

Urban Fringe

Location

This landscape sub type is found around the edges of Carlisle, Workington and Whitehaven.

Key Characteristics

- Long term urban influences on agricultural land
- Recreation, large scale buildings and industrial estates are common
- Mining and opencast coal workings are found around Keekle and Moor Row
- Wooded valleys, restored woodland and some semi-urbanised woodland provide interest

Physical character

The geology of these areas varies. Carboniferous rock is found around Workington and Barrow, with Triassic mudstones or sandstones found east of Carlisle. Both are overlain by fluvial glacial drift.

Land cover and land use

These agricultural landscapes have been subjected to urban and industrial influences for a long time and in many parts maintain a rural character. Field patterns remain distinct in the largely pastoral areas, often bounded by strong hedges and hedgerow trees. The urban influences vary.

In West Cumbria small settlements associated with former mining and associated activities spread over a ridge and valley landscape. While deep mining of iron ore has largely gone, agricultural areas on restored opencast coal sites introduce modern 20th century field patterns amongst more regular field patterns associated with parliamentary enclosure. Woodland, wetland and scrub has been reintroduced through

restoration schemes. Derelict land is dotted throughout the landscape. Despite the scars of former industries, much of the countryside character is still intact with wooded valleys retained along valleys that cut across the landscape.

In Carlisle there is a ring of semi-urbanised low farmland around the city. Large development such as large industrial estates, the racecourse and golf courses sit alongside small modern settlements linked to traditional farmsteads. Large modern agricultural buildings are also common.

Ecology

Largely an urban influenced landscape with mainly species-poor hedgerows and occasional small areas of woodland. There are isolated areas of coastal grazing marsh around Carlisle and hay meadows in West Cumbria. In addition to this, derelict former industrial or other previously developed sites have the potential to support a range of habitats and species which may have colonised the site since the previous uses ended.

Historic and cultural character

On the outskirts of Carlisle there is buried evidence of prehistoric settlement including burnt mounds, Neolithic activity and one of the largest Mesolithic sites found in North West England. Whitehaven was, briefly in the 18th century, the second Atlantic coast port (after Bristol) trading with Ireland, and exporting coal, so in West Cumbria the urban fringes contain much evidence of former coal and iron mining. The settlement pattern is generally dispersed and of fairly recent origin. Traditional fields are regular and indicative of late enclosure.

Perceptual character

This is a busy area where modern development dominates the pastoral character. The towns can be seen as progressively encroaching and areas have an air of neglect. The more agricultural areas and parts where woodland and open green spaces remain are important green lungs close to the towns and cities which provide respite from the busy areas and a connection to the wider countryside.

Sensitive characteristics or features

Wooded valleys, restored woodland, some semi urbanised woodland, and the intact field patterns of farmland reinforced by hedges and hedgerow trees are sensitive to changes in land management and settlement expansion. Open green spaces and fields close to settlement edges are sensitive to unsympathetic development.

Vision

This changing landscape will be enhanced through restoration. Management practices will create a stronger definition between town and country areas integrating adjacent discordant land uses into the landscape. Woodland areas and traditional field boundaries will be managed and enhanced. New woodland planting will be used strategically to create a bold landscape structure unifying disparate uses in developing areas while the reinforcement of rural 'green' qualities will help maintain rural character and provide visual relief. Access through the public rights of way network from towns and cities into the countryside will be enhanced.

Changes in the Landscape

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

Climate Change

- An increase in rainfall and extreme weather events could result in an increase in flash flooding. Flood risk management may result in man made mitigation

measures such as strengthened river defences, re-engineered bridges and access routes.

Management Practices

- Urban encroachment and changes in land use can lead to declining patterns of field boundaries.
- Areas of despoiled and unused derelict land can detract from the local character.

Development

- The tendencies for urban development to further encroach on the countryside and for agriculture to suffer from vandalism and pressures for access.
- Housing development on sensitive ridges can often lack the soft landscaping needed to help integrate it into the wider landscape.
- Expansion of villages can lead to a lack of identity and poor definition between town and country.
- Green infrastructure provides an opportunity to seek enhancements to the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritages adjacent to urban areas and to create green corridors between settlements.
- Farm diversification could lead to an increase in the use of farm land for horse grazing and equestrian uses could result in changes to field patterns and boundaries. An introduction of stables and ménages could cause incremental change the character of the farmed areas.

Access and Recreation

- Public rights of way provide a network of routes from towns and cities 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.

Guidelines

Climate Change

- Encourage appropriate woodland or other planting in landscapes higher up the river catchment areas to help provide natural alleviation to extreme weather events and reduce the amount of hard engineered solutions needed alongside rivers and close to settlements.

Natural Features

- Establish new woodlands or tree groups on prominent skylines in order to soften their windswept appearance and provide screening where climatic conditions allow.
- Manage and restore existing semi-natural woodlands.
- Carry out schemes of structural planting to contain settlements, punctuate and reinforce the identity of each settlement and contain urban edges.
- Use planting and general environmental improvements to frame views and define open spaces and recreational links along river valleys.
- Schemes for the management of riverbanks should be carried out sympathetically.
- Unimproved grassland or wetlands should be restored where possible.
- Seek opportunities to restore piped watercourses to enhance ecological corridors.

Cultural Features

- Restore and develop the pattern of hedgerows with additional planting and supplementary planting of scanty hedgerows.
- Increase planting of deciduous trees as feature trees, within hedgerows, along watercourses and in tree groups to enrich the general landscape.
- Ensure, where possible, that linked networks of vegetation are created using native trees and shrubs to enhance their nature conservation value and their use as 'ecological corridors'.
- Discourage the replacement or sole use of fences and encourage planting and traditional management of hedgerows.
- Develop whole farm environmental schemes.

Development

- When new development takes place consider opportunities to enhance and strengthen green infrastructure to provide a link between urban areas and the wider countryside. Reinforcing woodland belts, enhancing water and soil quality and the provision of green corridors from and between settlements could all help reinforce landscape and biodiversity features.
- Protect 'green' areas from sporadic and peripheral development. Support the retention and development of 'green gaps', green infrastructure and ecosystem services approaches in Local Development Frameworks where they would help maintain

distinctive, undeveloped characteristics.

- Protect countryside areas from sporadic and peripheral development through the local plans.
- Careful siting of any new development in non-prominent locations.
- Strengthen undeveloped areas of land with mixed woodland and hedgerow planting and restoration of natural landscape features.
- Encourage horse grazing and equestrian uses to respect field boundaries and field patterns. Stables and other facilities should be sited sensitively with appropriate landscape mitigation to prevent the erosion of the pastoral farmland character.
- Along major roads, develop schemes to improve visual awareness of the individual settlements, land uses and cultural landmarks.
- Conserve and maintain traditional farm buildings within their own setting.
- Reduce the impact of large scale new farm buildings by careful location so as not to dominate the traditional farm buildings on a plot adequate to accommodate circulation, storage and landscape proposals using a choice of sympathetic colours and non-reflective finishes.

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 and reinforce the remaining pastoral characteristics of this sub type.
- Seek opportunities to enhance access to farmland through farm stewardship or other schemes.