MVGLA
Landscape Architecture

Coalfield Communities Landscape Study

Landscape Character

COALFIELD
Communities Landscape Partnership

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1. Landscape Character Assessment

Introduction

1.1 The landscape of the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership (CCLP, Figure 1) area is one of its key assets, being the environmental setting in which the history of the area evolved to what it is today. The characteristics of the landscape affect how the area is experienced and used. The CCLP area is one of two valley systems, very different from each other, and the hills around and between them.

1.2 The landscape and context of the area, as part of the rim of uplands around the lowland basin that runs down to the sea to the north-west, shaped historic settlement as described in the Historic Environment Audit. At a local scale, the topography and soils (land capability for agriculture) influenced where people have settled, which areas are farmed, and which areas remain as relatively unmodified vegetation.

1.3 The geology underlying the area determined the soil types, which determines vegetation and agricultural potential, but in this area the geology has also proved a rich resource in its own right (see Figures 3-4). 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 land cover changes across opencast sites from working to restoration.

1.4 This study forms a review of the character of the landscape of the CCLP area, to provide a local scale review to support the identification of needs and opportunities for landscape partnership projects. The review considers the area at a regional scale in terms of published information, before focussing on local character and place.

1.5 The study area was the working boundary for the CCLP as shown on Figure 1, although the scope of the study included the identification of recommendations to alter the working boundary (set out in Chapter 3).

Landscape Character Types

1.6 In 1998 Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) published the Ayrshire Landscape Assessment[1] as part of a national suite of assessments. These landscape character assessments were carried out at a regional scale, looking broadly at landscapes that extended across Scotland. The Ayrshire assessment therefore picked out broad characteristics in the landscape to distinguish between landscape character types. This report aims to provide a more focussed consideration of the CCLP area for the purposes of the HLF Landscape Partnership.

1.7 The Ayrshire Landscape Assessment divided the region into areas of similar landscape character using a range of variables including topography and vegetation, land-use and settlement patterns, building styles and cultural associations. Broad Regional Character Areas were identified, then divided into landscape character types (LCTs) and sub-types, based on the variation of shared characteristics. Some landscape types are represented by a single example, whilst others recur across the region.

1.8 The CCLP area lies on the Ayrshire Rim, described in the Ayrshire Landscape Assessment (1998) as the rim of hills which surround the lowland basin that runs down to the sea, known as the Ayrshire Basin. To the north and west of the study area therefore, there are extensive lowlands, whilst to the east and south there is an area of extensive plateau moorland and hills. These hills lie to the north of the Southern Uplands Fault, comprising broad, gentle sloping hills with areas of moss and blanket bog. These uplands are drained by valleys that were shaped through glacial erosion, and the Ayrshire Rim is interrupted by valleys that cut through as the watercourses drain out into the lowland basin. Two such incised valleys are the Doon valley and the Lugar Water valley within the study area.

1.9 The CCLP study area is divided into LCTs as shown on Figure 2. These include:

[1] SNH (1998) *Ayrshire Landscape Assessment.* Commissioned Report No.111.

- Plateau Moorland
- Upper River Valleys
- Lowland River Valleys
- Ayrshire Lowlands
- Foothills with Forest
- Other LCTs adjacent to the study area include
    - Upland Basin
    - Foothills
    - Southern Uplands
    - Southern Uplands with Forest

1.10 Although most areas have continued relatively unchanged since the 1998 landscape assessment, there has been expansion of open cast mining in the upland areas, and the introduction of wind turbines or windfarms in some surrounding areas. As such, the 1998 landscape assessment is considered to be the main baseline resource on landscape character for the CCLP area[2].

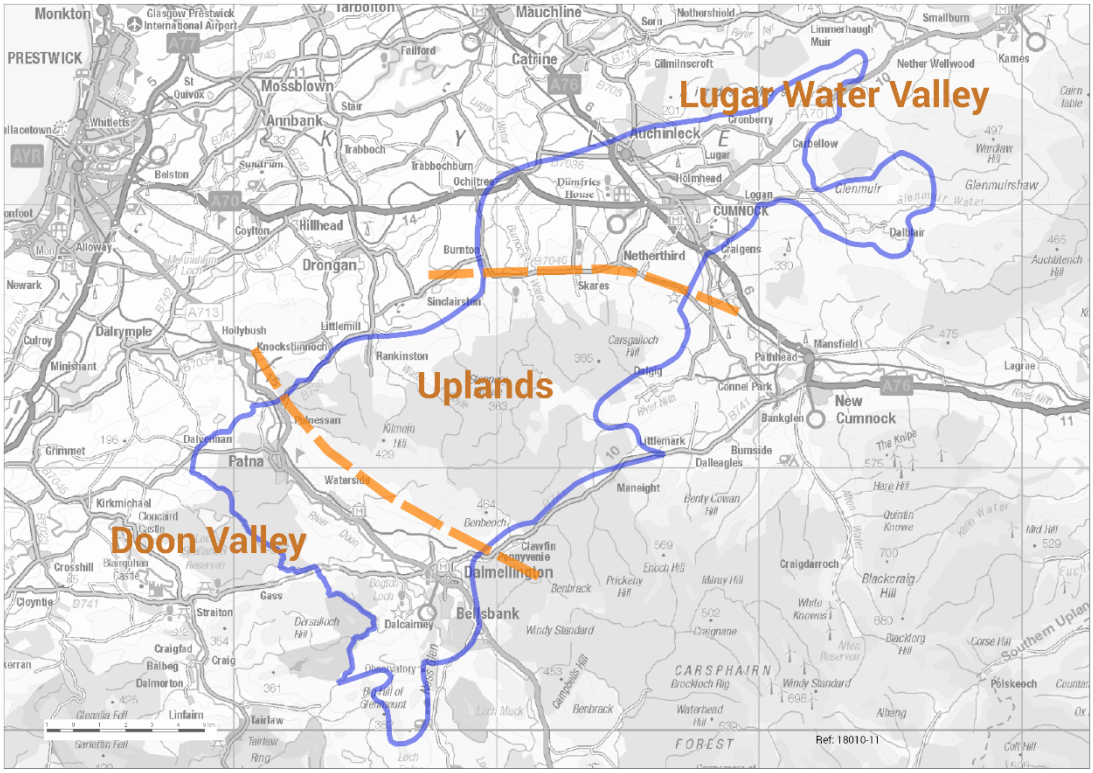
A Local Assessment

1.11 As set out above, the 1998 landscape assessment considered the landscape on a broad, regional scale, identifying areas with similar characteristics across the whole of Ayrshire as part of a suite of studies covering the whole of Scotland. The purpose of this study is to reconsider the landscape and to identify local character in the landscape of the CCLP area, as well as to identify local pressures for change and opportunities for enhancement.

1.12 This study has therefore considered the landscape at a local scale, using maps of 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 scale, as well as aerial photography, historic maps and field work. The aim of the study is not necessarily to divide the landscape into smaller units, but to review the character of the landscape, using the published LCTs as a starting point.

1.13 The CCLP area (using the working boundary) has been divided into 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.

[2] A more recent study carried out to consider wind energy in the area (East Ayrshire Landscape Wind Capacity Study, 2018) used the landscape character types set out in the 1998 assessment.



The three parts of the study area

Lugar Water Valley

1.14 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.

1.15 To the east of Cumnock the Glenmuir Water valley forms a small scale rural valley of upland character, surrounded by low moorland hills which form the edge of broad undulating moorland plateaux. The valley has a flat meandering flood plain with clear scarps of alluvial terraces. The slopes above are varied, leading up to the undulating horizon. The valley is quiet, accessible only by minor roads that terminate at farms and the ruins of Kyle Castle. Tree cover includes riparian woodland along the watercourse and minor tributaries, and a number of coniferous or mixed plantations on the valley slopes.

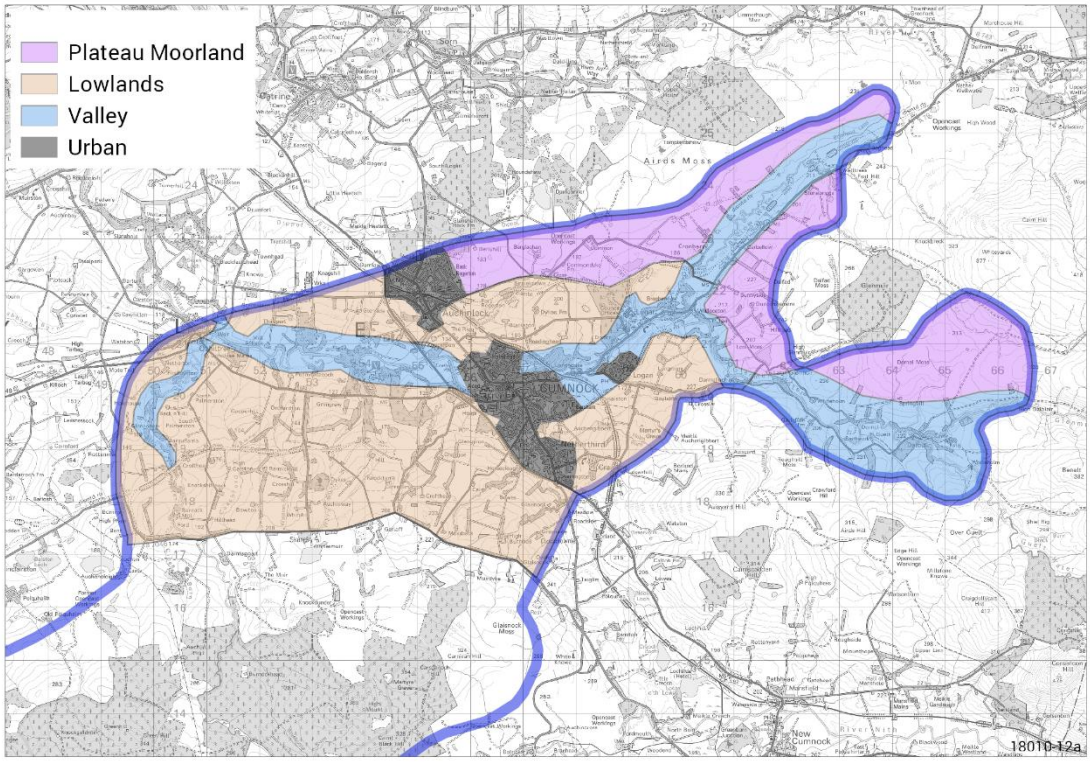
1.16 The Bellow Water Valley is different in character, being long and straight, although the watercourse meanders across the valley floor. The valley is shallower than the Glenmuir valley, with a gentle rise up to flat moorland to the north, and rising slopes to the south affected by former and current industry. It is also experienced differently as the A70 forms a busy and fast route along the Bellow Water valley, connecting to the upper Ayr valley and Muirkirk. Trees are few within the valley, and are associated with buildings, and a few waterside trees. Coniferous and mixed planting on the southern slopes is associated with reinstatement of mined land. Farmsteads are enlarged, including some with industrial yards forming pockets of current industrial activity in the valley otherwise characterised by former industry. Bings and spoil heaps are dotted along the valley, and disused railway lines are readily visible across the river from the A70.

1.17 The watercourses from these valleys converge within a incised valley section between Lugar and Cumnock. Here the narrow valley is wooded and enclosed, with very small scale valley floor that has the A70, linear settlement and a few narrow fields.

1.18 To the west and south of Cumnock, the landform is of larger scale, with rolling agricultural land that was formed by glacial deposition. At a broad scale, these lowlands descends from the hills to the south, down to surround the Lugar Water between Cumnock and Ochiltree, forming part of the Ayrshire Basin. The Lugar Water is contained within a narrow wooded valley that runs through the surrounding lowlands.

1.19 Given the variations in landform, landcover, and character of the valleys and lowlands, this study proposes that the local landscape areas be refined from the LCTs, to focus on how the valleys change in character along their lengths. The following local character areas are identified:

- Upper River valley – Glenmuir valley; Bellow Valley;
- Lowland River valley – Lugar valley;
- Ayrshire lowlands – Skares; Barony;
- Plateau Moorland – Airds; Glenmuir;



Local Landscape Character Areas in the Lugar Water Valley

Upper River valleys

1.20 The Glenmuir Water and the Bellow Water form two different river valleys. They each have upland character with limited improved ground cover close to the valley floors, rough grassland slopes coming down from enclosing moorland slopes above, and very limited settlement. The Glenmuir valley is an incised valley with a marked break of slope at the valley floor, but also a well-defined floodplain terrace that forms a distinctive feature within the valley particularly around Garleffan Farm. The valley sides are open moor with some forest plantations and wind



Photo: Floodplain terrace within the Glenmuir Water valley (source MVGLA)

pruned hedgerow trees. As the minor road is not a through-road, there is a sense of it being an isolated glen.

1.21 In contrast, the Bellow Water valley is a communication corridor. The A70 is a busy route, and one of the few main routes between Ayrshire and the M74 corridor. There is limited settlement within the valley, and the valley is most often experienced from the road. There are few trees within the Bellow Water valley, and the slopes either side do not enclose the valley, giving an exposed character to the landscape.

1.22 While the Glenmuir valley does not appear to have been modified much by industrial workings, the tell-tale signs of industry are unmistakable in Bellow Water valley. These include disused railways and sidings (grass covered), bings (with varied revegetation) and ruined buildings that one passes along the A70. On the south-east side of the valley there are recently planted woodlands on reinstated ground of former mining areas, and gateways to active sites up the slopes, although they are not visible from the road.

1.23 The Bellow Water valley in particular, was an important transport route for industry, with several railway routes running along it. Around Cronberry, there are multiple disused railway lines, from the through route from Muirkirk and Douglas towards Cumnock, with a split towards Auchinleck, and several short sections of track servicing collieries on the Airds Moss to the north and Gasswater on the south side. The Bellow Water valley therefore played a focal role in the coal industry.

1.24 Downstream, these valleys join within a deeply incised section between Darmalloch and Wallaceton to Cumnock, that has steep sided wooded valley and a very narrow valley floor. The A70 runs along the valley floor, through the linear settlement of Lugar.



Photo: Bings and disused railways within the Bellow Water valley (source MVGLA)

Lowland River valley

1.25 Downstream of Cumnock, the Lugar Water runs through a valley that is more open in topography than upstream, with gently sloping valley sides in most sections. This LLCA is characterised by a strong woodland structure with improved grassland fields and parkland. The area includes part of the designed landscape of Dumfries House. The meandering river has left oxbow lakes and wetlands, particularly downstream of Dumfries House. Riparian woodlands and wetlands with rectilinear fields bounded by hedgerows typify this small scale landscape.



Photo: View of the Lowland River Valley from the temple at Dumfries House (source MVGLA)

1.26 The Burnock Water forms an incised section of valley joining the Lugar water at Ochiltree. The Burnock Water emerges from the upland area to the south as the Black Water, and drains much of the study area. The Burnock Water valley downstream (north) of the B7046 is not visible from roads nearby due to the rolling nature of the topography, but has riparian woodlands on abrupt slopes down to the river that is within a narrow valley floor.

Ayrshire lowlands

1.27 The north-western of this part of the study area, including between the Lugar Water and the edge of Airds Moss (around Barony) and south of the Lugar Water between Logan and the Burnock water, and south to the B7046 is of rolling lowland farmland. These areas have improved grazing or arable fields that are rectilinear and bounded by hedges or fences. There are frequent shelterbelts running perpendicular to the contours, or defining the boundaries of estates (for example at Dumfries House, Glaisnock or Auchinleck House).

1.28 There is a network of minor roads across this area, often accompanied by mature beech shelterbelts or tree lines. Woodlands of Dumfries House and Glaisnock designed landscapes are mature, in contrast with the shelterbelts around Mossback that have been recently planted on restored land (former mining site).

1.29 Dumfries House is a large mansion designed by Robert and John Adam for the Earls of Dumfries in the 18th century, with extensive woodlands and gardens around it. The 7th Earl of Dumfries and 2nd Marquis of Bute accumulated vast wealth though developing coal and iron industries, not only in the local area, but also in Wales. Glaisnock House is on the Buildings at risk register, and is a Tudor mansion that was used as an education facility in the late 20th century.

1.30 The Barony A Frame is a large minehead frame structure at the site of the former Barony Colliery, which has been restored and preserved as a memorial to those who worked and died at the colliery between 1908 and 1989. It is a tall structure that stands out as a landmark on the horizon from a wide area, as a reminder of the coal industry that dominated this area.

1.31 The Ayshire Lowlands housed many coal and iron workers, as well as containing estates that were built or supported by wealth from these industries. The routes across the lowlands were vital transport corridors for the industries, with links to the coast and inland to Muirkirk and Douglas.

1.32 The B7046 road forms a notable boundary between the lowland and the foothill fringes, with a mature deciduous shelterbelt running along much of its length. The change in character is created by this road and shelterbelt



Photo: The shelterbelt along the B7046 at Garlaff (source MVGLA)

combination, with enclosed fields below (north) and open rough moorland on the slopes above (south).

Plateau Moorland

1.33 The Plateau Moorland areas are expansive uplands with blanket bog, heather and grass moorland, on an undulating topography of plateaux, basins and rounded hills and ridges.

1.34 Airds Moss, to the north of the Bellow Water valley, is an extensive flat peatland plateau that is exposed and due to the wet terrain, difficult to traverse. The south-eastern edge of the moss has a number of dismantled railways along it, including those that linked to the former coal mine on the western part of the moss. The boundary with the valley is a subtle edge to the flat moss before the slopes drop down into the valley. Airds Moss is covered by a number of natural heritage designations (see Figure 7), as well as being part of a Special Landscape Area (SLA, see Figure 6).

1.35 The Glenmuir area, between the Bellow Water Valley and the Glenmuir water valley is of higher, more undulating land, with mosses on the plateaux. Low Moss is located on relatively low lying land and is crossed by the minor road from Wallaceton, making it readily perceptible to local people moving around the area. Dormal Moss is higher ground to the east, and although there are tracks round it, it is relatively inaccessible. There is a large forest plantation on Glenmuir to the north of Dormal Moss, but other parts of this area are extensively mined.

1.36 The plateau moorlands form part of the uplands around the Ayrshire Basin, and form the immediate setting to the Lugar Water and Bellow Water valleys. Collieries, both deep pits and more recently open cast collieries have been located in these areas, including two former pits on Airds Moss, and extensive mining around Glenmuir and to the south of the Glenmuir valley (outside the study area). The Airds Moss represents one of the larger moss habitats in the region, although much of it is outside the study area.

Uplands

1.37 The Uplands area of the CCLP extend from the northern edge of the Doon Valley to the transition from moorland and forest to lowland land uses on the south side of the Lugar Water valley.

1.38 The hills are of undulating terrain with rounded summits, ridges and plateaux. The hills rise to around 350m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), with Benbeoch (463m AOD) and Benquhat Hill (435m AOD) forming the highest hills. These hills are relatively low compared with other parts of the Southern Uplands, but stand over the valleys forming horizons. Benquhat Hill is identified as a 'landmark hill' in the East Ayrshire Local Development Plan, Supplementary Guidance: *Planning for Wind Energy*[3].

1.39 The hills in this area are upland in character, covered with upland moor and bog vegetation between the extensive forest plantations. A characteristic that stands out is the evidence of former or current use of these hills for mining. This varies from blue/grey or black bare earth workings of active mines, to areas of recovering vegetation (as a result of active restoration or slow regeneration of unused areas). 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 between mining areas and connecting with the public roads at various points.

1.40 The tops of Benbeoch and Bequhat Hill have not been affected by mining, and there are three areas of moss and bog that also remain. The current land uses are, in order of prominence, forest plantation; opencast mining; mining restoration areas (moorland or forest or mixed plantations); undisturbed moorland; and moss. The land use pattern is complex, and mining has meant that land uses and topography are not permanent, and the quality and stage of restoration (remodelling and vegetation re-establishment) determines whether or not it is evident that an area was once mined.

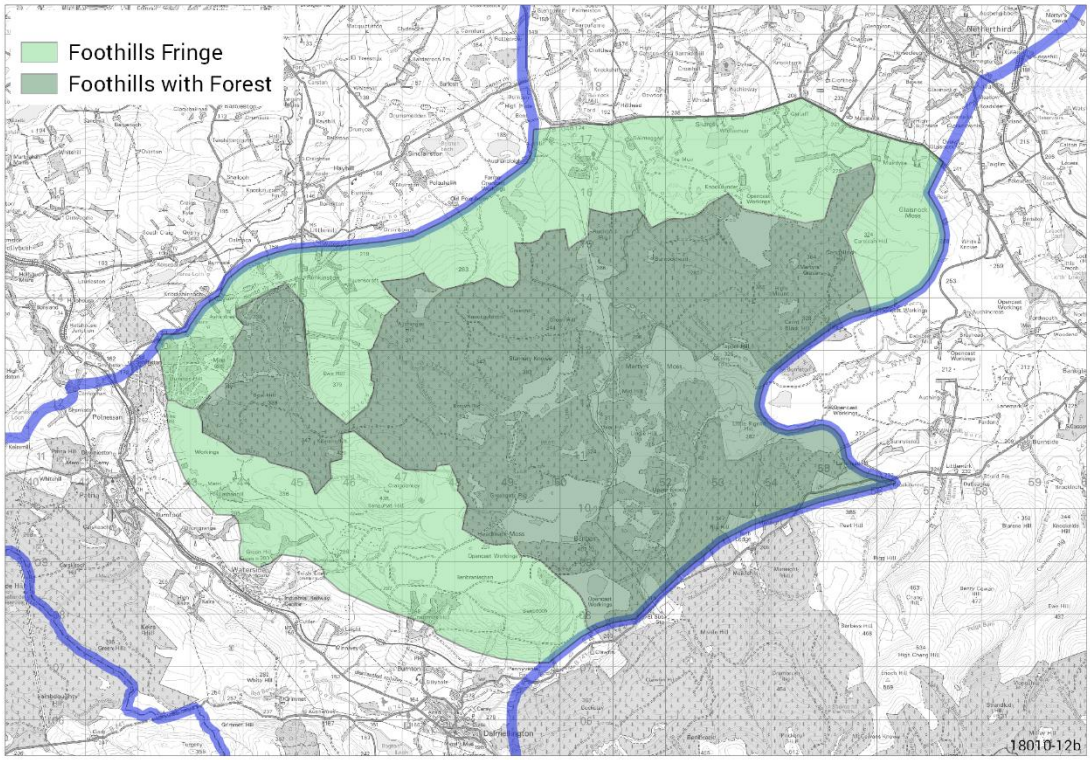
1.41 Polquhairn Windfarm, for 9 turbines of 100m to blade tip, is a consented development on the north-western edge of the uplands area. Over Hill Windfarm, a proposal for 10 turbines of 150m to blade tip has recently been granted planning consent[4]. Construction has not yet started, but these windfarms will be located within the upland part of the study area (see Figure 9). Other proposals for windfarms are currently being considered, and include North Kyle and Greenburn (both at scoping stage, i.e. not yet formal planning applications). In addition there are a number of windfarms in the wider area around the CCLP area, including the existing Hare Hill Windfarm and its extension, Afton Windfarm (operational) and South Kyle and Pencloe Windfarms (consented) and others that are undetermined applications.

1.42 Given the complexity of land use and land cover, it is considered that subdivision based on land use and landscape pattern is not beneficial. There is however, a fringe area around the hills that tends not to be forested, such

[3] East Ayrshire Council (2017) East Ayrshire Local Development Plan, Supplementary Guidance: *Planning for Wind Energy*
[4] Consented January 2019.

that the transition from lowland to upland is apparent in the transition from pasture to moorland, with forest areas further up. Local landscape character areas are there therefore identified as:

- Forested Foothills - core;
- Foothills Fringe – Lugar Fringe; Doon fringe.



Local Landscape Character Areas in the Uplands

Forested Foothills Core

1.43 This area is one of undulating hills and plateaux that have a dominant groundcover of coniferous plantation, and extensive areas of open cast mining. The character of the forested areas is affected by the species or species mix, and the age of the forest coups or stands within the plantations. Access is limited to rides between forest areas, that may be tracks or wayleaves.

1.44 The character of the mined areas is dependent on whether there is active mining, or if not, whether the land has vegetation and of what maturity. If there is vegetation, it may be undisturbed moorland and bog in areas that have



Photo: Upland forested hills, showing forests at different stages (source MVGLA)

not been worked, or it may be at some stage of restoration.

1.45 There are two remnant moss or bog areas, Martyr's Moss and a small part of the western edge of Headmark Moss that have not been planted with trees or mined, but show up as dark moss patches on aerial imagery[5]. These area are locally valued for their ecology and habitats, and some parts of this area are designated as local wildlife sites. However, most areas of moss have been either planted, mined or cut with drainage ditches.

1.46 Overall this is a landscape greatly affected by human activity, both in terms of land cover and land form. Further development, in terms of windfarm construction, will occur over the next few years at the consented sites of Polquhairn and Over Hill Windfarms.

[5] See online satellite imagery.

Foothills Fringes



Photo: Looking across the Doon Valley to Benbeoch above Dalmellington (source MVGLA)

1.47 The fringes of the foothills are open moorland slopes with some planted areas, descending from the forested hills. Along the north edge of the foothills, the transition from the Lugar fringes to lowland is marked by the B7046, and shelterbelts along the roadside forming a break between open moorland and enclosed improved fields. Much of the northern fringe above the Lugar Water valley has been mined, and is in a restored state, with immature trees and gently graded landform.

1.48 The southern fringe of the foothills above the Doon valley is a less distinct transition between what is upper valley slope and what is hill fringe, but it includes the open hills along this edge, Benquhat Hill and Benbeoch, and the open slopes that form the northern skyline of the Doon valley. These open areas have largely been mined, and are at various stages of restoration. Tracks, terraces and the topography of former workings can be seen on the slopes.

1.49 The upland area forms an important core area for mining, as well as forming the backdrop to the Doon and Lugar valleys. The fringes of the foothills form the skyline to many views from within the valleys. The introduction of wind turbines on the upland areas may affect the skylines seen from some parts of the lower lying areas.

River Doon Valley

1.50 The River Doon Valley is a U shaped valley with a flat flood plain and steep sides leading up to undulating to rugged hills and plateaux either side. Dalmellington is located the southern end if the valley, where three tributary valleys join forming a small basin. The converging valleys are the Ness Glen containing the River Doon from Loch Doon to the south, the Muck Water valley containing the A713 to the south-east, and the Pennyvenie valley containing the Cumnock Burn/Linn Water to the north-east.

1.51 The basin below Dalmellington is broad, flat and flooded by Bogton Loch, with wetland and wet woodland between Dalmellington and Dalcairney, and either side of the B741 as it crosses the valley. Downstream the main section of the valley is linear, with the wetlands of Bogton Loch giving way to improved floodplain pastures. Waterside is a linear settlement half way along the valley, focussed around the historic railway, and rather squeezed between the hill slopes and the A713 with a large spoil heap immediately on the south side of the road. The valley sides rise up from the flood plain as improved/semi-improved pasture with a transition to open moorland slopes beyond the enclosed fields. Patna is located at the northern end, before the valley narrows and passes out into the lowland areas to the north.

1.52 The hills that form the horizon to the north include Benbeoch and Benquhat Hill, and to the south, the horizon is formed by Patna Hill, Carskeoch Hill, Keirs Hill, Auchenroy Hill and Shear Hill above Craigengillan. Benquhat Hill, Auchenroy Hill and Big Hill of Glenmount (further south) are recognised as landmark hills in the East Ayrshire Landscape Wind Capacity Study[6]. The horizon to the valley is generally undulating, through more rugged where rocks are exposed. There is frequently forest on the horizon, obscuring the landform and giving the forests a presence in the perception of the hills when seen from the valley.

1.53 This is a valley with a sense of remoteness from the settled landscapes of lowland Ayrshire, although Dalmellington and Patna form 'bookend' settlements either end of the valley, and the busy A713 runs through the valley. There is a strong sense of an industrial past within the valley, with railways, spoil heaps, industrial buildings and disturbed topography on the slopes.

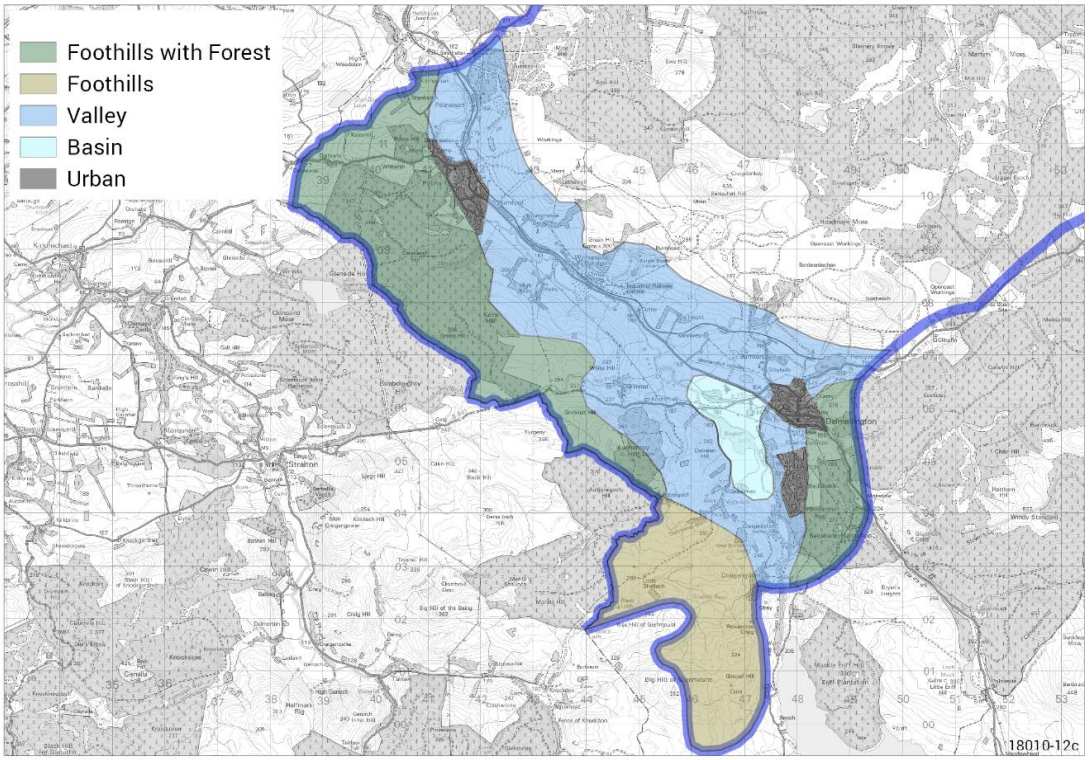
1.54 The valley and the hills to the west are recognised as a Special Landscape Area as set out in the *East Ayrshire Local Development Plan Background Paper: Sensitive Landscape Areas*[7]. The background Paper states for these areas:

- *"The Doon Valley is an attractive upland valley, which provides a scenic entrance into East Ayrshire. It contains a wide range of landscape features including complex knolly hill patterns in its most upland section, several water bodies and wetlands, landmarks hills and Craigengillan Estate. The east side of the Doon Valley has been affected by the coal industry, making the appropriate management of the remaining valley of significant importance."*
- *"The relatively constrained band of upland landscape, forms an important role in proving the backdrop and setting for the Doon Valley and the Girvan Valley in South Ayrshire. The landmark hills in the southern part of the landscape form the backdrop to Dalmellington and Craigengillan Estate, whilst the more gentle northern section contributes positively to the setting of Patna and Waterside as well as the entrance into East Ayrshire on the A713."*

1.55 The local landscape areas that can be identified for this part of the study area could follow landform characteristics, or seek to keep the whole valley as one unit. It is considered to make most sense to define the valley as a whole, with slopes and valley floor, but to pick out the basin below Dalmellington as a broader area of valley. The hills to the south and west lie within the study area but are not part of the immediate Doon valley. Local landscape character areas are identified as:

- Upper River valley – Doon valley;
- Upper River basin – Bogton Loch
- Foothills with forest – Keirs Hill to Glenmount

[6] Carol Anderson Landscape Associates (2013) *East Ayrshire Landscape Wind Capacity Study*
[7] East Ayrshire Council (2015) East Ayrshire Local Development Plan. *Background Paper: Sensitive Landscape Areas*



Local Landscape Character Areas in the River Doon Valley

Upper River valley

1.56 This local landscape character area includes the main part of the U shaped valley, with a flat valley floor and steep valley sides. The slopes of the valley are concave at the break of slope, but convex higher up. The valley floor is farmed but active as a flood plain in wet conditions. The settlements of Patna, Dalmellington and Waterside are located above the valley floor to avoid the wetter ground. Similarly, the A713 runs along the edge of the valley above the break of slope.

1.57 The tributary valleys that converge at the southern end of the valley near Dalmellington are narrow and wooded. The Ness Glen from the south is overlooked by Craigengillan, and is well wooded with riparian, parkland and mixed woodlands on steep slopes. The Muck Water Valley from the east is incised, with forest on the steep slopes that contain the valley. The Pennyvenie valley from the north-east is narrow with forest to the south and a large spoil



Photo: Chimneys and railway cottages at Waterside, with the bing to the right and the flood plain in action (source MVGLA)

heap covered with mixed woodland that dominates the mouth of the valley.

1.58 Former industrial activity is very evident in the Doon valley, with disused railway lines and former factory chimneys prominent at Waterside. Higher up the slopes, there are landforms that indicate former workings, and two large bings (spoil heaps) are located in the valley, one at Waterside occupying the width of the valley floor, the other north of Dalmellington.

1.59 The River Doon valley is an important transport route for residents and visitors to Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway today, just as it was a historical transport link in earlier times, including being the focus of transport of coal and iron out of the area when those industries were at their peak.

Upper River basin

1.60 The basin area within the Doon Valley contains Bogton Loch with wetlands around it, valued for their



Photo: Looking across Bogton Loch to Benbeoch (source MVGLA)

ecology and habitats. Two areas are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Bogton Loch and Dalmellington Moss adjacent to the A713. The topography is very low lying, and the area is relatively inaccessible due to the ground conditions. The B740 crosses the wetland area, with signs warning of flooding potential, and there are tracks and the minor road to Dalcairney that run around the wetlands.

1.61 The fields around the loch are of permanent pasture grazing with rush infestations and hedge and fence field boundaries. There are mature beech trees forming and avenue along the road to Dalcairney to the south of the loch, but the area is otherwise open with a limited amount of self-seeded scrub woodland.

Foothills with forest

1.62 The southern fringe of the Doon valley rises to a rugged horizon of hills between Keirs Hill to Glenmount. These hills are largely forested, although forests are largely set back from the horizon seen from within the Doon Valley. Further south the hills are open, and form a rugged backdrop to Craigengillan and the Ness Glen. The foothills at the south-western edge of the study area are part of a ridge between the Doon Valley and the Water of Girvan



Photo: Looking across the Ness Glen to Bogton Loch (source MVGLA)

valley, and part of the wider Ayrshire Rim.

2. Opportunities for Landscape Improvement Projects

2.1 During the preparation of this local landscape character assessment, a number of potential landscape projects have emerged. These include:

Beech Trees

2.2 Large mature beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) trees form a striking characteristic of this area, frequently lining roads



Photo: Beech trees form distinctive silhouettes (source MVGLA)

or field boundaries in each of the valleys but also on the valley slopes. The trees form dramatic silhouettes and create arching avenues over roads.

2.3 However, many of the trees are mature and are beginning to loose limbs or be susceptible to strong winds. Taking care of the old trees, and planting young beech trees will be important to preserve and strengthen this characteristic. Whilst there are risks relating to mature trees along roadsides, it will be important to local character to avoid pre-emptive felling which will denude the landscape of its mature trees. If serious risks are identified, crown pruning (removing large or dangerous branches) will be significantly better for the preservation of landscape character than felling. Pruned trunks of beech, oak etc will sprout new growth and the tree can survive for many more years.

2.4 There are also opportunities in engaging local people and school children with artistic projects relating to the silhouettes, and drawing attention to the age of these trees, some of which may be 150-200 years old.

Reinforcement of Landscape Pattern

2.5 The landscape pattern in the valleys and on the slopes of the uplands is set out with field boundaries. Loss of field boundaries, in particular removal of hedgerows for enlarging field sizes, or degradation of walls through lack of maintenance or repair of fallen sections is loss of landscape pattern and integrity. Replanting of hedgerows and field boundary trees, and management of existing shelterbelt woodlands is important for maintaining the character and pattern of the CCLP area. This should include successional planting of young trees in mature shelterbelts, as well as management of mature trees (as set out above). Wall maintenance and rebuilding of drystone walls is also an important element of maintaining landscape character and pattern. Walls can vary in style and building technique, with locally distinctive styles in some parts of Scotland for example in Galloway not far from the CCLP. The flora and fauna of walls is also an interesting botanical/ecological aspect of walls that should be valued as another local habitat. Engagement of local people in the 'hidden' environments of walls and hedgerows will help to raise awareness of the added value of these field boundaries.

2.6 There are opportunities for additional new plantings throughout the CCLP. In the uplands riparian planting could enhance habitats within more sheltered gullies or valleys. On the slopes new planting could form shelterbelts, reflecting local pattern by being orientated perpendicular to the contours, or running along roads (both across and parallel with contours). Community woodlands can often be highly valued assets for a community, providing places for recreation, shelter to properties or walking routes as well as giving a community a sense of participation in environmental action. There may also be interest in setting up community orchards to provide communities with a shared asset that can draw people together for planting (school children enjoy planting trees and watching them grow), maintenance (pruning days which involve training), harvest (picking, juicing, preparing and selling the produce at an 'apple day' event or at local markets) and sharing the locally grown produce.

A Regenerating Landscape

2.7 As much of the CCLP area is former open cast mining (see Figure 8), a key part of the CCLP action will be to focus on these areas. Involvement in restoration plans for former mined areas will be an opportunity to influence the future characteristics of the landscape, as well as involving local communities in land that is being returned after industrial workings. Restoration to former use (agricultural land or moorland) can be done in ways that increase environmental benefit, reinforcing landscape pattern and character (such as through planting new shelterbelts with a high proportion of beech), and could introduce other uses that may boost local economy. Additional uses could include active/adventure tourism, climbing on stabilised rock faces, boating on flooded quarries[8], or mountain biking on sculpted spoil heaps.

Access and Recreation

2.8 There are few paths that cross the uplands part of the study area, and access to the hills is in places limited by mining operations. The desire for more walking routes was a strong theme coming from community consultation. There are opportunities for circular walks along the valleys, up into the hills, and a path link from the Glenmuir Water or Lugar Water valley to the Doon valley has been suggested that would help to reconnect the communities with each other.

Tapping in to Renewables

2.9 Given that there are two windfarms consented (but not yet constructed) in the uplands part of the CCLP, there are opportunities to maximise the local benefits of these developments, not only through financial capital from community benefit funds that can be used to fund landscape restoration projects, but also through use of the access tracks that will be constructed as part of the windfarms. These will form routes into the hills which, with coordination with the developers and landowners, could become recreational resources. Tracks can be used for walking, cycling, pony trekking, or other recreational activities that require tracks.

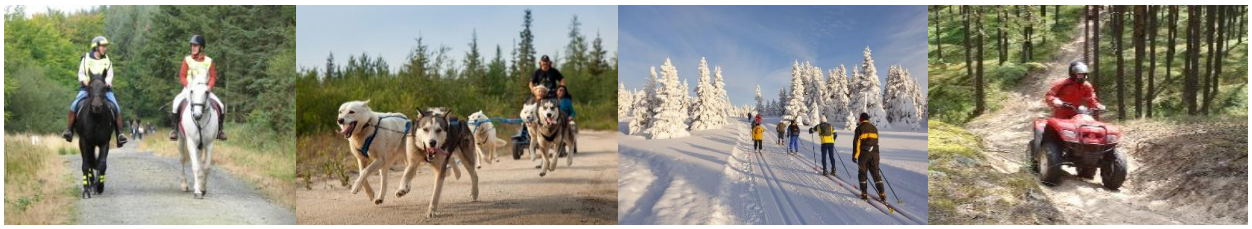


Photo: Forest activates (source various)

Interpretation and Learning

2.10 There are opportunities to raise awareness of landscape features, values and issues through interpretation. Provision of interpretation boards at key locations has been raised in community consultation as a repeating theme. Interpretation could take the form of boards or panels, or leaflets or developed as part of a mobile app that can be used by local people and visitors to enrich the experience of the landscape they are in.

2.11 Interpretation can be used to present information about landscape character, history, cultural heritage, wildlife and natural heritage, environmental issues and of course projects that the CCLP have been undertaking.

[8] The World Stone Skimming Championships take place on a flooded quarry on the Island of Easdale, but the quarry is criticised for being only 60m. There may be opportunities for longer waterbodies in the CCLP area.

Peat Management

2.12 There are important land management opportunities in the CCLP area relating to peat restoration. These could include rewetting of drained areas by blocking drainage channels that have been cut or formed within the peat, and management of vegetation growing on the peat, such as birch scrub that draw water.

2.13 Restoration of moss and bog habitats will benefit the wildlife and ecosystems of the CCLP area, some areas of which are already covered by natural heritage designations (see Figure 7). Restored peatland will emphasise the character of the landscape it forms, as a key component of the Uplands part of the CCLP.

2.14

3. Recommendations with respect to the Landscape Partnership boundary

3.1 The CCLP boundary that has been the basis of this study is currently a line that encompasses the Doon Valley from Dalmellington to Patna and the Lugar Water valley upstream of Ochiltree, plus the uplands between them. This area is shown on Figure 1. The boundary appears to follow landscape character type (LCT) boundaries for much of its route, with some exceptions:

- To the south-west, where the council administrative boundary is followed;
- To the north, where the line is taken across the lowlands from Polquhairn to Ochiltree to north of Auchinleck;
- To the east where the boundary extends into plateau moorland north of the Glenmuir valley; and
- To the east where the line crosses the Glaisnock area to above Logan.

MVGLA recommendations

3.2 On the basis of the local landscape character assessment and how the landscape is experienced, points for reconsideration of the CCLP boundary are shown on Figure 11 and set out below:

- **South-western boundary**. This section is the council administrative boundary, and it is not a readily recognisable boundary on the ground. Although the administrative boundary runs through the hills between the Doon and Girvan valleys and forms part of the SLA with the Doon valley, an alternative boundary in landscape terms would be to take the horizon of the Doon Valley as being the limit to the experience of the valley, the land beyond being part of the hills rather than part of the valley. This should be balanced with whether or not the thin strip of hill land beyond (1-2km wide), which is within the SLA, would be detrimentally affected if it were left out of the partnership area. *This would represent a reduction in the landscape partnership area*.
- **Polquhairn to Ochiltree and Auchinleck**. A key feature of the landscape and views of this area, and an important part of the coalfields heritage is the Barony A Frame. This structure, now a memorial to those who lost their lives in the mines, ought to be within the landscape partnership area. In this section, it may be more logical to follow the road network, such as along the B7036, or disused railway lines such as at Rankinston. The inclusion of Ochiltree and Auchinleck settlements is also another consideration. *This would represent a variation to the boundary, which may or may not involve an increase in the land within the landscape partnership area*. The potential for inclusion of the Auchinleck House non-inventory designed landscape is discussed below.
- **Airds Moss.** Airds Moss is and extensive area with a subtle boundary to the south at the edge of the Bellow Water valley. It is recommended that the CCLP follows clear lines on the ground where possible, such as along disused railway routes between the Moss and the valley. *This would represent a reduction in the landscape partnership area*. The potential for inclusion of the whole of the Aids Moss is discussed below.



Photo: T

- **Glenmuir Valley**. On the north and south sides of this valley, the LCT boundary roughly follows the break of slope between upland moor and steeper valley sides. It is understood that a project for the landscape partnership is peatland management and the restoration of bog in Glenmuir area. The boundary of the landscape partnership should follow clear lines on the ground where possible. Over Glenmuir it is suggested that the boundary is taken along the edge of the Glenmuir Forest plantation and along the Cass Water, enabling the Dornel Moss to be within the landscape partnership area. South of the Glenmuir valley the boundary could follow watercourses and field boundaries close to the horizon, before descending to meet the road network. *This would represent a variation to the boundary, which would involve an increase in the land within the landscape partnership area*.

- **Logan to Glaisnock**. In this area it is suggested that the boundary should follow the road network or the railway line. *This would represent a variation to the boundary, which may or may not involve an increase in the land within the landscape partnership area*.

- **B741 and other sections**: For other stretches of the boundary, where the LCTs are followed, it may be more logical to vary the landscape partnership to follow the road network in places. An example of this would be along the B741 from Dalmellington towards New Cumnock, as this road follows a pass that forms a natural break in the hills. The Landscape Partnership boundary as it stands does not follow the road, but varies by a few hundred metres either side. Given that LCT boundaries are drawn on a large scale as transitions rather than abrupt boundaries, and that the mapped line is not evident on the ground, it can be extrapolated that the LCT boundary was perhaps meant to follow the road. The landscape is experienced from the road when travelling through this valley and the road forms a natural perceptual boundary. *These alterations would represent variations to the boundary, which may or may not involve increasing the land within the landscape partnership area*.

- **Dalricket.** In this area the LCT boundary sweeps across the edge of the basin that is currently under active mining. The inclusion of this area would be to embrace active coalfields along with historical or finished sites. If this is possible (for various reasons it may not be), it is suggested that the boundary could follow existing and retained boundaries in the landscape, such as watercourses or forest edges at the boundary of the open cast site. *These alterations would represent variations to the boundary, which may or may not involve increasing the land within the landscape partnership area*. The potential for inclusion of the Dalricket open cast site is discussed below.

3.3 It is also recommended that links with the Galloway Glens area should be considered within the scope of the Landscape Partnership projects, even if the areas do not meet. The landscape between Dalmellington and Loch Doon

is of a different character from the Doon valley. It forms a division between these areas in the form of higher hills with narrow valleys and the experience of the A713 is one of a pass through the hills with forested narrow valleys to the Loch Doon area as it opens out. It is not therefore a continuous landscape area between the Loch Doon and Doon Valley areas, such that the separation between these landscape partnership areas is logical in landscape terms.

Potential additional areas

3.4 Requests have been made for inclusion of the Auchinleck non-inventory designed landscape, and the Airds Moss SAC/SPA within the CCLP area. These would represent large increases to the CCLP area.

- **Airds Moss**: In landscape terms, the Airds Moss is a large, relatively uniform area (of consistent character), located to the north of the Bellow Water valley. In order to make a coherent connection with the Bellow Water valley and the rest of the CCLP area, the Airds Moss area to the west of the SAC/SPA would need to be included also, as shown on Figure 11.

- **Auchinleck House**: Auchinleck non-inventory designed landscape is located to the north of Ochiltree, and includes an neo-classical 18th century house with ruins of two former dwellings, 13th century Auchinleck Castle and a 17th century Auckinleck 'Old House'. The grounds are laid out with woodlands and parklands on the northern slopes of the Lugar Water, with the remains of more formal gardens near the site of the Auchinleck 'Old House'. The former courtyard now hosts a café as well as farm/estate buildings. In landscape terms, the Auchinleck estate is contained within a woodland structure that sets it apart from the surrounding Ayrshire Lowlands. This recognisably defined area could be included in the CCLP if it is considered important to carry out projects within the area, or if it has a strong connection with the coal mining heritage of the CCLP area, such as with Barony Colliery.

- **Dalricket**: This area is an active open cast mining site. To include it would be to include the current industry in the CCLP area, allowing connections/associations to be made with historic and active mining activities. Much of this area is or was contiguous with the Upland areas with moorland and forest plantations, and forms the western edge for the Uplands area, in spite of being actively mined. If this area is to be included in the CCLP, it should be considered whether or not it will be possible to carry out physical Landscape Partnership projects within the area with access restrictions due to the active coaling works. However, the inability to carry out physical projects may not restrict other associative projects and links being made.

Area

3.5 Figure 11 sets out the potential changes to the CCLP. The alterations to the boundary will have implications in terms of the geometrical area covered by the CCLP, as set out in the table below.

Table 3.1: Areas within the CCLP boundary options (see Figure 11)

Boundary Option	Area
Study Area, issued CCLP boundary	229 km^2
Revised CCLP boundary following MVGLA recommendations	210 km^2
Additional area – Airds Moss	21 km^2
Additional area – Auchinleck	4 km^2
Additional area – Dalricket	16 km^2

3.6 It is acknowledged that landscape character is only one aspect of the CCLP, and that other considerations need to be taken into account. The CCLP Board will also need to consider the range of projects that the CCLP aims to undertake, in order to determine the appropriate boundary.

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Figure 1: The Study Area

Key:

- Landscape Parternship Boundary
- Council Boundaries

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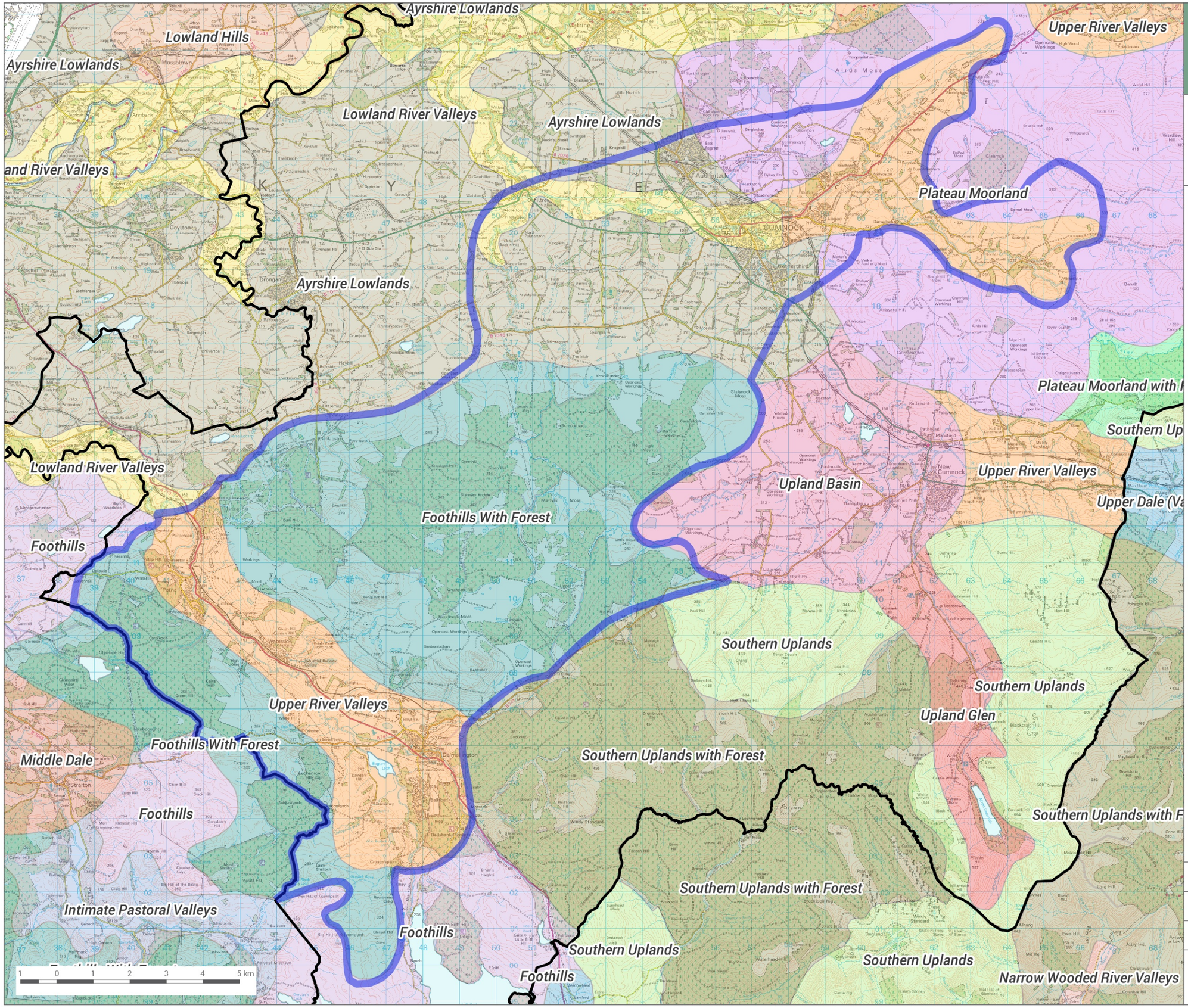
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Figure 2: Landscape Character Types



Key:

- Landscape Partnership Boundary
- Council Boundaries

Landscape Character Types

- Ayrshire Lowlands
- Foothills
- Foothills With Forest
- Intimate Pastoral Valleys
- Lowland Hills
- Lowland River Valleys
- Middle Dale
- Narrow Wooded River Valleys
- Plateau Moorland
- Plateau Moorland with Forest
- Southern Uplands
- Southern Uplands with Forest
- Upland Basin
- Upland Glen
- Upper Dale (Valley)
- Upper River Valleys

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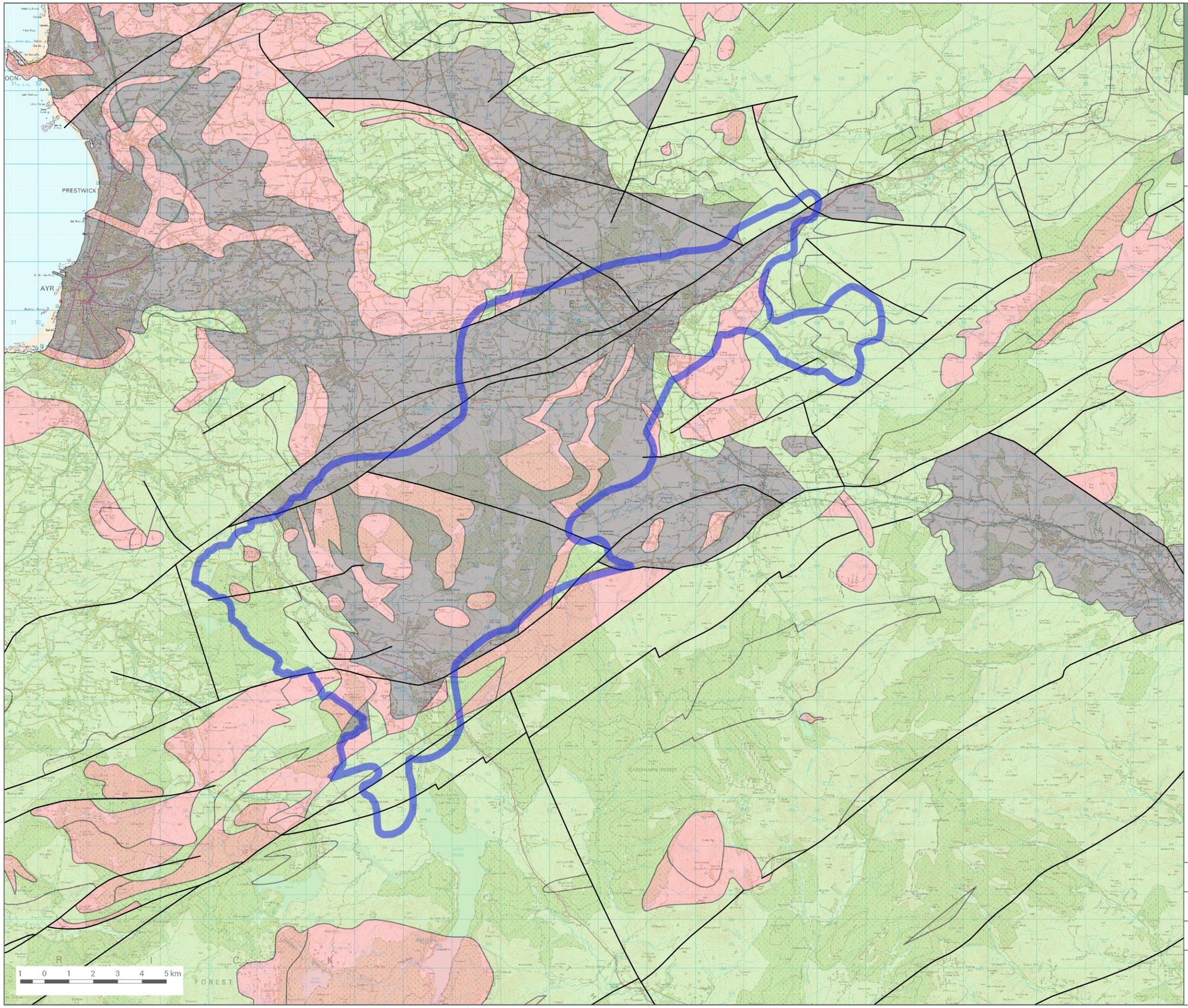
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Figure 3: Bedrock Geology



Key:

- Landscape Partnership Boundary
- Fault lines

Bedrock Geology

- Coal-bearing sedimentary rocks
- Other sedimentary rocks
- Igneous rocks

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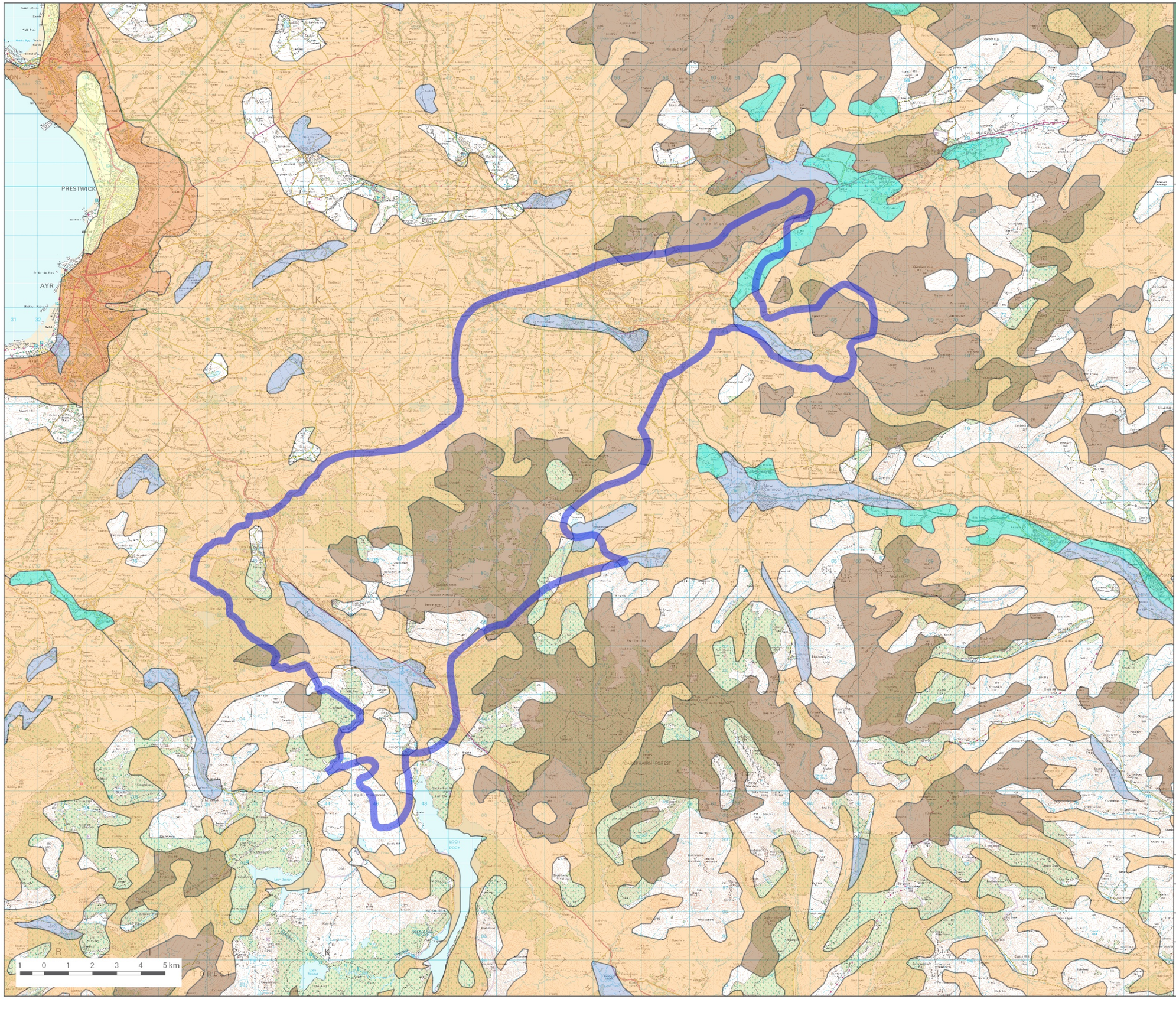
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Figure 4: Superficial Geology



Key:

- Landscape Partnership Boundary

Superficial Geology

- Peat
- Till
- Glacial deposits
- River deposits
- Raised beach deposits
- Sand

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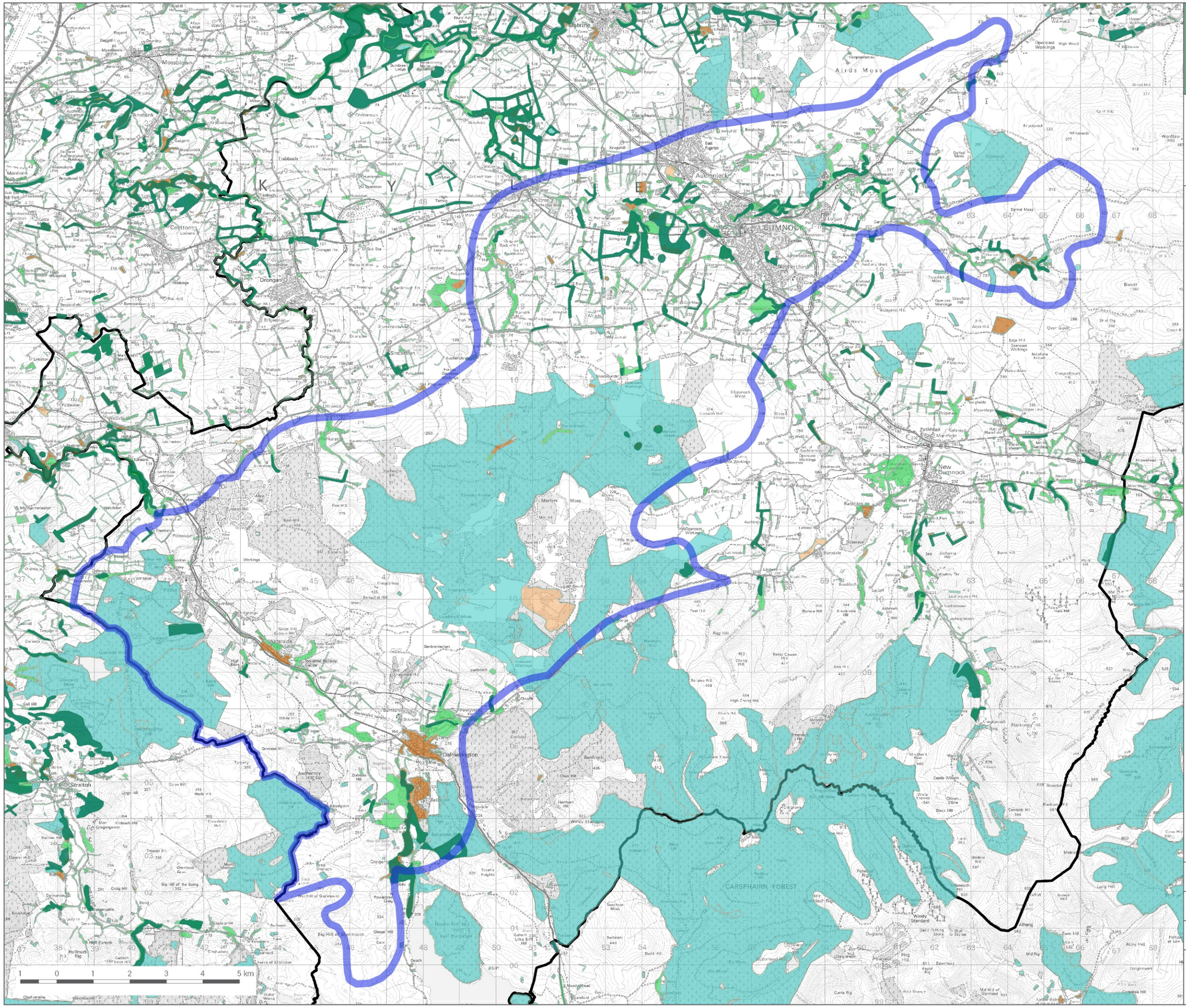
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Figure 5: Woodland



Key:

- Landscape Partnership Boundary
- Ancient Woodland

Semi-natural Woodland

- Broadleaf
- 80-90% Broadleaf
- Conifer
- 80-90% Conifer
- Mixed Broadleaf/Conifer
- Scrub

Notes:
Ancient and semi-natural woodland data sourced from SNH available datasets. Note that some coniferous woodland is not shown.

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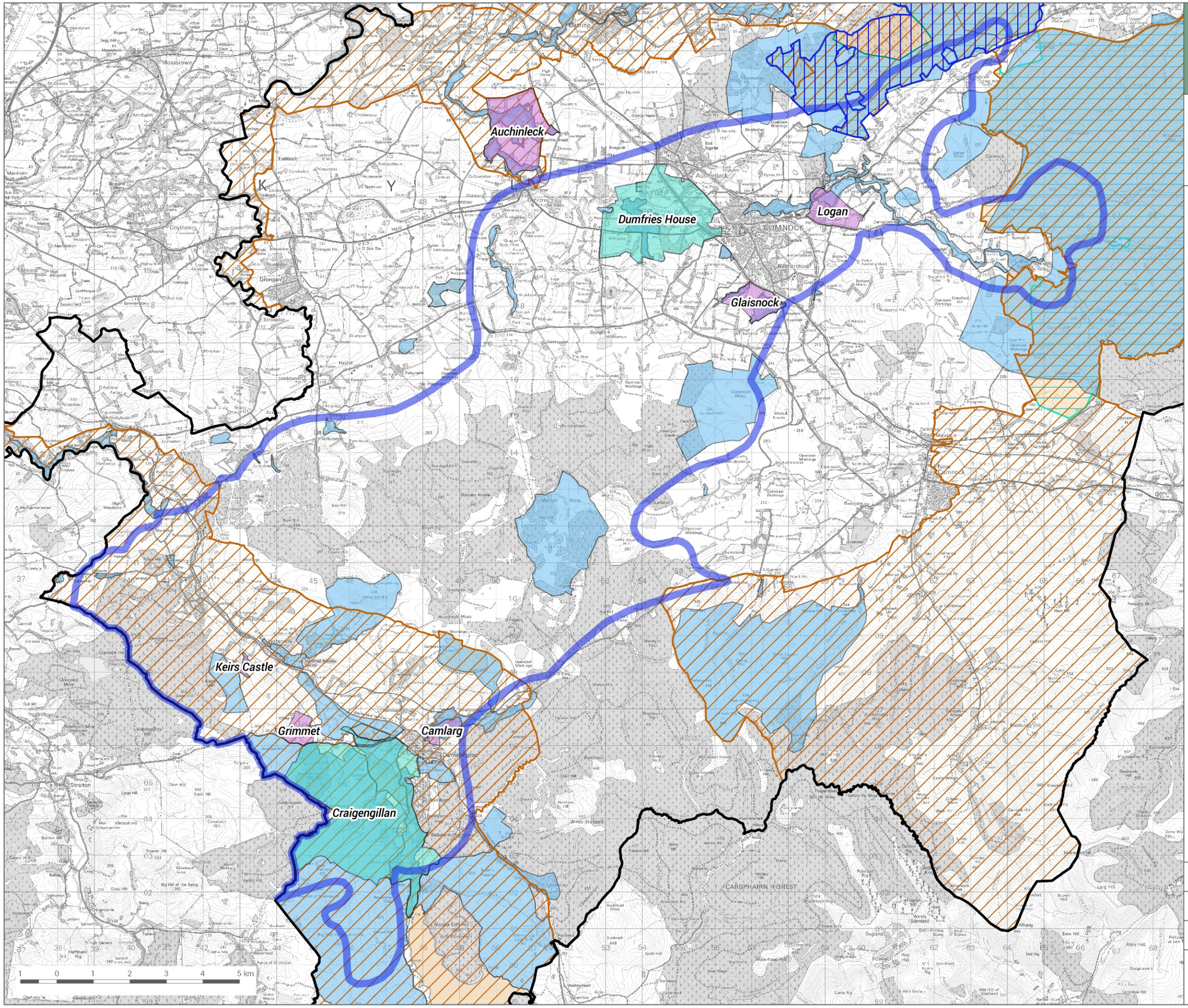
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Figure 6: Designated Areas



Key:

- Landscape Parternship Boundary
- Council Boundaries
- Special Areas for Conservation
- Special Protection Areas
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Special Landscape Areas

Designed Landscapes and Gardens

- Inventory listed
- Non Inventory

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Figure 7: Natural History Designations

Key:

- Landscape Parternship Boundary
- Council Boundaries
- Special Areas for Conservation
- Special Protection Areas
- local wildlife sites
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Biosphere

- Buffer
- Transition

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Figure 8: Opencast Coal Mining Sites

Key:

- Landscape Parternship Boundary

Open Cast sites

- Operational Sites (Coaling)
- Coaling finished under restoration
- Unrestored
- Fully Restored
- Aftercare

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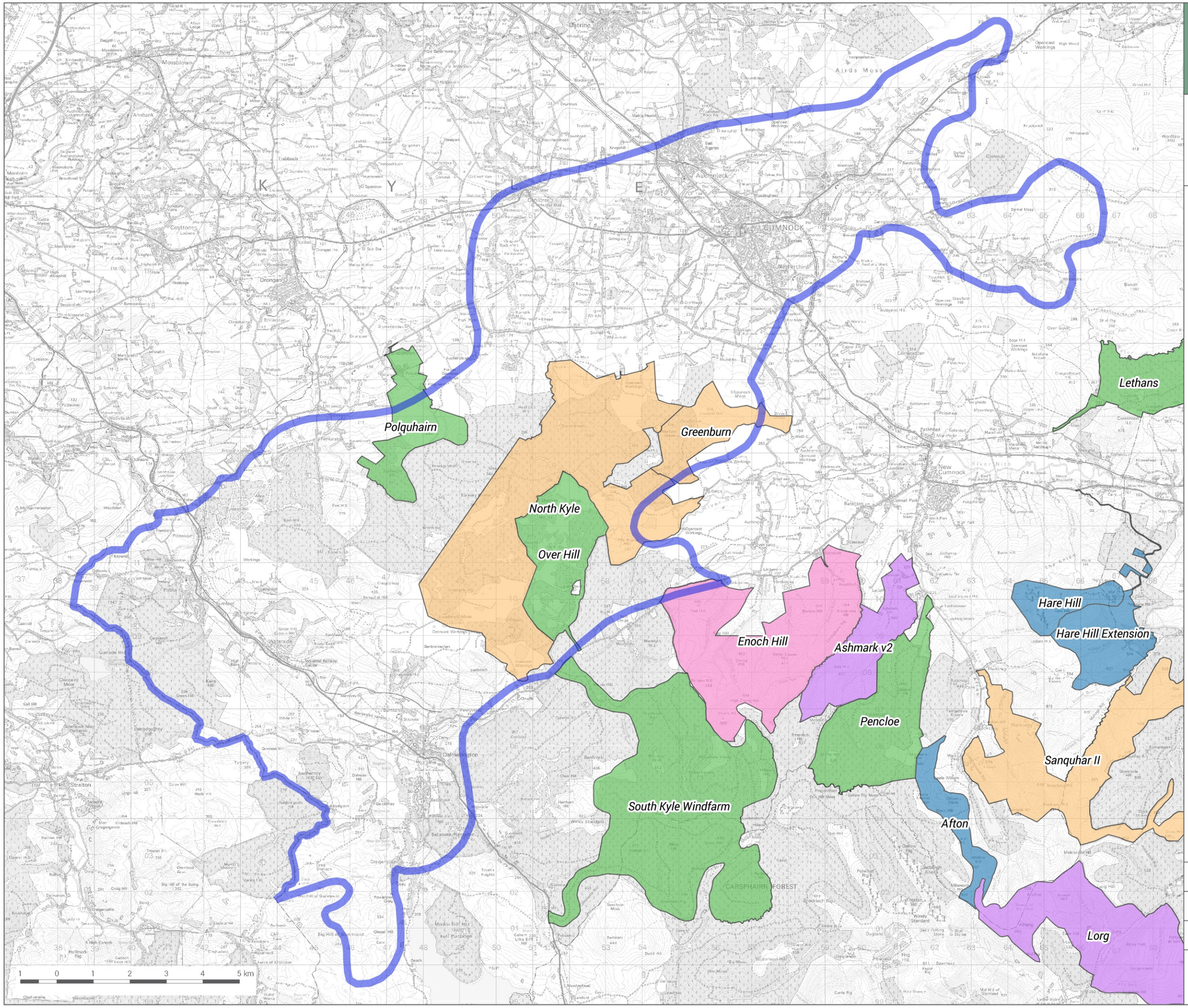
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Figure 9: Wind Farm Sites



Key:

- Landscape Parternship Boundary

EAC Windfarm data

- Operational
- Consented
- Planning Application
- Section 36 Application
- Scoping

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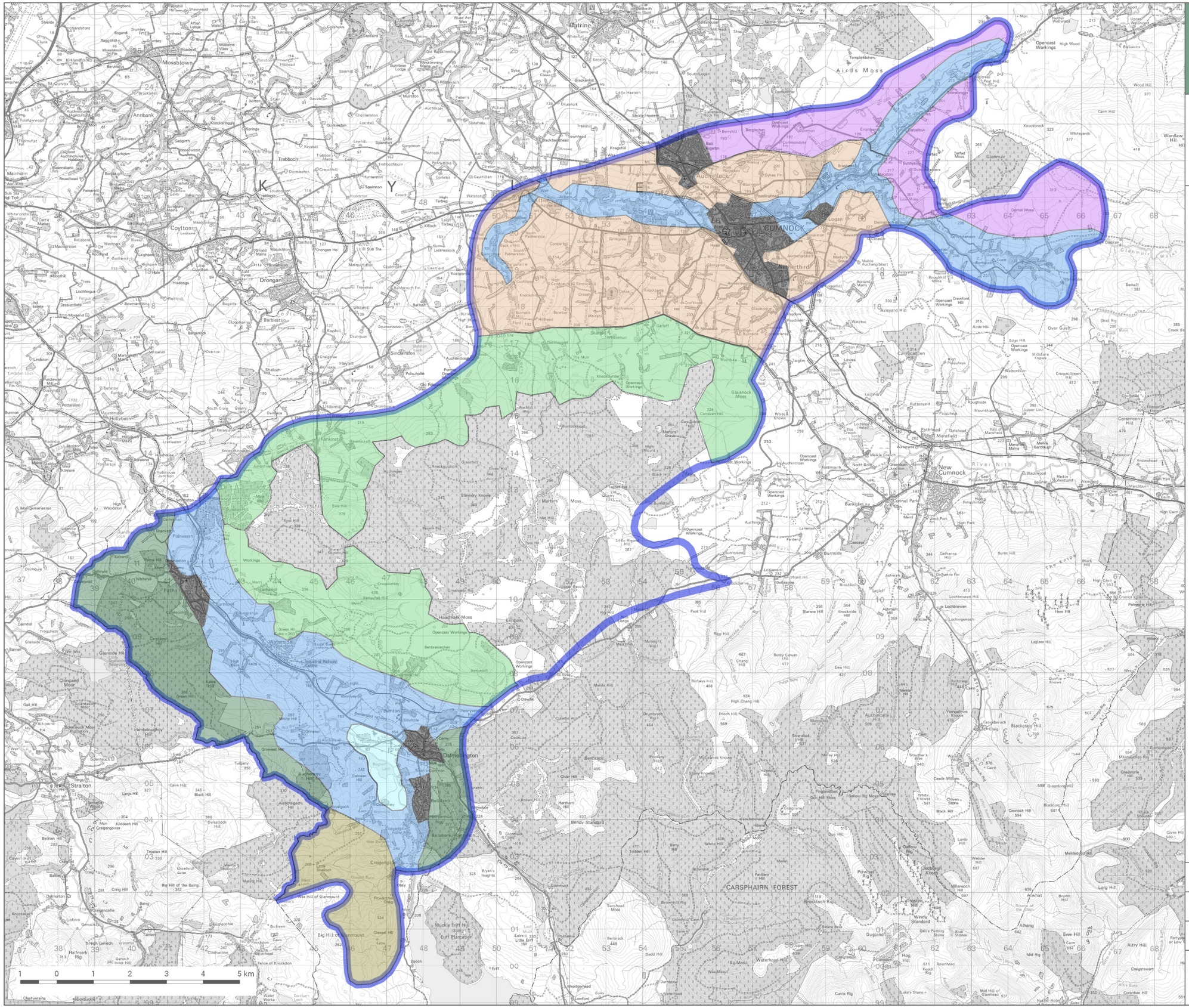
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Figure 10: Local Landscape Character Types



Key:

- Landscape Partnership Boundary

Coalfields_LLCAs

- Foothills with Forest
- Foothills
- Foothills Fringe
- Plateau Moorland
- Lowlands
- Valley
- Basin
- Urban

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Figure 11: Potential Revisions to Landscape Partnership Boundary

Potential inclusion of south-western Airds Moss area

Potential inclusion of Airds Moss SAC

Potential inclusion of Auchinleck House non-inventory designed landscape

Inclusion of Barony A Frame, boundary to follow B7036

Boundary to follow tracks and water courses

Boundary to follow road network

Boundary to follow disused railways

Boundary to follow waterourses and field boundaries

Boundary to follow roads/railway

Boundary to follow road network

Potential inclusion of Dalricket area (active opencast)

Reduce boundary to Doon Valley horizon

Boundary to follow B741

Potential inclusion of Craigengillan inventory designed landscape

1 0 1 2 3 4 5 km

Key:

- Current CCLP Boundary (229 km2)
- Council Boundaries

Potential boundary revisions

- Potential revised boundary (210 km2)
- Airds Moss (21 km2)
- Auchinleck (4 km2)
- Dalricket (16 km2)

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