

Info on West Dunbartonshire

West Dunbartonshire is located to the North-west of the City of Glasgow, and contains a number of commuter towns and villages along the north of the River Clyde. Extending to 68 square miles with a population of around 94,000, it is the fourth smallest council in Scotland. The area forms the most north-western part of the Glasgow & Clyde Valley conurbation and borders onto Argyll & Bute, Stirling, East Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire, with some of the land found within the confines of the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park.

Despite its small size, the landscape of West Dunbartonshire is diverse, with the Kilpatrick Hills and its rugged moorland forming the backdrop to the valleys of the Rivers Clyde and Leven. The urban landscape is linear in nature and contained by the rising topography of the Kilpatrick Hills and the Bromley and Carman Muirs. Forty percent of the land is classified as open countryside, representing a significantly higher average proportion than many other Local Authority areas in Scotland.

West Dunbartonshire has undergone a major transformation in recent times, primarily as a result in the decline of traditional industries such as shipbuilding and heavy engineering. However, regeneration initiatives such as Clydebank Riverside, Dumbarton Waterfront, Strathleven and Alexandria have tried to address urban renewal and regeneration and increase environmental quality.

It should be noted that this LBAP will cover all of West Dunbartonshire, excluding the areas found within the National Park which is covered by its own Biodiversity Action Plan.

Marine and Watercourses

The major watercourse in West Dunbartonshire is the River Leven, an important wildlife corridor linking the Clyde Estuary into Loch Lomond and beyond into the Highlands. Feeding into the Clyde Estuary, the Leven is tidal from around Dumbarton Golf Course and is a nationally important migration route for Atlantic Salmon, Sea Trout and Sea Lamprey. On the lower reaches of the River Leven and Clyde Estuary, mudflats are exposed at low tide that extend along until Milton (on the north side). These have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), RAMSAR site and Specially Protected Area (SPA). This indicates that they are of internationally and nationally importance for the large number of waders and wildfowl they attract primarily in the Autumn and Winter.

There are a number of open freshwater bodies such as Carman reservoir, Loch Bowie, Loch Humphrey, the Forge pond by the Leven and various bomb craters located around the area that support a variety of aquatic, marsh and swamp communities. The lochs within the Kilpatrick Hills all occur above 200m above sea level and along with a number of reservoirs (such as Greenside Reservoir,

Burncrooks Reservoir, Kilmannan Reservoir, Burnbrae Reservoir and Black Linn Reservoir, built originally for agricultural purposes and water retention) support a wide range of flora and fauna. The Forth & Clyde Canal has its westerly tip in West Dunbartonshire and is a key wildlife corridor in the area, along with the Cochno and Duntocher Burns.

Woodlands

The broadleaved woodlands of West Dunbartonshire have undergone a dramatic transformation in recent times due to agricultural and developmental pressures. In upper valleys, extensive woodland has been reduced to patches along river banks and streams, while lower valley forests have suffered as a result of urban development. Despite this, some relic or semi-natural woodlands have survived, such as Auchnacraig Woods, Pappert Wood, Crosslet House Woodland, Murroch Glen, Nobleston Estate Wood, Stoneymollan Road Wood, Poachy Glen, Alexandria Woods, Whiteleys Wood, Cochno Hill (and surrounds) and Overtoun Estate Woods. The NCC Inventory of Ancient, Long Established and Semi-natural Woodland shows only one site in Clydebank as ancient (along the Duntocher Burn at Auchentoshan Woods). The presence of locally rare species along with a rich array of ground flora supports the fact that some of the aforementioned sites are well established. Examples of fine policy planting can be found in Edinbarnet, Auchnacraig and Cochno.

Coniferous plantations also form a striking feature of the landscape, particularly at sites such as Pappert Hill, Craigarestie, Cameron Wood, Auchiewannie Wood, Aucheneden, Auchentorlie, Merkins and by Tullichewan Castle.

Upland areas

The upland areas of West Dunbartonshire are characterised by large open areas of moorland. From north to south, the west side of the Vale of Leven is comprised of five moors - Tullichewan Muir, Bromley Muir, Overton Muir, Millburn Muir and Carman Muir. East of the Vale of Leven is composed of similar habitat, also with five moors - Auchencarroch Muir, Blairquhomrie Muir, Merkins Muir, Gallangad Muir and Auchenreoch Muir. Additionally, the Kilpatrick hills with Dumbarton Muir to their north provide a large area of upland moorland for a variety of species.

Amphibians and reptiles also take advantage of this habitat with the upland areas being home to Common Lizard, Smooth and Palmate Newt, Adder as well as the Common Toad and Frog. The habitat is important for Curlew, Snipe, Red Grouse and Cuckoo. The rarer Black Grouse also use this habitat for lekking with the hens taking advantage of the covering of Heather and Cottongrass for feeding. Smaller birds such as the Skylark, Meadow Pipit and Stonechat are all frequently seen. Other species of note found in this area are Green Hairstreak butterfly, Stoat, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Buzzard, Kestrel and Green Woodpecker.

Grassland

Good quality neutral grasslands can be found in Balloch Country Park and along the eastern edge of Bellsmyre (although within the boundary of the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, the Country Park is maintained by West Dunbartonshire Council). Remnant neutral grassland exists at Ballantines Orchid Colony.

Vacant land and quarries

There are a number of derelict sites in West Dunbartonshire that have become colonised by scrub, grassland, tall ruderal vegetation and brambles. Brownfield sites can attract a multitude of different species that use them for nesting or foraging. There are a number of quarries (disused and active) in West Dunbartonshire such as Bonhill Quarry, Dalreoch Quarry, North Lodge Quarry, Carman Muir Quarry, Dumbain Quarry and former sites at Dalmonach and Drumkinnon. The presence of such quarries, with their exposed rock faces, associated vegetation and rockpools provide additional habitats within the area, and can be of special interest to raptors, Sand Martin and amphibians.

SSSI

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are nationally important sites for their fauna, flora or features of geological interest. They are afforded special legal protection under Section 28 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, and represent areas of highest national conservation importance. Scottish Natural Heritage is responsible for the management of SSSI's, further information on which can be found through the weblink www.snh.gov.uk/SNHi. West Dunbartonshire has seven SSSIs.

Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are areas that have been declared under section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 on grounds of their nature conservation interest, along with relevance to education and use of the community for the enjoyment of local wildlife. West Dunbartonshire has one LNR (The Saltings) and two proposed LNRs (Brucehill Cliffs and Faifley Knowes).

West Dunbartonshire SSSIs and LNRs (excluding the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park areas)

<i>Name of site</i>	<i>Designation</i>
Overtoun	Gardens and Designed Landscapes
The Saltings	Local Nature Reserve
Brucehill Cliffs	Local Nature Reserve (proposed)
Faifley Knowes	Local Nature Reserve (proposed)
Inner Clyde	Ramsar, SPA and SSSI
Hawcraig	Site of Special Scientific Interest

Glenarbuck	Site of Special Scientific Interest*
Dumbarton Rock and Foreshore	Site of Special Scientific Interest*
Lang Craigs	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Auchenreoch Glen	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Loch Humphrey Burn	Site of Special Scientific Interest*
Dumbarton Muir	Site of Special Scientific Interest

*also noted for its geological interest

LNCS

Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS, previously known as SINCS) are non-designated sites that are recognised on account of certain local important features of habitat, plant or animal communities or geology.

West Dunbartonshire LNCS (excluding those within the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park) – includes sites proposed as part of the LNCS Review 2008.

Site Name
A82 verge
Alexandria Wood
Auchenreoch Muir
Auchentorlie Glen
Auchentorlie Wood
Ballantines Orchid Colony
Beechwood - Broomhill Wood
Bellsmyre Grasslands
Blairvault Burn and Pappert Muir
Bonhill Muir & Pappert Hill
Brucehill - Inland Cliff
Carman Muir
Cochno Hill and Loch Humphrey Burn
Cordale Point
Craigandro Wood - Renton Wood 1 & 2
Craigarestie & Brown Hill
Dalquhurn Point
Dalreoch Quarry
Dillichip Grassland
Disused Railway Line
Duncolm and Craighirst
Duntocher Burn & Wood
Duntocher Burn (North)
Edinbarnet woodland
Fishers Wood & Boat House Wood
Fyn Loch Heath
Kilpatrick's Braes
Loch Bowie
Lusset Glen

Site Name
Morar Road Parkland
Mullour
Murroch Glen
Nobleston Estate Wood
Nursery Woodland
Overtoun and Bromley Muir
Overtoun Estate, Overtoun Burn & Barwood Hill
Pappert Wood & Bonhill Quarry
Poachy Glen
River Leven Corridor
River Leven Swamp (East Bank, East Bank Marsh, West Bank, Pond plus 3 other sites)
Stonemollan Road Wood
Thief's Hill and Earl's Seat
West Dumbarton Muir
Wester Cochno Burn
Wester Cochno Parkland
Whiteleys Wood

Major Wildlife corridors in West Dunbartonshire:

River Clyde and its tributary burns
River Leven and its tributary burns
Railway lines and embankments
Forth & Clyde Canal