

## Location

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This short section of the River Eden extends from near the 'Nunnery' north of Lazonby to Wetheral.

## Key Characteristics

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- A deep linear sandstone gorge
- Fast flowing river with waterfalls
- Outcrops of steep rocky cliffs
- Hanging woodlands cling to the gorge sides
- Large concentrations of ancient semi-natural birch woodland and occasional coniferous
- Impressive views into the gorge from adjacent high ground

## Physical character

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The dramatic gorge has formed in an area of Permo Triassic sandstone and cuts through the Sandstone Ridge (type 10) and Rolling Lowland (sub type 5c). The gorge drops from around 100 – 25m AOD in a northerly direction.

## Land cover and land use

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The gorge has a strongly distinctive character with rocky sides and cliffs that drop steeply down to the River Eden. The gorge is lined in many parts with swathes of hanging oak and birch woodlands and remnant ancient and semi natural woodlands. These tend to give way to coniferous plantations as you move up the gorge side before joining rolling farmland. Occasional improved or semi improved fields sit between the woodlands. Above the gorge sides pasture fields slope gently upwards and are bounded by sandstone walls and wire fences. A short section near Armathwaite includes a dramatic waterfall due to changes in geology. The gorge then opens up and has a flat floodplain valley floor and pasture fields extend down to the river.

There are traditional scaled nucleated settlements around bridging points and isolated traditional farmsteads and some modern dwellings sited along the river. Buildings are often constructed in the distinctive rich red local sandstone. A railway line skirts discretely along the western edge of the gorge and does not detract from the overall character.

The Lune Gorge is not included in this sub type due to significantly different man made characteristics. It is included in sub -type 8c.

## Ecology

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A landscape of high ecological interest, much of which lies in the upland oak woodland which lines the steep banks and cliffs of the Eden gorge. These woods are important for birds such as pied flycatcher, redstart, wood warbler and goosander. The damp cliffs support a diverse assemblage of mosses, liverworts, ferns and species such as the river jelly lichen. The river itself is of international importance and supports otter, Atlantic salmon and lampreys.

## Historic and cultural character

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The Settle to Carlisle railway runs through this landscape sub-type and is regarded as the most scenic railway in England. A section of the route runs adjacent to the valley of the river Eden. Skilled engineering was required to overcome the complex landform of this area. Striking railway viaducts are a feature of this landscape.

The settlement pattern is concentrated into a few large villages which had an industrial past associated with water power. Buildings are sandstone constructed, largely dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There are elements of ornamental designed landscapes on the river banks as at Armathwaite.

## Perceptual character

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The landscape is picturesque and can feel wild, natural and invigorating with its steep sides, heavily lined by swathes of woodland, looming over the fast flowing river in the gorge bottom. Changes in seasons can change the character of woodland, and weather changes can influence the flow, noise and energy of the river. Where fields interrupt the woodland they provide contrast with the dramatic hanging woodlands and provide more open views to farmland beyond. Views along the gorge are enclosed and snake along the rivers course. The lack of settlement and energy of the river give a feeling of remoteness.

## Sensitive characteristics or features

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Hanging woodlands in steep sided gorges and dramatic changes in geology are sensitive to changes in water management and natural forces. The distinctive sandstone vernacular and traditional scale villages are sensitive to unsympathetic expansion. Viaducts and the discretely sited Settle to Carlisle rail line could be sensitive to changes in the upkeep of the rail line. Enclosed views along a wild and remote undeveloped gorge are sensitive to valley rim development.

## Vision

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**The picturesque qualities and ecological richness of the gorge will be conserved and enhanced.** The contrasts between the hanging woodlands and cliff faces will be retained. The character of the former ancient and semi-natural woodland cover will be restored through various management practices. Development and the management of recreation will be strictly controlled.

## Changes in the Landscape

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Over the next 10 – 20 years this landscape could be subject to the following changes or issues:

### *Climate Change*

- There could be increases in flash flooding in upland areas linked to higher rainfall and extreme weather events. This could affect river courses and vegetation.

### *Management Practices*

- The replanting of some of the ancient valley woods with further large scale coniferous planting is unlikely to happen in the future. However, sensitive management of maturing plantations is needed.
- Intensive bank side grazing, use of fertiliser and diffuse pollution could cause changes to the nature conservation value of the River Eden SSSI.

### *Development*

- Planned or incremental village expansion and increased recreational use and ancillary tourism developments such as caravan parks could change the generally undeveloped and vernacular character of the landscape.
- There could be an increase in interest for small scale hydro electric schemes to help generate renewable energy.

### *Access and Recreation*

- Public rights of way provide a network of routes that enable quiet appreciation and enjoyment of the countryside. Ongoing maintenance is needed to support this network in the future.

## Guidelines

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### *Climate Change*

- Encourage flood risk management to maximise the use of natural approaches such as additional tree planting rather than the introduction of man made flood management approaches.
- Ensure the management of floodplain areas resisting development while conserving and enhancing floodplain habitats.

### *Natural Features*

- Improve management of the established broadleaf woodlands primarily for landscape and nature conservation.
- Where appropriate, extend broadleaf woodland cover along the River Eden and tributaries linking into the adjacent pattern of hedgerows to further emphasise their legibility in landscape and increase potential for nature conservation.
- Ameliorate existing coniferous plantations through sensitive management including softening of geometric outlines, phased felling appropriate to small

scale linear landscape patterns, introduction of open spaces and restocking with appropriate broadleaf species.

- Retain and maintain existing stone walls, gate posts and other built features. Encourage new walls where wire fences have replaced them in the past.
- Ensure the conservation and enhancement of semi-natural habitats.

### ***Development***

- Ensure new development on the edges of settlements is sited and designed to reflect the traditional village form and character and maintains a rural setting. Maintain key views from villages to the River Eden.
- Ensure new development elsewhere, such as caravan parks, respects the scale and traditional form of other development. Ensure that new buildings are integrated into the landscape through careful siting, design and the use of appropriate materials.
- Ensure any small scale hydro electric schemes are sensitively sited and do not erode the generally undeveloped character of the landscape, or harm any nature conservation interests.

### ***Access and Recreation***

- Encourage new access proposals and improvements in areas that would not harm the nature conservation value of the river and woodlands.