



Appendix VI

Landscape Character and Visual Assessment

South Knapdale Long Term Plan area

The South Knapdale LTP consists of three forests; Coulaghailtro, Torinturk and Meall Mhor. Coulaghailtro and Torinturk are closely located and separated by a 1–2km strip of intervening commercial forestry at the narrowest point. Coulaghailtro is located inland from Kilberry Head and Torinturk lies on the northwestern coastline of West Loch Tarbert and extends approximately 4.5km inland. Whilst, Meall Mhor is located approximately 6-7 km to the northeast, in the upland landscape overlooking the western shore of Loch Fyne.

NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment

The South Knapdale LTP is located within two Landscape Character Types (LCT); Plateau Moor and Forest and Rocky Coastland; and are shown on the Landscape Character and Viewpoint maps (Maps 15a & b) and described below.

Plateau Moor and Forest LCT 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.

Rocky Coastland LCT 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.

Coulaghaitro Forest:

The majority of Coulaghaitro forest is located in a Landscape Character Type (LCT) described in the NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment: Plateau Moor and Forest (Key characteristics are described above. Refer to Map 15a Landscape Character and Viewpoint Map: Coulaghaitro & Torinturk). The southern fringe of this forest lies within the Rocky Coastland LCT.

Visually, the majority of the forest is hidden and absorbed within a wider large scale mosaic of forestry and moorland characterised by the simple landcover and elevated landform of variable slope profile. Here, visibility of the forest mainly occurs along the southern (Viewpoint 1), southwest and northwest (Viewpoint 2) edges where they lie within close proximity to settlement and associated road infrastructure. At these locations, visibility only extends into the forest edge with occasional long distance glimpses of summits and ridges.

Torinturk Forest:

Located on the northwestern coastline of West Loch Tarbert, the southeastern edge lies within the Rocky Coastline LCT. This strip of landscape comprises of low undulating landform, the settlement of Torinturk and individual properties clustered along the B8024 public road. Beyond the Rocky Coastline, the majority of the forest lies within the vast Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. Refer to Map 15a Landscape Character and Viewpoints: Coulaghaitro & Torinturk.

Similar to Coulaghaitro, the visibility of Torinturk Forest is limited to the southeastern fringe where it is close to settlement and road infrastructure including Torinturk Village (Viewpoint 3). At further distances, where the forest is seen in the wider landscape context as shown by Viewpoints 4 and 5, the full extent of the forest is foreshortened and the boundaries merge with other adjacent forests.

Meall Mhor Forest:

Meall Mhor forest is contained within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. At this location the forest typically lies above the 80m contour and only drops to sea level along a short 1km section in the northeast corner of the forest block. See Map 15b Landscape Character Meall Mhor.

Views into this forest are very limited due to the steeply rising topography on the landward side of the A83 combined with intervening forest and woodlands cover. Close range views are only obtainable along the A83 where a small section of the forest extends to the coast in the vicinity of Artiligan Cottage in the northeast. However, given the extent of roadside vegetation there would be very little visibility from this section of the A83. It may be feasible to view the forest from the western shores of Loch Fyne, however it is assessed that visibility would be limited due to foreshortening in the long distance view and by the proximity of intervening roadside vegetation. Overall, there are very few external views of this forest and as such external viewpoints of this forest have not been included in this LTP.

Visibility

The areas of forestry with the most visibility within the LTP are shown on the Landscape Character and Viewpoint Maps 15a & b. They include:

Coulaghaitro:

- Forest edge adjacent to Crear (Viewpoint 2) where elevated views over the forest edge can be obtained.
- Southwest and southern forest edge where the B8024 runs parallel to the forest near Keppoch and the forest edge is sky-lined in views to the south
- Views from the B8024 when traveling north in the vicinity of Lergnahension. From this location the forest forms a backdrop to the Kilberry Parish Church.

Torinturk:

- The area around the village of Torinturk is of high sensitivity due to the close proximity of residential properties to the forest and the surrounding nature.
- The forest edge on the coastline of West Loch Tarbert is clearly visible from the Kennacraig Ferry Port.

Meall Mhor:

- It is assessed that there is very limited visibility from external views into Meall Mhor. Roadside views of the forest edge are obtained in the northeast corner of the forest over a 1km stretch of the A83 however given the dense screening by deciduous roadside tree

cover views of the forested hillside are unlikely. It is also recognised that there are no proposed changes in this area.

Felling operations within areas of Visibility

Coulaghaitro:

- The most noticeable changes are likely to occur from views along the B8024 and nearby properties to the south of Coulaghaitro where removal of phase 2 and 3 coupes from the southern forest edge and from the backdrop of Kilberry Church is likely to make a significant short term impact.
- Elsewhere, there are no proposed changes in areas of visibility until phase 4 and 5 felling, in approximately 15 – 20 years time.

Although a phase 3 coupe is proposed within 450m of the B8024, views are likely to be densely screened by the intervening forest edge. Likewise, the nearest phase 1 and phase 2 coupes are over 2km from Crear (Viewpoint 2) however, given the distance, screening by topography and intervening forest cover, they would be barely perceptible in easterly views.

Torinturk:

- The most noticeable proposed change during the first 10 years of the LTP would be in the vicinity of the settlement of Torinturk and the B9024 corridor. On the hillside to the north of the village, it is proposed to fell coupes 28056 and 26058 with coupes 26059 and 26037, to the east and south respectively, following in Phase 2. Although, the felling could raise a significant effect in the short term it is assessed that the scale of change would be screened by the retention of native broadleaves around the periphery of Torinturk and the road corridor. On removal of the brash and once the site has 'greened' the visual impact of the felling operations would significantly decrease. Furthermore, with exception of a coupe 28058, the commercial forest would be replaced with native broadleaf woodland which would be managed as long term woodland with minimal intervention.
- Further inland and across the wider forest it is proposed to fell a further 6 coupes during phases 1 and 2. However, these are located more distantly from local residents and visitors, being mainly visible in long distant views from south of West Loch Tarbert such as Spion Kop (Viewpoint 5). Given the scale and the foreshortening of the felling coupes in views it is assessed that they would fit the character and scale of the wider landscape and therefore create a very minor impact on both the landscape and views.

Meall Mhor:

- There are 7 phase 1 and 2 proposed clear fell coupes in Meall Mhor. Their scale and location are appropriate for the landscape character and would not be visible from most populated areas and transport corridors. Overall, the impact would be negligible on the wider landscape and external views.
- In the northeast, it is proposed that minimum intervention management of the native broadleaf woodland would continue. It is likely to result in an area of no change in the vicinity of the A83 corridor.

Mitigation

Coulaghaitro:

The proposed Future Species & Habitats Map (Map 6a) illustrates the integration of the forest into the surrounding landscape where it is proposed to establish native broadleaf woodland along the southeastern and along the northwest fringes of the block with riparian woodland extending through the interior of the forest. This would provide a sympathetic backdrop to the setting of Kilberry Parish church (Viewpoint 1), Kilberry village and Crear (Viewpoint 2).

Torinturk:

As shown in the Future Species & Habitats Map (Map 6b), it is proposed to establish an extensive area of native broadleaf woodland to the south and east of the village of Torinturk combined with a network riparian planting extending into the wider forest. This would integrate the forest with the areas of existing adjacent temperate Atlantic rainforest along the north coast of West Loch Tarbert and improve the landscape continuity in views from the south (Viewpoints 4 and 5). In the vicinity of Torinturk (Viewpoint 3), the new native broadleaf would provide a long term setting and backdrop to the village.

Meall Mhor:

As shown in the Future Species & Habitats Map (Map 6c), it is proposed that the existing broadleaf woodland cover will be maintained and extended along the east facing slopes overlooking Loch Fyne. This would be in keeping with the landscape character of the lochside. In addition, proposed riparian woodland would serve to provide an ecological and landscape link from coastline to the upper moorlands and enhance the legibility of the natural landform of the area.

Conclusion

Overall, the proposals for the South Knapdale LTP area respond favourably to the wider landscape and NatureScot LCT description for Plateaux Moor and Forest and Rocky Coastland.