



### Location and Context

Lying between the Southern Upland Fault and the Pentland Hills, the *Rolling Farmland - Borders* Landscape Character Type is an undulating upland fringe landscape of large-scale fields, with mixed arable and pastoral land use. It is present in 5 areas in the Scottish Borders – Lempitlaw, Oxnam, Westruther, Minto Hills and West Linton Synclinal Belt

### Key Characteristics

- Undulating relief, becoming more pronounced at higher elevations.
- Distinctive areas of flat or constant gentle gradients, giving wide horizons and skylscapes.
- Large-scale strong geometric field pattern, enclosed by hedgerows, with scattered coniferous woods.
- Mix of arable, ley pasture and permanent grazing land.
- Moderately densely settled, with frequent farmsteads and small villages.
- Well kempt, prosperous appearance.

### Landscape Character Description

#### *Landform*

The rather diverse *Rolling Farmland - Borders* is found on the margins of the Tweed Lowlands, and also in a broad synclinal depression which forms a fringe of the Midland Valley, lying between the Southern Upland Fault and the Pentland Hills. It is distinguished by a characteristic topography of rolling undulations, becoming steeper and more pronounced towards the uplands and more gentle at the lowland fringes. The geology reflects the relief, predominantly consisting of a mix of Silurian greywackes and softer Old Red Sandstones, with the occasional igneous intrusion or lava flow. An exception can perhaps be seen north of the Southern Upland Fault in West Linton where younger Carboniferous sedimentaries can be found. Soil types include brown forest soils with smaller localized areas of gleys, peat podzols and alluvium. All landscape character areas of this Type fall within the Tweed drainage system.

### *Landcover*

Land cover is characterized by a patchwork of medium or large sized arable, permanent and ley pasture fields typically enclosed by mature beech or hawthorn hedgerows or fences. Drystone dykes are common in the higher areas where sheep grazing predominates. Tree cover consists of mainly coniferous and mixed forestry blocks and shelterbelts. Broadleaf trees are generally less prominent, occurring mainly in small woodlands close to farmsteads, shelterbelts, or occasionally in hedgerows and narrow riparian strips along burn courses.

### *Settlement*

Much of this landscape has improved fields leaving pockets of archaeological remains, including some of the earliest funerary monuments in the West Linton and Harelaw Muir areas. Other notable features are the two Roman roads that cut through the landscape (Dere Street and the Carlisle to Cramond road).

Later industrial activity has left traces, especially around West Linton, the earliest being the 16th Century silver and lead mines at Siller Holes and the large industrial scale limestone quarry with extant lime kilns at Bents. Traces of rig and furrow and the medieval cultivation terraces at Romannobridge on the fringe of West Linton Synclinal Belt may be over 1000 years old and testify to the continuity of agricultural land use in this landscape. Today, settlement consists mainly of scattered stone farm buildings, often with modern barns attached. The neat villages have a distinctive vernacular style, typically of small-scale stone terraced buildings and slate roofs. This type is well served by a network of mainly minor roads. The presence of major road routes in the Westruther and West Linton areas (A697, A702 and A701) make these locations locally more visually sensitive.

### *Perception*

On higher ground this landscape is open in character with distant views often gained over the regular geometric field pattern on lowland farmlands and to the adjacent upland areas. A more enclosed intimate character is created locally by landform and woodlands, with intermediate visual horizons formed in places by mature hedgerow tree lines. The farmlands have a varied patchwork appearance throughout the seasons. In winter the brown and red tinged ploughed fields contrast strongly with the bright and muted greens of the permanent pastures. In summer the landscape is dominated by a colourful tapestry of light, dark and yellow green hues accentuated by darker coloured plantations, fresh green broadleaf woodlands and hedgerows.

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.