

# EARRAGHAIL RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

## Appendix 7.3 NatureScot Baseline Landscape Character

Prepared for  
ScottishPower Renewables Ltd

# Appendix 7.3: Baseline Landscape Character - NatureScot National Landscape Character Assessment (2019)

## LCT 39 Plateau Moor and Forest -Argyll (Host)



### SNH National Landscape Character Assessment

#### Landscape Character Type 39

### PLATEAU MOOR AND FOREST



#### Location and Context

The *Plateau Moor and Forest* Landscape Character Type occurs in four main locations in the Argyll and Bute, and Firth of Clyde area: along the spine of the Kintyre Peninsula; on the Mull of Kintyre; in narrow bands on either side of Loch Fyne; and on the Knapdale Peninsula.

#### Key Characteristics

- Upland plateau with rounded ridges, craggy outcrops and an irregular slope profile.
- Upland lochs.
- Winding narrow glens and wider glens with rivers.
- Extensive, large-scale mosaic of open moorland and forestry.
- No field boundaries.
- Very few buildings; occasional isolated dwellings on edges of moor.
- Small enclosed pastures and occasional farms and houses on lower hill slopes at the transition with adjacent character types and within the narrow glens which dissect these uplands.
- Little access; roads follow shorelines.

#### Landscape Character Description

##### Landform

The *Plateau Moor and Forest* Landscape Character Type extends from Inverary to the southern tip of the Mull of Kintyre. It is found on both the Argyll Group and the Southern Highland Group of Dalradian rocks, which both have more recent intrusions of igneous rocks within their structure.

The landform varies slightly according to the underlying geology. The uplands on the Mull of Kintyre, which are underlain by rocks of the Southern Highland Group, form an undulating plateau with rounded slopes and few rocky outcrops. Further north, the uplands formed on rocks of the Argyll Group are typically steep ridges, with rounded profiles and craggy

outcrops. The uplands reach an average height of 300 metres above sea level and there is a gradual increase in elevation towards the north. The contours here have the consistent north-west to south-east alignment typical of uplands on rocks of the Argyll Group, with upland lochs in low-lying hollows.

#### *Landcover*

The landscape is a large-scale mosaic of moorland and conifer forests. Forestry is often the predominant land use, covering extensive areas and masking the characteristic landform of undulating slopes and rounded summits. The forest cover extends onto the summits of the plateau, but is often discontinuous where there are rocky outcrops or lochs. The forests typically have straight edges, but their design is generally successful as they are deeply indented to fit with the landform and active forest management ensures that the landscape pattern is in constant flux.

The remaining areas are open moorland with extensive marginal upland pasture and blanket bog.

#### *Settlement*

Settlement is sparse. There are few farms and their buildings are isolated, usually sited in sheltered positions on the edge of the moor. There are several operational windfarms within the core of this Landscape Character Type, set back from the coastal edge of Kintyre. They generally have limited influence on this coastal edge, although they can be seen from the west coast of Arran. There is also a new power line from Cour to Inverary, with 46 metre high towers.

#### *Perception*

The coast between Skipness and Tarbet has strong wild character due to its ruggedness, naturalness and remoteness.



This is one of 389 Landscape Character Types identified at a scale of 1:50 000 as part of a national programme of Landscape Character Assessment republished in 2019.

The area covered by this Landscape Character Type was originally included in the Argyll and the Firth of Clyde (Environmental Resources Management), 1996

## 1.1 LCT 38 Open Ridges – Bute



### SNH National Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Type 38

OPEN RIDGES



#### Location and Context

The *Open Ridges* Landscape Character Type occurs in four locations in Argyll and Bute, located on the Rosneath Peninsula, the band of hills behind Helensburgh and Cardross below the ridge which forms the boundary to the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, and two areas on Bute.

#### Key Characteristics

- Broad, even slopes form rounded ridges and occasional steep summits.
- Upper slopes are predominantly open moorland with blocks forestry, patches of birch woodland and scrub.
- Marginal farmland confined to broader glens and loch fringes, with fields enclosed by stone walls and occasional shelter belts.
- Narrow strips of broadleaf woodland along burns and within steep, rocky gullies.
- Substantial, dark grey retaining walls and beech hedgerows emphasise contours and help to integrate settlements on lower slopes.
- Built development concentrated along very narrow shoreline strip.

#### Landscape Character Description

##### *Landform*

The *Open Ridges* Landscape Character Type lies on Dalradian metamorphic rocks of the Southern Highland Group, extending into the hills around Helensburgh, to the west of Gare Loch and on the island of Bute, to the north of the Highland Boundary Fault. They are also found on the igneous rocks of the Kilpatrick Hills, to the north-west of the Glasgow conurbation.

The broad, rounded ridges are considerably lower than the *Steep Ridges and Mountains* to the north and the profile of the slopes is relatively smooth. These elevated areas are larger in scale than lower areas. Rocky outcrops are limited to the upper moorland summits, where the landform becomes craggier in places. The glens cut deep into the landform, creating

wooded rocky gullies and some wider valleys such as Glen Fruin. The steep slopes generally become undulating at the edges of the lochs.

#### *Landcover*

There are extensive conifer forests on the sides of the broad ridges, with rounded, open moorland tops. Smaller broadleaf woodlands are confined to the glens. Many of the trees on exposed slopes are stunted. Rough grazing predominates and fields are usually enclosed by post and rail fencing. Gorse is characteristic of the upland areas, as are stands of Scots pine. Despite the wooded character, there are many long, framed views and the landscape has an open, well-structured character.

While the meandering rivers and burns form soft, organic shapes in the landscape, rows of hedgerow trees and shelter belts stand out as strong geometric features. Field boundaries on the lower slopes of the moorland ridges are characterised by broken stone walls, post and wire fencing and sparse hedgerows. On the loch edges, there is a gradual change to a smaller scale landscape, with wooded gills and a narrow, intermittent band of built development.

#### *Settlement*

Settlement is largely confined to the loch edges. The houses are typically at an acute angle to the road and are stepped up the slope on terraces. Beech hedges contrast with local stone walls, natural rock outcrops and mixed woodlands to create a richly varied local landscape. The strip of land by the loch side is particularly prominent in views from the opposite side of the loch. Reflection increases the visual effect of built development on this shoreline landscape.

The area has transmission masts and pylons and substantial oil depots and developments which are of larger scale than the surrounding landscape. MOD developments are dominant in some loch heads.

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## 1.2 LCT 53 Rocky Coastland – Argyll



### SNH National Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Type 53

ROCKY COASTLAND



#### Location and Context

The *Rocky Coastland* Landscape Character Type forms an irregular narrow coastal or loch edge, and is present in several locations in Argyll and Bute. It forms a narrow linear margin along the shores of Loch Fyne and the Kintyre coast; includes more inland areas on the Mull of Kintyre which essentially form smaller scale valleys set within adjacent upland areas; and occurs on the more settled and farmed shores of Loch Etive and Loch Awe.

The context of this Landscape Character Type varies greatly with some areas featuring an expansive seaward context (the Knapdale and Kintyre coasts), while other areas are more contained, being located either side of a narrow sea loch (upper Fyne and West Loch Tarbert).

#### Key Characteristics

- Uneven, hummocky landform with rocky outcrops and narrow glens.
- Raised beaches, cliffs and distinctive rounded knolls.
- Rocky, indented coastline with offshore islands and small sandy bays.
- Relatively small-scale landscape with a diverse mix of colours and textures.
- Steep wooded cliffs and hummocky, gorse-covered slopes.
- Stone walls provide partial enclosure.
- Relatively well-settled, with scattered isolated farm buildings and small villages in sheltered sites.
- A wide variety of archaeological sites.
- Complex transitional landscape.

#### Landscape Character Description

##### *Landform*

The *Rocky Coastland* Landscape Character Type is found on the lower margins of the upland forest moor mosaic on the west side of the Cowal peninsula and on the Mull of Kintyre, as well as the more settled and farmed shores of Loch Etive and Loch Awe. The

area is underlain by Dalradian rocks of both the Argyll Group and the Southern Highland Group and the landform varies slightly in accordance with the rock type. In areas underlain by rocks of the Argyll Group (West Cowal and the west side of the Mull of Kintyre) the landform is particularly undulating and uneven, with distinctive rounded rocky knolls. Elsewhere it is irregular and rocky, with a relatively small-scale.

Raised beaches are typical coastal features. In places, such as Muasdale on the west side of the Mull of Kintyre, they are steep, craggy cliffs, with jagged gullies, waterfalls and dramatic outlying boulders strewn across the beach at their foot. The coastline in these areas is typically rocky and indented, with small sandy bays.

#### *Landcover*

This is a very diverse, patchy landscape, with a rich mixture of colours and textures and intricate patterns. It is a transitional landscape, with a fairly small scale and an irregular, unpredictable character which often seems disorientating. The broad transition from rough moorland on the upper slopes to pasture and a rocky shoreline is complicated by the steep, crumbling cliff faces of the raised beaches, the undulating landform and the characteristic rounded knolls. Steep slopes and gullies are a mosaic of gorse and birch woodland, with scattered, stunted oak trees. The inland cliffs of the raised beaches along the southern and western shores of the Mull of Kintyre are cloaked in dense semi-natural ancient oak woodland. Many of the fields have patches of rough, tussocky moorland grass and the landscape as a whole has a wild, natural character. There are stands of windblown Scots pine and many small blocks of conifers, often with hard, geometric edges, form a sharp contrast to the natural, patchy mosaic.

#### *Settlement*

The isolated farmsteads, groups of cottages and small clustered settlements are linked by winding, narrow coastal roads, which are often major transport routes. Tracks leading to farms are usually dead ends, petering out on the upper moorland slopes. Small estates such as Ardlamont House and Kilmory Castle are characteristic, introducing a diverse range of plants, including invasive rhododendron species. This Landscape Character Type is a focus for recreation, providing highly scenic views across lochs, coasts and wider seascape. Managed woodland is a common landuse in this area.

Archaeological remains are highly varied and cover a long time-depth. There are prehistoric remains including standing stones, stone circles, burial cairns and stone alignments. Defensive prehistoric sites such as forts and duns are also located in this area. There are remnants of later prehistoric industry in the form of quern quarry and pit remains. The medieval period is evident with castles, some ruinous, being found on the coast. There are numerous chapels and churches across the area, some possibly of early Christian origin. Post-medieval remains of communication and travel are evident through the canal system at Lochgilphead and old military road remains. There is evidence for early industry in the form of gun-powder and iron works, including furnaces and quarries. The planned town of Inveraray is one of the finest examples of 18<sup>th</sup> Century estate town planning in the country.

## 1.3 LCT 59 Raised Beach Coast and Cliffs



### SNH National Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Type 59

### RAISED BEACH COAST AND CLIFFS



#### Location and Context

The *Raised Beach Coast and Cliffs* Landscape Character Type occurs in seven areas in Ayrshire, focused on thin strips of land on the western coastal edge of the mainland, facing towards the Firth of Clyde, and around the north-western and north-eastern coastal edge of the isle of Arran.

#### Key Characteristics

- Raised beach, visible as a level shelf backed by a steep, sometimes craggy escarpment representing the former cliff line, above which lies more gently rising land.
- Rocky coastline, sometimes with cliffs, with narrow sand and shingle beaches, and mud flats in estuarine locations.
- Varied land uses but mainly farmed; the raised beaches also provide a level terrace for settlement and communication.
- Large parts of the former cliff line are also characterised by dense, often wind sheared broadleaf woodland.
- A number of hillforts, promontory forts, mottes and castles reflecting the strategic importance of this coastal landscape.
- Small, historic settlements sit comfortably against the steep former cliff line and use building materials which reflect the local geology.
- Some modern growth has taken the form of ribbon development and includes caravan parks and holiday development; tall structures such as masts are relatively few.
- Landscape of visual drama and contrast with a strong sense of seclusion, and where less accessible a strong sense of remoteness.
- Views tend to be longer distance and focussed seaward.



## Landscape Character Description

### *Landform*

Post-glacial sea-level changes have left a raised beach which comprises an important feature of the Ayrshire coast, both along the mainland and on islands within the Firth of Clyde, particularly Arran. This Landscape Character Type occurs where areas of higher ground reach the coast and where the raised beach is visible as a level shelf backed by a steep, sometimes craggy escarpment, representing the former cliff-line. Thus, although termed 'raised beach', this landscape type comprises the former beach, cliff and areas above. Although raised beaches do occur within the lowland areas, they are less significant as landscape features in their own right.

For the most part, the raised Beach has been carved into comparatively soft red sandstone, creating a level terrace 100 to 300 metres wide a little above high water level, backed by a steep, fairly smooth escarpment. Where harder volcanic rock reaches the coast, however, as at the Heads of Ayr, and south of Girvan, the cliffs remain as rocky crags and the former beach is often much narrower. Above this lies more gently rising land, grading into the moorland higher up.

South of Hunterston, the raised beach widens, forming an area of coastal lowland between the main area of upland to the east and an outlier, Goldenberry Hill (140 metres), to the west. This hill would once have stood as an island and served as a focal point for human activity in the past, evidenced by a number of significant archaeological sites. Complex prehistoric enclosures nearby suggest the land around Goldenberry Hill was of importance from the Neolithic period onwards. At Portencross the raised beach and cliff line are particularly evident. Amongst the most dramatic of former cliffs are the steep hills which rise along the north Ayrshire coast near Largs. This wall of hills forms an escarpment, providing a dramatic setting for Largs and designed landscapes such as Kelburn.

Raised beaches are evident along much of the Arran coastline. They are particularly prominent on the more exposed western coast north of Machrie Moor, and on the eastern coast between Brodick and the Cock of Arran. The raised beaches and old cliff lines are cut into a wide range of different rock types, including new and old red sandstones, schists, and carboniferous rocks. In places, the schists create a complex and folded coastal landscape of crags and cliffs. The steep slopes of the old cliffs either remain as craggy escarpments, or are clothed in rich, but dramatically wind-sheared broadleaf woodland.

### *Landcover*

Raised beach areas vary in land use, but are mainly farmed. While some of the narrowest or more exposed sections are not viable, elsewhere the raised beach provides some of the most productive agricultural land in Ayrshire, supporting, for example, potato cultivation. In the north, the steep escarpment slope is invariably clothed in rich, broadleaf woodland (dominated by beech) with dramatically wind sheared canopies. In the south, the coast is more exposed and the cliff line is either unvegetated or colonised by rough grassland or gorse.

The broader sections of raised beach, for example between Largs and Ardrossan, provide some of the most productive agricultural land in Ayrshire. In some of the narrower sections,

particularly where land has become fragmented or developed, the raised beach is less intensively used, and other activities such as nurseries have developed.

Large parts of the former cliff line are characterised by dense, often wind-sheared broadleaf woodland. While much of this is semi-natural in origin, some is associated with designed landscapes and large estates. In some of the more exposed sections of raised beach (e.g. north of Girvan) these woodlands give way to areas of scrub, often dominated by gorse.

#### *Settlement*

The raised beaches probably provided fertile areas for the earliest forms of settlement in the area, as evidenced by occasional archaeological finds. The defensive nature of this coastal landscape and the importance of the raised beaches in providing a corridor for communications are reflected in the presence of a number of hillforts and castles. Examples of the former include Castle Hill immediately east of Largs, the fort and dun on Auld Hill above Portencross, and An Cnap, Arran. Castles include the Old Castle at Knock (17<sup>th</sup> Century), Dunure Castle (15<sup>th</sup> Century) and Carlton Castle, Lendalfoot (15<sup>th</sup> Century). Hunterston House (20<sup>th</sup> Century), situated within a designed landscape, replaced Hunterston Castle, a 16<sup>th</sup> Century tower house. Portencross Castle (14<sup>th</sup> Century) likely supplanted an earlier motte and bailey located on the adjacent Auld Hill, which was itself constructed on the site of an Iron Age hill fort. A number of Castles in the south of the region (Greenan, Dunure and Culzean) are indicative of medieval control of Carrick by the Kennedy family. Turnberry Castle may have been the birthplace of Robert 1 (the Bruce). Several of these historic sites formed the centre of later designed landscapes (e.g. Knock Castle), adding richness to the wooded landscape. Other examples include Skelmorie Castle and Kelburn Castle.

In subsequent centuries, historic settlements such as Largs have expanded beyond their original sites and have spread along the narrow sections of raised beach. While small, historic settlements (such as Portencross) sit comfortably against the steep former cliff line, some the 20<sup>th</sup> Century growth has taken the form of ribbon development along the coastal road. South of Ayr lie a number of caravan and holiday parks, some comprising a form of farm diversification, while at Lendalfoot a string of holiday cabins has developed at the foot of the former cliff line. The southern sections of raised beach are relatively remote and development pressures appear to be less. Most settlements here are small and functional. One exception is Carleton near Lendalfoot where a string of wooden houses creates an informal settlement on the site of a former fishery. On Arran, the raised beach areas are characterised by narrow, linear villages such as Corrie and Pirmill, and larger bay settlements such as Lochranza.

Historically, building materials reflected the local geology. At Largs, for example, red sandstone is a common stone, reflected both in tenement buildings and in grander structures such as churches. On the volcanic coast south of Ayr, buildings are built of grey stone or are rendered and limewashed. On Arran, building materials closely reflect variations in local geology, and again many are limewashed. Modern development uses a wide range of materials and styles, few of which have local origins.

Despite the elevated nature of the raised cliff-line, tall structures such as masts are relatively

few. The principal exception is at Hunterston where structures associated with the coal terminal, and the pylons serving the power station, can be prominent features. Extensive screen bunding means that the local influence of the coal terminal is very limited.

The A77 between Girvan and Ballantrae runs along the narrow raised beach at the foot of the hard volcanic cliffs. Over a period of years the once winding coastal road has been straightened and upgraded. This has involved the creation of new rock cuttings and the loss of small headlands and other important local features. Old sections of road remain as laybys and picnic areas. The Ayrshire Coastal Path extends along much of this coast.

#### *Perception*

This is a narrow landscape where the cliffs and headlands can appear higher than they are. This emphasised vertical scale creates a sense of visual drama. Well settled sections of the coast contrast with secluded and dramatic sections of headlands and cliffs. The rocky, rugged coastline and semi-natural vegetation reinforce the sense of naturalness. This is a highly visible landscape around the coastal edge, with the coastal headlands (eg. the Heads of Ayr) forming highly visible prominent landmark features in views along the coast and from the sea. The abrupt upper edge of the raised beach creates a very prominent skyline when viewed from much of the coastal road. Views tend to be long distance and focused out to sea and the landmark islands of Arran and Ailsa Craig often form the focus of the view. From Arran, views back towards the mainland, islands and peninsulas around the Firth of Clyde form the focus of views.



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The area covered by this Landscape Character Type was originally included in the Ayrshire (Land Use Consultants), published 1998.

## 1.4 LCT 62 Coastal Headlands



### SNH National Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Type 62

COASTAL HEADLANDS



#### Location and Context

The *Coastal Headlands* Landscape Character Type occurs in two areas in Ayrshire, and can be found along the mainland coast to the south of Ayr, overlooking the Firth of Clyde and Ayr, and on the north-eastern part of Arran.

#### Key Characteristics

- Distinctive headland, consisting of hills with bluffly almost craggy summits, flanked seawards by raised beaches.
- Varied geology formed by igneous rocks and a combination of sandstones, carboniferous rocks and lavas.
- Sheltered slopes consist of pastures enclosed by hedgerows, with rough grazing on exposed slopes and gorse and outgrown field boundary trees on summits.
- Semi-natural woodland is found on some of the more sheltered slopes with some areas of coniferous woodland also present.
- Settlement quite sparse and limited to small settlements, single houses and farmsteads on lower slopes.
- Sites for communications infrastructure, including a number of masts.
- Exposed, open and highly visible landscape, with panoramic views over the coastal edge and Firth of Clyde.

#### Landscape Character Description

##### *Landform*

To the south of Ayr lies a distinctive area of high ground (the Carrick Hills) forming a headland at the southern end of the Ayrshire bay. The prominent landmark hills often have bluffly, almost craggy summits, flanked to their seaward side by raised beaches comprising old cliff lines and level coastal terraces. The underlying geology is formed by igneous rocks. The landform is rugged and complex, with varied interlocking terrain, shallow valleys and steep slopes.

On the north eastern flank of Arran stands a distinctive headland, distinguished from the rest of the upland by its differing geology and by 'The Boguille' pass which divides it from the northern slopes of the Goat Fell group. The headland comprises a combination of sandstones, carboniferous rocks and lavas. The headland is elongated, running from north-west to south-east with a very steep northern face and shallower south facing slopes.

#### *Landcover*

The coastal headlands tend to have a pattern of agriculture which reflects the combined influence of exposure, gradient and soil quality. The landcover pattern is small scale and diverse. On the lower, more sheltered slopes, enclosed pastures prevail, though this quickly gives way to rough grazing on more exposed, higher slopes, with some wet moor and conifer woodland. Summits are characterised by gorse and lines of outgrown field boundary trees. Semi-natural woodland is found on some of the more sheltered slopes. In places, the contraction of farming is evident in the abandonment of higher enclosures and the presence of outgrown beech hedges.

A number of small to medium sized coniferous forests are found on the coastal headlands. These are sometimes geometric in appearance, though replanting in accordance with design guidance should lead to their improvement in due course. There is some semi-natural woodland on lower slopes, as well as riparian woodland. To the east of the Carrick Hills policy woodland is present, associated with larger houses overlooking the Doon Valley. On Arran, and although the south-eastern most part has been forested, much remains under heather or rough grassland.

#### *Settlement*

Settlement is generally quite sparse and limited to small settlements, farmsteads and single houses on lower slopes, connected by a network of narrow roads. The settlement of Lochranza is sited around a sheltered natural harbour at the western end of the Cock of Arran. This dispersed village includes a 13<sup>th</sup> Century hall house, a scatter of traditional cottages and the more recent distillery development. The headlands also provide sites for communications infrastructure, most notable on the Carrick Hills which include a number of masts which are highly visible from this prominent location.

#### *Perception*

This is an exposed, open and widely visible landscape. The hills are often perceived as being higher than they actually are, and have a sense of seclusion in more rugged and semi-natural upland areas. They provide easily recognised, prominent landmark hill summits in South Ayrshire, contributing to the setting of adjacent character types. They create the immediate backdrop to a number of smaller scale and lower lying Landscape Character Types. The headlands provide the backdrop to Ayr and contribute to the setting of Culzean Castle.

Panoramic views over the coastal edge and Firth of Clyde are available from the headlands themselves. Views of the headlands can be gained from the A77, A84, Arran, the Ayrshire Coastal Path and a number of nearby settlements including Ayr and Maybole.

## 1.5 LCT 83 Rugged Upland- Ayrshire



### SNH National Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Type 83

**RUGGED UPLAND - AYRSHIRE**



#### Location and Context

The *Rugged Upland - Ayrshire* Landscape Character Type occurs in two parts of Ayrshire. The first is the southern part of the area, where the Merrick range of mountains crosses into Ayrshire near Loch Doon, from Dumfries and Galloway. The second is the northern part of Arran, where a vast granite intrusion has created one of the most dramatic mountain landscapes in the country.

#### Key Characteristics

- Large, elevated and complex mountain ranges formed by granite intrusions which have been significantly modified by glacial erosion.
- Dramatic, craggy, mountainous scenery.
- Land cover dominated by heather moorland, rough grassland and areas of exposed rock outcrops.
- Woodland absent with the exception of areas of coniferous forest which have altered the character of some of the lower slopes.
- Scarce signs of human influence, limited to tracks and walkers' footpaths with roads running around the fringes.
- Grand, large scale, remote landscape with wild character, from the summits there are dramatic and extensive views in all directions.
- The mountains of North Arran are amongst the most spectacular in Scotland, providing a remarkable skyline from the surrounding area.

#### Landscape Character Description

##### *Landform*

Towering above even the nearby areas of *Southern Uplands - Ayrshire* Landscape Character Type, the *Rugged Upland - Ayrshire* comprise the most 'highland' of landscapes on the Ayrshire mainland. Comprising part of the Merrick mountain range extending into Ayrshire from Dumfries and Galloway, the mountains have been formed by a massive, hour glass shaped granite intrusion through the surrounding sedimentary greywackes and

agglomerates. The heart of the intrusion comprises the distinctive white granite that is evident in the outcrops on Mullwharchar and Macaterick. This resistant core is surrounded by the softer tonalite granite which has been eroded to form a lower corridor occupied by a series of lochs. This, in turn, is enclosed within a ring of hills (including Shalloch on Minnoch, Craiglee and Wee Hill of Craigmulloch) formed of metamorphosed sedimentary rocks. The hills have been modified by the glacial erosion which carved out the less resistant granite and formed the corries and glens that characterise the western face of the Merrick range.

The mountains of North Arran represent the remains of a major granite intrusion. The force of the rock movement was such as to deform the Highland Boundary fault, which runs around the edge of the granite, and to influence deposits of other rocks all around. The hills can be sub-divided into two groups. The first comprises the dramatic eastern peaks, including Goat Fell, Caisteal Abhail and Beinn Tarsuinn which are linked by a heavily serrated and knife edge ridge. The second comprises the more rounded western summits of Beinn Bharrain, Mullach Buidhe, Beinn Bhreac and Beinn Tarsuinn. The entire mountain range has been significantly modified by glacial erosion, both as a consequence of inundation by the main Highland ice sheets and the accumulation of local ice deposits. The result is a highly dissected landform, with the high peaks separated by plunging U-shaped valleys such as Glen Iorsa, Glen Sannox and Glen Rosa. The depth of these valleys, and the proximity of the hills to the coast creates a drama which, in Scotland at least, can only be experienced on other islands such as Skye and Mull.

#### *Landcover*

The land cover of the northern mountains of the Merrick range is dominated by heather moorland and rough grassland, scattered with many small lochans and areas of exposed rock outcrops. There is little or no native woodland, though evidence from peat bogs suggests that many of the lower hill slopes would have been clothed in oak, birch or pine woodland in early post-glacial times. Climatic changes, allied to grazing pressures have resulted in the loss of this woodland over subsequent millennia. Today, it is coniferous forest which cover many of the lower slopes (e.g. south of Loch Doon), though the higher summits and ridges are free of woodland. In these forests Sitka dominates with some areas of larch planting. Large parts of this landscape are located in Forest Parks.

Land cover in the mountains of north Arran is dominated by sparse moorland vegetation and extensive areas of bare rock. Woodland is absent with the exception of the coniferous forest on the lower slopes along the coastal fringes (e.g. above Corrie and north of Brodick) and an extensive area of coniferous forest above North Glen Sannox.

#### *Settlement*

The northern mountains of the Merrick range comprise one of the most remote and unsettled parts of Ayrshire. Roads run around the fringes of the area, for example along the western shores of Loch Doon, but do not penetrate the core of the uplands. Settlement is sparse, however man's influence is evident through commercial forestry and its associated operations. These areas can also be popular for walking and cycling.

Similarly in the north Arran mountains signs of human settlement are scarce, but nonetheless evident, for instance, from the presence of prehistoric hut circles, especially to

the south west, and from areas of peat cutting. However, these are only found on lower slopes. Tracks and walkers' footpaths indicate the limited extent of human contact with the landscape today. A complex of small bings and shafts in the lower part of Glen Sannox points to the historic importance of mineral working in the northern part of the area.

#### *Perception*

Both areas are large scale, remote landscape with wild character. From the summits in the mountains west of Loch Doon, which rise above the surrounding forests, there are dramatic and extensive views in all directions.

An essential characteristic of this landscape is the view of granite outcrops and of un-forested peaks which are made distinctive by the contrasting colours of grey granite against dark heather/ woodland and ochre grassland.

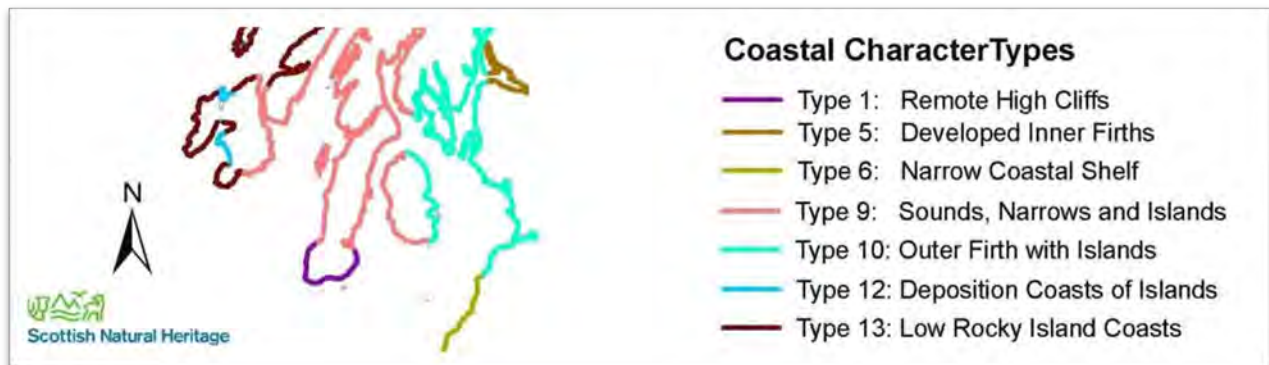
The north Arran Mountains are among the most spectacular mountains in Scotland, providing a remarkable skyline when viewed from the mainland, from Kintyre, or from vessels travelling through the Firth of Clyde. They are widely appreciated and visited, partly reflecting their proximity to centres of population on the mainland. They are popular for walking and cycling, and provide respite from nearby more developed landscapes.

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## 1.6 SNH Coastal Character Types (2012)



### Type 9 : Sounds, narrow and islands

#### Location

- Applecross peninsula to Mid Kintyre, and encompassing the eastern seaboard of Islay, Jura, Mull, Small Isles and Skye
- Loch Fyne, Argyll
- Sound of Harris – Harris/North Uist; Sound of Barra – Eriskay/Barra; Loch Seaforth, Lewis

#### Physical characteristics

A deeply indented and fragmented coastline, with islands and mainland enclosing narrows and sounds to form a strong articulated coast. The coastline is generally low and rocky and is often an 'incidental' feature, the focus being the narrow elongated stretches of open water which act as a visual foil to the often diverse landform of mountains and craggy islands.

Sandy beaches occur occasionally at inlets, with a notable, more extensive series lying between Arisaig and Morar. The coast is strongly fragmented in places,

Description of coastal character types from *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 103*  
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breaking up to form a myriad of small islands such as the Slate Islands of the Argyll coast. Settlement occurs along the narrow coastal edge of sheltered sea lochs. This type is backed occasionally by crofting land but mainly comprises moorland hills. Forestry occurs in places against the coast with ancient woodlands found in more inaccessible narrows and fjords. High mountain massif occurs close to the coast and dramatically features in views.

Views of islands tend to be the focus from the Mainland and vice versa, with mountain ridges e.g. Cuillin on Skye/Paps of Jura/Rum and Harris being particularly arresting. The profiles of sea, islands and mountain ranges build up different contrasting layers to create an overall high scenic quality. The open sea is not generally obvious because views are characteristically very contained in narrows and sounds, which are broken by islands. A broader bay containing the Small Isles between Mallaig and North Ardnamurchan allows more open views in contrast. Fish farming occurs in sheltered bays and the Sounds are important ferry routes between islands and the Mainland.

#### **Experiential qualities**

This type forms a highly scenic seascape due to the variety of landforms seen in views against the sea. Key ferry routes cross the sands and give changing views of islands, mainland and sea. Sandy beaches although rare, are magnets for recreation, and climbing and walking are all popular pursuits within this type due to the presence of mountains close to the shore. The sheltered waters of the sounds also attract sailors and scenic coastal road and rail routes, e.g. Fort William to Mallaig.

This type is not exposed to the open Atlantic being relatively calm and sheltered due to its inherent enclosure, however, views of mountains can often give it a dramatic character and it can feel remote in some of the more inaccessible narrows, e.g. parts of Knoydart, Morvern and Loch Nevis.

Between Eriskay/Barra, Barra/Mingulay and Harris/North Uist in the Western Isles, there is a diverse seascape of sea, islands, islets, skerries, sunken reefs and mountainous backdrops. The over-riding, distinct perception is of being on an island with glimpses of open sea, with occasional rougher sea being indicators of this. This perception is usually experienced from a ferry with the 'end' destination being the focus of views.