

Green Networks Technical Note

Introduction

This Technical Note considers the background and context of Green Networks in the Scottish Borders. It also looks at the current policy on the topic and considers the local issues that require to be taken into account in the formulation of any policy on Green Networks for the Scottish Borders context. Furthermore it provides recommendations on future Green Network policy to be contained in the Local Development Plan (LDP) and how it can be used to guide long term planning within the Council area.

Context

The Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) places a responsibility on local authorities to identify and promote green networks within Local Development Plans where this will add value to the provision, protection, enhancement and connectivity of open space and habitats. There is a strong connection between our green networks and the rivers and water courses within the Borders which will be reflected in the identification of the green networks.

Planning Advice Note 60: Planning for Natural Heritage promotes the concept of green networks that can contribute to the wider landscape, biodiversity and urban design objectives. The document continues stating that the development of Green Networks “can also be integrated with provision for nature conservation, education, recreation, countryside access and sustainable urban drainage, and the development of footpath and cycleway networks”.

Whilst Planning Advice Note 65 (PAN 65): Planning and Open Space states that local authorities should aim to maintain or form networks of green and civic spaces which:

- contribute to the framework for development;
- maintain and enhance environmental qualities;
- provide a range of opportunities for recreation and leisure;
- link and create wildlife habitats; and
- encourage walking and cycling and reduce car use, in line with local transport strategies and Core Paths Plans.

The SESplan Proposed Plan states that it supports not only the creation of the Central Scotland Green Network but also the Green Network in the Scottish Borders to establish a strategic green network across the SESplan area. That document continues stating that Local Development Plans will identify opportunities to contribute to the development and extension of the Green Network and mechanisms through which they can be delivered.

The Consolidated Local Plan 2011 identifies a ‘Countryside Around Towns’ (CAT) area. The area is located in the Central Borders and stretches from Galashiels to Newstead and on to St Boswells.

A Supplementary Planning Guidance details the CAT policy in greater depth and provides an action plan regarding the approach to enhancements. The CAT area is of particularly high value in terms of biodiversity, landscape, heritage, open space, sports and recreation and therefore requires protection to ensure that these benefits remain an important resource for the Central Borders Strategic Development Area. It is also important that the individual settlements within this area are protected from coalescence.

The River Basin Management Plan for the Solway Tweed River basin district sets out how the requirements of the Water Framework Directive will be met and how it is planned to continue to do so. This Plan identifies the risks to the status of our water environment, and assesses how and to what extent these risks can be addressed in the current or in the future. A series of local actions are set out within the Management Plan that should evolve into active projects resulting in improvements to the classification status through time.

The Green Network in the Scottish Borders

In considering the identification of a Green Network within the Scottish Borders and inline with the advice within PAN 65 (as set out in the previous page), consideration of contribution of green networks to the framework for development is crucial. Therefore, the locations of the Strategic Development Areas (SDA) as set out in the SESplan require to be taken into account.

The map below identifies the location of the three SDA's within the Scottish Borders Council area.



Definition and Aim

Green networks consist of a network of green spaces and green corridors around settlements, linking open spaces within settlements to the wider countryside. They can assist in enhancing the biodiversity, quality of life, and sense of place of an area.

The aim of the green networks that will be identified in the LDP are to assist in supporting sustainable economic growth, tourism, recreation, the creation of an environment that promotes a healthier-living lifestyle, and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, and have the potential to improve water quality, promote flood protection and reduce pollution.

What components make up a Green Network?

This section of the technical note considers the various components that contribute to making up a Green Network. The green network within the Scottish Borders area comprises of a series of green spaces within and around towns and link to the wider countryside.

The Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy was developed in partnership with the Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Borders Forest Trust, as well as with advice and guidance from a steering group comprising of a range other key stakeholders.

The Woodland Strategy seeks to draw together all those who have an interest in the Borders tree resources. It is intended to provide an integrated, practical, partnership based approach and be pro-active to act as a positive framework for the future. It is a component of the Scottish Borders Structure Plan and provides a regional expression of the Scottish Forestry Strategy.

The Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy identifies four major forest areas in the Scottish Borders that incorporate recreational facilities, activities and events for visitors. The forest areas are: Glentress, the Tweed Valley Forests in the north, and Newcastleton, Wauchope and Craik Forests in the south west (page 22 of the Woodland Strategy).

In addition to the above visitor attractions, private sector pro-active diversification into woodland-based recreation and visitor facilities has also been carried out by the Region's large traditional estates such as Buccleuch Estates (through its Countryside Services at Bowhill), Lothian Estates (with the Harestanes Countryside Visitor Centre) and Roxburghe Estates.

In line with PAN 65 it is proposed to primarily consider identifying only those green networks that will contribute to the development framework.

However, in addition to the Woodland Strategy highlighted above, the series of maps below identify the various key components that also contribute to making up a green network in the Scottish Borders.

The main components can be grouped to include:

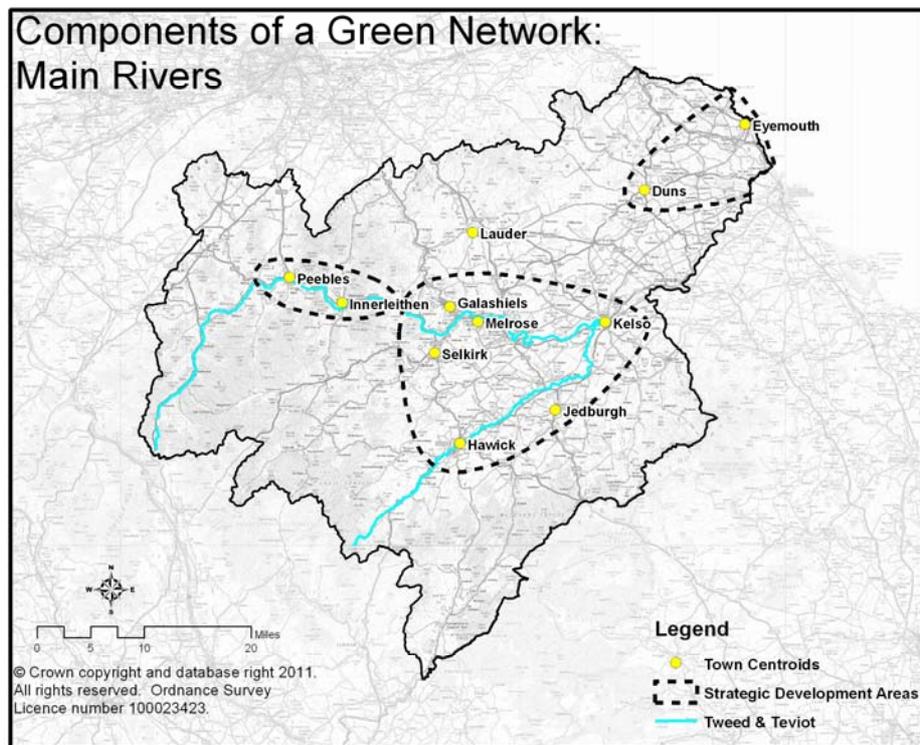
- Main rivers and Water Quality

- Natural Heritage
- Woodland
- Landscape designations
- Countryside Around Towns
- Gardens and Designed Landscapes; and
- Active travel and railway routes

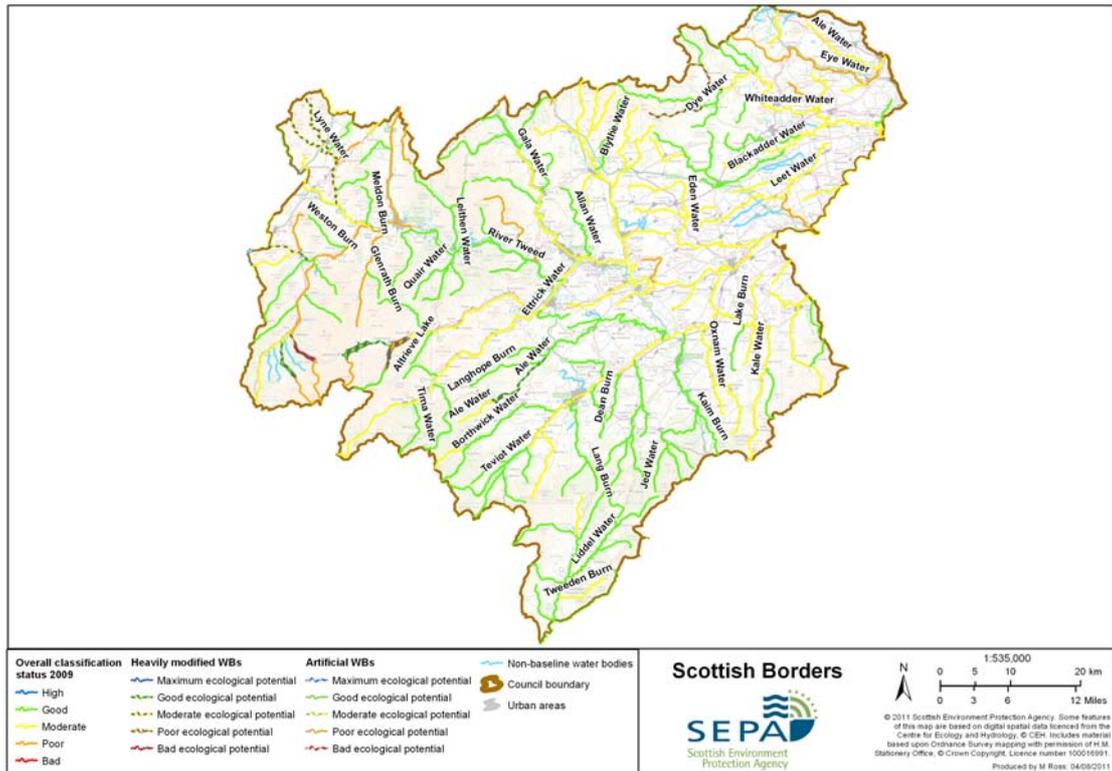
Why are these, the main components relating to the Green Network?

By its very nature the Green Network focuses on environmental resources and the Scottish Borders benefits from a very high quality natural environment with the River Tweed and the River Teviot running through the heart of the region.

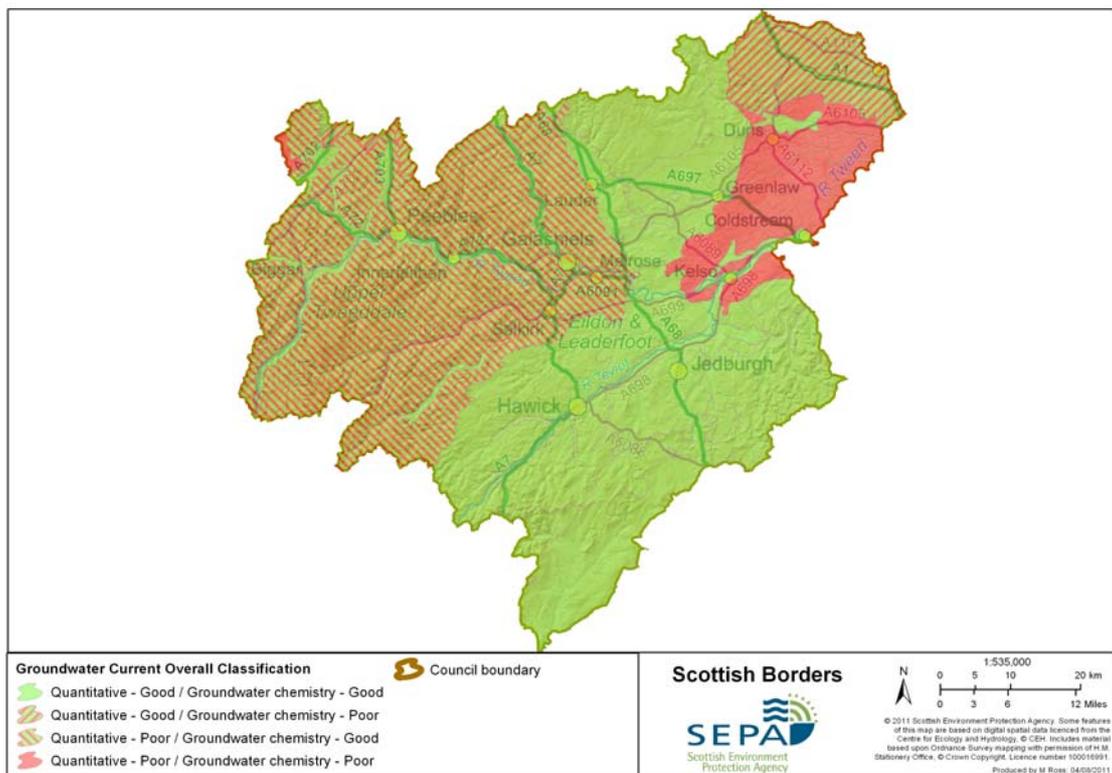
Main Rivers and Water Quality:



Surface Water:



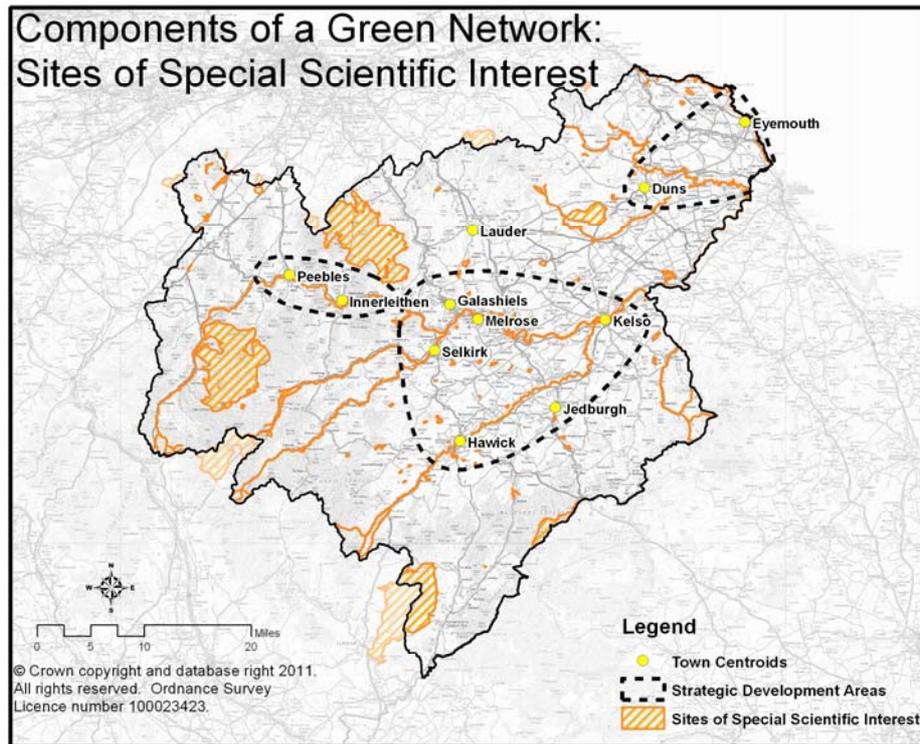
Groundwater:



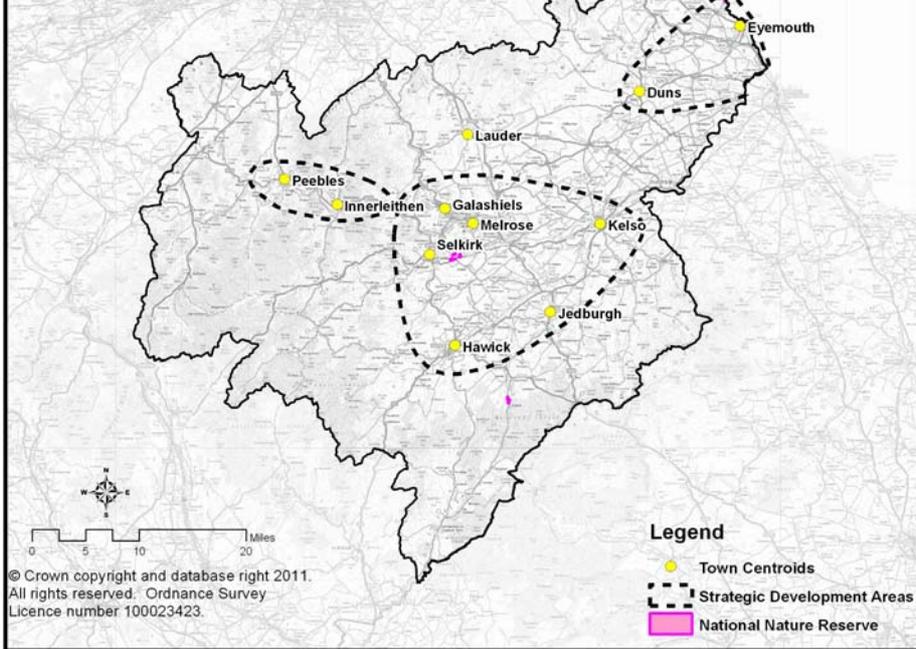
The above two maps provided by SEPA (Scottish Environment Protection Agency) show the current (2009 status) of the baseline water bodies within or partly within the Scottish Borders Council area for both surface water and groundwater.

In addition to the main rivers and SEPA's data on the quality of water, the Scottish Borders has significant resources in the form of the diversity of its plants, its animals and habitats, as well as its rocks and landforms. For that reason the Scottish Borders benefits from its many designations that aim to protect and enhance its natural heritage.

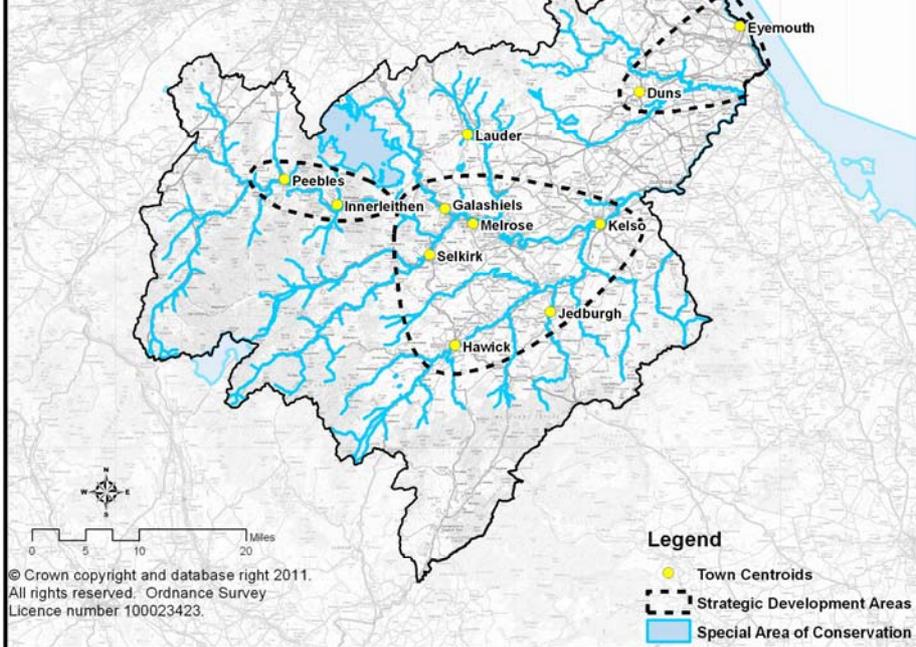
Components related to Natural Heritage:



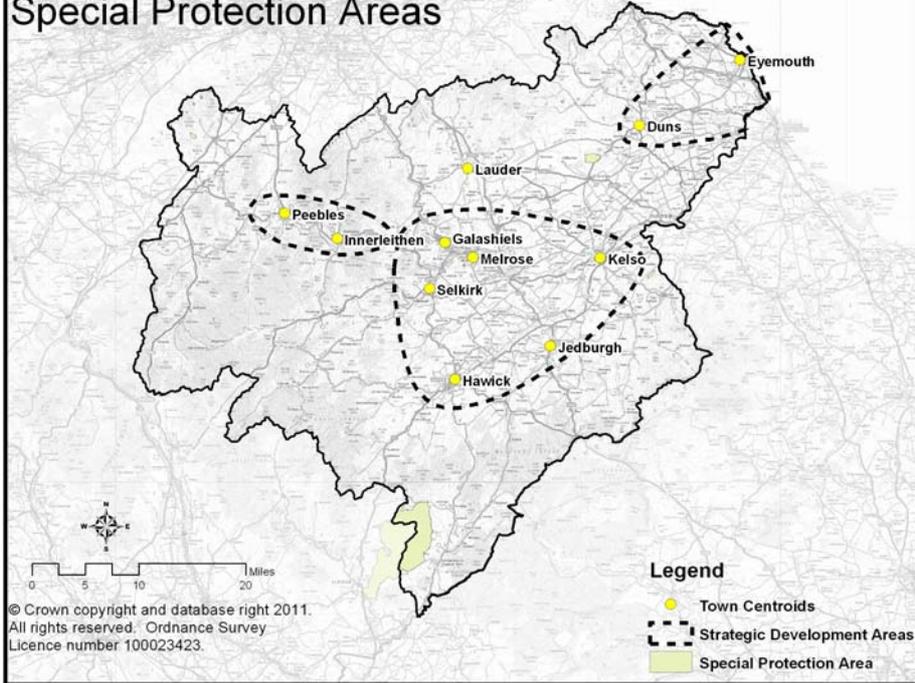
Components of a Green Network: National Nature Reserves



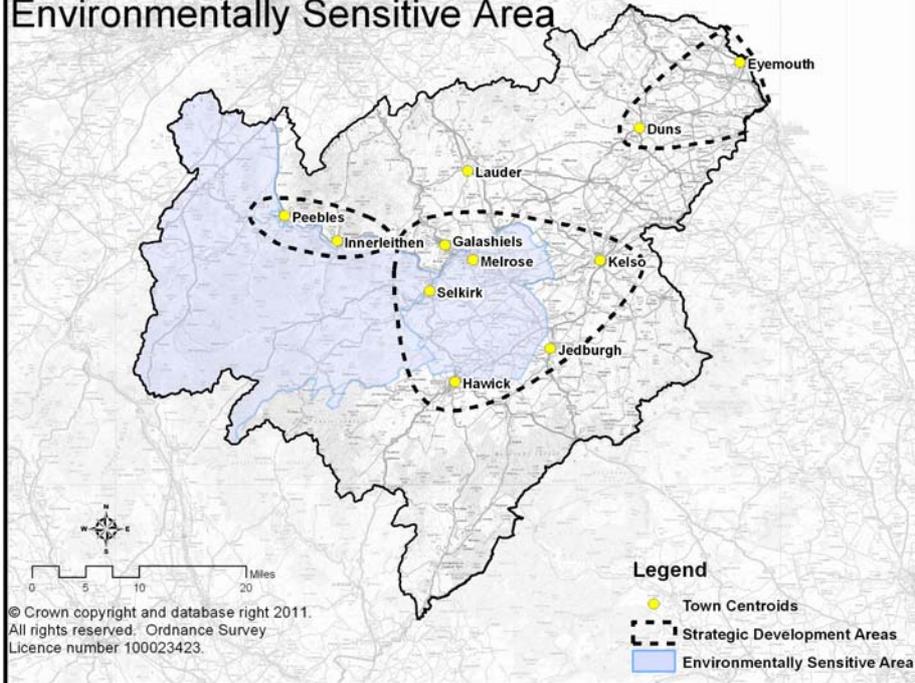
Components of a Green Network: Special Areas of Conservation



Components of a Green Network: Special Protection Areas

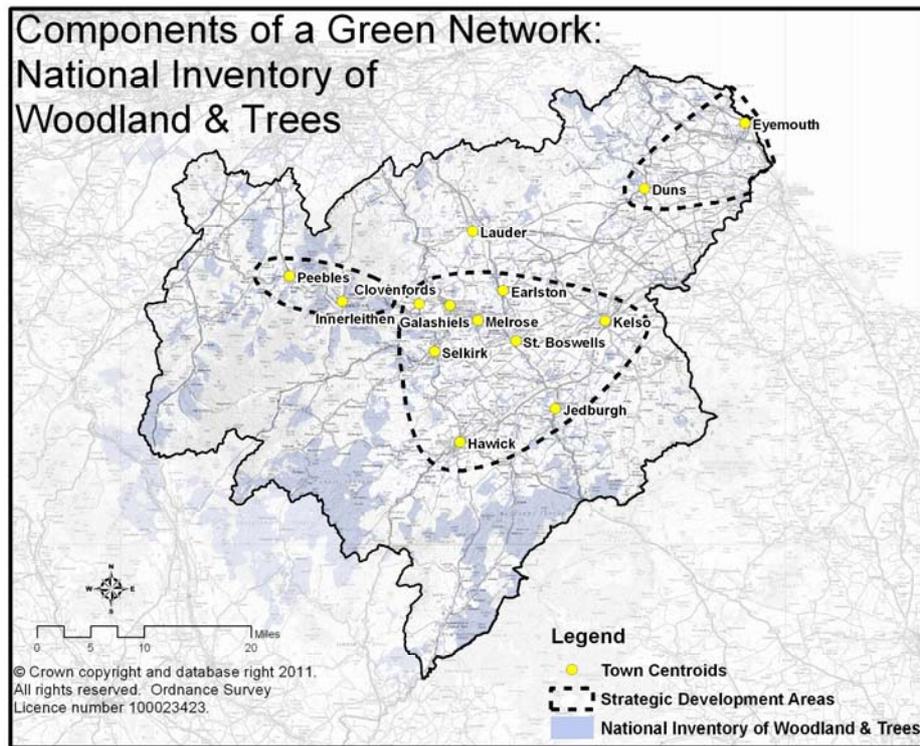


Components of a Green Network: Environmentally Sensitive Area



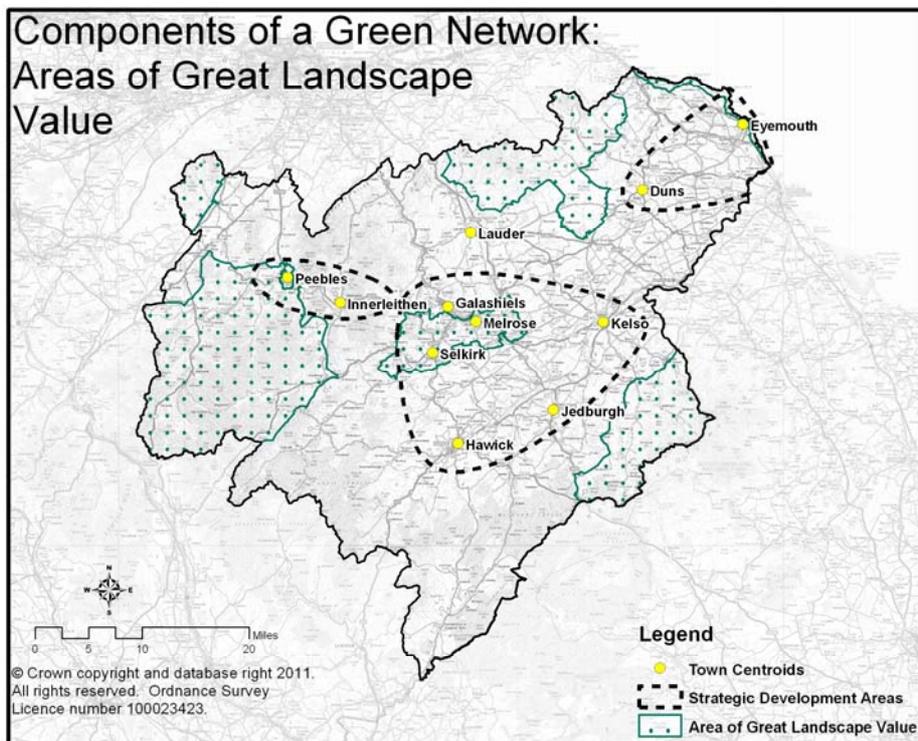
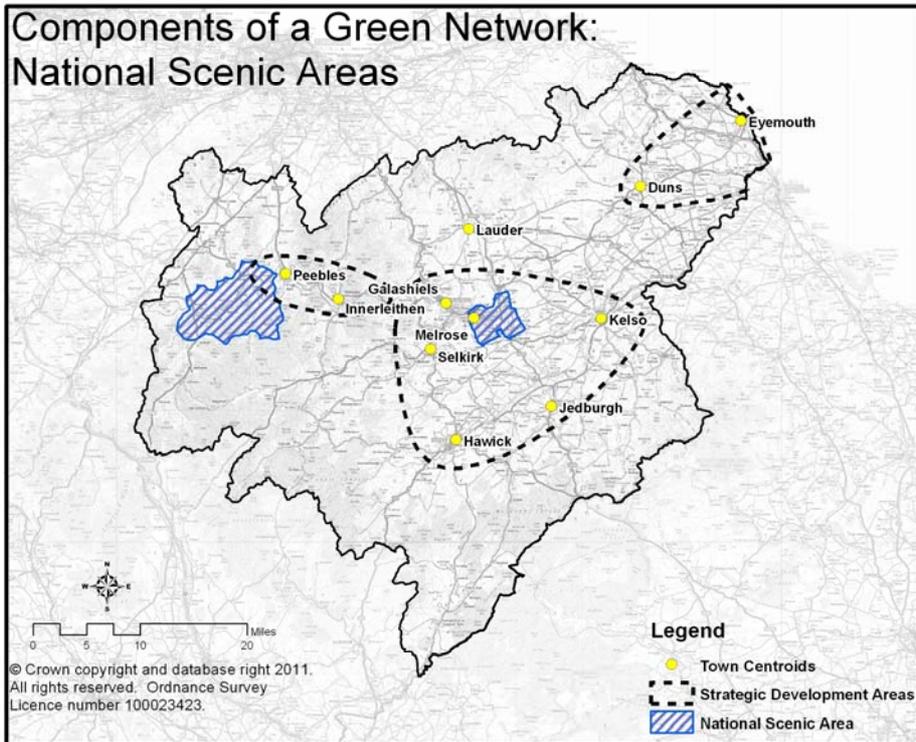
The Scottish Borders trees, woodlands and forests make a significant contribution to the region's quality of life. They make a substantial contribution to the tourist industry, providing opportunities for recreation, healthy exercise and community involvement. They also contribute to Scottish Border's unique landscape, ecological and cultural heritage.

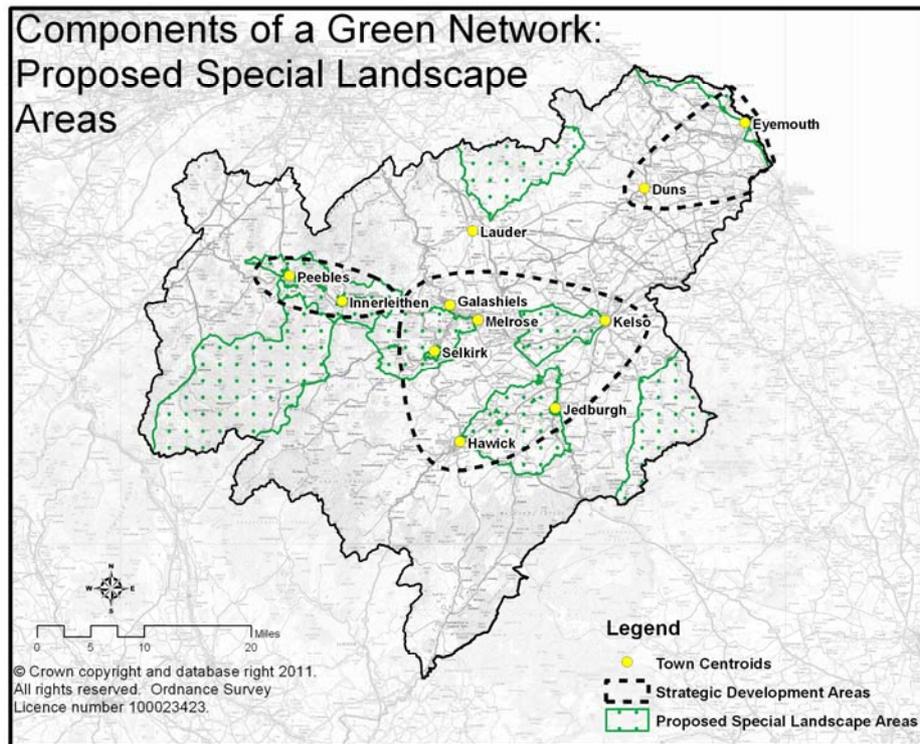
Woodland:



Landscape quality is the value that people place on their surroundings and the Scottish Borders is recognised as having many outstanding landscapes, the quality of which is recognised nationally by the designation of two National Scenic Areas (NSA). In addition to the two NSA's, there are also six Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). However, those AGLV's were made in the 1960s and have little or no written justification. Due to this lack of justification it was decided to undertake a complete re-evaluation. A review of the Local Landscape Designations has been recently undertaken and was informed by the Borders Landscape Character Assessment (1998). The review of the Local Landscape Designations has been formalised through a Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

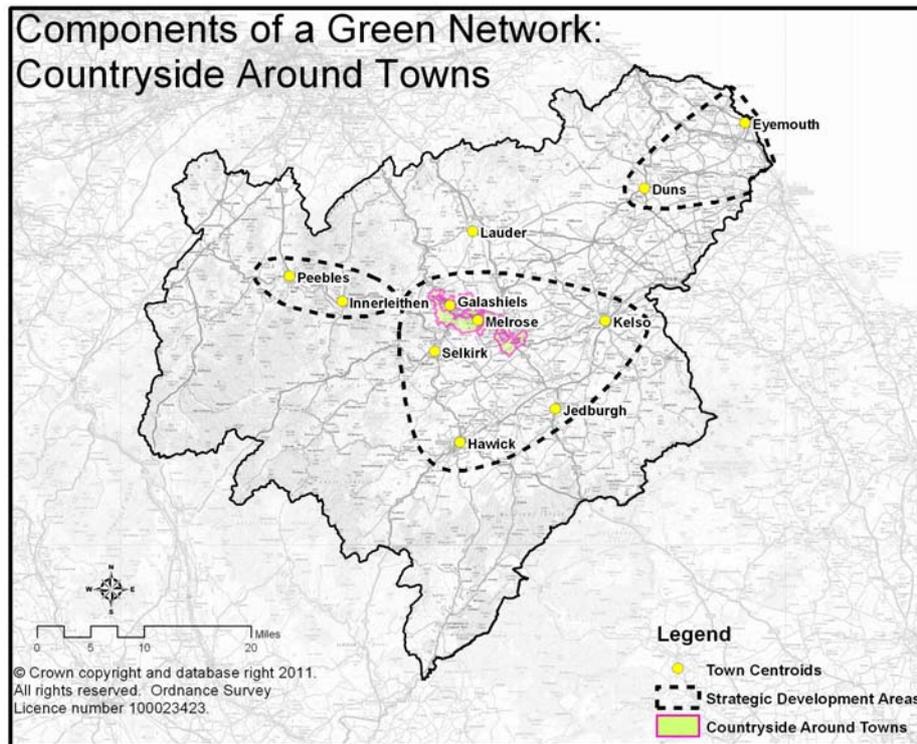
Components related to Landscape Designations:





Within the Consolidated Local Plan 2011 a 'Countryside Around Towns' (CAT) area is identified. The CAT area is of particularly high value in terms of biodiversity, landscape, heritage, open space, sports and recreation and therefore requires protection to ensure that these benefits remain an important resource for the Central Borders Strategic Development Area. It is also important that the individual settlements within this area are protected from coalescence.

Informal green space – ‘Countryside Around Towns’:



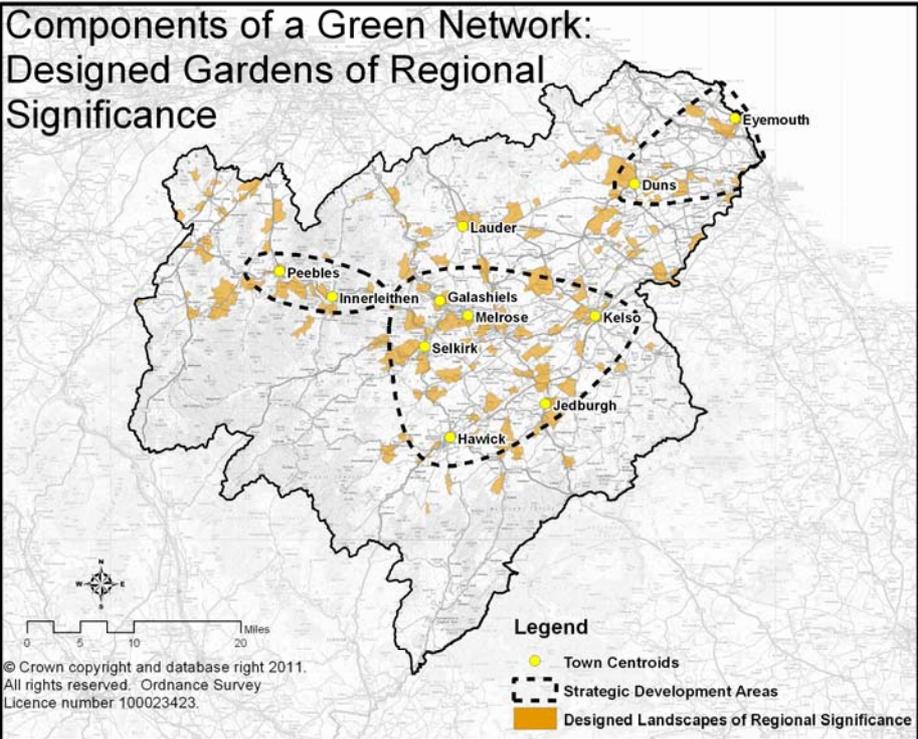
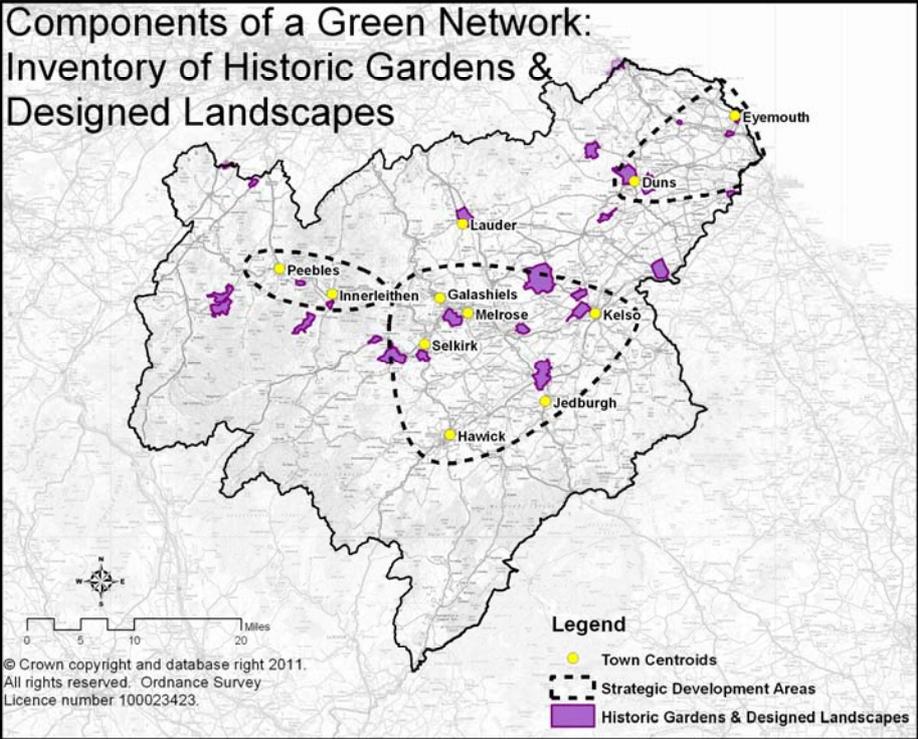
Gardens and Designed Landscapes are recognised as an important cultural asset. Historic Scotland maintains a register of those designated sites that are considered to be of outstanding quality and these are listed in the national inventory. Currently there are 39 nationally designated sites in the Scottish Borders.

However, the designed landscape resource is considerably larger than the list of nationally designated sites. In November 2005, the Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy (SBWS) was formally launched as part of an amendment to the Council's Structure Plan. In furtherance of the strategy, Scottish Borders Council (SBC) is implementing a series of key tasks and policies identified within the SBWS with the emphasis on achieving practical results with the overall intention of maximising the uses and benefits of the Borders trees, woodlands and forests.

One of these projects, the Borders Designed Landscape Study, commenced in December 2006 and was undertaken by Peter McGowan Associates (landscape architects and heritage management consultants) with Christopher Dingwall (garden historian).

The Council recognises the significant contribution that designed landscapes and their policy woodlands make to the landscape quality and attractiveness of the Borders, particularly in and around the principal Borders settlements and the adjoining more densely populated lowland areas. These estates represent a cultural inheritance that is the cumulative result of the efforts of many generations.

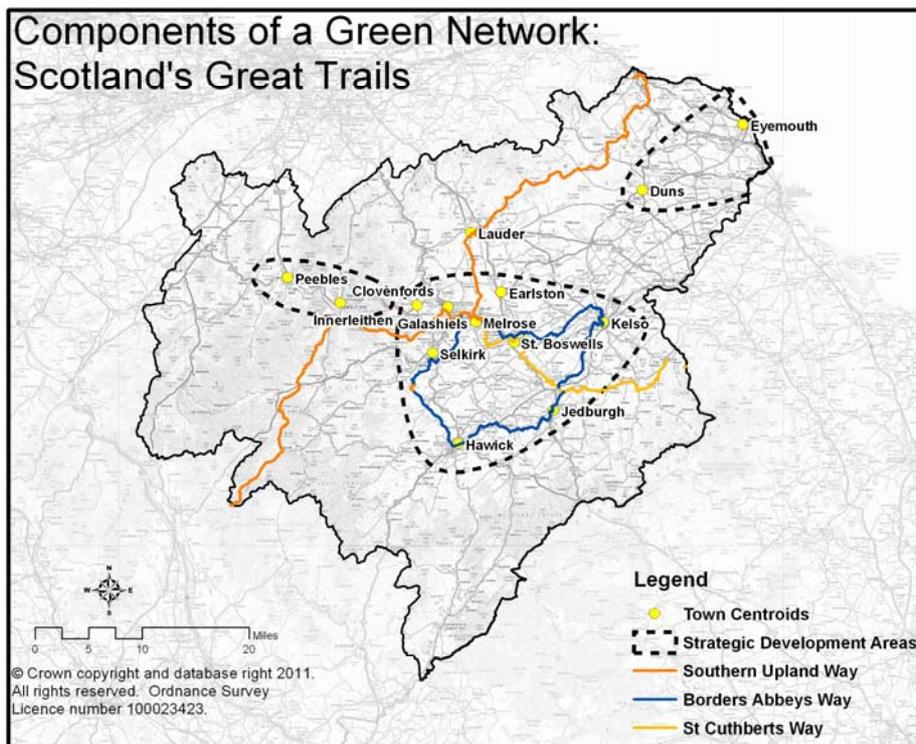
Components related to Gardens and Designed Landscapes:



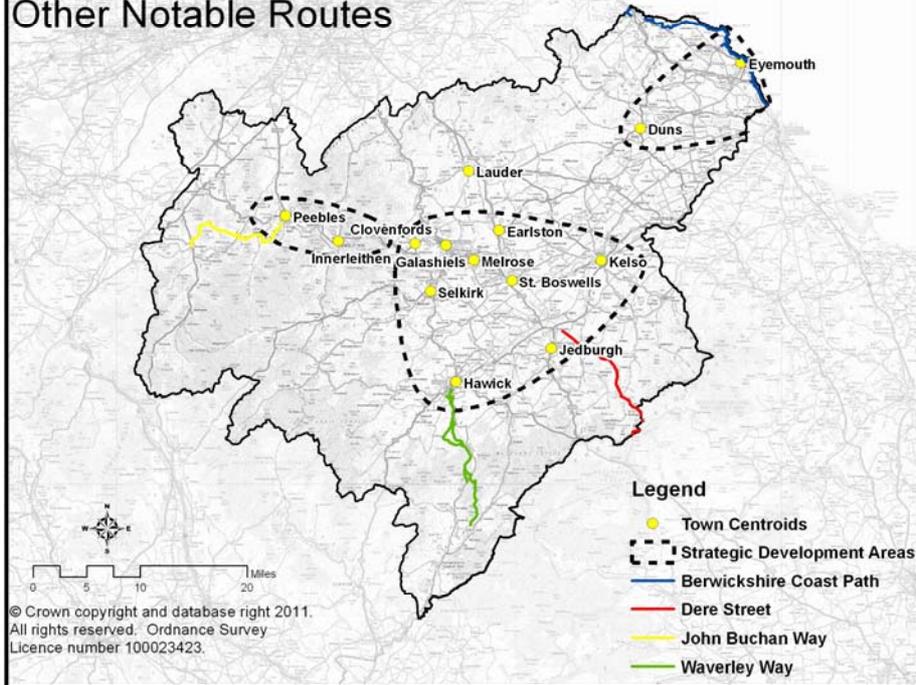
Within the Scottish Borders there are many opportunities to participate in 'Active Travel'. Active travel such as walking, cycling and mountain biking allows for the opportunity to address the health agenda, as well as offering the opportunity to contribute in the form of sustainable transport. The development of active travel routes should be part of the development of the green network, and within the Scottish Borders the routes of the former railways provides an opportunity for further enhancement.

Major path routes, core paths, cycle-ways, and mountain biking trails provide excellent opportunities to access for health, recreation, and travel.

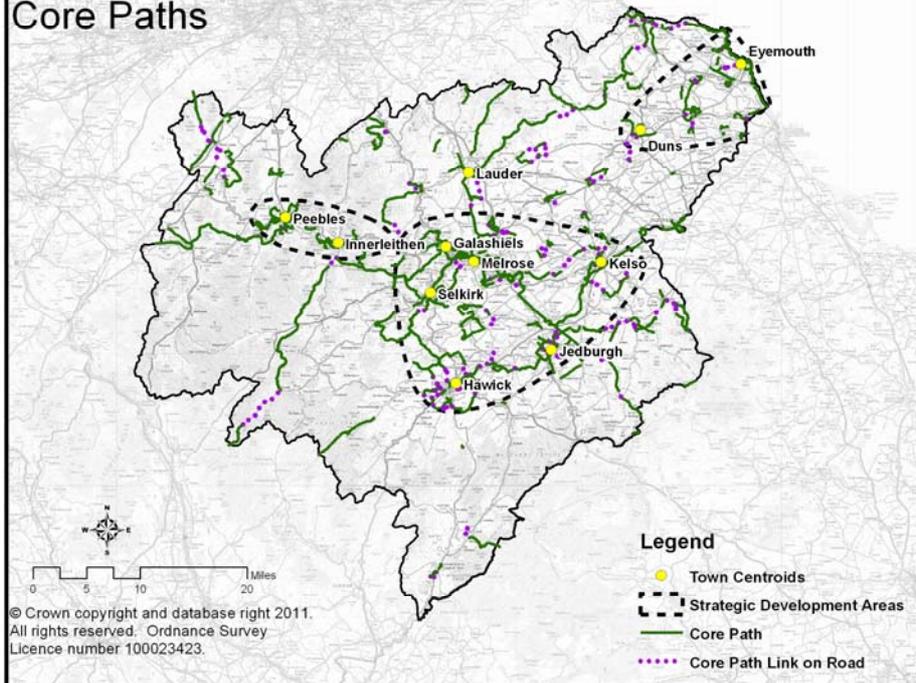
Components related to Active Travel and Railway Routes:



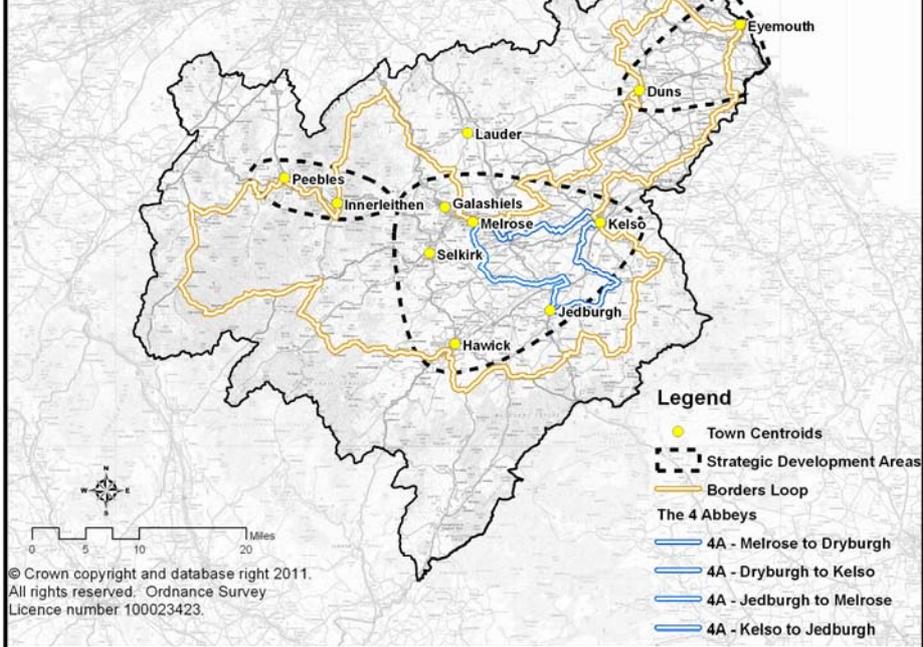
Components of a Green Network: Other Notable Routes



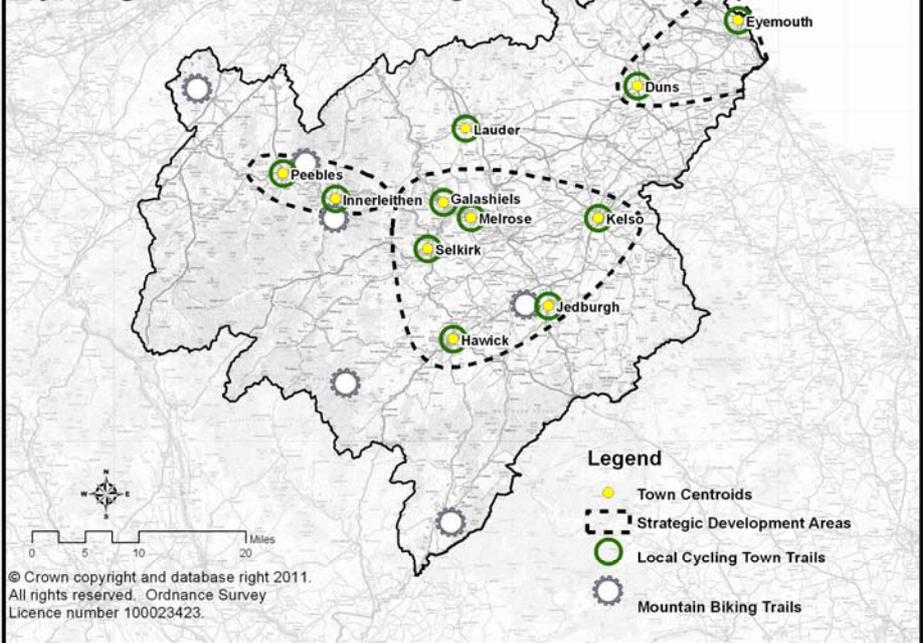
Components of a Green Network: Core Paths

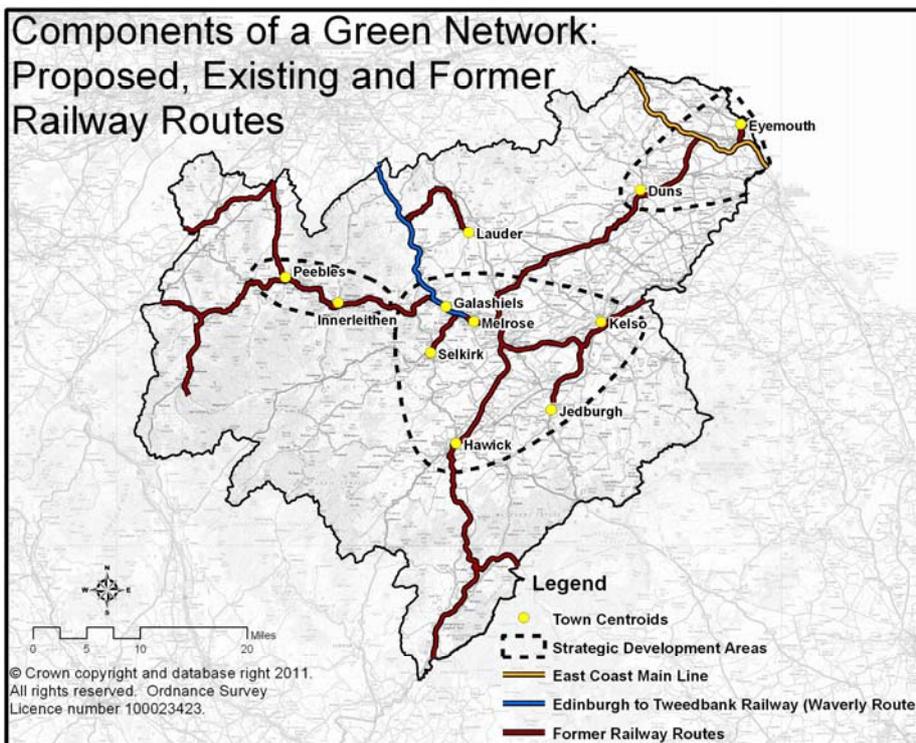
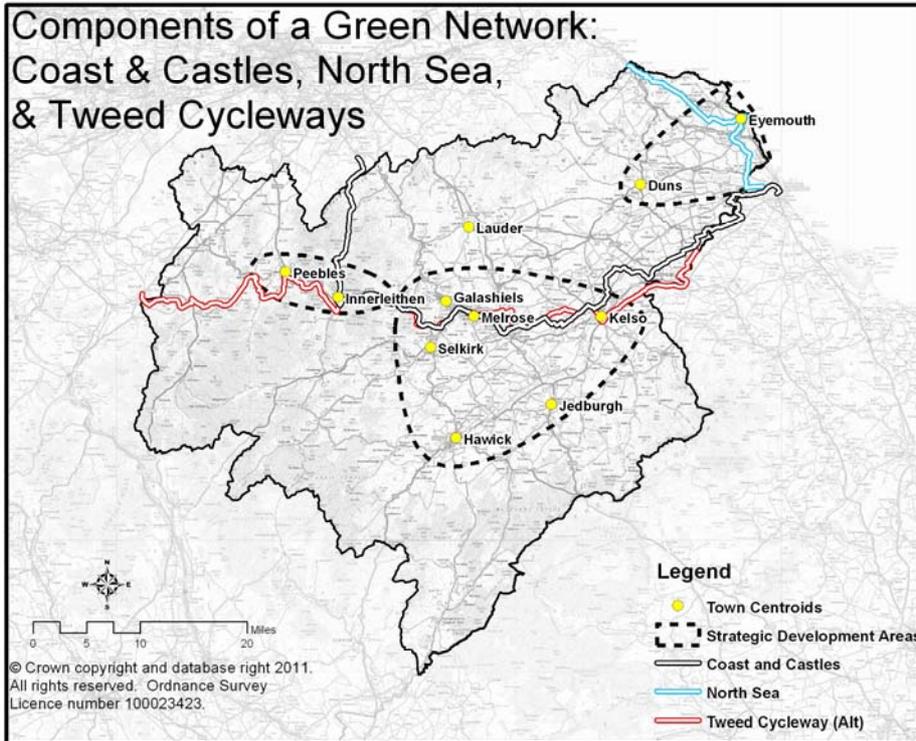


Components of a Green Network: Borders Loop & 4 Abbeys



Components of a Green Network: Cycling & Mountain Biking





Assessment of Green Networks

It is evident from looking at the following maps that the Borders is made up of many local green networks. However, due to the sheer coverage of the Borders and in line with PAN 65, it is proposed to primarily consider identifying only those green networks that will contribute to the development framework. For that very reason the main focus will be on the Strategic Development Areas and the 11 main population centres/settlements within the Borders. It is noted that all of the settlements identified on the maps above, with the exception of Lauder are located within the SDA's.

In considering the Green Networks that the Local Development Plan will set out, it is recommended that the Plan identify three different types – Strategic, Key and a further one based on the former railway routes.

Strategic Green Networks

It is proposed that the strategic green networks will be made up of various components that will attract and encourage participation from the greatest number of people. It should be focused on an area that will assist the greatest in supporting sustainable economic growth, tourism, recreation, the creation of an environment that promotes a healthier-living lifestyle, and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, and have the potential to improve water quality, promote flood protection and reduce pollution.

It is therefore recommended that based on the above, that the LDP will identify two strategic green networks, one located within the Central Borders Strategic Development Area (SDA) and the second within the Western Borders SDA. The proposed strategic green networks will encourage and promote improvements in the environmental quality of the areas identified. It is intended that the strategic green networks will work alongside and enhance the Development Strategy contained within the SESplan.

Central Borders:

Within the Central Borders the strategic green network proposed runs from Selkirk, through to Galashiels and down to St Boswells whilst also taking in Earlston.

Western Borders:

The green network identified runs from Peebles to Clovenfords.

The strategic green network areas to be identified within the LDP focus on green spaces and green corridors within and around settlements within the western and central SDA's.

The strategic network that focuses on the Western Borders takes in the settlements of Peebles, Innerleithen, Walkerburn and then extends into the central SDA taking in Clovenfords. Within this network area the River Tweed runs along the valley floor which benefits from SSSI and SAC status. Also, overlapping the proposed strategic green networks sits the Central Southern Uplands ESA. The Upper Tweeddale NSA also sits on the fringes of the

proposed strategic green network. It should also be noted that the proposed western strategic green network also takes in the majority of the proposed Tweed Valley Special Landscape Area. Within this network area are also a number of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of both national and regional importance. As with many places elsewhere within the Borders, the proposed western strategic green network also benefits many paths including cycling town trails at Peebles and Innerleithen as well as other cycling routes. It is the collective contribution of all of these components that make up the Western strategic green network.

The proposed Central Borders strategic green network also benefits from a number of components that contribute to enhancing the biodiversity, quality of life, and sense of place of the area. This strategic green network takes in the settlements of Earlston, Galashiels, Melrose, Selkirk as well as Tweedbank; smaller settlements such as Darnick, Gattonside, Newstead, Newtown St Boswells and St Boswells are also included. Within the Central Borders strategic green network the River Tweed runs along the valley floor and as stated above it benefits from both SSSI and SAC status. A number of National Nature Reserves also fall within the proposed strategic green network (to the east of Selkirk). This network is also largely taken in by the Central Borders ESA. The Eildon and Leaderfoot NSA is also largely included within the Central Borders strategic green network. Furthermore, existing and proposed local landscape designations are also prominent within this strategic green network. In appreciation of the quality of the area the proposed strategic green network also takes in the majority of the CAT area. In addition within this green network are a number of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of both national and regional importance. The proposed Central Borders strategic green network also benefits many paths including cycling town trails at Galashiels, Melrose and Selkirk as well as other cycling routes.

Key Green Networks

It is also recommended that the LDP will identify a series of key networks in and around the towns of Duns, Eyemouth, Hawick, Jedburgh, Kelso and Lauder. It is considered that inline with the development strategy these key networks will enhance the biodiversity, quality of life, and sense of place of each of these settlements; and will assist in supporting sustainable economic growth, tourism, recreation, the creation of an environment that promotes a healthier-living lifestyle, and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, and have the potential to improve water quality, promote flood protection and reduce pollution.

Former Railway Routes

The former railway lines represent a network of over 125 miles of former track-bed which links many of the larger towns, and as such offers considerable potential for alternative uses mainly walking and cycling. It is therefore recommended that the Local Development Plan seeks to safeguard the routes of the former railway lines as they have the potential to be used for walking, cycling, and recreation.

Whilst it is recommended that the LDP will identify a series of green networks – strategic, key and a further one that focuses on the former railway routes, it should also be noted that although not identified within the MIR other local green networks throughout the Scottish Borders also exist.

Alternative Approach

An alternative approach that the Council could promote is to support improvements in the environmental quality of the Borders independently of any identified green network.

This is not the Council's favoured option as it would not complement the Development Strategy. In addition this approach would:

- not allow the opportunity to maximise contribution to sustainable economic growth
- not maximise the contribution to health, wellbeing and quality of life for local residents
- not allow the potential to maximise contribution to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, landscape and the cultural and historical environment
- not allow the opportunity to maximise contribution to related strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Opportunities within the Green Networks

Opportunities identified within the SESplan Green Network Technical Note consist of:

Spatial Opportunity – Strategic Development Areas:

1. Galashiels – Melrose - Newton St Boswells Development Hub - Opportunity for network enhancement through the delivery of development.
2. Kelso Regeneration / Environmental Enhancement - Opportunity for network enhancement through the delivery of development.
3. Upgrade of the A1 along the coast- project related to Transport.

Spatial Opportunity – Key Strategic Recreational Routes:

1. East Calder to West Linton.
2. Borders Rail Line – opportunities for active travel and habitat network enhancement along the route.

Spatial Opportunity – Key Strategic Designated Sites:

1. Eye Water: SEPA priority catchment for improvements to the water environment.
2. Whiteadder Water: Priority catchment for improvements to the water environment.

Spatial Opportunity – Priority Woodland Areas:

1. Expansion of Borders Cleuch Woodlands.
2. Significant biomass resource in the South-west Border Forests.

Opportunities/Actions set out in The Tweed Area Management Plan:

The Tweed Area Management Plan sets out the measures and actions in place to deliver improvements to the Tweed. The actions set out in the Plan are divided into four themes: Diffuse pollution from rural land pollution; Abstraction of water; Alterations to beds, banks and shores; and Invasive non-native species.

The actions set out in the Plan consist of a combination of monitoring, data collation, regulation, investment, awareness raising and guidance work led by agencies, stakeholders or partnerships. The work varies considerably in scale, from small projects on a river bank to catchment-wide initiatives examining mitigation of alterations to beds and banks or invasive non-native species.

Opportunities set out in the Development and Landscape Capacity Study:

The Council in association with Scottish Natural Heritage commissioned a Development and Landscape Capacity Study. The Study covered eleven settlements, or groups of settlements. The Study sought to identify potential

future development sites as well as identifying where landscape enhancement proposals could be undertaken.

Other opportunities within the Scottish Borders Green Network that exist are:
TO BE ADDED TO

1. Abbotsford House – restoration and enhancement project including new visitor reception and car parking.
2. Haining Estate, Selkirk – enhancement of pedestrian access within the grounds around the loch and woodlands. Additional proposals to include the formation of a cultural hub.
3. Enhancement of river, loch and wetland habitats, improvement of water quality, increasing flood storage and areas acting as carbon sinks.
- 4.

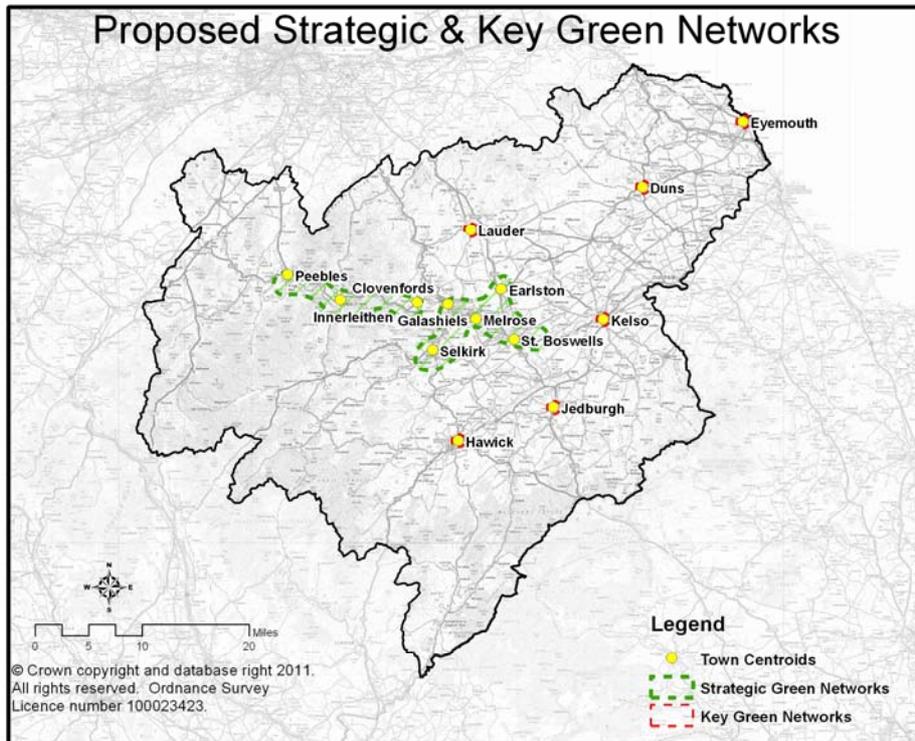
Conclusions

It is proposed that the LDP will promote and enhance a series of proposed green networks. The LDP will identify two strategic green networks, one located within the Central Borders Strategic Development Area (SDA) and the second within the Western Borders SDA which are set out in the SESplan (the Strategic Development Plan). The proposed strategic green networks will encourage and promote improvements in the environmental quality of the areas identified. It is intended that the strategic green networks will work alongside and enhance the Development Strategy contained within the SESplan.

Central Borders: Within the Central Borders the strategic green network proposed runs from Selkirk, through to Galashiels and down to St Boswells whilst also taking in Earlston.

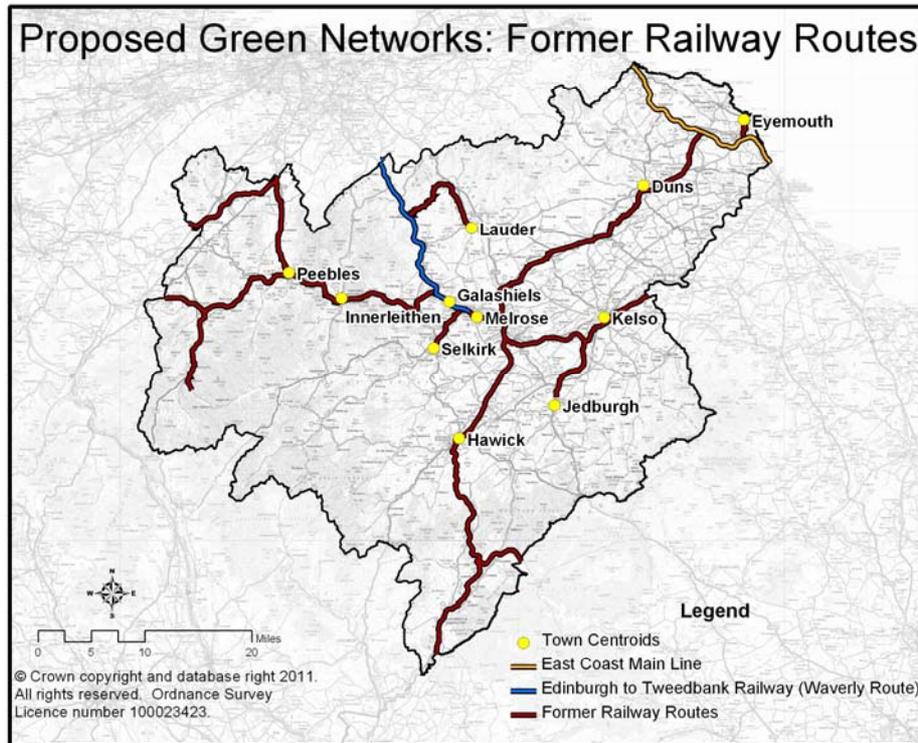
Western Borders: The green network identified runs from Peebles to Clovenfords.

Whilst it is proposed that the LDP identifies two strategic green networks, it is also proposed that it will identify a series of key networks in and around the towns of Duns, Eyemouth, Hawick, Jedburgh, Kelso and Lauder. However, it should be noted that although not identified within the MIR other local green networks throughout the Scottish Borders also exist.



In addition to the strategic green network and the key green networks that focus on main Borders towns, a further network will be identified based on the

former railway routes. This network not only takes in the former main routes but also the branch lines related to those routes.



A policy will also be developed that will aim to protect, promote and enhance green networks within the Scottish Borders.