

## Statement of Importance

### Gladhouse Reservoir and Moorfoots Scarp Special Landscape Area

#### Name and location

The Special Landscape Area (SLA) comprises **Gladhouse Reservoir and the Moorfoots Scarp**. It is located at the southern boundary of Midlothian with the Scottish Borders, and is centred upon Gladhouse Reservoir and the moorland and farmland surrounding it together with the containing scarp and hill fringes of the Moorfoot Hills to the south and east.



#### Overview

Key reasons why this area is a SLA are:

- The open and naturalistic character of Gladhouse Reservoir and its scenic juxtaposition with the dramatic scarp of the Moorfoot Hills and the deeply incised South Esk valley.
- The mix of trees and woodland, and well-managed farmland, moss and moorland surrounding Gladhouse Reservoir.
- Important panoramic views from the B7007 across Midlothian and the Forth Valley.

The open and expansive landscape of Gladhouse Reservoir, viewed against the steep northern scarp of the Moorfoot Hills, forms a sparsely settled and secluded corner of Midlothian. The South Esk forms a dramatically incised valley cutting deep into the Moorfoots, strongly contrasting with the undulating basin which accommodates the reservoir

## Statement of Importance

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and which is patterned with improved farmland, shelterbelts, moss and wetlands. The fringes of the Moorfoots scarp to the east form the foreground to important panoramic views to and from the hills.

## Landscape description

Key components of this landscape are:

- The irregularly shaped Gladhouse Reservoir and the fringing wetlands, mixed woodlands and small wooded islands which contribute to its naturalistic qualities.
- The dramatic steep scarp of the higher northern Moorfoot Hills and the deeply incised glen of the South Esk which cuts through these hills.
- Open and natural areas of moss and heather moorland.
- Well-managed farmland which is often enclosed by stone walls.
- The intimately scaled Rosebery Reservoir which is strongly contained by woodland and gently folded hills.
- The sense of seclusion that can be experienced in this sparsely settled landscape.
- Open and expansive views from this landscape to both the Moorfoot Hills and the Pentland Hills and also across the Lothians to the Firth of Forth.
- Revelatory views from the B7007 across the open moorland and farmland of this landscape to the distant Pentland Hills.

Lying between the Moorfoot Hills and the adjacent SLA of the South Esk Valley, Gladhouse Reservoir lies at the core of this landscape. To the north, broad areas of coniferous woodland and long mixed shelterbelts run across the farmland and form a transition between the tighter pattern of farm shelterbelts northwards within the South Esk Valley SLA and this more open and expansive landscape. Tucked away within these plantations and the surrounding rolling hill slopes, the intimately scaled Rosebery Reservoir is hidden by woodland and small folded hills, in contrast to the much larger Gladhouse Reservoir which is set within a broad gently undulating basin. Gladhouse Reservoir has a strongly naturalistic character featuring small wooded islands and with woodland, scrub and wetland fringing its banks. Fields of rough grassland and occasional improved pasture, lined with

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post-and-wire fences and sporadic hedges and walls, contrast with larger open areas of moorland and boggy ground within this basin. Mixed woodlands and shelterbelts associated with occasional farms ring the reservoir and angular coniferous plantations are prominently sited on the lower slopes of the Moorfoot scarp. Views from this elevated basin are panoramic with both the Moorfoot and Pentland Hills providing dramatic backdrops and with occasional long views across the Lothians.

Immediately south of Gladhouse Reservoir, the steep northern scarp of the Moorfoot Hills forms a distinctive and dramatic sculptural scarp cumulating in the high peaks of Blackhope Scar and Dundreich. The South Esk cuts a deep narrow valley within these hills, edged by the interlocking rounded spurs and deep gully tributaries of Hog and Huntly Cot Hills and the Kipps on its passage northwards. To the east, the hill scarp becomes lower but still forms a key element in views towards the Moorfoots from the north. Fringing this part of the scarp, a narrow band of gently sloping semi-improved grassland, moorland and long parallel coniferous shelterbelts is somewhat fragmented and undistinguished although forms an important foreground to a well-known view obtained from the B7007 road, which is also a National Cycle Route, as it emerges from the hills to the south.

The sparse settlement of the area, combined with its upland associations, lends a secluded and natural feel to this SLA. Several shelterbelts to the north are of semi-natural origin, and the reservoirs, bogs and stream woodlands are wildlife and nature conservation sites. Although roads and tracks are concentrated in the north, the circular route around Gladhouse Reservoir is waymarked and the Moorfoots are a popular walking destination.

### Choice of boundary

Where possible firm boundaries have been chosen for their longevity and robustness to define and identify the SLA.

The south-western and south-eastern boundaries of this SLA are formed by the administrative division between Midlothian and the Scottish Borders. The north-western edge follows the valleys of the Tweeddale Burn and Fullarton Water, with the boundary to the north being defined by a combination of roads, shelterbelts and field boundaries and partly abutting the South Esk Valley and Carrington Farmland SLA.

### Opportunities for change

*Management*

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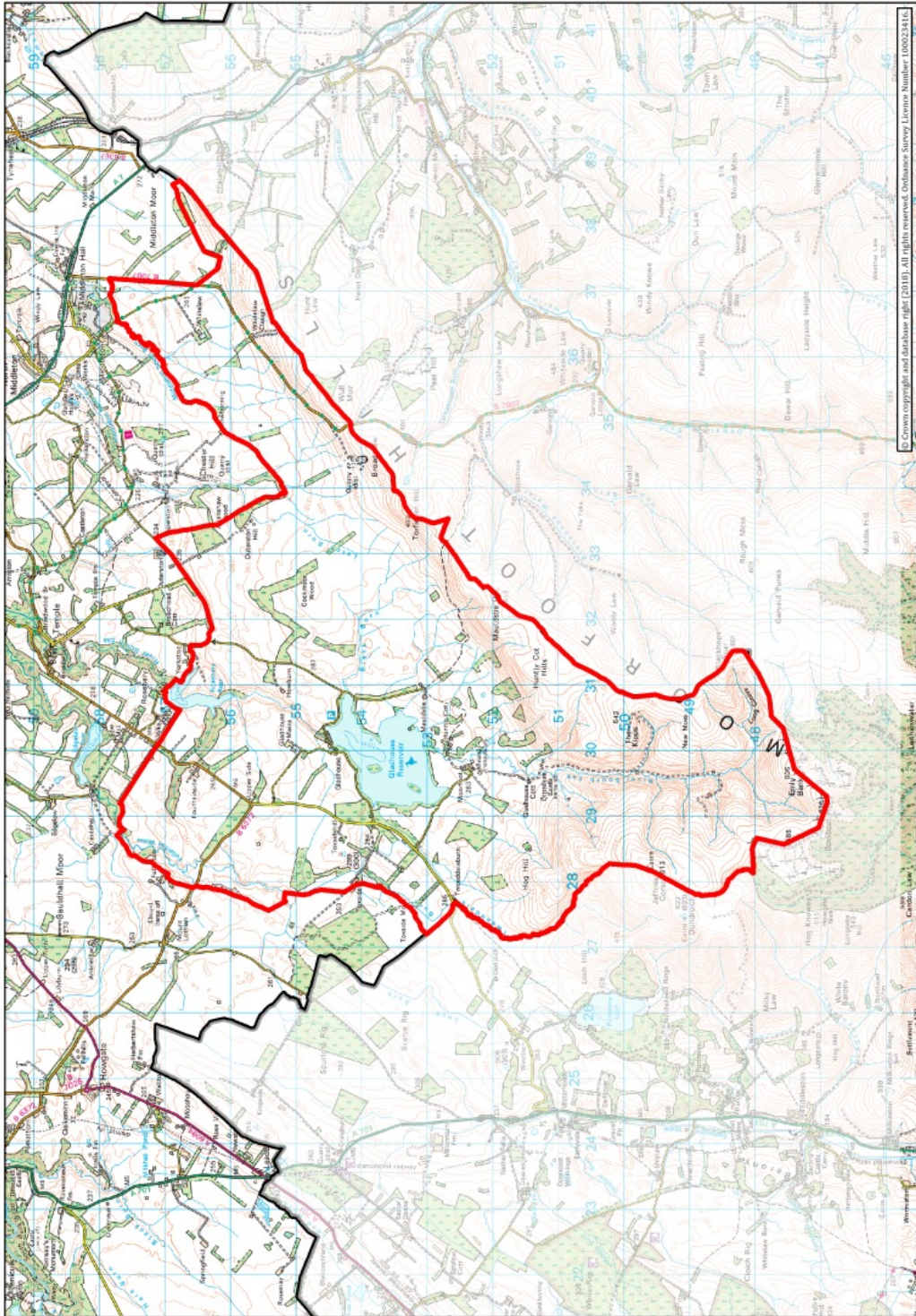
Gladhouse Reservoir and the surrounding area are covered by important nature conservation designations. Good management of farmland, field boundaries, woodlands, moss and moorland is important to the value and appearance of this landscape.

The focus for landscape improvement should be on the replacement of intrusive coniferous plantations on the scarp of the Moorfoot Hills with more sensitively designed native woodland. Any new woodland creation will need to reflect the sensitive nature of the location and respect the open character of the landscape. Neglected moorland, semi-improved pasture and shelterbelts in the eastern part of this SLA should be managed and the key stopping point on the B7007 should be enhanced. Increased car parking opportunities for walkers and visitors to Gladhouse Reservoir should be explored.

#### *Development*

Important considerations for landscape impact in the preparation and assessment of development proposals include:

- Potential for intrusion on key views to the Moorfoot Hills from the Gladhouse Reservoir area.
- Impacts on the openness and natural character of Gladhouse Reservoir and on areas of moss and moorland.
- Impacts on important views from the B7007 across Midlothian to the Pentland Hills.



**Gladhouse Reservoir and Moorfoots Scarp SLA**