



ARGYLL FOREST

SPECIAL QUALITIES OF ARGYLL FOREST

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Key Features

Forested glens
Open upland Hills
Designed landscapes
Inland lochs and sea lochs
Small areas of farmed strath floor
Coastal settlements
Vernacular farm buildings
Tradition of forestry
Tradition of communications and travel
Loch Eck
Benmore Designed Landscape
Glen Croe and the Rest and Be Thankful
Military road

Summary of Evaluation

Sense of Place

The area is characterised by lochs, forested glens and upland hills. Loch Eck is a distinctive feature, largely unspoilt and with a feeling of natural remoteness. Sea lochs are unique to this area of the National Park and the loch shores are a focus for communication routes and settlement.

The Argyll Forest Park runs throughout and the area is characterised by forested landscapes. Typically forestry extends over the glen slopes forming the areas unifying characteristic. Cowal has a number of large houses with policies, such as Drimsynie, Benmore and Ardgarten. The big trees, particularly those associated with Benmore and Kilmun Arboretum, are a unique quality of the area.

The climb over the Rest and Be Thankful and through Glen Croe is of high visual importance and one of the iconic landscapes of the National Park.

Cultural heritage

The landscape has been profoundly influenced by human activity from prehistoric to the present day. The land use is a combination of moorland and rough grazing and forestry. The forested glens are a mosaic of 20th century forestry interspersed with 18th and 19th century managed woodlands. This area contrasts with the extensive area of farmland in the South Loch Lomond area.

There are extensive surviving areas of past settlement and landuse in this area of the Park. Shieling groups have survived well in the open upland hills but they have been heavily disrupted by forestry planting in the glens. These features are likely to be important to local people and those whose ancestors came from the area.

Small areas of farmland occur around watercourses, comprising 18th and 19th century rectilinear fields and vernacular farm steadings. This human scale and enclosed landscape is not common in the Cowal area.

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The area includes historic defensive features of high value including Carrick Castle, Dundaraich Fort and possible mottes at Glenbranter.

Settlement occurs along the loch shores, this distribution reflecting the lack of good roads throughout much of Argyll Forest until the 20th century. Communications were often sea or loch borne prior to this time. The settlements of the loch shore are significant places with more antiquity than meets the eye. Kilmun and Lochgoilhead have their origins in the medieval period. There is some later 19th century settlement on the south coast of Cowal. Blairmore and Strone are characterised by Victorian villas, piers and ferry houses and their growth was a result of the convenience of steamer communications across the Clyde.

Biodiversity

Although much of the area has been planted with coniferous forestry there are significant pockets of native trees amongst the forestry including ancient woodland. The woodland biodiversity is of high importance for a large number of species, some nationally scarce, including red squirrel, black grouse and lower plants.

There is a mosaic of relatively natural upland habitat types in the upland areas such as moorland and blanket bog. Upland birds include skylark, red grouse, breeding waders, buzzard, golden eagle. Red deer, mountain hare and possibly water vole are present. The upland habitats and wildlife are an important part of the landscape of this area and much of the Park. Of particular importance is Beinn an Lochain which is designated as a SSSI and has a wide range of acid and basic upland plant communities.

Loch Eck is of high importance for biodiversity, designated a SSSI for its assemblage of fish species, probably the most natural in the Park, lower plants, nutrient poor water and mire plant communities. It contains one of the two natural powan populations in Scotland and is the only Scottish loch where powan and Arctic charr occur together. Otters and water birds are also present.

The intertidal zone of sea lochs, unique to this part of the Park, contain a range of habitats and species not found elsewhere in the Park, including small areas of salt marsh, mud flats, sand and gravel beaches, marine lichens and algae, fish, marine ducks, gulls and waders. They also provide viewing opportunities for gannets, seals and cetaceans.

Associations

The boundary between the early historic kingdoms of Scottish Dalriada and British Strathclyde is claimed to have been located on the watershed in Eastern Cowal. There is a standing stone called Clach a' Bhreatunnaich north-east of Lochgoilhead which is said to mark this boundary and there are other boundary markers in the uplands.

There is a long tradition of communications by water and land in Cowal. Early travel was by water as it was easier to cross than land. By the 19th century there were steamer communications across the Clyde. There is a long tradition of forestry in the Cowal area. Improvement period landlords in the 18th and 19th centuries planted estates with trees and there are fine examples of collections of ornamental trees at Benmore Gardens. However, most of the forestry plantations are recent and reflect the afforestation of large areas of Argyll Forest by the Forestry Commission in the twentieth century. The timber Forestry Commission housing and Kilmun Arboretum contribute to the character of the area.

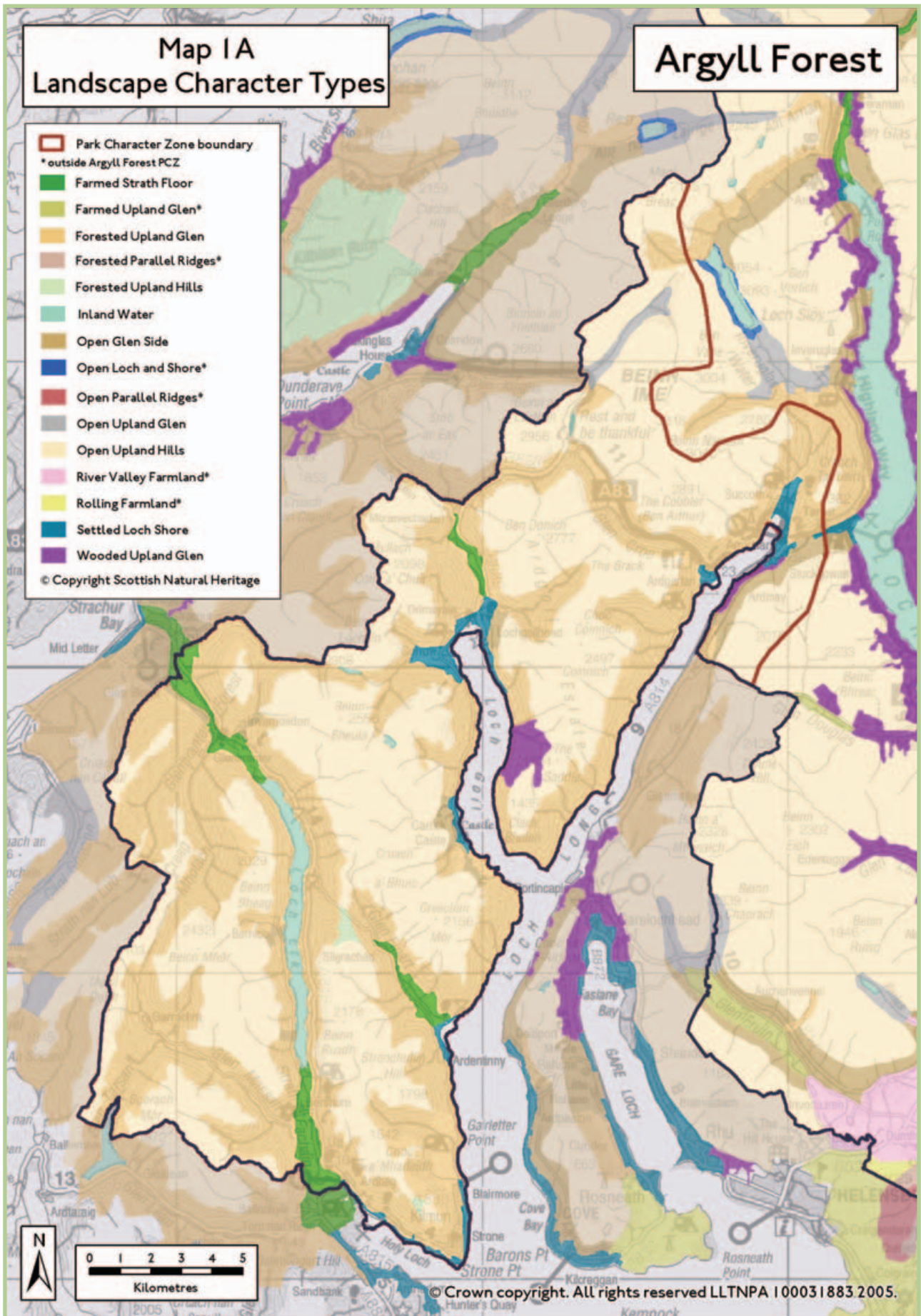
Qualities valued by local communities

(Source: Community Futures and Park Plan Workshop on Special Qualities, April 2004)

- The sea lochs and marine environment are unique to this part of the National Park. The sea lochs are valued for their scenery, historic associations and the piers and buildings associated with use of the loch.
- Loch Goil is valued for its scenic qualities and for recreation.
- The communities felt strongly that the area has a feeling of tranquillity and peacefulness and that it was important to retain those qualities.
- The scenic qualities of the area are valued by communities, mention was made of the combination of the mountains and sea creating a Norwegian Fjord effect.
- Loch Eck for its scientific and scenic qualities and its tranquillity.
- The large number of historic sites and the growing number of local history groups in the area.
- Woodlands are valued by communities, particular mention was made of the Atlantic Oak woodlands and the red squirrels.

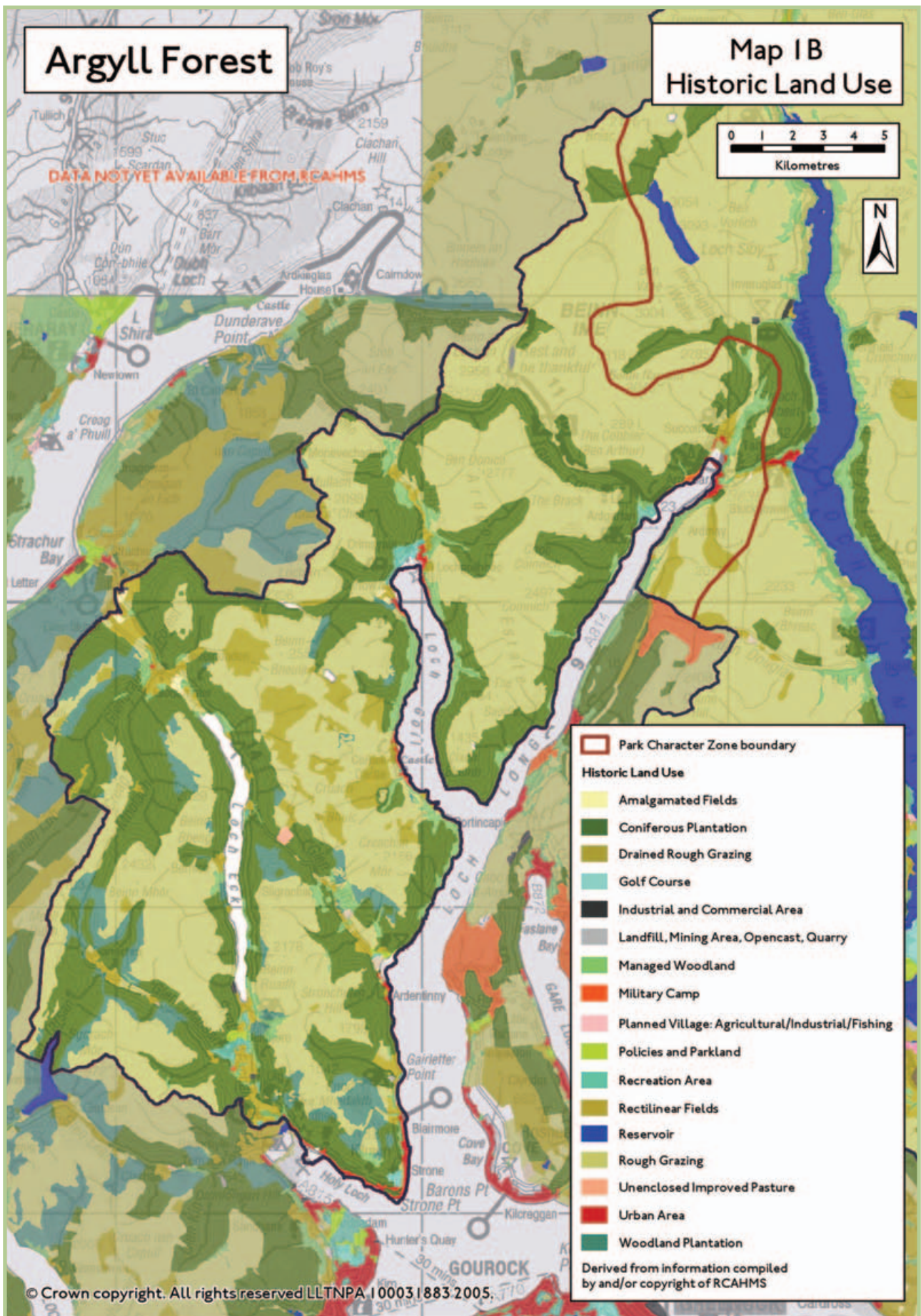
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MAP 1A – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES



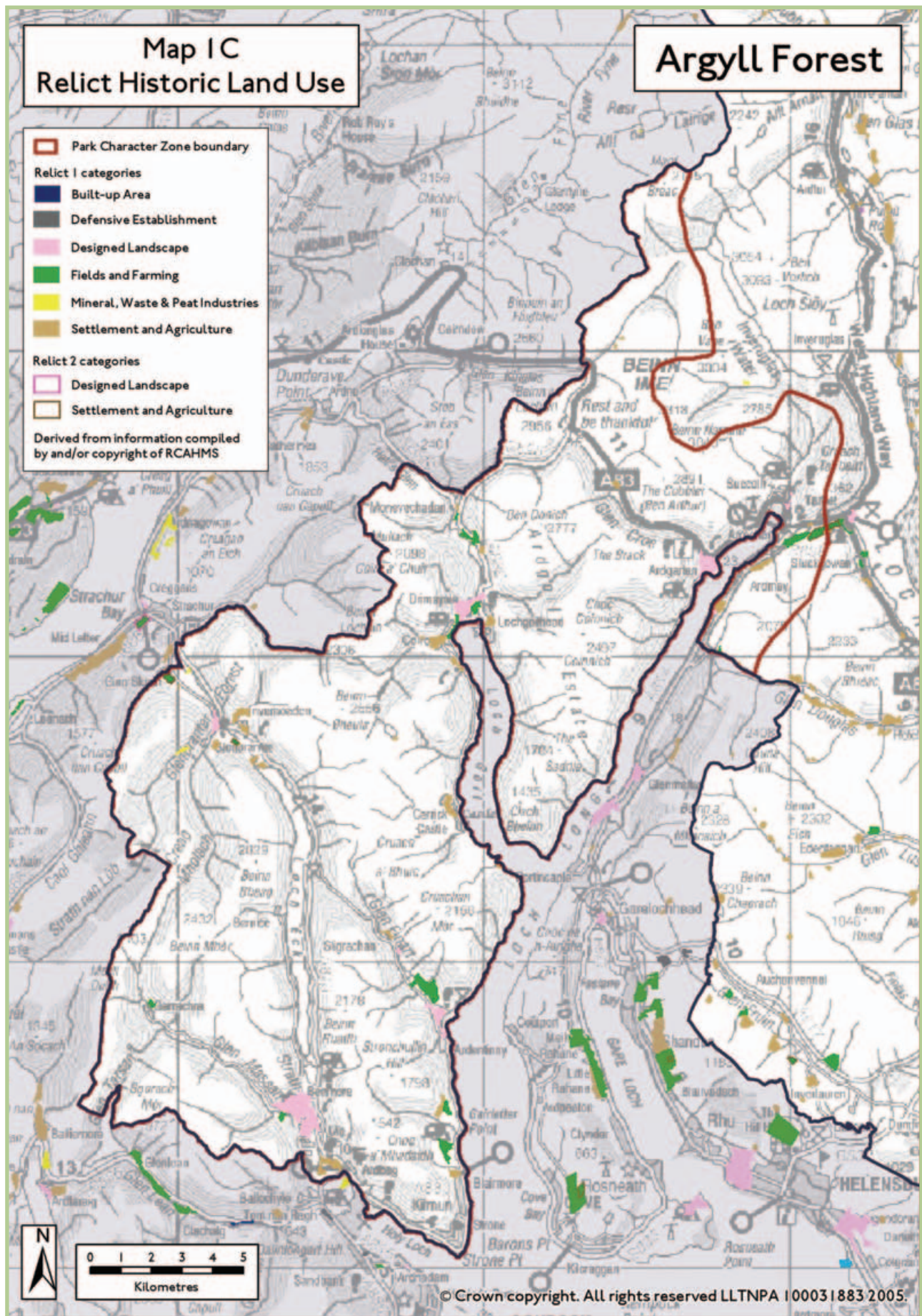
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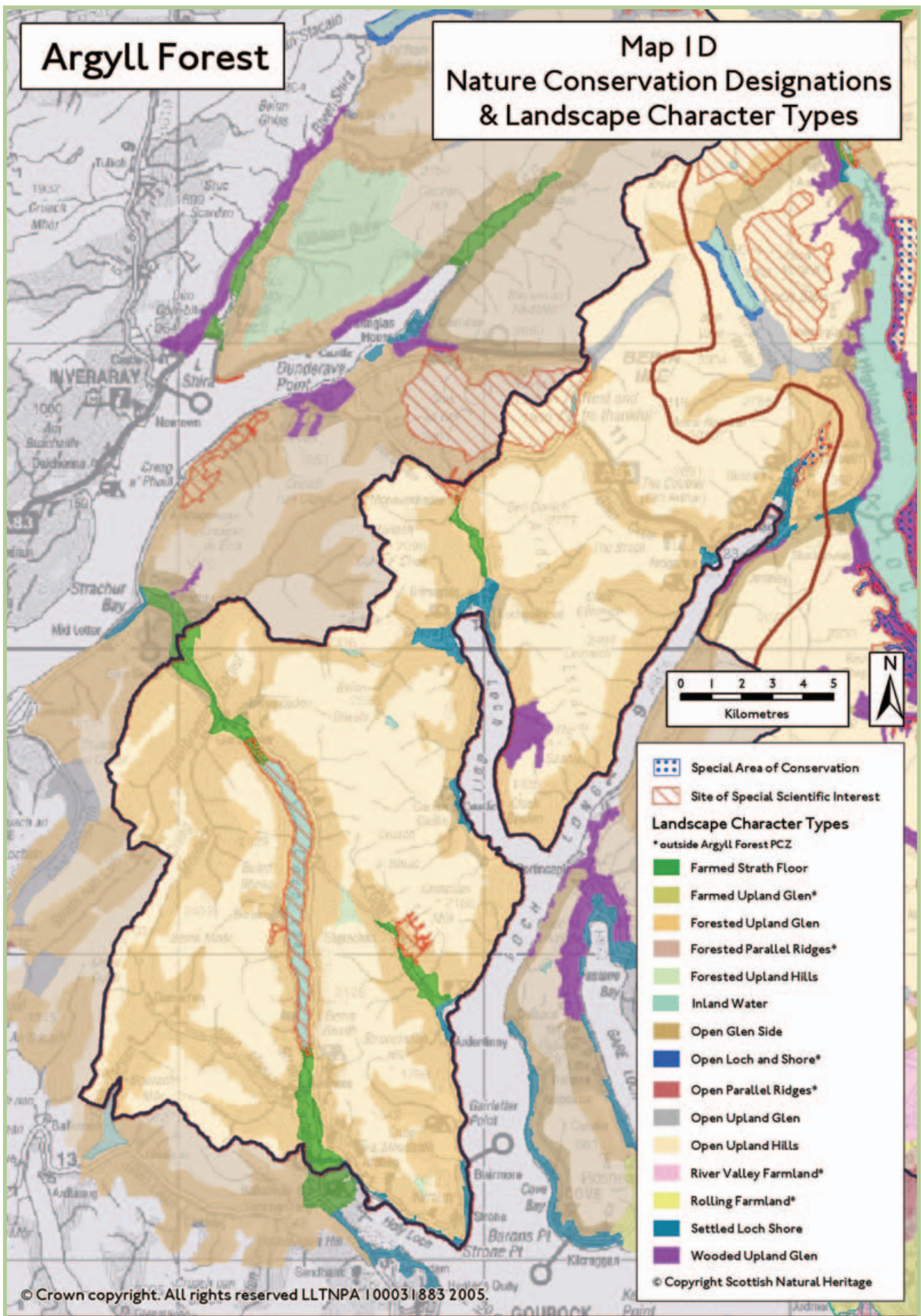
MAP 1B – HISTORIC LAND USE



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MAP 1C – RELICT HISTORIC LAND USE





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LCT: OPEN UPLAND HILLS

The open upland hills are characterised by peaks and outcrops, open hills and heather moorland. Burns and waterfalls.

HLA: Mainly prehistoric to present moorland and rough grazing with some areas having been drained in the 20th century.



BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
<p>Sense of place</p>	<p>The natural and open nature of the hills in Argyll Forest are a key characteristic of the area. Although not as high as some other peaks within the park, the hills are rugged and dramatically rise from lochs and sea lochs, with forestry flanking the glen sides. The highest hills are towards the eastern side of the area.</p>	<p>Important to local people and visitors.</p> <p>The open upper slopes and summits of hills in the Argyll Forest area are particularly important as elements of diversity within the predominantly forested uplands. They are not dominating in the local landscapes as they tend to be less visible from the roads and settlements. However in longer range views from the Clyde sea ways and the south Clyde, the broken ridgeline and summit silhouettes are striking.</p> <p>The uplands tend to be rather lower than elsewhere in the Park and apart from the Arrochar Alps they are less popular for hill walking. However, their remote and rugged character offers unusually challenging terrain, as well as exceptional views out through the sea lochs and to Scotland's west coast. The Cobbler and the Arrochar Alps are distinctive landmark summits which combined with the Rest & Be Thankful Pass, signify a dramatic landscape transition between the Park landscapes and the Argyll area beyond.</p> <p>These hills are predominantly unspoilt by development, although there is some intrusion by pylons.</p>	<p>Pressure from infrastructure (masts etc), motorised recreational activity. Improvements are likely to result from forestry restructuring.</p>
<p>Cultural Heritage</p>	<p>There are numerous shieling groups associated with the joint tenancy townships located on more sheltered ground in the bottom of the glens. Unmanaged areas with significant pockets of drained land providing rough grazing.</p>	<p>Important to specialists, walkers and local people.</p> <p>The shieling groups contribute to landscape character and are appreciated by walkers. They have specialist value, as many of the groups are likely to have considerable longevity and several phases of development are evident.</p> <p>Shieling groups are common in highland Scotland, but there is evidence of different regional types. It is not known if the Cowal group has more in common with Argyll, than the rest of the Park area</p> <p>The shieling groups tend to survive well and are less likely to be affected by tree planting, usually because they cluster around watercourses which are kept clear. The shielings are largely unspoilt, and contribute to the experience of hill walking, as they have a story to tell about past land use</p>	<p>Under no particular pressure, except natural degradation. Bracken growth may be a significant issue - obscures features in the summer and damages archaeological evidence.</p>

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LCT: OPEN UPLAND HILLS (CONT)

BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
Cultural Heritage	The important historic boundary between the early historic kingdoms of Scottish Dalriada and British Strathclyde is claimed to have been located on the watershed in eastern Cowal. There is a standing stone called Clach a' Bhreatunnaich north-east of Lochgoilhead which is said to mark this boundary, and other boundary markers may exist in the form of cairns or stones.	Important to local people and specialists	Under no particular pressure.
Biodiversity	Beinn an Lochain SSSI has a wide range of acid and basic upland plant communities, including mires at Loch Restil. A mosaic of relatively natural upland habitat types elsewhere, e.g. moorland & blanket bog. Upland birds, e.g. skylark, red grouse, breeding waders, buzzard, golden eagle; mammals red deer, mountain hare & possibly water vole all present. Limited information available as there has been few detailed surveys carried out.	Important to local people, visitors and specialists The upland wildlife and habitats are a critical part of the landscape in this zone and the park as a whole. They will be widespread in several other character zones. The biodiversity is of medium importance.	Overgrazing by sheep and deer in some areas.
Associations	The hills are associated with sporting and game conservation, which is linked to cultural heritage and traditional estate management.		

MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Ongoing conservation and grazing management should help to maintain the open character of the area.
- Retain the open character of the open upper slopes and summits.
- Control of bracken advisable to conserve archaeological remains e.g. via agri-environment schemes.
- Avoid further afforestation which would obscure archaeological features
- Overgrazing by sheep and deer may currently reduce the habitat quality in places and could be remedied through changes to management.
- Restructuring of upper woodland edges may enhance the ecological and landscape transitions from the forested glens.

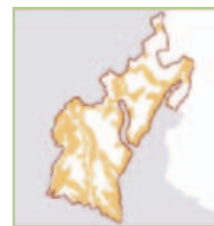
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LCT: FORESTED UPLAND GLEN

Steep glens with coniferous woodland, and native grassland and heather.

HLA: A mosaic comprising 20th century coniferous forestry, interspersed with some 18th and 19th century managed woodland and some late 20th century woodland plantations. Includes some 18th and 19th century rectilinear fields, mainly where the forestry meets watercourses and lochsides.

HLA Relict Landuse: There are also relict settlement and agricultural sites of medieval/post medieval period and 18th/19th century within the forested glens and a relict mineral, waste and peat site in the Glenbranter Forest.



BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
<p>Sense of place</p>	<p>Forested glens are characteristic of Argyll Forest. The steep slopes and varied topography of the Argyll Forest area provides a rugged setting for predominantly coniferous forestry, with some woodland diversity along water courses and around crags and screes.</p> <p>Glen Croe and the Rest and Be Thankful is a dramatic example of a forested glen, of notable scenic quality.</p>	<p>Important to people travelling through the National Park and local people. Coniferous forests over the glen slopes are a dominant characteristic of the Argyll Forest. The steep slopes are seen foreshortened immediate to the roads, but in full view across and up the lochs. The forests here are highly visible to people travelling along the Park roads, A815, A880, B839, B828 and the minor Ardentinny and Castle Carrick roads, as well the A814 outwith the Park and the Clyde sea ways. The forested glens are also a main component of the setting to all the area's rural villages, Arrochar, Strachur, Lochgoilhead, Carrick Castle, Blairmore, Kilmun and Ardentinny. They have some negative impacts on landscape character and visual quality on both the visitor experience and for local communities.</p> <p>However the rugged nature of the topography in this area and the presence of the loch and farmed strath floors, provides a setting for the commercial plantations, relieving potential monotony and oppressive aspects and creating considerable drama. Commercial plantation over glen slopes is the prominent type of woodland in the Argyll Park area and within the individual glens, where there is a relatively poor representation of more natural woodlands.</p> <p>Forestry can tend to extend too far up slope, with insensitive margins and artificial abrupt transitions to the open ground and it can be an intrusion where it becomes a dominant and oppressive feature. The forestry can also detract from hill walks and reduces the apparent visual and physical accessibility of the open upland hills. Other features, such as engineered forest roads, erosion scars and drainage ditches can also cause significant negative visual impact.</p>	<p>These landscapes are changing as a result of forestry restructuring and an increase in the proportion of open ground, broadleaf trees and native species. These changes are having a beneficial impact on the landscape.</p>

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LCT: FORESTED UPLAND GLEN (CONT)

BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
Cultural Heritage	<p>The glens contain remnants of past settlement and land use, usually the remains of the joint tenancy townships (19th century and earlier) which were located at the lower level in townships lands which included better quality arable land held in runrig, and rough pasture on higher slopes. Some of these may have been replaced with single farmsteads when the townships were converted to sheep runs in the late 18th/early 19th centuries. There is evidence of early ironworking in many glens in the form of bloomery mounds and slag heaps (pre-late 18th century industrialisation). Little is known about this early industry. Later native woodlands may have been exploited for industrial scale iron making etc. The ways in which forestry planting and management has changed over time is reflected in the patterns of forestry in the glens. The remaining areas of early managed woodland are likely to be of interest, providing a possible contrast with more recent planting.</p>	<p>Important to specialists, visitors and local people.</p> <p>The remnant townships are of value for genealogical research (sometimes visited), often beyond Scotland, and they have specialist archaeological value as they may contain evidence of medieval and post-medieval settlement. Little is known about early ironworking, and these sites have specialist value</p> <p>The townships in Cowal are no different from many others of the type throughout the Park and north and west highland Scotland. They relate to the former Gaelic speaking area and were typical of land use up until the Clearances (earliest date is unknown). They form part of the commonest relic settlement type in the National Park. The ones in Cowal have been badly disrupted by 20th century forestry planting, which has separated settlements from infields, and rough pasture and shielings (usually in open higher ground beyond the trees, but cut off from the settlement)</p> <p>There are likely to be better preserved examples of townships elsewhere in the National Park, e.g. with settlement, fields, and shielings still intact and related to each other and not cut off by forestry, but the particular examples in Cowal may be of special value to those whose ancestors came from these settlements, or to local people.</p>	<p>The townships and their original context are not renewable, but it would be beneficial to ensure there is no future deterioration in the benefit.</p>
	<p>There are several military roads within the Park about which little is known. The military road in Argyll Forest runs through Glen Croe just below the A83.</p>	<p>Specialist interest but may also have tourism value.</p> <p>The significance of the military roads extend beyond the Park. The roads were built at the start of the process which "occupied" the highlands, de-gaelicised Scotland, and led to the Clearances.</p>	<p>The deteriorating condition of the military road and associated structures is an issue in the Park.</p>
Biodiversity	<p>Woodland SSSIs at Craighoyle Woodland and Hells Glen. Other significant pockets of native trees amongst commercial conifers, including ancient woodland (some overplanted with conifers). The broadleaved woodlands are of interest for their bryophytes & lichens. There are especially large numbers of species and nationally scarce species in the 2 SSSIs. Range of native birds including song birds, black grouse and raptors. Strong population of red squirrel (few or no grey squirrels present), pine marten, otter, roe and red deer. Information is limited as there has been few detailed surveys of these areas.</p>	<p>Important to local people, visitors and specialists</p> <p>The visible wildlife and extensive woodland cover is significant as a conspicuous indicator of the comparatively wild area and low intensity management.</p> <p>The woodland biodiversity is of high importance for red squirrel, black grouse and lower plants</p>	<p>The benefit could be significantly expanded through an increase in the extent and quality of the native woodland habitat.</p>

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LCT: FORESTED UPLAND GLEN (CONT)

BENEFITS

Associations	Tradition of forestry. Improvement Period landlords in the 18th and 19th centuries planted estates with trees. However, much of the forestry plantations are recent developments and reflect the afforestation of large parts of Cowal since the inauguration of the Forestry Commission in 1919. The Kilmun Arboretum was established by the FC in the 1930s as a forestry research project to monitor the success of a variety of exotic tree species. Unique in Scotland as it has 162 tree species planted in groups.
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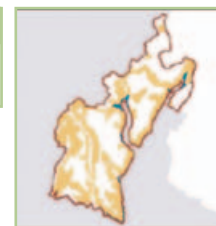
MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- The landscape qualities created by this type of plantation are likely to be enhanced due to forest restructuring and the promotion of native tree species and networks of open space.
- There are opportunities for further restructuring and increase in woodland diversity, allied to access and interpretation.
- Some of the townships could be enhanced by selective felling to open out the settlement remains, creating paths to them, and possibly re-opening connection routes to their shielings.
- All of the military roads in the Park could be managed better, but it may be easier to do this for those used as footpaths. This particular one may not be in this category. The military road can be beneficial for footpath creation, but needs careful management so the resource is not eroded.
- Extensive ongoing restructuring of mature plantations, largely publicly owned by FCS, provides great scope for enhancement of the biodiversity benefit.

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LCT: FORESTED UPLAND GLEN AND SETTLED LOCH SHORE

KEY FEATURE: DESIGNED LANDSCAPES



Designed landscapes occur in a number of LCTs

Some relict remains of designed landscapes are found within the forested glens and also on the loch shores. Designed landscapes include Ardgarten, Drimsynie and Benmore.

HLA: Designed Landscape 17th to 19th Century, 18th to 20th century woodland and forestry, 19th to 20th century recreation area and 18th to 19th century fields and farming.

BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
Sense of place	The large houses with their associated designed landscapes introduce elements of diversity and human scale. Benmore gardens provide an important feature – ‘showcasing’ tree species and providing interpretation. Exotic specimens including giant redwood trees are maintained and managed for visitors within a designed landscape.	Important to local people, visitors and specialists Contribute to the character of this part of the Park. Benmore gardens are relatively hidden, but provide an intact and unusual feature. The gardens have a strong identity, offer an opportunity to access the grounds and good viewpoints to the surrounding glen and the Clyde sea ways. The designed landscape’s scenic quality and value as a work of art is assessed as outstanding in the National Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.	The chalet developments around Drimsynie have had a negative impact on the landscape character and visual qualities of the designed landscape and village of Lochgoilhead. These landscapes are attractive to new commercial developments, but are sensitive to inappropriate and over development.
Cultural Heritage	The loch side country houses with associated parklands and policies were created during the age of agricultural improvements between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Benmore is one of the main examples in this area of the Park and is a good example of a garden developed during the Victorian period. Benmore House was begun in 1862 to the baronial designs of Glasgow Architect Charles Wilson and completed by his partner, David Thomson in 1874. The gardens also contain the Bayley Balfour Memorial Hut designed by Sir Robert Lorimer and originally sited in Puck’s Glen.	Important to local people, visitors and specialists. The designed landscapes and associated country houses contribute to the character of this part of the Park and are an important part of the cultural heritage of the Park. There has been a loss of integrity of much of the designed landscapes in Cowal. Few retain their role as landscaped settings of private country houses. Their setting and features have been affected by use as static caravan parks and chalets. Benmore is the exception, still retaining its original features and historic character. The site is included on the National Inventory of Designed Landscapes and includes a number of buildings and structures listed for their architectural and historic importance.	Ongoing pressures for tourism development.
Biodiversity	No particular native biodiversity attributes. The exotic plant species in the gardens provide a contrast and context for native species. Some native wildlife, especially birds will be visible within the gardens.	Of limited importance to local people and visitors Low biodiversity importance	Unlikely to change except in line with national trends such as climate change.
Associations	The country houses and designed landscapes often have associations with important families and clans. Benmore also has associations with the culture of forestry and the Royal Botanic Gardens.		

MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Encourage design briefs for key sites likely to be vulnerable to development.
- Consider the development of thematic related destination, incorporating Benmore, Puck’s Glen & Kilmun Arboretum.
- There is a role for proactive enhancements at Drimsynie.
- There is potential to enhance the designed landscapes where opportunities arise.
- Seek to retain historic landscape features where they exist as part of development.

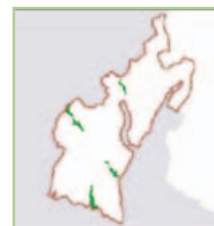
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LCT: FARMED STRATH FLOOR

There are small areas of farmland around watercourses, including a narrow area near Ardentinny at Glenfinart and Glenbranter.

HLA: Mosaics of 18th to 19th century fields and farming, 17th to 19th century designed landscapes, prehistoric to present day moorland and rough grazing and 19th to 20th century recreation areas

HLA relict: There is a relict 17th to 19th century designed landscape. (See analysis of Designed landscapes on page 32).



BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
<p>Sense of place</p>	<p>These flat pasture areas form a human scale and enclosed landscape. They comprise improved grassland and regular fields, with scattered riparian woodlands and policy woodlands.</p> <p>Farmed strath floors are important areas of diversity in the Argyll Forest landscape, flat and agriculturally managed, they provide strong visual contrast to the enclosing upland slopes, which are dominated by forestry and contribute to the setting of rivers and lochs. Traditionally managed farmed lands, these areas are notably managed with distinct field patterns giving a human dimension to the landscape. They are a component of the rural setting of the settled Loch shore.</p>	<p>The farmed strath floor areas in Argyll Forest are particularly significant in introducing elements of diversity in the wider and local landscapes, which tend to be dominated by commercial forestry. The strath floors have a distinctive character due to their flat topography and contrast with the surrounding uplands. This landscape type is generally important as an element of diversity in the Park's glen landscapes and where they occasionally occur contribute greatly to the scenic and distinctive qualities of the Argyll Forest glens. Whilst occupying an actually very small proportion of the landscape, the straths are visually highly significant, compositionally important within views and in terms of allowing views across and through the glens. Significantly this landscape type, as where it occurs elsewhere in the Park, helps to establish a farmed countryside setting to the rural villages of a generally unspoilt and traditional quality.</p>	<p>These areas are small in scale and therefore relatively vulnerable to change, such as past afforestation.</p> <p>The farmed strath areas may come under pressure from settlement expansion and for tourist developments in the future. Changes or decline in agricultural practise could lead to the decline of traditional features, such as field boundaries, or the expansion of woodlands through natural regeneration or new planting.</p>
<p>Cultural Heritage</p>	<p>These areas often have 18th/19th century field patterns mainly in small pockets along river or burnsides, at loch sides or on roadsides. The flat strath floors often contain historic buildings, and are likely to have post-clearance farm steadings, which are not necessarily listed, but of value in terms of vernacular architecture.</p> <p>There are claimed mottes (medieval earth and timber castle remains) in Glenbranter - if these were truly mottes, they would be of high significance because of their location outside the main area of Norman/Fleming settlement in Scotland. Dundaraich Fort is a Scheduled Ancient Monument found in this area at Glen Finart.</p>	<p>These areas are significant within Cowal because they are not typical of the area, which does not have many farmed flat strath floors. These floors are more likely to contain buried (that is, unknown) archaeological resources than other areas of Cowal</p> <p>The type of cultural heritage resource within this area is not particularly common in the western part of the Park area.</p> <p>The putative mottes would be a nationally significant resource if genuine.</p>	<p>The cultural heritage benefit is not apparently under threat at the moment.</p>
	<p>Timber as a building material is more evident in this area of the Park than any other. Most visible are the 3 groups of late 20th century Forestry Commission houses at Glenbranter, Glen Massan and Ardentinny (See LCT Settled Loch Shore).</p>	<p>Important mainly to local people and specialists.</p> <p>Although timber buildings occur elsewhere in the Park they are a particular characteristic of the Argyll Forest area.</p>	<p>No pressures at the present time.</p>

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LCT: FARMED STRATH FLOOR (CONT)

BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
Biodiversity	These areas provide a food source for wintering waders, geese and other birds. Supports a population of small mammals and may hold pockets of woodland ground flora that don't thrive in the surrounding commercial plantations.	Important mainly to local people and visitors due to the visibility of the wildlife Of low importance overall. Much more widespread elsewhere, e.g. South Loch Lomond	Modern farming patterns have tended to diminish the wildlife value through winter cropping.
Associations	Glenbranter is associated with Sir Harry Lauder (1870-1950), who started his career in the music halls and made a name for himself as a singer of Scottish songs.		

MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Retain the open character of the farmed strath floors as they contribute to the settlement settings.
- New woodland planting should be limited.
- Access to these landscapes could be improved with path network development from the villages and also links along the rivers and field boundaries.
- Conserve and enhance traditional farm steadings and seek to maintain field patterns.
- The biodiversity benefit could be enhanced through more wildlife friendly farming

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LCT: SETTLED LOCH SHORE

Settled loch shore is frequently found along sea lochs, the main examples are at Arrochar, Blairmore, Lochgoilhead and Ardentinny. Key characteristics include open water with a shoreline enclosed by residential or commercial development.

HLA: Mix of 18th to 20th century built up areas, 18th to 19th century fields and farming extending along loch shore and flat strath floors and 19th to 20th century recreation areas

HLA Relict Land Use: There are areas of relict 17th–19th century designed landscapes. (See analysis of designed landscapes on page 32).



BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
Sense of place	The settled shore provides a human built element within the forested shoreline, often punctuating the edges of the shoreline with dispersed and linear development. Historic and traditional character of rural and estate buildings and the presence of meadow lands, loch shore fringe woodlands and garden grounds enhance the unspoilt rural character. However, there are also areas of poorer quality built environment such as recent developments, (eg. chalets at Lochgoilhead), as well as areas that have become run down, (eg. Carrick Castle brown field sites).	The villages have high quality views across open water, with some negative impacts from poorly sited and designed tourism developments and the military bases. The settlements themselves are important landmarks in the wider view but tend to be somewhat remote by road access. Some of the villages have tourism developments but they are predominantly residential. There is a mixture of development, some new and some more traditional. The settlements locate at the heads of the sea lochs, around the headlands and at the outflows of glens. They introduce a human dimension to the glen and loch landscape, enhancing the drama and scale of the enclosing vertical forested slopes.	The area is likely to continue to be under pressure as a result of demand for development, new tourism developments such as chalets and caravan parks. There are also pressures related to tourism provision for sailing activities.
Cultural Heritage	The towns of the settled loch shore are significant places with more antiquity that meets the eye. They may have been small village/town settlements from the medieval period. The church at Lochgoilhead is on record in the 14th century, but there is a tradition that it was a much earlier foundation. The collegiate church at Kilmun is recorded in 1391. Both settlements may have medieval roots. Kilmun was a burgh created of barony in 1490, but it is not clear how much it was developed at this early period. Kilmun Church Tower is scheduled. Little is known about the early history of Lochgoilhead. A number of the buildings are of historic importance such as the Victorian villas located along the lochshore, reflecting the town's development as a popular steamer destination from the mid 19th century onwards. Little is known about the history of Arrochar. The McFarlanes are recorded to have had a residence at Arrochar in the 17th century and presumably earlier. The position of their house is thought to be under the present Cobbler Hotel (formerly known as Arrochar House). Arrochar was presumably also originally significant as an inn stop on the route through the pass to Argyll. It still serves an important function in providing tourist accommodation.	The towns are important to visitors and specialists. They are nodal points for day and extended visits. The small towns contribute to the Park's character, each is unique. The designed landscape at Drimsynie is already heavily compromised. There may not be much evidence of the potential antiquity of the settlements, but there is possibly scope for more interpretation.	Townscape quality may be threatened by small scale, badly designed, piecemeal development.

ARGYLL FOREST

LCT: SETTLED LOCH SHORE (CONT)

BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
Cultural Heritage	<p>The small villages of Ardentinny and Carrick Castle also lie on loch shores. Ardentinny is characterised by small vernacular cottages. The most prominent building is the 18th century Ardentinny Hotel (some parts may be earlier). It was from Ardentinny that the drovers and their cattle crossed to Coulport on their journey south and the surviving ferry house, hotel and cottages are a visible reminder of the historic importance of the village as a ferry port.</p> <p>Carrick Castle has developed around the dramatic late 14th century Carrick Castle which has strong historical connections to the Clan Campbell. The village is a group of houses strung along the shore, some originally holiday homes built by Glasgow Merchants in the 19th century.</p> <p>The settled loch shore also includes 19th century settlement at Blairmore and Strone characterised by large Victorian seaside villas, piers and ferry houses. The settlements developed due to the convenience of steamer communications across the Clyde.</p>	<p>Important to local people, visitors and specialists.</p> <p>These settlements are significant to the character of Cowal and the Park as a whole.</p> <p>The coastal settlements are of historic and architectural importance and unique to this area of the Park. Many villas still retain their original features and open setting.</p>	<p>There are some development pressures which could impact on the character of the settlements. Some of the structures such as piers and ferry houses are in poor condition.</p>
Biodiversity	<p>Limited biodiversity, mostly of common garden birds and some waders on larger open areas.</p>	<p>Important only to local people and visitors, due to its high visibility</p> <p>Of low significance. Typical of similar habitat across Scotland</p> <p>Of limited importance.</p>	
Associations	<p>Steamer traditions.</p> <p>Association with David Napier</p> <p>Early Christianity</p> <p>Campbells of Argyll</p> <p>Macfarlanes</p>		

MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Appropriate planning and careful siting and location of new developments can help ensure the conservation and enhancement of settlement character and setting.
- Prepare design guidance to enhance settlement character.
- Although not much evidence for antiquity of some of the settlements there is scope to raise awareness of antiquity through interpretation.
- Consider Conservation Area designation of Cowal coastal settlements
- Seek to conserve and enhance buildings and structures at risk such as piers and ferry houses.
- Arrochar may have a role to play in interpreting communication routes and military roads for visitors.
- Potential to develop proposals to conserve and enhance the setting of Carrick Castle and consider interpretation.
- The biodiversity benefit could be enhanced through changes to management of municipal grasslands and a reversal of current trends in makeover gardening could restore eroded wildlife benefits of built up areas.

ARGYLL FOREST

LCT: INLAND WATER

Loch Eck is the main inland loch within the area

HLA: Water body



BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
Sense of place	Loch Eck is quite a hidden loch, but its length and narrow width mean that it is a distinctive feature, and it is similar to the shape of the area's sea lochs.	Loch Eck provides a setting and interesting juxtaposition to the upland and forested areas. There are high quality and accessible views of the loch, it is largely unspoilt, with some associated small scale tourist developments, and has a feeling of apparent naturalness and remoteness. The shape and size of the loch is distinctive, and it is representative of other (sea) lochs within Cowal. The loch is highly valued locally for its tranquil qualities.	Shoreline erosion may be an issue. Increase in activity along loch shores could affect tranquillity. There may be increasing pressure for commercial developments. Increased boating and recreational activity on the loch is a local concern.
Cultural Heritage	The shores of the loch are too closely planted with conifers to retain much cultural heritage value. There are settlements in the trees along the loch sides, and crannogs recorded in the loch.	The settlements are of medium to high significance to local people and visitors, particularly to those tracing their genealogy and roots. The crannogs are part of a wider Scottish group of such sites which together are arguably of national significance for their archaeological and scientific interest, although not all are scheduled ancient monuments.	Shore line activity may affect heritage features.
Biodiversity	Loch Eck is an SSSI for its assemblage of fish species, probably the most natural in the Park, lower plants, nutrient poor water and mire plant communities. It contains one of the two natural powan populations in Scotland. Otters and water birds are present. No detailed bird survey information is available.	Important to all groups, noted for its angling Highly significant to the local zone, the Park and Scotland. It is one of the iconic freshwater fisheries in Scotland. Of high importance	The benefit is under great threat, e.g. very vulnerable to nutrient enrichment and to introduction of harmful non native species, such as ruffe.
Associations	Loch Eck has long formed a historic travelling route linking Inverary with the western shores of the Clyde. Travel was often easier by water than land and would have made use of the lochs and sea lochs. The Loch Eck Tour was a popular circular route for visitors to the Highlands in Victorian and Edwardian times. The tour would have used a combination of rail, steamer and coach service to travel from Glasgow to Inverary via Loch Eck.		

MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Safeguard the unspoilt and apparently natural qualities of Loch Eck.
- Retain the tranquil feeling and characteristics.
- The biodiversity could be enhanced through introduction of controls on the movement of fish between catchments; habitat enhancement for salmon & sea trout and development control to prevent nutrient inputs and physical damage to loch shore habitats.

ARGYLL FOREST

LCT: SEA LOCHS

Sea lochs include Loch Goil, Loch Long and Holy Loch

LCT: There is no LCT for these areas as they lie outside the National Park boundary. However, they are considered to be key contributors to the special qualities and landscape character of the Park.

BENEFITS	CONTRIBUTION TO BENEFIT?	EVALUATION OF IMPORTANCE	TRENDS & PRESSURES
Sense of place	The sea lochs are narrow and enclosed. Intertidal zones.	The Argyll Forest sea lochs are the Park's only area of coastline and whilst the narrow enclosed form relates them to some of the inland lochs, they are typical of the wider Scottish west coast landscape. The intertidal zones and shoreline ensure that they have a distinct coastal quality. They are important elements of diversity and dynamism in the Argyll Forest landscape, where the dominance of evergreen forests means that seasonal change is somewhat limited. Eye level views out from Kilmun give the only sense of more open sea ways. Elsewhere the views up and down the lochs can be extensive, although access to the loch shores is somewhat restrictive as there are only minor roads through the area. Also the enclosing nature of the forestry limits views out. The lack of ready access and views in to the sea lochs can make areas quite remote, wild and tranquil in quality. There are sections with no adjacent loch shore paths or roads, such as along Loch Long and Loch Goil between Ardentinn and Carrick Castle. Occasional sightings of submarines, along with more regular military surveillance boats, indicate the military use of the sea lochs.	The sea lochs could potentially experience increased use for water recreation. The military presence in the area will continue to be a factor of change. Shoreline development can be insensitive to and have a negative impact on the water environment. Fish farming developments and associated infrastructure can have a negative impact on the remote and unspoilt qualities of the sea lochs.
Cultural Heritage	There are likely to be remains of archaeological and historic interest in the intertidal zone (piers, fishtraps etc) and on the sea bed of the lochs (wrecks).	Important locally for understanding the use of the sea lochs over time. The lochs were historically and to the present day of strategic importance and have influenced the siting and location of many of the important monuments in the area.	Coastal development can affect historic remains in the intertidal zone.
Biodiversity	The intertidal zone round the lochs contain a range of habitats and species not found elsewhere in the Park, including small areas of salt marsh, mud flats, sand and gravel beaches, marine lichens and algae, fish, marine ducks, gulls, waders etc. There are viewing opportunities for gannets, seals and occasionally small cetaceans.	Important to all groups The biodiversity of this LCT is highly significant to the local area and the Park as a whole and of medium importance due to its localised distribution in the Park.	Coastal development for roads, piers, jetties etc has reduced its extent and could do so further. May also be threatened by pollution from inadequate sewerage infrastructure. Fish farming activities can have negative impacts on water quality and native fish populations
Associations	Military associations. Long tradition of use of the sea lochs for travel.		

MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Enhance the potential for accessing the sea lochs by boat through public ferry services or special operators.
- Explore opportunities to promote as marine gateways to the National Park.
- Control access through limiting the formal access network to maintain aspects of remoteness, whilst enhancing the existing paths, which can be difficult to find and follow.
- The biodiversity and cultural heritage benefits could be enhanced through sensitive development control, control of marine litter and sewage discharge and better fisheries management.