

The Special Qualities of the Eildon and Leaderfoot National Scenic Area

- Great landscape diversity within a compact area
- The distinctive triad of the Eildon Hills
- Spectacular views from the hill summits
- A strongly united landscape pattern of lively rhythm and colour
- A richly wooded scene of great variety
- The Tweed, an iconic river of international renown
- A rich array of historic buildings, structures and estates
- The hub of Border settlement
- A harmonious and varied prospect from unequalled viewpoints
- Inspiration for the arts, literature and painting
- Border country ballads and battles
- The historic crossings of Leaderfoot
- Scott's View
- The Wallace Statue

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great landscape diversity within a compact area 	
<p>At the confluence of two rivers and with its dramatic hills arising from inhabited, pastoral surrounds, this area distils the essence of the Borders' landscape.</p> <p>Although a compact area, no one land use dominates the scene. Instead it contains a rich intermingling of landscape types, with sharp delineation between the long-established settlements, the fertile fields, the woodlands, the rough grazing and the steep, heather-clad slopes.</p>	<p>The NSA is situated where the Border uplands meet lower lying lands, encompassing areas of both and the transitional lands between. Six different landscape character types merge in the NSA: Grassland with Hills, East Gala Undulating Grasslands, Lowland Margin with Hills, Pastoral Upland Fringe of the Lower Leader Valley, Upland Fringe Valley, and Lowland Valley with Farmland.</p> <p>It is also the meeting point of three Regional Landscape Areas: the Tweed Lowlands, the Lammermuir and Moorfoot Hills, and the Central Southern Uplands.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The distinctive triad of the Eildon Hills 	
<p>The three Eildon Hills, with their strikingly isolated, heather-capped summits rising from the ordered farmland below, are the heart of the NSA. Their distinctive profiles instil a strong scenic drama, and the peaks have long been recognised for both their aesthetic appeal and their strategic</p>	<p><i>'From almost any viewpoint on the Middle Tweed basin the triple summits of the Eildon Hills dominate the skyline, and they remain as aesthetically stimulating today as they must have been to the Iron Age people (who built a hill-fort on the northern summit) and to the Romans (who placed the aptly named fort Trimontium at their feet)...'</i> Whittow (1977)</p> <p>They are distinctive because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are isolated topographically, standing proud amidst other lower, less accentuated landform types.

<p>importance.</p> <p>As identifiable landmarks, commanding attention from many viewpoints both near and far, the prominence of these three hills gives this NSA a particular focus and sense of place. The hills have become a cultural icon – a potent symbol of the Scottish Borders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have concave slopes and pyramidal summits that contrast markedly with other Border hills (which are dome-shaped and merge into long ridges enclosing linear river valleys). • They have heather-topped, moorland summits rising dramatically from the Tweed-valley fields, pastures and woods. • They appear relatively natural within wider surroundings which are more managed and settled. <p>The fact that there are three peaks provides a naturally balanced visual focus. They act as key locators, assisting in orientation because views of them change as one moves through the countryside. The number of peaks visible changes, with two generally seen from the north and all three from the south.</p> <p>The long history of strategic importance is witnessed by Eildon North having an Iron Age fort and a Roman signal station.</p>
<p>• Spectacular views from the hill summits</p>	
<p>The summits of the hills provide unparalleled viewpoints for long-distant panoramas over the Border landscapes.</p>	<p><i>‘The Eildon Hills cannot be equalled as a viewpoint in the Border Country for, although their highest point is only 1,385 feet (422 metres), their central location and their isolation give them an advantage over some of their loftier neighbours.’</i> Whittow (1977)</p> <p>From the Eildon summits, the panorama extends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwards across the Middle Tweed Basin, with a backdrop of the East Gala Undulating Grasslands to the east, and the Lammermuirs forming the outer visual boundary. • To the south, towards the hills of Liddesdale and Eskdale, and beyond appear the summits of the Cheviots.
<p>• A strongly united landscape pattern of lively rhythm and colour</p>	
<p>Land-use is distinctive and long-established, with the different uses set out over a strongly undulating landform and related to the topography and relief.</p> <p>The visual and spatial patterns formed by woodlands, enclosed fields, unenclosed moorlands, together with the colours of fallow or ploughed lands and pastures, all give a strong sense of unity and lively rhythm. The red-coloured soil and stone add warmth to the landscape.</p> <p>This patterning affects more than just the scenery. It imbues the entire landscape with a sense of place, affecting the way that the area is experienced spatially, in terms of movement, sound and shelter.</p>	<p><i>‘The country is extremely picturesque, valleys with fine trees and streams; intermingled with great cultivation’.</i> Queen Victoria (1817)</p> <p>Agricultural improvements exerted considerable impact in shaping the landscape seen today, while the influence of the earlier monastic estates has also been important.</p> <p>Distinctive elements that make-up this pattern and patchwork of colours are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pattern of rectilinear fields of grazed pasture, interspersed with arable, possibly dating from 18-19th Century agricultural improvements. • Field boundaries made up of hedgerows, lines of field trees and drystone dykes that highlight the landform by accentuating undulating land and flatter areas. • Woodlands of diverse species and age-structure, especially along the river valleys, with conifer plantations mainly on upland slopes. • Designed landscapes with their policy parklands and woodlands, and individual parkland trees.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sinuous meandering of the river, with flatter haughlands and meadows enclosed by loops of the river. • River terraces that form distinct sinuous edges and linear undulating ridges, between the uplands and lower, flatter haughs. • Villages whose distinctive street layouts originated in the medieval period. • The red of ploughed soils in Lauderdale.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A richly wooded scene of great variety</i> 	
<p>The variety of woodland adds greatly to the NSA, whether clothing the steep banks of a river or hill, providing shelter to the fields or occurring as individual parkland trees.</p> <p>The woods provide habitats for wildlife, a setting for buildings and settlements, and give an intimate, enclosed feel to many areas. With the presence of both broadleaves and conifers, the form, texture and colour varies both spatially and seasonally, adding great interest to the scene.</p>	<p>In the farmed valleys there are riparian woodlands along the Tweed; mixed woodland across steeper slopes; policy woodlands and parkland planting (with some policy woodlands, specimen parkland exotics).</p> <p>The River Tweed meanders cut through steep wooded slopes; tributaries of the Tweed cut through steep, wooded gullies. Diverse woodlands provide structure planting for designed landscapes and elsewhere farmland shelter.</p> <p>In the Leader Water, a narrower farmed valley, woodland is dense compared to elsewhere within the NSA, but it provides a framework for several fine buildings. The dome-shaped upland hills, containing the Leader Water are dissected and defined by steep slopes which form well defined wooded valleys.</p> <p>Melrose is especially well wooded to its south-west, where land is undulating and complex. Riverside poplars, especially bordering haughlands are distinctive (Sunnybrae at Leaderfoot, Mertoun Bridge).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Tweed, an iconic river of international renown</i> 	
<p>The River Tweed forms a strong serpentine feature as it meanders through the landscape, its banks varying from the flat, haughlands to steep-sided, wooded slopes. This powerful river forms the core of an essentially picturesque landscape.</p> <p>It is also of international renown, synonymous with excellent fishing.</p>	<p>The Tweed is the principal river of the Scottish Borders and, at 96 miles (155 km), the fourth longest in Scotland. In its middle reaches it flows through the NSA, between its confluence with Gala Water and the Leader Water. The river valley is broad with flat river terraces raised above the valley floor. Surrounding, dome-shaped, Border hills are cut by the Tweed's winding, incised course.</p> <p>Fishing on the Tweed has been a great source of food and profit since the 11th century. Anglers catch more salmon on the Tweed than any other river in the European Union, and it ranks among the very top salmon rivers in the world. Brown trout and grayling also provide good sport.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A rich array of historic buildings, structures and estates</i> 	
<p>The area is rich historically and archaeologically, so that the landscape exhibits a distinct a time-depth. Within a small area can be found visible remains of structures and buildings dating back through Victorian, medieval and Roman times to the Iron Age.</p>	<p>The Iron Age hillfort on Eildon North sits on a very prominent landscape feature, and is one of the largest such sites in Scotland, particularly unusual for the presence of a Roman signal station within it. The Roman fort at Newstead is extremely well-known. Crop-mark evidence shows it sits within an earlier hub of pre-Roman settlement.</p> <p>Additionally there are the remains of the village of Old Melrose, the famous, ruined Border abbeys of Melrose and Dryburgh, villages dating from the medieval period, and</p>

<p>The ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, prominent within a horseshoe bend of the River Tweed, and Melrose Abbey, forming the focus of the town, are both renowned.</p> <p>The Eildon Hills, the Tweed and the surrounding area have lent themselves to the creation of designed landscapes and to the siting of follies, which are now key components of this landscape.</p>	<p>later designed landscapes.</p> <p>Both Dryburgh and Melrose were great ecclesiastical centres with large surrounding estates. Dryburgh Abbey is the most complete, although ruined complex, founded in 1150.</p> <p>Dryburgh Abbey evolved into the ornamented, designed landscape of Dryburgh Abbey House. Follies in the policies celebrate national history and the arts. Designed landscapes and agricultural estates were also created at Bemersyde, Priorwood House, Drygrange House, and Chiefswood.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• The hub of Border settlement</p>	
<p>The sheltered valleys of the middle Tweed are well-cultivated, the hub of human population, settlement and activity in the Borders. Settlement is strongly related to the landform, the rivers and natural communication corridors, with buildings often set just above the flood plain.</p> <p>A blend of both English and Scottish settlement characteristics and elements in building-style create a strong Borders identity.</p>	<p><i>'Most of these towns have developed as part of the tweed and knitwear manufacturing complex that has brought fame to the Scottish borders, utilizing the well-known Cheviot hill sheep and the availability of water power for the earliest looms...'</i> Whittow (1977)</p> <p>Stone is the traditional building material, a mixture of dark Silurian greywackes and ruddy Old Red Sandstone (reflecting the location of the towns astride a geological boundary).</p> <p>The strong Border identity of the settlements includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some village greens (St Boswell's, Bowden). • A wooded setting to many of the settlements (Gattonside, Melrose). • Settlements historically tightly constrained. • A lack of large-scale development. • Individual farmsteads and estates. <p>St Boswell's 40 acre common is reputedly the largest village green in Scotland.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• A harmonious and varied prospect from unequalled viewpoints</p>	
<p>Many elevated viewpoints provide broad, sweeping views encompassing both wild-looking land and areas of more richly intimate, managed character.</p> <p>This varied prospect of beauty and grandeur is memorable. The balance, visual composition and variety of land use create an attractive landscape of great delight.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>'And what a varied prospect lies around! Of hills, and vales, and woods, and lawns, and spires.'</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">James Thomson, quoted in Andrews (1989)</p> <p>The scene is harmonious on account of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear hierarchy of visual dominance in views, the eye is drawn from the upland summits of the Eildons down to other scenic components in succession. • The balance between elements in the scene – so that woodland, open land, uplands and lowlands flow on from one another, with no element dominant. • The serpentine course of the Tweed that flows through the composition. <p>Accessible ridges and key summits are found both within the NSA, at Black Hill, Bemersyde Hill, Craighouse, Clintmains, St Boswells, Gattonside; and from the variety of ridges and small rounded, isolated hills – outliers to the NSA.</p>

- **Inspiration for the arts, literature and painting**

The picturesque scenery around Melrose, Dryburgh and the Tweed has long been an inspiration to writers, poets, dramatists and artists, and contributed to the discovery of 'Nature' and its appreciation as a major subject in literature and the arts.

The major influence in establishing its distinctive image and identity internationally in literature was Sir Walter Scott. He in turn introduced and enthused the renowned painter Turner, whose sketches and watercolours of the area were widely circulated as engravings in the nineteenth century.

There are also strong associations with the landscape poet James Thomson, and through him Robert Burns.

Sir Walter Scott found inspiration for his work in this area, an example being his use of Melrose Abbey in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

The painter J.M.W. Turner visited Scott at Abbotsford in 1831 and his illustrations portray the NSA, highlighting the timelessness of its special qualities. These include *View of the Tweed with Melrose and the Eildon Hills* and *A view of the River Tweed and Dryburgh Abbey*.

Between 1750 and 1850, there were three hundred separate editions of the poet James Thomson's *The Seasons*. 'No single British poet contributed more to awakening and broadening the appreciation of the natural world' Andrews (1989). A Borderer, born in Kelso, he is commemorated by the Temple of the Muses, erected in 1817 on the banks of the Tweed within the NSA. Robert Burns wrote a poem *Address to the Shade of Thomson* for the opening of the temple.

- **Border country ballads and battles**

The area is rich in romantic and historic associations, with Border ballads, legends and accounts of battles.

Thomas the Rhymer is especially connected with the area. The Rhymer met with the Queen of Elfland on the Eildon Hills, and the ballad tells of the Eildon Tree. The Eildon Tree Stone, a large moss-covered boulder, lies on the road two miles west of Melrose. It marks the spot where the Fairy Queen led the Rhymer into the heart of the hills.

'I can stand on the Eildon Hill,' said Sir Walter Scott, 'and point out forty-three places famous in war and verse.'

There are long-established traditional oral and historical ties to this tract of Border landscape. Places associated with the legend of Thomas the Rhymer include Huntly Banks and Bogle Burn.

Rhymer's Glen was created by Sir Walter Scott at his home in Abbotsford, just outwith the NSA. The symbol of the Eildon Tree has persisted as inspiration in Scottish modern poetry through the work of Sydney Goodsir Smith and through the Eildon Tree poetry magazine.

It is said that beneath the Eildon Hills there is a hidden cave, which is the resting place of King Arthur.

Location-specific qualities

- **The historic crossings of Leaderfoot**

The tightly constrained Leader Water meets the broad River Tweed at Leaderfoot, a site of historic river crossings. Bridges here comprise the distinctive and prominent Drygrange Viaduct with its nineteen slender piers, and the three-arched Drygrange Old Bridge.

The hills to the east and west of the Leader Water contrast with one another in form but together they enclose an intimate wooded and farmed valley. At its foot the river joins the Tweed; thereafter the Tweed enters a series of tighter meanders than elsewhere.

The Drygrange Railway (Leaderfoot) Viaduct opened in 1865 for the Berwickshire Railway which ran from St Boswells to Reston. The railway was closed in 1964.

Drygrange Old Bridge (1779-80) is a three-arched stone bridge, now closed to vehicular traffic. Traffic is now taken by a reinforced concrete and steel box girder Road Bridge

	(1971-73) a short distance downstream from this viewpoint.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott's View 	
<p>The Eildon Hills, their shapely, heather-clad summits rising above the neatly ordered fields and woodlands of the meandering Tweed, are best seen from Scott's View, a panoramic beauty spot high on Bemersyde Hill, above Dryburgh.</p> <p>This long-recognised, classic viewpoint is known to be one of Sir Walter Scott's most loved views; his funeral hearse stopped here as a mark of respect.</p>	<p><i>'But it was Sir Walter Scott who brought most fame to these conical eminences, for the graceful lines of his "delectable mountains" stimulated some of his greatest writings and it is not by chance that his home, the famous Abbotsford, "that Romance in stone and lime", was built only a short distance away. The hills are best seen from the east, from the so-called Scott's View near Melrose, where ...'</i> Whittow (1977)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wallace Statue 	
<p>A prime viewpoint to the Eildons is marked by a tall, red sandstone statue of William Wallace. He stands looking out over the Tweed, his broadsword in his right hand and his shield resting at his left.</p> <p>As one of the follies within Buchan's designed landscape at Dryburgh, its siting (as with other follies) indicates awareness and appreciation of the scenic beauties of the area, allied with a conscious historical and cultural expression.</p>	<p>The statue is some 31 ft high, made by John Smith of Darnick. Originally painted white, the statue was unveiled on 22nd September 1814.</p> <p>Born in 1742, the 11th Earl of Buchan was responsible for much of the building and development work on Dryburgh Estate during the early 19th century, including the Suspension Bridge, the Orchard and its Gates, The Temple of the Muses and the Wallace Statue. Buchan persuaded Sir Walter Scott to accept a burial plot at Dryburgh Abbey.</p>

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