



### Location and Context

The *Lower Dale – Dumfries & Galloway* Landscape Character Type is found in the lower sections of the main valleys (dales) of Dumfries and Galloway, Nithsdale and Annandale.

### Key Characteristics

- Wide, flat or gently undulating section of the major valleys.
- Improved pastures and arable fields of medium to large size.
- Hedgerow field boundaries (beech and hawthorn) with occasional walls.
- Hedgerow tree lines and tree avenues predominantly beech and sycamore. Beech trees are an essential feature of Lower Annandale.
- Broadleaf shelterbelts.
- Open character, medium to long views determined by tree lines and shelterbelts.
- Wide meandering river channels.
- Network of communication lines: minor and major roads and railway lines.
- Many settlements including main towns at river bridging points, isolated developments and suburban expansion.
- Strong 'red earth' qualities in Annandale and Nithsdale, with brick red fields and red sandstone buildings.
- Archaeological features, particularly Roman and medieval forts and castles.

### Landscape Character Description

#### *Landform*

The *Lower Dale – Dumfries & Galloway* Landscape Character Type is found in the lower sections of the main valleys of Nithsdale and Annandale in Dumfries and Galloway. They are wide with generally flat or gently undulating relief. The central sections contain flat flood plains through which major rivers meander. Closer to the valley sides the topography is more irregular, created through a combination of glacial moraines and fluvioglacial deposits. The long rolling ridge of Ward Law is within Lower Nithdale and extends out into the *Coastal Flats*, separating the Lochar Moss area from the Nith Valley.

### *Landcover*

The *Lower Dale – Dumfries and Galloway* landscapes characterised by post-improvement (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century) fields and farming, as well a small 20<sup>th</sup> Century farms, with a few small designed landscapes and a scatter of relict land-uses. The Historic Landuse Assessment records discrete areas with evidence for pre-medieval land-use and some post-improvement remains.

Much of this landscape is covered with improved pasture and arable fields of medium to large scale. These create a large scale geometric tapestry of green, brown and yellow hues dependant on the season. This pattern is particularly striking when viewed from higher ground. Field boundaries are predominantly hedgerows, many of which have lines of mature hedgerow trees. These are generally beech or sycamore, although there are local uses of ash, elm and oak. These tree lines, as well as avenues (particularly beech), are attractive and distinctive features of this landscape. Shelterbelts also subdivide the landscape creating the main visual horizons in this generally open, broad scale landscape. In some areas fields have been enlarged and this has resulted in a blander landscape, lacking variety and foreground interest.

### *Settlement*

This is a settled landscape which contains some of the region's most developed areas. It has an extensive network of roads, both minor and as part of strategic links. New roads have not necessitated major land engineering projects and cuttings are generally minimal. This can result in high visibility of both the roads and their traffic. Small villages, farmsteads and various types of suburban expansion are also features of this landscape. The presence of underlying red sandstone is very evident in Nithsdale and Annandale where the ploughed fields are distinctly red-brown and the settlements have predominantly red sandstone buildings.

These dales have a long history of settlement, conflict and communication. This is reflected in their archaeological resource and particularly in the legacy of Roman and medieval activity. There are a number of archaeological sites of outstanding significance and distinctiveness, a number of which are promoted for public benefit.

### *Perception*

The *Lower Dale – Dumfries & Galloway* landscapes are contained by uplands. The side slopes are pastoral, frequently with hedgerows giving way to dry stone dykes. Patterns of medium scale coniferous plantations are common features of the upper slopes and form horizon feature from the valley floor.

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.