



THE OCHIL HILLS

THE GEOGRAPHY OF A SPECIAL PLACE

DREW JAMIESON

Prepared with the support of the Friends of the Ochils

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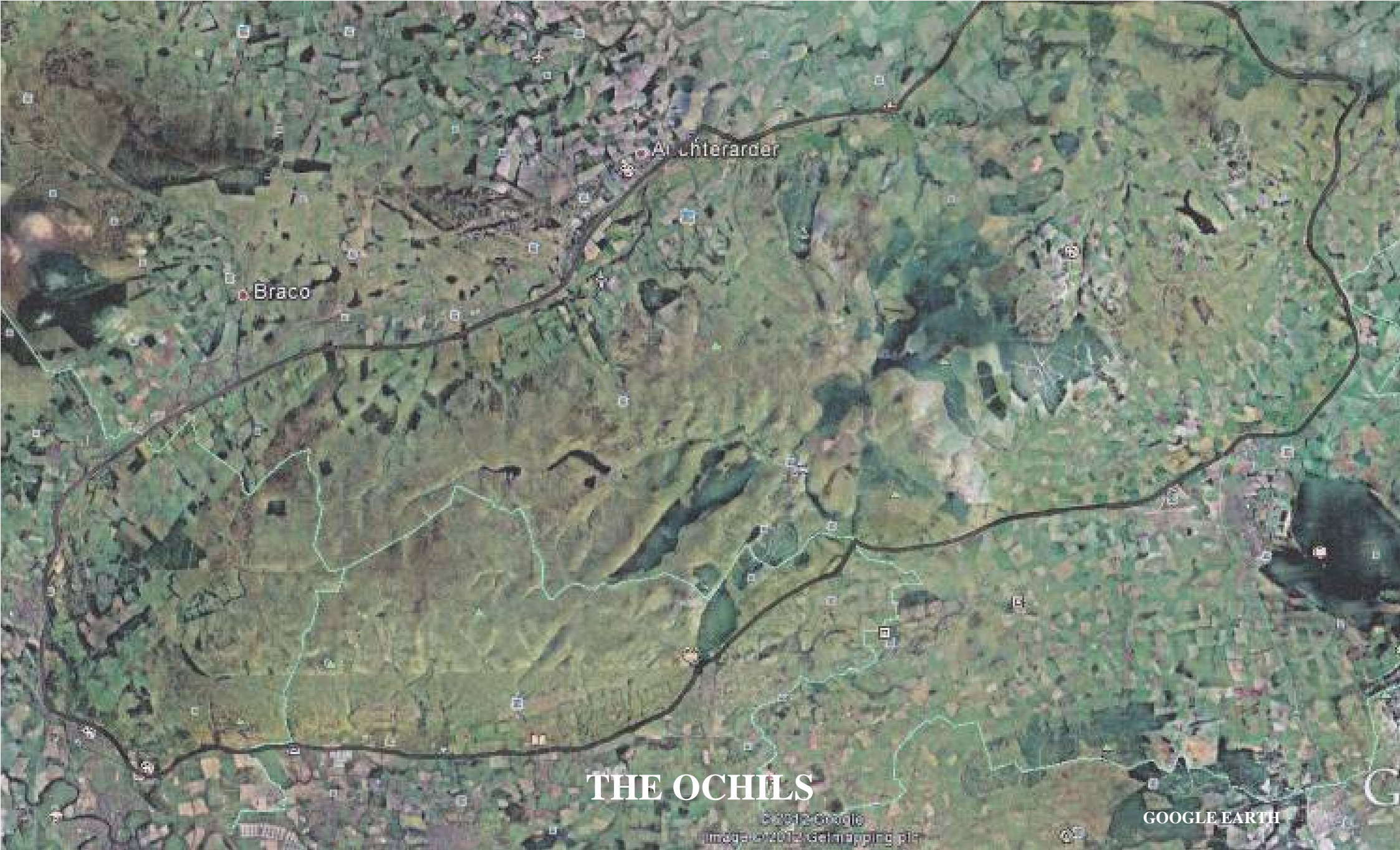
*AN ANALYSIS OF THE PHYSICAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS
WHICH MAKE THE OCHIL HILLS -*

“A SPECIAL PLACE”

Drew Jamieson

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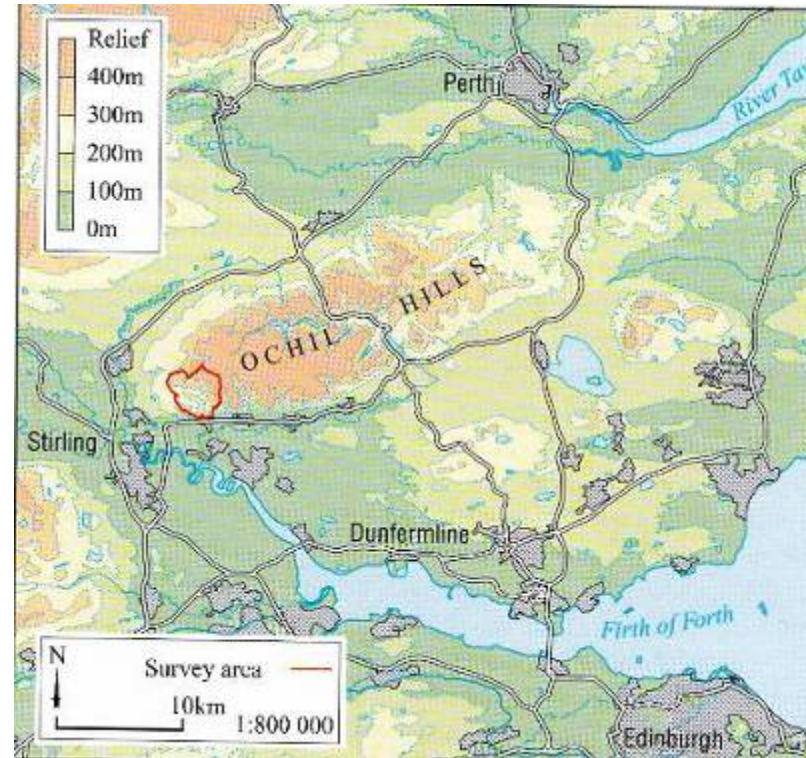
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THE OCHILS

GOOGLE EARTH

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MAP 1: LOCATION OF THE OCHIL HILLS IN RELATION TO CENTRES OF POPULATION IN CENTRAL SCOTLAND

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A discrete upland area highly visible from a large part of Central Scotland and clearly contrasting with the surroundings lowlands of Strathearn, Strathallan, the carselands of Stirling and Clackmannanshire and the basin of Kinross.
- A distinctive landscape of high relative relief, rising from almost sea level in Clackmannanshire to the highest summit in Central Scotland – Ben Cleuch (721m) - over a short distance.
- Diverse land-use and habitats – farming, forestry, water supply, recreation, renewable energy - closely associated with key Scottish historical, cultural and industrial events.
- A landscape characterised by high open plateaux and the juxtaposition of hill, glen, field and forest, farm and village and with a distinctive “sense of place” recognised by local communities – *The Ochils*.
- Popular recreation area providing healthy open air activity for a large part of Central Scotland but coming under increasing pressure from recreation and development. Half of Scotland’s population live within an hour’s drive of the Ochils.
- Provides opportunities for landscape improvement, recreation management, community involvement, job creation and integrated planning.

”AMANG THE OCHILS”

The Ochil Hills are a familiar sight across much of Central Scotland. They give the backdrop to those great national landmarks, the Wallace Monument and Stirling Castle. They are the hills that greet the visitor travelling north, by train or car, towards Stirling – the first real hills – a preview of Scotland’s northern mountains.



The Ochils massif rises dramatically from the flat farmlands of the carse and their southern face provides a

steep, sometimes craggy, backdrop to the conservation villages of Blairlogie and Muckhart and the Hillfoots towns of Menstrie, Alva, Tillicoultry and Dollar. Northwards from these Hillfoots towns run a series of deeply-incised glens, each with its very special attractions, and its own character.



While the western Ochil Hills are the most spectacular, the full range of hills recognized by local communities as “the Ochils”, extends north and east, across the deep Glen Devon, and on towards the rivers Earn and Tay.

The eastern Ochils are lower in altitude, with broader valleys, but providing a characteristic juxtaposition of hill, valley, farm and forest within a well-defined upland area towards Glen Farg

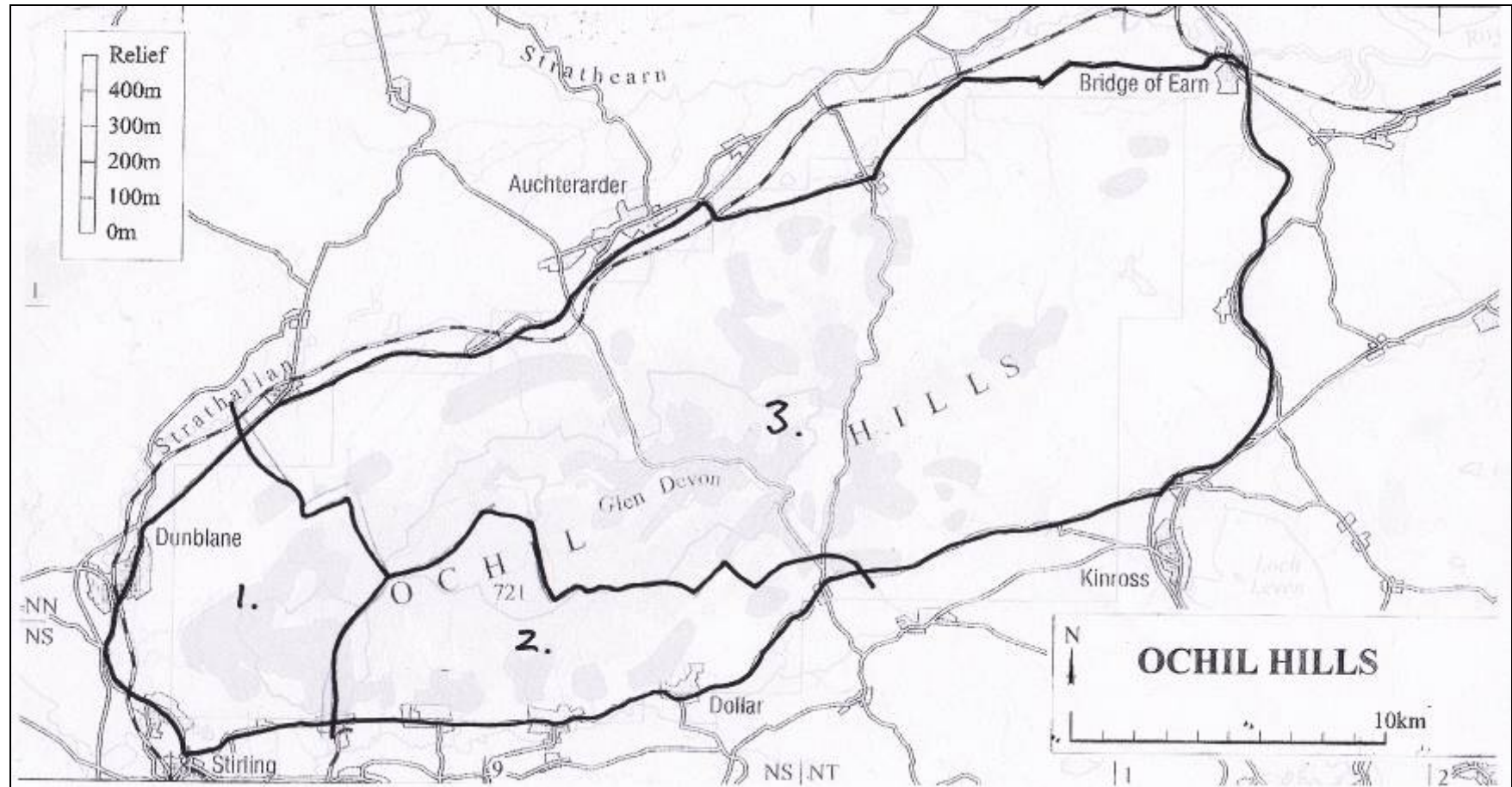


Although the geological structure of Old Red Sandstone lavas, continues into north-east Fife, the hills lose much of their presence and cohesion in this area. A reasonable boundary for the Ochil Hills is shown in Map 2, bounded

by roads, and stretching from Dunblane in the west to Glen Farg in the east. The Ochils lie within the boundaries of three local authorities – Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Perth and Kinross - with separate responsibilities for planning, recreation and other services within the Ochil Hills. Seventeen Community Councils have a statutory interest in the Ochils.

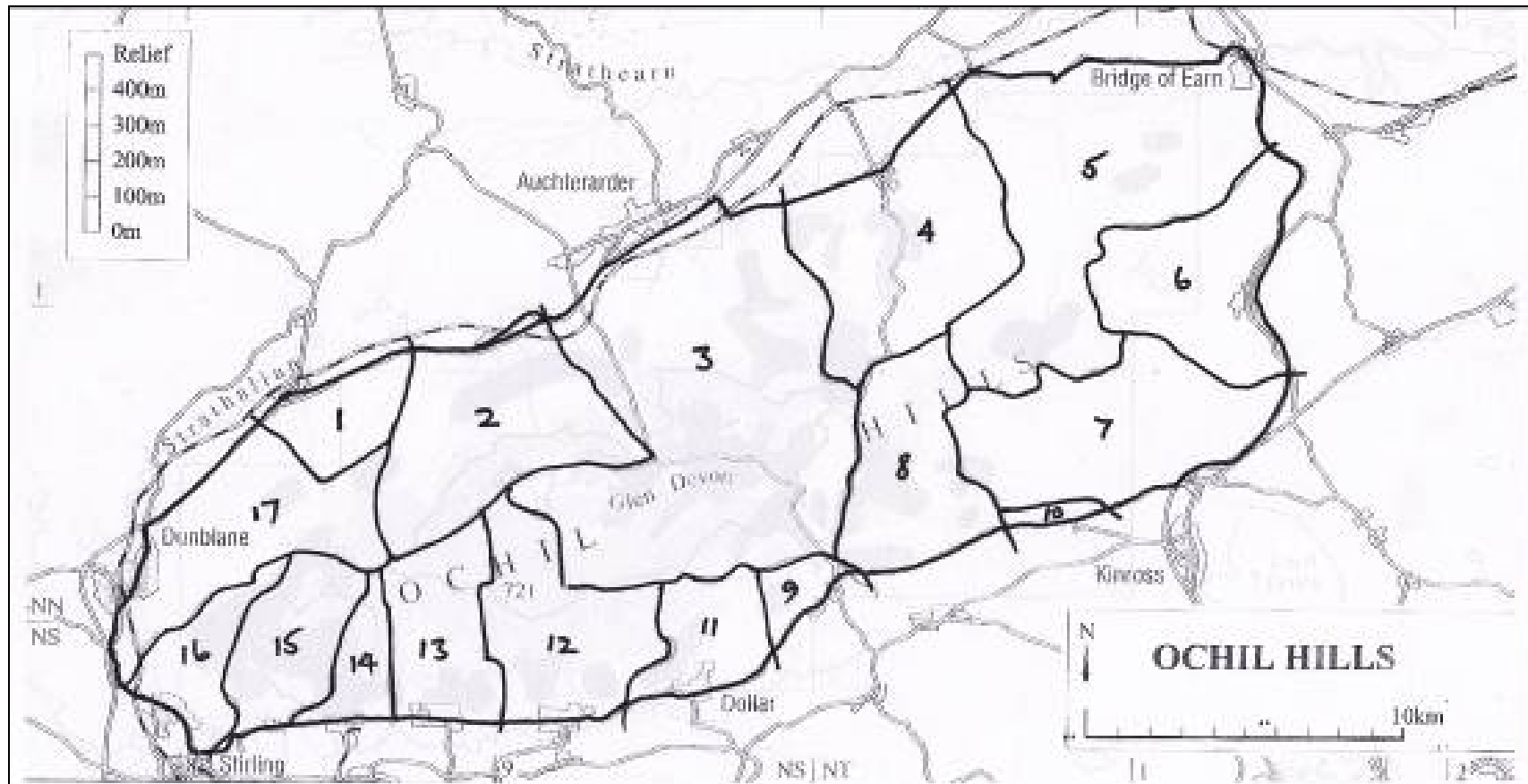


Glenquey Moss, Glendevon



MAP 2; NOTIONAL BOUNDARY AND CONSTITUENT LOCAL AUTHORITIES:-

1. Stirling Council. 2. Clackmannanshire Council. 3. Perth and Kinross Council



COMMUNITY COUNCILS WITH AN INTEREST IN THE OCHILS

- 1. Braco and Greenloaning. 2. Blackford. 3. Auchterarder and District. 4. Dunning. 5. Earn. 6. Glenfarg. 7. Milnathort. 8. Fossoway. 9. Muckhart. 10. Kinross. 11. Dollar. 12. Tillicoultry, Coalsnaughton and Devonside. 13. Alva. 14. Menstrie. 15. Logie. 16. Bridge of Allan. 17. Dunblane.*

NATURAL HERITAGE

The Underlying Rocks

The Ochil Hills are formed from volcanic rocks of the Old Red Sandstone age – the Ochil Volcanic Formation – which erupted some 400 million years ago, from an ancient volcano, or volcanoes, probably located to the south of the present hills and now buried under the younger rocks of the Midland Valley. The main lava flows are of basalt and andesite with inter-bedded pyroclastic conglomerates of rocks and ash. The total thickness of the combined sequence is estimated at 2500 metres and the layers of rock slope, or dip, towards the north and east. The dramatic southern escarpment of the Ochils marks the line of the Ochil Fault, where the southern part of the earth's crust dropped some 1100 metres, protecting the Coal Measures from erosion and safeguarding the Clackmannanshire coalfield.

The Shape of the Land

Since their initial formation the Ochil rocks have been subjected to multiple processes, at different times, of

erosion, uplift, faulting, submergence, deposition and glaciation. Each of those processes has had some effect on the present shape of the land.

The Physical Landscape

Map 4 shows a simplified version of a complex physical landscape of the Ochils. Carved by water and ice out of Old Red Sandstone volcanic lavas, tuffs and agglomerates, the Ochils form a shallow asymmetric dome with their highest point in Ben Cleuch (721 m) – the highest summit in Central Scotland. The plateau falls away to the west and particularly to the north and east to modest altitudes of less than 300 metres on the Perth and Kinross side of the range. The plateau is deeply incised by streams (burns) particularly on the southern slopes. These glens form dramatic features on the face of the Ochils and provide recreational access from the Hillfoots towns and villages.

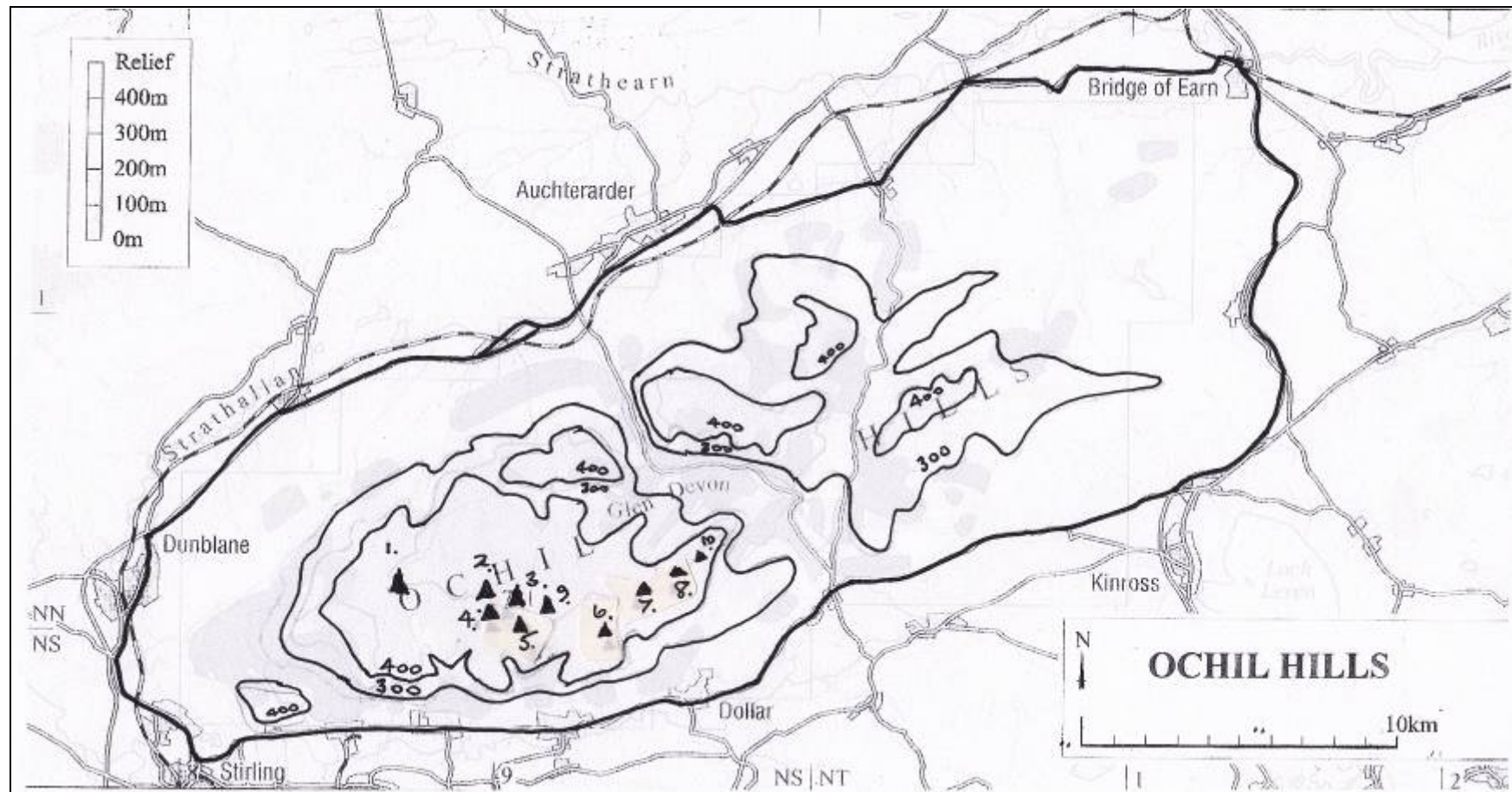
There are 60 hills in the Ochils over 300 metres high (984 feet) with a drop all round of at least 30 metres. The hills can be divided into three groups: *Western Ochils* - west of the A832 through Glen Eagles and Glen Devon (containing the highest summits), *Eastern Ochils* - east of the B934 from Dunning to Yetts o'Muckhart, and the

Northern Ochils - wedged centrally between these two roads. Map 3 shows the main summits in excess of 600 metres. Most of the water features are man-made reservoirs but the open water adds considerably to the interest and diversity of the landscape, particularly in the Glen Devon area.



Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

Craig Rossie from Blackford



MAP 4; SIMPLIFIED RELIEF – CONTOURS AT 300 AND 400 METRES

Summits over 600 metres: 1. Blairdenon. 2. Ben Buck. 3. Ben Cleuch (721m). 4. Ben Ever. 5. The Law. 6. Kings Seat. 7. White Wisp. 8. Tarmangie. 9. Andrew Gannel Hill. 10. Innerdownie.

Biodiversity

As a result of generations of man-made modification, most of the original habitats of the Ochil Hills have been degraded through woodland clearance and grazing. Many of the species have been reduced or eliminated. Nevertheless, the Ochils still retain some key species and habitats and have the potential for considerable enhancement.

There are nine Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the study area:

1. Kippenrait Glen,
2. Pitkeathly Mires
3. Craigleith and Myreton,
4. Mill Glen, Tillicoultry,
5. Dollar Glen
6. Glenqueich
7. Craig Rossie
8. Kincardine Castle Wood
9. Quoig's Meadow

Two of the sites – Kippenrait Glen and Pitkeathly Mires – are also designated as Special Areas of Conservation

(SAC) under the European Union Species and Habitats Directive. These are shown on Map 5.

Both the Tayside Partnership Biodiversity Action Plan and the Clackmannanshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) also recognise a number of key habitats and species to be found across the wider area of the Ochil Hills. Under the heading of “Farming”, Tayside Partnership have action plans for wet grasslands, hedgerows and treelines, stone dykes and farm steadings –all relevant to the Ochils. Other habitats with relevance to the Ochils are “Uplands” and “Water”. The Clackmannanshire BAP describes the main habitats of this part of the Ochils as: *“acid grassland, upland heathland, blanket bog, some exposed rock and small patches of calcareous grassland. Of particular interest is the 10km of exposed linear rock along the south of the Ochils, which supports a variety of rare plants and animalsand the glens which provide sheltered areas that are quite inaccessible and are therefore at less risk of disturbance, enabling a variety of species to thrive.”*

Blanket Bog is a UK Priority Habitat and there are two main areas in the Ochils at Alva Moss (300 hectares) and Menstrie Moss (5 hectares), with a smaller area at Maddy

Moss, near Dollar. One of the few active blanket bogs is found in Glenquey with significant geodiversity interest. An *Acid Grassland* is the predominant habitat in the uplands and this can include other UK Priority sites - *Upland Heathland* and *Upland Flushes, Fens and Swamps*. The Ochils also provide habitat for a number of bird species in the Red List of the “*Birds of Conservation Concern*” including the black grouse, ring ouzel, skylark, linnet and twite.

Both Tayside and Clackmannanshire BAPs identify “water”, in the shape of streams and burns, as important habitats both for fish and as corridors for other animals and birds. Tayside BAP recognises that “*rivers and burns are flowing watercourses and in their natural state are dynamic systems continually modifying their form. The rivers and burns habitat consists not only of the watercourse itself - the “wetted channel”, but also the bank and associated land or riparian zone. Rivers and burns support a wide range of plants and animals. A watercourse’s biodiversity is determined by its mosaic of features, geographical area, underlying geology and water quality*”.

The Ochils act as a watershed between the major rivers - Forth and Tay. They are drained by the headwaters of four tributary rivers – the River Earn to the north, leading into the Tay; the rivers Allan and Devon leading to the Forth in the south and the South and North Queichs feeding Loch Leven and ultimately the Forth estuary through the River Leven in Fife. The rivers and burns within the Ochils carry a population of wild brown trout (*Salmo trutta*). The tributaries of the Allan, Earn and Devon also carry the migratory version – the sea trout – and the Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), some of which may penetrate into the tributaries within the Ochil Hills to spawn. The Atlantic salmon is a UK Species of Conservation Concern.

A number of initiatives are underway to enhance the biodiversity of the Ochils, including the Ochils Landscape Partnership, the Woodland Trust’s “Rewilding Glendevon” project and the Forth Fishery Trust.

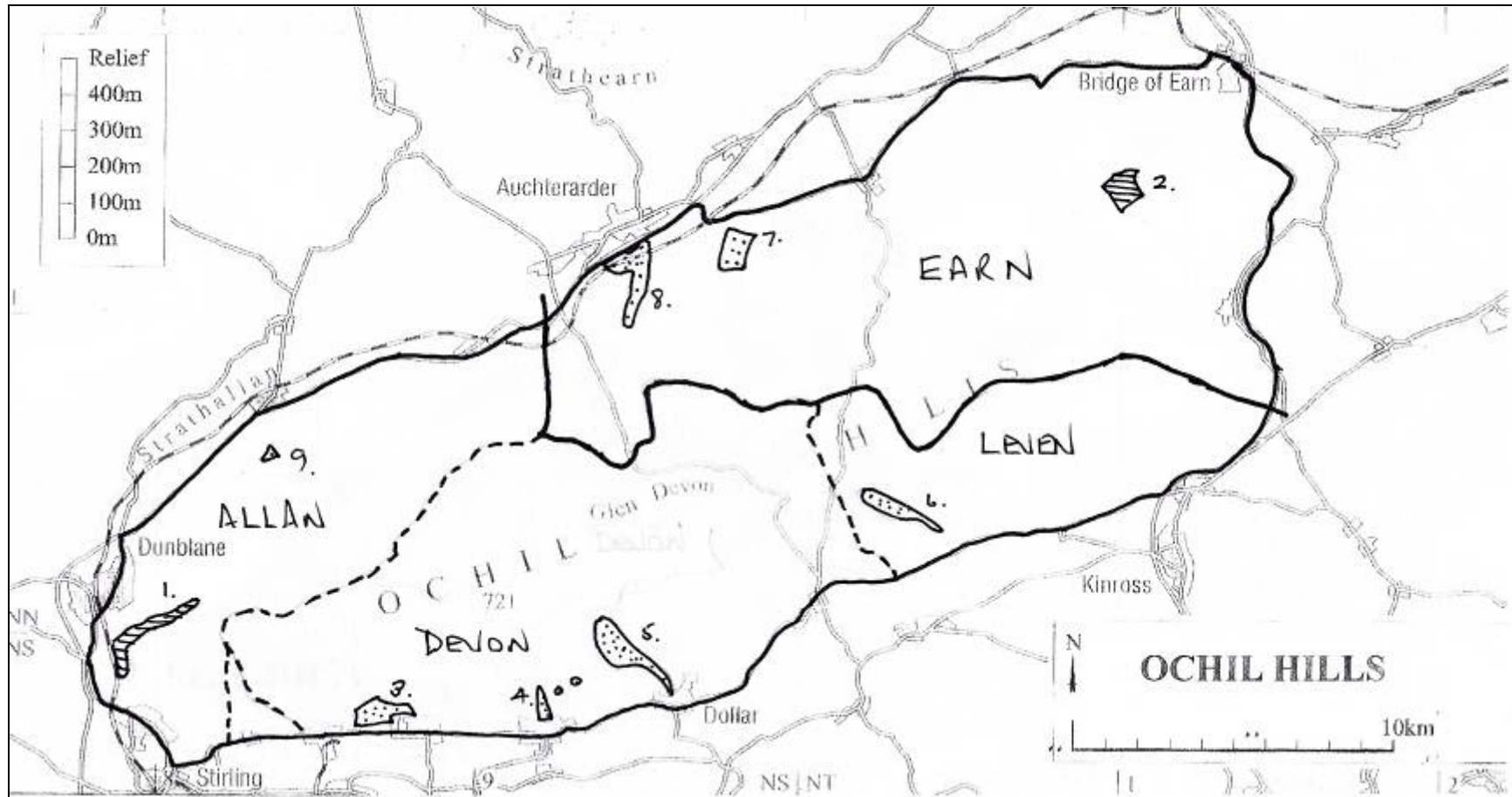
- The *Ochils Landscape Partnership* is a £2.26 million pound programme of 22 projects that will be delivered over three years. The projects are all aimed at improving the environment with benefits for biodiversity, including clearance of non-native

invasive species, planting of native tree species and works to strengthen and restore sections of the bank along the River Devon.

- The *Rewilding Glendevon* project plans to recreate the kind of native woodland of oak, ash, birch and juniper around the open grassy hill tops to restore the landscape and wildlife of Glen Devon with three new woodlands at Glensherup, Glenquey and Geordie's Wood near Muckhart.
- The *Forth Fishery Management Plan* provides a framework for the conservation and enhancement of populations of all freshwater fish species found in the Forth catchment.



“Re-wilding” Glen Quey



MAP 5: BIODIVERSITY SITES AND RIVER CATCHMENTS. SSSI = Stippled. SAC = Hatched. Major catchments – solid line. Minor catchments – broken lines

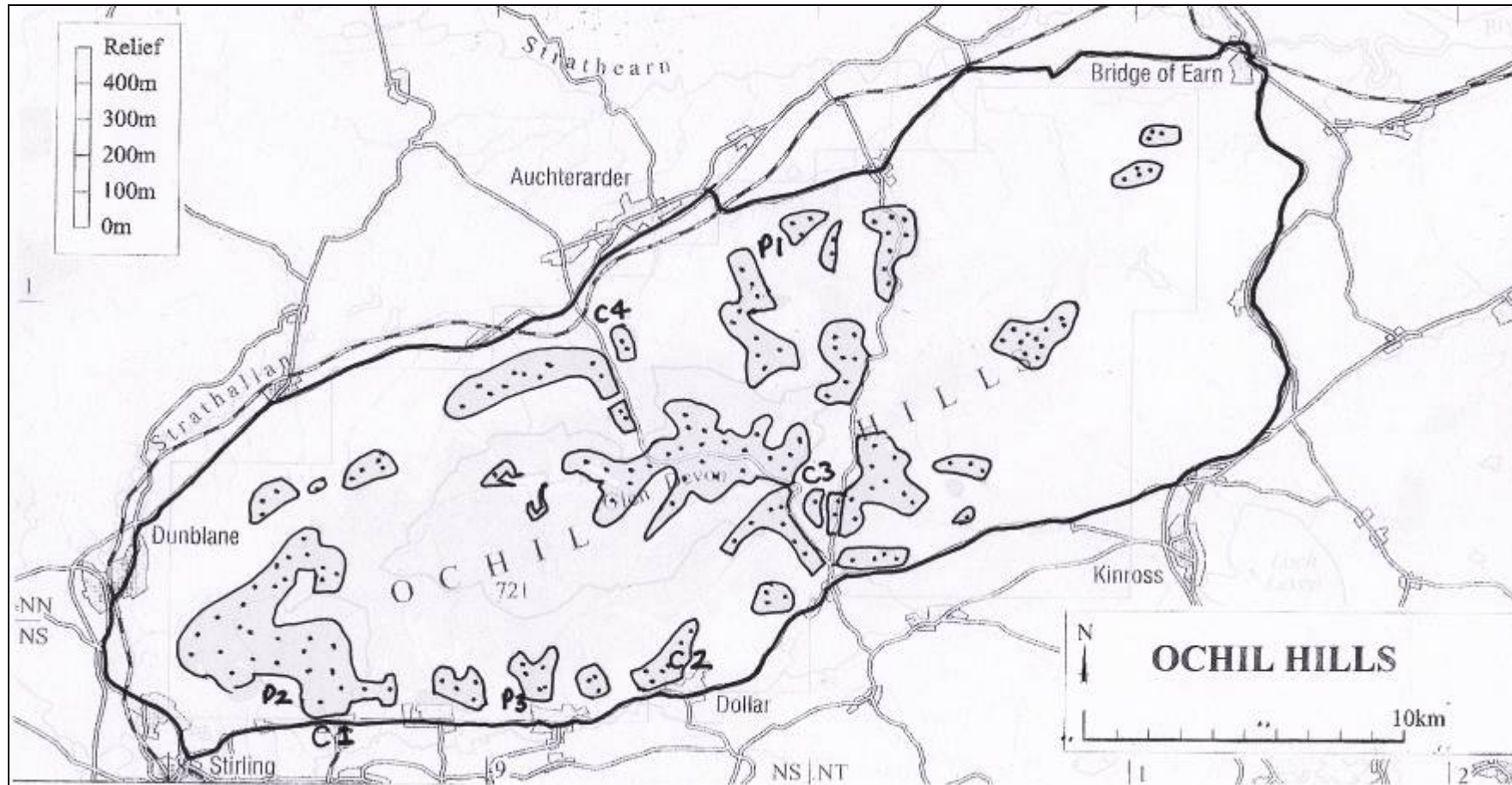
CULTURAL HERITAGE

Settlement

The Ochils share a long and distinguished history of human settlement, from the hunter-gatherer peoples who followed the retreating ice-sheet northwards through to the post-industrial revolution and the climate change responses of today. Early signs of human presence are seen in the many standing stones and cairns in and around the hills. Pictish hill forts on Rossie Law, near Auchterarder; Castle Law near Menstrie and Castle Craig, Tillicoultry demonstrate the defensive value of the Ochils and later fortifications include the medieval castles at Menstrie, Dollar, Glendevon, Gleneagles and Kincardine. The site of the Battle of Sheriffmuir (1715) lies within the hills and the battlefields of Stirling Bridge (1297) and Bannockburn (1314) are visible from Dumyat, framed by the iconic structures of Stirling Castle and the National Wallace Monument. Sheriffmuir battlefield has been included in the first tranche of battlefield sites listed by Historic Scotland.

Major features of the Ochils are the historic agricultural landscapes found throughout the hills, with well-documented examples in Menstrie Glen, Glendevon,

Dunning and Forteviot. These illustrate the farming landscapes and communities which lived in the Ochils throughout the 17th and 18th centuries – until the lowland clearances made way for sheep grazing and the start of the Industrial Revolution. Map 6 shows a summary of the key features of historic settlement. Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) maintain a detailed database of all the known historical assets of the area. The modern settlement pattern in the more agricultural, eastern part of the Ochils is one of dispersed farms and other rural dwellings connected by a network of rural roads and farm tracks. Larger settlements are confined to the periphery in the villages of Milnathort, Glenfarg, Bridge of Earn, Forgandenny, Dunning and Auchterarder. In the higher, western part of the hills, villages and even dispersed settlement are peripheral. The only dwellings within the hill-mass itself are the two isolated farms of Backhills and Frandy in the upper Devon valley while the only village, Glendevon, is strung out along the main through-routeway – the A823. All the other Ochil-related settlements are around the edge, from Blackford and Greenloaning, through Dunblane and Bridge of Allan to the “Hillfoots” villages and towns of Blairlogie, Menstrie, Alva, Tillicoultry, Dollar and Muckhart.



MAP 6: HISTORIC SETTLEMENT. Relic agricultural landscapes shown stippled. P1: Rossie Law. P2: Castle Law. P3: Castle Craig. C1: Menstrie Castle. C2: Castle Campbell. C3: Glendevon Castle: C3 Gleneagles Castle

Land Use

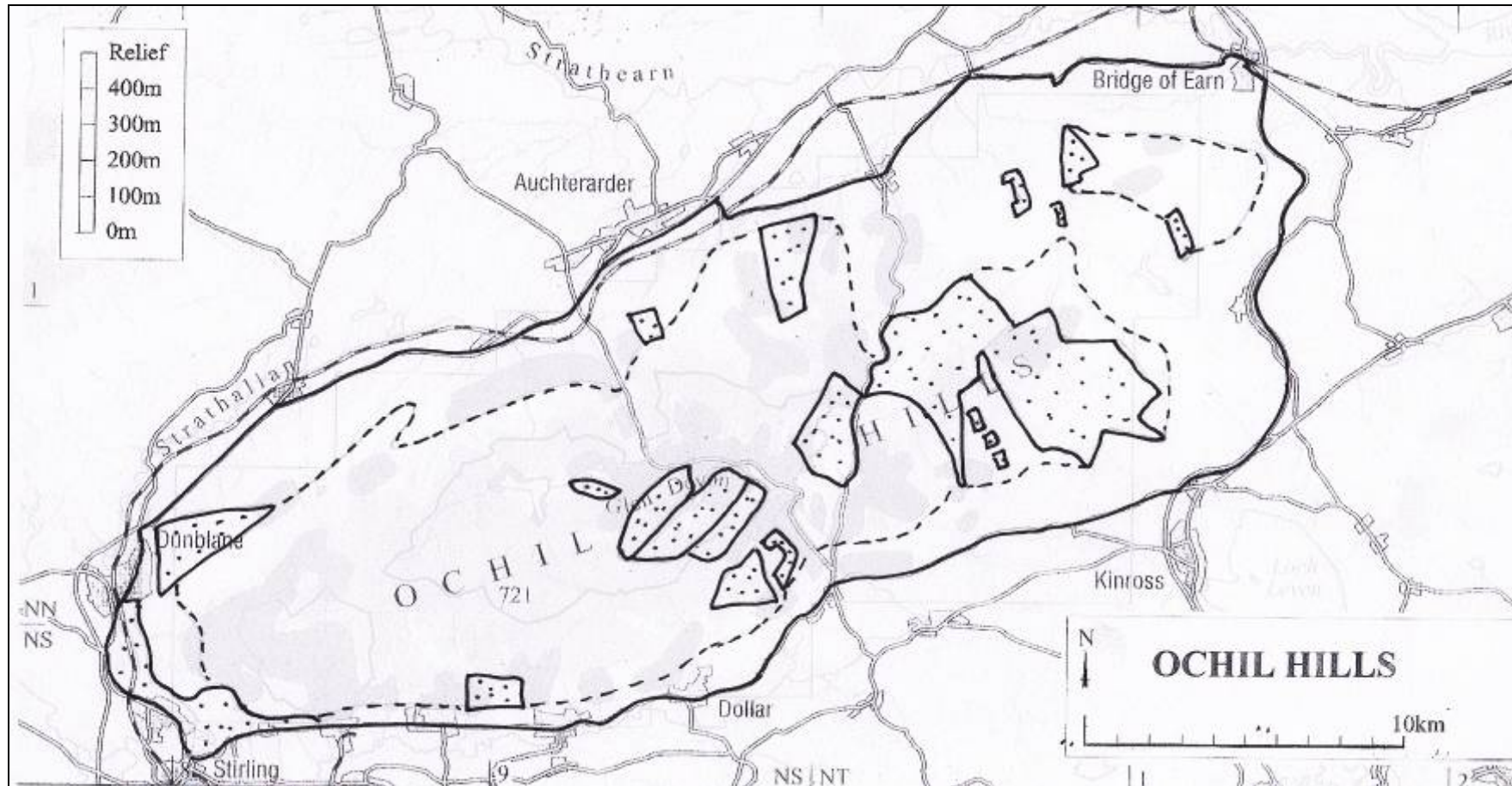
Agriculture. The predominant agricultural activity is sheep farming, with a limited number of cattle, on the rough pasture of most of the hill ground. The enclosed lower ground around the periphery of the hills and in the valleys supports improved pasture and arable. The densities of livestock and the mix of arable crops varies according to European Union and national government support mechanisms and the state of the market.

Forestry. Before human intervention the Ochil Hills would have been covered with native woodland, probably a mix of deciduous and coniferous species at different climatic cycles. The remnants of any native woodland, at present, are restricted to narrow strips along glens and steep slopes where they are protected from grazing animals. Even there regeneration is limited. Wood Hill between Alva and Tillicoultry demonstrates the highest

altitude (c400 m) at which mature trees are currently found in the Ochils.

Over the years an increasing amount of the upland has been given over to commercial forestry, particularly in the eastern Ochils, but a recent initiative by the Woodland Trust has seen the creation of new woodlands in the Glendevon area to re-create the native species and structure and biodiversity of the original forest cover of the Ochils.

Indicative Forestry Strategies prepared by the local authorities identify different areas which are designated as - Preferred, Potential, Sensitive or Unsuitable - for woodland planting. Within the Stirling and Clackmannanshire parts of the Ochils most of the ground is either Sensitive or Potential. Only the tops of the hills are listed as Unsuitable. There are government incentives for increasing forestry and woodland planting in Scotland. Map 7 shows the approximate distribution of open hill grazing, enclosed agricultural land and forestry/woodland.

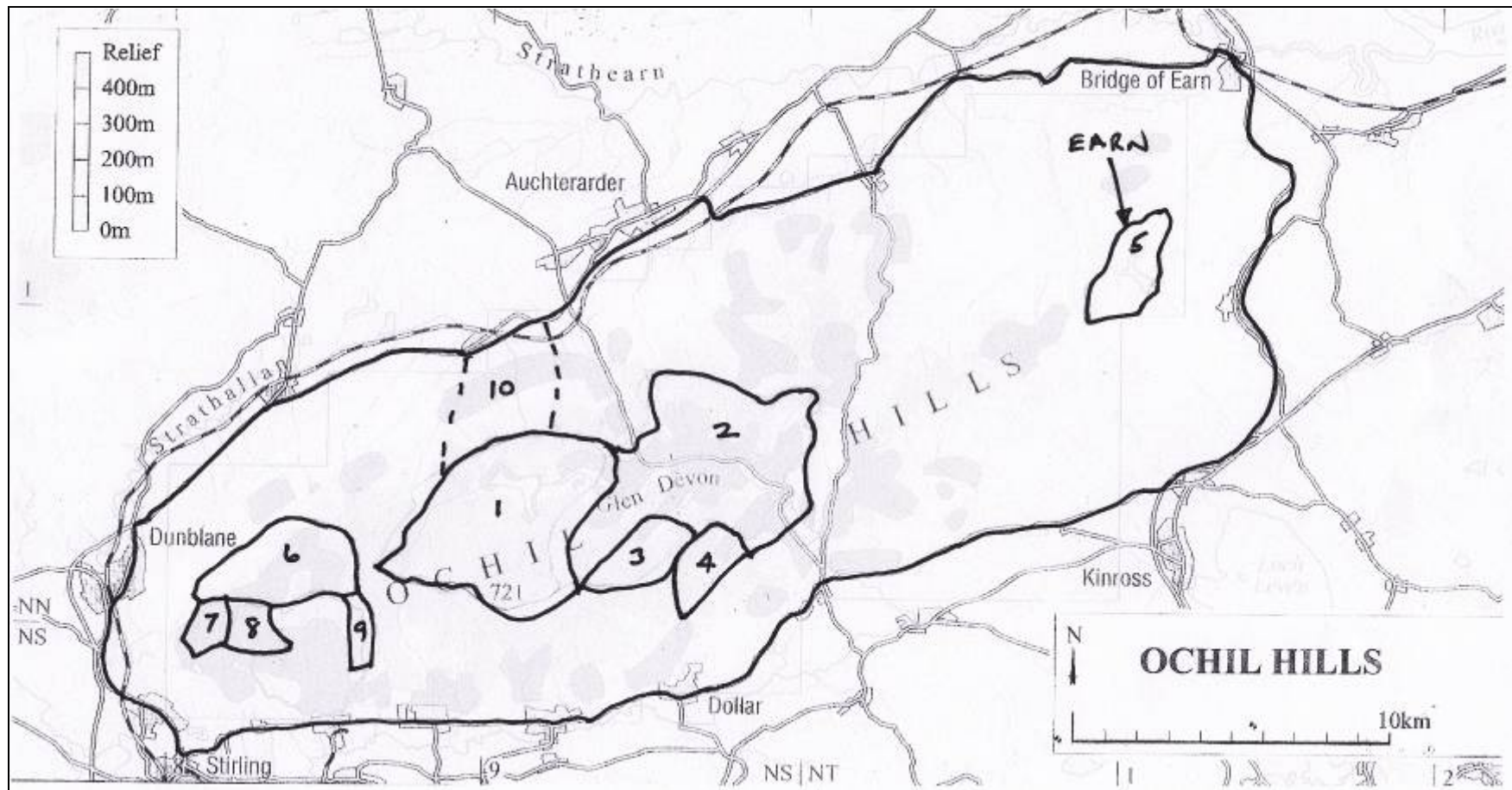


MAP 7: AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY. The approximate boundary between hill grazing and enclosed land shown as broken line. Forestry shown stippled.

Water Supply. The high rainfall and benign chemistry of the Ochils geology has long provided a source of wholesome water for the surrounding communities. At an early stage the hill burns provided drinking water for the surrounding villages and later provided the water power for the woollen mills of the Hillfoot towns of Menstrie, Alva and Tillicoultry to start the Industrial Revolution in Scotland.

At a later date the valleys provided easy sites for building reservoirs to supply water to more distant communities in Fife. Over the years nine reservoirs have been built, of which only six – Upper Glendevon, Lower Glendevon,(also known as Upper and Lower Frandy), Glensherup, Glenquey, Castlehill and Glenfarg - are currently functioning as public drinking supply sources

managed by Scottish Water. Glenfarg also pumps water from the River Earn to supplement local supplies. Waltersmuir (Wharry), above Dunblane, and Cocksburn, above Bridge of Allan are redundant as drinking sources and Lossburn and Balquharn are private supplies. Ground water is also important. Water from aquifers under the northern slopes of the Ochils supplies the distillery at Blackford and maintained its two earlier breweries. Since 1979, the Highland Spring bottling plant at Blackford captures groundwater, estimated to be 15 years old, from 1000 hectares of organically-managed land on the northern slopes. Map 8 shows those parts of the Ochils used as water-supply catchments, together with an indication of the groundwater abstraction area. A significant number of farms and dwellings still take their water supply from springs and surface burns.



MAP 8: WATER SUPPLY. Catchment areas of the 9 reservoirs and the area of groundwater abstraction.
 1. Upper Glendevon. 2. Lower Glendevon. 3. Glensherup. 4. Glenquey. 5. Glenfarg (and River Earn abstraction.) 6. Waltersmuir (Wharry). 7. Cocksburn. 8. Lossburn. 9. Balquharn. 10. Groundwater.

The Cultural Landscape

These human impacts of land use and settlement history also leave an imprint on the landscape. Over centuries they add layer upon layer of marks upon the land and produce a palimpsest of features which form the cultural landscape.

The ancient people have left their marks in standing stones, burial mounds, hill fort and ancient trackways. The Romans left their roads and forts close to the Ochils. Medieval people left their castles and battlefields. Farming over the centuries has created its patchwork of fields, fences, hedges and dykes, tracks and farmsteads. Beneath the marks of modern agriculture can be traced a relic pattern of farming and rural settlement which, with interpretation, tell the story of former communities and lifestyles. Whole hillsides and valleys show the remains of ridge-and-furrow, “run-rig”, cultivation up to heights not contemplated in modern times, with ruined farmsteads and high shielings from a time when cattle grazed the hills and were moved up to higher pastures in summer, in the practice of transhumance. Current human settlement

leaves its pattern of dispersed or isolated dwellings in the countryside, and the former “fermtouns” and “kirktons” in and around the hills.

Woodland management has created shelter-belts, coppices, plantations and forests. Commercial forestry has left its mark in the areas of conifer monoculture, although modern plantings may create a more diverse pattern. Upland grazing has left its legacy of dykes and fences. Drystone dykes were, historically, the dominant field boundaries where rocky outcrops, thin soils and climate made the use of hedgerows impractical. Lowland, more fertile regions also contain a significant number of drystone walls. “March” dykes and “head” dykes are prominent feature in the Ochils cultural landscape. Many of the dykes may be more than 200 years old, built between 1750 and 1850 after the Enclosure Acts. Primarily of landscape and stockholding importance, dykes also have a role in biodiversity. Many dykes are in poor or very poor condition. Whilst some have the potential to be restored there are many that are beyond repair.

Around the Ochil Hills, industrial progress created the weaver’s villages and the mill towns of the Hillfoots.

Wool from the hill sheep and water power from the glens led to the development of the woollen industry, the expansion of the settlements and the heritage of redundant woollen mills recycled for tourism or retail in the modern landscape.

The building of the water supply reservoirs created welcome water features in the landscape which offset to some extent the introduction of industrial-style dams and impoundments, access roads and treatment works in the wilder glens. More recent additions to the cultural landscape are more controversial. High voltage electricity power line cross the Ochils from north to south, one at the east end from Forgandenny to Carnbo and one at the west end from a Greenloaning to Blairlogie. After a public inquiry the pylons of the power line at the west end to increase its capacity to transfer renewable electricity from the north of Scotland. The new pylons are to be increased in size and number with associated visual impacts during and after construction. Associated with the drive for renewable energy are the latest controversial developments - windfarms,. There are currently three windfarms in the Ochils area and more are in the planning stage. Their presence within the Ochils and their location

have been and still are the subject of controversy and their impact on the cultural landscape is still unclear.

The Literary Landscape. Beyond the eulogy of Lord Cockburn, the Ochils have their own literary heritage. While more research is required, one or two obvious references come to mind. Robert Louis Stevenson spent holidays in Bridge of Allan and developed ideas for his novels there. There is view that Stevenson's "*Hills of Home*" refer not to the Pentlands but to the Ochil Hills. Hugh Haliburton, a native of Milnathort, is well known for his book of poetry "*Ochil Idylls*". Other poets have found inspiration in the Ochils. A R B Haldane wrote vividly about his part of the Ochils at Gleneagles. Latterly, Rennie McOwan has based many of his popular stories in the Ochils. At a more vernacular level, the Newsletters of the Community Councils are a fund of anecdotal literature about the hills. Right up to date, the Ochils now feature on *YouTube* with one video posted by adventurous souls winter-climbing up Raeburn's Gully on Dumyat and another, by mountain bikers, descending the same mountain at high speed.

RECREATION AND HEALTH

From the days of simple **picnics** up Menstrie Glen, **visits** to Alva Glen “illuminations” and Sunday **drives** across Dunning Glen, the Ochils have been a place of “recreation” for the people living within travelling distance of their slopes (Map 9). Access to the hills for **walking** is excellent with paths leading out from most of the surrounding villages which also provide some form of car parking, refreshments and even accommodation. Traditional drove roads moved cattle from Crieff to Falkirk Tryst and crossed the Ochils in the west, from Greenloaning to Stirling Bridge, and through Gleneagles and Glendevon to cross the Forth at Kincardine. Ancient rights of way cross the Ochils - from Tillicoultry to Blackford, Dollar to Glendevon and Glendevon to Dunning. The King’s Road runs behind Dumyat from Sheriffmuir to Menstrie.

Within the open hill areas and the higher tops an informal network of paths created by walkers and shepherds connect the main summits. The most popular routes, with the most visitor pressure, tend to be Dumyat and Ben Cleuch. A survey of visitor numbers and its results for the

Dumyat area was commissioned by the *Friends of the Ochils* and reported as written evidence to the Beauldy-Denny Power Line Public Inquiry in 2007. Several guide books, including foreign language guides, have been published detailing specific routes for walking. The Ochils are also popular for **hill running**. Recent years have seen the expansion of **mountain biking** on both surfaced tracks and hill paths. A combination of mountain biking and increased walking has led to a deterioration of some more sensitive hill paths.

The burns and reservoirs of the Ochils provide opportunities for **trout fishing**. The hill burns have traditionally provided free access to fish for wild brown trout while permits are available on Cocksburn, Quenquey, Castlehill, Glensherup and Lower Glendevon, some of which are stocked with rainbow trout. The River Devon below Castlehill Reservoir is managed by the Devon Angling Association.

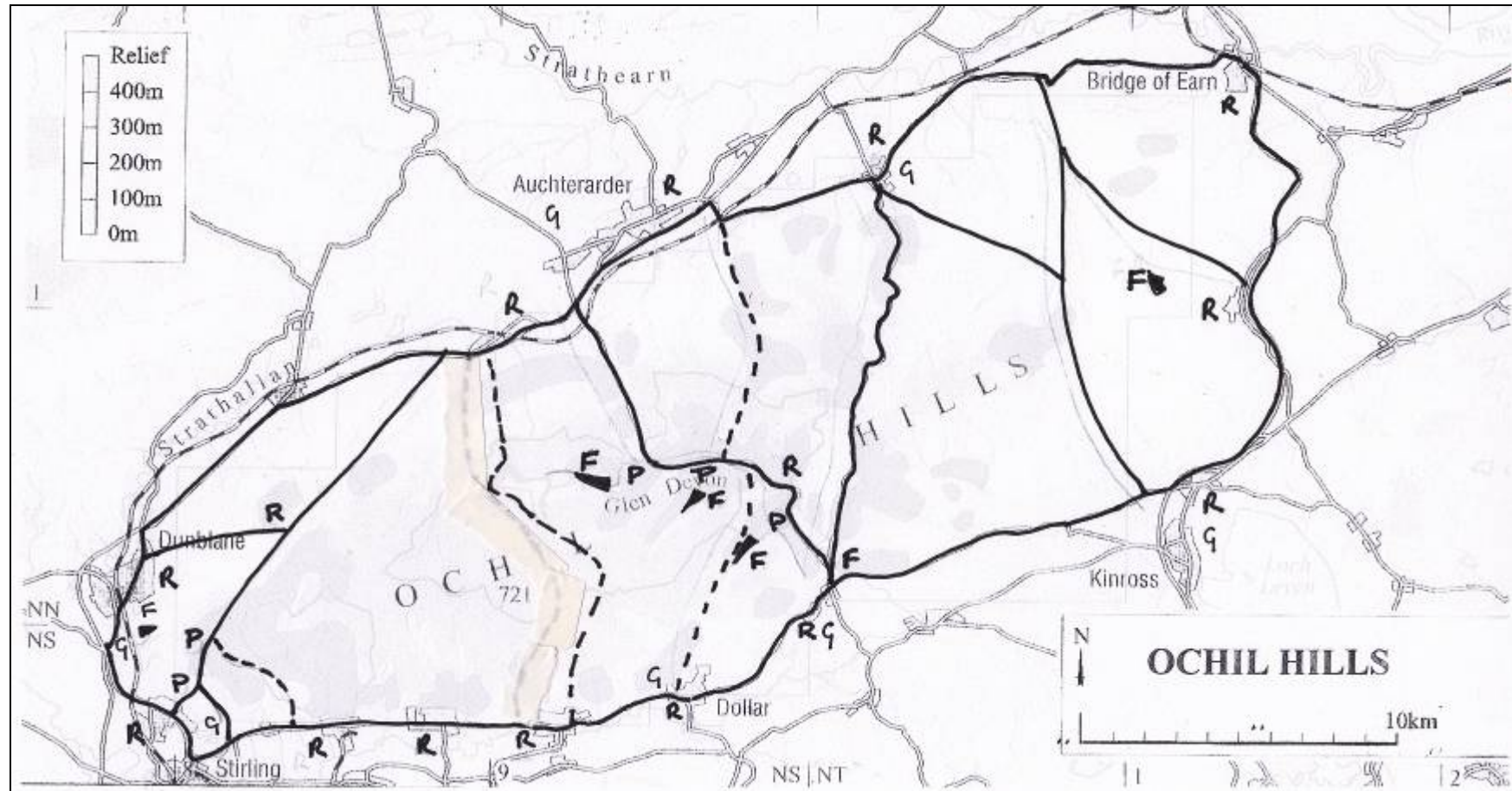
Most of the villages and towns around the Ochils have local **golf** courses which cater for visitors. Within sight of the northern Ochils lies the international standard golf complex of Gleneagles near Auchterarder.

The main hostelrys within the hills are at Sheriffmuir in the west and Glendevon in the centre. However most of the villages around the hills can provide **refreshments** of some sort and there is a range of **visitor accommodation** from campsites to 5-star hotels within close proximity to the Ochils.

Eco-tourism is a relatively new concept, but it offers opportunities to benefit the local community, safeguard wildlife and still allow visitors to experience some of the most varied landscapes in Scotland, often during the 'shoulder months' of the main tourism season when many species are easier to see. The Ochils offer visitors stunning scenery, wildlife and the unique historical heritage.



Pony-trekking , Glenquey



MAP 9: MAIN FEATURES PROVIDING RECREATION AND ACCESS. Surfaced roads = solid line. Historic footpaths = broken line. P= Parking. F= Trout fishing. G= Golf courses. R= Refreshments.

MITIGATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

The Ochil Hills have the potential to contribute to the mitigation of Climate Change (Map 10).

- **Peat.** There are several areas of peat which act as “carbon sinks”. Those areas on the watersheds at Alva, Menstrie and Maddy Moss are showing signs of erosion around their peripheries, either through historic climate change, atmospheric pollution, drainage or grazing.
- **Hydro-electric.** There may be potential for small-scale hydro-electric development, particularly at the outflow from the several reservoirs but also in the small, steep burns on the south face of the Ochils which originally provided water power for the woollen mills.
- **Biomass.** Some of the areas planted with commercial forests may have the potential to produce biomass from brashings and thinnings.
- **Biofuels.** Some of the more marginal agricultural land around the periphery of the hills and in the more agricultural eastern part may have the potential to grow biofuels, particularly willow trees.



Eroding Blanket Peat – Alva Moss

Windfarms. The potential for windfarms has already been identified and exploited. Three windfarms are already operational – Greenknowes, Burnfoothill and Lochelbank - and more are at the planning stage. Windfarms have been, and still are, the most controversial developments in the Ochils and there is a desire to avoid the cumulative impact which might turn the Ochils from the present “landscape with windfarms” into a “windfarm landscape” in the future.

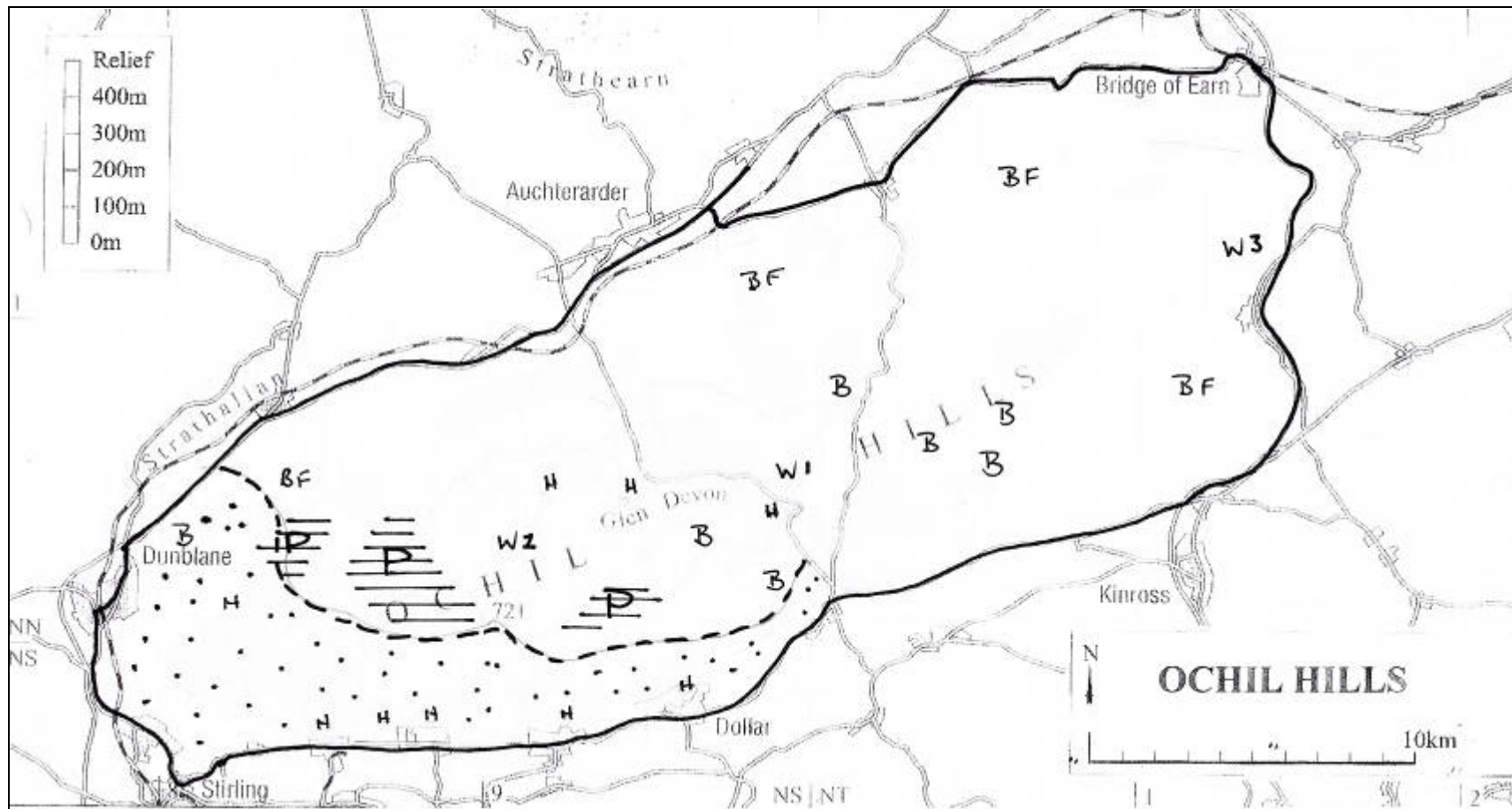
Much of the area of the Ochils which lie within Perth and Kinross are designated as Areas of Search for windfarms although an original proposal for a Preferred Area in the eastern Ochils was withdrawn after public consultation in 2005. Parts of the hills within Clackmannanshire and Stirlingshire are also designated as Areas of Search but Map 10 shows the approximate area specifically protected from windfarm location in the Clackmannanshire and Stirling Structure Plan 2002, First Alteration 2004.

High Voltage Power Lines. A new high-voltage power line to carry the renewable energy from the production

sources in the north of Scotland to the consumers in the south of the UK, has been another controversial issue of climate change mitigation to affect the Ochil Hills. After a Public Inquiry the existing power line on the western shoulder of the hills, from Sheriffmuir to Blairlogie is to be upgraded with much taller pylons



Burnfoot Hill Windfarm



MAP 10: FEATURES AFFECTING CLIMATE CHANGE. P=Peat. H= Potential hydro. B=Potential biomass. Bf=Potential biofuels. W=Windfarms (1. Greenknowes. 2. Burnfoothill. 3. Lochelbank). Protected area – Stippled.

ISSUES OF LANDSCAPE, BIODIVERSITY AND RECREATION

The Ochils will always need a viable and sustainable rural economy, with existing land-uses of sheep farming, cattle raising, forestry, water supply, field sports and tourism. Most of the characteristic landscapes which are so much valued are the result of generations of farmers and graziers. From the close-cropped turf of the high tops, to the woollen-mill towns of the Hillfoots, the physical and social landscapes of the Ochils have been “shaped by sheep”. Despite the beauty and inspiration of the hills, over the years, some of the landscape features and the wildlife habitats of the Ochils are not as good as they once were - nor as good as they could be in the future.

SOME OF THE ISSUES

- Areas of blanket bog and peat-lands are eroding – with loss of “carbon-sink”, increase in run-off and a threat to biodiversity.
- Native woodlands are now mere remnants confined to small areas – with loss of biodiversity and landscape quality.
- Specimen trees and shelter-belts are dying and not regenerating – with loss of landscape quality, biodiversity and historical context.
- Historic farming landscapes are being lost – with loss of social history context and landscape value.
- Drystane dykes are in disrepair – with loss of landscape value and social history context.
- Blanket afforestation has hidden landscape and historic features – with loss of landscape value and historical context.
- Historic commercial forestry schemes do not meet current design standards – resulting in poor “fit” in the landscape.

- Some commercial forestry practices, eg clear-felling, do not meet current guidelines – resulting in soil erosion, landscape degradation and loss of biodiversity.
- Increased recreational use creates issues of footpath damage, car parking, litter, and visitor information – resulting in diminished visitor experience.

There are already many examples of “*good practice*”, within the Ochils, and elsewhere, to address these problems.

- To protect existing blanket bog and peat-lands from further erosion and damaged areas restored.
- To protect the remaining native woodlands from further loss and to encourage the planting of new native woodlands in suitable locations at appropriate scales.
- To retain and replant existing specimen trees and shelter-belts, in those key locations where they contribute significantly to the landscape and cultural history of the hills.
- To repair and restore drystone dykes in selective key locations where they contribute to the landscape, cultural history or visitor experience of the hills.
- To modify existing blanket plantations to current design standards, diversified with native trees and clearings to create more diverse habitat and protect iconic features and views. To ensure new commercial plantations conform to modern design standards.

- To provide well-designed, small-scale car-parking; a repair and maintenance programme for popular hill paths, appropriate litter management and guidance on positive visitor information.

There are additional, more strategic, issues affecting the hills.

- **Increasing “Industrialisation” of the Hills.** With new, larger electricity pylons and several wind farms already established or proposed within the Ochils. At what stage will an Ochil “*landscape with wind-farms*” become a “*wind-farm landscape*”?
- **Fragmented Planning Framework.** The main part of the Ochil Hills range is split between three local planning authorities with seven statutory plans. The diversity of planning policy and procedures does not help to create a cohesive planning vision for the hills. It makes consultation and representation difficult and reduces the ability of the general public to influence planning decisions. New planning legislation is currently being implemented which can provide opportunities for local authorities to create a more cohesive system

Some of these issues are related to land-usage, others to land- and visitor-management, but the strategic issues are related to the statutory planning system and the development of much-loved physical and cultural landscapes. There has to be a case for a rationalized and coordinated planning system across the Ochil Hills, so that the whole hill range can be planned as a geographical, cultural and historical entity.



SOME RECREATIONAL ISSUES – Dunning Glen

Informal car-parking, litter; wild camping, lack of visitor-information

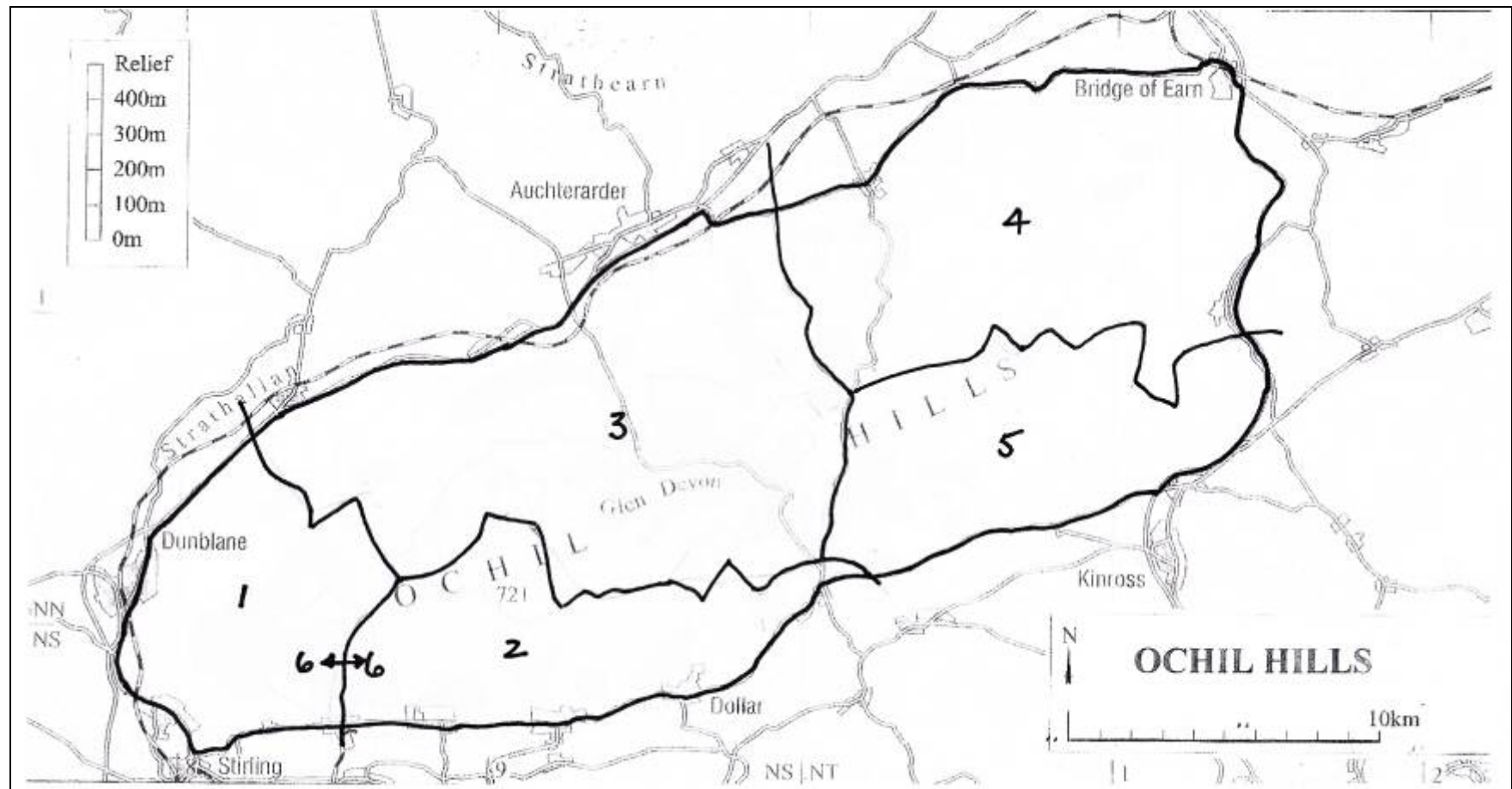
LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION AND STATUTORY PLANNING

Statutory Plans (as at 2012)

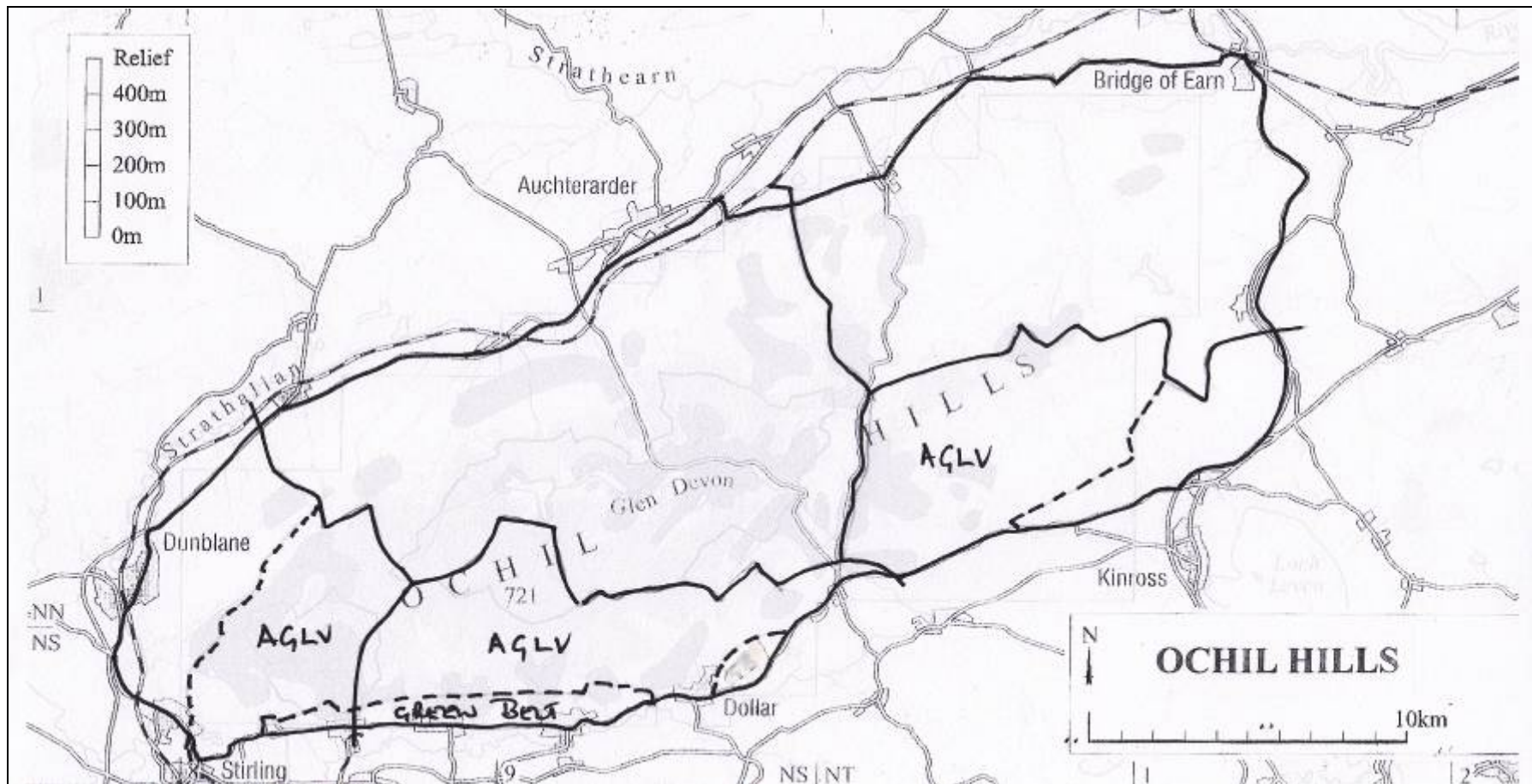
The Ochil Hills lie within the boundaries of three planning authorities – Perth and Kinross, Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire. Until 2012 their development was divided between two Structure Plans and five Local Plans (Map 11):

- Clackmannanshire and Stirling Structure Plan 2002,
- Perth and Kinross Structure Plan 2003
- Stirling Local Plan, 1999
- Clackmannanshire Local Plan, 2004
- Kinross Area Local Plan 2004
- Perth Area Local Plan 1995
- Strathearn Area Local Plan 2001

Under new planning legislation introduced in 2006, councils have to prepare revised Development Plans. In Perth and Kinross, a new Strategic Development Plan - “TAYplan” - replaced the previous Perth and Kinross Structure Plan in 2012. A new Local Development Plan to replace the several Local Plans is in progress. In Clackmannanshire and in Stirling the existing Structure Plan is being replaced by new Local Development Plans.



MAP 11. STATUTORY PLAN COVERAGE (2012). 1. Stirling Local Plan. 2. Clackmannanshire Local Plan. 3. Strathearn Area Local Plan 2001. 4. Perth Area Local Plan 1995. 5. Kinross Area Local Plan. 6. Clackmannanshire and Stirling Structure Plan 2002. *(In 2012 the “TAYplan” replaced the Perth and Kinross Structure Plan 2003)*



MAP 12: LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION DESIGNATIONS. AGLV = Area of Great Landscape Value. (*Note: AGLV designation replaced by Local Landscape Area designation in 2006.*) Green Belt

Emerging Landscape Conservation Designations

Stirling Council. Stirling Council has proposed a substantial part of the western Ochils, within its boundary, as an Local Landscape Area in its emerging Local Development Plan. Draft policies include:

“Local Landscape Areas (LLAs)

Development proposals will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that: -

- (i) The landscape character, scenic interest and qualities for which the area has been designated will not be adversely affected; or*
- (ii) There is a specific nationally recognised need for the development at that location which could not be satisfied in a less sensitive area, and any adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of local importance.*

Clackmannanshire Council. The Clackmannanshire Local Plan and the emerging Clackmannanshire Local Development Plan both designate the main Ochil Hills as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) with a strip of land along the foot of the Ochil scarp as Green Belt.

Perth and Kinross Council

- **Kinross Area.** The current Kinross Area Local Plan 2004 designates part but not all of the Ochils Hills in its area as an Area of Great Landscape Value.
- **Perth Area.** The current Perth Area Local Plan 1995 gives no landscape designation to the north-eastern Ochil Hills within its area.
- **Strathearn Area.** The Strathearn Area Local Plan 2001, gives no landscape designation to the northern Ochil Hills within its area.
- **TAYplan 2012.** The new TAYplan 2012 makes no reference to any landscape designation of the Ochil Hills within the TAYpan coverage.
- **Perth and Kinross Local Development Plan.** The emerging Local Development Plan for Perth and Kinross will consider landscape designations under Supplementary Guidance to be progressed during 2014.

At present the Ochil Hills do not have a consistent planning designation or policies for the protection of its landscape and other special characteristics. If the Ochils justify any consideration as a discrete landscape, historic and cultural entity some mechanism is required to focus the planning and management on the Ochils themselves, rather than just as small parts of much larger local authority areas, where their significance as a whole is diluted between larger areas and different issues.

In the past, individual Subject Local Plans have been prepared for discrete areas such as the Pentland Hills Regional Park. Otherwise, the Local Landscape Area designation or the Ecosystem Services Approach, associated with some joint inter-authority working might be useful?



CRAIG ROSSIE from Blackford

Courtesy: Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust