



Location and Context

The *Narrow Wooded River Valley – Dumfries & Galloway* Landscape Character Type occurs in areas of more resistant solid geology where the extents of glacial and fluvial erosion have been limited to narrow incised channels. These valleys can be found on 9 rivers – Cree, Palnure, Ken, Moneypool, Fleet, Urr, Kirtle, Liddel and Eskdale.

Key Characteristics

- Narrow incised valleys with wooded slopes enclosing pasture floors.
- Small pastures and arable fields enclosed by hedges/fences in lower reaches and drystone dykes in upper reaches.
- Dominant broadleaf (semi-natural) woodland character with conifers on higher slopes.
- Lush trough-shaped river valleys with pasture/arable floors enclosed by deciduous wooded slopes.
- Riparian trees and woodlands following meandering river courses in lower reaches.
- Narrow lanes following valleys and linking isolated houses, occasional settlements and providing access to higher moorland.
- Clusters of prehistoric landscapes and settlement up some valleys, notably in Eskdale.
- Numerous arched stone bridges over the rivers.
- Intimate unspoilt landscape focussing on river views with some adjacent policy landscape.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Narrow Wooded River Valleys - Dumfries & Galloway* are clearly defined topographic features whose profiles change throughout their length. They are found in the west and

central parts of the region in association with the River Cree, Water of Fleet, Urr Water and Cairn Water. They sometimes occupy the narrow upper reaches of the watercourses, and sometimes including river mouths as they enter the sea. They also extend through a wide variety of other Landscape Character Types, from high hills of the *Southern Uplands – Dumfries & Galloway* to the *Drumlin Pastures* and *Coastal Plateau – Dumfries & Galloway*.

Within these valleys the flat floor is at about 50 metres above sea level, while the steep valley sides rise up to more than 100 metres. The proportions of these generally trough-shaped valleys can vary, with a wide flat valley floor dominating in the lower reaches while upper reaches are typically v-shaped. Generally, these are intimate, small-scale landscapes with enclosed views.

Landcover

The steep v-shaped upper reaches are dominated by wooded slopes. The lower reaches usually have flat valley floors, sometimes discontinuous, through which the river meanders. These flat sections have river meadows and riparian woodland: their side slopes are also steep and mostly wooded. Woodlands are an essential feature of this landscape character type, creating intimate enclosure and restricting views. They typically comprise a mixture of semi-natural woodlands, shelterbelts, and farm and policy woodlands with small to medium scale conifer forests extending from the higher slopes. The woodlands are separated by pastures of small scale that provide spatial interest and permit views across the valleys. The fields are divided by hedges and fences in the lower areas with stone dykes more prevalent in the upper reaches. These landscapes typically contain minor roads which follow the valley floor giving access to isolated houses, some of which have large gardens or designed parkland.

The flat land in the valley bottoms is generally given over to pasture or arable. These small fields are generally divided by either hedges or fences in lower areas and stone walls in upper reaches. The fields are found within the lower meanders of the river itself and the course of the river is frequently highlighted by riparian trees, tree lines and wetland areas. The extent and patterns of broadleaf woodland are essential components of this Landscape Character Type. The steep valley slopes are generally covered, with semi-natural woodland and conifer plantations may be evident on hill land above the valley.

Settlement

These valleys frequently contain lanes which use the valleys to gain access to open moorland above. These winding valley roads, lined by trees, walls, hedgerows and the rivers, have a special character generated by the variety of scene, light and shade and spatial enclosure. There are few settlements, although some have developed around bridging points, for example, the cluster of houses and former mill buildings at Bridge of Urr. Isolated houses are more common, often surrounded by large gardens with exotic species, and some valleys, for example Cairn Water, have policy landscape identified by areas of parkland and distinctive lodge houses.

Three towns lie within the area: Gatehouse of Fleet, Newton Stewart, Creebridge and Creetown. These predominantly have linear layouts of one and 2-storey traditional houses with gabled slate roofs. The houses are normally built of the local stone (often granite or with

granite dressings), and painted a variety of colours. These towns and surrounding villages contain some former water mill buildings previously powered by the rivers. These include Mill of Fleet and Cumloden Waulkmill.

Some river valleys, most notably Eskdale, but also the Water of Fleet, Urr Water, Water of Ken and Kirtle Water have significant clusters of Ancient Monuments (Scheduled and undesignated) along their length. The majority of these are settlements, related structures such as cairns, burial mounds, stone circles and ruined churches, or defensive sites such as hill forts, Roman camps, mottes and tower houses. Particularly significant individual examples include Motte of Urr and Cardoness Castle.

Stone-arched bridges are a particular feature of this character area. The majority date from the late 18th and early 19th centuries and have a single arch, though there are also some important multi-arch bridges of the same period. The bridges are predominantly built of rubble masonry with ashlar arches, parapet copes and other dressings. Bridges in the western areas are often made entirely from granite, or have granite dressings.

Perception

Generally, these are intimate, small-scale landscapes with enclosed views.

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 Dumfries and Galloway LCA (Land Use Consultants), published 1998.