

The Special Qualities of the Fleet Valley National Scenic Area

Note: Management Strategies have previously been produced for the three NSAs in Dumfries and Galloway, including the Fleet Valley NSA. The Strategies contain scenic qualities which were identified through a public consultation process, and the documents were adopted in 2002 as Supplementary Guidance to the Development Plan. The special qualities given here have originated from and complement those in the Management Strategies and are presented in the new format.

- A compact, working landscape of great charm
- A sense of timelessness arising from a rich heritage
- The gradation from coastal islands to upland hills
- The traditional boundaries of dyke and hedge
- Abundance of trees and woodlands
- The variety and influence of water
- A rich variety of colour, light, texture and scale
- Landmarks, contributing to the identity of the area
- Views out of the Fleet Valley to the Isle of Man and the Merrick
- Gatehouse as a picturesque and historic centre

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A compact, working landscape of great charm</i> 	
<p>With its coastland, farmland, woodland and upland, together with a picturesque town and a designed landscape, this area contains great variety within a small area. Its various elements, both natural and cultural, blend well together, resulting in a working landscape of great charm.</p>	<p>Natural elements include mudflats, sandy beaches, merse (saltmarsh), islands, rocky coast, grasslands, gorse knolls, woodlands, burns, rives, moorlands and rocky hills.</p> <p>Cultural elements include a planned town, a designed landscape, a canalised river, mill lades, forests, fields, farms, hedgerows, field trees, dykes and landmark buildings.</p> <p>The upper Fleet Valley gives the appearance of an upland glen with a flowing river at its centre.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A sense of timelessness arising from a rich heritage</i> 	
<p>It is a landscape where land management is carried out in a manner that maintains the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, creating intermingled and pleasing mosaics of trees, fields, habitats and buildings.</p> <p>The presence of traditional houses, dykes, hedges and field patterns, the numerous historical and archaeological</p>	<p>The Fleet Valley is very much a working landscape, with cattle grazing on the lower slopes and sheep on the upper slopes. Cattle are often the distinctive black Galloways.</p> <p>Most of Gatehouse of Fleet is a Conservation Area, and Cally Estate is in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. Evocative cultural features include the deserted house on Murray's Isle, Anwoth Old Church, the ruins of Cardoness Castle, and a variety of ancient monuments. These latter include an Iron Age fort, a Roman fort, early historic symbol stones, mottes and castles.</p>

<p>sites and ruins, together with the abundant natural heritage, lend the area an air of timelessness – a sense of historical continuity across the ages.</p>	<p>The richness of the natural heritage is reflected in the presence of six SSSIs, two of which are also Special Areas of Conservation. The existence of many National Trust for Scotland Conservation Agreements has helped maintain the distinctiveness of the area.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• <i>The gradation from coastal islands to upland hills</i></p>	
<p>With coastal scenery dominating in the south, moving inland there is a gentle transformation through ordered farms and fields, to a landscape with a wilder feel of hills and moors. This juxtaposition enables contrasting aspects of the Scottish countryside to be experienced within a short journey or a single view.</p>	<p>A wide variety of landscapes can be experienced as one journeys northwards from Fleet Bay: from the wide outer bay, the valley becomes more enclosed and the sides steeper, until a narrow upland valley is reached, with slopes of moorland; the high peak of Cairnsmore of Fleet (outside the NSA) is visible from the upper slopes. There are few buildings here and the whole area feels remote. The Knocktinckle Viewpoint on the moor road to Laurieston at just over 100m provides a good view of the upper part of the NSA (the viewpoint itself is outside the NSA).</p> <p>Over a shorter distance, the moorland hills of Ben John and Mill Knock can be reached from the coast of Fleet Bay after a short transition of farmland and wood.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• <i>The traditional boundaries of dyke and hedge</i></p>	
<p>Particularly distinctive is the pattern of fields bounded by dykes and hedgerows, traditional boundaries which are still active elements of this farmed landscape.</p>	<p>Hedges and dykes have long been used as boundary markers in the Fleet Valley. Many different techniques have been used in wall building (using local rock including granite) and in hedging (using mainly hawthorn). Different styles of Galloway dyke include those that are a combination of dyke and hedge; and those with holes visible between large blocks, which act as deterrent to livestock jumping over them.</p> <p>The area has been formative in the re-establishment of dyking skills in Britain.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• <i>Abundance of trees and woodlands</i></p>	
<p>The abundance of trees and woods, whether acting as field boundaries, old coppice, wood pasture, policy woodlands or modern plantation, adds great variety and texture.</p> <p>However trees do not appear overly dominant but, by breaking up the open fields and hills, give an enclosed and intimate feel to many areas.</p>	<p>The well-wooded landscape includes: Scots Pines on rocky promontories, isolated field trees, old coppices and pollards, field boundary trees, hedgerow trees, veteran trees; ancient and deciduous woodlands, old wood pasture, policy woodlands and commercial forests.</p> <p>The Fleet Valley contains the best examples of upland oakwood in Kirkcudbrightshire, and Carstramon oak wood (an SSSI) is particularly notable. The woodlands of the Designed Landscape of the Cally are also an important feature.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• <i>The variety and influence of water</i></p>	
<p>Fleet Bay, open to the Solway Firth, dominates the southern half of the NSA. At times, a sea of sand, at others brimful of water, it provides an ever-changing vista. With its numerous sandy beaches,</p>	<p>Humans have influenced the waterscape; for example, the use of Loch Whinyeon (outside the NSA) as the principal source of water to power the mills, the lades that run through Gatehouse, the canalisation of the Fleet, and the Lake within the designed landscape of Cally.</p>

<p>it is a key draw for the summer visitors.</p> <p>In contrast, the Water of Fleet is the focus in the north. Meandering peacefully through the glen, it provided both access to the sea and contributed to the power that gave Gatehouse its prosperity.</p>	
<p>• <i>A rich variety of colour, light, texture and scale</i></p>	
<p>The variety of colour and light adds great beauty to the area. The sea and the bay continually change with the weather and tides, and the mosaic of houses, water, woodland, fields and hills results in a tapestry of different colours that changes with the season.</p> <p>Additionally there is a range of different textures, often adjacent – such as the mud and sandflats next to the rocky shore, or the smooth fields interspersed with gorse and woodland.</p> <p>A great variety of horizons can be experienced, through the overlapping of uneven isles, knolls, hills and ridges. Likewise a range of scales, varying from the intimate scale of the Anwoth Valley, to the open, exposed landscapes of bay or moorland.</p> <p>Together, this variety of colour, light, texture, horizon and scale appeals to the senses, and has attracted many visitors and artists over the years.</p>	<p>Variety of colour includes: the colours of the sea, mud flats and tidal waters of Fleet Bay; the fields of greens with a splash of yellow from the gorse; the browns and greens of the rough grassland, heather, and bracken; and the light browns of the reed beds.</p> <p>Also there are changes in colour on the Water of Fleet in differing weathers, blue to black; the seasonal changes of deciduous woodland and its ground flora in spring; the dark greens of the forestry and the varying shades of green of Cally Policy Woodland; the greys of granites in the dykes and walls, covered with a patchwork of lichens; and the white-washed buildings of Gatehouse of Fleet.</p> <p>The shore at Carrick was a favourite location for artists, such as David Sasson, from Kirkcudbright Artists colony. Other painters have included Eric Robertson and William Daniell; the Victorian artist John Faed was born in Gatehouse.</p> <p>The area has also been immortalised in Dorothy Sayers' book <i>Five Red Herrings</i>.</p>
<p>• <i>Landmarks, contributing to the identity of the area</i></p>	
<p>Several landmarks are particularly distinctive and provide focal points for different areas. They become familiar features that help give the area its unique identity.</p> <p>These include structures such as Cardoness Castle, Rusko Tower, the Gatehouse Clock Tower and the Rutherford Monument; and also natural features such as Carstramon Wood, Murray's Isles and the hills of Ben John</p>	

and Mill Knock.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views out of the Fleet Valley to the Isle of Man and the Merrick 	
<p>Although the landscape is generally enclosed and intimate, there are places where expansive vistas out to the Isle of Man to the south, or the Merrick to the north, create a contrasting feeling of spaciousness.</p>	<p>The Isle of Man is 30 miles away to the south and is visible from, for example, Knockbren Viewpoint. It is said locally that if you can see the Isle of Man it is about to rain, and if you cannot it is raining!</p> <p>The Merrick about 20 miles to the north is the highest mountain in Scotland south of the Highland Boundary Fault.</p>
<i>Location-specific quality</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gatehouse as a picturesque and historic centre 	
<p>Gatehouse of Fleet was originally a planned town and, with its characteristic white-washed stone buildings, retains its original integrity. Now by-passed by the main road, it is both peaceful and picturesque.</p> <p>Situated at the upper tidal reach of the river, it was once a prosperous mill town and port and is nowadays both the geographic centre and the economic heart of the area.</p>	<p>Historically it has long been the centre of human activity with, in 1795, four cotton mills. Being largely a planned town, the houses built for the workers, its sense of identity is closely linked to its history. Most of the town is a Conservation Area.</p>

Selected Bibliography

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