



Location and Context

The *Southern Uplands – Glasgow & Clyde Valley* Landscape Character Type occurs in one area including parts of the Lowther Hills and Southern Uplands. The area falls within South Lanarkshire local authority area and is located immediately south of the Southern Upland Fault as bold upland which has a character very different to the lower moorlands and hills to the north and west.

Key Characteristics

- Extensive, large-scale upland landscape with strong but smooth relief.
- Glacial carved and smoothed landforms, including u-shaped valleys, hanging valleys and corries.
- Extensive mosaics of heath, with a transition to rough grazing on lower tops or slopes.
- Prominent isolated conifer forests and old stands of Scots pine.
- Largely undeveloped, except for occasional upland farms, shielings and Clyde wind farm.
- Important travel and transmission lines pass through the area are the A74, west coast mainline railway and Scotland-England interconnector pylon line
- Significant archaeological sites, particularly from the Bronze and Iron Age periods.
- Prominent hill ranges in views from many areas.
- Wide ranging panoramic views from the hill summits.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

Immediately south of the Southern Upland Fault lie a number of bold upland areas which have a character very different to the lower moorlands and hills to the north and west. This character is derived from the hills' height which generally rises up to 575 metres; their geology (Ordovician rocks, predominantly more resistant greywackes); and the influence of glacial erosion.

The hills are characterised by steep, smooth slopes rising to rounded summits. They tend not to have distinctive individual forms, but the whole range provides a backdrop in views from surrounding areas and, notably, the M74 which traverses through the hills. Cut into the uplands is a series of distinctive glacial valleys, with u-shaped cross sections, sometimes with precipitous side slopes, hanging valleys, waterfalls, crags and screes. The combination of these features, and the contrast with lower moorlands and the lowlands to the north, gives an impression of uplands which are more extensive, remote and higher than is actually the case.

Landcover

Land cover in the *Southern Uplands – Glasgow & Clyde Valley* is typically coarse grassland, though the highest areas often comprise heather moorland. Areas of rough grazing generally lack walled enclosures. Semi-natural woodland is scarce, limited to a few more sheltered glens, gullies and clefts. There are also extensive areas of conifer forest, the most extensive area of which is found between the Clyde Valley and Annandale, enclosing the A74 corridor. Indeed, the visual influence of these forests extends further than the *Southern Uplands – Glasgow & Clyde Valley* area. 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. 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 also prominent, almost sculptural forest areas, particularly around the fringes of the higher hills.

The lower slopes of the outlying hills typically have a pastoral character with rough grazing the dominant land use in medium-sized fields, enclosed by fences, hedges and shelterbelts. The latter are a particular feature of these hills' lower slopes and of the lower adjacent farmland. Some woodland belts and forests are components of minor policy landscapes, which are locally significant features. With increasing altitude, the proportion of rough grazing rises, with higher summits dominated by moorland vegetation. The open hill tops contrast strongly with the farmland in surrounding landscapes.

Settlement

Modern settlement is largely absent from these exposed uplands, being limited to occasional farmsteads and dwellings in river valleys, on gentler and more sheltered slopes and in the larger glens. It is likely that settlement was more extensive during milder periods in the past, evident in the several Bronze Age and Iron Age hill forts on summits and a Roman Road. Roman occupation is also evident by the remains of small fortlets adjacent to the contemporary roadway. Archaeological evidence suggests that landscape of the outlying hills was occupied during the Neolithic period and the legacy of subsequent occupants can be seen in the form of ceremonial and settlement sites such as burial cairns and platform settlements. Later medieval remains are also evident with examples of small defended houses known as bastles and the remains of medieval and slightly later agricultural settlements. Masts and radar stations are prominent on a number of hill tops, however, for example at Lowther Hill and Green Lowther. The substantial Clyde Windfarm, one of the largest in Scotland, is a significant feature in the central part of this landscape, introducing a

built element into the largely undeveloped uplands and decreasing the relative wild character of this area.

Minor roads skirt the lower slopes and more major roads pass nearby, from which the hills are seen as important landmarks. The M74 exerts a localised influence on areas surrounding the Upper Clyde, and the A 702 and the Southern Upland Way long distance route pass through the area. The hills themselves are a valued recreational resource, and several summits are popular with hill walkers with panoramic views from their summits. There are also remnants of industry and resource exploitation with a group of open cast mines and quarries at the south-west of the area. The southern and eastern areas of this Landscape Character Type have more extensive areas which are unaffected by human influence. Scottish Natural Heritage wild character mapping shows high values particularly to the east and south, with a number of relatively remote valleys.

Perception

The hills have a strong perception of remoteness and tranquillity, although this is locally diminished by the presence of the M74 and wind turbines.

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.