

Statement of Importance

Tyne Water Valley Special Landscape Area

Name and location

The Special Landscape Area (SLA) comprises the **Tyne Water Valley**. It is located in the north-east of Midlothian, and follows the valleys of the Tyne and Gore Waters and adjacent ridges and valley slopes between Cousland in the north and Middleton in the south.



Overview

Key reasons why this area is a SLA are:

- The rich diversity of the Tyne Water Valley which is characterised by extensive designed landscapes and farmland patterned with woodlands and field trees.
- The more naturalistic upper valleys of the Tyne and Gore Waters which provide the setting for a number of landmark historic features.

The valley of the Tyne Water and surrounding farmlands is a highly diverse landscape. To the north, the valley floor is characterised by the historically important buildings and policies of several designed landscapes and surrounding farmlands and woodlands. The more open and naturalistic reaches of the upper valleys of the Tyne and Gore Waters to the south are more intimate in character. The higher farmed slopes of the valley to the east and west act as framing and complementary landscapes to the setting of the valley core.

Landscape description

Key components of this landscape are:

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- The intimately scaled upper valleys of the Tyne and Gore Waters which are strongly contained and secluded and which feature richly diverse rough grassland, scrub and broadleaved woodlands.
- Extensive policy woodlands, parkland and ornamental plantings which provide the setting to Oxenfoord Castle, Preston Hall, Vogrie and Middleton Hall.
- Strongly patterned farmland which form the wider setting to the more richly patterned lower Tyne valley but which also feature mature field trees and distinctive mixed woodlands on the ridges framing the valley.
- Historic buildings and structures, including Crichton and Borthwick Castles and the Lothian Bridge, which form landmark features within this landscape.
- The small and often tightly knit historic settlements which further enrich the cultural heritage of this landscape.

Much of the southern-most part of this SLA is dominated by the tightly confined and convoluted valley of the Gore Water, the landscape of which then merges with the upper reaches of the Tyne. The steep slopes of the Gore Water are marked by furrows of soil creep and rocky knolls, with wetland meadows lining the narrow floor. The upper valley slopes are mainly open hummocky expanses of rough grassland and scrub, transitional in character between the hillier moorland landscapes to the south and the more settled valley landscape to the north. Small mixed woodlands edge parts of the valley sides and line tributaries.

Sitting high above the Tyne and Gore Waters, the imposing edifices of Borthwick and Crichton Castles are prominent reminders of the area's importance in medieval times and, along with the churches of Crichton and Borthwick, form focal features seen from surrounding roads. At the southern tip of this SLA, the 18thC estate of Middleton Hall is enclosed by policy woodland and stone walls and separated by the A7. North of Crichton Castle, the Tyne Water follows a more gently meandering open route, gradually opening out to the north. The extensive policies of Vogrie House, and the contiguous designed landscapes of Oxenfoord Castle and Preston Hall, occupy almost the entire remaining length of the Tyne Water valley and its lower terraces, and dominate both landscape and built character. Mixed and deciduous woodlands, ornamental plantings and parkland dotted with specimen trees merge with well-managed farmland, patterned with hedgerows and scattered with hedgerow trees.

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Throughout this richly varied landscape of often high scenic and wildlife value, historic interest is added by villages and hamlets including Pathhead, Ford and Dewartown, structures such as the elegant five-arched Lothian Bridge viaduct, and the lodges, stables, temples and stone walls associated with the estates. To the north-west near Mayfield and Cousland, and to the east around Pathhead, the gently rolling farmed upper valley slopes and often wooded ridges form an important backdrop to views in and out of the valley.

The recreational value of the area is concentrated along the river valley path network and around Vogrie Country Park, with fewer routes across the surrounding farmland. The SLA is well-served by roads along and across the valley and surrounding farmlands, with the A68 and A7 being prominent features as they cross the valley. These, along with other roads on the higher slopes, offer views into and across the landscape, whereas within the valley itself views are often constrained by landform and woodlands.

Choice of boundary

The eastern and western boundaries of the SLA follow the top of valley slopes, being locally defined by a combination of prominent woodlands, tracks and minor roads. To the north, the boundary skirts Cousland/Cousland Park and follows part of the conjunction with East Lothian, while to the south it is demarcated by the A7 and the wooded policies of Middleton Hall.

Opportunities for change

Management

Good management of the existing woodlands, field trees and hedgerows is important to the value and appearance of this landscape.

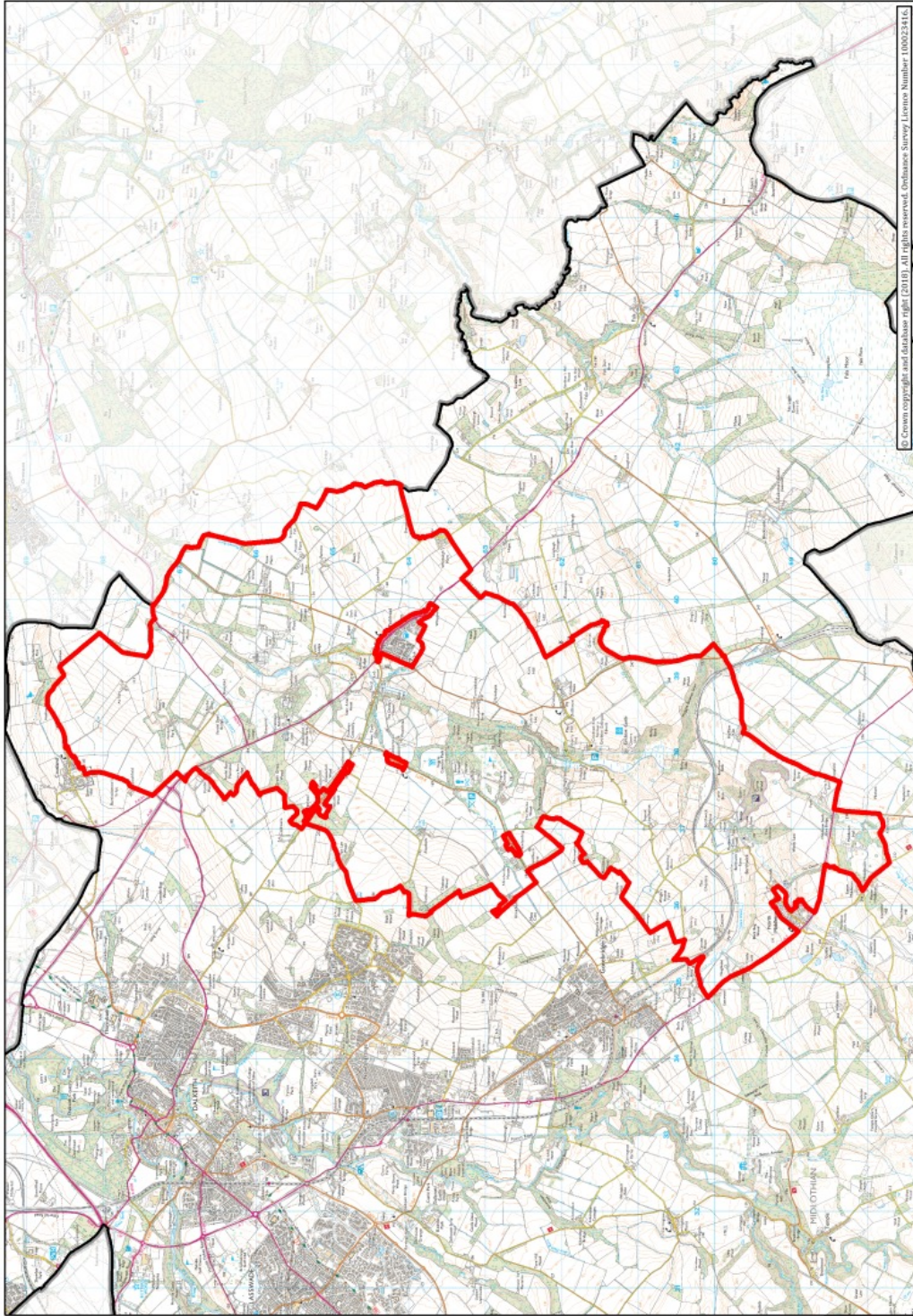
The focus for landscape improvements should be on the management of mature field boundary trees and trees aligning roads with replacement planting where they are moribund or gaps have occurred. Ridgeline woodlands on the edges of the SLA and woodlands and parkland within designed landscapes should also be managed to ensure longevity. Improvements to recreational access routes between Borthwick and Crichton Castle should also be explored.

Development

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

- Potential for intrusion on designed landscapes and any impacts on their key components.
- Impacts on the character and setting of historic settlements, landmark built features.
- Impacts on the character of often strongly patterned farmland which features mature field trees, hedgerows and woodlands.
- Intrusion on sensitive skylines which contain the Tyne valley.
- Impacts on the often intimate scale of the narrow Gore Valley.



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