



Location and Context

The *Southern Uplands – Borders* Landscape Character Type comprises the highest and remotest mountain areas of the Southern Uplands within the Scottish Borders. Occurring in one large area it includes the Broad Law group of mountains. It is adjoined to the west by the similar *Southern Uplands – Central* in South Lanarkshire, and to the south by the *Southern Uplands – Dumfries & Galloway*.

Key Characteristics

- Extensive, large scale rolling upland landscape with dome or cone-shaped summits and ridges.
- Glacial carved and smoothed landforms, including u-shaped valleys, hanging valleys and corries.
- Steep-sided valleys with numerous burns
- Open, exposed character.
- Significant areas of peatland and heather moorland on higher slopes.
- Transition to rough grazing on lower slopes, with some sizeable areas of conifer woodland at base of main glens.
- Upland areas largely undeveloped, except for occasional upland farms.
- Reservoirs and roads in main glens.
- High degree of remoteness, wild character and grandeur of scale within the region.
- Wide ranging panoramic views from summits.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The Broad Law Group of mountains, which make up the majority of the *Southern Uplands – Borders* Landscape Character Type, includes the highest summits in the Region, generally between 500 and 840 metres in height. Broad Law itself is the second highest summit in the Southern Uplands. 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. These distinctive hills are predominantly smooth, 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. 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 Broad Law group forms part of the drainage basin of the River Tweed. The Megget, Talla and Fruid reservoirs are located to the south of Broad Law. They add landscape diversity and often serve as a focus for informal recreation.

Landcover

Land cover is predominantly coarse grassland. On the higher ground, wet and dry Atlantic heath moorland is 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. The grassland on lower slopes and in valleys is predominantly grazed by sheep, 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.

Large conifer forests are present only on lower slopes of the upper Tweed valley and along the Manor Water. These are often large, often straight sided, single species plantations. Broadleaf woodland, mainly of oak, birch and alder is mostly confined to sheltered valleys and burn courses.

Settlement

Settlement is sparse, consisting mainly of widely spaced farmsteads along sheltered valleys. There are a few small villages and hamlets, such as Tweedsmuir, Hearthstone and Stanhope, on the fringe of the Landscape Character Type in the upper Tweed valley. The road network is correspondingly sparse, consisting of minor roads in larger valleys serving the reservoirs. Two main roads skirt the Landscape Character Type, with stretches of the A701 and the A708 traversing valleys. The Glenkerie and Clyde wind farms are prominent features on the western side of the A701.

Evidence of earlier settlement on the fringes of this hill group includes the Celtic settlement and field systems in the upper Manor Water valley. In the more recent past, the main cattle drove road from Falkirk to England crossed the edges of Broad Law Group en route from Peebles to the Yarrow.

Perception

This is a dramatically sculpted, 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. They are popular for hillwalking. Patches of orange-brown bracken through the winter augment the typical seasonal grassland and moorland colours. The forests are predominantly dark green and coarse-textured, 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.

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.