



Location and Context

The *Upland Valley with Pastoral Floor* Landscape Character Type comprises six areas, including all the major rivers draining the Tweedsmuir Hills (Biggar Water, Upper Tweed, Manor Water, Upper Yarrow and Upper Ettrick), together with the Lyne Water and the Upper valley of Liddel Water. The landscape is characterised by flat valley bottom pastures, strongly enclosed by steep valley sides merging with heather and forest covered uplands.

Key Characteristics

- Glaciated valleys with moderately to strongly sloping sides and flat floor modified by river bluffs and glacial moraine.
- Improved pastures with occasional small woodlands and tree lines on valley floors.
- Rough unimproved grazing, heather moorland or coniferous forest on valley sides.
- Scattered stone built villages with farmsteads and dwellings dispersed along river terraces, lower valley sides and tributary valleys.
- A simple, distinctive landscape strongly enclosed by uplands with intermittent long views along valley corridors.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Upland Valley with Pastoral Floor* landforms are characterised by a flat valley floor, with moderately to steeply sloping sides, frequently incised by narrow v-shaped tributary valleys. The valley floor and lower sides may be modified by bluffs or terraces eroded by river meanders and minor undulations related to fluvio-glacial deposits. The valleys are carved in sedimentary rocks of Ordovician and Silurian age. The valleys in the Ordovician (Lyne, Biggar Water) tend to be wider and with less steeply-sloping sides. Liddesdale, which has been carved into Carboniferous rocks, is aligned for most of its length with a series of parallel faults. The soils underlying the valley side slopes are typically similar to those of surrounding uplands, whilst the valley floors are covered mainly by alluvial or fluvio-glacial material.

Landcover

Land cover on the valley floor is predominantly improved permanent sheep grazing pasture divided into a regular pattern of small and medium sized fields by drystone dykes. Occasional patches of rushes, scrub and rough grassland are found on the wetter areas of the river floodplains. The valley sides are typically covered by a rough mosaic of unimproved hill grassland in large units, divided by fences or drystone dykes, interspersed with occasional screes. In some areas the valley sides are covered by large coniferous plantations which often extend into the surrounding uplands. Elsewhere tree cover consists mainly of scattered small mixed and broadleaf woodland blocks shelterbelts and hedgerow lines which contribute to visual enclosure and diversity. The river bluffs and tributary valleys commonly carry narrow strips of broadleaf woodland. Landscape and environmental sensitivity is recognised by a high number of natural heritage designations

Settlement

Settlement consists of numerous villages and farmsteads scattered along the valley typically sited on the terraces above the river floodplain and in the sheltered mouths of tributary valleys. Buildings are typically simply constructed of traditional stone with slate roofs frequently sheltered by small tree groups. Well-trafficked roads typically follow the river terraces along the lower valley sides. They are predominantly of local importance, although the A701 (Upper Tweed), A72 (Lyne) and A708 (Upper Yarrow) are of regional importance.

The river valleys have formed natural routeways through the uplands since prehistoric times. Evidence of earlier human activity in this Landscape Character Type ranges from the temporary camps of the earliest hunter gatherers, through the ritual monuments and settlements of the prehistoric period, to Roman roads and forts, medieval towers (such as Kirkhope and Tushielaw towers in the Ettrick valley) and castles (an example being Hermitage in the valley of the Liddel Water), and the extensive areas retaining field remains of many of the different historic periods.

Perception

The character of this landscape type is dominated by the surrounding uplands. The valley floor typically has an intimate enclosed quality with views confined to a narrow corridor, and occasional glimpses of tributary valleys. Long views may be gained along straighter, more open sections. Elsewhere, visual horizons are formed by steep interlocking spurs, woodland blocks and tree lines. The sense of enclosure and intimacy may be accentuated in places by conifer plantations on the valley sides, and wooded river bluffs. A distinctive feature of this landscape type is the contrast between the regular pattern of smooth green improved pastures on the valley floor and the coarse textured mosaic of unimproved grassland and heather on the valley sides and surrounding uplands. Buildings in this landscape generally fit well into the landform, often adding texture and variety to the landscape.

Variation

In addition to the landscape characteristics outlined above, each area of the *Upland Valley with Pastoral Floor* has the following distinctive features;

- The Upper Ettrick has a marshy upper valley floor with alder and willow scrub, and a distinctive dramatic river gorge with exposed rock strata at Ettrick Bridge.
- The Upper Tweed has a narrow valley floor, characterised by small permanent

pasture fields, divided by drystone dykes. Conifer forest is prominent on the valley sides and adjacent uplands.

- The Liddel Water is a predominantly shallow valley with gently to moderately sloping and rolling sides, and numerous narrow, wooded tributary valleys. There are frequent marsh and rush pastures on the valley floor, with forestry dominant on valley sides and surrounding uplands in north eastern areas. The village of Newcastleton has a distinctive formal layout.
- Manor Water has locally prominent scree and rock outcrops.
- Biggar Water has a broad flat-floored valley, with smooth, gently to moderately sloping sides and a narrow, straightened river channel. There are large pastures and scattered arable fields divided by fences, drainage channels, drystone dykes and widely dispersed shelterbelts. Overall the character is simple, uniform and open, with distant views along the valley.
- Lyne Water has a predominantly small-scale, narrow, flat-bottomed valley, widening at the junction of Tarth Water, with moderately sloping valley sides. There are medium-sized permanent pasture fields, divided by drystone dykes and mature deciduous trees and hedgerows which contrast with heather and grass moorland on upper valley sides. Scattered farmsteads are located on the valley floor edge and immediate hill slopes. Steep gullies and tributary valleys are often wooded, with gorse or scrub, and there is dominant conifer forest on the upper main valley sides.



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.