



### Location and Context

The *Plateau Moorlands - Glasgow & the Clyde Valley* Landscape Character Type occurs in extensive areas in two parts of Glasgow and the Clyde Valley – the western part of South Lanarkshire on the Ayrshire Rim, where it extends into East Ayrshire, and the Central Plateau on the eastern boundary of North and South Lanarkshire. There are other areas of Plateau Moorland with Wind Farms in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley area at Whitelee which are a separate Landscape Character Type.

### Key Characteristics

- Large scale landform
- Undulating hills and sloping ridges in the western areas; a more even plateau landform in the east.
- Distinctive upland character created by the combination of elevation, exposure, smooth plateau landform, moorland vegetation.
- Predominant lack of modern development.
- Extensive wind turbine development, including one of the largest wind farms in Scotland, Black Law.
- Sense of apparent naturalness and remoteness which contrasts with the farmed and settled lowlands, although this has been reduced in places by wind energy development.

### Landscape Character Description

#### *Landform*

Both the areas of the *Plateau Moorlands – Glasgow & Clyde Valley* grow in scale as they approach the Southern Uplands. The moors along the Ayrshire Rim, for example, rise from about 300 metres at Kype Muir in the north, to over 450 metres in the south. This area of Plateau Moorland is characterised by individually defined hills, frequently dissected by drainage lines rather than forming a continuous flat plateau. The hills are neatly rounded or

have gently sloping ridges – often named ‘rigs’ – extending from them. The moors along the Central Plateau rise from about 250 metres in the north to about 350 metres in the south. Here, the topography is rather less varied and it forms a more level plateau.

This Landscape Character Type is distinguished geologically. The Ayrshire Rim is underlain by resistant basalts and tuffs. Rivers draining these hills tend to follow fault lines and many have been glacially enlarged to form important lowland corridors through the moorlands. These valleys are described separately as *Upland River Valley – Glasgow & Clyde Valley*.

The Central Plateau is underlain by coal measures, though a number of significant igneous intrusions and dykes (to the east of Airdrie for example) are present. The area is less faulted than the Ayrshire Rim, and river valleys, such as that of the North Calder and Luggie Water are much less significant features. Both areas have a number of waterbodies, many of them enlarged to provide water supplies for the Glasgow conurbation.

#### *Landcover*

The Plateau Moorlands consist of blanket bog, heather and grass moorland. The large-scale topography is comparatively level and regular, with extensive shallow basins rising to soft contoured ridges. Farmland, often with wind bent trees and thorn hedges, extends onto the lower slopes, particularly on the Central Plateau where altitude and exposure is less extreme. The landscape is of an open, exposed and rather remote character despite occasional isolated hill farms, and sheep and cattle grazing. Mosses, comprising areas of extensive peatland, form an important ecological and landscape component of the plateau moorlands.

Both areas of plateau moorland have had extensive conifer plantations, although areas of these have been felled to accommodate wind farm development. Examples along the Ayrshire Rim include the plantations which cover Black Loch Moss, Nutberry Hill and the slopes of Cairn Table to the south. Examples on the Central Plateau include Kingshill Plantation above Carluke and Worm Law to the east. The afforestation has significantly modified the original character in terms of colour, textures and the length of views possible. However, there is a general lack of elevation which means that the forests create dark horizons, rather than being visible in their full extent. New plantations appear as dark speckled landscapes from a distance. The open ground and surrounding moorland contrasts with this, with its mosaics of brown and ochre colours.

#### *Settlement*

Settlement within these exposed landscapes has been historically sparse, although several cairns exist on higher ground. Along the Ayrshire Rim, farmsteads, villages and towns usually favoured more sheltered valley locations. Although the same is generally true of the central plateau, the lower altitude, together with a series of important transport corridors linking Glasgow and Edinburgh, means that settlement is more extensive. The moorlands provide long views across the Glasgow conurbation, emphasising the contrast between the more remote upland and the developed lowlands. Many of the villages in the area have grown incrementally over time.

Modern development in these areas takes a number of forms and can be very prominent in

this otherwise open, expansive and simple landscape. Tall structures are often visible over a considerable distance. There has been significant wind energy development on the Plateau Moorlands, taking advantage of their upland exposure, yet relative proximity to large centres of population. South of the Avon Valley is Bankend Rig wind farm, and Hagshaw Hill and Nutberry developments are located to the north of the Douglas Valley. On the Central Plateau Black Law wind farm also forms a distinctive point feature. Examples of other tall structures include the dense cluster of communication masts and electricity pylons on the moorland ridge above Paisley, the communications mast on Ballageich Hill south of Newton Mearns, and the masts on either side of the M8 motorway near Harthill.

The presence of coal reserves and, to a lesser extent, hard rock deposits, has had a major effect on the landscape within the Central Plateau area. Coal working has experienced a number of clear phases of development. Historically it would have been worked on a small scale with surface pits, drift mines and shallow pits. Up until recent decades deep mining also took place, though this has been replaced by open-cast working, often on a very large scale. Extensive commercial peat extraction has also been carried out. Cumulatively, these activities have had a major influence on the landscape in the form of bings and tips, areas of derelict land, operating open-cast workings (such as those to the south of Shotts) and associated Industrial infrastructure including disused railway embankments. Hard rock quarries are also visible features in some areas. Several former extraction sites are now used for the landfilling of waste in North Lanarkshire.

### *Perception*

The landscape has an exposed and relatively remote character where wind turbines are not present, although enclosure within the forests can be well defined. Wind farms have reduced the perception of undeveloped character, although this is still associated with higher, exposed areas of remoter moorland. However, there have been signs of human activity in most areas of this Landscape Character Type now. Wildness levels on the western plateau are slightly higher than those in the Central Plateau.

Where forestry permits, views tend to be relatively open across the surrounding valleys and adjacent hill groups. There are a number of man-made features visible, particularly road corridors and electrical infrastructure, though few visual foci are present.

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.