



EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

Local Development Plan 2

Strategic Woodland Creation

Non-statutory Planning Guidance

2024

Section 1 – Introduction and purpose

1.0 Purpose of the guidance

This Woodland creation guidance aims to highlight the opportunities for woodland creation within an identified pilot area. Whilst the area selected contains some existing woodland, it does not currently feature as a significant land use within the area. The purpose of this guidance is to explore:

- The constraints and sensitivities within the area
- The opportunities to expand woodland creation in this area and what form any woodland creation should take.

The guidance sits underneath the Ayrshire and Arran Forestry Strategy; by looking in more detail at a defined area it has been possible to provide greater guidance on woodland creation than can be achieved within the strategic nature of the Forestry Strategy.

1.1 National context

The guidance sits within the national context of the climate emergency, declared by Scottish Government in April 2019 and the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan, both of which recognise the need for a significant shift in the way we use land, to help Scotland become carbon neutral by 2045. Woodlands have an important role to play in this, in terms of carbon sequestration and forming an alternative rural land use to more less carbon conscious land uses. In response to this, the Scottish Government has set a target to increase woodland cover from 18% to 21% by 2032. To increase woodland cover to this level, the annual woodland planting target has increased from 10,000 hectares per annum to 12,000 per annum, with an intended target of 18,000 per annum by 2024/25, increases the previous woodland planting.

National Planning Framework 4 restates the Scottish Government ambition to protect and expand forests, woodland and trees. NPF4 recognises the role of woodlands in sequestering and storing carbon, but also their wider roles in terms of ecological connectivity and nature networks. NPF4 requires Local Development Plans to protect existing woodland and identify potential for enhancement or expansion of woodland. Where a planning application is proposed which includes an area of existing woodland or land identified as being suitable for woodland creation within a Forestry and Woodland Strategy, developers should explore opportunities to enhance or expand the woodland on-site and to integrate it into the design.

1.2 Local context

At an East Ayrshire level, the **Climate Change strategy (2021)** recognises the role of forestry and tree planting in tackling climate change. In particular, the strategy recognises the potential of utilising former mining sites for tree planting, to create new woodlands, combining both commercial conifer planting and native species.

As part of the spatial strategy of the **East Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2**, the Plan will ‘support woodland creation, increasing tree planting in the right places.’ **Policy SS12: Strategic woodland Creation**, which directly relates to this guidance, supports woodland creation in the pilot area.

Policy SS13: Strategic Woodland Creation

The Council will particularly support developments and proposals that contribute to woodland creation within the Strategic Woodland Creation Pilot Project area, shown in Figure 12. Proposals will be supported where they meet with the guidance set out in the associated non-statutory Planning Guidance.

Policy NE9: Woodland creation give wider support to woodland expansion and enhancement throughout East Ayrshire, recognising the multiple benefits in terms of recreation and access, habitats and wildlife corridors, flood management and climate change adaptation.

Policy NE9: Woodland Creation

Development proposals within an area of existing woodland or land identified within the Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and Woodland Strategy therein deemed suitable for woodland creation should enhance and expand woodland onsite by integrating it into design in order to meet national targets set within Scotland’s Forestry Strategy (2019-2029). The Council will support developments that propose to enhance, expand and improve woodland to deliver benefits such as:

- carbon sequestration;
- improving air quality;
- enhancing energy efficiency;
- providing shelter and shade;
- providing opportunities for woodland play and recreation;
- improving biodiversity;
- helping prevent flooding; and
- other ecosystem services.

The creation of new woodland should take into consideration its individual and cumulative impacts on landscape character.

1.3 Background to the planning guidance

The impetus for this guidance came through a pilot project initiated by Scottish Forestry, based on a Scottish Government desire to explore opportunities for woodland planting on a strategic scale within spatially defined areas. The overall aim of the pilot was to explore whether there is a way to take a more strategic, planned approach to woodland creation, to both increase levels of planting, but also ensure woodland can be planned in a more logical and coherent way to deliver better outcomes for all. The delivery of the pilot project was hampered by the covid-19 with the pandemic impacting on the priorities and capacity of partners involved in the project. Nevertheless, the Council has remained committed to producing guidance and will monitor over the next 5 years how it is used and whether it has any marked impact on woodland creation within the defined area.

Applications for woodland creation are made to Scottish Forestry. Whilst the consideration of these take account of woodland strategies, in East Ayrshire this is the Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and

Woodland Strategy, and other relevant policy documents and on-site constraints, they are generally dealt with on a case-by case basis. The intention of the pilot project was to create a framework document to sit underneath the FWS, to provide more detailed guidance. All applicants for woodland creation within the area will be directed to take account of the guidance within this document.

1.4 Why Planning Guidance?

It is recognised that woodland creation is normally undertaken outwith the scope of the Planning system. However, woodland forms a significant part of East Ayrshire's land cover, whilst forestry is an important land use and economic resource for the area. The need to sustainably manage, guide and enhance trees and woodlands, is therefore an important factor in the long term development and land use of East Ayrshire. Further, the need for compensatory planting as a result of rural developments, often energy related infrastructure projects, requires developers to consider opportunities for woodland creation as part of related developments.

1.5 How should the planning guidance be used?

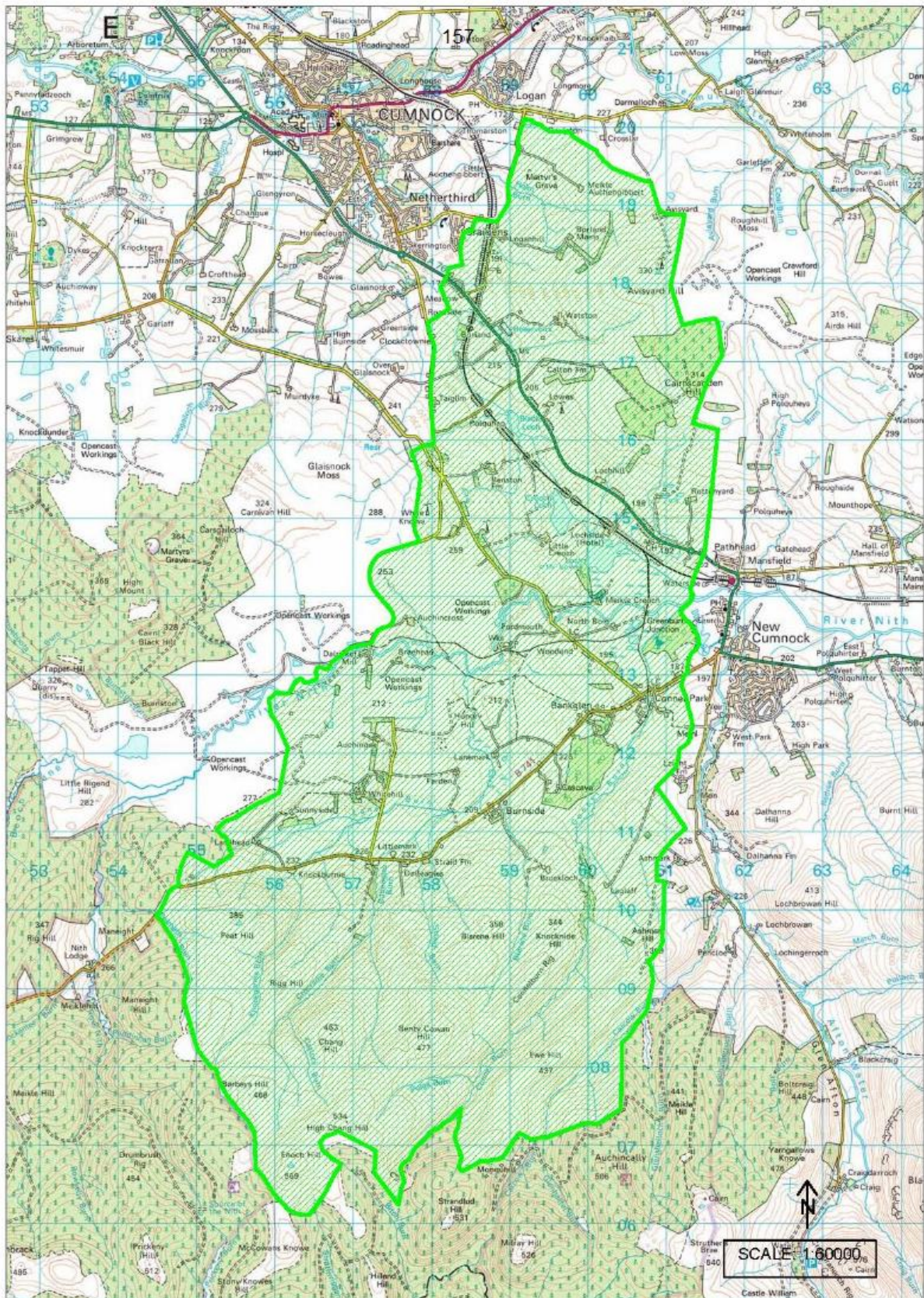
The guidance should be considered by any developer or landowner within the pilot area, when initiating development proposals. Where possible, development proposals or woodland planting proposals, should take on board the advice contained within the guidance.

The guidance does not preclude other types of development coming forward within the pilot area. It also cannot, on its own, deliver woodland creation. Instead, it encourages woodland creation and guides where and what type of woodland could be established. For planting to come forward, it will ultimately require buy in and positive action from landowners and local stakeholders.

Section 2 – The woodland creation area

2.0 Location

The area of focus of this guidance is an area of approximately 56 sq kilometres lying to the south of Cumnock and west of New Cumnock (see map 1 below). It is varied and complex in its landscape and land use; parts of the area have very few features whilst some have more notable natural qualities. This diversity makes it an interesting area to examine more closely.



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Map 1: Strategic woodland creation area

2.1 Landscape

It is largely focussed around the broad basin at the headwaters of the River Nith, taking in both the river and surrounding tributaries, farmland and a series of small lochs. In contrast the southern part of the area takes in the northern scarp of the southern uplands, comprising steep slopes with a rugged open character. The northern part of the area is characterised by gently sloping farmland.

2.3 Land use

In terms of land use, the coal mining legacy is a key feature of the area. The former Knockshinnoch colliery, is now restored as a Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserve, comprising a series of lagoons and associated wetlands. In the western part of the area, surface coal mining was present up until very recently, at Greenburn and House of Water, with restoration recently completed. Moving on from the coal industry, the renewables industry is becoming a prominent land use feature, with turbines visible on the skyline to the south and further turbines consented within the study area, in its southern part.

2.4 Existing woodland

There is relatively little existing woodland in the area. Most notable areas of woodland comprise:

- Stands of pioneer birch and pine, associated with the restored spoil at Knockshinnoch Lagoons, as well as alder/willow scrub around the lagoons and fringing the 'string of lochs' aligned north-west of New Cumnock.
- Existing coniferous plantation at Cairnscadden Hill on the eastern edge of the study area and on a former mined area near Bankglen.
- New woodland woodland planting comprising a small area of willow plantation close to Nith Bridge and Sitka spruce dominated woodland either side of the B741 west of New Cumnock.

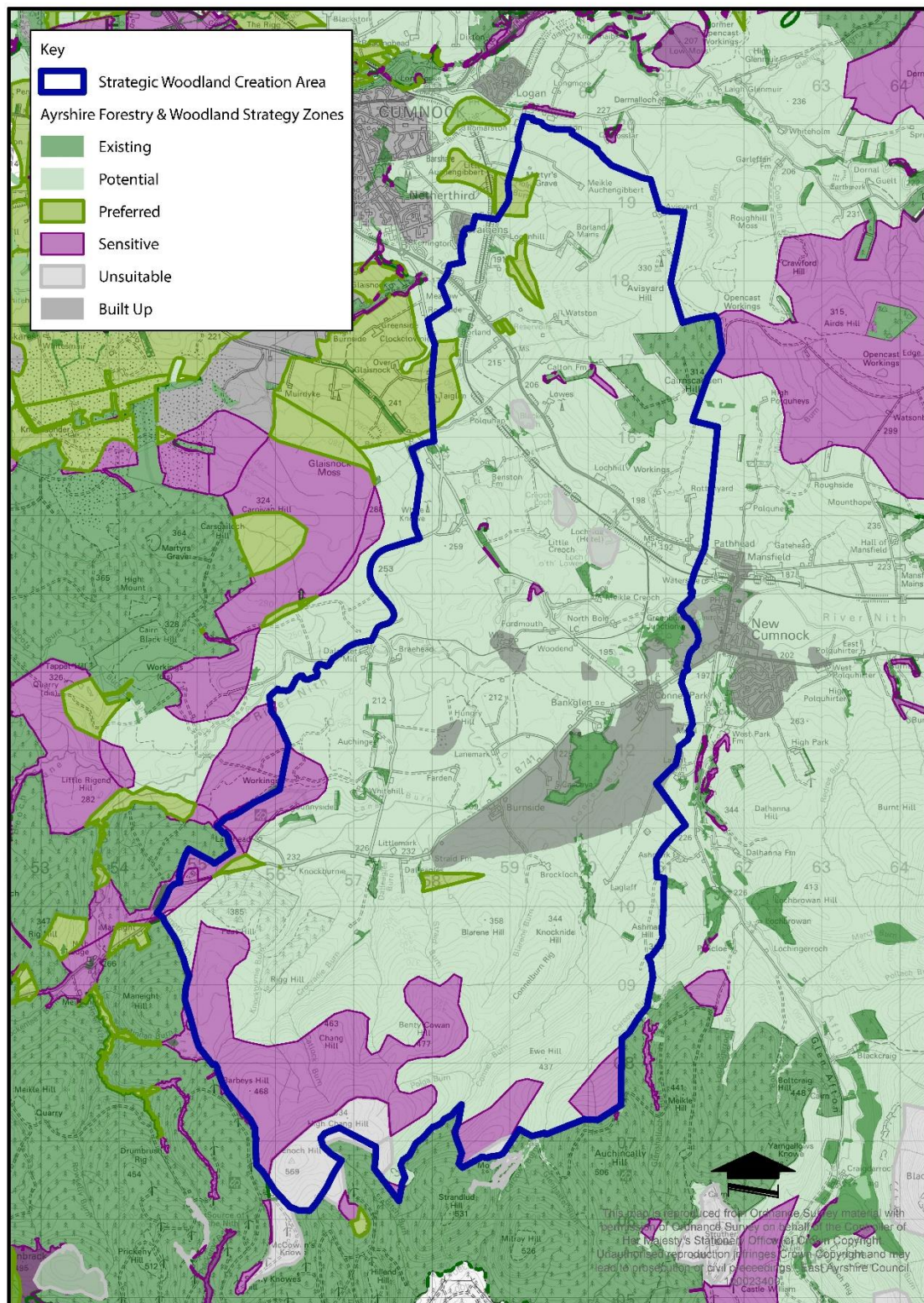
2.5 Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy

The Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy categorises the whole of the strategy area based on an indication of the areas with the most – and least – ability to accommodate new woodland within accepted environmental limits. Categorisation in this context is a strategic process, giving an overall impression of an areas suitability for woodland expansion; on more detailed, site specific examination there will inevitably be anomalies. It is, however, a useful tool and was used in part to identify the pilot area as a suitable area to focus on.

The majority of the area covered by this guidance is identified as having 'potential' for woodland expansion. Potential is defined as:

'Land that offers considerable potential to accommodate a range of woodland types, but where at least one significant sensitivity exists. Design of proposals in this area will require careful, site specific consideration to ensure they are of an appropriate type and scale to be successfully accommodated.'

As shown on map 2 below, the area contains pockets of the other classifications: Preferred, sensitive, existing, unsuitable and built-up



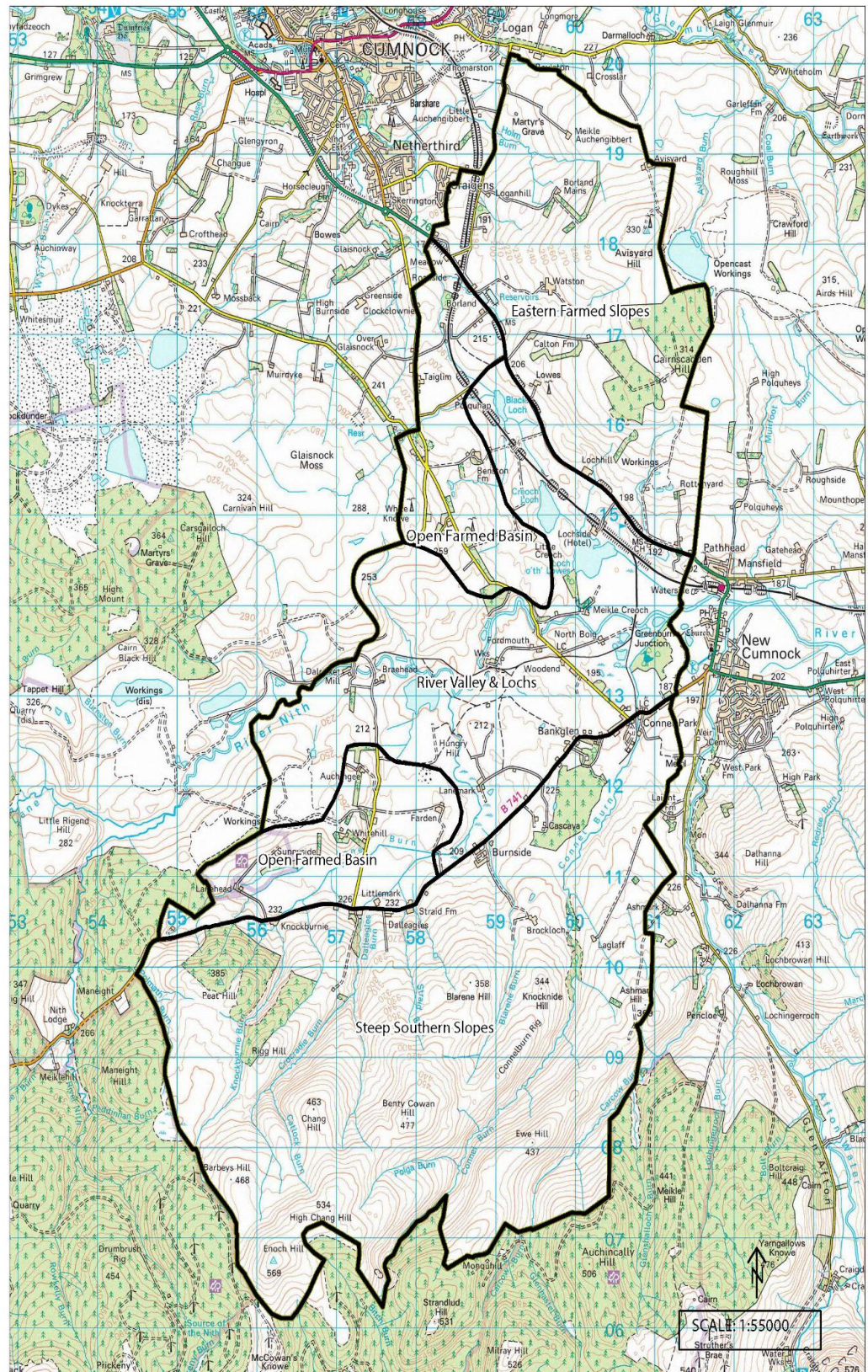
Map 2: Woodland creation area and Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and Woodland Strategy zones

Section 3 – Woodland creation: spatial guidance

3.1 This section of the guidance explores in more detail constraints and opportunities of the woodland creation area in a spatial context.

The pilot area has been broken down into 4 discrete landscape parcels. These parcels have been identified through the study of the landscape capacity of the area and each have been examined separately to consider the ability of the areas to accommodate woodland creation and the types of woodland creation that could best be accommodated. The 4 parcels comprise:

- (i) Open Farmed basin
- (ii) River Valleys and Lochs
- (iii) Steep southern slopes
- (iv) Eastern framed slopes



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Map 3: Landscape classifications

Open farmed basin

Two discrete areas, separated by the lower-lying valleys, wetlands and water bodies of the River Valleys and Lochs landscape parcel. Both parts of the parcel lie immediately east of the North Kyle Forest and adjacent to former surface coal sites on which landscape restoration has been undertaken.

Landscape considerations and sensitivities	Environmental considerations	Community and other considerations
<p>Overall, the open farmed basins are relatively intact with little impact from mining activities. The areas provide valuable contrast to the extensive coniferous woodlands on the southern and western edges of the study area.</p> <p>Landform is generally characterised by undulating low ridges and smooth slopes, with some flatter areas coinciding with valleys. At points landform is more rolling and complex, close to the <i>River Valley and Lochs</i>.</p> <p>In terms of landcover, hedgerows and dry stone walls are notable features, enclosing small fields in the rolling valleys, whilst larger fields bounded by fences and ditches predominate in flatter areas. Broken lines of beech and sycamore occur on field boundaries and accentuate low ridge tops.</p> <p>The scale of the landscape ranges from small to medium, where there are compact farm buildings and small enclosed fields, to a</p>	<p><u>Designations:</u></p> <p>The southern parcel of land contains a small part of the Riggfoot / Lanemark LNCS (see comment below). Over and above this, there are no environmental designations within either of the discrete parcels.</p> <p><u>Existing habitats and potential expansions:</u></p> <p>There are two areas of <u>grassland</u> habitat in the northern portion and another one in the very eastern part of the southern land parcel, where it meets the river valleys and lochs landscape type. At this area there is particular opportunity for adding to the network.</p> <p>In the northern parcel there is a significant area of <u>bog heath</u>, linked to a larger area of this habitat to the west, outwith the study area. Similarly the southern parcel has an area of bog heath in its northern part. Whilst there are no clear opportunities to extend the networks at these points, at a detailed level there may be opportunities.</p>	<p>There are no settlements or small clusters of properties within this parcel. There is a dispersed pattern of traditional farm buildings and farm houses/cottages.</p> <p>The northern of the 2 parcels has a greater spread of houses and farm properties.</p> <p>The northern parcel contains a small stretch of railway line. Whilst this does not preclude woodland creation in the surrounding area, a buffer will be required on the immediate surrounding land, to protect the operation and safety of the railway.</p> <p>Boig Road, which cuts through the northern parcel is identified as an on-road cycle route within the core path plan.</p> <p>In terms of cultural heritage, there are several sites of possible archaeological significance in the northern parcel.</p>

more expansive scale where fields are larger and where wetter and more open disturbed grounds occurs at the edges of the area.	In terms of <u>Peatland</u> , the Southern parcel has a few small areas of valuable peatland scattered across the northern part. The northern parcel has two small areas of class 5 peatland	
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Opportunities for woodland creation:

- The open farmed basin is a relatively intact part of the study area, less obviously modified by past mining activity, current renewable energy use or commercial forestry. It provides a valuable contrast to the extensive coniferous woodlands on the southern and western edges of the study area. At the same time, the area has considerably little constraints and therefore offers some scope for woodland creation.
- **Larger predominantly coniferous woodlands** could fit within the scale and largely gently undulating landform of this landscape but would subsume the existing landscape pattern which contributes to the more diverse character of this part of the study area, when compared with extensive coniferous forestry lying to the south and west. Views over the wider basin of the study area from the B741 could be affected by this woodland type. **Woodlands of this size should generally be avoided.**
- **Small-medium sized coniferous woodlands** would be most appropriate in terms of commercial forestry. Woodlands should comprise a large proportion of broadleaves in order to attain good integration with existing copses, shelterbelts and tree lines within farmland. Woodlands should generally adopt an organic form, influenced by the subtle undulating landform. Areas of more complex rolling landform and/or featuring distinct field enclosure patterns should be avoided.
- **Small-medium predominantly broadleaved woodlands** would have greater compatibility with the landscape pattern of this area and will be encouraged. This should include Scots pine and beech, a characteristic species of remnant woodlands and tree lines.

River valleys and Lochs

This parcel contains the headwaters of the River Nith and its many tributaries. The Nith cuts through this area west to east, with associated wetter ground and former open cast coal workings lying either side of the narrow channel of the river. The western part of the area is particularly impacted by the legacy of the surface coal industry. A series of small lochs lie within a valley to the north west of New Cumnock and pockets of farmland occupy slightly more elevated ground sitting about wetlands and around the lochs.

Landscape considerations and sensitivities	Environmental considerations	Community and other considerations
<p>The area is generally very flat with some gently undulating landform. The deeply incised channel of the River Nith provides a significant contrast.</p> <p>Landcover in the eastern part of the area is diverse, with wetlands, damp pasture, willow carr, birch and riparian woodland, which has a generally natural appearance. Similarly, the scale of the landscape in the east is smaller, the west forming a more expansive landscape character.</p> <p>The eastern part of the landscape has a clear scenic quality, with the balance of woodland, open farmland and the natural water bodies.</p>	<p><u>Designations:</u></p> <p>The area contains a small <u>SSSI, Nith Bridge</u>, (1.6 hectares), recognised for its geological value. It provides an important exposure in the glacial deposits of South-west Scotland and is a key reference site, showing three layers of till and two interbedded layers of gravel. The properties of these deposits illustrate the coalescence and interaction in this area of two ice masses with separate sources in the West Highlands and Southern Uplands. (SiteLink - Nith Bridge SSSI (nature.scot))</p> <p>The area contains 3 Local Nature Conservation Sites, the first reflects the Nith Bridge SSSI. The further 2 (New Cumnock Wetlands and Riggfoot-Lanemark Bogside Wetland), cover a significant proportion of the River Valleys and Lochs and the consideration of their features should be a significant consideration in shaping a woodland proposal.</p>	<p>The area contains various resource that are valued by the local community. The lochside hotel is an important tourist and wedding venue, as well as a local employer. The associated golf course is important for local recreation.</p> <p>The New Cumnock Wetlands LNCS contains the Knockshinnoch Lagoons Nature Reserve, managed by Scottish Wildlife Trust. It has local walking routes and provides an opportunity for local people to connect with nature.</p> <p>The Kilmarnock to Dumfries railway line journeys through the north east part of the landscape parcel. Whilst this does not preclude woodland creation in the surrounding area, a buffer will be required on the immediate surrounding land, to protect the operation and safety of the railway.</p>

	<p><u>New Cumnock Wetlands</u> Mosaic grassland habitat, with a woodland in the south and four waterbodies of varying sizes in the centre. Site is an important migratory route for birds. Survey data recorded by South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre (SWSEIC), notes several protected species including otters, red squirrels and brown hare in an around the site. (Link to LNCS planning guidance will be added)</p> <p><u>Riggfoot-Lanemark Bogside Wetland</u> Mosaic of improved, semi-improved and marshy grasslands. An area of broadleaf trees, of a range of species, and neutral grassland is present in the centre of the site. This area offers potential for further tree planting to supplement and expand what is currently in situ. Cattle grazing is a feature of area and will impact on any future habitat works.</p> <p><u>Existing habitats and potential habitat expansion:</u></p> <p>There are significant areas of bog and heath habitat throughout the area, with opportunity areas identified to link habitat parcels. Opportunity areas are most notable long Burnfoot Road to the south of the area.</p> <p>There are areas of wetland and grassland habitat across the site, again, with opportunities to expand into small gaps within the network.</p>	<p>Boig Road, which cuts through the area is identified as an on-road cycle route within the core path plan. Further core paths allow access to the two LNCSs.</p> <p>There are several sites of possible archaeological significance in the across the site.</p>
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Opportunities for woodland creation:

- This area has been significantly impacted by surface mining activity, especially within the west where recent restoration has resulted in a simple land cover and very open character. This contrast with the more complex landform to the east, with the string of lochs and small areas of riparian woodland and the River Nith and associated wetlands.
- **Large predominantly coniferous woodlands** could be accommodated in the less diverse western part of this area. Any such schemes should incorporate a higher proportion of native broadleaves on lower margins, linking to new riparian woodlands associated with the Nith and its tributaries.
- As above, **small or medium sized coniferous woodlands** could also be accommodated in the western section. Commercial non-native coniferous woodland is unlikely to be able to successfully incorporated into the landscape of the eastern, more diverse section, however stands of Scots Pine could be accommodated where these could add a scenic feature associated with the lochs.
- **Small or medium predominantly broadleaved woodlands**, would be likely to have a positive effect on this area, enhancing the more natural character of rivers, water bodies and wetlands in the east and extending this positive characteristic to the west, improving visual and ecological connectivity. The initial priority should be to plant riparian woodlands to accentuate the River Nith (although this should avoid affecting the appreciation of geological interest near Nith Bridge). Currently, the riparian planting along this stretch of the Nith is limited. New planting should aim to link with broadleaved woodlands which form part of approved coal site restoration plans in the west. Small broadleaved woodlands planted on the subtle rolling landform around Loch o' th' Lowes, Creoch Loch and Black Loch, and along connecting water courses, would enhance the scenic qualities of these focal features.

Steep southern slopes

This parcel comprises the northern scarp of the Southern Uplands. The steep slopes are cut by deeply incised valleys with Afton Glen (just outside the study area) forming a particularly dramatic cleft through the uplands. The Steep southern slopes have a rugged and open character, contrasting with extensive coniferous forests to the south and west of the study area. The area is influenced by wind energy development, which will increase as existing consents are built out over the coming years. In particular, there is a consented wind farm (Enoch hill) within the landscape parcel which will have a significant impact on its character and appearance and on the potential for woodland creation within the area.

Landscape considerations and sensitivities	Environmental considerations	Community and other considerations
<p>The landscape parcel is characterised by steep slopes, rising to rounded hills and ridges attaining heights of over 500 metres. Some deeply incised narrow glens cut into the slopes, accentuating the ruggedness of the landscape. The steep, rugged slopes are highly visible from transport routes and settlements to the north, where they form a scenic contrast to more managed low lying farmland.</p> <p>The landscape parcel is generally large in scale, although this is reduced on the northern medium to lower slopes, where some enclosed fields, settlements and smaller features are present.</p> <p>The higher slopes and hills are covered with grassy moorland and areas of bog. Improved and rough pasture is present on lower slopes. There is some coniferous plantation</p>	<p><u>Designations:</u></p> <p>The area contains 2 Local Nature Conservation Sites.</p> <p><u>Connel Burn / Benty Cowan</u> is a large site of 1,300 hectares taking in the southern part of the woodland creation area. It comprises a large, open area of heathland, blanket bog and marshy grassland. There is a small area of broadleaved woodland located on the north east boundary of the site and coniferous plantation in the southern part of the site.</p> <p><u>Dalleagles Woodland</u> is a small (4 hectares) LNCS, comprising primarily of woodland, with some scrub and grassland. The Dalleagles Burn flows north through the woodland. It sits in the north western part of the landscape parcel. Given that the site is densely wooded at present, there is no real opportunity for woodland creation within this small area, however, as noted below, there is potential to expand woodland cover beyond the boundaries of the LNCS.</p> <p><u>Existing habitats and potential habitat expansion:</u></p>	<p>The area contains the consented, but as yet unbuilt, Enoch Hill wind farm which will contain 14 wind turbines. A habitat management plan is required prior to construction, setting out proposals for bird monitoring, peatland mitigation measures and habitat enhancement for black grouse and golden plover. There is no requirement for tree planting or woodland creation associated with the planning consent.</p> <p>The area contains part of the New Cumnock circular core path, which cuts through an area of coniferous woodland to the south of Bank Glen, planted on a former surface coal site.</p> <p>There are a series of sites of possible archaeological significance following the route of B741 to Dalmellington.</p>

planting in the north eastern part of the parcel, associated with restored former coal sites.	<p>Aligned with the landscape character of the area, there are areas of bog and heath habitat in the southern part of the site, with some opportunity for habitat expansion to better improve the overall network.</p> <p>There are several areas of existing woodland network in the northern part of the landscape parcel.</p>	
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Opportunities for woodland creation:

- The steep slopes of this landscape provide an important visual backdrop to the lower lying basin to the north. Given the extensive coniferous forestry to the south and west and the significant landscape change that the consented wind farms will bring, it is important that the remaining openness and ruggedness of the area is conserved where possible, in considering future land use change, including woodland creation.
- **Large predominantly coniferous woodlands** should avoid the visually prominent steeper slopes and could instead be more comfortably accommodated within the more gently graded lower slopes in the North East of the landscape parcel. Any new schemes should incorporate a high proportion of broadleaves, with these connecting to areas of isolated riparian woodlands, such as the Dalleagles LNCS. Commercial coniferous planting should avoid the small but prominent hills lying on the southern edges of this AU, for example Knocknarran Hill, and the deeply incised valleys.
- **Small or medium sized predominantly coniferous woodlands** should, similar to above, avoid the more visually prominent steeper slopes. The lower slopes to the north offer greater opportunities to accommodate this type of woodland while minimising landscape and visual effects, as well as impacts on nature.
- **Small or medium predominantly broadleaved woodlands**, would bring beneficial effects to the lower slopes and lower valleys, where they would fit within the reduced scale of the landscape and could be associated with existing woodlands and trees. In terms of the steeper slopes to the south, riparian planting within deep valleys would be appropriate and could help accentuate the ruggedness of the area.

Eastern Farmed slopes

This landscape parcel is the most easterly part of the study area, sitting to the east of the A70 and to the south east of New Cumnock. It is predominantly traditional farmland in nature, however, has been affected by previous mining activity in the south east of the area.

Landscape considerations	Environmental considerations	Community and other considerations
<p>The landform of the area primarily forms evenly graded slopes, rising to the east at Avisyard Hill (330 metres). There are limited distinctive landform features, aside from some relatively shallow valleys on lower slopes.</p> <p>The scale of the landscape is smaller on the western side, where field enclosures and woodland pattern provide a degree of containment. Scale becomes larger moving east to the more open upper slopes near Avisyard Hill.</p> <p>There is a variety of landcover; coniferous plantations in the north east, distinctive broadleaved shelterbelts on farmland in the north and north west; improved and semi-improved pasture with some wetter rough grazing on upper slopes and; pockets of disturbed ground and restored land in the south east.</p> <p>Visibility of this landscape parcel is limited</p>	<p><u>Designations:</u></p> <p>One very small Local Nature Conservation Site is located within the landscape parcel; <u>Ryderston Belt</u> is towards the north west edge of the area. It is a small area of woodland and grassland mosaic, with records showing evidence of protected species including badgers and pine martens within or in close proximity to the site.</p> <p><u>Existing habitats and potential habitat expansion:</u></p> <p>There are several areas of existing woodland network on the lower slopes of this landscape parcel.</p> <p>Pockets to the far east are identified as part of a bog heath network, linking to similar habitats further east, beyond the study area.</p> <p>No opportunity sites are identified within this area for habitat enhancement.</p>	<p>There are limited features of community interest within this part of the study area.</p> <p>A small stretch of railway line cuts through the north west part of this landscape parcel. Whilst this does not preclude woodland creation in the surrounding area, a buffer will be required on the immediate surrounding land, to protect the operation and safety of the railway.</p> <p>Avisyard Hill is popular locally, for informal walking / recreation.</p> <p>The former Garleffan surface coal site sits immediate to the east of the study area; restoration is complete with re-contouring, dis-used tracks filled in, soil placed and grass seeded.</p> <p>There are several sites of possible archaeological significance through this landscape parcel.</p>

Opportunities for woodland creation:

- The gently east sloping landform of this part of the study area means it is in the most part not prominent in views from the surrounding area. There are areas of existing coniferous woodland in the south eastern part of the area. The lower and north west facing slopes are predominantly in agricultural use and feature small broadleaved shelterbelts and small copses, which could provide a starting point for wider landscape enhancement.
- **Larger predominantly coniferous woodlands** could be accommodated on the broader and more expansively scaled upper slopes and ridge of Avisyard Hill. The lower margins of new woodland should include a large proportion of broadleaved species in order to attain good integration with shelterbelts and copses on lower farmed slopes. The design of new woodland should additionally aim to improve angular margins of existing coniferous plantations.
- **Small or medium sized predominantly coniferous woodlands** could, similar to above, be accommodated on the broader and more expansively scaled upper slopes and ridge of Avisyard Hill. The lower margins of new woodlands should include a large proportion of broadleaved species in order to attain good integration with shelterbelts and copses on lower farmed slopes. The design of new woodlands should additionally aim to improve angular margins of existing coniferous plantations.
- **Small or medium predominantly broadleaved woodlands** would have beneficial effects on this farmed landscape. New woodlands should be designed to increase visual and ecological connectivity with existing broadleaved shelterbelts and copses. Broadleaved woodlands could be designed to emphasise the subtle water courses which pattern these lower slopes. There are opportunities for wood pasture to be planted to provide shelter for stock and for coppice woods to be established.

Section 4 – Woodland creation criteria checklist

This section of the guidance provides a useful checklist against which proposed woodland creation schemes should be measured to create successful woodlands that achieve multiple benefits.

The criteria cover a range of considerations which should be considered at the early stage of a project but may not include all the requirements necessary for a grant approval or woodland compensatory planting scheme.

The Council will use this checklist when consulted on any proposals for woodland creation schemes within the pilot area, and indeed elsewhere within East Ayrshire, given its wider relevance and usefulness.

	CHECKLIST		
	Yes ✓	No X	Comments
Criteria 1 – Scale of woodland creation proposed			
Does the scale of the proposal align with the guidance set out within this document?			
If not, has the design process considered alternative scales or mitigation measures to better accommodate the proposed scale of woodland within the site?			
Criteria 2 – Woodland diversity			
Does it include an appropriate mix of tree species?			
If predominantly conifer, does it include a diversity of coniferous species?			
Criteria 3 – Promote public access			
Does it maintain existing access?			
Does it promote new public access?			
Criteria 4 – Peatland and carbon rich soils			

Will the proposal disturb areas of nationally important class 1, 2 and 5 peatlands?			
Has action been taken to avoid / minimise / reduce impact on other areas of			
Criteria 5 – Species and habitats			
Does the proposal affect any Local Nature Conservation sites? If yes, have any impacts been fully explored and mitigation measures put in place?			
Does the site host any CSGN opportunity sites? If yes, does the proposal help realise the habitat opportunity? CSGN - Habitat Networks and Opportunity Areas (arcgis.com)			
Criteria 6 – Landscape character			
Does the proposal follow the guidance set out above in relation to landscape sensitivities?			
Criteria 7 – Community engagement			
Has engagement, appropriate to the scale of the proposal, been undertaken with nearby residents and communities?			
Have any concerns raised through engagement been addressed?			
Have opportunities to create community woodlands or community stewardship schemes been explored?			

Criteria 8 – Transport			
Have transportation considerations been fully explored?			
If timber extraction is proposed, will agreed routes be used?			
Criteria 9 – Water quality			
<p>Has the impact on drinking water sources been explored?</p> <p>Greater detail can be obtained here Sustainable Land Management - Scottish Water or in consultation with protectdwsources@scottishwater.co.uk</p>			
If any risks have been identified, have mitigation measures been agreed?			



East Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

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