



### Location and Context

The *Upland River Valley – Glasgow & Clyde Valley* Landscape Character Type is found where tributaries of the Clyde have cut shallow valleys into the plateau moorland and farmland between the Clyde Basin and the Ayrshire Basin. This Landscape Character Type is found at Neilston, Avon Water, Douglas Water, Duneaton Water and Inverkip, occurring in South Lanarkshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde local authority areas.

### Key Characteristics

- A series of valleys formed along faultlines through the Plateau Moorlands and paired with valleys to the south and west in Ayrshire.
- South-west to north-east orientation of the valleys.
- Strong contrast between the wooded and settled character of the valleys and the exposed enclosing uplands.
- Transition from the exposed upper reaches to more sheltered lowland areas.

### Landscape Character Description

#### *Landform*

While the *Upland River Valley – Glasgow & Clyde Valley* landscapes do not form breach valleys through the upland mass, they tend to follow fault lines generally with a south-west north-east trend, and are often mirrored by similar valleys to the west of the *Plateau Moorlands – Glasgow & Clyde Valley* watershed. To the north, the valleys cut through basalts and millstone grits. Further south, they cut through the complex mixture of sandstones, limestones, millstone grits and coal measures which lie along to the north of the Southern Upland Fault. The Duneaton Water marks the transition from Central Valley to the

### *Southern Uplands.*

Although each of these valleys has its own distinctive character, they share a number of common features, largely as a result of their small scale, orientation, contained nature and relationship with neighbouring areas of moorland.

#### *Landcover*

There has been loss and decline of mature farm and policy woodlands which help to integrate valley floor and side slopes and which provide contrast with the moorland hills which are often visible on higher ground to the north and south. The characteristic pattern is that of lines of field boundary trees (often beech), together with small to medium scale woodland belts (often coniferous) which extend up the slopes often following drainage channels, hugging gullies and framing terraces. The woodlands are predominantly broadleaf, although small conifer plantations (usually distinctive pine belts), occupy sites on the valley slopes. In the lower parts of some of these valleys, conifer woodlands form policies as part of designed landscapes. The upper parts of these valleys have been forested in some areas. Generally, the large scale of these semi-upland landscapes, and the visual links with moorland plantations means that the effect of these woodlands is relatively limited.

This landscape is predominantly agricultural, encapsulating a transition from arable cultivation on some lower parts of the valley floor to grazing of diminishing quality on the valley sides. The resulting combination of colours and textures, together with the pattern of woodland and tree cover, make an important contribution to landscape character.

#### *Settlement*

Settlement within the valleys is comparatively limited and influence of the conurbation decreases as one moves south. The valleys provide important transport corridors through the moorland hills. Although several modern road links (or sections thereof) pass over the moorland itself rather than following these valleys, their importance remains, e.g. for the A70 which follows the Douglas Water, the A71 along the Avon Water and the A726 following the Levern Water. There are extensive mineral workings through the Douglas Valley, including the now spent open cast coal sites, some of which are still to be restored.

Although there are no operational wind farms in this Landscape Character Type, several wind turbine developments appear on skylines in views from within these valleys.

#### *Perception*

The influence of settlement decreases through the valleys moving north to south, away from denser areas of population. Some parts of the upper reaches are undeveloped, perceived as having wild character.

#### *Variation*

The valley **by Neilston**, actually incorporating parts of the Lugton Water, Cowden Bum and Levern Water (as distinct from the River Leven which drains into the Clyde from Loch Lomond), comprises a narrow south west to north east oriented valley. Its northern edge is defined by the steep slopes along the Lochliboside Hills and Fereneze Hills. The southern edge of the valley is less well defined, comprising a series of low craggy hills. There is little

or no floodplain, and the river drops about 100 metres in 10 kilometres. Loch Libo is found at the head of the valley. Although of modest size, the valley provided an important communication route, at one time accommodating two railway lines and two roads. Agriculture remains the dominant land use within the valley, with improved grassland covering the valley sides. Woodland is limited in extent, comprising areas of broadleaves and a number of shelterbelts. Settlement within the valley comprises a scatter of farmsteads and the later industrial and residential settlements of Neilston and Barrhead. Nineteenth century industry included water powered mills. Today, a series of high voltage transmission cables cross the valley on pylon, radiating from the electricity distribution station to the north-west.

The valley of the **Avon Water**, to the south west of Strathaven, forms the broadest and shallowest of these valleys. However, rising land to the south (e.g. at Side Hill) and north (e.g. Mossmulloch) creates a sense of enclosure, and contrasts with the Improved pastures of the valley floor and lower slopes. Loudoun Hill, a volcanic plug, is a prominent feature just beyond the boundary into Ayrshire. The Avon Water (and its principal tributary the Glengavel Water) meanders across a broad, level floodplain in its upper reaches, entering a narrower valley downstream near the town of Strathaven.

Agriculture is dominated by pastoral farming, and the area has a quite dense scatter of farmsteads. In contrast with the afforested moorland to the north and south, there is little woodland in this open valley. The exception is a series of shelterbelts which run at right angles to the river, and lines of beech trees along some field boundaries. However, the spread of forestry from neighbouring upland areas into the upper reaches of the Avon Valley is resulting in some loss of local character. Wind farm development to the northwest and south of the valley provides a prominent skyline feature influencing the landscape character. Like other valleys, the valley of the Avon Water has provided an important communication route between the lowlands. A Roman road is known to have passed along the southern side of the valley, while a disused railway line and the existing A71 point to its more recent role. The upper part of the valley contains significant deposits of glacial sand and gravel. Many of these have been eroded by water courses to create steep 'inner' valleys. Several areas have been worked in the past or are currently subject to mineral extraction.

The valley of the **Douglas Water**, west of Douglas, is more tightly enclosed between the steeply rising slopes leading to high ground to the north and south. The river once flowed into the Tweed but was captured by the more aggressive Clyde. Below Douglas, the river valley broadens, but remains predominantly upland in character until its confluence with the River Clyde to the south of Lanark. In its upper section, the valley is narrow, almost V-shaped with little or no floodplain. The valley slopes comprise rough moorland. Below its confluence with the Glespin Burn the valley widens a little and the Douglas Water swings in a series of meanders across a narrow floodplain. The valley slopes comprise a mixture of improved pasture and coniferous woodland. A considerable amount of woodland is associated with the designed landscape to the east of Douglas. Much of this is beech, Scots pine and larch. The valley's historic role as a communication corridor is reflected in the presence of castles and mottes. A dismantled railway runs along the north side of the valley, running alongside the existing A70 where it passes through the narrow, twisting part of the valley approaching the Ayrshire border. There are extensive areas of former opencast coal

working on the Plateau Moorland around Douglas and Glespin, within the valley to the east of the M74. More evident are the wind farm cluster on the hills to the west of and the motorway where it crosses the valley.

The valley of the **Duneaton Water**, west of Crawfordjohn, lies close to the boundary of the Southern Uplands. The valley is sinuous in form, swinging in a series of broad curves. Like the Douglas, this river once formed one of the headwaters of the Tweed, but has since been 'captured' by the Clyde. In its upper sections, the valley flows through unsettled moorland, draining an extensive area of upland plateau. Lower and more sheltered areas in its middle section accommodate areas of pasture, enclosed by a series of shelterbelts around the village of Crawfordjohn. Down river from Crawfordjohn, Black Hill fort and Craighead prehistoric settlements occupy elevated positions on the southern slope of Black Hill, north of Duneaton Water. Like the other Upland River Valleys, the valley of the Duneaton accommodates a communication route, in this case the B740 between Sanquhar and the M74 corridor. More minor roads and tracks feed off into side valleys, several leading to the mineral working area of Leadhills and Wanlockhead to the south. Wind farm developments have been constructed to the northwest of Crawfordjohn.

The valley extending from **Greenock towards Inverkip** forms a narrow corridor of lowland enclosed within the rugged moorland hills of Inverclyde. Although the steeper slopes, and more exposed upper slopes remain as open moorland, settlement has had a major influence on the landscape character of the valley. In particular, Greenock has expanded southwards from its coastal centre, occupying the northern part of the floor and valley sides. Modern factories cover much of the valley floor, although some buildings (such as those at the old IBM factory) have been removed, with future development of housing, retail, business, industry and a prison planned. The A78 cuts through the valley, avoiding the more circuitous coastal route via Gourrock.

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 Glasgow and Clyde Valley LCA (Land Use Consultants), published 1999.