

P4 Dove Lowland River Floor

C4 Dove Lowland River Floor consists of a flat and narrow valley floor with open water, in the forms of the River Dove or its tributaries, a short length of disused canal, or reservoirs, present along its length. Immediately outside the character area the land slopes up to form valley sides. The underlying geology is middle coal measures, overlain in most places with alluvium. The elevation of the character area is fairly constant, dropping gradually from 75m AOD at Stainborough Dike in the west, to 35m AOD at the eastern boundary where it meets character area *C2 Lower Dearne Lowland River Floor* in the east.

Trees and scrub, and the sloping valley sides that lie within adjacent character areas, provide a sense of enclosure and create an intimate character. Views are restricted to parts of the valley sides and to short distances along the valley floor.

The character area contains a mix of land uses, dominated by farmland, recreation and communication, but also including residential, landscape renewal and nature conservation. Although the valley floor is largely free of buildings, there are a few pockets of housing and commercial development that protrude into the open corridor adjacent to roads that cross the valley. These developments are small scale and include stone and brick houses, industrial units and a sports stadium. There are also remnants of the industrial past of the area, including dismantled railway lines that run for almost the full length of the valley floor, a short section of disused canal, and stone buildings at Worsborough Mill which have been converted into a museum. Stone walls and bridges are found frequently along roads throughout the character area.

Pockets of farmland exist as small fields under permanent pasture or arable cultivation. These are linked to larger areas of farmland in adjacent character areas on the valley sides. There are two areas in the west of the character area where willow is grown for coppicing and use as a renewable fuel.

Recreational land uses include the country park around Worsborough Reservoir, some of which is designated as a nature conservation site, smaller reservoirs used for fishing or nature conservation, the Trans Pennine Trail and Dove Valley Trail along a dismantled railway line, and a small sports ground. As well as being dominant features in the landscape, the water bodies provide important habitats for wildlife.

Transportation corridors cross the valley floor at frequent intervals. The M1 motorway crosses the character area at Stainborough Dike in the west and is partially hidden by its location in a cutting. However, the noise from it intrudes into an otherwise tranquil part of the character area. Two other major roads, several minor roads and the railway line from Barnsley to Sheffield cross the valley floor and cut through the otherwise fairly uninterrupted, open green corridor. However, their effect on the overall character is limited, as they are narrow and vegetation provides local screening.

Strips of land alongside the River Dove and its tributaries, and the dismantled railway lines, are covered with naturally occurring trees and scrub. Trees close to water often comprise species associated with wet ground such as willow and alder. There are also some small isolated pockets of deciduous woodland. These areas of trees and scrub provide valuable habitat and corridors for wildlife.