



Location and Context

The *Incised River Valleys* Landscape Character Type occurs in eight different locations in the upper reaches of the Clyde Valley - Uddingston Clyde, North Calder Water, South Calder Water, Rotten Calder Water, Mid-Clyde Valley, Avon Water, River Nethan and Mouse Water. It occurs in North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire.

Key Characteristics

- Narrow, steep sided valleys cut deeply into the plateau farmlands.
- Rich broadleaf woodlands on steep valley sides.
- Agriculture where valleys are wide enough with a mixture of pastures, arable, market gardens and orchards.
- Series of policy landscapes, castles and other historic sites.
- Linear villages and winding roads.
- Focal role of rivers and tributaries.
- Rich, sheltered and settled areas, often hidden within the wider landscape.
- Views along and across the valleys.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Incised River Valleys* of the Clyde passes through the underlying carboniferous coal basin of central Scotland and south eastwards into a band of carboniferous limestone. The Falls of Clyde are created by a nickpoint where the bordering areas to north and south of old red sandstone meet the softer carboniferous rocks of the river valley.

Incised River Valleys were entrenched during the last Ice Age. At this time, a fall in sea level sparked a major phase of erosion and downcutting. Although this has now ceased, erosion is still very active in the valleys and subsidence is a frequent issue. While the valley sides are generally steep and well defined, there are also gorge areas where the burns and rivers have cut through harder rocks to create vertical cliffs. Waterfalls and rapids are a frequent

feature in these river valleys. An example of these is the Falls of Clyde, which historically powered the textile mills at New Lanark, Robert Owen's model settlement on the edge of the Clyde at Lanark, a World Heritage Site and designed landscape.

The *Incised River Valleys* are bounded by a series of smaller water courses which run perpendicularly into the larger course creating a 90° lattice effect, which is often echoed by shelterbelts and road patterns in the landscape.

Landcover

The land in the *Incised River Valleys* is predominantly arable on the fertile flat valley bottoms if they are large enough (e.g. the floor of the Clyde Valley). In the narrower tributary river valleys, land cover tends to be predominantly deciduous woodland - in some cases this is ancient woodland. This is due to the relative inaccessibility and steep sides of these valleys, prohibiting agricultural use. These older woodlands have considerable conservation value and there are a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and Local Nature Conservation Sites within their limits, and the Clyde Valley woodlands are a National Nature Reserve. Elsewhere, pasture and arable land is hedged with beech or hawthorn and there are remnants of field boundary tree structure, often in decline and over-mature. Hedges are also being lost to post and wire fencing. The wider incised valley of the Clyde has traditionally been used for orchard fruit production and market gardening. Orchard, though often in decline, are still present in this locality. Some of these are undergoing restoration as part of the Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership. In the more confined incised river valleys, e.g. the Nethan Valley, coppicing of woodland was undertaken as a cropable resource. This practice has died out in the last 60 years.

Agriculture tends to comprise arable cultivation or market gardening on the flatter valley floors in fairly small fields (larger in the main Clyde Valley). Arable and silage cultivation is found on some broader areas of floodplain and on the shallower slopes, in some areas resulting in an enlargement of fields and decline or loss of hedges and woodland. This has created a more open landscape which contrasts with enclosure provided elsewhere in these valleys. Orchards (both managed and derelict) are found on valley slopes in parts of the main Clyde Valley, particularly around Kirkfieldbank. There are areas of glasshouses, although many now stand empty and derelict due to the decline in horticulture and fruit growing. Shelterbelts define fields in some areas but are more prevalent on the valley slopes where they emphasise the 90° lattice of the hydrology. This tree cover within the farming landscapes along the valley floor and on shallower valley slopes makes a significant contribution to these areas.

Settlement

Farmsteads are spread out along the river valleys in a linear pattern controlled by the landform and by transport links. Many farming enterprises have diversified into garden centres and other forms of retailing and recreation.

Small villages are present, often in a linear form along roadlines (e.g. Kirkfieldbank in the Clyde Valley). Their relation to main communication routes means that these villages are a dominant feature in the landscape. Larger towns lie generally outwith this Landscape Character Type, favouring less constrained and more accessible sites on surrounding

plateau farmland. A number of these settlements, for example Lanark, Hamilton and Motherwell, are visible from within the valleys.

These incised valleys are often narrow and winding, a characteristic reflected in the road system. Transport routes tend to run along the valley floor with steep and sinuous connecting routes down the valley sides. Again, a 90° lattice effect is created. In the Clyde Valley, there was also a tourist rail route, now defunct. The roads are often subject to subsidence due to the erosion caused by river action in the incised river valleys. The steep sided and narrow character of these valleys means that they can present an obstacle to modern road development. Although major elements of infrastructure tend to be concentrated in the plateau areas, the need to cross incised valleys can result in a significant landscape impact and severance. This can be seen in relation to the upgrading of the A8 to motorway standard in the vicinity of the North Calder Water.

Incised River Valley industry tends to be predominantly agricultural, although tourism in the Clyde Valley plays a major role in the local economy. Hydroelectric power also exists on the Clyde, and there are a few more urban fringe type activities around the edge of towns, for example, a caravan site on the Mouse Water just outside Lanark. Parts of this Landscape Character Type are underlain by coal deposits. Historically, these have been worked on a small scale, creating a number of spoil lips, railway lines and viaducts. These sites have often become important cultural and landmark features, and many are of ecological interest.

The *Incised River Valleys* created strong defensive locations and historically housed a variety of towers and castles (e.g. Craignethan Castle on the River Nethan). Other common historic features include remnants of policy landscapes such as woodlands, walls and bridges, a number of large houses, castles and designed landscapes. A number of these, for example Lee Castle and Dalzell, are listed in the “Inventory of gardens and designed landscapes in Scotland”. New Lanark, Robert Owen's model settlement, is recognised as a World Heritage Site and is covered by various designations (Conservation Area, Designed Landscape, Special Landscape Area) reflecting its unique and environmental qualities.

The valleys of the Calder Water (flowing along the eastern edge of East Kilbride) and the North Calder Water (south of Coatbridge and Airdrie) exhibit similar physical characteristics, but are subject to urban fringe pressures. The North Calder Water valley in particular represents an important surviving corridor of undeveloped land in an increasingly pressured area. A number of these valleys provide a recreational resource. The North Calder Heritage Trail, for example, combines access and interpretation. Chatelherault and Calderglen Country Parks in South Lanarkshire are recreational “honeypots” based around the Incised River Valleys.

Perception

The combination of physical features (incised valleys, gorges), woodland, characteristic patterns of land use and settlement (particularly the history of fruit growing and horticulture) has created a distinctive and high quality landscape.

Views from within this Landscape Character Type are generally focussed across and along the valleys, sometimes screened by woodland. There are some views out to neighbouring

Landscape Character Types such as *Plateau Farmland – Glasgow & Clyde Valley* which locally overlooks it.

There are some pockets of remaining tranquillity, away from the major population centres and transport corridors and often influenced by the presence of water and woodland.



This is one of 390 Landscape Character Types identified at a scale of 1:50 000 as part of a national programme of Landscape Character Assessment republished in 2019.

The area covered by this Landscape Character Type was originally included in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley LCA (Land Use Consultants), published 1999.