



Location and Context

The *Pastoral Upland Valley* is represented by the Eddleston and Gala Water valleys, on the flanks of the Moorfoot plateau. It comprises open, medium to large scale valleys with moderately sloping sides.

Key Characteristics

- Flat valley floor with smooth moderately sloping sides incised by narrow tributary valleys and enclosed by rolling dissected plateau uplands.
- Land cover of permanent pastures on valley floor and sides with frequent woodlands, merging with unimproved grassland and heather on upper slopes.
- Scattered farms and villages along the valley floor and lower sides typically built around road junctions and river crossings.
- A medium scale enclosed landscape of smooth curves, strongly influenced by the surrounding uplands.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Pastoral Upland Valley* Landscape Character Type is generally more open and larger in scale than the *Upland Valley with Pastoral Floor*, and the moderate enclosing slopes typically allow improved pasture to extend high on to the valley sides. The sides may frequently be incised by narrow v-shaped tributary valleys. The valley floor is generally flat and narrow, widening out in areas of less resistant geology. Landform is mainly smooth and large in scale with local undulations and flat terraces. In some areas the rivers have cut steep bluffs at the floodplain edges. Localised areas of scree are prominent on some of the steeper valley sides particularly in the Gala Water. There is a diversity of landform features at detailed scale. In geological terms, both valleys cut across the regional trend of the rock structure, with the result that differences in resistance to erosion tend to be closely reflected by fluctuations in valley width, alignment and the steepness of side slopes. This quality is more strongly exhibited in the Gala where the Silurian sediments are also frequently interrupted by intrusions of igneous rock. Soils on the valley sides are mainly similar to those of the

surrounding upland landscapes. The valley floors are typically underlain by alluvial soils.

Landcover

Land cover on the river floodplain is mainly improved pasture in medium sized fields with occasional rushes, scrub willow and gorse vegetation. The valley sides typically carry large fields of permanent pasture with some arable land on lower slopes. On the upper edges of the valley the improved pasture gives way to heather moorland and semi-improved rough hill grazing of acid bent fescues. Fields are divided mainly by drystone dykes and fences. Approaching the watersheds to the north the valleys become noticeably shallower and pastures rougher, eventually merging with coarse upland grasslands of the adjoining plateaux.

Trees form a strong element in this landscape type with mainly broadleaf species on the lower slopes and valley floor; typically in small to medium scale mature woodlands with scattered clumps of willow and alder along the river banks and disused railway lines. Narrow riparian woodlands are also a feature of some of the tributary valleys. In many areas coniferous plantations and shelterbelts extend up the valley sides to the surrounding hills.

Settlement

Settlement pattern is controlled by physical factors. It consists mainly of scattered farms and small villages built around river crossing points and road junctions. Buildings are typically of traditional grey whinstone or harled, usually with slate roofs. There are groups of traditional wooden holiday 'bothies'. In the Gala Water valley, the Borders Rail Line from Edinburgh to Tweedbank is a distinctive feature in the valley floor with its bridge crossings and rock armouring along the route of the line. The transport network is well developed with major roads (the A7 in the Gala Water, and the A703 on the Eddleston Water) generally following the river terraces elevated above the valley floor, and numerous minor roads extending into the surrounding tributary valleys and uplands. Earlier occupation is represented by later prehistoric settlements including brochs at Torwoodlee and Bow on opposite sides of the Gala Water. Brochs are a monument type unique to Scotland and are characteristic monuments of the north and west Atlantic coasts; the presence of two such sites in this valley is extremely unusual. The low numbers of surviving medieval monuments in what must have been a significant routeway throughout history is also notable, with a few early churches along the valley and Torwoodlee Tower the only upstanding medieval tower house in the area

Perception

This is medium to large scale but strongly enclosed landscape. The upland influence, although strong, is less dominant than in the 'pastoral floor' type valleys where the heather and rough grassland often extend down to the valley floor. Views are typically medium to long in range along the valley corridor, with visual horizons formed by interlocking spurs and woodlands with occasional glimpses of the Long Park wind farm. Views into this Landscape Character Type are confined to the immediately adjoining plateau margins.

The colours of the landscape are dominated by the fresh greens of the permanent pastures, accentuated on the valley sides by dark coloured coniferous plantation and shelterbelts and given texture by broadleaf woodland in the valley floor and the upper valley sides. The regular pattern of smooth green improved pastures contrasts with the rough textured mosaic appearance of the heather moorland and coarse grasses.

There are distinctive features special to each valley. The Eddleston Water Valley has distinctive small-scale mounds and terraces derived from fluvioglacial gravels and sands along the upper valley, with a narrow, occasionally straightened river channel. In the Gala Water Valley the meandering river is prominent in the valley floor and there are frequent valley-side woodlands. There is considerable variation in valley width, with alternating open and enclosed sections. The scree slopes which are present do not occur in the other valley. The Border rail line is a key feature defining the character of this valley.



This is one of 389 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.