The Knolls and Stake Fell, looking NE from the A684 just east of Newbiggin-cum-Preston

LCA 18 Wensleydale

Yorkshire Dales National Park - Landscape Character Assessment

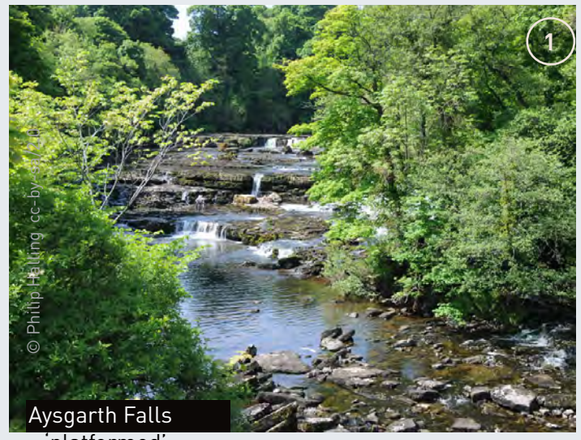
YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

LCA 18 Wensleydale

Key characteristics

- Broad, open U-shaped glacial valley with a grand scale.
- Valley sides are unevenly stepped with sloping bands of outcropping rock, often combined with strips of woodland and screes. Limestone scars are visually important focal points, highly visible due to lack of vegetation cover.
- Series of steep flat-topped summits, such as Penhill, Addlebrough and Wether Fell are prominent landmarks at the entrance to tributary valleys, often framing views along the dale
- Glacial features such as drift tails, moraines and drumlins form a rolling, undulating valley floor.
- River Ure is broad and gently meandering with a stony channel and low grassy banks, generally hidden by undulating landform.
- Tributary valleys branch from the main dale, each with a distinct local character (Widdale, Sleddale, Raydale, Cotterdale, Bishopdale, Waldendale, Coverdale).
- Numerous waterfalls, formed by alternating beds of hard limestone and sandstone within the soft shales. eg Hardraw Force, Mill Gill Force, Whitfield Force and Aysgarth Falls; smaller rocky gills and waterfalls on tributaries and valley slopes
- Well settled, with clustered market towns and villages and many small linear settlements, strung out along minor roads and stepping up the valley slopes.
- Field pattern is well defined by drystone walls, which often accentuate the undulating valley floor topography; traditional stone barns on field boundaries are a strong visual element.
- Small mixed woodland blocks, scattered copses and trees occur in clumps across the valley floor, on top of hillocks and on the lower valley slopes; concentration of trees in areas of parkland character in lower Wensleydale and mid Bishopdale. The landscape becomes progressively more open and exposed towards Upper Wensleydale and the upper tributary dales.

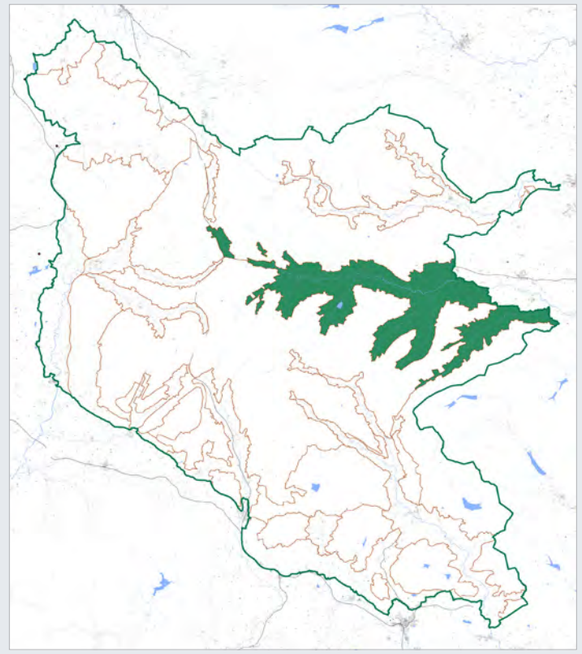
Numbered photographs illustrate specific key natural, cultural and perceptual features in Wensleydale (see page 8)



Aysgarth Falls - 'platformed' waterfall with water flowing over alternating bands of hard limestone and soft shale



Peaks of Addlebrough (to the left) and Wether Fell to the right) emerging from mist in view south west from Askrigg towards Raydale



Landscape context

The primary influence on the landscapes of Wensleydale is the rocks of the Yoredale series which here lie on top of the Great Scar Limestone. The Yoredales comprise a repeated series of limestone, shale and sandstone layers. The easily eroded shales form the gentler slopes of the valley sides with the harder limestones exposed as horizontal scars and steps on the valley sides. Wensleydale's numerous waterfalls are formed by alternating beds of hard limestone and sandstone within the soft shales.

The Main limestone, which lies above the Yoredale series, outcrops as high scars and caps the distinctive flat-topped summits along the valley, such as Crag Hill and Wether Fell.

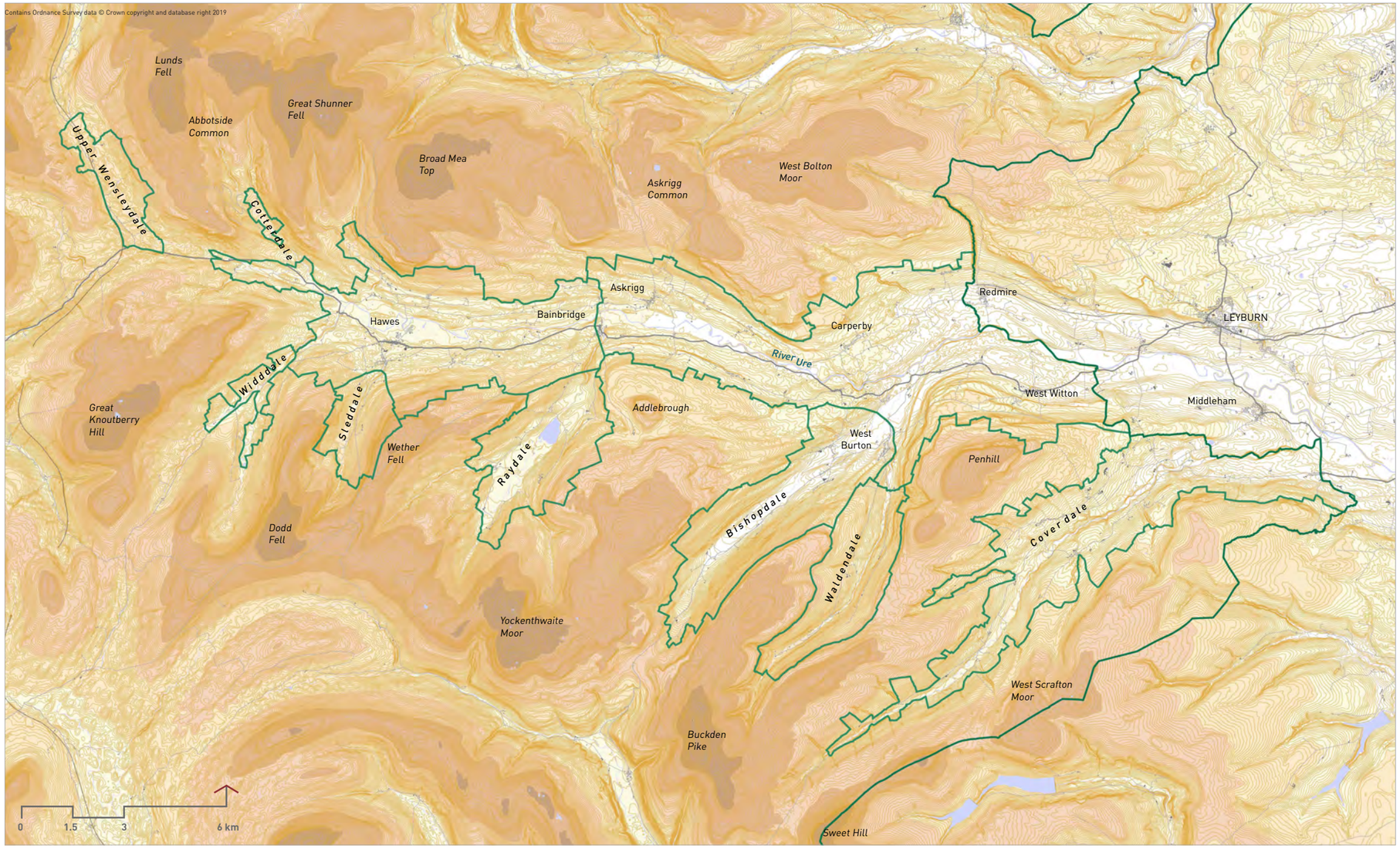
Millstone Grit outcrops on top of the fells to the north and south of the dale, including Dodd Fell, Penhill, Great Haw and more widely on Great Shunner Fell to the north.

The broad, U-shapes of Wensleydale and its tributary dales were carved by glaciers although the main glacier in Wensleydale was less erosive than in some of the side valleys, such as Bishopdale, which contained a steep and active glacier leading to the significant deepening of the valley. Waldendale's v-shape profile shows that it was little affected by ice.

As the glaciers retreated, deposits were left as rounded drumlins and 'drift tails' at the junction of tributary valleys. The glacial drift deposits tend to divert water courses, often creating waterfalls within the tributaries. Drumlins are particularly pronounced between Bainbridge and Aysgarth and drift tails are concentrated in the Mid Wensleydale area.

Semer Water is a natural lake of glacial origin, a rare

Landscape context: Wensleydale



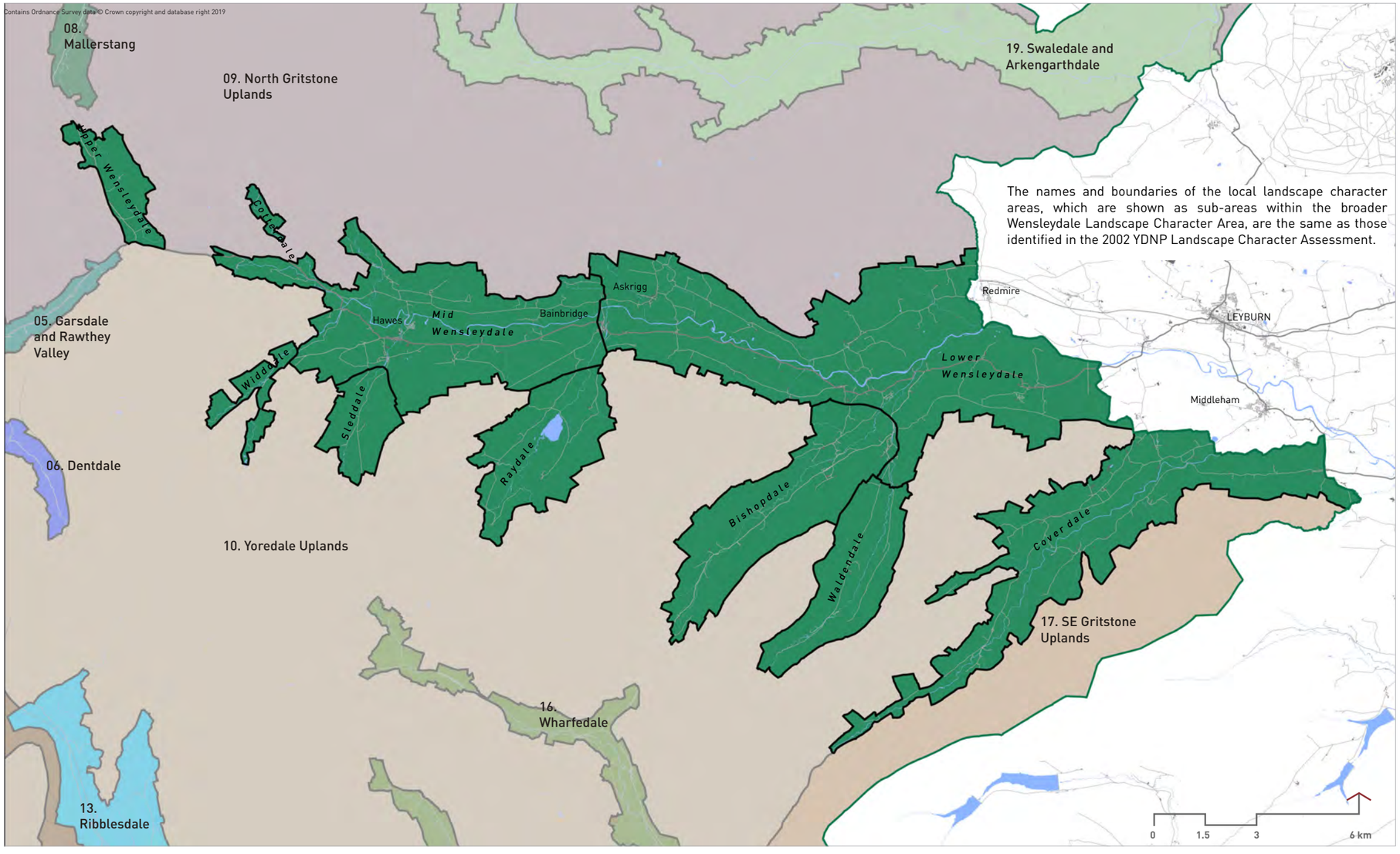
feature and one of the largest in Yorkshire. It was dammed at its lower end by glacial debris and was formerly much bigger reaching further up Raydale; the overflow from the lake formed the gorge and falls of the River Bain above Bainbridge.

Landscape character

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

- **Lower Wensleydale** - very broad, large scale U-shaped dale with stepped valley slopes; glacial drift and drumlins create undulating landform and local sense of enclosure on the valley floor. Extensive tree cover and a diverse, well settled character
- **Mid Wensleydale** - broad glaciated dale with uneven stepped valley slopes and prominent limestone scars; relatively open, sweeping character with distinctive network of drystone walls and field barns
- **Upper Wensleydale** - elevated, open and remote, broad u-shaped valley with gently graded slopes, overlying the Yoredales.
- **Coverdale** - long, U-shaped dale with striking transition from settled, well treed and enclosed lower valley character to open, wild moorland at dale head
- **Waldendale** - narrow V-shaped dale with gently undulating, stepped valley sides
- **Bishopdale** - long, fairly narrow and deep U-shaped dale; regular pattern of small woods, hedgerows and walls on valley slopes becomes larger scale and more open towards dale head
- **Raydale** - wide flat valley floor with stepped slope profiles; bands of scree and terraces of woodland accentuate alignment of rock strata; well wooded
- **Sleddale** - broad, open shallow-sided tributary dale; regular pattern of large rectangular fields enclosed by stone walls leading up onto moorland slopes
- **Widdale** - shallow sloped, elevated tributary dale with undulating valley floor; extensive conifer plantations
- **Cotterdale** - small, remote upland tributary dale; character dominated by surrounding moorland

Landscape character: Wensleydale



Distinctive landscape character

Wensleydale is the broadest of the Yorkshire dales and distinguished by the stepped slope profiles of the valley sides, a sequence of branching tributary valleys and the flat topped summits of fells along the valley. The extensive undulating valley floor glacial drift deposits create a complex topography and a diverse landscape pattern.

The River Ure drops 215m in height along the full length of Wensleydale (a distance of 26 miles); about a third of this fall occurs within a 3 mile stretch between Redmire and Aysgarth in a series of waterfalls, notably the stepped Aysgarth Falls. Numerous other falls occur in Wensleydale including Cotter Force and falls at Gayle, West Burton and Widdale Beck, with many others on the tributary streams.

Wensleydale and its branching tributary dales are well settled, with larger settlements at Hawes, Bainbridge and Askrigg and numerous small villages and hamlets clustered at river crossings or strung out along minor roads on the terraced valley side slopes.

Remnants from Wensleydale's long history of settlement and land are found in the form of Bronze Age stone circles and tumuli, such as at Oxclose Pasture near Carperby, sites of Iron Age villages near the summit of Addlebrough and the Roman fort on Brough Hill, near Bainbridge. Lynchets on the lower valley slopes, which date from the late medieval period, historic packhorse routes and drove roads and old limekilns are frequent local landscape features which contribute to the diverse landscape character of the dale.

By the end of the 17th century the majority of houses and farms were built using the local gritstone and limestone. Gritstone was the best building stone; in areas where limestone was used for building gritstone was used for cornerstones and lintels.

Lower Wensleydale

At the eastern fringes of the National Park, Lower Wensleydale is an exceptionally broad valley with a grand scale and long views across the well treed dale to the open surrounding moorland ridges.

The dale here has stepped valley slope profiles and scars that run in pale coloured, horizontal bands along the dale sides. The scars are particularly pronounced from Askrigg and Bainbridge in the west to Aysgarth in the east, along both sides of the valley and are often associated with bands of trees or woodland.

The River Ure follows a sinuous course, crossing a number of spectacular and nationally renowned waterfalls at Aysgarth, High, Middle and Lower Force and at Force Scar further downstream. The river has well wooded banks that obscure it from view but whose meandering lines mark its presence within the valley floor.

The valley floor has a distinctive hummocky landform resulting from glacial deposition including valley floor moraines and drumlins. Small copses frequently mark the tops of the hillocks while larger blocks of woodland occur on the valley floor. Areas adjacent to Wanlass Park and Swinithwaite have a very strong parkland character, with large parkland trees close to the main road. Species include horse chestnut, oak and sycamore. North of Aysgarth the valley side vegetation character changes to scattered clumps of hawthorn and more scrubby bands of trees. The moorland tops are more visible here and slanted bands of outcropping rock are a feature of the valley side above large areas of scree.

The field pattern is often obscured by the characteristic rolling valley floor landform and the extensive woodland cover; field are typically enclosed by a mix of stone walls and hedgerows.

The lower dale is well settled and there is a dense network of minor roads, track and footpaths. The medieval Castle Bolton is a prominent landmark on the north dale slopes.

Mid Wensleydale

West of Bainbridge, Wensleydale becomes distinctly more open, with a prominent network of drystone walls and numerous field barns. The flat-topped summit of Addlebrough is a dominant landmark at the entrance to Raydale.

The valley floor is very broad with a rolling landscape of green fields and scattered clumps of trees. The undulating mounds of glacial till are shaped as 'drift tails' which point downstream. The knolls, topped with clumps of trees, north east of Hawes create a distinctive undulating valley floor landscape in this area.

The valley sides are stepped unevenly in profile with sloping areas interspersed by bands of outcropping limestone rock. High Clint and Low Clint, the largely unvegetated scars on the northern upper valley side, are important visual elements. Scrubby vegetation and scattered trees occur until midway up the slopes leaving the crest of the valley open. Minor gills with their own waterfalls start high up on the valley sides.

Numbered photographs illustrate specific key natural, cultural and perceptual features in Wensleydale (see page 8)



Sweeping scale and prominent network of drystone walls

3

View across Mid Wensleydale to the west of Bainbridge, towards Abbotside Common



4

Brough Scar

High scars, where the underlying limestone 'breaks out' as sheer rock faces



5

West Burton traditional gritstone buildings fronting a village green



Stepped dale slopes reflect the banded geological strata of the underlying rocks

6

Penhill on Burton Moor

The River Ure is broad and meandering with a stony channel and low grassy banks with a few scattered trees. It is often hidden by the undulating topography of the valley floor.

There is a relatively sparse pattern of vegetation comprising small mixed woodland blocks, scattered copses and trees in clumps across the valley floor, on top of hillocks and on the lower valley slopes. Scrub and scree occur higher up valley sides. Some areas are open and exposed with very little vegetation.

An unusually small-scale field pattern near Hawes creates a more intimate feel, becoming larger and more irregular higher up the valley sides. The majority of pastures are improved although hay meadows are well represented within this part of the dale.

Upper Wensleydale

An elevated, very open and exposed broad upper dale that is dominated by the character of the surrounding moorlands and views to particular to the flat-topped summit of Wild Boar Fell. The meandering river is fast flowing and bordered irregular pastures and crumbling stone walls. There are some drumlins on the valley floor, but the landscape of the upper dale has a gently, open character that is interrupted by the former block of the conifer plantation at Lunds.

The Settle to Carlisle railway is prominent as a linear feature on the valley side, with a viaduct at Dandry Mire and near Grisdale crossing.

Cotterdale

A small, steep-sided, narrow dale with a flat valley floor, which may have been formed by a post-glacial lake. Cotterdale's strong sense of containment is enhanced by two large blocks of coniferous woodland to either side of the dale head. There are prominent limestone scars on the eastern flank of the valley, given visual emphasis by a band of trees that line them, and a prominent rocky outcrop known as Bends Clints.

Widdale

An elevated and shallow tributary dale, which is dominated by the surrounding moorlands with few walled fields. Extensive conifer plantations are a dominant influence in the central part of the dale, which is traversed by the busy B6255 connecting Ingleton and Hawes.

Sleddale

The broad tributary dale of Gayle Beck has an open character with a regular pattern of large stone walled enclosures. There is a transition from rough pasture to moorland vegetation in the upper dale, where the sites of small disused coal workings and quarries are visible features. Gayle Beck is notched into the valley floor and forms a gently meandering, shallow, stony channel with rough grass banks. It In its lower reaches Gayle Beck is fringed by trees and crosses Aysgill Force.

Raydale

A broad, flat valley floor with gently sloping stepped valley sides which is slightly enclosed and separated from Wensleydale by a ridge of higher land. The flat-topped summit of Addleborough is a dominant landmark in views throughout Raydale.

Bands of scree combine with terraces of woodland to form distinctive horizontal lines traversing the valley slopes. Valley side gills are also accentuated by tree cover.

Raydale contains Semer Water, a natural glacial lake retained by a terminal moraine, which gives the dale a secluded, 'oasis-like' character. There is a patchy transition from wetland to scrub and flower-rich meadow habitats surrounding the lake.

The dale has a well-treed character, with woodlands, copses and hedgerows interspersed with walled fields; the pattern of fields and woodlands extends high up both valley sides and the adjoining moorland exerts only a very minor influence. At the dale head the influence of the moors is stronger and moorland vegetation spills over the tops and partway down the valley slopes.

Bishopdale

A steeply sloping and deep, long glacial tributary dale, with a gradual transition from a regular large scale pattern of pastures, walls/hedgerows, small woodlands and settlement in the lower valley to a large-scale, open moorland character in the upper dale. Narrow banded wooded scars are prominent on the upper dale slopes.

The lines of trees that cross the valley floor and creep up the valley sides form a strong linear pattern and are a distinctive element of the dale's character. Around Ribba Hall and the Rookery there is a strong, parkland character to the valley floor.

Waldendale

A long, narrow dale with a curved V-shaped form, formed by fluvial processes rather than glacial erosion. The dale has steeply shelving valley sides with pronounced terraces midway up the valley sides including stepped bands of outcropping rock and scree, particularly noticeable at the dale head and on the eastern valley side at Dove Scar and Scar Folds. At the head of the dale the valley bottom widens into a narrow flat valley floor.

The stepped outline of Height of Hazely to the north east frames views towards Wensleydale. Stone walls form a strong pattern of parallel lines running down the steep valley sides, particularly where the valley v-shape is most pronounced.

Coverdale

A long, sinuous U-shaped valley in which the farmed, small scale landscape pattern on the rolling valley floor contrasts with the extensive, sweeping moorland and woodlands on the steeply enclosing ridges. Field boundaries are picked out by trees rather than walls. Tree cover tends to be concentrated on the valley floor and extends up the valley sides in a marked linear pattern following gills or field boundaries and petering out at the top of the valley side to leave the crest of the valley bare.



Looking south from Coverham Lane towards slopes of Braithwaite Moor, Coverdale



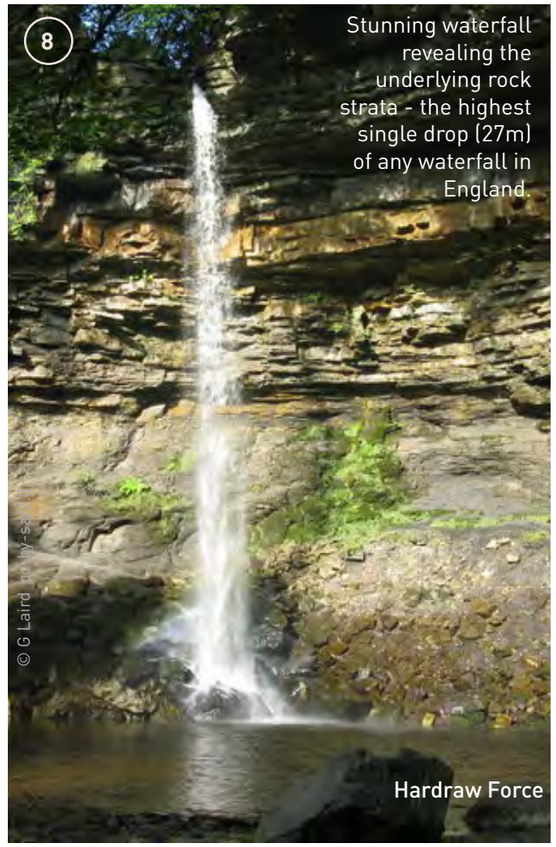
Minor valley of Grange Beck cut within mounds of glacial drift



7

Rare example of an upland lime-rich lake, with a gradual transition of wetland habitats

View across Semer Water towards Addlebrough, Raydale



8

Stunning waterfall revealing the underlying rock strata - the highest single drop (27m) of any waterfall in England.

Hardraw Force



9

High limestone scar - rock faces follow the contours accentuated in views by bands of woodland

Ivy Scar, looking NE from near Thornton Rust



10

Semer Water

Many villages have a linear form; buildings often front village greens, which have an irregular shape to fit with local topography



11

Thoralby - buildings strung out on slopes of Thoralby Haw, Bishopdale.



12

Historic tracks and stone barns are a feature of the dale

Track from Carperby to Great Wegber



13

Village of Gayle, from Beggarmans Road

Bainbridge - buildings fronting an irregular village green



14

Bainbridge



Stepped rock ledges on banks of the River Ure at Yorebridge



creates a sense of a 'valley within the valley'



Traditional gritstone farm buildings are juxtaposed with farmhouses and cottages



Key natural, cultural and perceptual features

NATURAL

Stepped dale slopes reflecting the banded geological strata of the underlying rocks (of the Yoredale series), with flat terraces and steep slopes on hard limestone and rounded, shallow slopes on shales. (6)

Flat-topped summits on fells capped with limestone, eg. Addlebrough and Penhill, which are prominent landmarks at junctions of tributary dales. (2) (7)

'Platformed' waterfalls with water falling over alternating bands of hard limestone and soft shale eg. Hardraw Force, Aysgarth Falls, Mill Gill Force. (1) (8)

High scars on upper dale slopes, where the underlying limestone 'breaks out' as sheer rock faces that follow the contours. eg Ellerkin Scar near Askrigg, High Clint near Hardraw. Scars have stronger visual definition when associated with bands of woodland and screes. (4) (9)

Extensive glacial drumlins and drift tails (mounds of glacial till narrowing to 'tails' which point downstream) create a deeply undulating landform on the valley floor and lower dale sides. (18)

Semer Water in Raydale is a rare example of an upland lime-rich lake. It is an SSSI, with a gradual transition of habitats from open water to dry land. (7) (10)

Important species-rich grassland habitats, including floodplain meadows (River Ure Grasslands SSSI, near Thoralby, Wanlass Grasslands SSSI near West Witton) and moorland fringe areas with valuable transitional habitats eg Marsett Rigg SSSI in Raydale.

Traditionally managed hay meadows eg Swineley Meadow in Widdale; Pry and Bottom Meadows at Mid-Mossdale; Askrigg Bottoms and Walden Meadows

Diverse and extensive range of woodlands, including patches and strips of semi-natural ancient woodland alongside watercourses and historic roads. Freeholders Wood SSSI at Aysgarth Falls is one of very few examples of hazel coppice in the YDNP. (17)

CULTURAL

Numerous traditional villages, many with a linear form and often with gritstone/limestone buildings fronting village greens, which have an irregular shape to fit with the local topography. (5) (11) (13) (14)

Network of field stone walls, which is prominent in the more open landscapes of Mid Wensleydale and the upper tributary dales; **Numerous field barns** are a feature throughout Wensleydale. (3) (12) (16) (20)

Roman Fort on Brough Hill Bainbridge - one of the best preserved of the Pennine Forts.

Sites of early settlements and field systems, including of Iron Age villages on Nab End, the western end of Penhill and Addlebrough.

Dense network of rights of way, offering multiple opportunities for recreation and views - historic drove roads and packhorse routes are conserved as green lanes. (12)

Historic stone bridges are important local landscape features throughout Wensleydale eg bridges at Aysgarth, Semer Water and Coverham Abbey. (19)

Bolton Castle is a prominent landmark on the north slopes of Lower Wensleydale.

PERCEPTUAL

An exceptionally diverse range of long views as a result of the many opportunities for views from the branching tributary dales. (21)

Mounds of glacial drift add layers of complexity and interest. In places the undulating topography creates a mini landscape which feels like a 'valley within the valley.' (15)

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



Patches and strips of ancient woodland alongside watercourses, rocky ledges and tracks





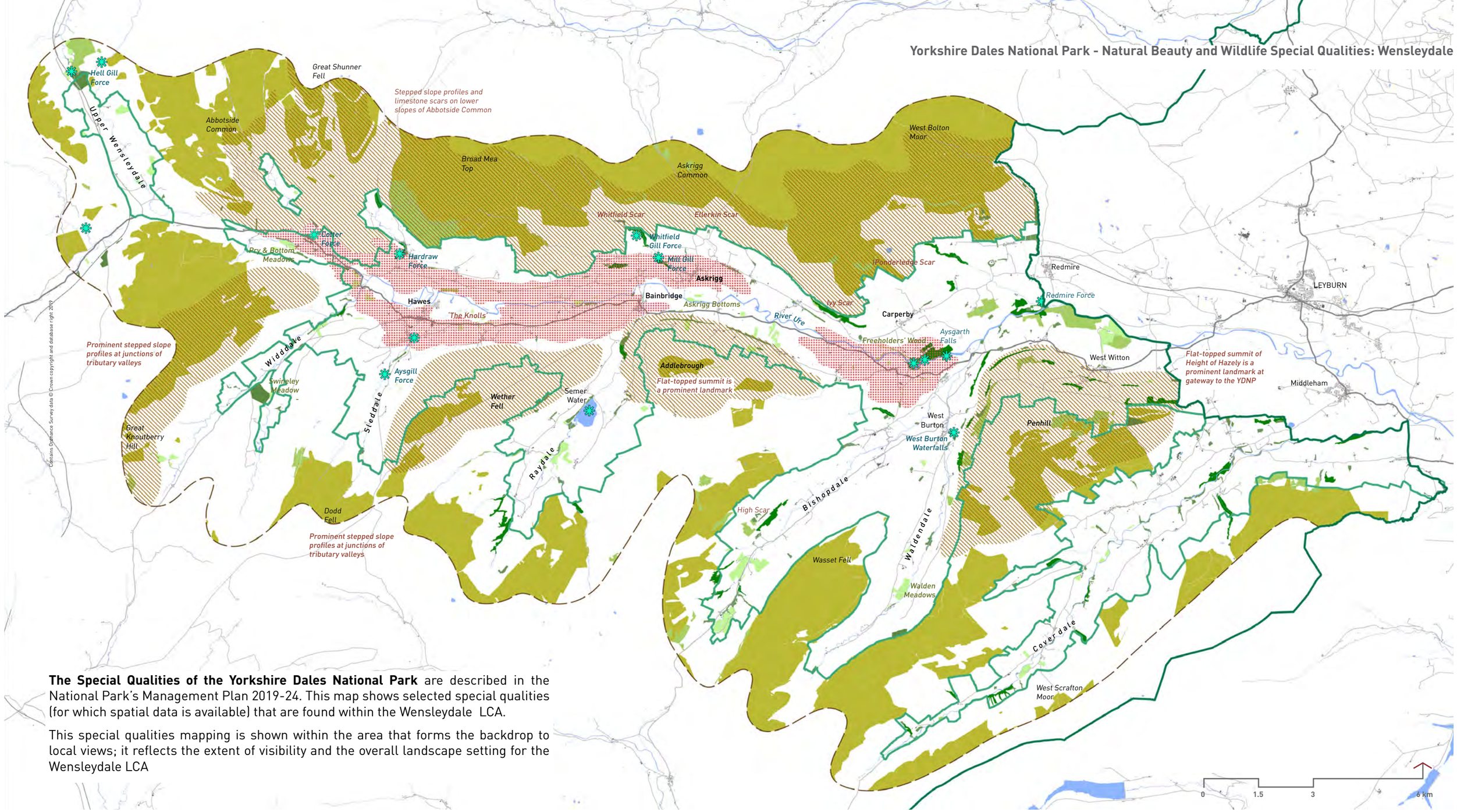
Historic stone bridges are important local landscape features







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



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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 Wensleydale 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 Wensleydale LCA

Special Qualities of the YDNP

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

Natural beauty

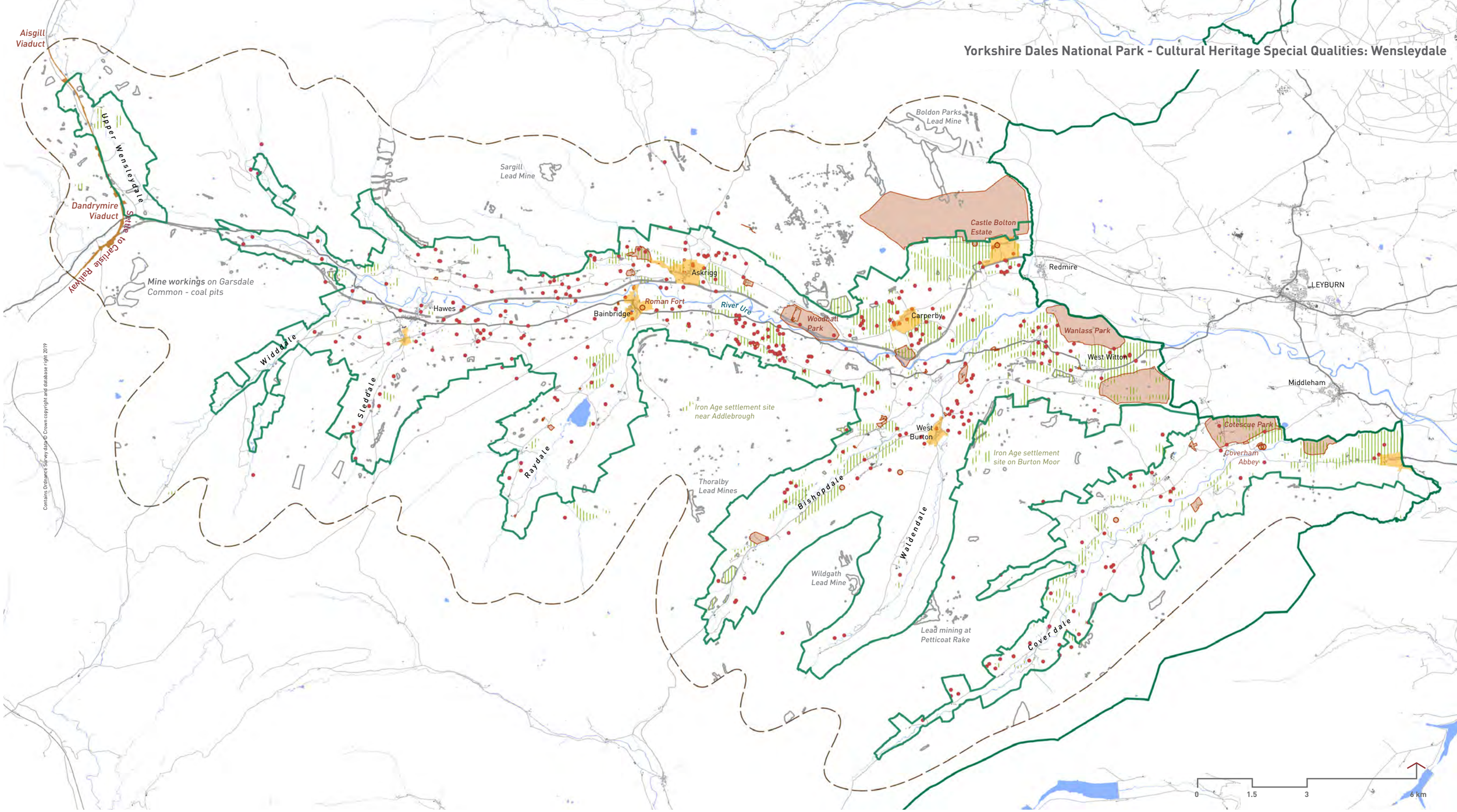
- **Dales with distinctive stepped profiles**
  [Displaying outcrops of rocks from the Yoredale series]
- **Significant glacial/post-glacial features**
  [Prominent drumlins and glacial drift landforms]
- **Extraordinary cave systems**
  ['Caves' noted as 'recognised attraction' in YDNPA Visitor Strategy]
- **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: Wensleydale



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Special Qualities of the YDNP

- YDNP Boundary
- Wensleydale LCA boundary
- Extent of area that forms the backdrop to views from the Wensleydale 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]
- **Powerful reminders of periods of dominance by large estates and religious houses**
  [Ancient & historic parklands & other ornamental landscapes]
- **The remains of former rural industries**
  [Sites of former lead & coal mines & lime kilns]
- **Settle-Carlisle Railway Line**
  [Conservation Area]
- **Historic settlements with distinctive traditional architecture**
  [Conservation Areas]

* YDNPA Historic Environment Record

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