

**SOUTH TIPPERARY  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT  
PHASE ONE  
UPLANDS**

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# **South Tipperary Landscape Character Assessment**

## **Phase One - The Uplands**

**Cunnane Stratton Reynolds – September 2006**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Context

In June 2000 the Department of the Environment published the *Landscape and Landscape Assessment Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (hereafter referred to as the *Guidelines*). The *Guidelines* were prepared "...against the background of increasing development pressure, the National Development Plan and the preparations being made for the production of a National Spatial Strategy [since published] which made apparent the centrality of landscape considerations".

As well as recognising and addressing the "urgent need to approach landscape appraisal in a systematic way", the *Guidelines* "allow us to view landscape for its ability to accommodate developments, [giving] indicators as to which developments might be most suited [to the landscape], under what conditions and using what design criteria".

The process of landscape character assessment is thus intended to result in the delineation, description and sensitivity assessment of recognisable areas of common landscape character. This will assist local authorities in determining the capacity of particular areas and sites to accommodate development types and specific proposals, based on a thorough understanding of the character of the receiving landscape.

Cunnane Stratton Reynolds was appointed by South Tipperary County Council in June 2002 to undertake the first phase of a landscape character assessment in response to increasing development pressure on the upland areas of the county. The study would inform the compilation of the new County Development Plan, in preparation at that time and since published. As such, the County Council's brief to the consultants stated the intent that the landscape character assessment "will provide the technical background for the Planning Authority to formulate a set of policies and development control standard towards:

- a) The preservation of identified sensitive landscapes, and
- b) To identify suitable working landscapes where there is potential to accommodate development, such as forestry, rural housing and buildings and wind farms in a manner that protects the character of the landscape".

This, Phase One of the landscape character assessment of South Tipperary, concentrates on the upland areas of the County, namely Slievenamon, the Galtees and Slievenamuck, the Knockmealdowns, the Hollyford Hills and Slieveardagh hills. The methodology prescribed in the *Guidelines* has been altered / abbreviated to allow for the completion of particular stages of the process in time to inform the County Development Plan. Phase Two, due to take place following review of the process and results of Phase One, will address the lowland areas of the County and will culminate in a comprehensive landscape character assessment of South Tipperary in accordance with the *Guidelines*.

### 1.2 Approach and Methodology

The method of landscape character assessment proposed in the *Guidelines* involves three distinct steps, i.e. landscape characterisation followed by landscape values assessment followed by landscape sensitivity assessment (See graphic below).

Landscape characterisation involves the delineation and description of landscape character areas based primarily on physical units (areas of common landform and / or landcover), as well as visual units (areas of visual containment) and image units (areas of distinctive cultural-perceptive character).

Landscape characterisation is followed by landscape values assessment. Values assessment, which includes the participation of stakeholders, articulates the benefits (socio-cultural, ecological and socio-economic) derived from the landscape characteristics of each identified character area.

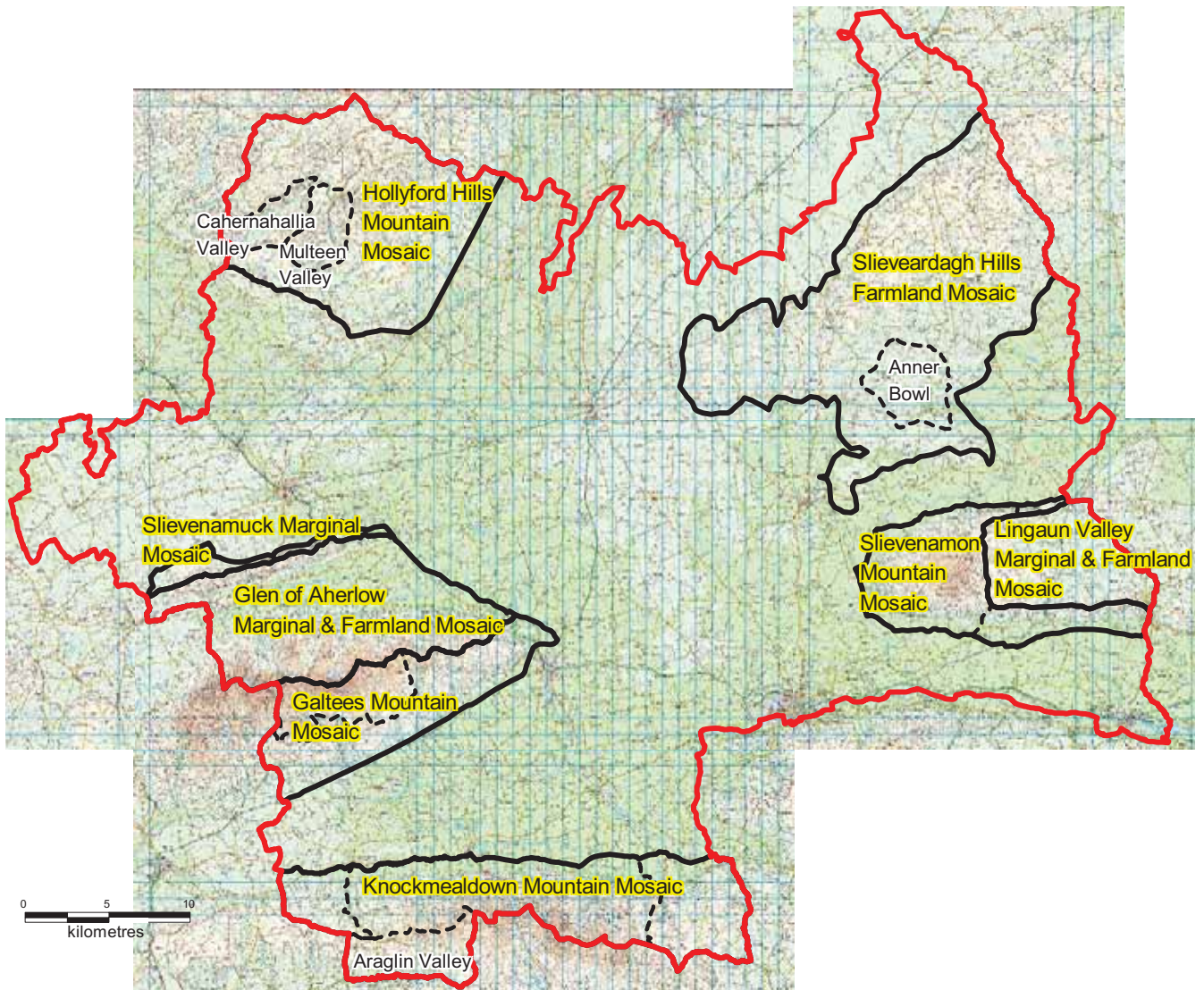
Finally, the sensitivity of the landscape character areas to development in general and to particular development types, is determined based on the assessment of their identified characteristics and values.

<b>Landscape Character Assessment</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Landscape Character</i></p> <p>Character can be established for an area where there is visual distinctiveness and identity through a continuity of similar characteristics.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Landscape Values</i></p> <p>Values can be described as the environment or cultural benefits that are derived from various landscape resources. These resources may include physical and visual components as well as 'image' elements.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Landscape Sensitivity</i></p> <p>The extent to which a landscape can accommodate change without unacceptable loss of existing character or interference with values.</p>

Appendix One describes the methodology prescribed in the *Guidelines* and, as applied in this study, in more detail.

Eight upland LCAs have been identified in South Tipperary are as follows:

- The **Knockmealdown mountain mosaic**
- The **Galtees mountain mosaic**
- The **Slievenamuck marginal mosaic**
- The **Glen of Aherlow marginal and farmland mosaic**
- The **Slievenamon mountain mosaic**
- The **Lingaun Valley marginal and farmland mosaic**
- The **Hollyford Hills mountain mosaic**
- The **Slieveardagh Hills farmland mosaic**



Section 2.0. describes each of the above character area, the Characteristics and Values associated with each area, Principals for the Management of each area and respective sensitivities.

## 2.0 SOUTH TIPPERARY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

Chapter One and Appendix One of this document described the methodology for the delineation and assessment of Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) as prescribed by the *Guidelines*, and the process of data analysis and LCA delineation (the uplands) as applied to County South Tipperary.

This Chapter describes the LCAs individually, identifies the significant Landscape Values of each LCA, outlines the Principles of Management and awards a general development sensitivity classification for each LCA. The format of presentation of this chapter is as follows:

- A detailed map is provided for the LCA, accompanied by a brief description in terms of the landscape characteristics. Certain significant landscape characteristics are illustrated with photographs taken during survey. (A detailed landscape description as prescribed in the *Guidelines* is provided in Appendix 1)
- The Landscape Values – Conservation: Socio Cultural and Ecological and Development / Enhancement – are identified and described. (Appendix 1 details the identified landscape values of the LCA (those deemed significant in terms of forward planning and development control) and lists them in tabular format, under the categories *culture*, *environment* and *socio-economic* related values. Each value is assessed (awarded a classification in the table) in terms of three key criteria, *importance*, *sufficiency* and *substitutability*.)
- The Principles for Management of the area are set out summarising the landscape values and the threats and opportunities inherent in the Landscape Character Area.
- Taking account of the Landscape Values assessment, the key indicators of landscape character defined in the *Guidelines*, and the Principles for Management, the overall Sensitivity of the LCA to development is classified as Class One (low sensitivity), Two (moderate), Three (high), Four (special) or Five (unique).
- Chapter Three concludes with four maps illustrating the classification of the South Tipperary upland LCAs' sensitivity to general development.

The eight upland LCAs identified in South Tipperary are as follows:

- The **Knockmealdown mountain mosaic** of moorland, forestry and marginal pasture. This area includes a sub-area comprised of the Araglin River Valley, which straddles the County boundary with Waterford, south of and parallel to the mountain range. The lesser peaks to west and east of the range are also considered sub-areas of the LCA.
- The **Galtees mountain mosaic** of moorland, forestry and marginal pasture. This area is comprises the southern face of the Galtee mountains including an extensive area of cSAC designated land, the Galtee Mountains SAC. This area of upper slopes and peaks is considered a sub-area of the LCA.
- The **Slievenamuck marginal mosaic** of forestry and marginal pasture. This area comprises the almost entirely forested northern face of Slievenamuck.
- The **Glen of Aherlow marginal and farmland mosaic** of moorland, forestry and varying pasture. This area comprises the Aherlow River valley, narrow strip of flat to undulating farmland mosaic between the northern face of the Galtees and the southern face of Slievenamuck, which are included in the area.

- The **Slievenamon mountain mosaic** of moorland, forestry and marginal pasture. This area includes the primary and lesser peaks of Slievenamon at the western extent of the upland, as well as the outer slopes of the hills enclosing the Lingaun river valley to the east of the peak. These outer slopes are considered sub-areas of the LCA.
- The **Lingaun Valley marginal and farmland mosaic**, of moorland, forestry and varying pasture. This area comprises the valley of the Lingaun River extending eastwards from the peak of Slievenamon, including the inner slopes of the hills defining the northern and southern edge of the upland.
- The **Hollyford Hills mountain mosaic** of moorland, forestry and marginal pasture. The Cahernahallia and Multeen River valleys, are both visual units in which a distinct sense of enclosure is perceived. These are considered sub-areas of the LCA.
- The **Slieveardagh Hills farmland mosaic** of varying pasture, tillage and private forestry. The Anner River 'bowl' which forms the source of the river in the southern hills of the upland can also be described as a visual unit, and is considered a sub-area of the LCA.





#### Landscape Characteristics

- Rolling uplands
- Dramatic topography of moorland on the upper slopes
- Forest plantations and marginal agriculture on the lower slopes
- Minimal built development

#### Distinctive Features

- The Vee viewpoint
- Large scale simple landscape components
- Small mosaics of pastoral land in valleys and plateaus contrasting with large landscape elements

#### 2.1.2. Landscape Values

##### *Socio-cultural (Conservation Values)*

- The dramatic landform of the mountains, the scenic views that they offer, and the extensive natural area and remoteness (moorland and peatland on the upper slopes and crests), comprise the area's *aesthetic amenity* and contribute to the area's significant *recreational amenity* value.
- The integrity and unity of the traditional *landscape pattern* and scale (moorland with marginal fields on the lower slopes), has been compromised by recent land cover change (forestry), giving rise to a new, equally recognisable mountain mosaic of land use.
- The *settlement pattern* is very sparse.
- Although devoid of *settlements* and community, the physical prominence of the mountains, and the well-known waymarked walks, scenic drive and viewpoints, lend the area a distinct *sense of place and identity*.
- The mosaics of farmland on the sheltered slopes provide continuity of human activity and a *historical value*.

##### *Ecological (Conservation Values)*

- The extensive peatland areas on the upper slopes and peaks, and the *presence of water* in two corries and numerous mountain streams, contribute to the area's *biodiversity* value. There are however no designated areas. Many of the valleys have been afforested and are choked by invading rhododendron, threatening the integrity of the ecosystems and thus the area's biodiversity. Overgrazing of the moorlands, and the traffic along the

waymarked walks in the area of viewpoints accessed by road in particular, may lead to further depletion of the soil quality locally, potentially affecting biodiversity.

*Socio-economic (Enhancement / Development Values)*

- The marginal quality of the uplands (shallow and nutrient poor soils) result in limited land capability. Much of the area that is capable, has been converted to forestry and the extensive Coillte owned plantations produce significant volumes of timber.

2.1.3. Principals for Management

The LCA's conservation values (ecological and cultural) have a consistently high level of importance ranging from local to national significance (Glenboy pNHA) and despite significant afforestation of the area, have remained largely intact. Its amenity value is acknowledged and harnessed by the Avondhu and East Munster Ways that traverse the area, and by the usage of the Vee as an amenity area. Although the environmental value of the LCA benefits from the limited human intervention / production on the upper slopes and peaks, it has been severely compromised by primarily conifer afforestation on the mid- and lower slopes. Glenboy Wood pNHA is the only designated habitat requiring particular conservation measures.

Ongoing management and intervention to safeguard and enhance those components that generate the area's conservation value should be the ultimate objective in the management and development of this area. Knockmealdown and the other central peaks of the range should be preserved.

2.1.4. Landscape Sensitivity

The overall landscape sensitivity ranges from High, Class 3, to Special, Class 4. The central sub-area west of and including the Gap (now defined by the R668 between the peaks of Knockshanahullion and Knockmealdown) is of a Special Sensitivity, Class 4, and the landscape character and value of this area are too high to absorb more than limited change. .

East of the above area, the Knockmealdowns are of High Sensitivity - Class 3. The landscape character is established and capable of absorbing material change that reflects or enhances the current condition.



The area is characterised by steep, forested slopes and glacial valleys rising up from the surrounding plains towards towering peat and moorland covered peaks. Due to the area's limited land capability (shallow, nutrient poor soils), the once typical marginal mountain mosaic of pasture and moorland has largely been replaced by the modern equivalent, incorporating forestry. A broad forest belt around the mountains' lower and mid slopes now separates the original land cover types. The extensive mountain peatland habitat along the crest of the Galtees is designated SAC.



#### *Landscape Characteristics*

- typical *mountain marginal mosaic*
- steep, forested slopes
- glacial valleys
- towering peaks covered with peat and moorland

#### *Distinctive Features*

- Ireland's highest inland mountain range
- extensive mountain peatland habitat, designated SAC

#### 2.2.2. Landscape Values

##### *Socio-cultural (Conservation Values)*

- The dramatic landform of the Galtees, the scenic views that they offer, and the extensive natural area and remoteness (moorland and peatland on the upper slopes and crests), contribute to the area's *aesthetic amenity*, and related *recreational amenity* value.
- The integrity and unity of the traditional *landscape pattern* and scale (moorland, field patterns and hedgerow vegetation) has been compromised, particularly by recent land cover change (forestry), giving rise to a new, equally recognisable mountain mosaic of land use.
- The traditional *settlement pattern* and vernacular architecture has been compromised by recent non-agricultural rural housing development.
- Although devoid of identifiable settlement cores or significant focal points of activity / destinations the physical prominence of the area and its location relative to the Glen of Aherlow and the proposed N8 motorway, lend the area a distinct *sense of place*, if not a recognisable identity (except when seen in the context of the Glen of Aherlow).

#### *Ecological (Conservation Values)*

- A large cSAC designated area of mountain heathland habitat and a pNHA of remnant oak wood in the Galtees, contribute to the area's significant *biodiversity* value.
- Numerous mountain streams, all feeding the Suir River, contribute to the *presence of water* in the area.

#### *Socio-economic (Enhancement / Development Values)*

- Notwithstanding the very limited land capability (shallow, nutrient poor soils), the area is productive, with its extensive coniferous forests and to a lesser extent the remaining pastoral farmland, contributing to the local economy.
- Where farmland is uneconomic there may be potential for forestry to take its place, should the land prove capable of economic production.

#### 2.2.3. Principals for Management

The LCA's conservation values (ecological and cultural) have a consistently high level of importance ranging from local to international significance (Galtees cSAC) and despite significant afforestation of the area, have remained largely intact. The contribution of the uplands in terms of image, aesthetic and recreational amenity and ecological value at the local and regional scale is significant. However, this value is largely perceived and appreciated in the neighbouring Glen of Aherlow LCA. The conservation values of the southern slopes of the Galtees are more sufficient and substitutable than the northern slopes which form part of the Glen.

Ongoing management and intervention to safeguard and enhance those components that generate the area's conservation value should be the ultimate objective in the management and development of this area. As such the upper slopes and peaks of the range comprising the Galtee SAC have been identified as a sub-area with Special sensitivity. The ridge line of the range as perceived from the Glen of Aherlow should also be protected.

#### 2.2.4. Landscape Sensitivity

The upper slopes and peaks of the range comprising the Galtee SAC have been identified as a sub-area with Special Landscape sensitivity Class 4. This means that the landscape character and value are too high to absorb change and development is generally not acceptable. Wholesale conservation is required. The ridgelines of this central upland area should also be protected.

The remainder of the character area is of High Sensitivity, Class 3 i.e. The landscape character is established and capable of absorbing material change that reflects or enhances the current condition.





#### *Landscape Characteristics*

- small scale partly wooded fields on the valley plain
- typical *mountain marginal mosaic*
- steep, forested slopes with dramatic open slopes in places
- towering peaks covered with peat and moorland

#### *Distinctive Features*

- Ireland's highest inland mountain range
- Extensive mountain heathland habitat, designated cSAC
- Aherlow river designated cSAC
- Dramatic viewpoints of valley from adjacent uplands and "frame" provided by those uplands
- Relationship between lowlands and adjacent upland areas

### 2.3.2. Landscape Values

#### *Socio-cultural (Conservation Values)*

- The dramatic enclosure of the Glen by the Galtees and Slievenamuck, the scenic views within and across the area, the extensive natural area and remoteness of the Galtee slopes coupled with the intimacy of the Aherlow valley landscape, result in a significant *aesthetic amenity*.
- These characteristics contribute to the nationally acknowledged *recreational amenity* value.
- The integrity and unity of the traditional *landscape pattern* and scale (field patterns and hedgerow vegetation) has been compromised by recent land cover change (forestry), giving rise to a new, equally recognisable mountain mosaic of land use on the Glen's enclosing slopes. The process has begun on the valley floor, with the enlargement and / or plantation of fields, potentially threatening the quality of the whole.
- The traditional *settlement pattern* and vernacular architecture of the Glen has been compromised by recent non-agricultural rural housing development and by alternative farm enterprise development (e.g. pig farms).
- The scenic combination of the dramatic scale of the mountain landscape and the relative intimacy of scale of the enclosed valley floor, along with the Glen's rural community result in a *distinct Identity / image and sense of place*.

#### *Ecological (Conservation Values)*

- Aside from the designation of the Galtee mountain heathland and Slievenamuck woodland, the Aherlow River is designated cSAC (a management plan is currently under development). These *designated areas*, along with extensive areas of moorland in the uplands and mature

hedgerow vegetation on the valley floor, contribute to the area's significant *biodiversity* value.

- The designated Aherlow River, along with the Galtee Corries and mountain streams, indicates the contribution of water to the character of the area.

#### *Socio-economic (Enhancement / Development Values)*

- The marginal quality of the uplands (shallow, nutrient poor soils) and the relatively limited land capability of the valley floor, creates limited potential for agricultural development.
- The area has nationally acknowledged recreational amenity value. The combination of socio-cultural and ecological values of the area create the potential for further, focused development of the area's *tourism economy*.

#### 2.3.3. Principals for Management

The LCA's conservation values are consistently high. The Glen is of national importance in terms of image, aesthetic and recreational amenity. Its environmental value is of international importance (Galtee Mountain and Aherlow River cSACs). These values are not sufficient or substitutable. A certain amount of compromise of these values, particularly in relation to image / sense of place, has resulted from recent landscape changes including forestry, farming intensification / diversification and rural housing. This has illustrated the LCA's vulnerability to landscape change that alters the perception of scale and traditional land use and settlement patterns.

Ongoing management and intervention to safeguard and enhance those components that generate the area's conservation value, should be the ultimate objective in the management and development of this area. No changes that might reduce the scenic value and cultural-historic value of the Glen's still largely traditional landscape pattern should be allowed, nor changes that might affect the drainage regime of the Aherlow catchment. Consolidation of settlements is required to ensure that villages develop as viable service centres to the community and the tourism industry.

The conservation values of the Glen of Aherlow are of consistently high value and support the significant local tourism economy. They should, however, be managed in tandem with the neighbouring character areas of Galtees and Slievenamuck and the pressures for change in the wider area thus ensuring the sustainable development of the areas significant natural assets for the benefit of all.

#### 2.3.4. Landscape Sensitivity

The character area is a Special Landscape of Sensitivity Class 4 i.e. This means that the landscape character and value are too high to absorb change and development is generally not acceptable except where it will be integrated and completely harmonious with the existing character.





#### *Landscape Characteristics*

- low but steeply rising forested slopes

#### *Distinctive Features*

- main viewpoint for elevated views south over the Glen of Aherlow and north over the plains to Tipperary town.

#### 2.4.2. Landscape Values

##### *Socio-cultural (Conservation Values)*

- The change in landform of Slievenamuck, the scenic views that they offer, and the extensive woodland contribute to the area's *aesthetic amenity*, and related *recreational amenity* value.
- The unity of the traditional *landscape pattern* and scale (moorland, field patterns and hedgerow vegetation) has been completely changed, giving rise to a new, upland forestry land cover.
- Although devoid of identifiable settlement cores or significant focal points of activity / destinations the relatively low lying prominence of the area and its location relative to the Glen of Aherlow and the Galtees, lend the area a distinct *sense of place*, as a gateway to these more recognised and dramatic scenic locations.
- The associations of legends and stories with Slievenamuck give a historic or cultural value.

##### *Ecological (Conservation Values)*

- A pNHA of woodland at the eastern extent of Slievenamuck, contribute to the area's significant *biodiversity* value.
- Numerous mountain streams, all feeding the Suir River, contribute to the *presence of water* in the area.

##### *Socio-economic (Enhancement / Development Values)*

- Notwithstanding the very limited land capability (shallow, nutrient poor soils), the area is productive, with its extensive coniferous forests contributing to the local economy.
- Benefits are also derived from the area's natural/environmental amenity potential.

#### 2.4.3. Principles for Management

The LCA's cultural values are high primarily as a result of its location relative to the neighbouring Glen of Aherlow. Slievenamuck is a gateway to the Glen from Tipperary Town to the north. The

ridgeline contributes substantially to the sense of natural enclosure within the Glen. The area has ecological value of national importance in the Bansha Wood pNHA at the eastern extent of the area. These values remain intact despite blanket afforestation of the LCA.

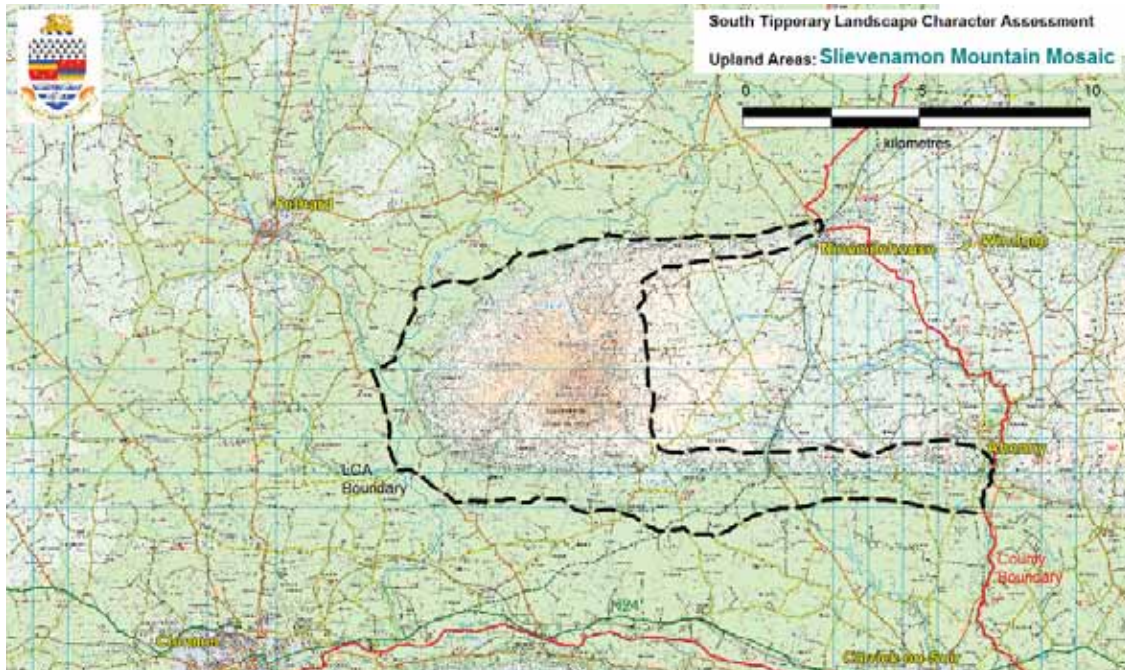
Due to the upland's relatively small scale the LCA's socio-economic values are limited except in the already optimised forestry sector.

Ongoing management and intervention to safeguard and enhance those components that generate the area's conservation value should be the ultimate objective in its management. The scenic and recreational amenity value of the LCA, specifically in relation to provision of physical and visual access to the Glen of Aherlow should be retained and enhanced.

#### 2.4.4. Landscape Sensitivity

The Slievenamuck area is of High Sensitivity, Class 3 i.e. The landscape character is established and capable of absorbing material change that reflects or enhances the current condition.

## 2.5. Slievenamon Mountain Mosaic



This area adjoins the eastern boundary of the county, extending into County Kilkenny. Its boundaries are clearly defined by transitions in geology, soils and topography. The boundary of the area is defined by the perimeter roads of the upland to north and south, local roads that roughly follow a contour at the base of the mountain slopes, and by the Anner River that skirts the base of the upland to the west. The Linguan Valley LCA is encircled on three sides by the Slievenamon LCA.

Despite the interconnectedness of physical landscape character between the Linguan valley and its defining uplands (Slievenamon to the west and the outer slopes of the ridgeline to north and south of the plateau / valley), the variation in cultural character requires that they area be treated as separate LCA to allow for more specific landscape management.

### 2.5.1. Landscape Character

The peak of Slievenamon, rising steeply to a height of 720m above the surrounding lowland plains at the western extent of the upland, is possibly the most distinctive upland feature of the County. Although the plateau to the east of the peak (Linguan Valley LCA) is flat, its outer slopes, continuous with the lower slopes of Slievenamon, are uniformly steep and of similar character to Slievenamon. Due to the area's limited land capability (shallow, nutrient poor soils), the once typical marginal mountain mosaic of pasture and moorland has largely been replaced by the contemporary equivalent, incorporating forestry. A broad forest belt around the mountains' lower and mid slopes now separates the remaining marginal fields on the lower slopes from the combination of peatbogs and moorland of the upper slopes and crests. Apart from dispersed farm houses on the lower slopes, the area is devoid of built features other than forest tracks.



#### *Landscape Characteristics*

- typical *mountain marginal mosaic*
- steep, forested slopes
- a massive peak covered with peat and moorland
- lack of built features

#### *Distinctive Features*

- distinctive form and relative isolation of Slievenamon
- spectacular views from the mountain particularly to the west over the Golden Vale

#### 2.5.2. Landscape Values

##### *Socio-cultural (Conservation Values)*

- The dramatic and distinctive landform of Slievenamon, the scenic views provided by the peak, and the extensive natural area and remoteness (moorland and peatland on the upper slopes and crests), comprise the area's *aesthetic amenity* and *recreational amenity* value.
- The integrity and unity of the traditional *landscape pattern* and scale (moorland, field patterns and hedgerow vegetation) has been compromised by recent land cover change (forestry), giving rise to a new, equally recognisable mountain mosaic of land use.
- The *settlement pattern* is sparse, limited to the lower slopes, where there has been little recent development.
- Although devoid of significant settlements or focal points of activity / destinations (other than the peak) the physical prominence and distinctive form of Slievenamon lend the area a distinct *sense of place* and identity.
- There are several clusters of cultural-historic features / monuments in the vicinity of rural settlement clusters still in existence, suggesting a long history of agriculture and settlement on the lower slopes of the uplands.

##### *Ecological (Conservation Values)*

- The extensive, relatively un-intensively farmed heath and peatland areas on the upper slopes and peaks of Slievenamon contribute to the area's biodiversity. However, there are no *designated* sites in the area.
- There are no standing water bodies but numerous mountain streams, most feeding the unpolluted Anner River (according to the EPA), which flows around the north and west of the upland and forms the area's western boundary, contribute to the *presence of water* in the area.

*Socio-economic (Enhancement / Development Values)*

- The marginal quality of the uplands (shallow and nutrient poor soils) result in limited land capability.

2.5.3. Principals for Management

The cultural value of Slievenamon is particularly high. Its distinctive landform and central location contribute to a high degree of visual exposure, generating an image value of regional importance. The LCA's aesthetic and recreational amenity value is high at the local level but un-tapped relative to other upland areas in the County. Although the environmental value of the LCA benefits from the limited human intervention / production on the upper slopes and peaks, it has been compromised by primarily conifer afforestation on the mid- and lower slopes. Environmental / biodiversity values are not recognised in any designation of sites however.

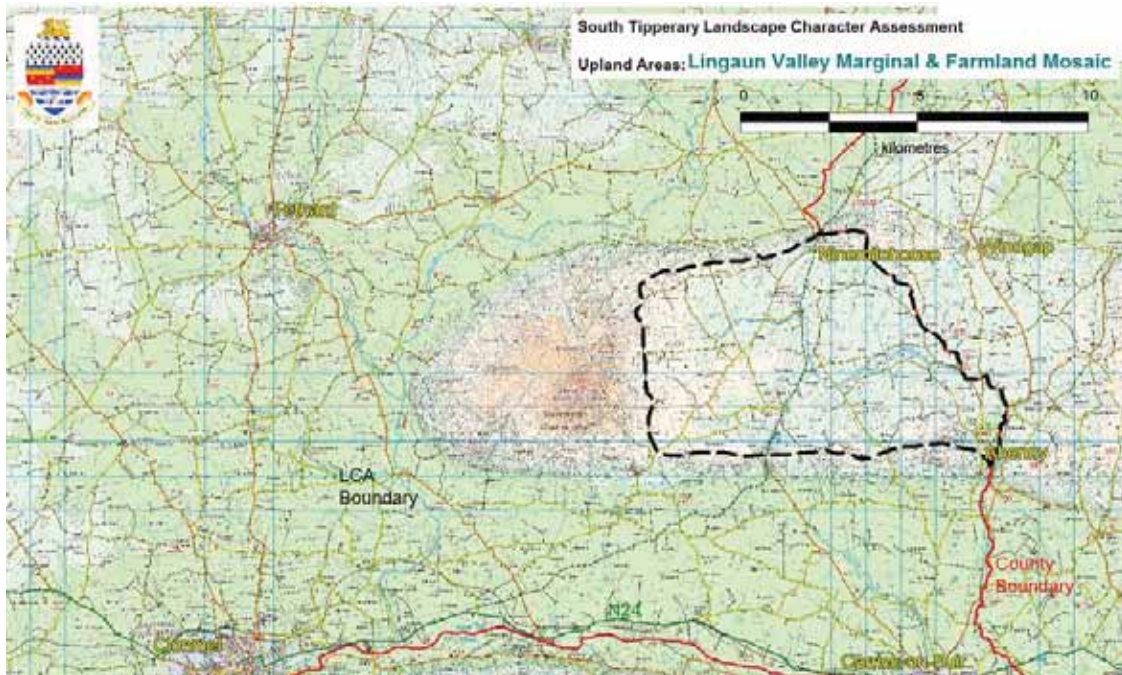
The cultural value of the LCA, generated by its unique topographical character and location, has withstood the impact of land use and land cover alteration. However, ongoing intervention to safeguard and enhance these values should be the objective of all further management of the LCA.

2.5.4. Landscape Sensitivity

In general the Slievenamon area is of Special Sensitivity Class 4. This means that the landscape character and value are too high to absorb any more than limited change. The image value of Slievenamon is particularly valued and susceptible to change.

However there are sub-areas comprising the lower slopes that enclose the Linguan Valley plateau where sensitivity is less. These areas are of Sensitivity Class 3 i.e. Highly sensitive but capable of absorbing development that complements the existing values and character of the area.

## 2.6. LINGUAN VALLEY MARGINAL AND FARMLAND MOSAIC



### 2.6.1. Landscape Character

The area is characterised by an undulating landscape of farmland patchwork with a high degree of tree cover in the form of mature hedgerows. The mostly pastoral fields are interspersed with areas of tilled lands. While this is typical of the County's lowland plains, the enclosure of the area by a rim of hills and Slievenamon (which together separate the area from the plains), its resulting elevation and isolation, as well as the undulating landform, lend it a particular character and quality. The land capability deteriorates towards the west and north, where forestry is now encroaching on the farmland patchwork, causing a subtle change in character. The settlement pattern is dispersed and relatively unaffected by modern development. Traditional farm houses and associated buildings, in traditional architectural style, are a feature of the landscape.



#### *Landscape Characteristics*

- Enclosure and relative isolation from surroundings
- typical farmland patchwork
- distinctly wooded appearance due to density and maturity of hedgerows
- relative lack of modern built features

#### *Distinctive Features*

- Enclosure caused by Slievenamon and rim of hills to north and south
- numerous hamlets or 'marginal agricultural clusters', as well as relatively few modern residential developments
- "secret" or undiscovered character

### 2.6.2. Landscape Values

#### *Socio-cultural (Conservation Values)*

- The enclosure of the area by Slievenamon and the rim of hills to north and south, the scenic views within the area and the intimacy and scale of the area's landscape pattern, result in a significant *aesthetic amenity*.
- These characteristics contribute to a potential *recreational amenity* value, as yet untapped.
- The integrity and unity of the traditional *landscape pattern* and scale (field patterns and hedgerow vegetation) are predominantly intact but have been compromised to an extent by recent land cover change (forestry) in isolated but growing patches in the north and west, potentially threatening the whole.
- The traditional *settlement pattern* and vernacular architecture of the area are largely intact. A vernacular architecture is visible in the agricultural clusters of farm houses and related buildings and the area is relatively unaffected by modern development.
- Two hillforts on the rim hills, numerous enclosures, two castle sites in the valley (beyond the County boundary) and the ecclesiastical site including two high crosses at Ahenny are testament to a long *history* of settlement and constitute the area's significant cultural-historic value.
- The scenic combination of the dramatic scale of the mountain landscape (Slievenamon) and the relative intimacy of scale of the enclosed Lingaun valley, along with the area's rural community result in a *distinct image and sense of place*, although a recognisable, marketable identity is lacking.

#### *Ecological (Conservation Values)*

- The dense pattern of mature hedgerows with abundant tree cover and the *presence of water* in the Lingaun River and numerous streams contribute to the area's *biodiversity* value. There are no *designated areas*.

#### *Socio-economic (Enhancement / Development Values)*

- The land capability is wide for the most part, with significant areas of tilled land in the south and east of the area (south of the Lingaun River). However, in the north and west the land capability is more limited.
- The combination of socio-cultural and ecological values of the area create the potential for enhanced tourism in the area.

### 2.6.3. Principals for Management

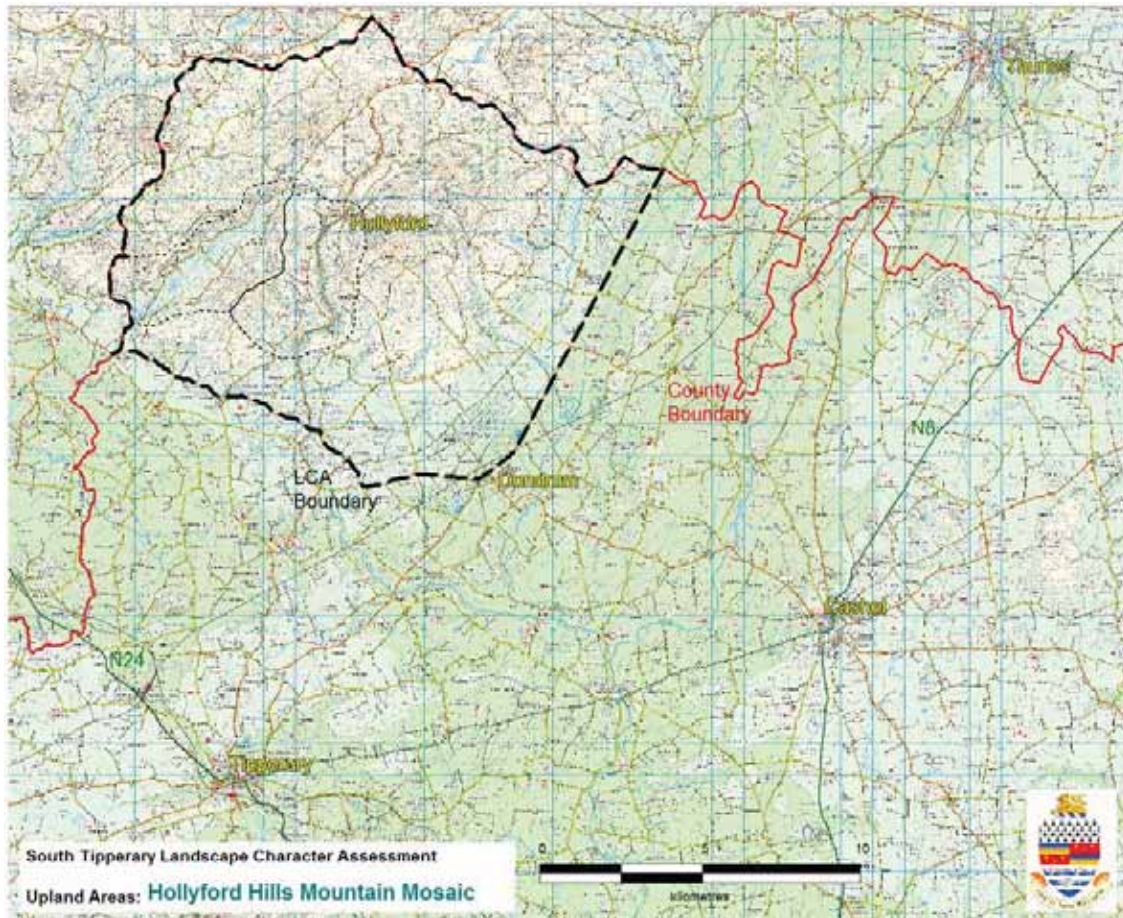
The conservation values of the Lingaun Valley LCA are consistently of a high level of importance at a local level. Its enclosure by Slievenamon and the rim of hills to north and south, the scenic views within the area and the intimacy and scale of much of its landscape pattern, result in significant aesthetic, and potentially recreational amenity value, as yet un-tapped. Due to a lack of recognition and thus active conservation and development of these values, the area has not yet realised its potential for the development of a regional landscape and amenity resource.

Due to the area's visual enclosure, there is an opportunity for the establishment of a strong area identity, potentially by employing its development value and 'working landscape' characteristics to its advantage. Any significant alteration of the landscape should take into account the landscape sensitivities of the neighbouring Slievenamon LCA.

#### 2.6.4. Landscape Sensitivity

The Linguan Valley area is of High Sensitivity, Class 3 i.e. The landscape character is established and capable of absorbing material change that reflects or enhances the current condition.

## 2.7. Hollyford Hills Mountain Mosaic



The area, comprising the southernmost extent of the Slievefelim mountain range, is situated in the north west of the County, adjoining County Limerick to the west and North Tipperary to the north. Except for these (County) boundaries, the area boundary follows the roads that skirt the lower slopes of the hills namely, the R505 between Cappawhite and Dundrum, and the R661, which heads north from Dundrum, becoming the local road LP 420.

### 2.7.1. Landscape Character

The non-linear arrangement of the hills and valleys that constitute the area, distinguish it from the County's southern uplands. The rounded hilltops, between 350m and 450m in height, are low relative to the southern uplands. The Hills' extensive pediment, extending east and southwards from the varyingly steep hillsides, is of constant but shallow gradient, resulting in a less abrupt transition from uplands to plains than elsewhere in the County. Conversely, the landform of the central portion of the area is complex relative to the County's southern, linear uplands, the deep, V-shaped valleys radiating from the central hills in all directions. The area was extensively farmed in the past and is relatively accessible by local road, but the limited land capability has resulted in a change in land cover from the once typical marginal mountain mosaic of pasture and rough grazing towards the contemporary equivalent, incorporating forestry. Because of the complex, undulating landform relative to the southern uplands, there is no forest belt, but rather an expanding pattern of plantations on the hilltops, in steep river valleys and in places on the boggy valley floors. There is a sparse settlement pattern of farm houses and buildings alongside the road network, a single village central to the area (Hollyford), and several along the Hills' perimeter road.



#### *Landscape Characteristics*

- complex arrangement of rounded hills and steep sided valleys becoming less pronounced and enclosed towards the south and east
- *mountain marginal mosaic*, however patchy as opposed to continuous as in the linear uplands to the south

#### *Distinctive Features*

- varying degree of enclosure / exposure in the landscape, but distinctly more contained than elsewhere in the County, especially towards the north and west
- random land cover / use pattern, with forestry at lower altitudes than pasture in some areas (i.e. a reversal of the norm in the County's uplands), as well as plantations extending right over the hilltops, thus excluding the moorland areas found elsewhere
- spectacular views towards the south taking in most of the County, from the area's southern hilltops

#### 2.7.2. Landscape Values

##### *Socio-cultural (Conservation Values)*

- The distinctive undulating landform of the Hills, although not particularly dramatic or of significant *aesthetic amenity* and *recreational amenity* value, is dominant in the characterisation of the area. Some views south and eastwards over the County are afforded in places, e.g. the Red Hill viewing point near Cappawhite.
- The integrity and unity of the traditional *landscape pattern* and scale (moorland, field patterns and hedgerow vegetation), although not prominent relative to the distinctive landform, has been significantly altered by recent land cover change (forestry), giving rise to a new, equally recognisable mountain mosaic of land use.
- The *settlement pattern* is sparse and concentrated adjacent to the roads following the lower slopes of the Hills. The villages are well defined and recent industrial development has led to, and provides potential for further development of settlement cores.
- The medium scale of the topographical elements and the landscape pattern somewhat diluted by the landform, do not create a distinct *sense of place* or identity in any more than the local context (e.g. the village of Hollyford in the setting of the Multeen River valley creates a sense of place locally).
- The relatively dense pattern of historic features including standing stones, megalithic tombs, moated sites and holy wells, as well as more contemporary features such as the Anglesey

Road, RIC barracks and the memorial to local deceased of the 1916 uprising, lend the area a significant historic *value*.

#### *Ecological (Conservation Values)*

- Small areas of peatland and several stretches of semi-natural vegetation on the steep valley sides of watercourses, constitute the remnants of natural habitat and contribute to the area's *biodiversity value*. Four such areas are designated, one cSAC and three pNHA.
- There are no standing water bodies but numerous mountain streams contribute to the *presence of water* in the area.

#### *Socio-economic (Enhancement / Development Values)*

- The generally marginal quality of the Hills (shallow and nutrient poor soils) result in limited land capability.

#### 2.7.3. Principals for Management

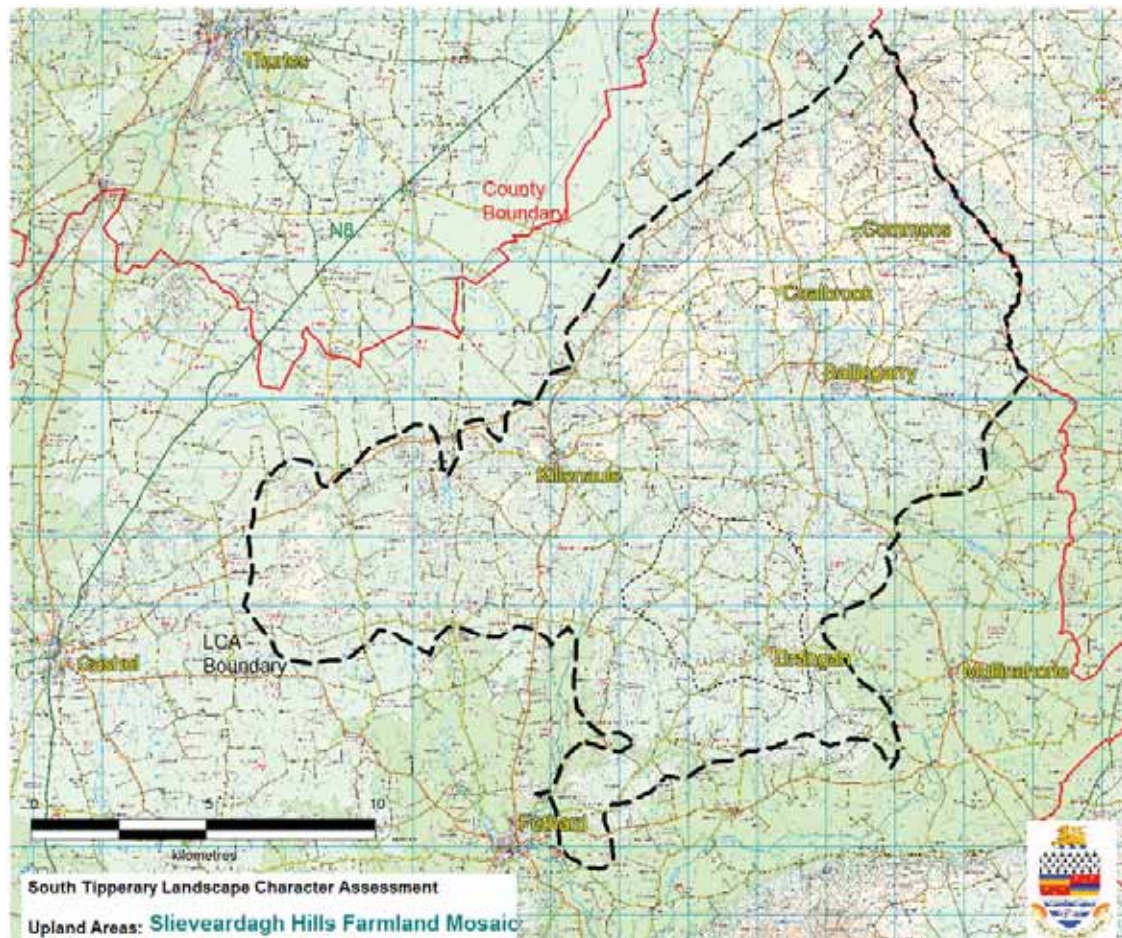
Environmental values in the Hollyford Hills are high although the particular features generating this importance are limited in extent. One cSAC (Anglesey Road), of international importance, and three pNHAs (Knocknavar Wood in the Cahernahallia River valley, Inchinsquillib Wood in the Multeen River valley and the Aughnaglanny River valley as a whole) require protection from potentially damaging landscape alteration. Other conservation values (cultural) are of medium importance, mostly at a local level. The settlement pattern (villages in particular) and the historic value derived from the numerous archaeological features emerge as being of greatest value. The integrity and unity of the traditional landscape pattern and scale (moorland, field patterns and hedgerow vegetation), have been significantly altered by recent and ongoing land cover change (afforestation), giving rise to a mixed mosaic of mountain land use. Significantly, aesthetic and recreational amenity values are low when considered in the County context (i.e. there is a sufficiency of upland amenity in the southern uplands) and therefore substitutable. The area does not contribute to a sense of place at a broader scale than local, e.g. the villages and particular viewpoints in the landscape, which have improvement and conservation potential.

Facilitation of the optimal use of the area's enhancement / development values should be the ultimate objective in the management of this area, along with the conservation and improvement of the historic settlement pattern and the enhancement of the area's environmental value.

#### 2.7.4. Landscape Sensitivity

The Hollyford Hills area is of Medium Sensitivity, Class 2 i.e. Change or Development generally acceptable as it may beneficially alter, enhance or reinforce landscape character and value (e.g. the landscape is somewhat degraded, undergoing change or the precedent for such and similar development is set and the landscape is capable of absorbing considerable change without detriment).

## 2.8. Slieveardagh Hills Farmland Mosaic



The area is situated in the north east of the County, extending across the border into neighbouring County Kilkenny. Although the Hills as such occupy a larger area, only the north eastern portion has been delineated as an upland landscape character area. The boundaries of the area are the County boundary to the north east, the R689 (between Fethard / Clonmel and Urlingford) and a lesser road (3rd class - 397, 374, 411) that skirt the north western base of the Hills, and the R691 to the south.

### 2.8.1. Landscape Character

The Hills arise as undulations in the central plain of the County, east of the River Suir, and increase in height towards the north east, where Knocknamuck, just within the County boundary, reaches an altitude of 340m. The NNE - SSW orientation of the Hills is most evident in the scarp slope that separates the Hills from the plain to the north and west. Behind the crest of the steep scarp slope, the row of elongated, flattened hilltops sloping gently to the south, forms (the impression of) a plateau broken by the valleys of small streams, before the land falls away at varying gradient towards the plains to the south. The transition between the upland area and plains thus varies between very abrupt (to the north) and relatively imperceptible, depending on the orientation of one's approach and / or view. The transport and rural settlement pattern is typical in density of the agricultural lowlands of the County, pastoral agriculture being the primary land use in the area. However, the area's history of coal mining, which came to an end in the eighties, has left a visible impact on the landscape, both in the form of mining infrastructure and in the layout and architecture of the planned mining settlements.



#### *Landscape Characteristics*

- Steep scarp slope to the NW behind which the flattened hilltops form a plateau that descends into undulating hills and valleys that merge gradually with the plains to S and W
- Accordingly, a varying degree of enclosure in the landscape
- *farmland mosaic*, however, distinctly marginal in places, with the beginnings of incremental afforestation of private lands visible
- Fields generally large and marginal in appearance, separated by low hedgerows, but with smaller fields and broadleaf-dominated hedgerows in the valleys

#### *Distinctive Features*

- The scarp slope separating the Hills from the bog plains to the north of the area is distinctive locally
- The remaining mining infrastructure, in the form of air shafts, are very distinctive built features
- The mining villages, such as at Commons, being planned settlements, are distinctive features of the landscape
- The spectacular view towards the north over the bogs on the plains from the top of the northern scarp slope are unique in the County context

#### 2.8.2. Landscape Values

##### *Socio-cultural (Conservation Values)*

- Except for the steep north western scarp slope, the landform of the area is not particularly dramatic or of significant *aesthetic* and / or *recreational amenity* value. Extensive views, northwards in particular, are afforded in places, e.g. the Reen viewing point near New Birmingham.
- The integrity and unity of the blanket coverage of the traditional *landscape pattern*, i.e. pastoral farmland mosaic on an undulating landform, has been altered recently by isolated, mostly conifer plantations on privately owned lands. Isolated elements or features of other land use (e.g. mining infrastructure and telecommunications towers) also characterise the landscape pattern. However, mostly marginal pastoral agriculture, remains the dominant land cover type.
- The *settlement pattern* is dense relative to both the plains and other upland areas, the agricultural population having been bolstered by a mining community. Villages such as Commons, New Birmingham and the now abandoned Mardyke, are examples of planned

industrial (coal mining) settlements. Villages such as Ballingarry and Killenaule have also been affected by planned housing for a non-agricultural element of the population.

- Apart from certain locations e.g. those in close proximity to coal mining infrastructure / settlements and particular viewpoints, the area's landscape generated *sense of place* or identity is limited (landform and landscape pattern are unremarkable and the transition between the area and the surrounding plains is mostly indistinct).
- The area's *historic value* is however high, with numerous prehistoric sites, a medieval settlement at Grange near Kilcooly Abbey, a history of Palatine settlement in the 18th Century, a long history of mining, the site of the 1848 warehouse (and associated Tricolour monument), etc.

#### *Ecological (Conservation Values)*

- Except for small boggy areas at the margins of pastoral lands and the small streams that drain the area, there are no remnants of habitat survival. *Biodiversity* is therefore low. There is an almost blanket coverage of fairly intensive agricultural land use and there are no *designated areas*.
- There are no standing water bodies but numerous streams, mostly feeding the Kings River to the south and the Munster River forming the area's (and County's) eastern border, contribute to the *presence of water* in the area.

#### *Socio-economic (Enhancement / Development Values)*

- The relatively poorly drained acid brown earths predominant in the area result in limited land capability and the farmland is generally of marginal quality.

#### 2.8.3. Principals for Management

The LCA's conservation values are generally limited to a local level of importance. There are no environmental designations and very limited aesthetic or recreational amenity value relative to the southern upland LCAs. The settlement pattern (specifically villages) and the historic value derived from the numerous industrial features in particular, emerge as being of greatest value, lending the area a distinctive sense of place / identity locally. The area has an historic association with energy production, having been mined for coal up until the 1980s. Numerous physical remnants of this land use remain.

Facilitation of the optimal use of the area's enhancement / development values should be the ultimate objective in the management of this area, along with the conservation and improvement of the historic character of productivity.

#### 2.7.4. Landscape Sensitivity

The Slieveardagh area is of Medium Sensitivity, Class 2 i.e. Change or Development generally acceptable as it may beneficially alter, enhance or reinforce landscape character and value (e.g. the landscape is somewhat degraded, undergoing change or the precedent for such and similar development is set and the landscape is capable of absorbing considerable change without detriment).

### 3.0. LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY MAP



South Tipperary County Council -  
Landscape Policy for General Development

