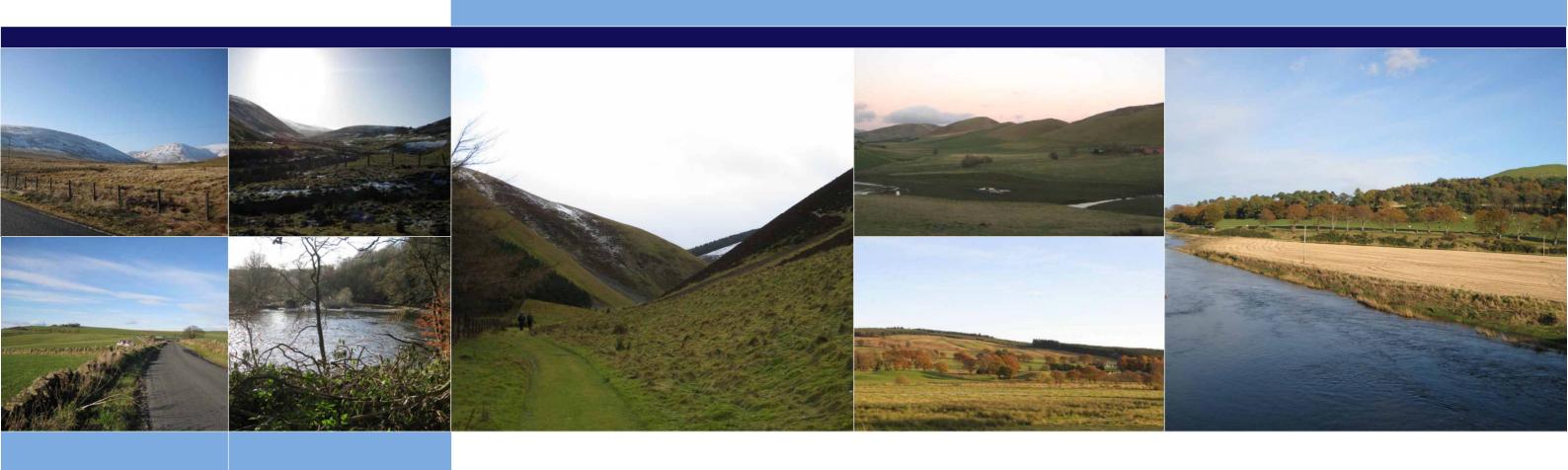


# South Lanarkshire Landscape Character Assessment



Report by

Ironside**Farrar** 

7077 / December 2009

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#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The South Lanarkshire Local Plan, adopted on 23 March 2009, contains Policy ENV 9: Review of Landscape Character, which states 'The Council will undertake an assessment of the landscape character of South Lanarkshire council area and a review of related landscape designations for the Council's area'.

This Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) addresses this requirement, covering the local authority area of South Lanarkshire (see Figure 1). It builds upon the *Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Landscape Assessment. SNH Review No. 116. (Land Use Consultants, 1999)* which covers South Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire, Glasgow, Renfrewshire, Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde. It is being undertaken in recognition that the current LCA is a broad regional study, is now ten years old and significant changes to the landscape have taken place, and will be taking place over the coming years.

The updated and revised assessment will serve as baseline information that will inform landscape planning policies and guidance over the period of the Local Plan. It will address a number of areas including, in this case, the validation of local landscape designations and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for Renewable Energy. It will also address other SPG and Spatial Frameworks in the future, such as minerals and urban expansion.

#### 2.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1 The Landscape Resource

The objective of assessing and understanding our landscape resource is to ensure that the distinct identity, the diverse character and the scenic quality of Scotland's landscapes as a whole can be safeguarded and enhanced. Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland working with other stakeholders have been heavily involved in recent years to provide guidance on landscape character assessment. Landscape assessment provides the starting point for local authorities to develop specific zonal policies for the care, enhancement and sustainable use of their landscapes. These spatial policies can be adapted for use in development plans, but also a range of other strategies, most notably forestry, agriculture and design and, more recently, in the preparation of Supplementary Planning Guidance. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) has also been used as the starting point for more detailed assessment of the sensitivity of landscapes to specific types of development, and Historic Landscape Assessment (HLA) can be used in a similar way.

Understanding the landscape and relationship with change and landscape management is a critical part of LCA. Safeguarding the quality of landscapes and the adoption of an 'all landscapes' approach accepts the need to guide and manage change in accordance with broad principles:

#### Landscapes evolve but change should be guided

Landscapes are continually changing, but because of the increasing extent and pace of change, and the loss of distinctiveness resulting from it, a more proactive approach to landscape planning and management is required to ensure that the landscapes of tomorrow are of no less value than today's.

#### Landscape change should be positive in effect

Most change in our landscapes should fit with and enhance existing landscape character, particularly where present character is highly valued. But the character of a landscape cannot always be retained: some landscapes will be changed through land uses and development; some valued landscapes may merit restoration; and some landscapes may be the focus of effort to create a new landscape character. In all these cases the objective should be to ensure that the landscape is recognisable and valued as distinctive and appealing.

#### All landscapes deserve care

Safeguarding landscape has traditionally focused on designated areas (eg. Areas of Great Landscape Value and Regional Scenic Areas in South Lanarkshire). Nevertheless, it is the countryside as a whole (including settlements) that provides the valued diversity of distinctive landscapes, as well as the settings for most people's lives. All landscapes are of value to those who live and work in them, and are therefore deserving of care.

#### Some landscapes warrant special safeguard

Even within a universal approach, some landscapes are widely recognised as being of particular value, are therefore more sensitive to change, and justify special effort to ensure they are safeguarded. Their designation is an important planning and management tool to ensure they continue to be given care when proposals for change arise.

#### Quality should be the goal

In aiming for a marked improvement in our care for Scotland's landscapes, we need to place more emphasis on achieving higher standards of design and management, along with a more considered approach to the development and implementation of policies and actions which affect landscape.

#### Landscapes are a shared responsibility

Scotland's landscapes are important to us all. Many activities influence the landscape's appearance; their net effect is of legitimate concern to all those who live, work and seek recreation in these places. A more integrated and collective approach is therefore required, based on a broad agreement on the direction, nature, and extent of desirable landscape change.

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#### 2.2 South Lanarkshire's Landscape Character

The local authority area of South Lanarkshire is located in south-central Scotland, to the south-east of Glasgow, and is centred on the valley of the River Clyde. It is bounded by Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and West Lothian to the north; the Scottish Borders to the east; Dumfries and Galloway to the south and East Ayrshire and East Renfrewshire to the west and north west. It has a total area of 1,772 km² and a population of approximately 309,500.

The landscape of South Lanarkshire represents a transition from the urban area of greater Glasgow, and its neighbouring large towns, through a largely rural landscape, to the remote hills of the Southern Uplands. The River Clyde flows through South Lanarkshire from its source at Watermeetings in the south, to Cambuslang, at the southeastern edge of the Glasgow conurbation, in the north. The river valley forms one of the distinctive features of the area. Running through or near much of the Clyde Valley are the M74 motorway and West Coast Main Line, the main transport links through the area, which connect Glasgow with north-western England.

The middle and lower Clyde Basin and its tributaries are surrounded by extensive areas of farmland. This is relatively rolling and sheltered in lower areas of the Clyde Valley but grades into a more plateau-like and exposed form with lower tree cover as it extends to the upland areas in the north and west. Closer to the settlements in the north the farmland becomes influenced by urban fringe uses and the visual effects of settlements. A number of deeply incised river valleys, including the Clyde itself, cut through the farmlands.

Along the western boundary of the area is an extensive area of moorlands, which separate Lanarkshire from Ayrshire to the west. This band of hills runs south-east from Whitelee Moor, above the new town of East Kilbride, merging into the Southern Uplands at the Lowther Hills around Leadhills. Across the M74 corridor, the Southern Uplands continue past Culter Fell into the Scottish Borders. North of these hills is Biggar, at the south edge of an area of farmland which stretches to the western end of the Pentlands. North-west are the towns of Lanark and Carluke, with moorland beyond extending into North Lanarkshire and West Lothian.

Tinto is an isolated hill, forming a significant landmark in the Clyde Valley, and is located almost at the centre of South Lanarkshire. The Clyde Valley becomes more enclosed to the north, particularly around New Lanark and the Falls of Clyde. The valley and the M74 corridor become increasingly urban as they converge around Larkhall, and pass between Motherwell and Lanark. The Clyde here becomes a green corridor, linking parks and historic features through Hamilton, Blantyre, Cambuslang and Rutherglen, the latter two being suburbs of Glasgow.

#### 2.3 The Need for Reassessment

The regional variations in character of South Lanarkshire and neighbouring authorities have been assessed and recorded in the regional Landscape Character Assessment: Glasgow and Clyde Valley Landscape Assessment: Scottish Natural Heritage Review No.

116. (Land Use Consultants in association with Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division, 1999). This document is part of the national programme of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) undertaken by SNH at the end of the last Millennium.

LCA provides a common framework for understanding and analysing the landscape. SNH includes Landscape Character Mapping for the whole of Scotland and identifies 274 distinct landscape types. Each Landscape Character Type (LCT) defines a landscape of consistent and recognisable landscape character and the key forces for change within this landscape. LCA enables the better assessment of the effect of actions upon the landscape, and supports a clearer understanding of future management requirements. LCA can be applied at a general level to national strategic approaches, or at a more detailed level to address regional, local and site specific issues down to specific development guidance. Allied techniques, such as landscape capacity studies, have been developed to explore the ability of different landscapes to accommodate development of particular types.

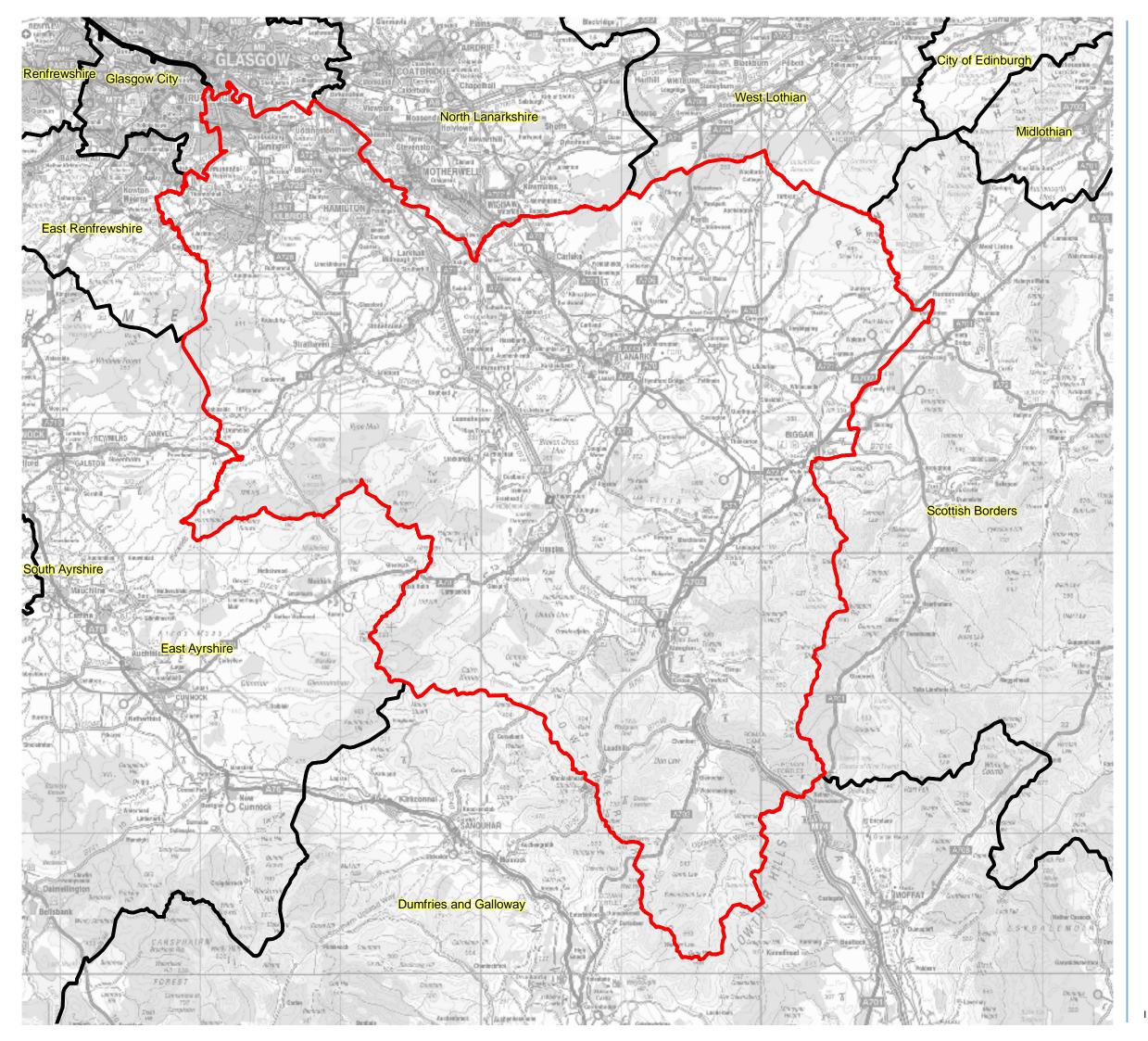
The landscape character assessment for Glasgow and the Clyde Valley was undertaken at a regional scale, identifying a number of broad Regional Character Areas (eg. Clyde Basin Farmlands, Southern Uplands) and subdividing each of these into Landscape Character Types relating to moorland, farmland, river valleys etc. Each type may occur one or more times within the study area as a separately named Landscape Character Unit. The Regional Landscape Areas located within South Lanarkshire are illustrated in Figure 2 and the Landscape Units in Figure 3.

Most of the Landscape Character Units identified are on a broad scale, suitable for broad strategic planning purposes but not necessarily for more detailed assessment of specific developments or development types. Furthermore, significant changes to the landscape have taken place over the past decade and are due to take place in coming years.

LCA at a strategic level in South Lanarkshire has not hitherto included a comprehensive review of designations or an assessment of development capacity for types of development such as windfarms and minerals. It is now recognised that a more detailed local assessment of the landscape character and landscape designations is required as committed in the Local Plan 2009. This assessment will also inform the Spatial Framework for windfarms (See South Lanarkshire: Validation of Local Landscape Designations (Ironside Farrar 2009) and South Lanarkshire: Spatial Framework and Landscape capacity for Windfarms (Ironside Farrar 2009))

#### 3.0 LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

All landscapes are important, and regional landscape character assessments have allowed a broader 'all-landscapes' approach to be adopted in considering the planning and management of the landscape asset.





## Landscape Character Assessments

#### Legend

SLC Boundary

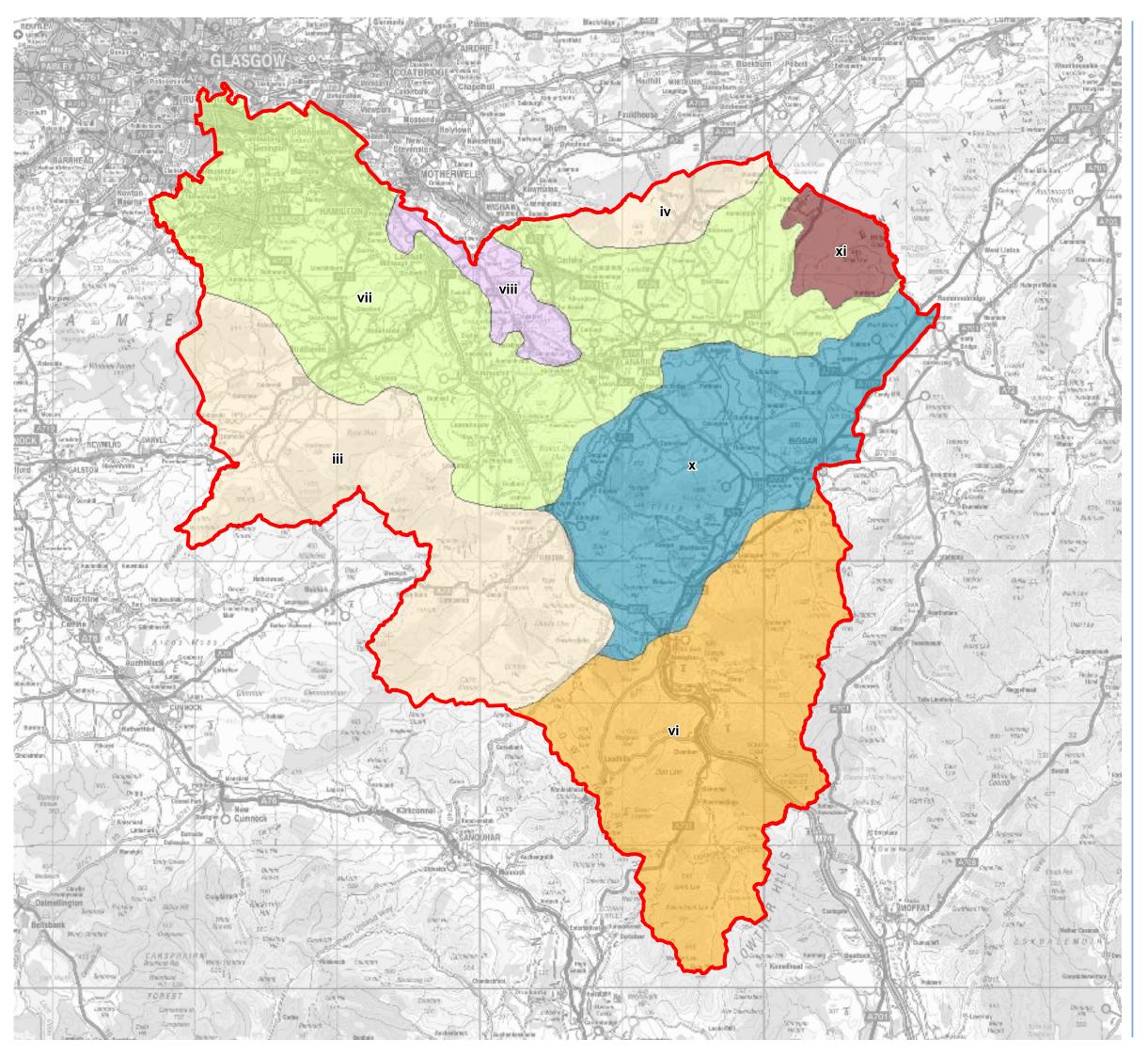
Other Local Authority Boundaries

Figure 1
Study Area

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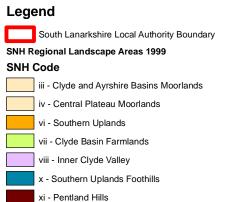
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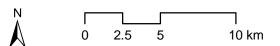
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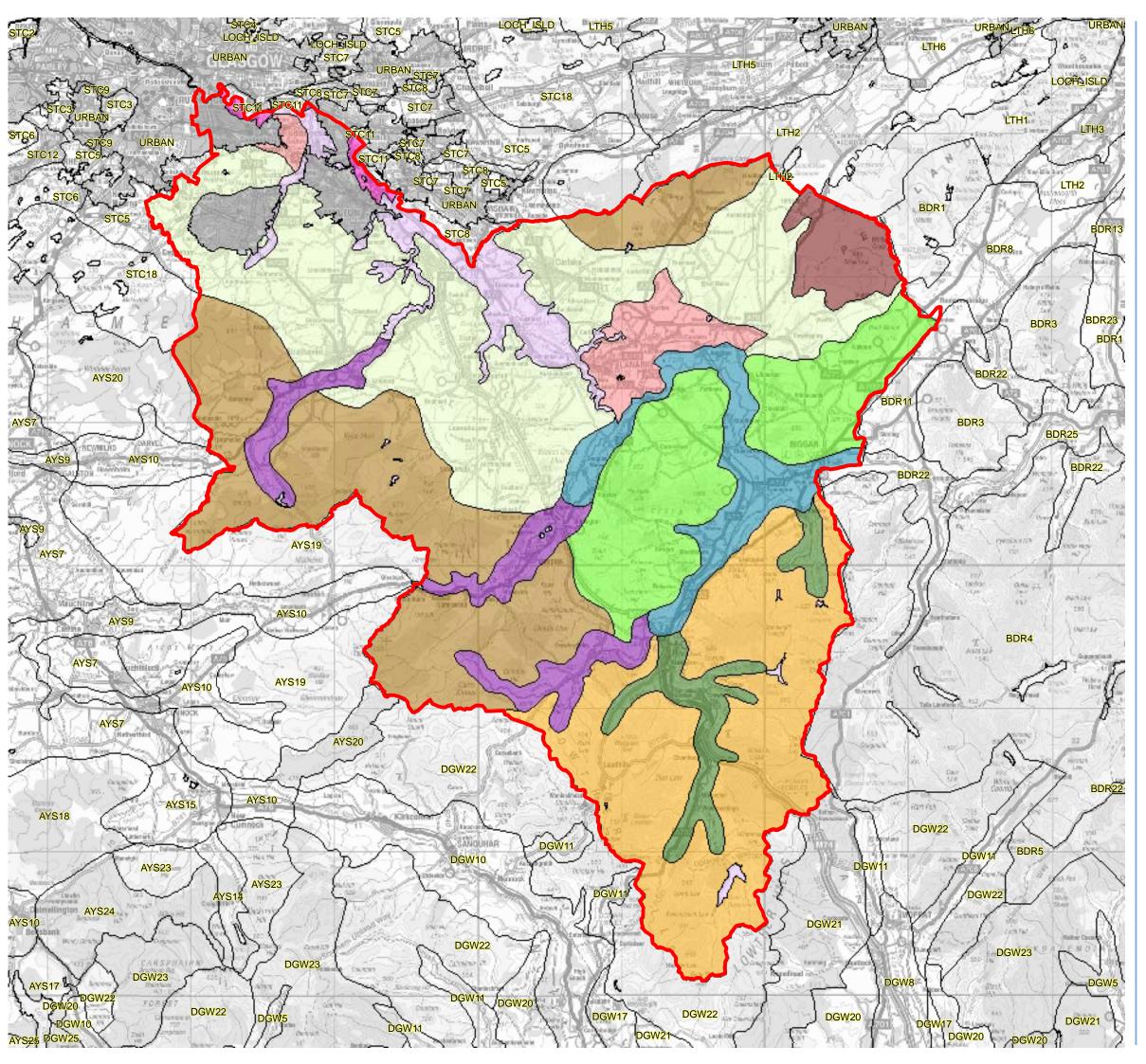


## Landscape Character Assessment





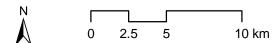
#### Figure 2 Regional Landscape Areas





## Landscape Character Assessment





## Figure 3 Existing Landscape Character Areas

South Lanarkshire

Landscape Character Assessment

South Lanarkshire Council's Environmental Designations Map identifies a Regional Scenic Area (RSA) and areas designated as Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and Policy ENV 28 offers policy protection against inappropriate or insensitive development.

Scottish Government guidance on local landscape designations is contained in Circular 2/1962 Development Plan: Areas of Great Landscape Value and Tourism Development Proposals, NPPG 14 Natural Heritage (paras 60 - 62) and PAN 60 Planning for the Natural Heritage.

The existing SPPs and NPPGs are to be replaced by a consolidated Scottish Planning Policy covering all topics. This will set out the land use planning interpretation and application of national policy on Scotland's natural heritage. The SPP will summarise the main statutory obligations in relation to natural heritage conservation, and will explain how natural heritage objectives should be reflected in development plans. The SPP will also confirm the need for planning to safeguard sites of national and international importance and to give appropriate consideration to local and non-statutory designations.

Recent guidance on local landscape designations has been published: *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations (SNH and Historic Scotland, 2005)*. This is specifically prepared to assist local authorities in reviewing their local landscape designations. The guidance adopts an 'all landscapes' approach that aims to promote a greater understanding of, and consistency in, selection of local landscape designations. The preferred terminology for a local designation is *Special Landscape Area*.

This current landscape character assessment will provide the baseline information that will help to fulfil the aims of the guidance. A separate report: South Lanarkshire: Validating Local Landscape Designations (Ironside Farrar, 2009) has been prepared using this revised LCA.

#### 4.0 WINDFARM DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

Landscape Character Assessment forms the baseline for assessment of sensitivity and capacity of the landscape to accommodate windfarm developments.

SPP 6: Renewable Energy refers to the need for local planning authorities to undertake broad criteria-based assessments to determine a spatial framework for windfarms within their area. A critical part of this process is to identify designated areas which should be given some level of protection against windfarm development and to identify areas where it is considered that cumulative windfarm development has reached the capacity of the landscape to absorb it without significant adverse effect.

Local landscape designations are discussed in section 3.0 above. They are one of the criteria considered in the spatial framework for windfarms.

#### Landscape Capacity

Landscape capacity is variously described as the ability of a landscape to accommodate (or absorb) change without a significant (or unacceptable) change in fabric or character. This is usually taken to mean whether or not one or more of the key defining characteristics of the landscape is changed such that the overall fabric or character of the landscape is changed, i.e. 'capacity threshold' is crossed. In the case of windfarms it is primarily landscape character that is being considered, particularly in cumulative assessments.

Planning Advice Note 45 (PAN 45): Renewable Energy Technologies and Annexe 2 to PAN 45, together with Scottish Natural Heritage (Guidance: Cumulative Effect of Windfarms, Version 2 SNH, 2005) and Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland topic paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity (SNH and the Countryside Agency 2002) provide reference and guidance for the assessment of landscape capacity with regards to Windfarms.

A separate report informing the Spatial Framework has been prepared using information from this revised LCA and the revised local landscape designations discussed above.

#### 5.0 APPROACH TO LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

The following Landscape Character Assessment has not been carried out from first principles. It is essentially a review and update of the South Lanarkshire area in the existing *Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Landscape Assessment (1999)*. It builds constructively on this and does not seek to challenge its principles and broad thrust.

The reassessment seeks to provide a more detailed record appropriate to the strategic planning uses which it will support. It has the following aims:

- 1) Review and verification of broad character types and areas
- 2) Identification and recording of significant change in the landscape that has taken place since the original assessment was carried out in the late 1990s.
- 3) Identification of more accurate/ precise boundaries between LCTs/ LCAs based on topography, land cover/use and landscape features
- 4) A greater degree of refinement and subdivision of areas, identifying individual topographic or land use features such as significant hills and valleys where this helps to understand the landscape at a more local level.
- 5) Identification of sub-types within the main LCTs based on land use, such as forestry, mining, windfarm development etc.
- 6) A reappraisal of landscape sensitivities and forces for landscape change based on the updated LCA, taking into account the refined definition of landscape types, units and their boundaries and the changes that have occurred in the decade since the original assessment was undertaken.

South Lanarkshire Landscape Character Assessment

7) Revised landscape management guidelines based on the reassessment of sensitivities and forces for change

The assessment has been carried out on desktop by review of the existing LCA; Ordnance Survey maps and aerial photography, together with confirmation by site survey.

#### 6.0 MAIN FEATURES OF REVISED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

#### 6.1 Main Findings

The study has confirmed the broad extent of different landscape types, essentially confirming the robustness of the existing assessment. However, the finer-grained approach has identified a number of changes:

- 1) Updated descriptions of landscape types, updating where appropriate and providing descriptions for newly defined types.
- 2) Identification of three new landscape types reflecting the more detailed analysis and degree of subdivision.
- 3) Further sub-division of landscape types.
- 4) Change within the landscape since the 1999 Landscape Assessment was undertaken.

The suggested revisions to landscape character areas are illustrated in Figure 4, with a comparison of boundaries illustrated in Figure 5.

#### 6.2 Specific Changes

The following describes the main specific amendments and refinements to the landscape character areas.

#### **Urban Fringe Farmland**

A further farmland landscape type has been newly defined: *Urban Fringe Farmlands*. This type is heavily influenced by adjacent urban areas together with identifiable landscape patterns and features. However it is not as fundamentally degraded as the *Fragmented Farmlands* to the east of Glasgow identified by the 1999 assessment. Generally there are close views of large settlements and the areas are extensively crossed by main roads and electricity transmission lines. Other land use distinctions include peri-urban recreation such as country parks, golf and horse riding as well as signs of past and present industry. Pressures and changes within this landscape type have been apparent over recent years, for example the construction of the Glasgow Southern Orbital and the extension of urban development.

The three areas are redefined principally from Plateau Farmland and Rolling Farmland:

- The farmland surrounding East Kilbride, Hamilton and Cumbuslang
- The farmland surrounding Carluke and Law
- The farmland between Ferniegair and Larkhall

#### **Broad Urban Valley**

This type covers a limited area of the River Clyde to the east of Hamilton and to the north of Cambuslang in the 1999 LCA. Reassessment has extended the type into the area between Uddingston and Cambuslang, superseding *Incised River Valley*, as the surrounding urban influence, particularly on the Glasgow side of the river, is considered to override the relatively gentle topography in determining character. The Clyde gorge passing between Blantyre and Bothwell retains its classification as *Incised River Valley*.

#### Plateau Farmland and Rolling Farmland

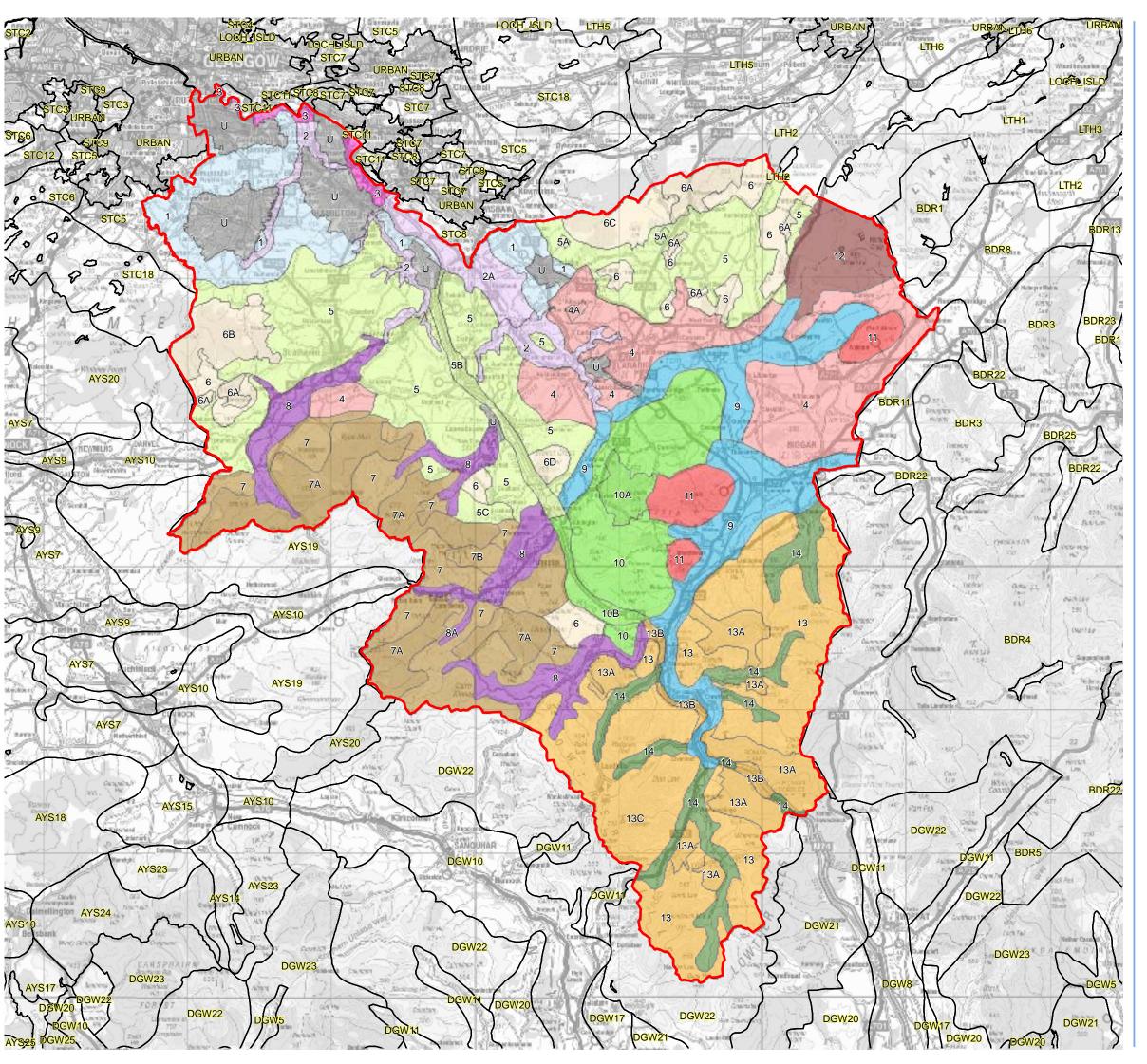
An appraisal of topographical influence within the landscape suggested that the extensive areas of the landscape character type *Plateau Farmland* did not fully describe the changes in topography in some locations when considered in a more local context than the regional Glasgow and Clyde Valley Landscape Assessment. It was considered that some areas of *Plateau Farmland* with more small scale variation in topography, smaller fields and greater woodland and hedgerow tree cover should be reclassified as *Rolling Farmland*, an existing related lowland type. *Rolling Farmland* is a more sheltered, varied and intimate landscape than the flatter more exposed *Plateau Farmland*.

The new locations include:

- A small area on the south side of the Avon valley opposite Strathaven
- An area on east facing slopes to the south west of the Clyde Valley opposite Lanark.
- An extension of the area surrounding Lanark west towards Carluke, between the Clyde Valley and the A721 and east beyond Carnwath, to the southeast of the A70
- The area around Dunsyre, south of the Pentlands (this area merges with the lower farmland areas of the area around Biggar formerly described as Foothills -see below).

#### Plateau Moorland and Rolling Moorland

The appraisal of topographical influence within the landscape suggests that the extensive areas of landscape character type *Plateau Moorland* did not fully describe the changes in topography in some locations when considered in a more local context. It was considered that the landscape character within *Plateau Moorland* varied sufficiently for those areas where the topographical changes were most evident to be described as *Rolling Moorland*. This is a newly defined type. Whilst land use (open unimproved pasture and forestry) in *Rolling Moorland* is similar to *Plateau Moorland*, the landscape comprises separately

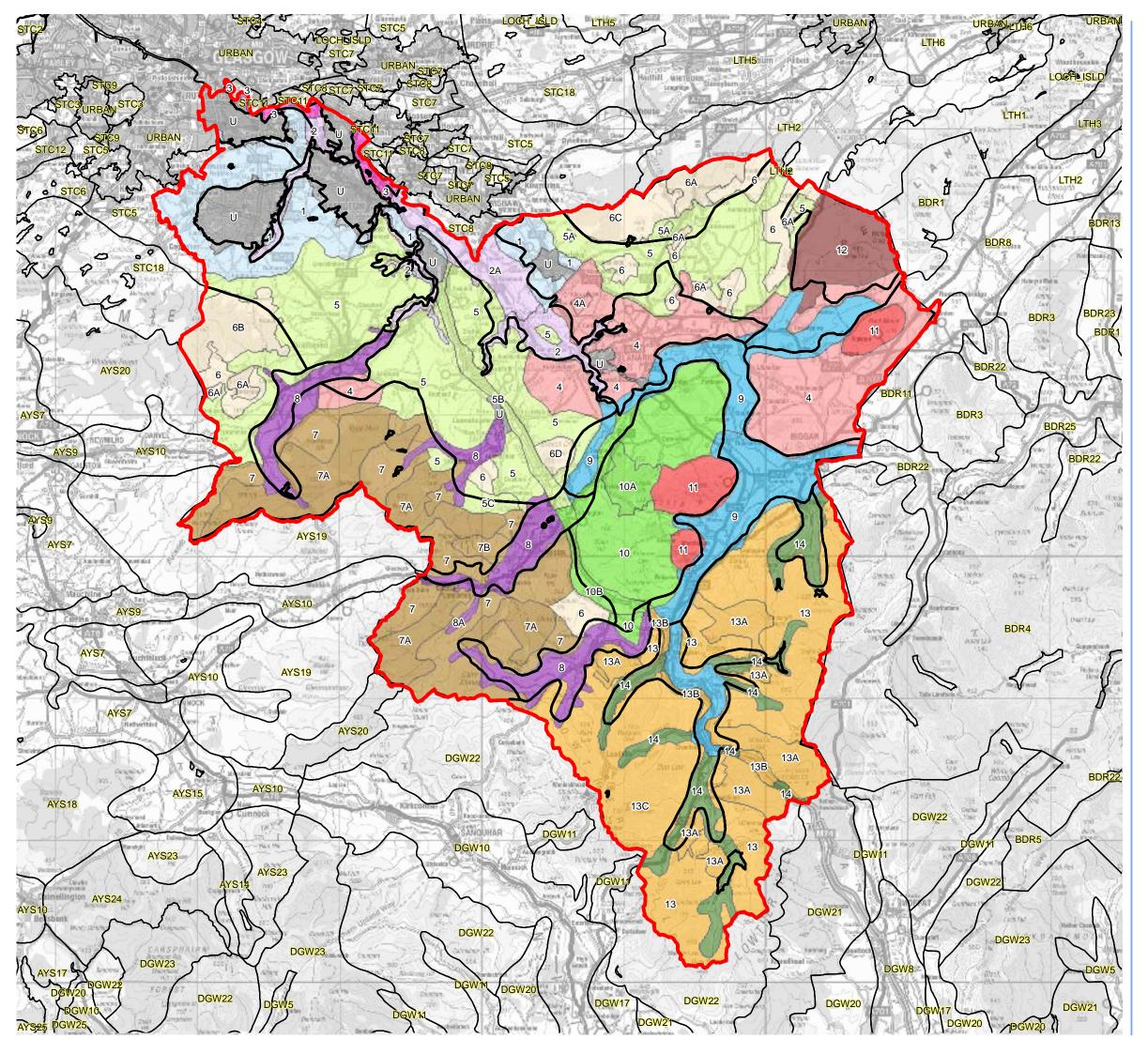




## Landscape Character Assessment



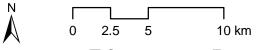
# Figure 4 Proposed Revisions to Landscape Character Areas





### Landscape Character Assessment





## Figure 5 Comparison of Area Boundaries

South Lanarkshire

Landscape Character Assessment

defined hills of a generally greater elevation than the plateau areas (300-600m AOD, as opposed to 200-350m AOD), much more frequently dissected by drainage lines.

The remaining areas of *Plateau Moorland* are concentrated in the north east (Black Law to Tarbrax) and the west (Whitelee). Notably, both of these areas have been extensively developed with windfarms by comparison with the *Rolling Moorlands*. There are other small areas with *Plateau Moorland* characteristics scattered across the *Plateau Farmland* and adjacent to *Rolling Moorland* where a lack of agricultural improvement and flatter topography prevail. These areas lack the extent of the two main areas and have not been developed as windfarms.

The areas of *Rolling Moorland* lie on the southwestern boundary of South Lanarkshire south of Whitelee: between the Avon valley to the north and the Duneaton Water to the south. In some locations (eg. Hagshaw Hill), the moorland comprises well defined hills comparable to the northern edge of the Southern Uplands and in many ways this type could be considered transitional between the classic *Plateau Moorland* and the *Southern Uplands* immediately to the south.

#### **Foothills and Prominent Isolated Foothills**

The 1999 LCA identifies two extensive areas of *Foothills* either side of the Upper Clyde valley. This is a transitional type with both lowland and upland characteristics related to topography and land use. In particular there are a number of prominent hills rising above more general farmland and moorland. It is suggested that Tinto Hill, Black Mount and Dungavel Hill are of sufficient elevation and prominence to be defined as the separate new landscape type *Prominent Isolated Hills* rather than *Foothills*.

In the case of the eastern area of *Foothills* north of Biggar the removal of Black Mount takes out the only large scale hill. The remaining area is predominantly a rolling lowland in character and is redefined as *Rolling Farmland*, the type with which it shares most characteristics, and which continues north into the adjacent Borders area.

In the western area the removal of Tinto and Dungavel Hill leaves a transitional landscape of hilly farmland and low moorland that can still best be described as *Foothills*.

#### **River Valleys and Glens**

The reassessment of broad areas defined as moorlands and farmlands in the 1999 LCA has identified or extended the areas of a number of river valley types. This is an inevitable result of the finer grained assessment in which individual topographic features begin to be defined separately rather than as part of a whole.

The main areas include:

- Extension and refinement of Upland River Valleys including defining the River Nethan out of Plateau Farmland and Rolling Moorland above Lesmahagow
- Extension of the Broad Valley Upland of the River Clyde and tributaries east along the Medwin Water to Dunsyre (redefining Plateau Farmland) and south along the Clyde from Abington to Elvanfoot (redefining an Upland Glen area)
- Extension and refinement of *Upland Glens* within the Southern Uplands

#### **Sub-Types**

Landscape types have been, in some instances, further sub-divided. This is both in response to a smaller, finer grained, study area and also as a result of changes in Landscape Character allied to development in recent years. An example of this would be the influence on landscape character of recent windfarm developments on *Plateau Moorland*; the M74 and railway on *Plateau Farmland* and *Southern Uplands* or opencast mining and forestry on various areas.

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