Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Landscape Character Assessment
Historic Environment Audit
Community Engagement
Socio-economic Analysis

April 2019

COALFIELD
Communities Landscape Partnership

heritage lottery fund
LOTTERY FUNDED

Introduction

A landscape character assessment, historic environment audit and socio-economic analysis were conducted of the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership area in November 2018 - February 2019. The findings are presented in individual reports and drawn together here in an Executive Summary.

The study area is defined as the CCLP Landscape Partnership area - 228 km2 of the River Doon and Lugar Water valleys along with the foothills between them - plus a 1 km buffer zone (Figure 1).

Landscape Character Assessment

MVGLA Landscape Architects

The landscape of the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership (CCLP) area is one of its key assets, affecting how the area has developed and how it is experienced and used. The presence of coal deposits in the rocks has been the most significant aspect of the area that has influenced how humans have used the land. Coal mining has influenced the population changes, settlement patterns, communications networks, and continues to influence the landscape today through economic and physical drivers.

In 1998 Scottish Natural Heritage published the Ayrshire Landscape Assessment which picked out broad characteristics in the landscape to distinguish between landscape character areas. This study aims to provide a locally focussed consideration of the CCLP area for the purposes of the HLF Landscape Partnership, using the published landscape character types as a starting point.

The CCLP area is made up of three parts, the Lugar Water valley; the Uplands; and the Doon Valley, reflecting the topography of the area and the way in which it is experienced.

The Lugar Water valley forms the northern part of the study area, and includes the Bellow Water and Glenmuir Water valleys and the lowlands around Cumnock to Ochiltree. The Glenmuir Water valley is a quiet, small scale upland valley surrounded by low moorland hills. The valley has a meandering flood plain with alluvial terraces. The Bellow Water Valley is different in character, being long and straight. It is shallow and exposed with a slight rise to flat moorland on the north side, low hills to the south and relatively few trees. It is also experienced differently with the A70 running through the valley connecting eastwards towards Muirkirk.

There is evidence of former industrial activity including spoil heaps and disused railway lines. The Glenmuir and Bellow Water valleys converge within a short incised wooded valley section between Lugar and Cumnock. Downstream to the west and south of Cumnock, the landform opens out to be rolling lowland that has estate woodlands and large agricultural fields. This part of the study area is described as seven local landscape character areas: Upper River Valley (the Glenmuir and Bellow Valleys), Lowland River Valley (Lugar valley), Ayrshire lowlands (the Skares and Barony areas), and Plateau Moorland (Airds and Glenmuir areas).

The Uplands area of the CCLP extends from the south side of the Lugar and Glenmuir Water valleys to the northern edge of the Doon Valley. The hills have ridges, plateaux and rounded summits that rise to around 350m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) with extensive forest plantations. The evidence of former or current use of these hills for mining is notable as exposed workings of active mines, and areas of recovering vegetation. The land form is disturbed in many places, with deep terraced quarries (some of which are flooded), storage piles or spoil heaps, and broad tracks.

Two windfarms, Polquhairn (9 turbines of 100m to blade tip) and Over Hill (10 turbines of 150m to blade tip) have been granted planning consent, and although construction has not yet started, these windfarms will be located within the study area. The fringe area around the hills tends not to be forested, forming a moorland transition from lowland to forested upland. Local landscape character areas are identified as the Forested Foothills (the core) and the Foothills Fringe (the Lugar and Doon fringes).

The River Doon Valley is a U shaped valley with a flat flood plain and steep sides leading up to rugged hills either side. Dalmellington and Patna form 'bookend' settlements at either end of the valley, and the busy A713 runs through the valley. At the southern end three tributary valleys converge to form a small basin containing Bogton Loch. Downstream the main section of the valley is linear, with improved floodplain pastures. The valley sides rise up from the flood plain as improved/semi-improved pasture with a transition to open moorland slopes above. There is a strong sense of an industrial past within the valley, with multiple disused railways, spoil heaps, industrial buildings at Waterside and disturbed topography on the slopes. The three Local Landscape Character Areas are Upper River valley (Doon valley), Upper River basin (Bogton Loch), and Foothills with forest (Keirs Hill to Glenmount).

Potential landscape projects include care of the beech trees that are characteristic of the area; reinforcing the landscape pattern with planting; influencing restoration of mined areas; increasing access and recreation potential; and tapping in to renewable forms of energy for local and environmental benefits.

The CCLP boundary was reviewed during the study, and a number of recommendations for revisions to the boundary are made. These include using the horizon of the Doon Valley to form the south-western edge of the CCLP; including the Barony A Frame as a symbol of mining history in the area; and making use of existing boundaries on the ground such as roads, railways (current or disused) and field boundaries to make the CCLP easy to define. Additional areas that could be considered for inclusion are the Auchinleck non-inventory designed landscape; Airds Moss SAC/SPA; and the Dalricket active open cast mining site.

Historic Environment Audit

Dave Sneddon & Gavin MacGregor, Northlight Heritage

An audit of the historic environment of the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership (CCLP) area was conducted in November and December 2018. This has provided a baseline understanding of the CCLP area's historic environment and the key historical elements and narratives that underpin the landscapes' distinctive qualities. For the purposes of this study, 'historic environment' is defined as a combination of physical evidence - including archaeological remains, artefacts, the built environment and bio-cultural heritage - and intangible associations, concepts and values that link people with place (Scottish Historic Environment Policy 2011). The audit has drawn together physical evidence for human activity - including archaeological remains, artefacts, the built environment and bio-cultural heritage - with elements of intangible cultural heritage such as folklore and traditions.

The historic environment record for the CCLP area alone contains 643 entries, some of which are also Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments, while the buffer zone around it contains an additional 240 entries. Designated sites and areas include 10 Scheduled Monuments, 166 Listed Buildings, five Conservation Areas and two inventoried Gardens and Designed Landscapes. No Properties in Care or Battlefields noted in the Inventory of Historic Battlefields are present.

Evidence for prehistoric activity is generally sparse, particularly in relation to settlement. There are a range of stray finds, including three Neolithic polished stone axes (c 4,100 – 2,500 BC) and a number of

Bronze Age (c 2,500 - 800 BC) weapons found in votive hoards in vicinity of Cumnock. A notable number of round cairns and mounds of probable Bronze Age date, related to funerary and ceremonial practices. One of these, a round cairn at Beoch, incorporates part of a rock art panel .

While remains from the Iron Age (c 800 BC – c AD 400) are sparse, they include two possible enclosed settlements, one at Knockdon Burn and the other at Waterside, a possible crannog on Elizabeth Isle in Bogton Loch. Two possible Roman roads cross the area, and various Roman coins found may relate to the Army's temporary presence or to local trade in the early centuries AD.

The Medieval period is relatively well represented by the remains of secular strongholds. There are mottes (artificial earthen mounds that supported timber castles) at Ochiltree and also at Dalmellington, strategically situated on the boundary between the kingdoms of Kyle and Carrick; these probably date to the 12th century AD. Later Medieval stone tower houses are more numerous, with seven recorded in the valleys of the River Doon and Lugar Water, including Dame Helen's Castle, Kiers Castle, Laight Castle, Kyle Castle and Terringzean Castle. Evidence for other types of settlement from this period is rare, with the notable exception of a Medieval turf building north of Cronberry. Several of the larger settlements become Burghs of Barony, a status which gave the landowner the right to hold weekly markets: Auchinleck in 1507, Cumnock in 1509 and Dalmellington in 1607. Covenanters were particularly active in the study area during the 17th century, with associated sites at Martyrs Moss, Carsgailoch Hill, Little Auchengibbert and Airds Moss.

The mid to late 1700s saw the start of significant social and economic change. Flax growing and sheep farming activity increased, as did the cottage industries of hand loom weaving and embroidery in the larger villages. Rural settlement remains of post-medieval date are relatively abundant, such as the settlement at Dalnean. Few have been investigated archaeologically, and as such they have high potential for enhancing understanding of other areas of life, including changing food production and family social histories.

Coal was key to agricultural improvement, as it allowed lime to be burned, improving soil quality and enhancing crop yields and wool production. This in turn led to a need for more mills and an improved road network to transport goods to markets outwith the area. Access to coal and improved roads also led to the development of the iron and brick industries, such as the works at Dunaskin, along with associated infrastructure, including the wider network of mineral railway lines. Industrial growth was also accelerated by the expansion of the railway network in the area from 1841, with the line extended to near Cumnock in 1850.

Increased wealth and access to the area led to the construction of country houses and designed landscapes, such as Auchinleck House, Dumfries House and Craigengillan. These continue to contribute to the landscape character , largely through mature woodland, in parts of the CCLP area. The 19th century also saw the creation of more complex settlements for industrial workers, such as Lethanhill and Benqhuat, related to the Dalmellington Ironworks, and Cronberry and Darnconner, north of the Lugar Ironworks. Patna was established in 1902 by William Fullerton to house miners from his estate.

The area also had strong traditions of craft production, including hand loom weaving, shoe manufacture and the creation of Mauchline Ware wooden souvenirs and Cumnock Ware ‘motto’ ceramics. Other forms of cultural practice have been important in the area since the 19th century, including music (brass and silver bands) and sports (bowling, curling, football and quoiting).

A resurgence in coal mining took place when the industry was nationalised after the Second World War. Key sites include the Barony A Frame; it marks the site of Ayrshire's last working deep pit, which shut in 1989. Since then, open cast mining has grown significantly in extent. Other notable sites dating to the 20th century include the short-lived airfield at Bogton Loch, Dalmellington, which relates to the Loch

Doon gunnery school. This significant site can be related, at least indirectly, to recent archaeological and oral history studies of Pennylands Camp 22 in Auchinleck.

The unique characteristics of the area's historic environment and wider cultural heritage create considerable potential to engage local people, attract research and stimulate conservation, which can enhance narratives about the present and future in the Coalfield Communities LP area.

The historic environment audit has highlighted several key themes which could be pursued through projects and associated interpretation planning:

- **Old Land, New Life**: Evidence for post-medieval rural settlements range from 17th- and 18th-century farmsteads to 19th- and 20th-century industrial villages. How did people live differently at these sites, and to what extent could they produce food from the land (through infield and garden)? What did they grow and where did farmers and gardeners get seeds? What containers did they use to store and carry? How did diet and recipes differ in these periods, and what could be learned to inform legacy building?

- **Landscape of Change**: The CCLP area has visible change written large across it. Designed gardens and landscapes of the 18th and 19th centuries and the remains of late 18th- to 19th-century industrial innovations are still clearly visible. The late 20th-century open cast extraction is very much in evidence. Large-scale afforestation and the growth of renewable energy have also created visible change. Wider understanding of these processes of reinvention and change could form the basis for research and engagement during the delivery phase. It could help frame a conversation around future landscape change and how the Coalfield Communities could positively develop aspects of it as part of CCLP legacy planning.

- **We Make and Play**: There is abundant evidence for creativity and energy in the area, from the craft production of the 18th to 20th centuries to its sporting heritage, which still plays a significant role in cultural life. How have people celebrated, through music and dance, and what photographs exist from the area showing past leisure pursuits? Can we be inspired by the ways people made and played in the past and thus encourage further activities and new traditions?

These themes could frame a number of potential projects relating to the archaeology, historic environment and cultural heritage of the CCLP area:

- 21st Century Mottos – Focusing on Cumnock Ware and providing opportunities for people to work with local collections and learn about the heritage of craft production in the area through pottery- and motto-making for the 21st century.

- Delvin Oor Patch – Based on archaeological investigations at several key post-Medieval sites to reveal the social archaeologies of communities, to address research questions on changing household and food production / consumption.

- Covenanting Paths and Places – Comprehensive mapping of sites associated with Covenanting could form the basis of heritage trail development.

- Sports Mapping – A sports heritage project documenting the traditions associated with different local sports and producing a short film of people's stories.

- Walk This Way – Mapping and walking old routeways to encourage wider access and support enhanced health and wellbeing among participants.

- Access All Archives – Supporting wider access and use of local archives to research information to feed into other CCLP projects.

Community Engagement

Jacqueline Macleod, Landscape Architect

Gavin MacGregor, Northlight Heritage

The community engagement captured a snapshot of participants' perceptions and interest in their landscape, mainly through a series of walking events.

Among several themes that emerged through discussion and engagement, the predominant one was the area's rich industrial heritage and the pride and inspiration people draw from this. Key themes have the potential to be explored both in terms of further research and through strengthening capacity and resilience to forces for change.

Socio-economic history and current analysis

Rob Mc Morran, Jane Atteron and Sarah Jones, Scotland's Rural College

History and recent development

- The CCLP area has been transformed over time, in particular through the exploitation of the area for coal and iron ore, with these processes having a major and lasting impact on the economy, settlement patterns and landscapes of the area.
- Historically the region has benefitted from the proximity of Kilmarnock, Ayr and the Greater Glasgow area, with the establishment of improved road and rail links having been crucial to the success of key industries.
- As part of the wider East Ayrshire region the CCLP area has experienced periods of significant socio-economic decline due to the collapse of the coal mining industry.
- The population and communities of the CCLP area have experienced demographic decline linked with the declining availability of employment and the local economy is increasingly reliant on jobs in the public sector.
- Despite these challenges, the CCLP area and wider region benefits from high value environments and a number of relatively unique cultural and landscape features –including the cultural artefacts of the coal mining industry itself.
- Future economic development can harness this existing natural and cultural heritage to link with growth areas including tourism and food and drink, as well as capitalising on a strong further education sector in the region.

Key policy drivers for the future of the CCLP area

Key relevant policy drivers include Brexit uncertainty and the potential for the withdrawal of overseas companies post-Brexit, disruption from altered trade arrangements and the potential loss of EU funding for infrastructural development and agricultural support. Uncertainty also exists in relation to the future of the LEADER programme, with limited detail currently on the potential UK-wide Shared Prosperity Fund (to support local development). However, the 2018 Agriculture Bill offers potential for development of Payments for Ecosystem Services approaches which may offer opportunities for land managers.

Further drivers include: i) an emphasis in the regional economic strategy on growth sectors, including food and drink and tourism; ii) the development in the wider region of the South of Scotland Economic Partnership, which although outside the CCLP area, has the capacity to create relevant employment and development; iii) increasing emphasis by the Scottish Government on a Town Centre First principle and an emphasis on place based approaches; iv) the Scottish Government's Digital Strategy and wider technological change and the potential for improving digital access for rural businesses, increased opportunities for home working and digital provision of health services; v) climate change and renewables funding and potential for forestry expansion; vi) land reform, community empowerment policies and the development of funding and support for community ownership and asset transfer.

Land cover and land capability

- Agriculture is historically important in the area in terms of employment, economic activity and landscapes.
- The CCLP area contains a reasonably diverse mixture of land uses, but is generally constrained (particularly in the uplands) in relation to agriculture.
- Forest and woodlands are a major landcover component.
- Due to the area's limited agricultural capability future changes to agricultural policy are unlikely to result in major rapid changes to land use, although marginal and smaller farms are likely to face challenges. Some lowland areas and areas under dairy and cropping face a period of uncertainty due to the potential for changes to subsidy mechanisms.
- Land use change across the region (e.g. conversion of marginal ground to woodlands) could affect flood prevention/mitigation capacity of the land cover, which represents a potential opportunity for land managers dependent on grant availability and/or any future Payments for Ecosystems Services (PES) approach.

Current population demographics

- The overall population of the area in 2011 was 22,416 with an overall density of 47 people per sq/km), comparable to an average for Scotland of 65 people per sq/km or for East Ayrshire of 96.8 people per sq/km. The wider regional population has remained static over the last twenty years. Within the CCLP population densities are much lower in the upland areas outside of the main river valleys.
- Considerable demographic shifts have occurred, with the number of children (0-15) having declined by 15.8% since 1997 and the 23-44 age group experiencing a 19.3% decline over the same period, while those in the 65-74 and 75+ categories having experienced increases of 21.1% and 27.9% respectively.
- The CCLP area contains lower numbers of children, lower numbers of people of working age and higher numbers of people in the 55-85 age categories, indicating a lower level of economic activity and a higher rate of dependency than for Scotland. Current population projections for the wider region suggest the population will experience a limited decline (2%) to 2034. Over the same time period these projections also indicate a 6.4% reduction of 0-15yr olds (compared to -2% Scotland), a 14.2% reduction in people of working age (16-64) (-4.6% for Scotland) and 40.6% increase in people aged 65 and over compared to 46.7% for Scotland.

- The current static population growth and demographic decline in the CCLP area is reliant on in-migration as a lever to reverse negative trends and increase the overall proportion of young people and people of working age.

Economic development and employment

- The decline of the coal mining industry across East Ayrshire, as well as declines in employment in the manufacturing, textiles and land use sectors during the 1970s has impacted the economy of the region heavily. In some cases, communities have failed to fully recover or reposition themselves to capitalise on emergent industries.

- Regional economic growth has been relatively slow and economic activity rates remains a challenge, with a number of recent business closures in the wider region. To address these economic challenges a number of specific programmes have been undertaken and the food, drink and tourism sectors have become key growth areas and both renewable energy and software development also represent key emerging growth areas for the wider region.

- The wider region is known for its heritage, culture and high quality environment, making it an attractive place to live and work – which can be harnessed to facilitate future in-migration. Business start-up rates have also improved in recent and the wider region has benefitted from substantial investment in the further education.

- The rate of unemployment was higher in the CCLP area (6.4%) than for Scotland (4.7%) and the percentage of economically inactive and retired people were both higher in the CCLP area than for Scotland. More up to date data shows a decline in the unemployment rate for the wider east Ayrshire region in recent years.

- In terms of employment by sector a higher proportion of people worked in health and social care, primary production, land based industries, construction and manufacturing in the CCLP area than for Scotland as a whole in 2011, with a decline in the numbers of people working in manufacturing in recent years due to the closure of a number of businesses within the region.

- The CCLP area and wider East Ayrshire region contains a very wide range of community assets, including buildings and greenspace and East Ayrshire Council area has the largest amount of vacant and derelict land of any Scottish Local Authority, with the majority of this lying within the CCLP boundary – with these sites offering opportunities for initiatives/development from a community perspective through Community Asset Transfer. To take advantage of these and wider opportunities community capacity building (e.g. in the form of community development trusts) represents an important current and future area of development at community levels both within the CCLP area and wider region.

- The economy of the CCLP area and wider regional economy face considerable challenges in relation to an ageing demographic, low levels of economic activity and limited employment opportunities. Nevertheless, the CCLP area and wider region has a number of key strengths including regional business clusters around food and drink, renewables energy, engineering and tourism (among others).

Key forces for change

- Green growth opportunities, diversification and inward investment, including through the Ayrshire Regional Growth Partnership and building on existing key sectors such as food and drink,

renewables and tourism/leisure, drawing on the regions accessibility and natural and cultural assets;

- Labour retention and developing a skills based economy, with the aim of addressing demographic challenges through upskilling of the local/regional population and encouraging in-migration of skilled employees to ensure labour supply for emergent industries;
- Place making and building economic links to local cultural heritage and landscapes including coal mining and iron ore extraction, to harness the existing cultural landscapes and build links to the areas cultural heritage through a wide range of cultural and tourism initiatives. These activities also have the capacity to develop a strong 'sense of place' and differentiate the area in terms of the perceptions of residents and visitors as a unique, high quality destination;
- Building community capacity through the establishment of new energy landscapes, linking the areas industrial cultural heritage with modern, renewable energy landscapes. Linked to this there is potential for new employment in the renewable energy sector, the development of linked businesses across the supply chain and the creation of new funding sources for community groups and community development. This offers potential for further development of relevant locally based community development bodies and building;
- Land managers delivering public goods and an increased focus within the land use sector in the region on diversification and innovation, creating opportunities for new forms of farming activity of farming models and new entrants to the farming sector.