



Location and Context

The *Southern Uplands with Scattered Forest - Borders* Landscape Character Type is an upland landscape characterised by large-scale, rolling, heather and grassland covered hills. They occur in 3 locations; east of the Broad Law group (Elibank, Traquir and Ettrick Forest areas), Cauldcleuch Head hill group, and near Dun Knowe.

Key Characteristics

- Large-scale rolling landform with higher dome or cone-shaped summits.
- Significant areas of peatland and heather moorland.
- Mosaic of grassland, bracken and rushes on lower ground.
- Locally-prominent scattered large areas of forestry.
- Degree of remoteness, wild character and grandeur of scale unique within the region.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The three *Southern Uplands* Landscape Character Types (*Southern Uplands - Borders*, *Southern Uplands with Scattered Forest* and *Southern Uplands with Forest*) are distinguished from the plateau landscapes by the generally more pronounced rolling nature of the terrain, and by their extending in places to significantly higher elevations. The *Southern Uplands with Scattered Forest* type ranges from 200 to around 600 metres. The topography is characterised by large dome and cone-shaped hills and ridges separated by deep, steep-sided valleys, many of which exhibit evidence of glacial erosion and local fluvioglacial deposits. This assemblage of glacially-sculpted landforms in high altitude areas make them very locally distinctive. The hills are predominantly smooth, but are creased by minor clefts and gullies and interrupted in places by scree and rock outcrops. The hills are formed predominantly by greywackes and shales of Lower Palaeozoic age with Lower Carboniferous sandstones in the southern part of the Cauldcleuch Head group. Varying thicknesses of glacial drifts cover all areas and the soils derived from these include a range of brown forest soils, gleys

and podzols on the slopes and blanket peats on the highest ground.

The Dun Knowe group and the area east of the Broad Law group, and the northern part of the Cauldcleuch Head hill group, form part of the drainage basin of the River Tweed. The southern part of the Cauldcleuch Head hill group drains southwards into the River Esk. There are valley reservoirs and lochs which add diversity.

Landcover

Land cover is predominantly heather moorland and coarse grassland. On the higher ground, wet and dry Atlantic heather moorland are dominant. The grassland which is prevalent in lower areas is typically unimproved grazing of bents and fescues interspersed in places with patches of bracken, and with rushes in wetter areas. In some areas the grassland extends over the hill tops. Large coniferous forests are prominent in many parts of this landscape type. In some areas forests include a mix of species and have irregular edges. Elsewhere large, often straight sided, single species plantations, typically of Sitka spruce, cover hill tops and valleys. Broadleaf woodland, mainly of oak, birch and alder is mostly confined to sheltered valleys and burn courses.

Land use of the grassland is predominantly sheep grazing, usually on lower slopes and valleys in large units divided by drystone dykes. The traditional circular dyke shelters, known as sheep stells, are a distinctive landscape pasture on the lower ground. Much of the heather moorland is managed for grouse, creating the typical irregular patchwork pattern of muirburn.

Settlement

There are no large towns or villages in this landscape type and settlement consists mainly of widely spaced farmsteads along sheltered valleys. The road network is correspondingly sparse. The A7 which links Edinburgh to Carlisle follows the valley floor across the Cauldcleuch Head hill group. The Ettrick Forest area is traversed by A708 which links the A74 with Selkirk and Galashiels.

Evidence of earlier settlement on the fringes of these hill groups includes the Roman fort at Oakwood near Selkirk. In the more recent past, the main cattle drove road from Falkirk to England crossed the edges of Broadlaw Group en route from Peebles to the Yarrow.

Perception

This is a dramatic large-scale landscape, open and exposed on the hills and often strongly enclosed within valleys. Views from high ground are distant and panoramic, often including adjoining landscape types. The highest summits have a grand and remote character which is rare elsewhere on the Border Hills, making the area highly visually sensitive. The typical seasonal grassland and moorland colours are augmented by patches of orange-brown bracken through the winter. The forests are predominantly dark green and coarse in texture, contrasting with grassland and moorland vegetation. In some areas larch and broadleaf woodland are prominent, their bright green summer foliage often contrasting with a backdrop of darker spruce or pine forest. In autumn and winter these provide further colour diversity.

Variation

The three different hill groups within this Landscape Character Type can be distinguished by variations in topography and land cover as summarized below;

The area to the east of the Broad Law Group rise to approximately 600 metres and have glacially sculpted features. St Mary's Loch is prominently located along the A708 north of The Wiss. There are extensive conifer forests in the north at Traquair, Elibank, Cardrona and Yair Hill.

The Dun Knowe hill group has lower summits, ranging mainly between 300-470 metres, and there are scattered, small, locally prominent small lochs. To the east of Dun Knowe there is an extensive conifer forest, and extensive views to adjacent *Southern Uplands with Forest* Landscape Character Type at Craik Forest can be gained.

In the Cauldcleuch Head Group hill peaks mainly range between 300 and 600 metres. The southern area of this hill group has gently to moderately sloping heather moor and grassland in the south. Extensive conifer forests are prominent in views to the adjacent *Southern Uplands with Forest – Borders* Landscape Character Type.

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.