



### Location and Context

The *Plateau Grassland - Borders* Landscape Character Type occurs as a single area in the central section of the Moorfoot/Lammermuir plateau, bounded by the valleys of the Gala and the Leader. The area forms an upland plateau landscape of smooth gently rolling hills covered by coarse acid grassland.

### Key Characteristics

- Large scale, rolling plateau topography with gentle slopes and smooth relief.
- Vegetation cover dominated by coarse grassland with localised patches of heather moorland, rush pasture and scattered small coniferous plantations and shelterbelts.
- Low density settlement with widely dispersed farm buildings.
- Wind farm development in the northern and central parts of the Landscape Character Type.
- Remote, isolated quality.
- Open, panoramic views.

### Landscape Character Description

#### *Landform*

*Plateau Grassland - Borders* is distinguished from *Dissected Plateau Moorland* by a slightly lower elevation and a dominance of grassland cover. The plateau height ranges from 350 to 400 metres, the consistent hills being typically dome-shaped with convex slopes. The large scale landform has subtle variations in relief caused by narrow shallow gullies eroded by minor burns. The solid geology is similar to the main plateau, consisting of greywackes and shales of lower Palaeozoic age. The entire area is covered by varying thicknesses of glacial drifts from which a soil cover of brown forest soils is derived.

#### *Landcover*

Land cover is dominated by coarse acid grassland, with smaller remnants of dry Atlantic heather moor on higher ground, and rushes in poorly drained, low lying areas. The grassland is typically unimproved or semi-improved rough grazing of acid

bent fescues, dominated by sheep and cattle grazing in large units defined by drystone dykes. Tree cover is rare, and consists mainly of scattered small coniferous plantation blocks and shelterbelts, often enclosed by drystone dykes, with some larger forestry blocks, the most prominent of which is at Hartside Hill to the north-west of Oxton.

### *Settlement*

The plateau has some evidence of earlier landuse, in particular in the form of prehistoric settlements which can be found on the high ground above water courses. Scattered prehistoric burial cairns are also present, notably around Lauder Common. The northern part of this landscape, near Dun Law Wind Farm, is crossed by Dere Street, the strategic Roman road that connected legionary fortresses in York and Perthshire. Where the road leaves this landscape character type at its northern end is the important medieval hospital at Soutra Aisle.

Prior to its enclosure, the plateau was a true Common, its marches demarcated by cairns, and periodically policed by a traditional Common Riding, as elsewhere in the Border grazing lands. Settlement consists of widely dispersed farm buildings located in sheltered valleys and often protected by topography or associated shelterbelt plantations. The transport network consists of minor roads and farm tracks, together with the B6368 and B6362 which traverse the plateau linking the A7 and A68 Trunk Roads. Multiple wind farm developments occur within the character type, with Dun Law, Pogbie, and Toddleburn in north and Long Park lying in the central part.

### *Perception*

On the plateau top the landscape is open, large scale, and exposed in character, with distant and panoramic views often gained over the adjoining landscape types. The infrequency of field boundaries, lack of enclosure at road edges at high levels uniformity of the land cover and large scale of the landform all contribute to an impression of some remoteness. The grassland colours vary between fresh green of early summer through to gold and russet in the late summer to straw coloured in winter. The isolated patches of heather on higher ground create a distinctive contrast in colour and texture with the surrounding grassland. The dark green colour and coarser texture of the conifer plantations and shelterbelts is conspicuous against the lighter hues and finer grained texture of the surrounding grassland vegetation, particularly during the winter.

This is one of 390 Landscape Character Types identified at a scale of 1:50 000 as part of a national programme of Landscape Character Assessment republished in 2019.

The area covered by this Landscape Character Type was originally included in the Borders LCA (ASH Consulting Group), published 1999