



Location and Context

The *Southern Uplands with Forest – Dumfries & Galloway* Landscape Character Type predominantly occurs on the northern and eastern fringes of Dumfriesshire, and extends into neighbouring Scottish Borders and South Ayrshire. It is found in four locations, at Carsphairn, Ken, Eskdalemuir and Ewe Hill.

Key Characteristics

- Large, smooth dome-shaped hills with large scale dark green forests on slopes and over lower summits.
- Predominantly simple, gently rolling landform.
- Some areas of more complex and smaller-scale landscapes, with steep slopes enclosing heads of valleys and/or where uplands remain open.
- Changing landscapes with large scale forestry operations and wind farm development.
- Forested areas dominated by Sitka Spruce, interspersed with mixed conifers and broadleaf planting, and undergoing felling and replanting in large coupes.
- Wind farms are a key characteristic in some areas.
- Expansive scale.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

In topographic respects, the *Southern Uplands with Forest – Dumfries & Galloway* Landscape Character Type is the same as the *Southern Uplands – Dumfries & Galloway*. Altitude ranges between 200 and 500 metres and is characterised by large smooth domed or slightly conically shaped hills. The hills have a strong relief, dissected by steeply sided clefts and glens, many of which have been enlarged by glacial erosion. This forms areas of dramatic landform and exemplary geomorphological features. This is a large scale

landscape, although there is some confinement between the peaks. There are some incised gullies, rock outcrops, and screes.

Landcover

Its character is, however, considerably different due to the dominant forestry landcover. Indeed, the visual influence of these forests extends over considerably larger areas than those mapped. The forestry is predominantly Sitka Spruce, the main variations being in mixes with Larch which provides colour contrasts between the dark green of Spruce and the light greens to browns of Larch (although larch is being lost to disease in some areas). The forests generally extend over the summits or are concentrated on the side slopes leaving the domed peaks exposed. The rotational nature of forest management provides long term textural and colour changes related to the felling and replanting coups.

There are some areas of more complex and smaller scale landscapes, with steep slopes enclosing heads of valleys, and/or where uplands remain open. These areas contribute diversity, local drama and scenic interest within the wider forest cover. Remaining open hill ground used for sheep grazing and such areas are essential parts of this landscape, providing tracts of open ground between forests and showing remnants of historic settlement and farming practice. Although generally less frequent than in the adjacent foothills, relict landscapes do occur in the lower fringes of this landscape, with a particular concentration of evidence for late prehistoric settlement and agriculture in the hills east of the Water of Ken, together with some medieval to post-medieval shieling grounds. Areas of heather moor are particularly distinctive in their vibrant colour changes. Drystone dykes are infrequent, but nevertheless are important features in this landscape. Several late prehistoric forts, again more common in the surrounding foothills, are located in the lower fringes of this landscape.

Settlement

The landscape is very sparsely populated and not readily visible from the wider landscape, being sited away from settled areas and public roads. Forest tracks, trails and core paths, including the Southern Upland Way, extend through the area. In Eskdalemuir, a well-preserved section of Roman road crosses a series of hillocks and bogs from Craik Cross Hill to Mid Raeburn, and serves as the basis for later tracks and hollow ways.

Large scale wind farms are key and at times defining characteristics of this Landscape Character Type. In local areas of more complex and smaller scale landscapes, such as steep slopes enclosing heads of valleys, and/or where uplands remain open, large scale wind farms in terms of turbine height or extent tend to dominate the local drama and scenic interest.

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.