas helped guide proposals to:

- 1) **omit a section of the LLA to the south (within LLA2)** – removal was recommended due to the current and proposed changes to the qualities and sense of remoteness of this part of the LLA, due largely to the significant number of windfarms that are operational, under construction and consented. These windfarms, along with the associated access tracks, overhead lines (OHLs), supporting infrastructure (e.g., substations, compounds) and ongoing forestry operations, all have significantly diminished the sense of wildness and remoteness.
- 2) **extend the LLA within LLA1 to incorporate Dumfries House Estate** – the results of the public questionnaire highlighted that the estate was not part of LLA1, and it was determined that the qualities and characteristics of the estate and the section of the Lowland River Valley to the southeast of Ochiltree are consistent with other areas of LLA1.

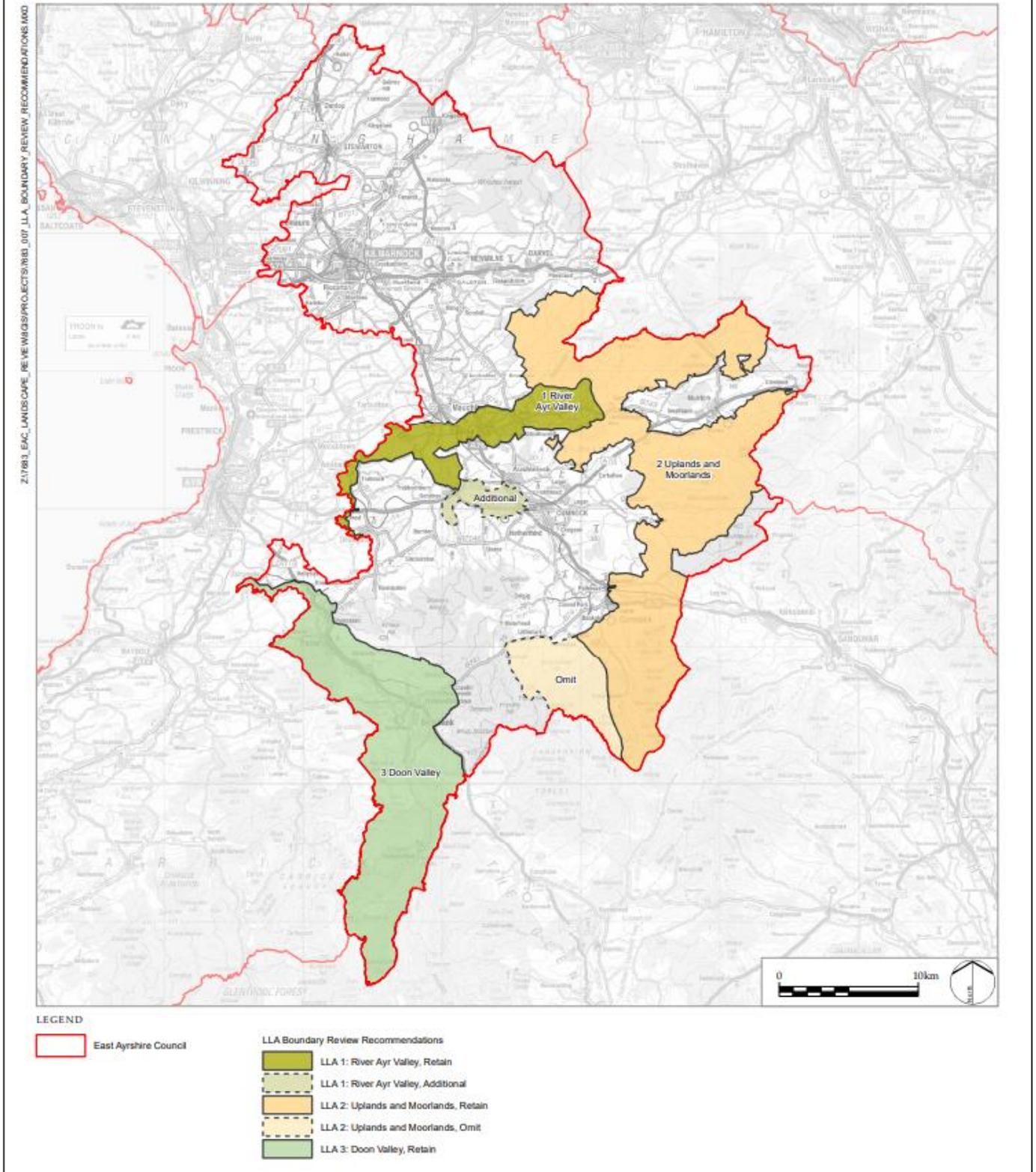


Figure 1: Boundary Changes following 2022 Review of the Local Landscape Area

4. Local Landscape Area Profiles

4.1 River Ayr Valley (LLA1)

Summary of Character and Qualities:

Complex and intricate mix of rolling landform, river corridor landscapes, small settlements, deciduous and mixed woodlands, open farmland, and designed landscape of Dumfries House Estate, with the associated range of landscape colours (blues, dull greens, bright greens and annual changes of the farmland colours – ploughed, fresh grasslands, crops). This gives rise to a more intimate landscape character and set of qualities. The boundary is consistent with the Lowland River Valleys, Ayrshire LCT (River Ayr and Lugar River).

Key Design Principles for Development in the LLA:

- Development proposals should reflect the small-scale, intimate landscape character. Large-scale developments (in terms of height and massing) should be avoided.
- Development proposals should take account of established woodlands, and seek in the first instance to avoid any woodland removal. Where this is not possible, woodland removal should be minimised, and appropriate re-planting proposed.
- Views of, and from, Designed Gardens and Landscapes should be fully considered in development proposals, and action taken to minimise impact on such views.
- Established hedgerows and field boundaries should be maintained and managed.
- Care should be taken to avoid impacts on containing skylines, prominent in views from settlements, roads and footpaths within the lower valley.

TABLE 1: Evaluation of Criteria for LLA1: River Ayr Valley

The criteria used in this table were developed from the range of evaluation criteria set out in [NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland Guidance on Designating Local Landscape Areas \(2020\)](#), Table 1, p.21.

Criterion	Consideration	Rank	Justification
Identity and sense of place	<i>To what extent does the landscape contain features, or combinations of features, that are distinctive to East Ayrshire, making a positive contribution to its wider identity, image and sense of place?</i>	Medium	The combination of woodland, rivers and streams, agriculture, valleys and settlements is significantly different to other areas of East Ayrshire. The area also includes a number of heritage features and visitor attractions.
Rarity	<i>To what extent does the landscape contain features or a combination of features which are rare or unique within East Ayrshire, or which are known to be uncommon elsewhere?</i>	Medium	The combination of woodland, rivers and streams, agriculture, valleys and settlements is significantly different to other areas of East Ayrshire. The Ayr River valley is strongly influenced by former mining, although so are other areas of East Ayrshire.
Intactness and condition	<i>Is the landscape intact or has it experienced a decline in quality (since the last LLA assessment)? Are present and future changes likely to lead to a decline? Are the landscape features or combinations of features in a good state of repair?</i>	Medium	Former mining and coalfields have influenced the natural landscape to an extent, but the area is not in a state of decline.
Wildness	<i>To what extent does the landscape display characteristics of wildness, including perceived naturalness, lack of modern artefacts or structures, rugged or physically challenging landform or remoteness / inaccessibility?</i>	Low	Too settled and cultivated to be wild. Landscape intertwined with development (historic and current), which is an important element of its character.

Criterion	Consideration	Rank	Justification
Scenic qualities	<i>To what extent is the landscape of scenic value in its own right or to what extent does it contribute to the scenic qualities of the wider area?</i>	High	Rich combination of woodland, rivers and streams, agriculture, valleys and settlements with some localised high points offering panoramic views and particularly to the moorlands and upland areas.
Enjoyment	<i>To what extent is the landscape enjoyed by local people and visitors e.g. walking, cycling, horse riding.</i>	High	Rich combination of woodland, rivers and streams, agriculture, valleys and settlements with the River Ayr Way, Dumfries House Estate, Auchinleck Estate and area around the Barony A-frame enjoyed by local people and visitors
Built heritage assets	<i>Do the built heritage assets have a significant influence on the character of the landscape? Does the landscape provide key views, in to and away from, important built heritage assets?</i>	Medium	Dumfries House and Estate, Barony A-frame particularly have a positive influence in and on the landscape. The A-frame being a very striking feature in views
Cultural qualities	<i>To what extent does the landscape have specific historic or cultural associations (including literature, music, art, local history or particular spiritual associations) or does it contribute to the wider cultural heritage of the area?</i>	Low	The area is heavily influenced by forming and current mining and quarrying.
Naturalness and natural heritage assets	<i>To what extent do features of natural heritage interest, including important habitats, protected sites and features of geodiversity value make a contribution to the landscape?</i>	High	Combinations of landform, deciduous woodland, rivers, water courses, agriculture, pasture, lowland moorland make for a rich and diverse landscape and intricate landscape.

Criterion	Consideration	Rank	Justification
Settlement setting	<i>How important is the landscape in providing the setting for settlements as a whole or particular aspects of a settlement?</i>	High	Settlements are nestled into the landscape, contained by landform, hedges and woodland
Views	<i>To what extent does the landscape provide key views into and out of the landscape?</i>	Medium	Some high points giving rise to panoramic views, but views are mostly constrained by valley landform, hedges and woodland.

TABLE 2: Landscape Character Types and their Significance to LLA1: River Ayr Valley

The review of the Local Landscape Area was undertaken against the associated Landscape Character Types (LCT) as set out in the [NatureScot 2019 LCT map](#) along with the associated descriptions. In terms of LLA1, the key LCT is the Lowland River Valley, which covers most of LLA1 as demonstrated on figure 2 below. Links to the associated descriptions can be found in column one in the table below. The table sets out the key characteristics and sensitivities of each LCT, along with recognised issues and pressures and the significance of each LCT to the LLA designation.

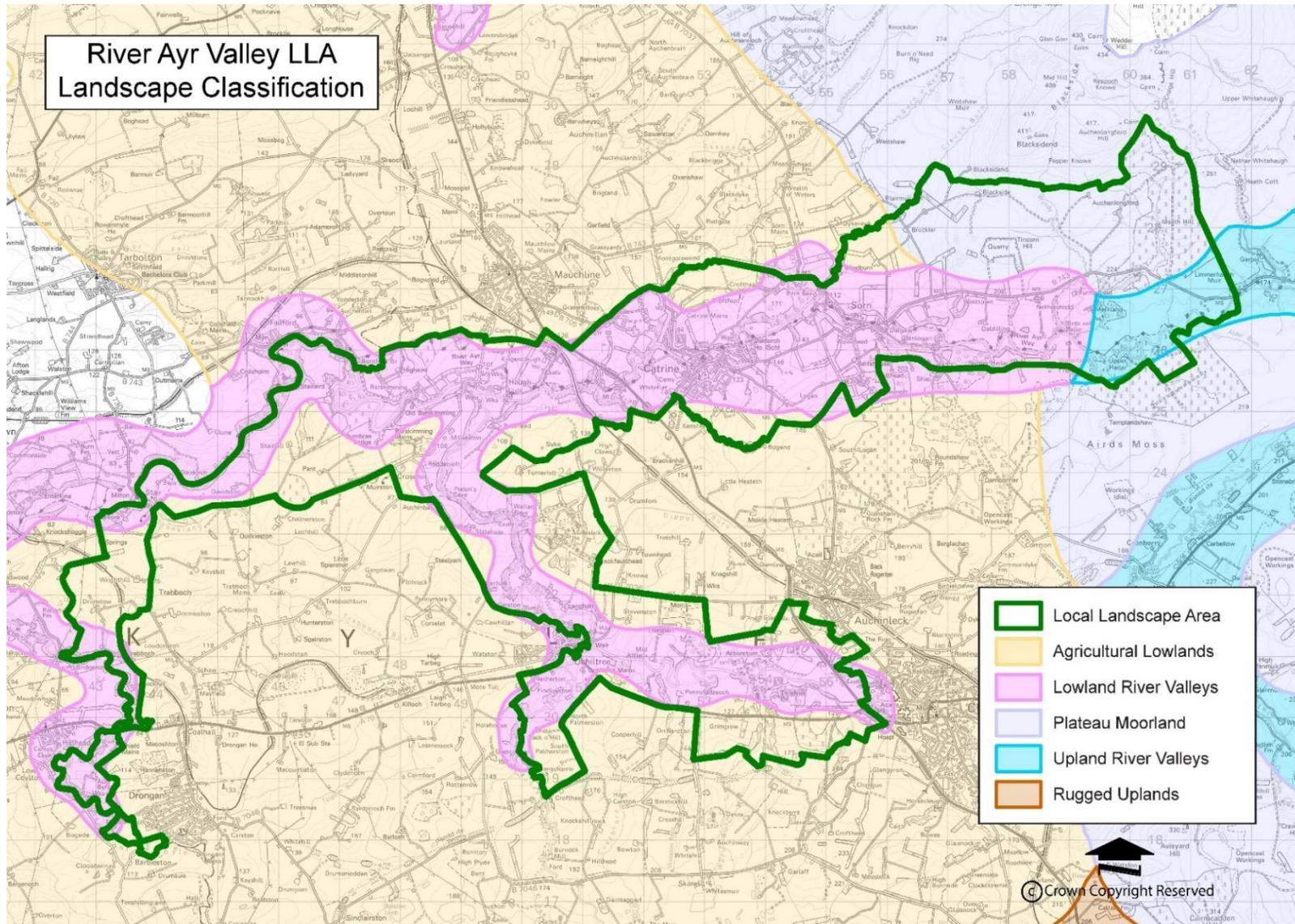
Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
Lowland River Valleys (68)	<p>Incised, narrow river valleys bounded by steep slopes which cross the agricultural land.</p> <p>Complex skylines formed by interlocking hills.</p> <p>Pastoral farming character with hedgerow field boundaries and valley</p>	<p>The River Ayr is accessible to many settlements.</p> <p>The valley contains a number of architecturally interesting settlements e.g. Sorn occupies a position where the River Ayr leaves the uplands and enters its lowland valley.</p>	<p>Hedges to field boundaries need to be managed and retained to avoid the character being eroded.</p>	<p>Important recreation areas attractive to locals and tourists.</p>

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	<p>slopes which are frequently wooded.</p> <p>Settlement is comparatively limited but with some mills often at bridging points.</p> <p>Rich woodland of the river valleys often incorporated into designed landscapes.</p> <p>Intimate small-scale landscapes which often lie hidden within the wider agricultural lowlands.</p> <p>Views are generally enclosed, short distance and focused along the diverse river valley landscape</p>	<p>Interesting and scenic lowland landscapes. The Ayr cuts through an area of sandstone creating a dramatic gorge-like valley.</p> <p>The rich woodland of the river valleys has been incorporated into designed landscapes e.g. Sorn Castle, and Auchinleck House.</p> <p>Small-scale landscapes which are hidden within the wider landscape, often coming as a surprise.</p> <p>Significant tracts of natural woodland give a sense of naturalness and seclusion.</p> <p>Variety and sudden, unexpected changes of views.</p>		

Other Landscape Character Types for Consideration:

Agricultural Lowlands (66)	LLA1 includes some transitional areas between lowland farming and the boundaries of the River Ayr. These areas have their own landscape value but are of less immediate relevance to the designation and character of the LLA. Please see the linked NatureScot profile for a more detailed description of this landscape type.
Upland River Valleys (69)	A small area in the eastern part of LLA1 is characterised as 'Upland River Valleys'. Please see the linked NatureScot profile for a more detailed description of this landscape type.
Plateau Moorland (78)	A small area in the eastern part of LLA1 is characterised as 'Plateau Moorland'. Please see the linked NatureScot profile, and the relevant section of LLA2 , for a more detailed description of this landscape type.

Figure 2: River Ayr Valley LLA – Landscape character types



REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS: River Ayr Valley



View northeast from Mauchline Road



Arable, hedgerow and woodland characteristics



Lugar Water – river and riparian woodlands



Mixed deciduous woodlands



Barony A – frame – heritage & recreation



Dumfries House Estate – heritage & recreation

4.2 Uplands and Moorlands (LLA2)

Summary of Character and Qualities:

In the main a bold and large-scale but simple, rolling landscape of open, rounded top hills that form the backdrop to the eastern parts of East Ayrshire, the yellow and ochre colours of the moorland areas contrast with the dark greens of the coniferous and plantation woodlands. The combination of natural features and the lack of roads and access gives an impression of landscapes that are more extensive, remote and higher than is actually the case. The boundary encapsulates the Southern Upland LCT and Plateau Moorland LCT and also takes in the majority of the area designated as Sites of National Nature Conservation Interest.

Key Design Principles for Development in the LLA:

- Any development proposal should carefully consider how it can be accommodated within the wide, open nature of the plateau moorland landscape, with consideration given to existing or proposed screening to be able to embed development within the landscape and minimise visual prominence.
- Development should take account of views to and from landmark hills contained within the LLA, including (but not limited to) Cairn Table, Blackside, Wardlaw Hill and Blackcraig Hill. The Council will seek to retain the integrity and setting of these prominent hills, as seen in panoramic views from settled lowland areas.
- Developments proposed within the Uplands and Moorlands LLA should seek to avoid impacting on adjacent, more sensitive, smaller-scaled landscapes by setting development further into the upland interior.
- Development proposals for land use change, particularly for energy or forestry use, should carefully consider cumulative landscape impacts in relation to existing development and other proposed developments, given the extent of landscape change that is occurring. Care should be taken to maintain the overall integrity of the key characteristics that make the LLA worthy of protection, as set out in Table 4 (pages 20-25).

TABLE 3: Evaluation of Criteria for LLA2: Uplands and Moorlands

The criteria used in this table were developed from the range of evaluation criteria set out in [NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland Guidance on Designating Local Landscape Areas \(2020\)](#), Table 1, p.21.

Criterion	Consideration	Rank	Justification
Identity and sense of place	<i>To what extent does the landscape contain features, or combinations of features, that are distinctive to East Ayrshire, making a positive contribution to its wider identity, image and sense of place?</i>	Medium	Contains striking moorland character but they are not unique to East Ayrshire as they extend into Dumfries and Galloway and South Ayrshire. Contains some elements of past and present industrial use which also extend across neighbouring Council areas.
Rarity	<i>To what extent does the landscape contain features or a combination of features which are rare or unique within East Ayrshire, or which are known to be uncommon elsewhere?</i>	Medium	Contains striking moorland character but they are not unique to East Ayrshire as they extend into Dumfries and Galloway and South Ayrshire. Contains some elements of past and present industrial use which also extend across neighbouring Council areas.
Intactness and condition	<i>Is the landscape intact or has it experienced a decline in quality (since the last LLA assessment)? Are present and future changes likely to lead to a decline? Are the landscape features or combinations of features in a good state of repair?</i>	Low	Parts of the LLA have already been impacted by wind farms and further pressures will continue with more in the planning system. Notably, large upland areas remain free of turbines, in part due to the European nature designations. Quite a state of change although the underlying landscape is not in decline. Subject to numerous large-scale planning applications which will shape the qualities and characteristics of the landscape.
Wildness	<i>To what extent does the landscape display characteristics of wildness, including perceived naturalness, lack of modern artefacts or</i>	Medium	Some perception of wildness as more difficult to access due to lack of footpaths but modern interventions (wind turbines, Overhead lines) impinge on views and qualities, significantly affecting the sense of remoteness.

Criterion	Consideration	Rank	Justification
	<i>structures, rugged or physically challenging landform or remoteness / inaccessibility?</i>		
Scenic qualities	<i>To what extent is the landscape of scenic value in its own right or to what extent does it contribute to the scenic qualities of the wider area?</i>	High	Dramatic, large-scale, simple rolling hills which act as the backdrop to East Ayrshire in the east and south, contrasting strongly with the valleys and open agricultural areas
Enjoyment	<i>To what extent is the landscape enjoyed by local people and visitors e.g. walking, cycling, horse riding.</i>	Medium	Not as popular a destination due to lack of easy access across much of these areas
Built heritage assets	<i>Do the built heritage assets have a significant influence on the character of the landscape? Does the landscape provide key views, in to and away from, important built heritage assets?</i>	Low	Few built assets - only Robert Burns Cairn, near Laight. However, it is tucked away in the landscape and does not influence the landscape character.
Cultural qualities	<i>To what extent does the landscape have specific historic or cultural associations (including literature, music, art, local history or particular spiritual associations) or does it contribute to the wider cultural heritage of the area?</i>	Low	Robert Burns Cairn (built in 1973 to mark the 50th anniversary of the New Cumnock Burns Club) and Robert the Bruce Way, although the latter is not well used (in disrepair in places) and appears to have been affected by the windfarm access tracks.
Naturalness and natural heritage assets	<i>To what extent do features of natural heritage interest, including important habitats, protected sites and features of geodiversity value make a contribution to the landscape?</i>	High	Dramatic, large-scale, simple rolling hills which act as the backdrop to East Ayrshire in the east and south, contrast strongly with the valleys and open agricultural areas.

Criterion	Consideration	Rank	Justification
Settlement setting	<i>How important is the landscape in providing the setting for settlements as a whole or particular aspects of a settlement?</i>	Medium	Fewer settlements but backdrop is important to defining the eastern and southern extents of East Ayrshire.
Views	<i>To what extent does the landscape provide key views into and out of the landscape?</i>	High	Elevated and panoramic views, but forestry does restrict some views.

TABLE 4: Landscape Character Types and their Significance to LLA2: Uplands and Moorlands

The review of the Local Landscape Area was undertaken against the associated Landscape Character Types (LCT) as set out in the [NatureScot 2019 LCT map](#) along with the associated descriptions. As illustrated in Figure 3 below, the Uplands and Moorlands LLA is made up of a number of different landscape character types. The most prominent comprise the Plateau Moorland and Upland River Valley LCTs, whilst in the southern section, the South Uplands and Upland Glen are intrinsic to character of the area.

Links to the associated descriptions can be found in column one in the table below. The table sets out the key characteristics and sensitivities of each LCT, along with recognised issues and pressures and the significance of each LCT to the LLA designation.

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
Plateau Moorland (78)	Occurs on the higher ground extending along the Ayrshire-Lanarkshire boundary, from the Irvine Valley in the north to the Nith Valley at New Cumnock in the south.	The plateau moorland is a wide, open, upland landscape with landmark hills forming an important feature of East Ayrshire's skyline.	Frequent extensive areas of coniferous forest of uniform age has significantly modified the original character of the area in terms of colour, texture and views. Incremental spread	Important to defining the eastern area of East Ayrshire and forms both physically and within views.

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	<p>Topography is comparatively level with extensive plateau to soft contoured ridges.</p> <p>Covered by blanket bog, heather, grass moorland, extensive areas of mosses and peatland.</p> <p>Largely undeveloped with a sparse network of roads.</p> <p>Open, exposed and rather remote landscape, wild in character (although this is lessened in places by the presence of wind turbines and associated infrastructure).</p> <p>Views are open and medium to longer distance depending on undulation in the local topography.</p>	<p>The open expansive nature contrasts dramatically to the rolling lowland landscape, contributing to the diversity of experiences when travelling.</p> <p>Views are open and medium to longer distance depending on undulations in the local topography.</p> <p>Largely undeveloped although there is some evidence of some medieval and post medieval farmsteads. However, there are extensive open-cast coal working around Cumnock, in particular, and wind farms are beginning to alter the landscape character.</p>	<p>of Sitka spruce forest with blocky outlines, but these are increasingly being replaced by restructured forests designed along more sympathetic lines. The dense tree cover has significantly modified the original character in terms of colour, texture and length of views. Newly planted forests appear as dark speckled landscape from a distance. The open and surrounding moorland contrast in their mosaics of brown and ochre colours.</p>	

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
Southern Uplands (81)	<p>Located in the South of the LLA, along the border with Dumfries and Galloway</p> <p>Steep, smooth slopes rising to rounded summits.</p> <p>Series of distinctive valleys cut into the uplands created by glacial erosion with U-shaped cross sections, precipitous side slopes, hanging valleys, waterfalls, crags and screes.</p> <p>Relatively simple landcover.</p> <p>Scarce, semi-natural woodland limited to a few sheltered glens, gullies and clefts.</p> <p>Occasional forested areas and shelterbelts on lower slopes leaving the domed peaks exposed.</p>	<p>Bold, upland, rugged, open hills form a dramatic backdrop and contrast to the adjacent low-lying upland basin and form an important part of East Ayrshire’s southern skyline.</p> <p>The combination of natural features and the contrast with the lower moorlands gives an impression of uplands which are more extensive, remote and higher than is actually the case.</p> <p>Many areas have experienced little modification and semi-natural woodland and coniferous forest is scarce.</p> <p>Modern settlement is absent; concentrated in river valleys and larger glens.</p>	<p>Windfarms have altered the character of the landscape from the Southern Upland to the east of Ayrshire, south-west of New Cumnock.</p>	<p>Wind turbines visible in the landscape, both in views of the hilltops (when travelling south) and when looking across the landscape from Southern Uplands with Forestry LCT. However, turbines smaller and access tracks and associated infrastructure not as visible.</p>

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	<p>Absence of modern settlement.</p> <p>Expansive, remote and largely untamed landscape.</p> <p>Long distance and panoramic views.</p>	<p>Most parts of the uplands are only accessible on foot.</p> <p>An extensive, remote and largely untamed landscape creating landmark features when seen from adjacent hills and roads. Views are long distant and panoramic.</p>		
<p>Upland River Valleys (69)</p>	<p>Area along the River Nith (near New Cumnock).</p> <p>Varying river valley landform with broad open sections that contrast with steeper valley slopes and narrow, more enclosed valleys.</p> <p>Moorland vegetation, with increasing amounts of improved pasture on lower slopes and valley floors.</p> <p>Confined landscape scale.</p>	<p>Upper Nithsdale - glacial erosion has over-deepened the valley creating a distinctive u-shaped valley between steeply rising hills to the north and south. The river meanders freely across a broad, flat valley bottom.</p> <p>Settlement within Upper Nithsdale is scarce, but the valley is important for communication and provides a corridor between the Ayrshire lowlands and the Solway coast.</p>	<p>The upland valleys often act as a focus for settlement and transport corridors and have been exploited for mineral extraction. The developed character can contrast with the more remote, rural areas.</p>	<p>Important recreation areas attractive to locals and tourists.</p> <p>Contrast in landscape character to the plateau moorlands and foothills, being more intimate in character.</p>

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	<p>Often provide focus for opencast coal mining activity.</p> <p>Act as a focus for transport routes.</p> <p>Open views in the broad valley sections, change to quite enclosed and intimate views within narrow sections.</p>			
<u>Upland Glen (73)</u>	<p>Within the LLA this is the valley of the Afton Water, immediately to the south of New Cumnock.</p> <p>Distinctive profile comprising steep, often craggy valley slopes and a rounded valley floor, containing a comparatively small 'misfit' river.</p> <p>Complex and prominent ridgelines along tops of steep valley sides.</p>	<p>Glen Afton is the only Upland Glen LCT within East Ayrshire, making it an important landscape feature for the area.</p> <p>The narrowness of the glen creates a small-scale, intimate landscape, with a relatively remote and tranquil character.</p> <p>Modern settlement is limited. Most roads are minor.</p>	<p>Forestry operations will periodically change the character due to felling and restocking regimes. Views of wind turbines in most views, both short and long distant</p>	<p>Important recreation area, particularly attractive to locals with the walk to and around the reservoir and the views of the River Afton.</p> <p>Whilst forestry operations influence the landscape character, the wind turbines on the hilltops above the valley are very evident in many views.</p>

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	<p>Pasture on the valley floors and lower valley slopes giving way rapidly to rough grassland and heather moorland on higher ground.</p> <p>Broadleaf woodland is scarce, but small to medium scale coniferous forests are found on the valley slopes.</p> <p>Small scale landscape with some areas of remote and wild character.</p> <p>Views contained by the steep valley sides.</p>	<p>Diverse landcover comprise improved pastures enclosed with drystone dykes constructed from glacially rounded boulders.</p> <p>The high ridgelines and well-defined hills on the edges of the glens are visually prominent and the rugged upland landscape has a high scenic value, attractive to walkers.</p>		<p>Scottish Water building, caravan site, farm buildings & Burns Cairn discreetly located in the valley.</p>

Other Landscape Types for Consideration:

Southern Uplands with Forest (82)	<p>A small area to the south of LLA2 is characterised as ‘Southern Uplands with Forest’. Please see the linked NatureScot profile for a more detailed description of this landscape type.</p>
Upland Basin (74)	<p>A small area to the south of LLA2 is characterised as ‘Upland Basin’. Please see the linked NatureScot profile for a more detailed description of this landscape type.</p>

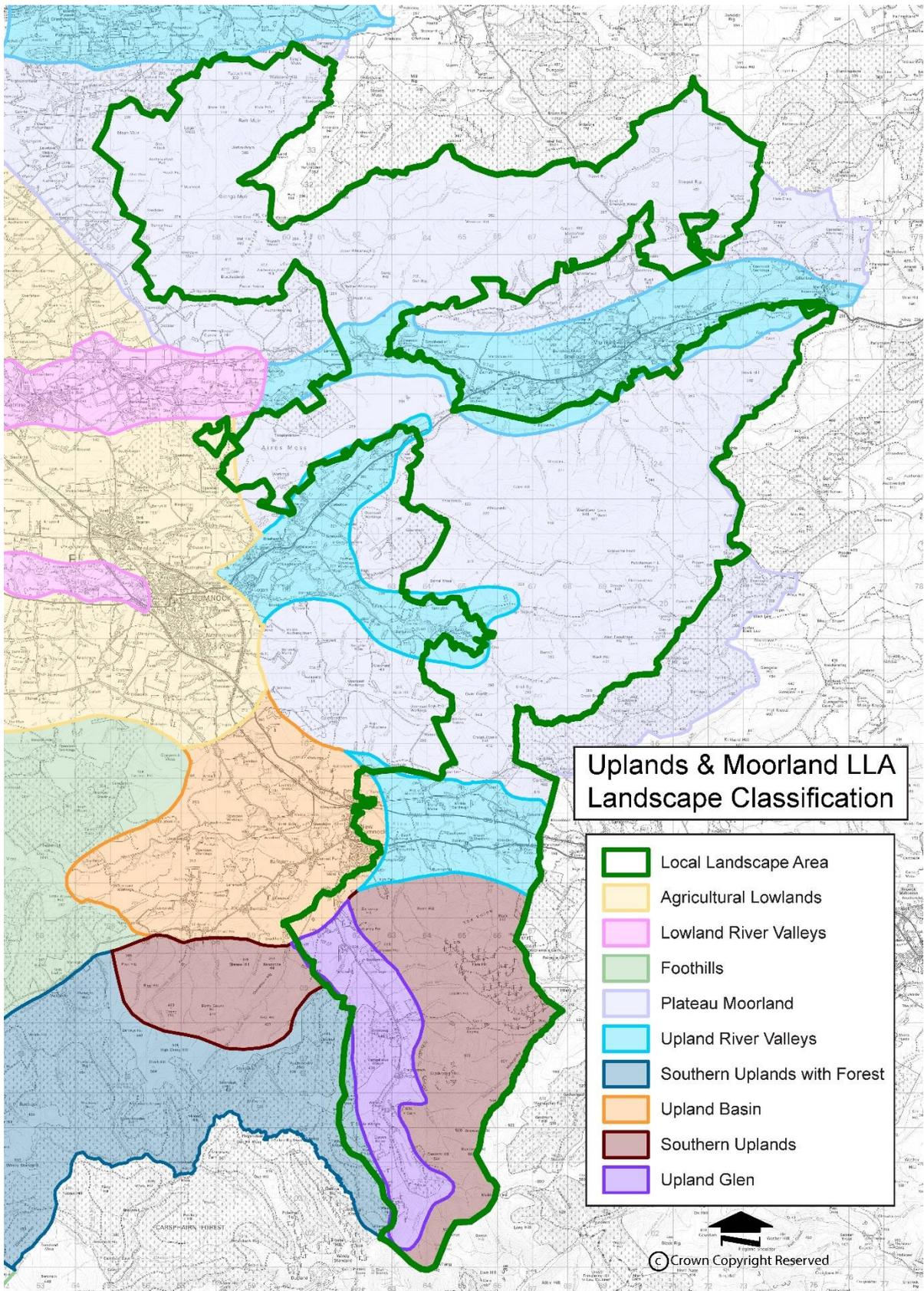


Figure 3: Uplands and Moorland LLA Landscape Character types

REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS: Uplands and Moorlands



Looking east towards Afton Reservoir & Blackcraig Hill with the turbines on Windy Knowes Hill – the boundary between the area of LL2 to be retained and the area removed from the LLA, due to the influences of the wind turbines and access tracks.



River Afton, looking north



Afton Glen, looking northeast towards Hare Hill



View southeast over Afton Reservoir



Forestry felling and OHLs at Pencloe Windfarm

4.3. Doon Valley (LLA3)

Summary of Character and Qualities:

A grand and dramatic landscape of mountains and large water bodies, large-scale, and a sparsely settled landscape with a lack of woodland gives a strong sense of wildness and naturalness. This area is also important as it encompasses part of the Dark Sky Park and the UNESCO Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere. The LLA boundary is distinct and does not bound either of the other two Local Landscape Areas.

Key Design Principles for Development in the LLA:

- The rugged uplands, lochs and forest landscapes contained within this LLA comprise of a relatively wild and sparsely-settled landscape parcel, giving a sense of seclusion and naturalness; of particular value because these attributes are more notable here than anywhere else in East Ayrshire. Any development proposals should not impact on the overall integrity of these characteristics, outlined fully in Table 6 (pages 31-38).
- To the very south of the LLA, the higher rugged hills provide for some dramatic mountainous scenery, more reminiscent of a typically highland landscape. There is relatively little scope for new development within this area; any development proposals must demonstrate how they can be accommodated within the landscape without undermining the overall integrity of the LLA and the Merrick Wild Land Area (see Local Development Plan 2 Policy NE2).
- The Doon Valley offers a diverse mix of natural landcover and landform, which sit alongside more modified landscape elements; most notably, the eastern slopes are significantly modified by past mining activities. Development proposals within the valley should not exacerbate visual clutter and landscape fragmentation associated with past mining activity; instead, care should be taken to improve modified landscapes and provide environmental improvements.
- The landscape qualities of the LLA provide significant recreational opportunities (e.g. walking, cycling and kayaking) focussed on Loch Doon, surrounding hills, and upland Doon Valley. Development proposals should seek to protect and enhance opportunities for recreational enjoyment of the landscape.

TABLE 5: Evaluation of Criteria for LLA3: Doon Valley

The criteria used in this table were developed from the range of evaluation criteria set out in [NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland Guidance on Designating Local Landscape Areas \(2020\)](#), Table 1, p.21.

Criterion	Consideration	Rank	Justification
Identity and sense of place	<i>To what extent does the landscape contain features, or combinations of features, that are distinctive to East Ayrshire, making a positive contribution to its wider identity, image and sense of place?</i>	High	The rich combination of hills (forested, open moorland), lochs, streams, wild land areas with extensive views is very scenic and attractive to visitors who come to enjoy nature. A pleasing balance of natural and managed landscapes.
Rarity	<i>To what extent does the landscape contain features or a combination of features which are rare or unique within East Ayrshire, or which are known to be uncommon elsewhere?</i>	High	There is only one are of wild land within East Ayrshire (Merrick), located to the south of Loch Doon, which is a freshwater loch and is the largest inland loch in southern Scotland at around seven miles long.
Intactness and condition	<i>Is the landscape intact or has it experienced a decline in quality (since the last LLA assessment)? Are present and future changes likely to lead to a decline? Are the landscape features or combinations of features in a good state of repair?</i>	High	The landscape and combinations of elements are generally in a good state of repair. Some damage to verges around Loch Doon, by cars, due to insufficient parking space / passing places. Some encroachment of wind turbines within some views detracts slightly from the natural landscape around Loch Doon. Changes will occur as part of forestry felling and restocking (over time) but the requirement to include greater mix of native, deciduous species will be beneficial. Currently, no wind farms or other infrastructure projects within the planning system.
Wildness	<i>To what extent does the landscape display characteristics of wildness, including perceived</i>	Medium	This LLA includes an area designated as wild land, where it borders Dumfries and Galloway / Galloway Dark Skies Park.

Criterion	Consideration	Rank	Justification
	<i>naturalness, lack of modern artefacts or structures, rugged or physically challenging landform or remoteness / inaccessibility?</i>		Some encroachment of wind turbines within some views detracts slightly from the natural landscape around Loch Doon.
Scenic qualities	<i>To what extent is the landscape of scenic value in its own right or to what extent does it contribute to the scenic qualities of the wider area?</i>	High	The rich combination of hills (forested, open moorland), lochs, streams, wild land areas with extensive views is very scenic and attractive to visitors who come to enjoy nature. Some encroachment of wind turbines within some views detracts slightly from the natural landscape.
Enjoyment	<i>To what extent is the landscape enjoyed by local people and visitors e.g. walking, cycling, horse riding.</i>	High	A landscape that is highly valued by locals and tourists for walking (a number of Core Paths), cycling, horse riding, fishing, bird watching, simply enjoying nature, including dark skies.
Built heritage assets	<i>Do the built heritage assets have a significant influence on the character of the landscape? Does the landscape provide key views, in to and away from, important built heritage assets?</i>	Medium	Doon Castle, Dunaskin Heritage Centre, Craigengillan Estate. Attractions within the landscape but they do not significantly influence the character of the landscape. Views to and from are constrained by landform.
Cultural qualities	<i>To what extent does the landscape have specific historic or cultural associations (including literature, music, art, local history or particular spiritual associations) or does it contribute to the wider cultural heritage of the area?</i>	Low	Doon Castle, Dunaskin Heritage Centre, Craigengillan Estate. These places attract locals and tourists. These are built heritage assets rather than cultural associations.
Naturalness and natural heritage assets	<i>To what extent do features of natural heritage interest, including important habitats,</i>	High	Loch Doon and other smaller lochs, River Doon valley, Dalcairney Falls, proximity to Galloway Forest Park/Dark Skies park, Ness Glen, relationship of hills to lochs and rivers and

Criterion	Consideration	Rank	Justification
	<i>protected sites and features of geodiversity value make a contribution to the landscape?</i>		SSSIs. These all combine to create a rich and diverse landscape appreciated by locals and tourists.
Settlement setting	<i>How important is the landscape in providing the setting for settlements as a whole or particular aspects of a settlement?</i>	High	Settlements nestle in the landscape and sit within the valley corridor. Rising higher ground provides enclosure and setting.
Views	<i>To what extent does the landscape provide key views into and out of the landscape?</i>	Medium	Higher ground and wild land area provide panoramic viewpoints, but there are no specific/special viewpoints noted. Within the Doon Valley and around/across Loch Doon, views are contained by landform. Views of turbines encroach into some views.

TABLE 6: Landscape Character Types and their Significance to LLA3: Doon Valley

The review of the Local Landscape Area was undertaken against the associated Landscape Character Types (LCT) as set out in the [NatureScot 2019 LCT map](#) along with the associated descriptions. As illustrated on Figure 4 the Doon Valley LLA is made up of a number of different landscape character types. The northern portion is characterised by the Upland River Valley, surrounded by the Foothills. The southern portion, sees a notable transition from the Foothills to the Rugged Uplands. Links to the associated descriptions can be found in column one in the table below. The table sets out the key characteristics and sensitivities of each LCT, along with recognised issues and pressures and the significance of each LCT to the LLA designation.

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
Foothills (76)	The areas within the LLA are to the east, west and south of the Upland River	The relatively constrained band of upland landscape forms an important role in	Wind farm development, especially in the foothills to the south of the Water of	Extremely popular recreation area for locals and tourists, with a number

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	<p>Valley LCT within the Doon Valley.</p> <p>Dissected landform of incised valleys cut between rounded ridges.</p> <p>Variety of landcover types; pastoral, rougher grazing and summits dominated by moorland vegetation.</p> <p>Coniferous forest covers many of the rounded peaks.</p> <p>Very little settlement in the more upland areas.</p> <p>Remnants of historic settlement patterns still evident in unsettled and uncultivated areas.</p> <p>Remote, isolated feeling with forested areas foreshortening views.</p>	<p>providing the backdrop and setting for the Doon Valley.</p> <p>The landmark hills in the southern part of the LCT form the backdrop to Dalmellington and Craigengillan Estate.</p> <p>The area running between Dalmellington, Waterside and Rankinston on the eastern side of the Doon Valley has many relics of coal, limestone and ore extraction.</p> <p>Modern settlement is generally very limited, and the building materials reflect the variations in underlying geology and the era of development.</p> <p>The interior areas are not readily visible from public roads.</p>	<p>Girvan and east of Loch Doon has altered the character of some locations.</p>	<p>of visitor attractions. Loch Doon transitions between the Foothills and Rugged Uplands. The Foothills are an important backdrop and enclosing features to the loch and the lowland River Doon valley.</p>

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	<p>Simple, largely undeveloped landscape, with foothills providing scenic backdrops.</p>	<p>The remnants of historic settlement patterns based upon rig and furrow fields enclosed by turf dykes are still evident.</p> <p>Outwith areas affected by coal mining, this is a simple, relatively undeveloped landscape.</p> <p>The Foothills – Ayrshire provides scenic backdrops to the settled valleys which surround them. Views tend to be long distance and panoramic and reveal the contrast between the remote character of the foothills and the surrounding settled valleys and lowlands.</p>		
<p>Rugged Upland (83)</p>	<p>Located where the Merrick range of mountains crosses into Ayrshire near Loch Doon,</p>	<p>Unique in East Ayrshire due to its remote and little modified nature with grand, large-scale, remote</p>	<p>Areas of coniferous forest which has altered the character of some of the lower slopes. Wind turbines</p>	<p>Backdrop of the rugged uplands are a dramatic setting for Loch Doon with the most southerly area</p>

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	<p>from Dumfries and Galloway.</p> <p>Large, elevated and complex mountain ranges formed by granite intrusions which have been significantly modified by glacial erosion.</p> <p>Dramatic, craggy, mountainous scenery.</p> <p>Land cover dominated by heather moorland, rough grassland and areas of exposed rock outcrops.</p> <p>Woodland absent, except for areas of coniferous forest which has altered the character of some of the lower slopes.</p> <p>Scarce signs of human influence.</p>	<p>landscapes and wild character.</p> <p>Dramatic and extensive views in all directions from the mountain summits.</p> <p>Access limited to tracks and walker's footpaths – roads only around the fringes.</p> <p>Loch Doon is East Ayrshire's largest water body adding to the diversity and interest of the landscape.</p> <p>The sparsely settled landscape and lack of woodland gives a strong sense of wildness and naturalness.</p> <p>The most southern part of this LCT is designated as Wild Land (covered by Local Development Plan Policy NE2).</p>	<p>can occasionally be seen from neighbouring areas. Slightly reducing the sense of isolation.</p>	<p>being designated as Wild Land.</p> <p>The dark skies are an important extension to the Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park.</p> <p>Some visual distractions caused by views of wind turbines.</p> <p>Forestry changes not overly distracting and, in the future, will have higher percentage of broadleaves and natives which will be positive.</p>

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
		<p>High scenic value, important for recreation and tourism.</p> <p>It borders the Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park and UNESCO Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere.</p> <p>An essential characteristic of this landscape is the view of granite outcrops and of unforested peaks which are made distinctive by the contrasting colours of grey granite against dark heather / woodland and ochre grassland.</p>		
<p>Lowland River Valleys (68)</p>	<p>The River Doon is relevant to this LLA.</p> <p>Incised, narrow river valleys bounded by steep slopes which cross the agricultural land.</p>	<p>The River Doon is accessible to many settlements.</p> <p>The valleys contain a number of architecturally interesting settlements.</p> <p>Interesting and scenic lowland landscapes.</p>	<p>Hedges to field boundaries need to be managed and retained to avoid the character being eroded.</p>	<p>Important recreation areas attractive to locals and tourists.</p>

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	<p>Complex skylines formed by interlocking hills.</p> <p>Pastoral farming character with hedgerow field boundaries and valley slopes which are frequently wooded.</p> <p>Settlement is comparatively limited but with some mills often at bridging points.</p> <p>Rich woodland of the river valleys often incorporated into designed landscapes.</p> <p>Intimate small-scale landscapes which often lie hidden within the wider agricultural lowlands.</p> <p>Views are generally enclosed, short distance and focused along the</p>	<p>The rich woodland of the river valleys has been incorporated into designed landscapes e.g. Skeldon Estate.</p> <p>Small-scale landscapes which are hidden within the wider landscape, often coming as a surprise.</p> <p>Significant tracts of natural woodland give a sense of naturalness and seclusion.</p> <p>Variety and sudden, unexpected changes of views.</p>		

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	diverse river valley landscape			
Upland River Valleys (69)	<p>Varying river valley landform with broad open sections that contrast with steeper valley slopes and narrow, more enclosed valleys.</p> <p>Moorland vegetation, with increasing amounts of improved pasture on lower slopes and valley floors.</p> <p>Confined landscape scale.</p> <p>Often provide focus for opencast coal mining activity.</p> <p>Act as a focus for transport routes.</p> <p>Open views in the broad valley sections, change to quite enclosed and</p>	<p>The Upper Doon Valley is comparatively broad in its upper sections with an open, flat, floodplain near Dalmellington, narrowing as it flows north to Patna. The river meanders, attractively, back and forth across a narrowing floodplain.</p> <p>It contains a wide range of landscape features; knolly hills, water bodies, wetlands and Craigengillan Estate.</p> <p>The east side of the Doon Valley has been affected by the coal industry. As such appropriate management is important for the remaining valley.</p> <p>The developed character contrasts with the more remote, rural areas. The</p>	<p>The upland valleys often act as a focus for settlement and transport corridors and have been exploited for mineral extraction. The developed character can contrast with the more remote, rural areas.</p>	<p>Important recreation areas attractive to locals and tourists.</p> <p>Contrast in landscape character to the plateau moorlands and foothills, being more intimate in character.</p>

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Key Sensitivities	Issues and Pressures	Significance to LLA
	intimate views within narrow sections.	landform can also add to the sense of contrast with more open views in the broader valley sections changing to quite enclosed and intimate views within the narrow valley sections.		

Other Landscape Types for Consideration:

Agricultural Lowlands (66)	A small area to the north of LLA3 is characterised as ‘Agricultural Lowlands’. Please see the linked NatureScot profile for a more detailed description of this landscape type.
Low Hills (77)	A small area to the north west of LLA3 is characterised as ‘Low Hills’. Please see the linked NatureScot profile for a more detailed description of this landscape type.
Southern Uplands with Forest (82)	A small areas to the east of LLA3 is characterised as ‘Southern Uplands with Forest’. Please see the linked NatureScot profile for a more detailed description of this landscape type.

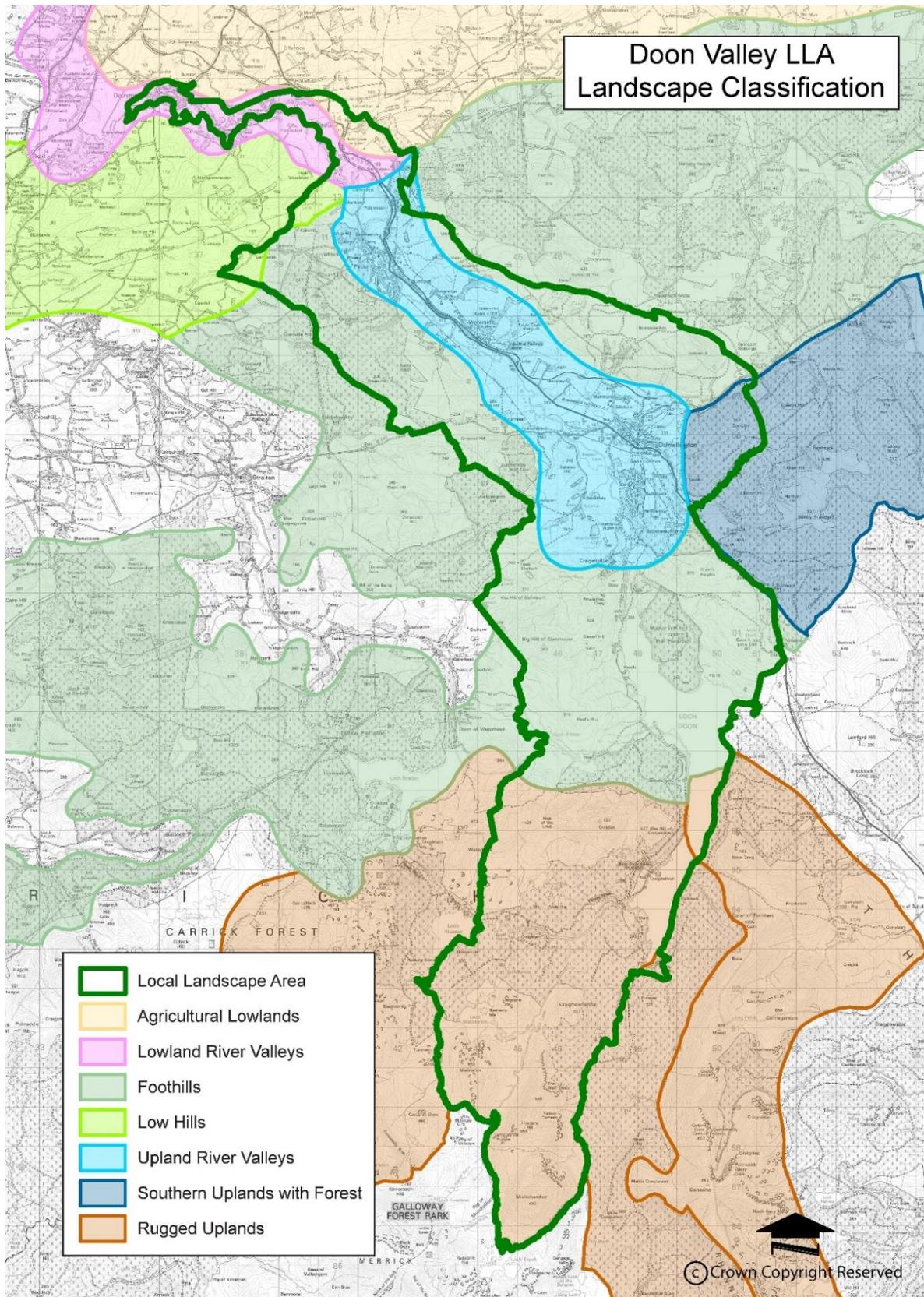


Figure 4: Doon Valley Landscape character types

REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS: Doon Valley



Loch Doon looking south – East Ayrshire’s largest water body



Wildland characteristics around Loch Doon



Loch Doon looking east – towards Benbrack, Lamford Hill & Black Craig



Moorland and hills surrounding Loch Doon

Loch Doon is a popular tourist location. Loch Doon Castle was built by the Bruce earls of Carrick in the late 1200s. Other attractions include the Roundhouse Café by the dam, Ospreys nest by the café, new Touring Caravan Park, and free camper van and camping spots that are controlled by a ranger. The area also has a popular riverside walk and four hill ranges, with hills from 1,000 feet to 2,766 feet. Five hills are above 2,500 feet.



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