LCA 4 Lune Valley

Yorkshire Dales National Park
Landscape Character Assessment

YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

Ruskin's View, from the Riverside walkway in Kirkby Lonsdale

LCA 4 Lune Valley



Key characteristics

- Broad river valley with asymmetrical form, enclosed by the high, steep-sided open fells underlain by Silurian rocks to the east and lower, more rounded uplands of siltstones to the west.
- Complex layered small-scale glacial drift topography within the valley, including mounds and undulating terraces of glacial drift.
- Occasional drumlins create rounded skylines and slopes throughout the valley.
- River Lune meanders across a flat or gently undulating floodplain of mixed farmland; fields are large, with more arable to the south, becoming more irregular in shape and dominated by pasture to the north of the valley.
- Network of small improved pastures interspersed with broadleaf woodlands on the undulating eastern valley slopes; broader scale, more low lying mixed farmland to the west.
- River Lune is frequently enclosed by strips of woodland. Woodland cover increases to the south, where the valley landscape is strongly influenced by parkland and estate landscapes.
- Most fields are enclosed by hedgerows, but stone walls are also present, particularly on higher valley slopes and in the Casteron area, where there is a narrow outcrop of limestone.
- A settled landscape of villages, small hamlets and farms linked by narrow lanes which are often tightly enclosed by hedgerows or woodland.
- Sweeping views to the dramatic uplands of the Howgills to the north-east and the Middleton and Barbon Low Fells to the east.

Landscape context

The Lune Valley Landscape Character Area (LCA) comprises the broad glacial valley of the River Lune which is aligned north-south along the western edge of the National Park from the Lune Gorge at the M6 in the north to the market town of Kirkby Lonsdale in the south.

The valley is extremely broad with a shallow U-shaped profile and a rolling, undulating valley floor and overlies sandstones and slates of the Silurian period. It is dominated to the north-east by the dramatic massif of the Howgills and the Silurian rocks of the Howgill Fells continue all along the eastern side of the valley, although the fells that form the eastern valley slopes become lower and less steep south of the Rawthey Valley (formed by the Dent Fault). The valley has an asymmetrical form as the Silurian Fells to the east are significantly higher and steeper than the uplands to the west, which are part of a broad rolling plateau of rolling or undulating terrain lying on Silurian siltstones. The slopes of this plateau, which form the western slopes of the Lune Valley, are entirely covered by superficial deposits of glacial till.

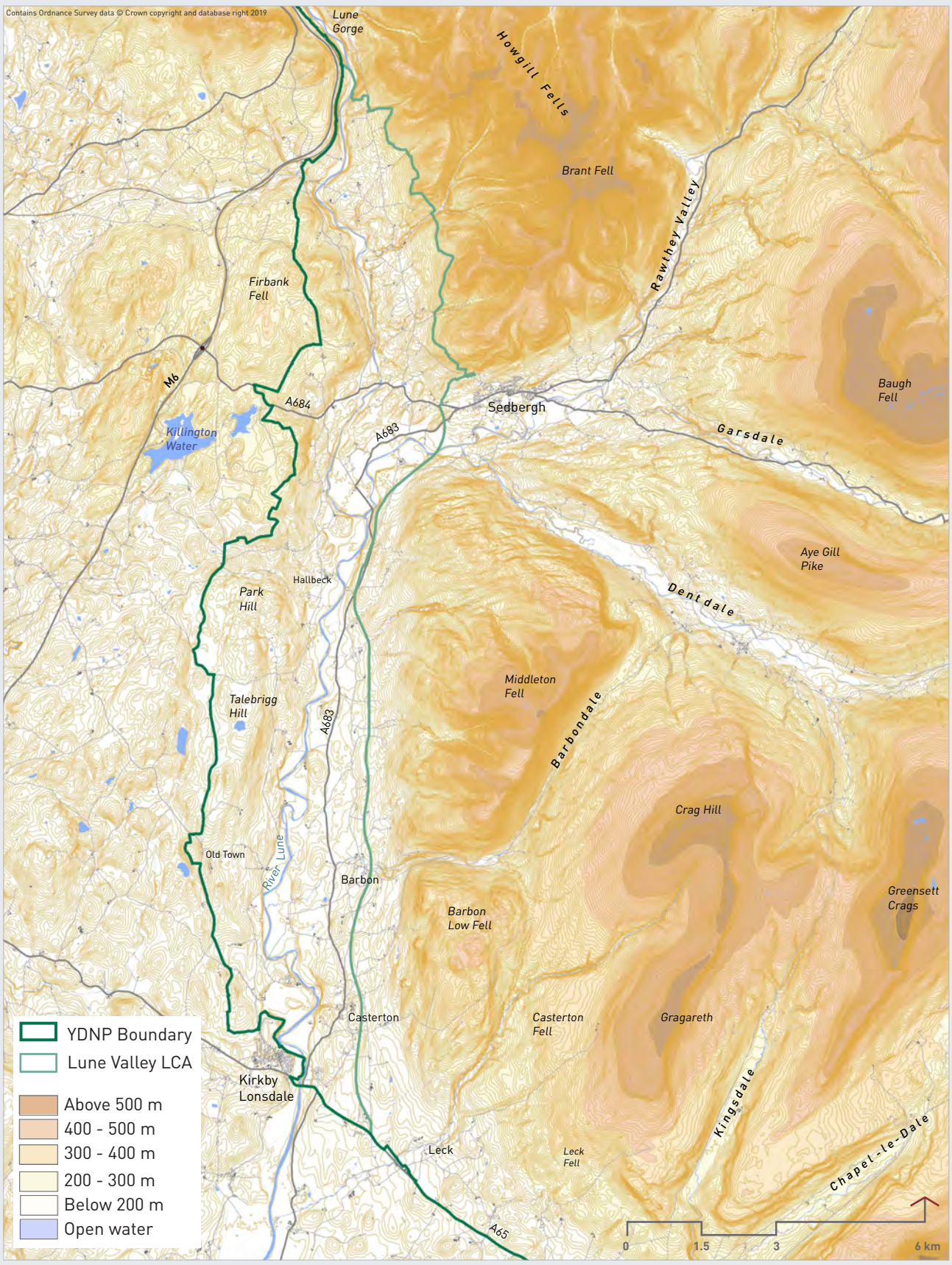
The steep fells to the east range from 623m at the summit of Fell Head in the Howgills to 370m at Barbon Low Fell and 280m at Casterton Fell. The upland ridge that encloses the Lune Valley to the west is also higher to the north, but here the highest summit is Firbank Fell at 289m and the hills become progressively lower to the south, with a summit of 240m at Talebrigg Hill and high points of around 200m near Kirkby Lonsdale.

The River Lune is a broad, fast flowing river. It meanders across a slightly undulating floodplain which broadens and flattens towards the south. There are prominent drumlins throughout the valley and extensive undulating glacial drift deposits on parts of the valley floor and on the western valley slopes.

The Lune Valley LCA includes the valley floodplain, all of the slopes of the hills that enclose the western side of the valley and the undulating floodplain fringe to the east. However, the slopes of the steep fells to the east are outside the Lune Valley LCA and are included within LCA 7 (Middleton and Barbon Low Fells and Leck Fell Fringe).

To the north of the Lune Valley LCA, the River Lune flows through a gorge formed by the steep Howgill Fells to the east and the uplands of Birkbeck Fells and Whinfell Common to the west. However the Lune Gorge is outside the National Park. The Upper Lune Valley, to the north of the Howgills, is included within the Orton Fells (LCA 2).

Landscape context: Lune Valley

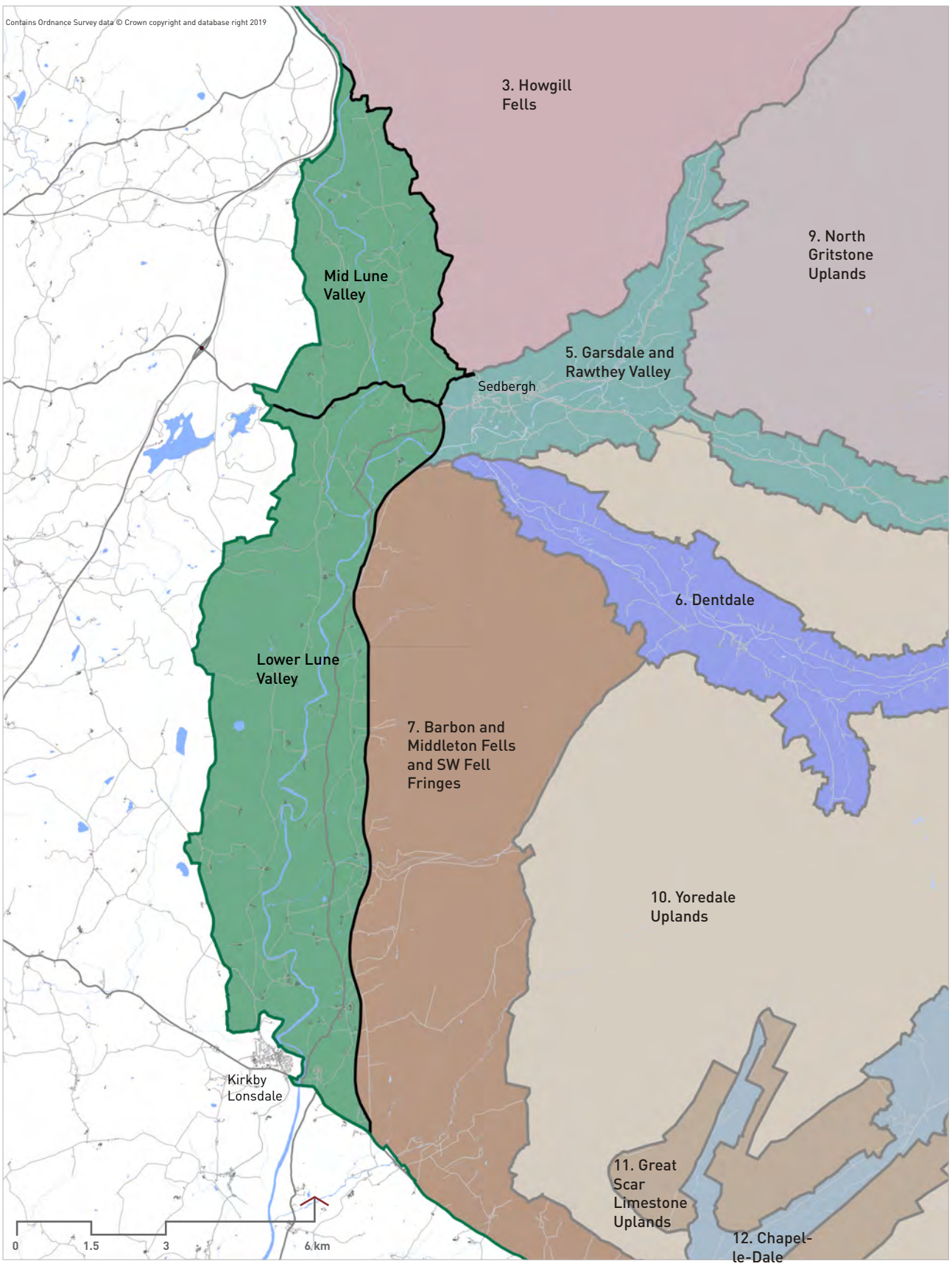


Numbered photographs illustrate specific key natural, cultural and perceptual features in the Lune Valley (see page 7)



A renowned, perfectly composed panorama of the Lower Lune Valley from the Riverside Walk at Kirkby Lonsdale

Landscape character: Lune Valley



Landscape character

The principal variations in landscape character at a local scale are:

- **Mid Lune Valley** - the northern part of the Lune Valley LCA, between the M6 motorway (just north of the Crook of Lune) and the A684, which crosses the valley west of the junction between the Lune Valley and the Rawthey Valley (and the town of Sedbergh). This northern part of the Lune Valley LCA is dominated by the presence of the massive Howgill Fells to the north and east. There is a subtle but natural change in the character of the Lune Valley at this point because the Rawthey Valley follows the alignment of the Dent Fault, which cuts through the ridge of the Howgill Fells and marks a prominent 'notch' in the upland ridge and skyline in eastward views across the Lune Valley.
- **Lower Lune Valley** - the southern part of the LCA from the A684 to Kirkby Lonsdale. This part of the Lune Valley has a broader form and is less steeply enclosed by the surrounding fells. The river is wider and bordered by a more complex, undulating floodplain fringe landscape, with parkland influences. The riverside margins of the market town of Kirkby Lonsdale are included within the National Park but the town centre is outside the National Park boundary.



Hummocky pastures on glacial drift near High Holme

Numbered photographs illustrate specific key natural, cultural and perceptual features in Wharfedale (see page 7)



Looking east towards Middleton Fell from Talebrigg Hill on the western slopes of the Lune valley

Striking contrasts in landscape scale and pattern - between the high, open summits of the Silurian fells to the east .....

Distinctive landscape character

The Lune Valley has a strong and coherent landscape character, with a consistent north-south alignment that enables long views along and across the valley. The massive profile of the Silurian fell ridge to the east has a very strong visual presence along the whole length of the valley which is exaggerated by open, sparse character of the upland landscape and its contrast with the rich tapestry of verdant meadows, hedgerows, trees and woodland within the Lune Valley. The asymmetry of the valley is emphasised by this striking contrast because the pattern of green fields, woodlands and hedgerows peters out low on the slopes of the high fells to the east, but extends right up onto the ridgeline on the western side of the valley.

Lower Lune Valley

The river floodplain is relatively broad and flat in the southern part of the valley, with a wide, fast flowing river channel, meandering across large hedged fields of arable land or improved pasture. Drumlins appear as low rounded hills (around 100m in height) at intervals along the floodplain and more frequently on the rolling fringes of the floodplain, where the glacial drift creates an undulating and slightly terraced landform on the western slopes. The drumlins are typically orientated in a north south direction alongside the river and create a sense of a layered, complex valley landscape in views from the floodplain.

North of Kirkby Lonsdale the valley landscape is strongly influenced by historic halls and their associated parkland and estate landscapes. They include Underley Hall, now a school, Casterton Hall, and Mansergh Hall, which all lie in the floodplain of the River Lune, and Rigmaden Park which is on the western valley slopes. The parklands are defined by large woodlands and plantations, which dominate the valley slopes and extend across the floodplain. Golf courses are also a feature of the lower Lune Valley, between areas of wooded parkland.

A network of regular, medium-large fields extends across the floodplain and over the drumlins. Some fields are enclosed by stone walls, particularly to the east of the floodplain and in the Casterton area, where the character of buildings and field stone walls is influenced by the narrow outcrop of limestone that occurs in this part of the valley. The broad river is often hidden from view by winding strips of riverine woodlands.

The river floodplain is fairly inaccessible, with only two vehicular crossing points in a 12km length of valley. However a network of narrow lanes connects villages and hamlets on the valley slopes and floodplain fringes. The small historic stone bridges that occur wherever these valley side roads cross the many tributary becks are a distinctive landscape feature of the Lune Valley,

The LCA extends to the market town of Kirkby Lonsdale, where the boundary of the National Park includes Devil's Bridge (a beautiful medieval bridge over the Lune) and skirts the elevated riverside walk on the southern edge of the historic town centre. The celebrated view described by Ruskin from the viewpoint by the church in Kirkby Lonsdale provides an attractive panorama across the Lower Lune Valley, which includes the meandering river (here with a stony central island), the floodplain farmland and enclosing estate woodlands of Casterton and Underley Halls - all set against the backdrop of the Barbon, Leck and Casterton Fells.

Mid Lune Valley

The valley becomes slightly narrower and more steeply enclosed to the north of the A684 and the views to the Howgill Fells become increasingly dramatic and dominant.

Fields in the northern part of the Lune Valley are generally smaller and more irregular in shape than those further south. They are enclosed by a mix of stone walls and hedgerows.

Small becks dissect the valley side and these water courses, as well as areas of steeper slopes and wetter ground, are cloaked by broadleaved woodland. There are also areas of gorse and bracken on steeper ground.

Settlement consists of a few small hamlets, farms and cottages, built in local stone and slate, which almost disappear into the landscape except where they are painted white. The small lanes traversing the valley side are extremely narrow, often with tall enclosing hedgerows that restrict visibility. There are dramatic cross-valley views from the western valley slopes which are dominated by the fells on the opposite side of the valley – the Howgills in the north and Middleton, Barbon and Leck Fells further south. The break in the massive ridgeline of the Howgill Fells at the Rawthey Valley is a strong feature in these cross valley views,

Two viaducts along the former Tebay-Kirkby Lonsdale railway line are striking landmarks at crossing points over the River Lune at Waterside (the Lune Viaduct) and near the Crook of Lune (the Low Gill Viaduct).



Beck House on the slopes of Park Hill



Track of former railway near Casterton

The former Tebay to Kirkby railway is visible as a shallow trough or an embankment along the length of the valley

.... and the lower, rounded plateau edge uplands to the west


2
Looking west, towardsPark Hill from the floodplain at Middleton


3
Drumlin on the Lune floodplain near Middleton


4
The broad, meandering river channel is often hidden by winding riverside woodlands
River Lune at Rigmaden Bridge


5
Photo. © John H Darch cc-by-sa/2.0
Hawkrigg Wood
Extensive mature broadleaf woodlands on the valley slopes, which often contain stands of semi-natural ancient woodland


6
Photo. © Karl and Ali cc-by-sa/2.0
Devil's Bridge, Kirkby Lonsdale
Beautiful example of a multispan stone bridge, which dates from the late medieval period

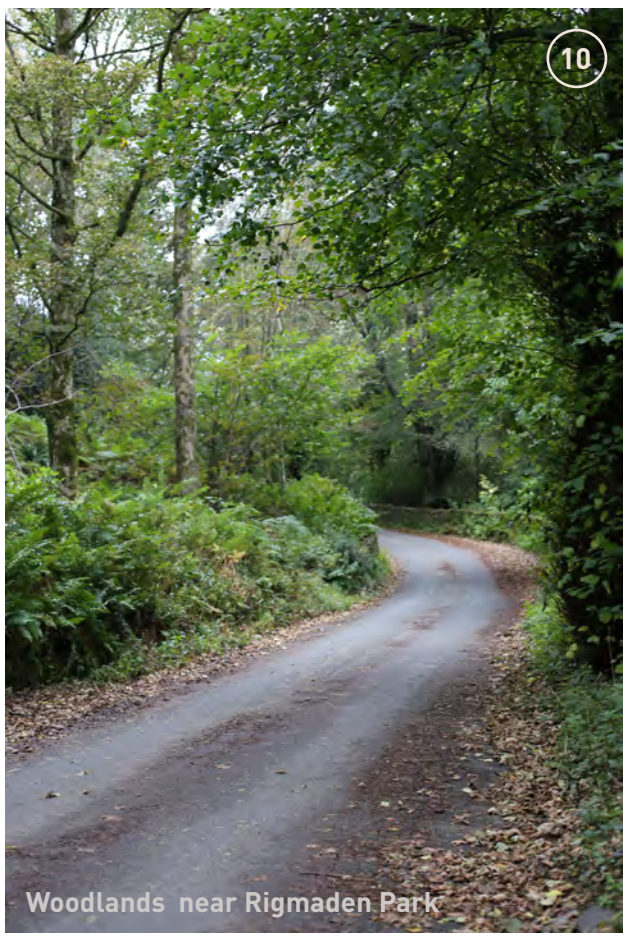

8
The Howgill Fells, looking east from the slopes of Firbank Fell
Dramatic views to the steep, open summits of the Howgill Fells dominate the Mid Lune Valley


View east towards Barbondale from Mansergh

A 189m long curve with 11 arches carrying the former railway 30m above the valley

9


Lowgill Viaduct


10

Woodlands near Rigmaden Park

Woodlands and specimen trees in historic parkland on the western valley slopes at Rigmaden Park

11


Parkland at Rigmaden park


12

Photo. © Chris Heaton cc by-sa/2.0

Hodge Bridge

Small historic stone bridges, carrying roads over tributary streams, are a feature of the Lune Valley

A stunning high sandstone viaduct (1857-1861) with a cast-iron central span. It is grade 2* listed,

13


Viaduct at Waterside


Looking west from Barbon across a flat part of the Lune floodplain

Key natural, cultural and perceptual features

NATURAL

Strong contrasts in character and scale of the enclosing valley ridges; high, steep and open Silurian fells to the east and lower, more rounded plateau edge hills to the west. (2)

Drumlins are locally significant landscape features throughout the valley, often forming the skyline in views from the floodplain or lower valley slopes. (3)

Broad meandering River Lune flowing within an attractive but relatively hidden river corridor landscape. (4)

Numerous tributaries interrupt the regular field patterns; watercourses are often hidden by bands of woodland, which connect across and blur boundaries between the valley slopes and floodplain. (14) (16)

Extensive mature broadleaf woodlands on the valley slopes; many contain areas of ancient woodland eg at Green Wood and Gildard Wood near Casterton, Nether Hall Wood near Mansergh and Hawkrigg Wood near the A684 river crossing point. **Stands of mature beech trees** are a feature of the valley woodlands. (5) (14)

Wood pasture within the historic parkland landscapes of Underly Park and Beckfoot Park in the lower Lune Valley

CULTURAL

Small historic stone bridges which take the valley side roads across the many tributaries that flow into the River Lune. Examples are Hodge Bridge at Barbon and High Stockdale Bridge at Middleton, which are both scheduled monuments, and Middleton Bridge and High Beckfoot Bridge, which are listed buildings. (12)

Wooded historic parklands in the lower Lune valley which, together with their associated walls, gateposts, lodges and farms, have a strong influence. (11)

The former Tebay to Kirkby railway line (which was active between 1861 and 1854) which is visible as a shallow trough or an embankment along the length of the valley and at two dramatic viaducts - The Lune Viaduct at Waterside, near Sedbergh, which is built of red sandstone with a cast iron central span across the river) and the Low Gill Viaduct near the Crook of Lune. Both are listed buildings. (12) (5) (14)

Devil's Bridge - a beautiful example of a multi-span stone bridge at Kirkby Lonsdale which dates from the late medieval period and is a very popular honey pot site for visitors, particularly in warm weather. (6)

Roman Road - the A683 between Kirkby Lonsdale and Sedbergh follows the course of a Roman Road.

PERCEPTUAL

Striking contrasts in landscape scale and pattern between the sparse, open steep slopes of the Silurian fells to the east and the lower, smooth rounded uplands to the west - emphasised by continuity of the pattern of fields and woodlands, which extends up onto the western ridge. (2) (15)

Dramatic views to the Howgills to the north east and to Middleton, Barbon and Casterton Fells to the east; t**he Howgills have a powerful presence** throughout the valley. (8)

Ruskin's View from the riverside walk at Kirkby Lonsdale, which offers an attractive panorama across the Lower Lune Valley in which the elements of meandering river, floodplain farmland, historic halls and wooded parklands are perfectly composed against a backdrop of steep, open fells. (1)

Photos that illustrate specific key natural, cultural and perceptual features are numbered eg. (10)

Watercourses are often hidden by bands of woodland, which connect across and blur boundaries between the valley slopes and floodplain.



14

Chapel Beck in the Mid Lune Valley, from the slopes of Firbank Fell



Kirkby Lonsdale Golf Course



15

Contrasting landscape scale and pattern between **Barbon Low Fell and the Lune floodplain near Middleton**



16

Photo. © Chris Heaton cc-by-sa/2.0

Many tributaries interrupt the regular field pattern, here winding across and between the **low rounded glacial landforms**

Eller Beck near Treasonfield

Yorkshire Dales National Park - Natural Beauty and Wildlife Special Qualities: Lune Valley

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Lune Gorge
Howgill Fells
Brant Fell
Firbank Fell
M6
A684
Sedbergh
Killington Water
Dentdale
Killington
Hallbeck
Park Hill
River Lune
Middleton Fell
Dent
Drumlins are locally significant features throughout the valley, often forming the skyline in views from the valley floor
Tebrigg Hill
Barkin Beck
Barbondale
Extensive mature broadleaved woodland on slopes of lower Lune Valley
A683
Old Town
Barbon
Barbon Beck
Mansergh
Barbon Low Fell
Beckfoot Park
Wood pasture and semi-natural ancient woodland within historic parklands of Underly Park and Beckfoot Park
Underly Park
Casterton Fell
Casterton
A65
Kirkby Lonsdale
Leck
0
1.5
3
6 km

The Special Qualities of the Yorkshire Dales National Park are described in the National Park's Management Plan 2019-24. This map shows selected special qualities (for which spatial data is available) that are found within the Lune Valley LCA.

This special qualities mapping is shown within the area that forms the backdrop to local views; it reflects the extent of visibility and the overall landscape setting for the Lune Valley LCA

Special Qualities of the YDNP

YDNP Boundary

Lune Valley LCA boundary

Extent of area that forms the backdrop to views from the Lune Valley LCA

Natural beauty

The Howgills
[Areas in the YDNP underlain by Silurian rocks]

Significant glacial/post-glacial features
[Prominent drumlins and glacial drift landforms]

Spectacular waterfalls
['Water features' noted as 'recognised attraction' in YDNPA Visitor Strategy]

Wildlife*

Flower-rich hay meadows and pastures
[Lowland meadows; Upland hay meadows]

A range of rare limestone habitats
[Limestone pavements; Lowland calcareous grassland; Upland calcareous grassland]

Extensive areas of moorland
[Upland heathland; Blanket bog; Lowland raised bog]

Small areas of broadleaf woodland
[Deciduous woodland; ancient woodland (darker tone)]

*Priority Habitats [S41 NERC Act 2010]

Yorkshire Dales National Park - Cultural Heritage Special Qualities: Lune Valley

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Low Gill Viaduct
Lune Viaduct
Sedbergh
M6
A684
Killington Water
Killington New Park (post medieval)
Killington Old Park (from Norman times)
Middleton Bridge
Dent dale
Killington
Hallbeck
River Lune
High Stockdale Bridge
Site of Middleton Deer Park (medieval)
Former Tebay to Kirkby Railway Line
Dent
Rigmaden Park
Former Roman Road
Barbondale
Blease Hill medieval settlement site
Barbon Park
Old Town
Mansergh
Hodge Bridge
Barbon
Whelprigg Park
A683
Extensive ridge and furrow (post-medieval field systems throughout the Lower Lune Valley
Beckfoot Park
Romano-British field systems
Underly Park
Casterton
Bindloss Farm - Romano-British settlement
A65
Kirkby Lonsdale
High Park, Leck
High Park - multi-period archaeological scheduled earthworks, representing settlement, burial mounds, field systems, enclosures and trackways
Fairthwaite Park
Ruskin's View
Devil's Bridge
Fairthwaite Park - medieval deer park, which extended up onto Leck Fell

0 1.5 3 6 km

Special Qualities of the YDNP

- YDNP Boundary
- Lune Valley LCA boundary
- Extent of area that forms the backdrop to views from the Lune Valley LCA

Cultural heritage*

- **A traditional pastoral landscape**
  [Traditional stone-built field barns]
- **An exceptional range of archaeology**
  [Strip lynchets & prehistoric field systems that are prominent]
- **The remains of former rural industries**
  [Sites of former lead & coal mines & lime kilns]
- **Powerful reminders of periods of dominance by large estates and religious houses**
  [Ancient & historic parklands & other ornamental landscapes]

* YDNPA Historic Environment Record

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