

Broad Valleys

Location

These broad valleys include parts of the rivers Liddel, Irthing, Eden, Derwent, Lune, Lyth, Kent and Winster. The sub type continues into the Lake District national park and is classified as sub types H2 Valley Floor with River Floodplain in the Lake District National Park Landscape Character Assessment. Parts of this type around the River Lune meet the criteria for National Park designation and are being considered for designation in 2010/11.

Key Characteristics

- Wide and deep valleys with open floodplains
- Rural farmland comprising significant areas of improved pasture
- Pockets of scrub, woodland and coniferous plantations
- Hedges and stone walls form a matrix of field boundaries
- Roads and railway lines often follow the linear valley contours

Physical character

These broad valleys are found on a range of rocks, but are usually overlain by fluvio glacial drift and river alluvium. The valley bottoms are often less than 50m AOD with either gentle or steep valley sides that reach to around 175m AOD. While generally broad and large in scale, the topography can vary as valleys cut through a range of landscape types including drumlin fields, limestone escarpments, and fells. Throughout this sub type the rivers have formed both open and wide floodplains and broad and deep valleys where the rivers gently meander along the valley bottoms. Occasionally narrow and faster flowing sections of river are found reflecting local geological variations.

Land cover and land use

Land cover is mixed. Fields of improved pasture dominate, but there are occasional arable fields, particularly in the Eden Valley. The farmland is broken up by pockets of scrub, deciduous woodland and small blocks of coniferous plantation.

Fields are both irregular and regular in shape and bounded by hedges or stone walls and provide a strong pattern of boundaries. Hedges tend to be thicker in southern valleys. In places fences have replaced traditional boundaries. Hedgerow trees and riverside trees are common. These contribute to the wooded character of the valleys.

The more open sections of river usually have a flat floodplain with the river meandering gently along the valley bottom. Valley sides can be incised by small streams and tributaries. Improved pasture is dominant, particularly on the floodplain and lower valley sides. Blocks of plantations and broadleaved and coppice woodland can be found in more open areas and towards the top of the valley sides. These are often associated with estate parkland and areas that were historically deer park. Damson orchards are a distinctive feature of the Lyth Valley. Drained mosses can often be found towards the mouths of the Kent, Lyth and Winster in the south.

In the narrower deeper more gorge like valley sections the rivers are more twisting and can have short fast flowing sections with water falls. Valley sides are steeper and are often covered with wooded banks and hanging woodlands.

Small scale historic bridges cross the rivers in many places and have determined the location of many of the traditional villages. Small villages that retain a strong vernacular character are common, with buildings built mainly of local sandstone and limestone. Villages are often linear close to the river or more nucleated along

the valley top. Towns such as Kirkby Lonsdale and Sedbergh retain a traditional core but have modern characteristics where they have expanded. Farms are isolated and dispersed usually along valley sides.

Small rural roads and railway lines often follow the contours of the river valleys and are generally discrete features. More modern larger roads often cut across the valleys in a more discordant way.

Ecology

The rivers are often ecologically rich, supporting species such as otters, Atlantic salmon, bullhead, lampreys and white-clawed crayfish. Several are internationally important. The river banks are often wooded with upland oak, remnant ancient and semi natural woodland and wet woodland communities. Patches of rush pasture can also be present. Along the Lyth Valley small wooded remnants of once more extensive lowland raised bogs are present. Species-rich hedgerows frequently bound the fields of improved pasture, and these, together with the river habitats provide important habitat for bats. Species-rich roadside verges are a feature of the Lune valley east of Tebay. Earth cliffs along the river bank provide nesting sites for sand martins whilst riverside woods support nesting goosander. Some valleys also support wintering sites for whooper swans.

Historic and cultural character

The broad valleys of the area have been popular locations for artists. The Lune Valley and the upper Lune Valley in Ravenstonedale were painted by J.M.W. Turner, Norman Adams, and David Morris. The Eden Valley is the location for one of Andy Goldsworthy's sheepfold sculpture walks.

The settlement pattern is dispersed except in the Eden and Irthing valleys and part of the Lune Valley which are more nucleated. Fields are often associated with ancient enclosure and former common arable land. Planned enclosure is dominant in the Lyth Valley and along the edges of the Eden, and Black and White Lyne valleys. There are varying building styles with sandstone the primary building material in the north and limestone in the south. There are a number of historic weirs and

bridges associated with the rivers. The most frequent archaeological sites relate to water powered industries; paper, gunpowder and iron manufacturing on the River Kent and corn mills on all the river systems. Marble quarrying once took place along the banks of the River Kent south of Kendal.

There are Roman sites such as Kirkby Thore in the Eden and Lune valleys. In Irthing Valley Hadrian's Wall and forts such as Birdoswald form the most significant archaeological components. The Wall and associated earthworks follow a prominent ridge running along the northern rim. There are a number of ornamental and parkland landscapes, particularly in the Kent and southern Lune Valley.

Perceptual character

These landscapes are generally medium in scale with a lot of variety along the length of the valleys. The narrow enclosed wooded sections can feel remote and wild due to the lack of development and speed and character of the river and hanging woodlands. The character of the river can change with the seasons and weather, sometimes increasing the sense of wildness. In more open parts there is a sense of calm within a working farmland. Close to large towns and roads there is a busier feeling but the rural qualities still dominate. Low level views are often intimate, contained by the valley sides and woodland. More expansive views are possible from the top of some valley sides towards the Scottish hills, Lakeland fells and the North Pennines.

Sensitive characteristics or features

Woodlands, orchards and the matrix of hedges and hedgerow trees and open meandering undeveloped river plains are sensitive to changes in land management. The planned nature of estate parkland and historic deer parks is sensitive to changes in estate management and the expansion of estate buildings. The limestone and sandstone vernacular, traditional scale of villages and their siting that follows the grain of the valleys are sensitive to unsympathetic expansion. Traditional stone bridges and roads that follow the grain of the valleys could be sensitive to flooding events and highway improvements. Undeveloped valley rims and their

relationship with adjacent landscapes are sensitive to rim edge development. The remoteness and wildness associated with the rivers, and the sense of calm associated with the more open farmland, are sensitive to changes in land management.

Vision

These landscapes will be conserved and enhanced. Hedgerows and walls will be strengthened adding striking edges to field boundaries and will help define the river valleys and the farmed valley bottoms. Settlement patterns and habitats associated with the rivers will also be conserved and enhanced while tree cover will be maintained and strengthened. Development will be sited to complement traditional settlement patterns and use vernacular materials. The historic features and continuity will be conserved and enhanced.

Changes in the Landscape

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

Climate Change

- Changes in approaches to flood risk management could provide an opportunity for some floodplain areas to become wetter in future.

Management Practices

- Changing agricultural practices have led to the neglect of landscape features and the loss or replacement of hedgerows by fences.
- There could be a tendency for coniferous forests and designed landscapes to introduce non-native trees which may bring disease.
- Lack of management to estate or other woodlands and hedgerow and riverside trees can erode the character of the area.
- Water abstraction, pollution and enrichment can affect riverside features.

Development

- Large scale farm buildings can be found in some parts and are introducing uncharacteristic development into the farmed landscape.

- There is likely to be continued pressure for expansion of villages and towns along the Derwent, Eden, Kent and Lune.
- The need to provide more renewable energy sources could result in an interest for large scale wind energy development and small scale hydro electric schemes.
- Road and rail improvements and energy infrastructure such as, large scale wind turbines could erode the rural character and affect adjacent landscapes.

Access and Recreation

- Visitor numbers could increase in areas adjacent to the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks and north pennines and from programmes encouraging people to access the countryside around where they live.
- 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.
- Current farm stewardship grants provide the opportunity to develop more public access in the countryside. Future grant or other programmes may continue to support this.
- Additional recreation facilities such as fishing lodges, holiday accommodation and golf courses could be sought in these areas.

Guidelines

Climate Change

- Opportunities should be taken to create new areas of wetland in response to changes in flood risk management, such as is planned in the Lyth Valley.

Natural Features

- Encourage the restoration of the floodplain and catchment centered farming to protect river edges and vulnerable habitats in association with Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP).
- Conserve and enhance marginal wetland features and support the re-wetting of areas such as the Lyth Valley to provide wildlife and landscape diversity.
- Protect, enhance or restore marshes, wet meadows and pasture, off-stream ponds, reed beds, willow and alder, carr and bank side trees. This may involve for example, sensitively timed light grazing, maintenance

of water levels, protection from livestock or control of invasive vegetation.

- Ameliorate incongruous river engineering and canalisation works by softening geometric forms and creating a variety of habitats and natural features within and alongside rivers.
- Reinforce established broad-leaved and mixed woodlands through improved management and supplementary planting ensuring a balance is maintained between coniferous and deciduous plantations.
- Extend tree cover into adjacent areas by additional planting of tree groups, lines, hedgerow trees and roadside planting, encouraging use of indigenous species.
- Plant trees to enhance vistas whilst emphasising contrasts between wooded valley sides and open flood plain.
- Encourage the use of deciduous species along the river valley sides to give definition to the watercourse and encourage the development of riverside habitats.
- Introduce open areas within woodland and manage water and wetlands to increase landscape and nature conservation value.
- Ensure that the planting of designed landscapes using non-native trees does not bring disease into the surrounding landscape.
- Maintain and enhance other semi-natural habitats such as ancient woodlands and unimproved grasslands.
- Create ecological corridors to enhance nature conservation value.

Cultural Features

- Improve the management of existing hedgerows to create stronger patterns in the landscape.
- Encourage the replanting and renovation of gappy overgrown hedges.
- Renovate parkland respecting historic designed layouts and planting schemes.
- Conserve historic buildings and structures, which may include removal of trees and scrub to keep them open and viewable.
- Conserve historic earthworks through avoidance of damaging agricultural activities such as infilling or leveling, tree planting, poaching by cattle, ploughing or tipping.

Development

- Minimise the visual impact of recreational developments such as caravan sites. Careful siting, restrictions on scale and a high standard of design and landscaping may achieve this.
- Minimise the impact of infrastructure and housing development by careful siting, avoiding open valley floors, obstruction of corridor views and relating them to existing development. Set high standards of landscape treatment.
- Maximise opportunities to create/enhance semi-natural elements such as woodland and wetland in association with recreation developments such as golf courses.
- Minimise developments impact on local character through ensuring design and scale respects the local vernacular and character particularly regarding the introduction of modern large-scale farm buildings.
- Large scale wind energy schemes should avoid small enclosed valleys and valley tops where they could appear dominant.
- Hydro electric schemes should be sited and designed to be discrete elements in the landscape and not harm nature conservation interests.
- Conserve and enhance traditional farm buildings and features particularly within a historic setting.
- Encourage retention and restoration of stone gate posts, historical artefacts and features forming part of the cultural heritage.
- Reduce the impact of large scale new buildings by careful location, siting and design.
- Conserve and protect the character of historic stone built villages in their landscape settings.
- Discourage fringe development in non-traditional materials that will affect the setting of the village particularly in its relationship with the River Eden

Access and Recreation

- Public rights of way should be well maintained and quiet recreational areas and facilities should be improved and developed to be compatible with the pastoral character of this sub type.
- Seek opportunities to enhance access to farmland through farm stewardship or other schemes.
- Promote and enhance existing recreation routes by improving waymarking, providing appropriate surfacing, gates and gaps and interpretation.