

**PROPOSED KILPATRICK HILLS LOCAL LANDSCAPE AREA –
DRAFT STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Kilpatrick Hills are a range of hills north of the River Clyde stretching from Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven in the west to Strathblane in the east. The rugged upland landscape provides a stunning backdrop to the settlements which fringe them, including Balloch, Dumbarton, Bowling, Old Kilpatrick, Clydebank, Bearsden and Milngavie, creating a unique sense of place. To the north of the hills lies the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. The majority of the range is within West Dunbartonshire, although it extends into East Dunbartonshire and Stirling. In addition to the Kilpatrick Hills' special landscape qualities, the area is home to an important habitat network and provides recreational opportunities for local communities.

West Dunbartonshire Council and East Dunbartonshire Council propose to designate the Kilpatrick Hills as a Local Landscape Area (LLA) in their respective Local Development Plans. This document explains the reasons why the Kilpatrick Hills have been selected for this designation. It will provide the basis for Supplementary Guidance for the Kilpatrick Hills which will establish a framework for managing change and the protection and enhancement of the area's special qualities.

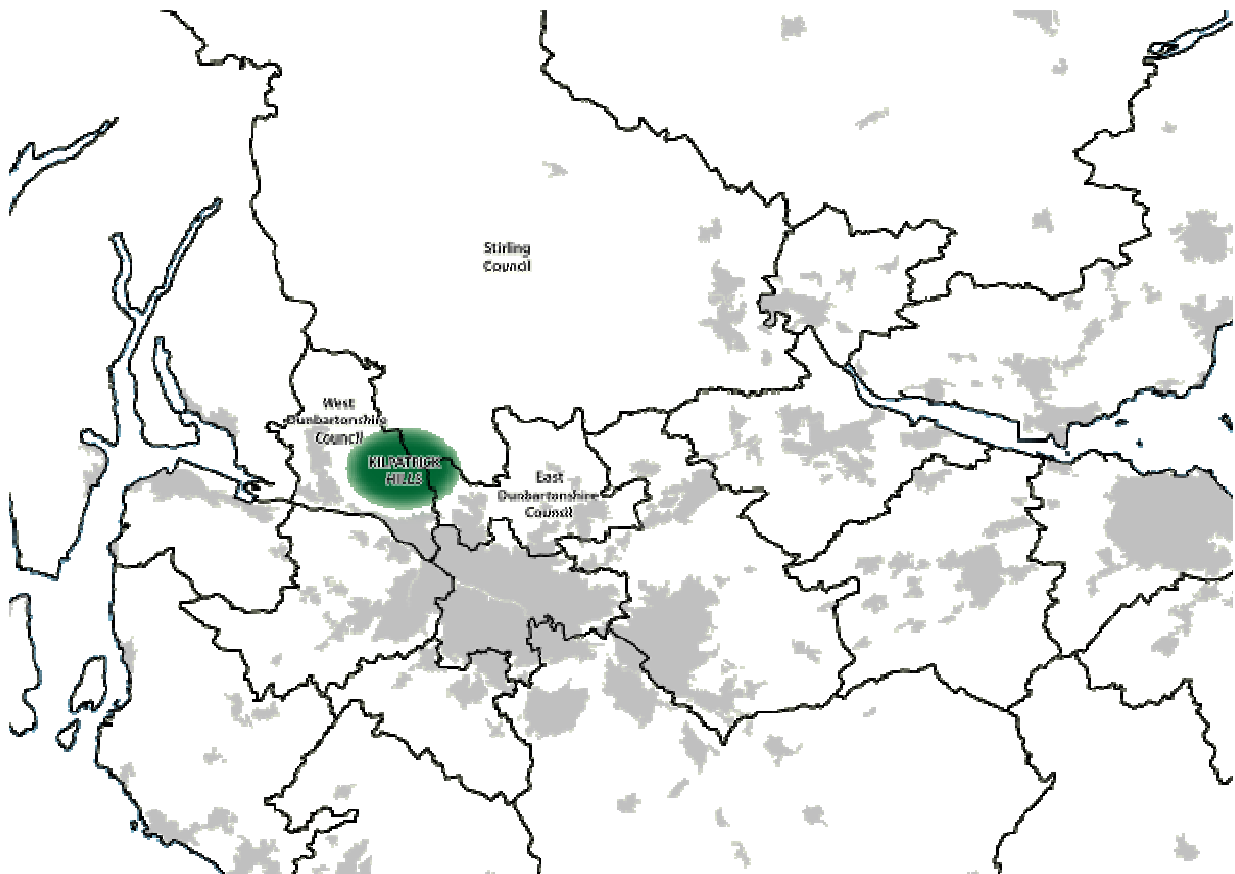


Figure 1 – The location of the Kilpatrick Hills within central Scotland

2. POLICY CONTEXT

Scotland's landscapes are recognised as a major asset, contributing to national, regional and local identities, adding to the quality of many people's lives and providing attractive settings which help to promote social and economic development. The importance of landscape is acknowledged internationally by the [European Landscape Convention](#), which promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues.

The Convention defines 'landscape' as an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors and 'landscape protection' as actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value and derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity. It provides a framework for Scotland's approach to landscape, based on a set of [five principles](#).

Improving the natural environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it is one of the Government's 16 national outcomes detailing how its central purpose of delivering sustainable economic growth will be achieved. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) states planning authorities should support opportunities which promote this and the understanding of the natural heritage of Scotland, defined as including flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features, its natural beauty and its amenity.

The planning system seeks to facilitate positive landscape change whilst maintaining and enhancing the distinctive character. SPP states local landscape character should inform the siting and design of new development. It is important therefore to develop an understanding of local landscape character and its sensitivity to change.

The European Landscape Convention and national planning policy advocate an 'all-landscapes' approach which recognises the landscape is important everywhere, not just in special places, and whether beautiful or degraded. Alongside this approach, landscape designations play an important role in protecting and enhancing those areas which are of particular value and merit special attention. National Scenic Areas (NSA) are areas which are nationally important for their scenic quality. NSA are complemented by local designations – local landscape areas – which protect, enhance and encourage the enjoyment and understanding of locally important landscapes.

3. BACKGROUND AND STUDY APPROACH

The value of the Kilpatrick Hills as an important landscape has been recognised by development plans for over 30 years. Their designation as a Regional Scenic Area emerged from the 1981 Strathclyde Structure Plan, with its boundaries identified in subsequent local plans. The Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan, approved by Scottish Ministers in May 2012, however does not identify and safeguard strategic environmental resources in the same way as previous Structure Plans. Furthermore, Scottish Planning Policy encourages local, non-statutory designations which protect, enhance and encourage the enjoyment and understanding of locally important landscapes and natural heritage to be limited to two types – local landscape areas and local nature conservation sites.

Within this context, the Main Issues Report for the West Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan, published March 2012, included the preferred option that the Kilpatrick Hills be identified as a Local Landscape Area. West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), East Dunbartonshire Council (EDC) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) have subsequently worked together to prepare a 'Statement of Importance' for the proposed Kilpatrick Hills LLA which identifies the extent of the proposed LLA (following a review of the RSA boundary), describes the proposed LLA's landscape character, including those qualities identified as special, explaining the reasons for the designation.

Study Approach

The Statement of Importance has been prepared following three key stages:

- i. A landscape designation review meeting held on 8th December 2011 with landscape, planning, area and access staff from SNH and WDC to discuss key views and landscape attributes of Kilpatrick Hills;
- ii. A desk review of the [Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Landscape Character Assessment](#) (1999) and SNH wildness and wild land mapping assessments;
- iii. Fieldwork assessment within the Kilpatrick Hills, carried out over 3 days (30th and 31st October and 30th November 2012) by SNH landscape advisors, area officer and WDC and EDC planning staff (individual field assessment sheets and locations are available at Appendix 2).

4. STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE



Photograph 1 – Taken from Middle Duncolm north-eastward towards Duncolm. The panoramic background view is of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.

4.1 Overview

The Kilpatrick Hills form a distinctive rugged upland landscape, inextricably linked with their surroundings: ‘borrowed’ views, unique and relatively accessible panoramas and a plethora of high quality vistas, both to and from the Kilpatrick Hills, make the area key to defining the identity of nearby settlements and in providing a setting for nationally important landscapes.

The abrupt transition from surrounding urban areas and farmed lower slopes and the seemingly remote and still largely wild land characteristics of the hills, together with the ease of access from west central belt towns and cities, makes them a popular recreational area, including for hill walking, mountain biking, fishing and wild camping and they also form an important habitat network.

4.2 Landscape Description

The Kilpatrick Hills rise relatively steeply from the shores of the River Clyde to around 400m at their highest point at Duncolm. The transition between the urban area and rugged moorland occurs within a relatively short distance. The landform comprises a series of rounded, craggy summits set within an undulating plateau, crossed by a series of burns. Land cover is characterised by open moorland including heather and rough grasslands, with extensive areas of blanket bog. Several of the area’s burns have been dammed to create reservoirs and lochs and these sit among the summits and several coniferous plantations. Semi-natural and

native woodland cover is largely limited to the narrow burn corridors and glens and the edges of the Kilpatrick Hills, notably the designed landscapes of Overtoun, Cochno and Edinbarnet. This woodland forms a key component of the transitional hills slopes, where the urban area and agricultural land makes way for the rugged moorland hills of the Kilpatricks.

Regional landscape context

Although the Kilpatrick Hills are relatively low lying they are part of a wider landscape character area. To the east the hills tumble dramatically into the Blane Valley, which separates the Kilpatrick Hills from the Campsie Fells and Kilsyth Hills.

The Glasgow & Clyde Valley Regional Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 1999) notes the Kilpatrick and Campsie Regional Character Area comprises a broken line of rugged upland which encloses Glasgow and the Clyde Valley to the north. The hills are marked by steep south facing slopes which are visible from much of the conurbation. This 'Rugged Moorland Hills' landscape type crosses west to east from the Kilpatrick Hills, beyond the Campsie Fells/Kilsyth Hills to the Fintry, Gargunnoch & Touch Hills and also the Ochil Hills. The Landscape Character Assessment notes the following key characteristics, features and qualities:

- distinctive upland character created by the combination of elevation, exposure rugged landform, moorland vegetation and the predominant lack of modern development;
- a shared sense of apparent naturalness and remoteness which contrasts strongly with the farmed and developed lowland areas;
- presence of archaeological sites on hill tops and sides.

The Kilpatrick Hills are bounded immediately to the north east by the Cameron Muir and Stockie Muir which are described by the [Stirling Council Local Development Plan Landscape Character Assessment](#) (Proposed) Supplementary Guidance (Landscape Character Area L22). Auchineden Hill and the Whangie, two of the best known viewpoints and places of interest within the Kilpatrick Hills fall within this area, described as a transitional moorland hill fringe landscape owing to its relationship with Strathblane (L10). It can be considered to form part of same landscape character unit and share the same key landscape qualities as the Kilpatrick Hills.

The relationship between the Kilpatrick Hills and the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park is an important element in the hill's regional landscape context. The Kilpatrick Hills form a key element in the setting and overall landscape composition in views to/from the south-east part of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the Loch Lomond National Scenic Area (NSA).

Local Landscape Character Area

The local landscape identity of the Kilpatrick Hills is focused around prominent, isolated hills and the abrupt transition from surrounding urban areas and farmed lower slopes. There is also a high perceived quality of wildness and sense of apparent naturalness and remoteness, particularly in the central/core areas of the

Kilpatrick Hills, derived in part from the limited visual influence of modern development, in contrast to nearby urban areas.

The skylines and edges of the Kilpatrick Hills play an important role in views from the Vale of Leven, Dumbarton, Clydebank and Milngavie and in the overall landscape setting of urban areas in the Glasgow conurbation, forming a natural setting and backdrop which visually contrasts with the urban development. With such an extensive visual envelope, and large viewing populations, the hill slopes and skylines have a high level of visual and landscape sensitivity.

Although the Kilpatrick Hills are lower than the mountains beyond the highland boundary fault to the north, their dramatic form and largely open character make them a defining feature in the overall landscape composition.

Special Landscape Qualities

The following landscape qualities of the Kilpatrick Hills are identified as being of special interest: features which justify and explain the Kilpatrick Hill's selection as a Local Landscape Area. The qualities identified consider not only key landscape and visual characteristics but look beyond these to encompass how the landscape is experienced and valued. They identify and explain the importance of specific locations and landscape features which are considered to contribute strongly to what is special about the area.

NB: This section should not be interpreted as a comprehensive inventory or gazetteer of notable locations or features in the area.

i. Strong sense of remoteness, wildness and open horizons

Although the area is traversed by tracks, electricity lines and pylons and bounded by roads, the Kilpatrick Hills are almost completely uninhabited. At a broad level the landform is very simple and the open moorland appears vast in extent with open horizons, however at a more detailed level there is a diversity of topographical features and upland habitats characterised by mosaics of heathland and grassland, with frequent rocky outcrops, scree and crags. Fragments of broadleaf woodland also occur on the lower ground, and highlight ravines and burn corridors that provide some shelter. Coniferous plantations occur frequently and appear highly incongruous in this landscape as stark, angular, dark blocks which contrast with the muted colours, textures and sinuous patterns of the moorland vegetation.

Pockets of sheep grazing, stone walls, post and wire fencing and telegraph poles mark the transition from the central remote area of more isolated hill and moorland areas to the lower slopes and road and urban corridor to the west and south. Infrequently scattered across the landscape are the remains of archaeological or historic features such as cairns and these add to the sense of a remote historic unchanged landscape.

It is a simple landscape providing a rolling hill backdrop, undeveloped as a natural setting to adjacent urban areas. The contrast but proximity creates an 'accessible solitude' which is enjoyed in the central areas and around the remote hills, reservoirs

and lochs. These provide an experience of remoteness, isolation and tranquility in a landscape where wild and natural character dominates. This is particularly true of the core of the Kilpatrick Hills.



Photograph 2 – View eastwards from the core path above the Kilpatrick Braes



Photo 3 – Kilpatrick Hills core area

ii. Distinctive geomorphology and topographical features

Within the Kilpatrick Hills, the sweeping open moor land and coniferous plantations are contrasted with the dense mass of rounded summits such as Duncolm, Doughnut Hill and Auchinenden Hill which form distinctive local landmarks. In places, the summits give way on outward facing edges to dramatic ridges of rock and escarpments. Distinctive, horizontally banded lava flows, eroded into stepped cliffs, top the hill faces shelving gently downwards towards the well-defined transitional area of heather moorland below. Dramatic hill edges, long ridges, exposed rock cliffs and the gentle roll of land forming the lower slopes play an important role in the overall landscape composition. The Lang Craigs, which dominate the skyline above Dumbarton, are the most prominent example of this feature of the Kilpatrick Hills, along with the Kilpatrick Braes.

Elsewhere, deep corries and gullies such as Auchenreoch Glen and Glenarbuck have formed at the edge of the Kilpatrick Hills where the hills many burns run through towards the River Clyde. Both the glens and rock outcrops are important national and local geological features and have high natural heritage interest (see also section 4.5).



Photograph 4 – Duncolm is one of a number of topological features within the Kilpatrick Hills



Photograph 5 – The Lang Craigs from Overtoun Estate

iii. A unique diversity of views

The Kilpatrick Hills boast unique and relatively accessible panoramic views in all directions, so that the landscape experience from these small hills is one of being part of and “viewing the whole of Scotland”. For example, there is a sequence of vast panoramic views over the Clyde estuary on the short walk from Old Kilpatrick to Duncolm, over the Kilpatrick Braes. When at Duncolm, within the core of the Kilpatrick Hills, it is possible to view to the south and see beyond Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh (approximately 80km or 50 miles); the Carsphairn hills in Galloway (approx. 50 miles) and Merrick (approx. 57 miles), also in the Southern Uplands. From the same vantage point viewing to the north, Ben Lui is framed between Ben Lomond and Ben Vorlich, and Loch Lomond and its highland setting is clearly visible.

These panoramic views form part of a tremendous range of high quality views both to and from the Kilpatrick Hills. The landscape designation review meeting identified over 21 key, panoramic or iconic high quality viewpoints. These views are very diverse and range from important internal vistas, to remote areas with no view of the urban area, to extensive “borrowed views” of the adjacent nationally important highland landscape. Open horizons and borrowed views lead to the Kilpatrick Hills being experienced as part of a much larger landscape, increasing the sense of isolation and solitude.

Long views across the Glasgow conurbation, emphasise the contrast between the remote upland and developed lowlands and from out with the Kilpatrick Hills, from locations such as Carmen Reservoir and Dumbarton Castle, the hills are a key feature in views across adjacent urban and farmed lowlands. The hill's skyline makes an important contribution to the setting of views from the north and east of Glasgow city and the Inner Clyde estuary.



Photograph 6 – The Clyde basin from the Kilpatrick Braes



Photograph 7 – View from Duncolin toward the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park

4.3 Proposed Local Landscape Area boundary

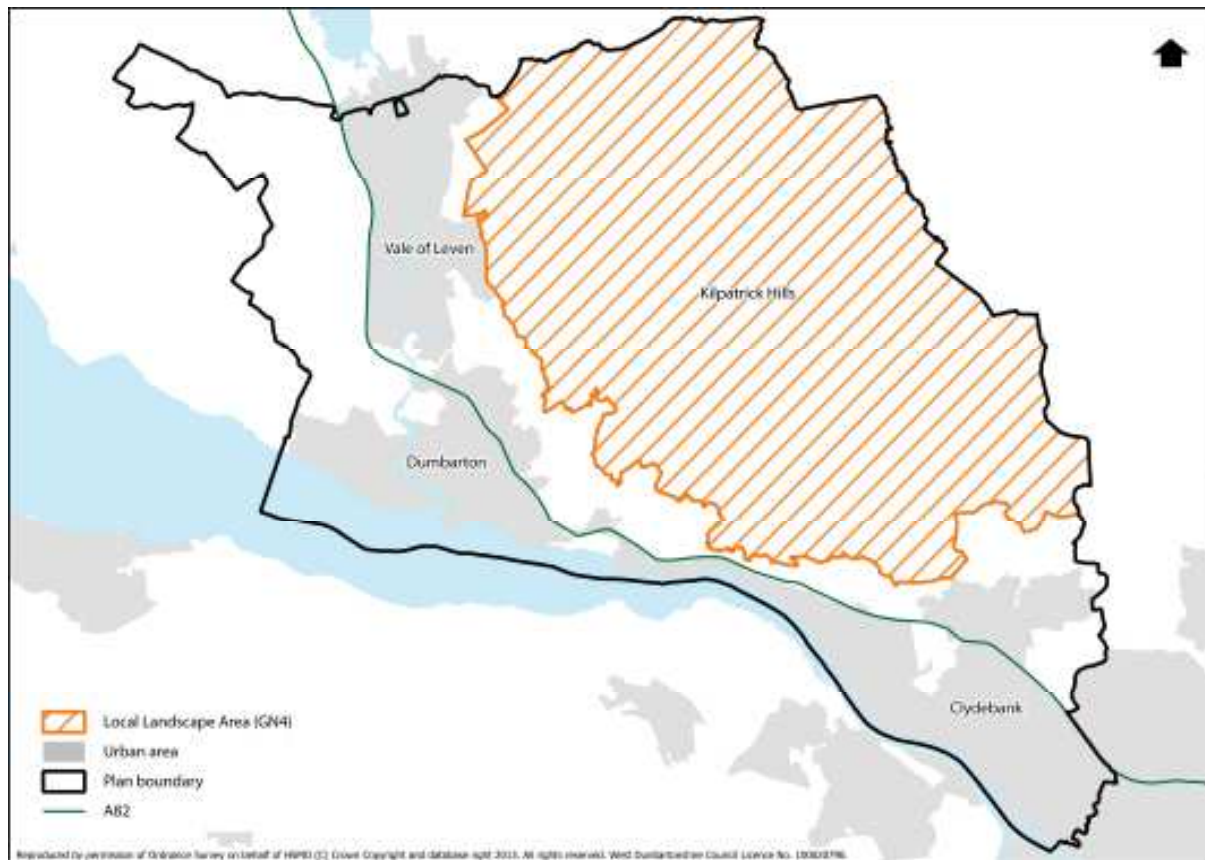


Figure 2 – Proposed Local Landscape Area boundary

An important element of the fieldwork undertaken was to determine the boundary of the proposed local landscape area, taking account of the Regional Scenic Area boundary as defined in the adopted West Dunbartonshire Local Plan and features in the landscape, with the aim of creating a robust boundary which is clearly identifiable.

Lower hill slopes and fringes contribute to the setting and approach to the Kilpatrick Hills' distinctive ridges and crags, acting as an important landscape and visual buffer. These transitional landscapes are generally more diverse in appearance than the open hills. The historic influence of old estate and policy landscapes, such as Overtoun, Cochno and Edinbarnet, is still evident in many of these areas. The historic character, policy woodland, remnant field tree lines and avenues, and vistas associated with remains of former farmed estate landscapes make an important contribution to landscape diversity and setting on the boundary of the Kilpatrick Hills. These areas also provide a unique ease of access to an experience of remoteness and the diverse experience of sharply contrasting landscape: in a short walking time, visitors will pass from urban and suburban town to farmland, parkland to wild remote expansive highland landscape, but be still in close proximity to or have a view of contrasting urban lowlands.

The proposed boundary of the LLA seeks to recognise the importance of these transitional landscapes to the overall character of the Kilpatrick Hills, acknowledging the importance of these areas to the landscape quality of the Kilpatrick Hills, particularly in terms of how it is experienced by local populations. The historic RSA boundary has therefore been moved further down the hill slope in a number of locations to create the LLA boundary. Appendix 1 provides a full description and justification for the proposed LLA boundary.

A separate exercise has been carried out within East Dunbartonshire to review the outer green belt boundary and Regional Scenic Area boundary, so that they coincide with each other on the edge of the rugged moorland hills landscape type. No boundary has been defined for the section of the Kilpatrick Hills within the Stirling Council area.

4.4 Landscape Change

A key principle in the policy approach to landscape is that landscapes are constantly changing and evolving in response to our needs. Positive change should be facilitated whilst maintaining and enhancing distinctive character. Human activity has already had notable effects on parts of the Kilpatrick Hills' landscape, including: grazing; the creation of water-supply reservoirs for nearby urban areas; planting and management of commercial forestry and associated infrastructure such as forestry access tracks; and masts and pylons. All of these features and activities cumulatively have eroded the wild land characteristics of remoteness and perceived naturalness, and detracted from some of the special landscape qualities in some locations. They do not, however, presently dominate or significantly impact on the overall character of the landscape in the core and central parts of the Kilpatrick Hills.

4.5 Other designations and interests



Photograph 8 – Auchenreoch Glen

In addition to their importance in landscape terms, the Kilpatrick Hills are unsurprisingly home to a number of other natural heritage and recreation interests. This range of habitats and geodiversity sites and formalised access routes enhances landscape experience and the number of people who can enjoy it.

The Kilpatrick Hills feature a network of nationally and locally important nature conservation sites, of both biological and geological interest. Five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are found within the Kilpatrick Hills and much of the rest of the area has been designated as Local Nature Conservation Sites. These provide the SSSIs with a robust framework of buffers and habitat connectivity which contribute to safeguarding their viability and recognise the wildlife value of the Kilpatrick Hill's open mosaic of habitats.

The hills are connected to the wider green network by a number of core paths and burn corridors – key features which link both the habitat network and enables residents and visitors to West Dunbartonshire to enjoy the Kilpatrick Hills. This range of habitats and geodiversity sites and formalised access routes enhances landscape experience and the number of people who can enjoy it.

Already noted above are the historic gardens and designed landscapes that form part of transitional landscapes at the edge of the Kilpatrick Hills. Grand houses constructed by wealthy industrialists at Overtoun, Auchentorlie, Cochno and Edinbarnet, mainly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, historically had large gardens, parkland and woodland associated with them, designed and managed to add to the setting and enjoyment of the main house. Overtoun Estate is the best example of an estate as it would have originally looked when the house was built and is recorded on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscape.

Further back in human history, prehistoric cup and ring marked stones and cairns have been found within the Kilpatrick Hills, including at Auchentorlie, Auchnacraig and Gallangad Muir and burn, where they are designated as scheduled monuments.