



Westmorland  
& Furness  
Council



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# Design Code – Summary Character Appraisal

LUC

October 2025



## Contents

|                                                                    |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Introduction .....                                              | 4  |
| Purpose of the Summary Character Appraisal .....                   | 4  |
| How to Use this Appraisal: .....                                   | 4  |
| Links to Baseline, Template and Design Code .....                  | 5  |
| Planning Overview of Westmorland and Furness .....                 | 5  |
| 2. Context Overview .....                                          | 9  |
| Physical Environment Overview .....                                | 9  |
| Geology .....                                                      | 9  |
| Topography .....                                                   | 10 |
| Rivers, Waterways, and Flood Risk .....                            | 10 |
| Rivers and Waterways - A note on flooding .....                    | 11 |
| Natural Environment and Ecology .....                              | 12 |
| Cultural Environment Overview .....                                | 19 |
| Connectivity .....                                                 | 19 |
| Roadways .....                                                     | 19 |
| Railways .....                                                     | 19 |
| Public Transport .....                                             | 19 |
| Cycling and Walking Routes .....                                   | 19 |
| Landscape Character .....                                          | 20 |
| Landscape Character - A note on views, vistas and viewpoints ..... | 21 |
| Historic Landscape Character .....                                 | 21 |
| Historic Development and Settlement Character .....                | 22 |
| Materials .....                                                    | 24 |
| 3. Summary Character Portrait of Westmorland & Furness .....       | 29 |
| Landscape Character: .....                                         | 29 |
| Historic Character: .....                                          | 30 |
| Aspects of Character .....                                         | 30 |
| Character Consistency .....                                        | 30 |
| Character Variation .....                                          | 31 |

## List of Figures

|                                                                                      |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Figure 1 – Location plan</b>                                                      | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Figure 2a – Former Planning Authority Areas</b>                                   | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Figure 2b – Westmorland and Furness Council Planning Boundary</b>                 | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Figure 3a – Bedrock Geology</b>                                                   | <b>15</b> |
| <b>Figure 3b – Superficial Geology</b>                                               | <b>15</b> |
| <b>Figure 4a – Topography of Westmorland and Furness Council area</b>                | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Figure 4b – Topography within Westmorland and Furness Planning Authority area</b> | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Figure 5a – Rivers and Surface water</b>                                          | <b>17</b> |
| <b>Figure 5b – Environment Agency Flood Risk Areas</b>                               | <b>17</b> |
| <b>Figure 6a – International Natural Environment Designations</b>                    | <b>18</b> |
| <b>Figure 6b – National and Local Natural Environment Designations</b>               | <b>18</b> |
| <b>Figure 7a – Road Connectivity</b>                                                 | <b>27</b> |
| <b>Figure 7b – Public Rights of Way and National Cycle Network Routes</b>            | <b>27</b> |
| <b>Figure 8a – National Parks and National Landscapes</b>                            | <b>28</b> |
| <b>Figure 8b – National Character Areas</b>                                          | <b>28</b> |

# 1. Introduction

## Purpose of the Summary Character Appraisal

- 1.1. This Summary Character Appraisal has been prepared by LUC on behalf of Westmorland and Furness Council. This document supports the Westmorland and Furness Design Code by summarising key baseline information concerning the area's character. It covers the Westmorland and Furness Local Planning Authority Area.
- 1.2. This appraisal summarises the existing physical and cultural character of Westmorland and Furness, providing a clear and concise picture of the existing landscape and historic context of the design code area.
- 1.3. This appraisal collates and catalogues existing literature for the study area, to provide an overview of the existing historic and landscape context of Westmorland and Furness from a range of different sources. This includes documentation from national, regional and local levels, as well as character information of protected sites such as National Landscapes and Conservation Areas.
- 1.4. A broad range of existing literature is available, and so alongside a condensed overview this document also provides a concise desk-based summary of:
  1. Where key characteristics are consistent or vary across the authority area (in the Character Consistency and Character Variation Sections); and;
  2. Where there are gaps or disparities in data or analysis, or where little or no existing historic and landscape literature is available.

## How to Use this Appraisal:

- 1.5. This appraisal provides an overview of character for anyone using the design code – whether they are an applicant, officer or consultee. The design code's baseline document provides a deeper exploration and analysis of the policies and guidance that inform the design code, along with signposts to other information. This appraisal brings together and summarises the main sections of the baseline relating to the code area's character.
- 1.6. The appraisal is based upon the documents, studies and resources available at the time of writing, and given the scale of the code area, is deliberately high level. Should design codes be prepared for smaller areas within Westmorland and Furness, this appraisal provides an overview to which more local character appraisal can be added.



## Links to Baseline, Template and Design Code

**1.7.** This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Westmorland & Furness Design Code Baseline Review
- Westmorland & Furness Template for Local Settlement Character Appraisals
- Location, Key Towns and Planning Overview

**1.8.** Westmorland and Furness is located in the north-west of England, within the historic county boundaries of Westmorland and includes parts of the old Furness portion of Lancashire. Westmorland and Furness includes a small part of historic Yorkshire and about a quarter of the area of the historic county of Cumberland. The more recent county of Cumbria, to the north and west, forms the separate unitary authority area of Cumberland (Figure 1).

**1.9.** The area is known for its stunning landscapes, including parts of the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales, making it a popular destination for tourism and outdoor activities. Key towns within Westmorland and Furness Council's area include Barrow-in-Furness, Kendal, Penrith, and Ulverston.

### Key Towns:

- Barrow-in-Furness: An important industrial town known for its shipbuilding industry, which is the largest urban area in Westmorland and Furness.
- Kendal: Often referred to as the "Gateway to the Lake District," it is known for its historic buildings including the castle.
- Penrith: A market town near the Lake District with historical significance, rail links to London and Scotland and close proximity to the M6 motorway, making it a transport hub.
- Ulverston: Known for its markets and festivals and the recognisable Hoad Monument.

**1.10.** Westmorland and Furness has a mix of urban centres, market towns, and historic and picturesque villages, making it a diverse area both in terms of geography and community. Westmorland and Furness Council aims to foster a cohesive approach to development and local governance while respecting the distinct identities and needs of its varied places.

## Planning Overview of Westmorland and Furness

**1.11.** Westmorland and Furness Council is a recently established unitary authority in Cumbria. The council was formed on 1 April 2023, as part of a significant local government reorganisation. This reorganisation merged the former borough council of Barrow-in-Furness, and district councils of Eden and South Lakeland, along with the functions of Cumbria County Council. The restructuring aims to streamline administrative processes, improve service delivery, and enhance financial efficacy.

**1.12.** Westmorland and Furness includes parts of two National Parks: the Lake District National Park and the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales each have their own planning authorities, which handle

all planning functions within the parks' boundaries. The design code and supporting information are therefore applicable to the area within the Westmorland and Furness Council boundary, but outside of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. This is illustrated in Figure 2a and 2b.

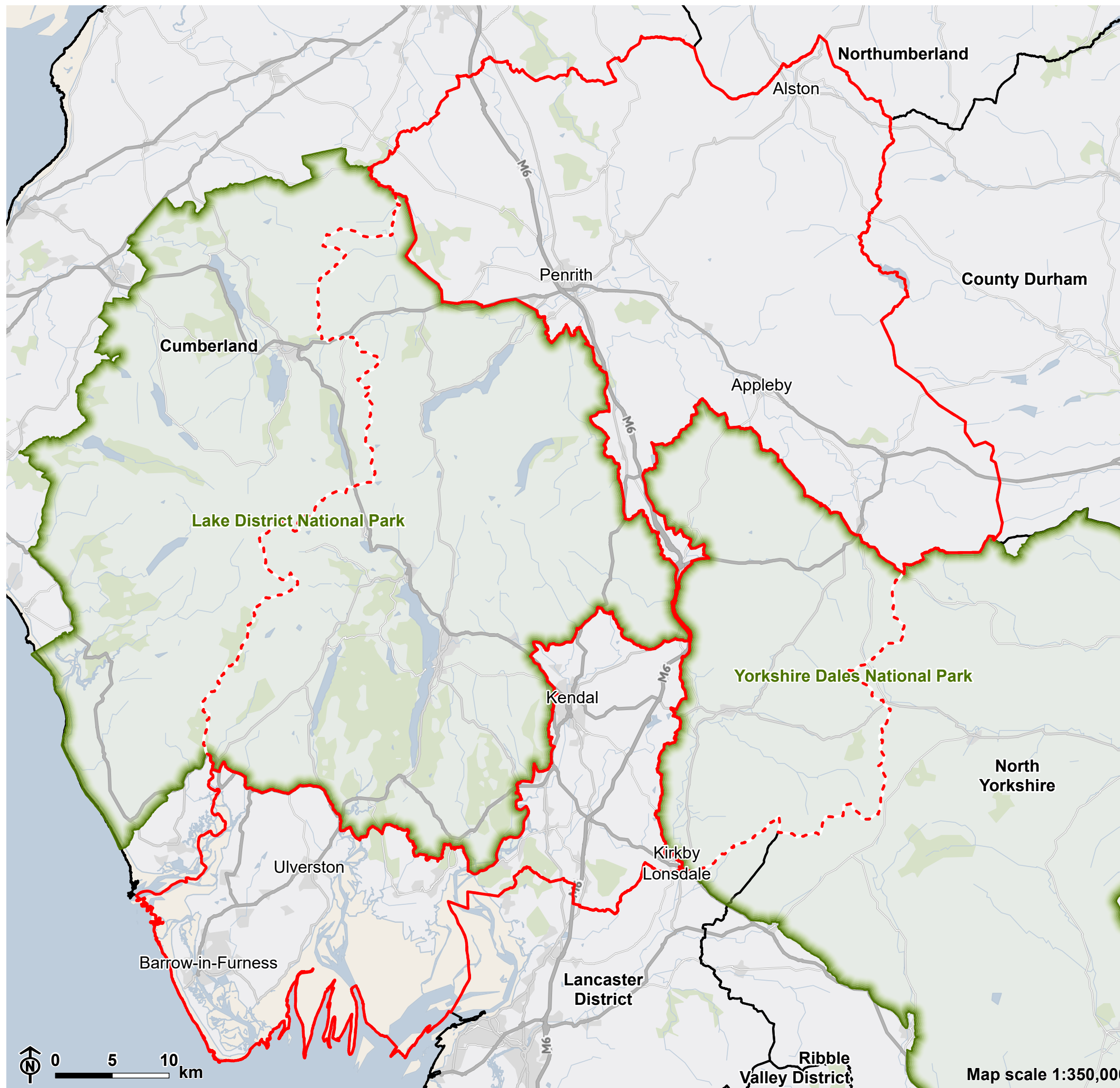
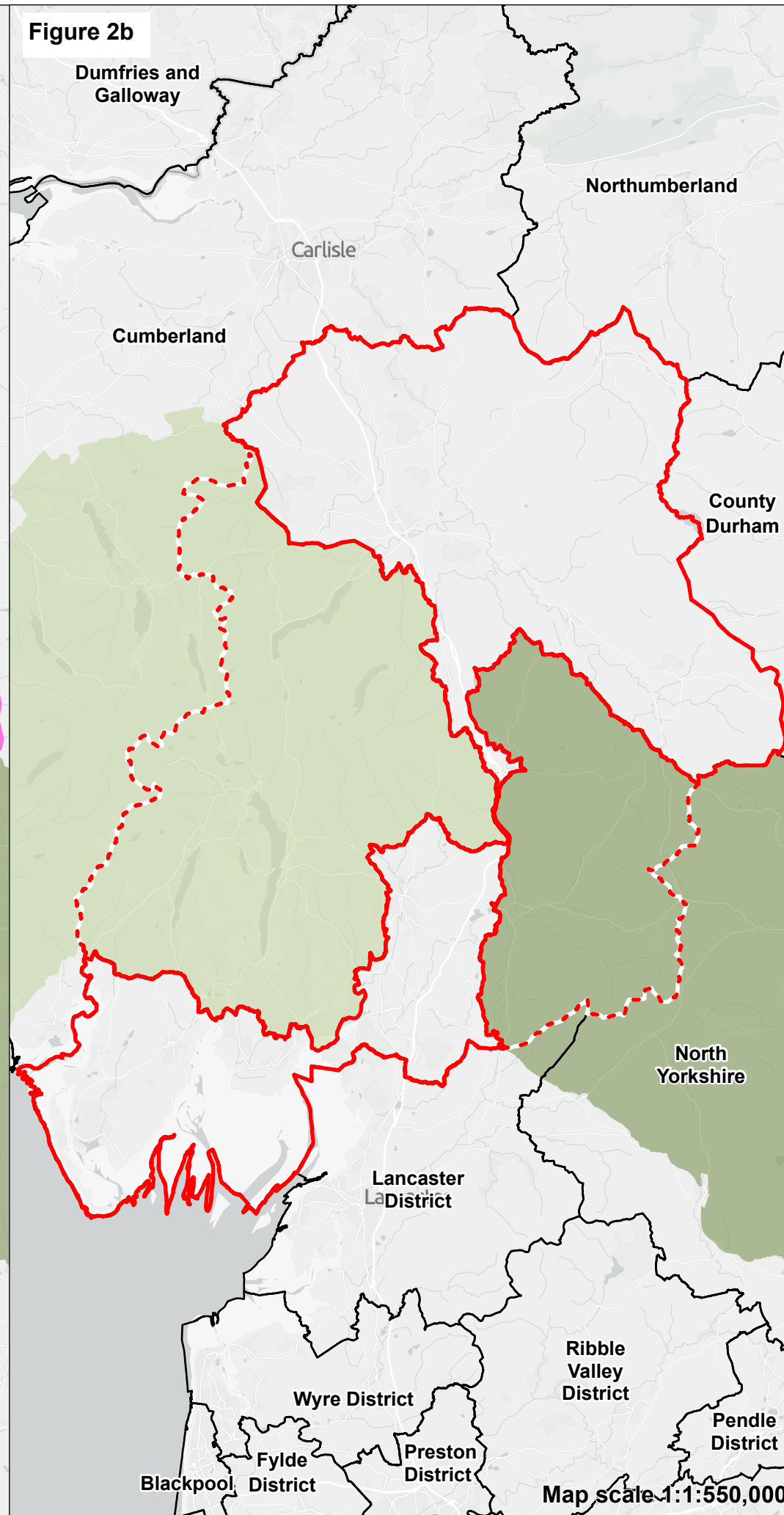
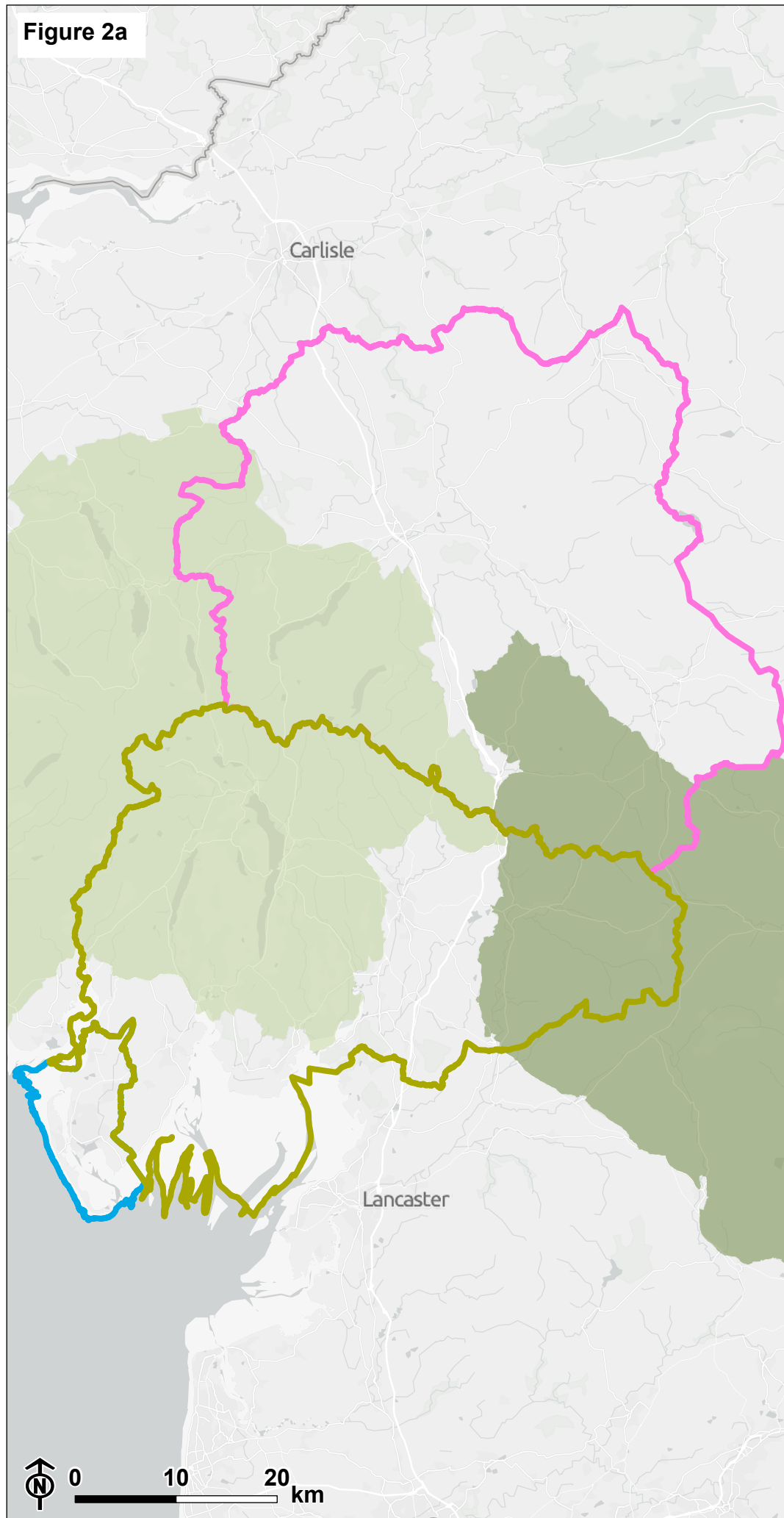


Figure 1: Location Plan

- Westmorland and Furness Local Planning Authority Area
- Westmorland and Furness Council Administrative Area
- National park boundary
- Neighbouring local authority





**Figure 2a: Former Planning Authority Areas**  
**Figure 2b: Westmorland and Furness Council Planning Boundary**

- Westmorland and Furness Council Planning Boundary
- Westmorland and Furness Council
- Neighbouring local authorities
- Former Barrow-in-Furness District
- Former Eden District
- Former South Lakeland District

**National Parks**

- Lake District
- Yorkshire Dales

## 2. Context Overview

*The figures referred to below in this section are all grouped together, following paragraph 2.25.*

### Physical Environment Overview

**2.1.** This section summarises the area's physical characteristics, including topography and geology, water courses and flood risk, and protected natural environment and ecology. Figure 3a and Figure 3b focus respectively on the bedrock and superficial geology of the area. Figure 4a and Figure 4b respectively show the topography of Westmorland and Furness Council area, and a more detailed view of Westmorland and Furness Planning Authority area.

### Geology

**2.2.** At a very broad scale, the structural geology of Cumbria is dominated by a central dome of volcanic rock which formed the mountain ranges of the Lake District. Surrounding this central dome, in a roughly concentric circle, are sedimentary rocks including mudstones, siltstones, limestones and sandstones. To the south of the district, in a band along the south Cumbria coast are Carboniferous limestones which give rise to the distinctive scenery found around the Kent estuary. These characteristic limestone features include scars, cliffs and exposed areas of limestone pavement.

**2.3.** The northern and eastern areas of the district can be broadly defined by bands of bedrock trending north-west to south-east (Figure 3a). These generally give rise to three main character areas, based on the underlying geology:

- limestone forming the Westmorland Fells,
- red sandstone forming the Eden Valley, and
- millstone grit forming the North Pennines.

**2.4.** Due to its distinctive geology and landscape features, part of the North Pennines National Landscape, is designated as one of nine UNESCO Global Geoparks in the UK, recognised for internationally significant geology. This designation comes without restrictions on development, but supports conservation, education and nature tourism activities with a focus on geological heritage.

**2.5.** Much of the superficial geology comprises mixed deposits of clay, silt, sand, or gravel of glacial origin, overlain on top of the bedrock (Figure 3b). These deposits are particularly notable in the Eden Valley, where large quantities of material were deposited by ice sheets into drumlins and hummocks, resulting in the characteristic mounded terrain, with very few outcrops of bedrock.

**2.6.** There are also some alluvial deposits, such as along the River Eden and River Lune, which have led to a mixed-pastoral landscape due to fertile soils. Within Westmorland and Furness, occasional areas of shallow peat and blanket bog exist, particularly where the Lake District meets the Yorkshire Dales, and in the north-east upland areas of the district of the North Pennines. These areas support important moorland and heath habitats. There are also pockets of peat

which have been artificially drained by straight channels, forming the mosses that are found around the Kent and Leven estuaries.

- 2.7.** The underlying geology has had great influence on the land use and development throughout the district. This is visibly evident both through the multitude of land management practices, and the use of local building materials. This latter point can be explored further in the Materials section.

### Topography

- 2.8.** The landscape of Westmorland and Furness varies greatly from the upland moors to lowland farmland, estuarine flats and coastal marshes. To broadly describe the height and shape of the land, the low-lying south Cumbria coastline, including the vast flat expanse of Morecambe Bay, gradually rises to the South Cumbria Low Fells and eventually the imposing Cumbria High Fells (Figure 4b). Views of the Cumbria High Fells are a significant part of the overall character of the district, with the mountains providing a distinct skyline and a point of orientation.

- 2.9.** In the south-east, the Orton Fells and Howgill Fells form an upland area spanning between the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales. Although cut by numerous steep-sided river valleys, these fells have distinctive rounded, smooth summits.

- 2.10.** The north-east of the district is dominated by the Vale of Eden basin, which separates the two upland areas of the Lake District and the North Pennines. This encompasses the broad valley and flood plain of the River Eden and its tributaries. The steep face of the Pennine escarpment overlooks the wide, undulating Eden Valley, creating a distinctive contrast in topography.

- 2.11.** Often present in views are the rugged mountains of the Lake District to the west, and rolling green hills, rough limestone cliffs, and incised valleys of the Yorkshire Dales to the east. These provide a distinctive setting to Westmorland and Furness and are the characteristic backdrop to many locations within the district (Figure 4a).

### Rivers, Waterways, and Flood Risk

- 2.12.** The landscape is also formed by the directional flow of water. The area covered by Westmorland and Furness Council can be roughly divided in half by drawing a line approximately east to west from Kirkby Stephen to Grasmere. The northern half of the district drains to the north, with rivers generally flowing northwards toward Carlisle and then out through the Solway Firth. The southern half generally drains to the south towards Morecambe Bay, creating the distinctive estuarine environments along the south Cumbria coast.

- 2.13.** Figure 5a shows Rivers and Surface water within the area. Rivers and waterways contribute significantly to the district's natural beauty and ecosystem diversity. Some of the notable routes and water habitats within the district include:

- **River Kent:** The River Kent flows through Kendal, originating in the hills above Kentmere. It meanders through the town and eventually joins the estuary of Morecambe Bay near Arnside, where it forms part of the border between Westmorland and Lancashire.

- **River Leven:** Starting in the southern Lake District, the River Leven flows south through Windermere and Newby Bridge before entering Morecambe Bay near Greenodd. It serves as a link between Windermere and the estuary, supporting both recreational activities and local wildlife.
- **River Eden:** The Eden originates near Mallerstang, before flowing through Kirkby Stephen and north-west to Appleby-in-Westmorland. It takes water from numerous tributaries flowing from both the Pennines and the Lake District and has formed a large open vale. The River Eden continues north and eventually flows through Carlisle, before reaching the sea at the Solway Firth.
- **River Eamont:** Flowing out of Ullswater at Pooley Bridge, the River Eamont is one of the major tributaries of the River Eden. It passes immediately to the south of Penrith before entering the Eden approximately four miles to the east of the town.
- **Estuarine Areas:** Morecambe Bay, located to the south of Furness, is a significant estuarine environment. It comprises extensive tidal flats, salt marshes, and sandbanks, providing habitats for a variety of bird species and marine life.
- **Canal Networks:** While not natural waterways, the canal networks in the region, namely the upper reaches of the Lancaster Canal (which today terminates at Stainton rather than Kendal) and the Ulverston Canal, historically played crucial roles in transporting goods and connecting inland areas to coastal ports. Today, they offer recreational opportunities for boating and add to the uniqueness of the local character.

**2.14.** Rivers and watercourses shape the unique character of different areas within Westmorland and Furness. Larger, faster rivers like the Eden, Kent, and Lune structure the landscape and divide the district. In the uplands, for example in the North Pennines, water appears as upland becks or streams, and within peat and moorland. By contrast, farmed river valleys define the South Cumbria Low Fells while lowland rivers cut through the West Cumbria Coastal Plain.

**2.15.** Locally, water defines many of the Cumbria Landscape Character Types (LCTs), especially at the coast. Dynamic river channels in estuaries and bays mark the Intertidal Flats LCT. Artificially straightened watercourses around Levens and Flookburgh show evidence of land drainage. Inland, streams and rivers are common in all Main Valleys LCT sub-types and feature in other LCTs, from wooded ghylls in the Fells to incised valleys in Intermediate Farmland.

### **Rivers and Waterways - A note on flooding**

**2.16.** Rivers and waterways are important natural assets, however challenges of flood risk in Westmorland and Furness are of significant concern. This is due to the area's high rainfall, varied topography and proximity to water bodies. The valleys and low-lying areas are prone to flooding during periods of heavy rainfall or snowmelt. Urban centres and agricultural land along these watercourses are therefore vulnerable, with flood plains and drainage systems often struggling to cope with sudden surges in water levels. Efforts to manage



flood risk include flood defence systems, river management schemes, and community resilience plans aimed at mitigating damage and protecting vulnerable areas. In addition to this, coastal flooding must be considered in the southern part of Westmorland and Furness, particularly around Barrow, Ulverston and Grange-over-Sands. Figure 5b shows these Environment Agency Flood Risk Areas.

- 2.17.** The collaboration between local authorities, environmental agencies, and communities is key to addressing these challenges and minimising the impact of flooding on both residents and infrastructure of Westmorland and Furness. Implementing blue-green mitigation strategies and promoting flood resilience are crucial for sustainable management and ultimately for preserving the district's natural character.
- 2.18.** Beyond preserving unique ecosystems and effectively managing flood risk, it is essential that new developments recognise all these physical environment elements - including geology, topography and river and waterways - contribute significantly to the unique setting and overall backdrop of Westmorland and Furness, and play a crucial role in shaping the area's character and identity. By doing so, developments enhance sustainability and respect cultural heritage.

### Natural Environment and Ecology

- 2.19.** International, national and local level landscape and ecological designations are found within Westmorland and Furness, examples of which are listed below. These are protected through legislation, and a definitive influence on character in the area.
- 2.20.** Although they are not included in the planning authority area, a large portion of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks are included within Westmorland and Furness Council unitary authority area. Therefore, the landscapes of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales still have an important physical and cultural relationship with the rest of Westmorland and Furness, as they provide the setting and backdrop, both culturally and physically in views and vistas.
- 2.21.** There are international level designations for ecology (Figure 6a), including:
- **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites:** these designations are part of the Natura 2000 network under the EU's Habitats Directive and Birds Directive, respectively. They offer protection to the most seriously threatened habitats and species across Europe. . In Westmorland and Furness, there are numerous international designated sites, including 14 SACs, 2 SPAs and 2 Ramsar sites outside of the National Park areas. Some of these designations overlap: it is common that a site is both SAC and SPA.
- 2.22.** At a national level (Figure 6b), designations include:
- **National Landscapes:** Formerly titled Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), these are nationally protected landscapes recognised for their distinctive landscape character. Arnsdale & Silverdale National Landscape overlaps with part of the southern boundary of Westmorland and Furness.



Almost half of the National Landscape comprises intertidal sand and mudflats forming the fringe of Morecambe Bay. As well as these intertidal flats, Arnside & Silverdale hosts lowland pastures and parklands, with wooded limestone hills and pavements rising beyond, creating an intricate mix of landscapes and habitats which have several local, national and international designations. There are extensive and spectacular views over Morecambe Bay, towards the mountains of the Lake District, and to the Yorkshire Dales. The special qualities of Arnside & Silverdale defined and described in more detail in the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. The North Pennines National Landscape is designated as another nationally important landscape of unique character, covering a large portion of the north-eastern boundary of Westmorland and Furness. Primarily upland moorland with rocky crags, incised by dales, the North Pennines overlooks the lower lying, Eden Valley. The western edge of the North Pennines is dominated by an escarpment, fringed with conical hills and scattered settlements. The special landscape qualities of the North Pennines are defined and described in more detail in the North Pennines AONB Management Plan 2019-24.

- **Ancient Woodland:** there are numerous small, scattered patches of Ancient Woodland which hold national importance due to their presence as irreplaceable woodland habitat which has existed continuously since at least the 1600s. There is a presumption against the removal or damage of ancient woodland in national planning policy.
- **Sites of Special Scientific Interest:** (SSSIs) are designated at the national level and recognise areas of important habitats, species and geological heritage. SSSIs are legally protected from damaging operations, and management practices are often tailored to maintain their special qualities.
- **National Nature Reserves:** (NNRs) are designated to protect sensitive features of the natural environment, providing opportunities for scientific research and public education. They often overlap with other designations such as SSSIs. In Westmorland and Furness, there are 79 SSSIs and 8 NNRs, outside of the National Park areas.

**2.23.** Supporting and connecting the network of statutory designations are many different types of non-statutory designated sites. In Westmorland and Furness, there are 279 County Wildlife Sites, outside of the National Park areas. There are a small number of identified Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) within Westmorland and Furness. LNRs are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. In addition, the North Pennines has been awarded UNESCO Global Geopark status in recognition of its internationally significant geology.

**2.24.** While local level designations such as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), or Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) may not have the same level of statutory protection as international and national designations, they can be designated, recognised and managed

through local planning policies, management agreements and community involvement. These sites can be identified and protected in the Local Plan and are recognised for their local importance in conserving natural habitats and species.

- 2.25.** These designations, with their varying levels of protection, illustrate the variety of unique and valuable habitats found across Westmorland and Furness. Development proposals should seek to conserve and enhance these characteristics.

Figure 3a

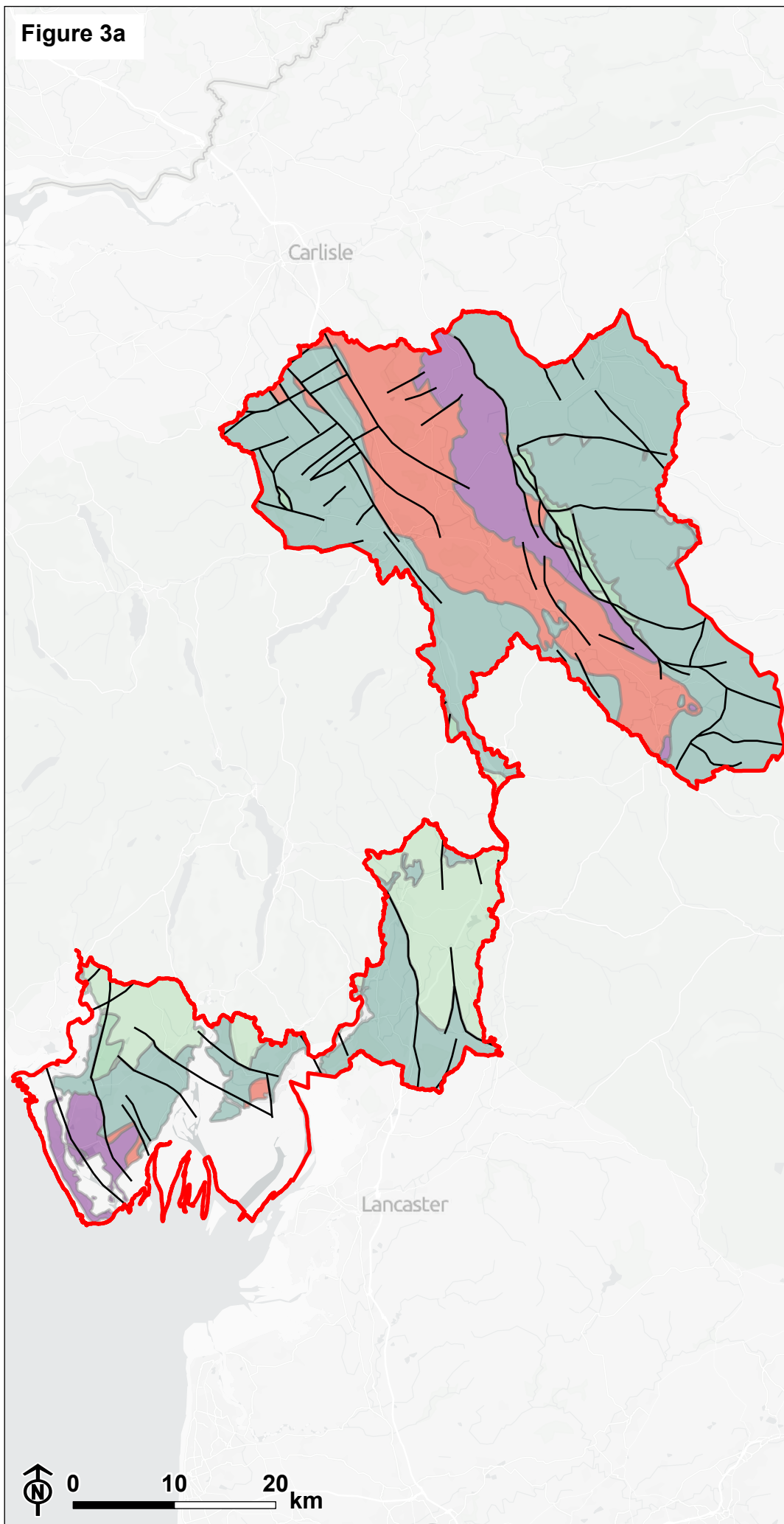


Figure 3b

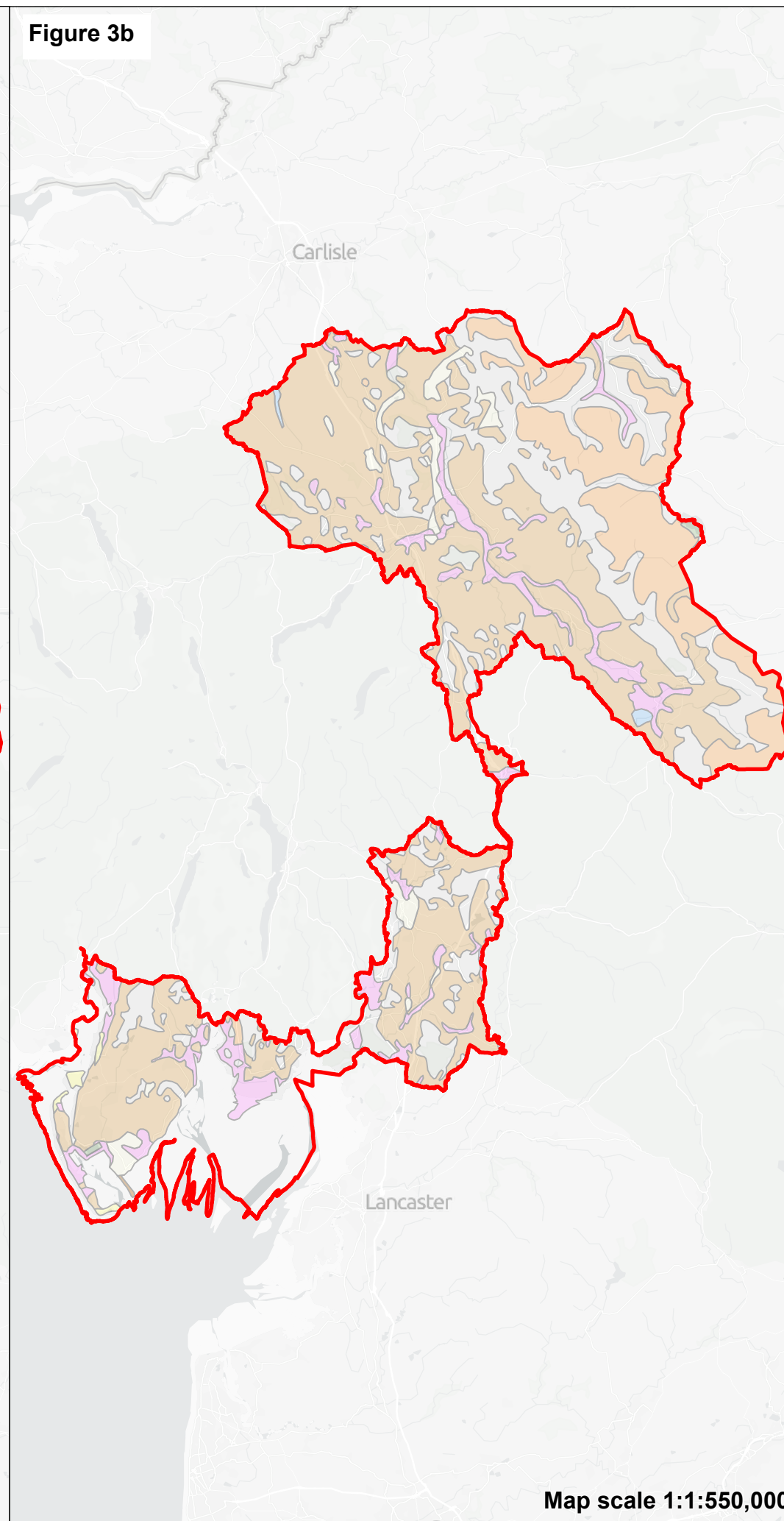
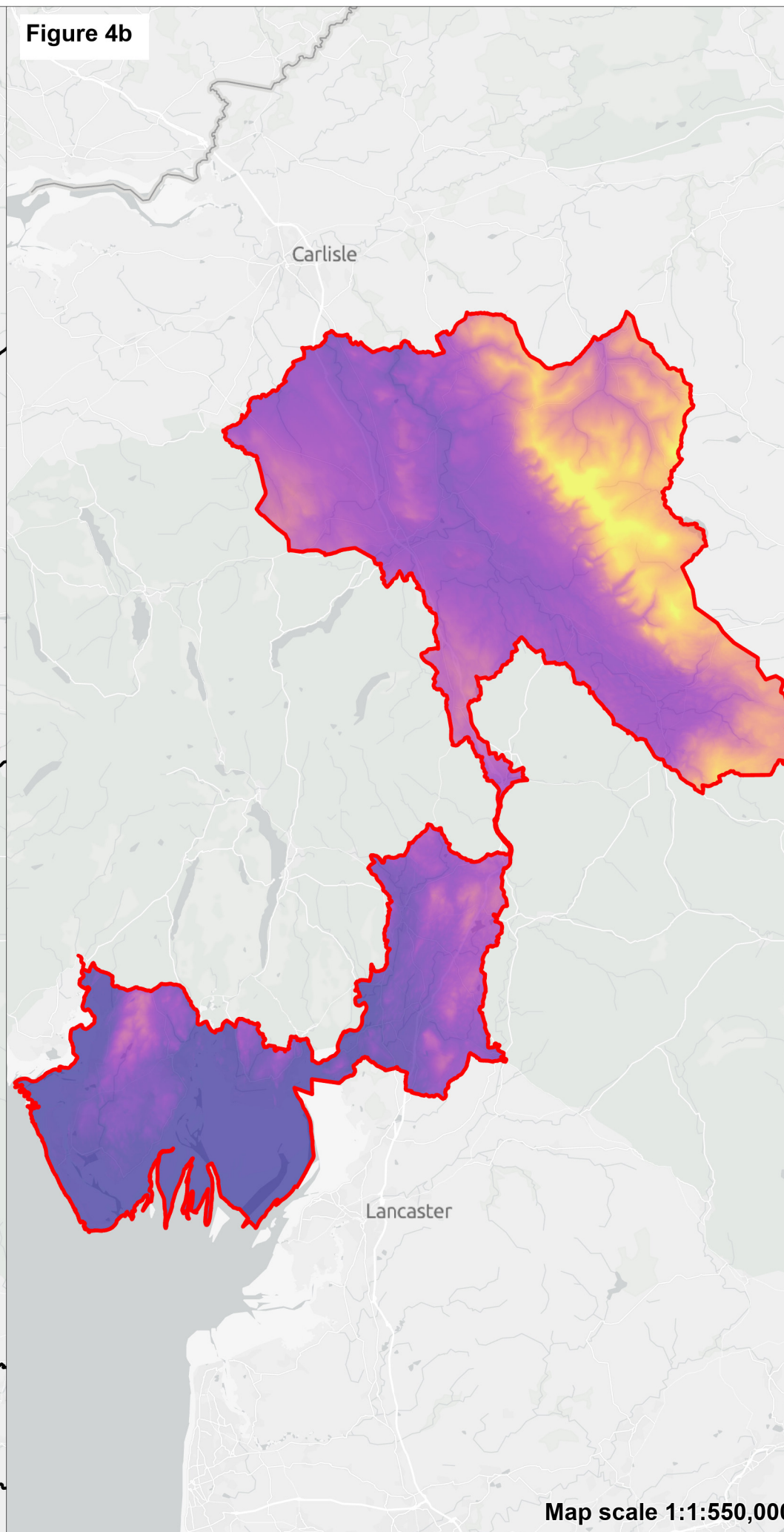
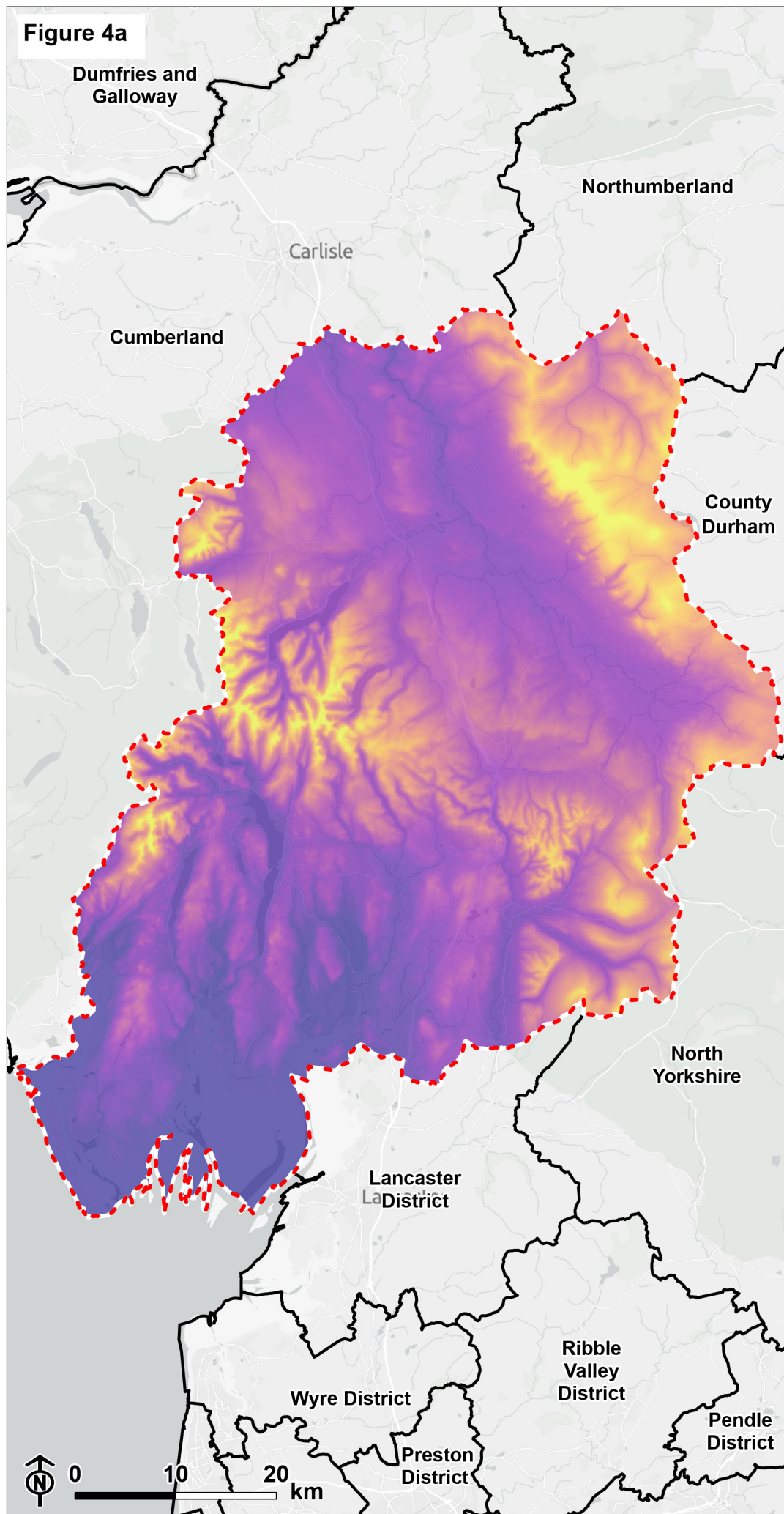


Figure 3a: Bedrock geology  
Figure 3b: Superficial geology

- Westmorland and Furness Council  
Planning Boundary
- Bedrock geology (BGS 625k)**
- Triassic
  - Permian
  - Carboniferous To Permian
  - Carboniferous
  - Devonian
  - Silurian To Devonian
  - Silurian
  - Ordovician To Silurian
  - Ordovician
- Faults**
- Thrust Fault
  - Fault at rockhead
- Superficial geology (BGS 625k)**
- Aeolian Deposits - Sand
  - Alluvial Deposits - Clay, Silt And Sand
  - Glacigenic Deposits - Diamicton (Clay, Sand And Gravel)
  - Glaciofluvial Deposits - Sand And Gravel
  - Marine and Coastal-Zone Deposits - Sand And Gravel
  - Organic Deposits - Peat
  - River-Terrace Deposits - Sand And Gravel
  - Unknown Deposits

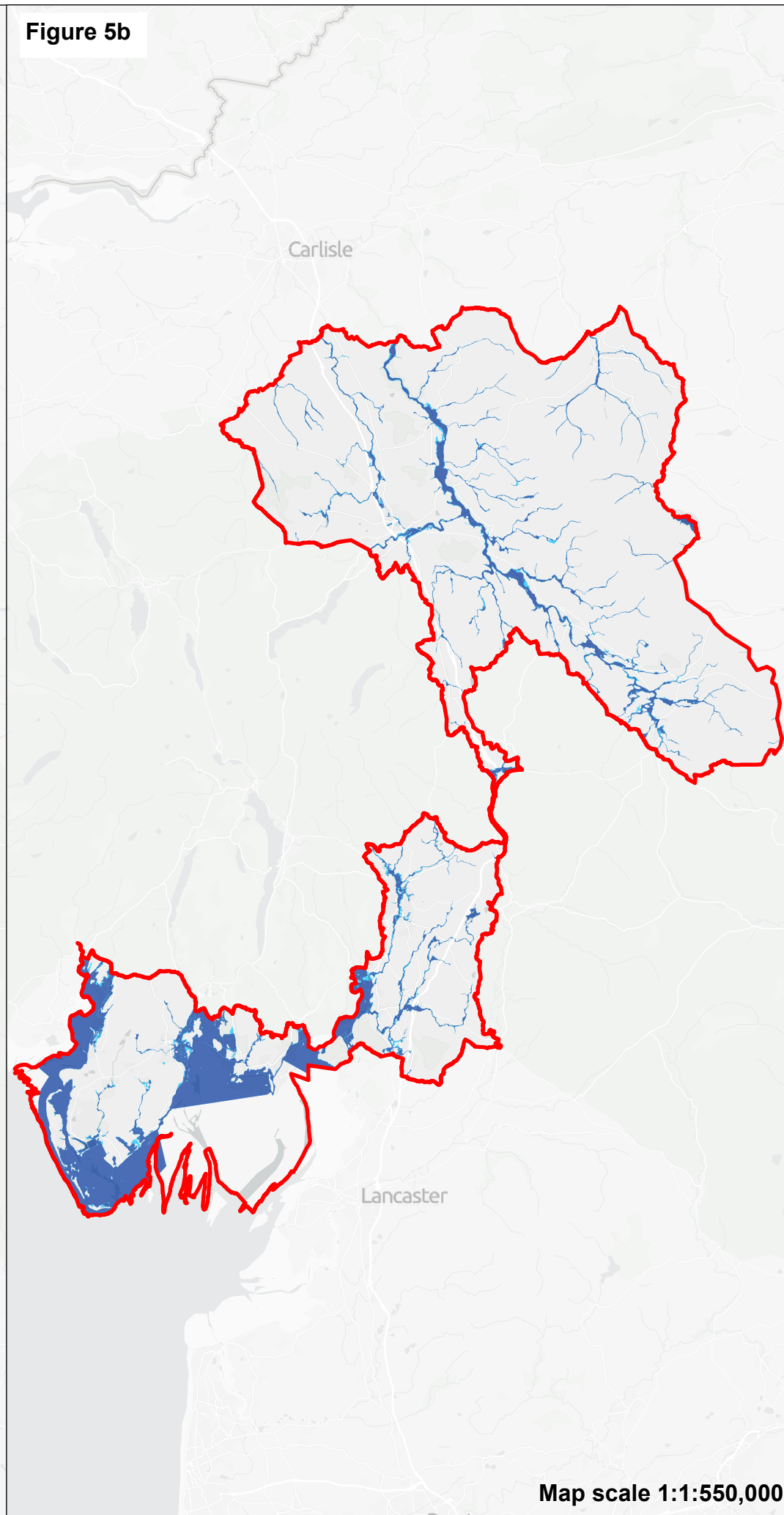
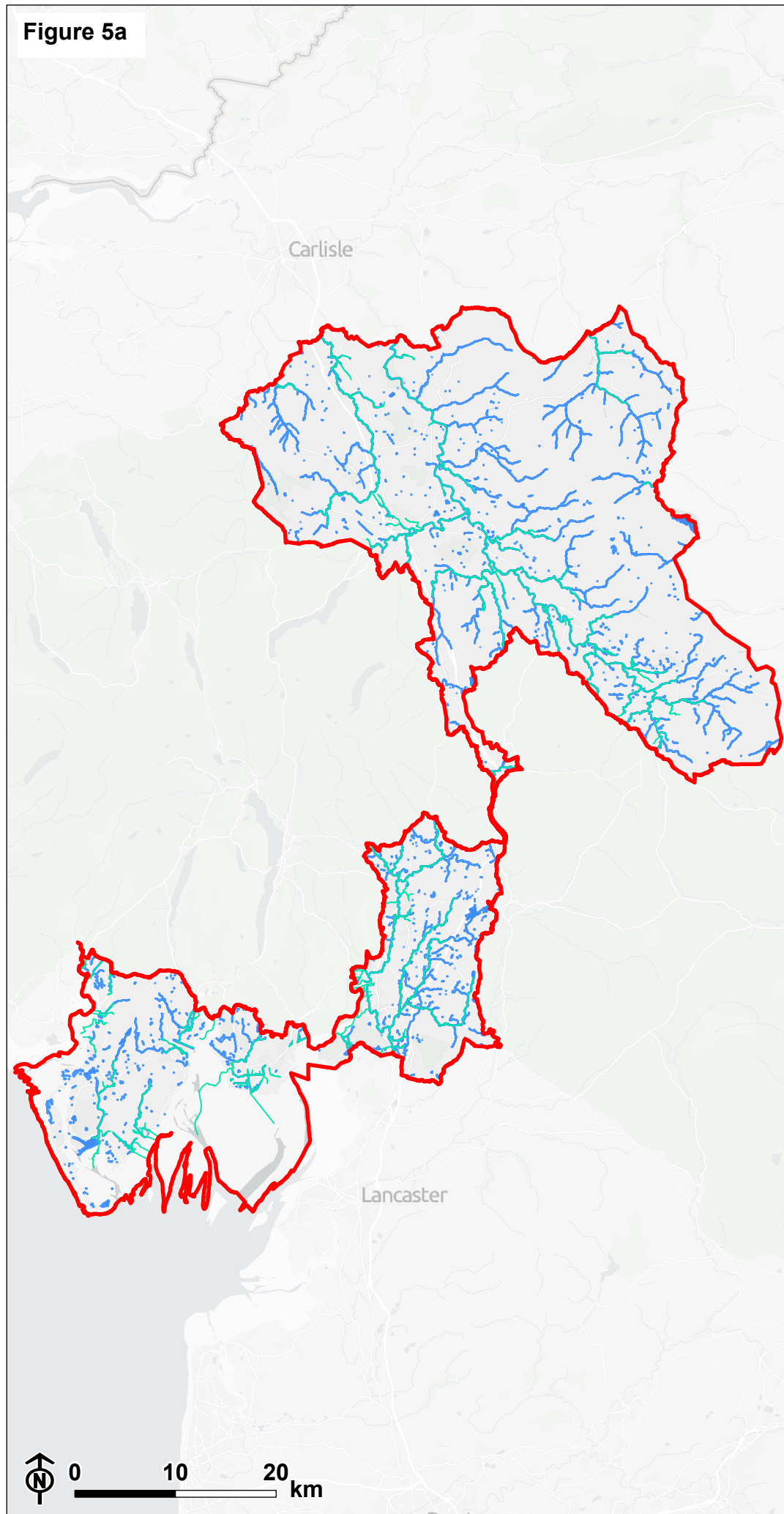




**Figure 4a: Topography of Westmorland and Furness Council area**  
**Figure 4b: Topography within Westmorland and Furness Planning Authority area**

- Westmorland and Furness Council Planning Boundary
  - Westmorland and Furness Council
  - Neighbouring local authority
- Elevation (m AOD)**
- 1000
  - 5





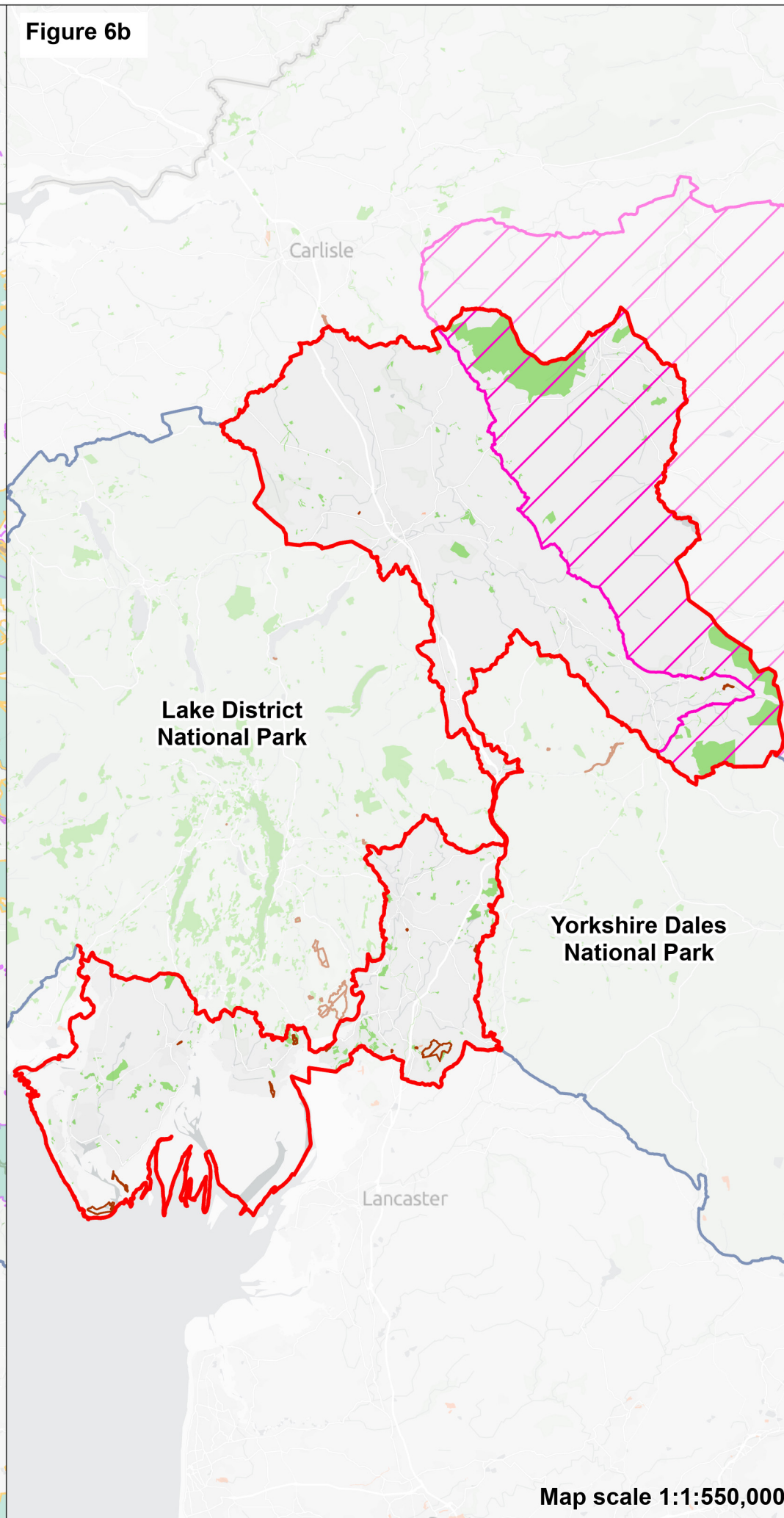
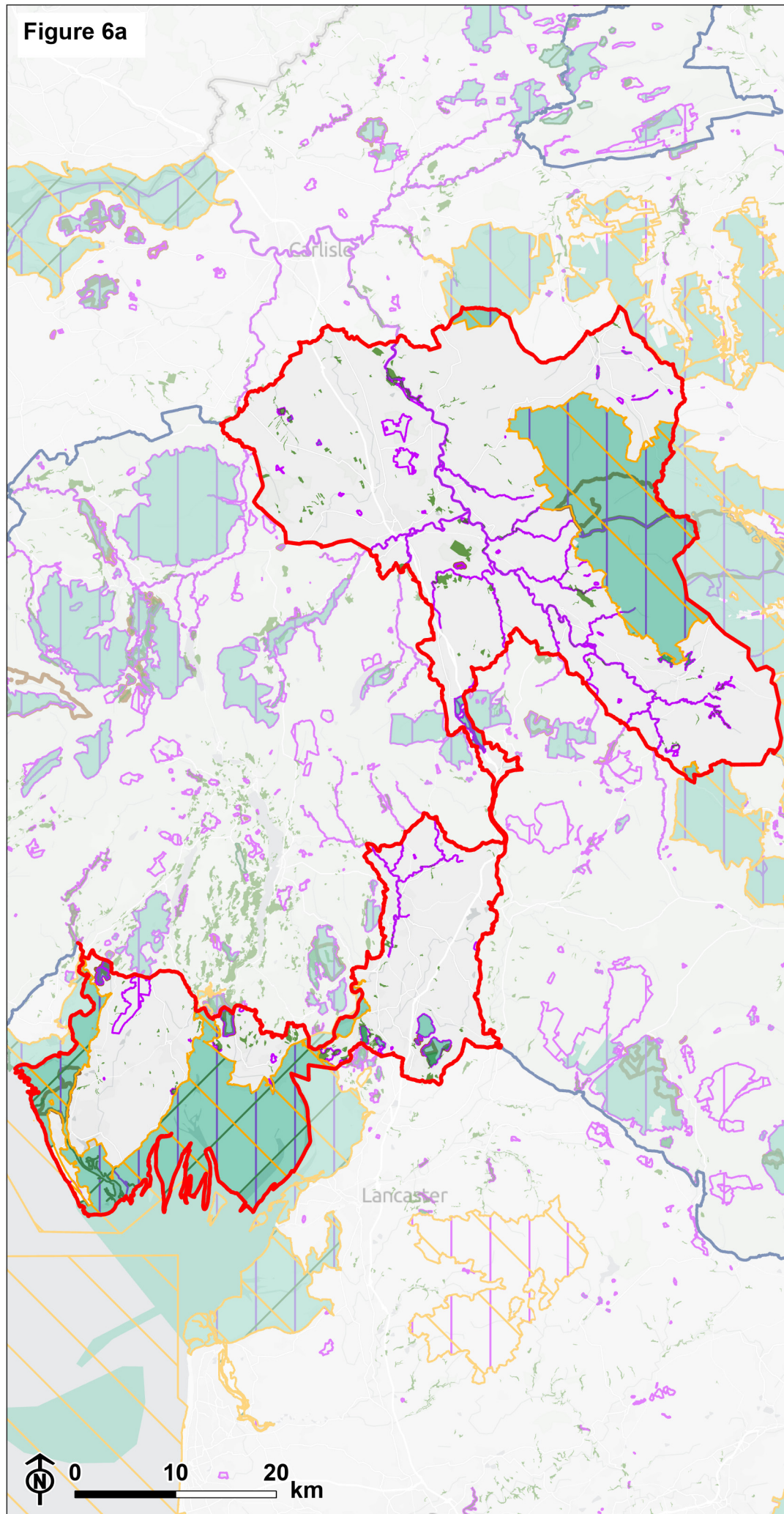
**Figure 5a: Rivers and surface water**  
**Figure 5b: Environment Agency flood risk areas**

- ▬ Westmorland and Furness Council Planning Boundary
- ▬ Statutory main river
- ▬ Surface water area

**Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea)**

- ▬ Flood zone 2
- ▬ Flood zone 3





**Figure 6a: International Natural Environment Designations**

**Figure 6b: National and Local Natural Environment Designations**

- Westmorland and Furness Council Planning Boundary
- International Level Statutory Designations**
  - Special Area of Conservation
  - Special Protection Area
  - Ramsar Site
- National Level Statutory Designations**
  - National Park
  - National Nature Reserve
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest
  - Ancient Woodland
- Local Level Statutory Designations (Protected Sites with Local Plan and Policy)**
  - Local Nature Reserve
  - Cumbria Wildlife Trust Reserves
  - County Wildlife Sites
  - North Pennines UNESCO global geopark



## Cultural Environment Overview

*The figures referred to below in this section are all grouped together, following paragraph 2.58.*

### Connectivity

**2.26.** Westmorland and Furness is well-connected by both road and rail, providing efficient transport links within the district and to other parts of the UK. Figure 7a and Figure 7b show road connectivity and major rail networks, Public Rights of Way and National Cycle Network Routes.

### Roadways

**2.27.** The M6 is a crucial north-south motorway passing through the district which provides a fast and direct road connection, with major junctions at Penrith and close to Kendal, giving access to the South Lakes and Furness. The A-road A6 is the north-south road relieved of long-distance through traffic by the M6. It is a primary route which runs parallel to the M6, connecting towns such as Kendal and Penrith with villages and other A and B-roads through the district. The A66 is a major east-west route which crosses the district, linking the M6 at Penrith with the A1(M) near Scotch Corner, facilitating travel across northern England. Aside from these routes, the A-road network is fairly limited, as shown on Figure 7a, largely due to topography and a relatively sparse population distribution.

### Railways

**2.28.** The West Coast Main Line runs through the centre of the district, providing a significant rail connection. There are stations at Penrith and Oxenholme, giving connections to major cities such as London, Glasgow, and Manchester. Additionally, the Settle-Carlisle Line includes many stations in Westmorland and Furness linking the district to Carlisle and Leeds. More local lines including the Lakes Line, Furness Line and Cumbrian Coast Line provide important routes across the authority area.

### Public Transport

**2.29.** Public transport in Westmorland and Furness varies significantly across the district, with certain areas better served than others. Urban centres like Kendal and Barrow-in-Furness benefit from more frequent bus and rail services, providing commuters and residents with relatively reliable transportation options. However, rural areas and smaller villages often experience less frequent bus services, which can be limited to one or two times a day, impacting accessibility for residents without personal vehicles.

### Cycling and Walking Routes

**2.30.** National Cycling Routes (NCN) 70 and 6 traverse the district, offering scenic paths through Westmorland and Furness, occasionally utilising old railway routes. Many walking routes are available within Westmorland and Furness including the Cumbria Way, Dales Way, and a network of local footpaths and bridleways connecting villages and natural landmarks. These routes promote outdoor recreation, support tourism and contribute to the district's cultural heritage. As evident on Figure 7b, there is a fairly extensive network of Public Rights of Way. This appears denser in the southern half of the district, and

sparser in the area around Penrith, and in the North Pennines where there is some open access land.

- 2.31.** Urban connectivity is also important, for example in towns like Kendal and Barrow-in-Furness that have invested in improving pedestrian infrastructure, including pathways, crossings, and signage, to enhance local mobility and safety.
- 2.32.** In Westmorland and Furness, strategically incorporating new roadways, connections, green links, cycleways, and pedestrian routes is crucial for sustainable development, reducing traffic congestion, and promoting public transport. This planning approach helps preserve natural landscapes and biodiversity, supports active lifestyles and public health, enhances air quality, and bolsters tourism and local economies. It also ensures social equity by improving access to services and managing the cumulative impact of large developments, thus creating resilient infrastructure that accommodates future growth while maintaining the district's unique character.

### **Landscape Character**

- 2.33.** Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) profiles cover the whole of England. These define and describe areas of similar landscape, biodiversity, geology and socio-economic characteristics. They can be used to support community engagement, foster a sense of identity, and guide planning and development. The profiles also include Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) which offer suggestions on ways to secure and enhance the future of the environment unique to each character area. Eight NCA profiles exist within the Westmorland and Furness area, as illustrated in Figure 8b.
- 2.34.** Based on the National Character Area Profiles found within Westmorland and Furness, the landscape is broadly characterised by a diverse mix of rolling hills and fertile valleys, interspersed with a patchwork of agricultural land and coastal flats. In Westmorland, the terrain features gentle slopes and open fields dotted with farmsteads and historic villages. The Furness and Cartmel peninsulas present a mix of coastal vistas as well as some undulating countryside. Along the coast, estuarine flats and marshlands create a dynamic environment which has a contrasting character with the inland hills and valleys.
- 2.35.** As touched upon above, the North Pennines and Arnside & Silverdale are designated as National Landscapes for their distinctive landscape character (Figure 8a). The respective Management Plans for each area contain detailed descriptions of their special landscape qualities, along with key issues and a vision for the future, including future development. [The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-24](#) and [Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019 – 2024](#), should be referred to when designing or assessing development proposals within and around these National Landscapes.
- 2.36.** The landscape of Westmorland and Furness includes distinctive features such as limestone pavements, glacial deposits, river valleys, rocky outcrops and coastal marshes. Tree cover is mixed, ranging from ancient woodlands to parkland, coppiced woodland and scattered scrub. Agricultural fields, bordered by traditional dry-stone walls and hedgerows, dominate the rural scenery, while rivers and estuaries provide vital habitats for wildlife. Historic towns and villages, with their vernacular architecture, reflect the rich cultural heritage of the district.

This varied landscape supports a range of economic activities, from farming and tourism to conservation efforts. These activities all contribute to the unique identity and character of Westmorland and Furness.

- 2.37.** The landscape character of Westmorland and Furness is in major part created by the physical environment as explained in the Physical Environment Overview Section. However, it is also shaped by centuries of human interaction with this natural environment, including land use such as settlement development and agricultural practice. The area's built environment demonstrates its historical significance, with towns and villages showcasing architectural styles spanning centuries, and efforts to maintain the district's rural character. The Historic Development of the district and Settlement Character are expanded upon in the Historic Development and Settlement Character and Materials Sections.
- 2.38.** This commentary provides a high-level overview of the landscape character across the district. However, when looking at a finer grain detail, the landscapes within Westmorland and Furness vary greatly. This is evidenced by the [Cumbria Landscape Character Toolkit](#), which identifies 13 distinct Landscape Character Types (LCTs) across the county, as well as 37 sub-types, 30 of which are found within Westmorland and Furness. The descriptions for each sub-type provide detailed information on the unique features of each landscape.

### **Landscape Character - A note on views, vistas and viewpoints**

- 2.39.** In Westmorland and Furness, views, vistas and viewpoints are integral to the district's cultural and scenic fabric. Listed, historic or locally appreciated viewpoints dot the landscape and are both a way of appreciating landscape and historic character and considered part of it. Maintaining and enhancing these views, vistas and viewpoints through thoughtful planning and conservation efforts safeguards their intrinsic value and are important for maintaining connection between people and their environment in Westmorland and Furness.
- 2.40.** Good design begins with appreciating and responding to the surrounding context, both at the local level and with an understanding of the wider environment. New developments can have both individual and cumulative effects on landscape character and setting, and can add to, detract from, or maintain it. Development proposals therefore must consider the potential constraints and opportunities associated with both local landscape character and the character of the broader surroundings.

### **Historic Landscape Character**

- 2.41.** The landscape of Westmorland and Furness has been shaped by thousands of years of human activity. This has resulted in a rich and varied cultural heritage that includes archaeological remains, historic towns and buildings, traditional villages and hamlets, scattered farmsteads and ancient and more recent field systems. Agricultural practices and traditional farming methods have shaped the landscape, contributing to its distinctive character.
- 2.42.** The variety in historic landscape character across Westmorland and Furness is evidenced by the Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Database (CHLC), which identifies 15 distinct historic landscape types across the county which relate to past human activity. The descriptions for each provide information on the features of each historic landscape type, and although these are not detailed, it also records dates where appropriate. The CHLC also has fifty-three



defined character areas across Cumbria using the HLC landscape types. Excluding areas outside Westmorland and Furness and those inside the National Parks, there are approximately ten character areas within the Westmorland and Furness local planning authority area.

- 2.43.** The area of Westmorland and Furness includes distinctive features such as common arable fields associated with nucleated settlement patterns, bounded by hedges or dry stone walls. These nucleated settlements are often dispersed and surrounded by large areas of woodland. In the case of Barrow, the previous pattern of nucleated settlements of medieval origin became dominated by industrial inspired settlement expansion.
- 2.44.** There are constraints when summarising the historic landscape character of Westmorland and Furness. The CHLC is a useful resource, but complete data covering the entire area is not widely available, with data held for the former South Lakeland district only. Equally, the data held by Historic England appears to be incomplete as search results for both the three legacy councils and for Westmorland and Furness do not accurately identify designated assets in the district. Individual assets can be searched for on the Historic England website accurately, but a district by district search does not return complete results. It would also be beneficial to have access to details of locally listed or other identified non-designated assets. There is no national guidance on how these lists are created or stored, so the council would need to advise on what information is held for the area. These data sources further support the settlement character discussed within this report [Cumbria Local Heritage List | Westmorland and Furness Council](#).

### Historic Development and Settlement Character

- 2.45.** There are over 2,000 designated heritage assets in Westmorland and Furness<sup>1</sup>, predominantly Grade II and therefore of national interest, with a number of Grade I assets of exceptional national interest. Of note are the scheduled monuments of medieval castles like Brougham Castle and ancient stone circles such as Long Meg and Her Daughters, and Grade I listed Appleby and Penrith Castles. Given the size of the district, there are relatively few registered parks and gardens, with Levens Hall being the only Grade I registered park and garden.
- 2.46.** To the south-west of the district, the Furness Peninsula has a long industrial heritage, particularly linked to iron ore mining and the steel industry, which in turn provided the conditions for its ship building industry. The town of Barrow-in-Furness became a significant industrial hub in the 19th century, and its heritage is still visible in the form of Victorian industrial architecture, docks and shipbuilding facilities. Historic sites such as Furness Abbey, a 12th-century Cistercian monastery, highlight the district's medieval past. The abbey's ruins are a testament to the area's historical significance and spiritual heritage. The market town of Ulverston, with its cobbled streets and Georgian buildings, is a blend of rural and industrial history whilst Kendal, a notable urban centre in Westmorland, exhibits medieval roots in its narrow lanes and historic buildings.

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<sup>1</sup> Within this chapter, discussion of the historic environment within Westmorland and Furness assumes the exclusion of the area covered by the National Parks.

- 2.47.** There are 40 **conservation areas** within Westmorland and Furness (excluding areas that are within the National Parks): eleven in Barrow, nineteen in Eden and ten in South Lakeland. The key characteristics are identified in the conservation area appraisals for each. These designations highlight the special architectural and historic interest of each place.
- 2.48.** Between 2000 and 2002 an Extensive Urban Survey was carried out across Cumbria. The project comprised a survey of the historical and archaeological aspects of 23 settlements across Cumbria in order to provide comprehensive, rigorous and consistent baseline information for use in research, regeneration and planning. The project resulted in new data on the Cumbria Sites & Monuments Record, a comprehensive report containing background information on the historical development and current archaeological knowledge of each town, and a strategy report, which outlines recommended management actions<sup>2</sup>. Within Westmorland and Furness, the following 12 settlements were included in the survey: Barrow, Dalton, Ulverston, Flookburgh, Milnthorpe, Kendal, Appleby, Penrith, Alston, Nenthead, Kirkby Lonsdale and Kirkby Stephen.
- 2.49.** The district's local planning authority area also borders the [Lake District World Heritage Site](#). Although this large historic environment designation is outside of the planning authority area, development within the local planning authority area can and will impact the setting of the World Heritage Site. Therefore, the design of development must therefore consider the significance and heritage values of the World Heritage Site, where necessary.
- 2.50.** Given the size of the district and variation in development across it, there is no simple or singular description of settlement character. The above commentary provides a high-level overview of the historic landscape character across the district. However, when looking at a finer grain detail, the historic settlements within Westmorland and Furness vary greatly. The historic market towns of Kendal and Appleby-in-Westmorland retain much of their medieval layout, with cobbled streets and historic market squares. Kendal, a notable urban centre in Westmorland, exhibits medieval roots in its narrow lanes and historic buildings, while Barrow-in-Furness, a prominent industrial hub, reflects Victorian-era development alongside modern amenities.
- 2.51.** Good design begins with looking at and understanding the surrounding context, both at a local site level and its relationship with, and views to and from, the wider settlement and landscape. Development proposals must take into account the local character of the site and its wider surroundings, protecting important features, and making the most of the opportunities these provide to design new development which sits happily in its context.

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<sup>2</sup> Archaeology Data Service. *Extensive Urban Survey – Cumbria*.  
[https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/cumbria\\_eus\\_2006/index.cfm](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/cumbria_eus_2006/index.cfm)



## Materials



A small sample of the wide variety of building stone found across the district. Clockwise from top left: Barrow, Alston, Dufton, Ivegill, Appleby, Ulverston and Kirkby Lonsdale



The six examples above are from different towns and villages in Westmorland and Furness: Ulverston, Kirkby Lonsdale, Langwathby, Grange-over-Sands and two examples in Dalton: painted and natural.



- 2.52.** The traditional materials used in existing buildings and walls contribute a great deal to the overall character and identity of a place, tying it to the landscape by reflecting the distinctive colours and textures of the natural environment, in particular the geology [See figures 3a and 3b]. Broadly speaking, the colour palette of Westmorland and Furness is relatively varied and largely determined by the use of local building materials such as slate, red and pink sandstone and grey limestone.
- 2.53.** There are areas of red Permo-Triassic sandstone, fine reds and browns which are characteristic tones of towns and villages in the area particularly in the Eden Valley. The colours of this sandstone used in settlements between the Lakes and the Pennines can be rich, ranging from grey to brown, dark red and deep purple, whereas the stone formerly quarried at Helm Crag is dark red.
- 2.54.** Carboniferous limestone, in pale-grey hues, is used extensively along the north, east and southern edges of the Lake District National Park and is the main source of walling material in these areas around Kendal and the Furness Peninsula (with the exception of Barrow which is on sandstone), particularly where some degree of stone dressing was required. Silurian flagstones, with hues of greys, blacks and browns dominate in parts of the south-west of the area, such as Kirkby-in-Furness.
- 2.55.** There is less variation in roofing materials: slate has historically been the main roofing material used throughout Westmorland and Furness. Towards the east and north of the district, locally quarried stone slate roofs are often seen, for example sandstone slates in the Eden Valley, but even in these areas stone slate roofs are a minority among the local slate, especially as stone slates were replaced with local slate when buildings were re-roofed.
- 2.56.** Barrow, historically an outpost of Lancashire, is unusual in the district in that it has the same building materials as south-west Lancashire: a local red sandstone but much more commonly brick. In addition to the materials that could be imported via the railway, Barrow had at least three brickworks in the 19th century. Elsewhere in the district, it is not uncommon that the stone construction of buildings is not visible, due to a coat of roughcast render to protect the building from water ingress. The render is often left white, although in some cases, such as in Ulverston, the render is colourfully painted. There is also a tradition of only rendering or limewashing the more important buildings or elevations such as the front of a townhouse, or the principal farmhouse whilst the walls of the working farm buildings, including any attached to the farmhouse, are left as bare stone.
- 2.57.** Alongside the buildings, traditional walling and boundary materials also offer a reflection of the local geology, and demonstrate traditional skills and craftsmanship. Dry stone construction, without mortar, is common for boundary walls in Westmorland and Furness. Limestone is the main source of walling material around Kendal and in Low Furness. The irregular weathered shapes of limestone blocks are often used as sculptural forms to the top of low boundary walls for residential properties. In High Furness, slate of mixed field stone from glacial deposits is more commonly used. Around the Eden Valley, sandstone historically provided a sound and easily worked walling material, in either pink, brown or red. These colours, and the occasional sparkling surface of these stones, create the characteristic hues of the towns and villages in this area. Less

frequently, field stone from glacial deposits (boulders and stones found within the finer clays of the surface geology) is used as walling material.

- 2.58.** Field boundary treatments are often highly localised, giving a finer level of detail and more subtle variation to the character of an area. For instance, the raised hedgerow embankments known as ‘kests’ are unique to the west Cumbrian coast. Features such as these help to retain the link between built form and landscape, giving the area its ‘sense of place’.

Figure 7a

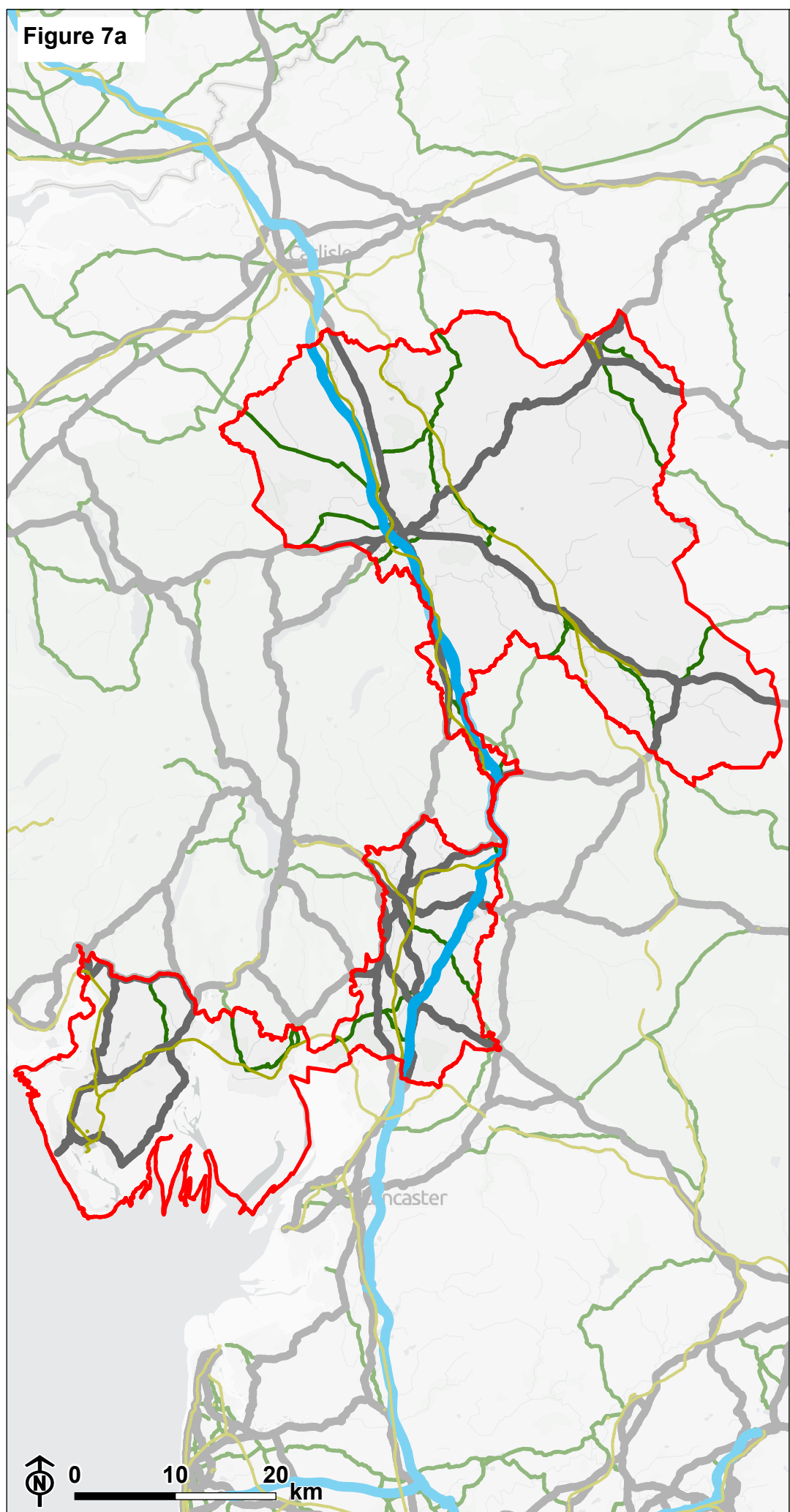
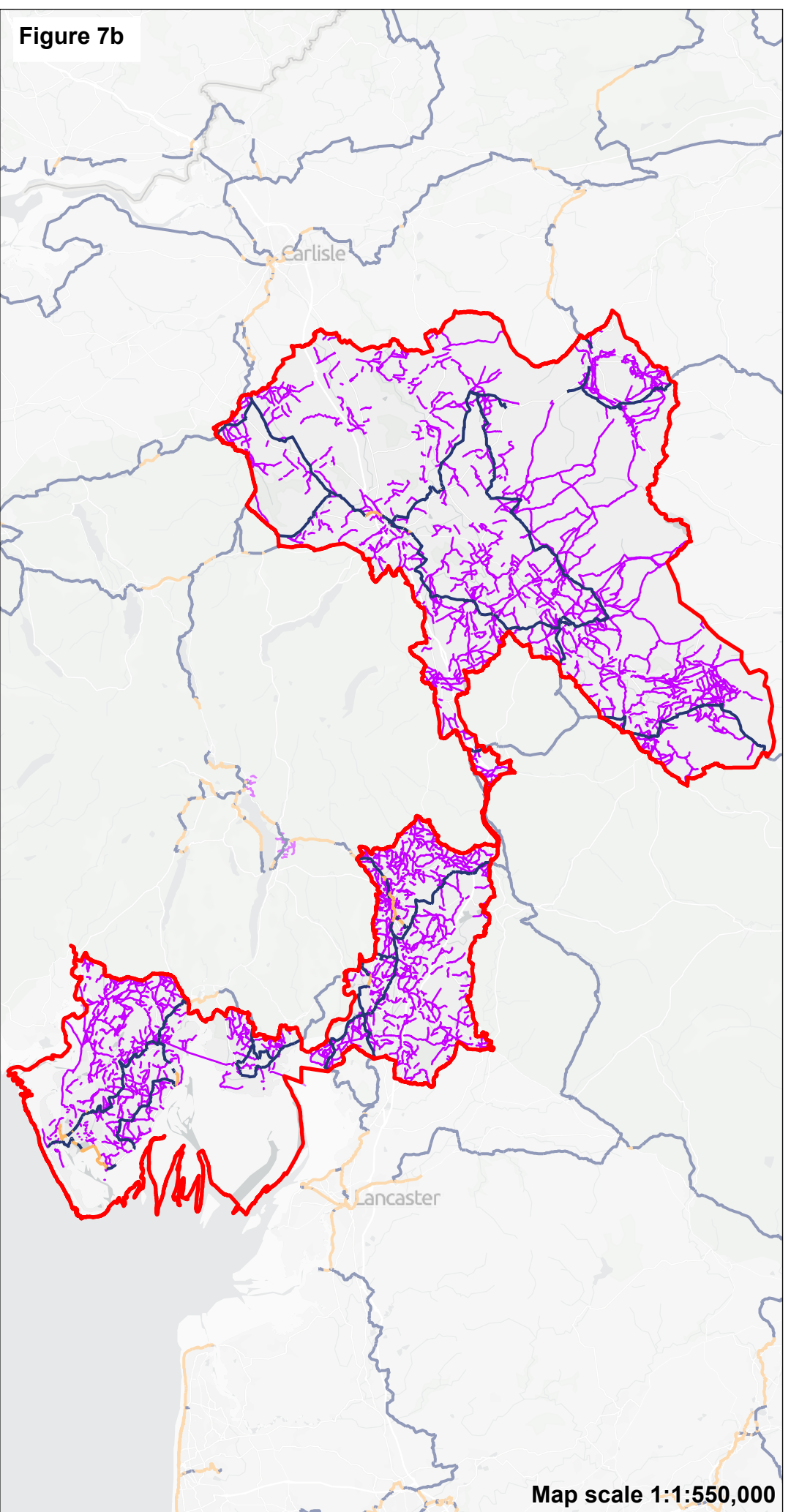


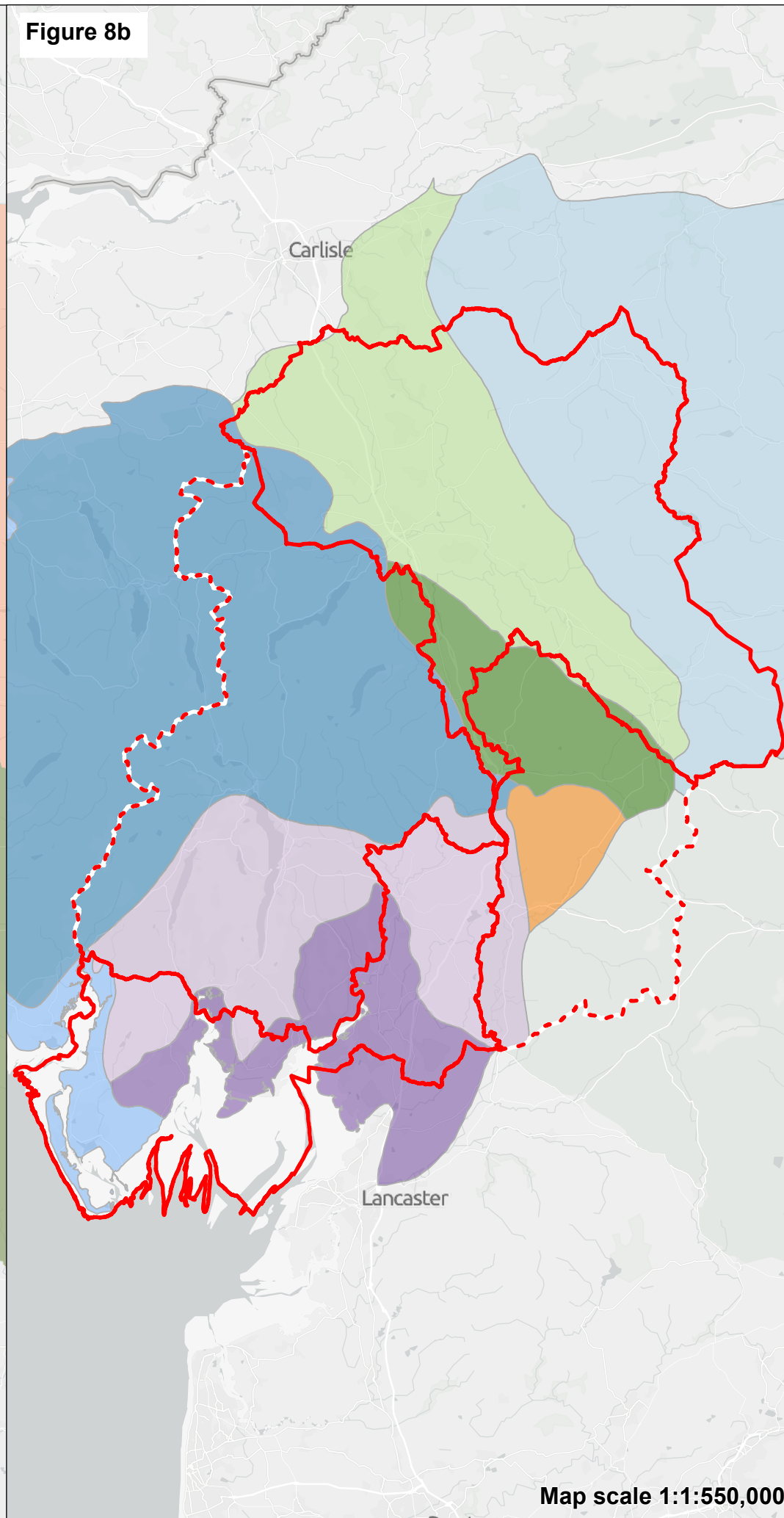
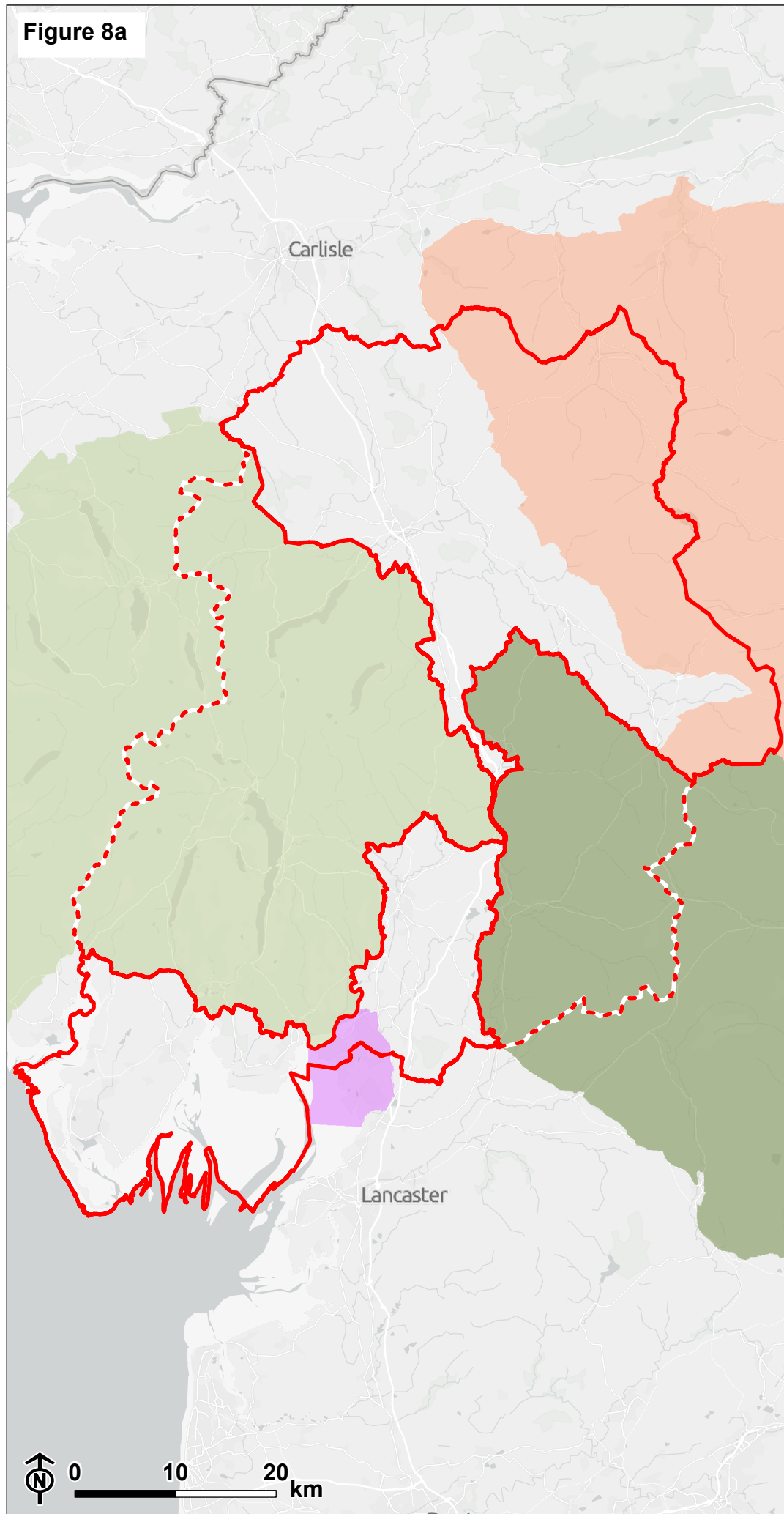
Figure 7b



**Figure 7a: Road Connectivity**  
**Figure 7b: Public Rights of Way and National Cycle Network Routes**

-  Westmorland and Furness Council Planning Boundary
-  Railway
-  A Road
-  B Road
-  Motorway
-  Public Right of Way
- National Cycle Network**
  -  Traffic free
  -  On road





**Figure 8a: National Parks and National Landscapes**  
**Figure 8b: National Character Areas**

- Westmorland and Furness Council
- Westmorland and Furness Council Planning Boundary
- National Parks**
  - Lake District
  - Yorkshire Dales
- National Landscapes**
  - Arnside & Silverdale
  - North Pennines
- National Character Area**
  - 7: West Cumbria Coastal Plain
  - 8: Cumbria High Fells
  - 9: Eden Valley
  - 10: North Pennines
  - 17: Orton Fells
  - 18: Howgill Fells
  - 19: South Cumbria Low Fells
  - 20: Morecambe Bay Limestones

## 3. Summary Character Portrait of Westmorland & Furness

### Landscape Character:

- 3.1.** Outside of the National Parks, the northern portion of Westmorland consists of predominantly rural and agricultural land uses which form the foundation of its character. It features gently rolling hills, fertile valleys, and extensive farmland. The topography here generally lends itself to pastoral and hill farming systems, but this is interspersed with pockets of arable farming where conditions permit. Traditional stone-built farmhouses and barns are scattered across the countryside, often surrounded by fields divided by dry stone walls. The River Eden and its tributaries weave through Westmorland, with woodlands and small wood copse interspersed throughout the landscape. The North Pennines escarpment defines the north-east of the district, with its sparse settlements and moorland mosaic habitat.
- 3.2.** By contrast, the Furness and Cartmel Peninsulas in the south-west of the district are recognisable by their coastal and rural landscapes. The Furness Peninsula extends into Morecambe Bay, characterised by its vast tidal flats, salt marshes, and low-lying coastline. Inland, the landscape features rolling hills, wooded valleys, and agricultural land. The lower-lying areas of Furness exhibit a more mixed agricultural landscape including arable farming and dairy production. The presence of the Furness Fells, a smaller but striking range of hills, adds to the area's diversity of character. The Duddon Estuary and the Leven Estuary are notable natural features, providing habitats for a variety of wildlife and adding to the area's ecological richness.
- 3.3.** Arnside & Silverdale National Landscape is recognised for its outstanding landscape supported by its unique limestone geology and limestone pavements, as well as its perceptual characteristics including spectacular views, a sense of tranquillity and a rich sense of history. There is also significant tourism and recreation within this area, particularly due to proximity to the Lake District and the transport corridor of the M6 and West Coast Main Line railway.
- 3.4.** The centre south of the district areas formed by South Cumbria Low Fells are characterised by gently rolling hills and fells, and the landscape generally exhibits a mix of semi-improved valley pasture, upland fringe grazing land. Farming, particularly sheep and cattle grazing, has shaped the landscape in this area for centuries. Dry stone walls and traditional barns are common features in this part of the countryside. There is a rich assortment of habitats, including wildlife-rich grassland, coppiced woodlands, meadows, and some areas of wetland and shallow peaty soils.
- 3.5.** Although they are not included in the planning authority area, a large portion of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks are included within Westmorland and Furness Council unitary authority area. Therefore, the landscapes of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales still have an important physical and cultural relationship with the rest of Westmorland and Furness, as they provide the setting and backdrop, both culturally and physically in views and vistas.

### Historic Character:

- 3.6.** Westmorland and Furness has a rich history, reflected in its archaeological sites, landscapes and built environment. The historic character of the district is illustrative of the fact that it is historically two counties: the largely coastal portion of Lancashire and the largely inland Westmorland consisting chiefly of the Eden and Kent valleys and their tributaries.
- 3.7.** Because of these different topographies and landscapes, the land was used and therefore developed in different ways. This is reflected in landscape character, heritage assets, settlement patterns, materials and historic economic activity. This means character can noticeably change within the space of a few kilometres in some instances.
- 3.8.** Even within these former counties, significant variations exist due to availability of materials and geological and topography differences. These factors have influenced how people interacted with and established networks of settlements within the landscape, contributing further to the district's diverse and historically layered character.

## Aspects of Character

### Character Consistency

- 3.9.** The following characteristics are generally found within Westmorland and Furness as a whole:
- In broad terms, the low-lying south Cumbria coastline gradually rises northwards to low fells and eventually the imposing high fells of Cumbria and into the Lake District. The north-east of the district is dominated by the Vale of Eden basin, overlooked by the Pennine escarpment.
  - Long range views are a significant part of the overall character, to the mountains of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales or across the expanse of Morecambe Bay.
  - In terms of rivers and drainage, the district can be roughly divided in half: the northern half drains to the north, ultimately through the Solway Firth, whereas the southern half generally drains to the south towards Morecambe Bay, creating the distinctive estuarine environments of the south Cumbria coast.
  - Flood risk and resilience should be considered throughout the district due to the region's high rainfall and varied topography.
  - The natural environment is generally well protected by designations for habitat, biodiversity and landscape throughout the district. Development proposals should seek to conserve and enhance the natural environment.
  - Westmorland and Furness is well-connected by both road and rail, providing efficient transport links within the district and to other parts of the UK.
  - There is an extensive network of Public Rights of Way, which could be optimised as green infrastructure assets.
  - The area's built environment demonstrates its historical significance, with towns and villages showcasing architectural styles spanning centuries.



- Agricultural and mining practices and traditional farming methods have shaped the landscape, contributing to its distinctive character.
- The area exhibits a rich historic environment: there are over 2,000 designated heritage assets and 40 conservation areas within Westmorland and Furness. The key historic and architectural characteristics are identified in conservation area appraisals.
- The underlying local geology is reflected in the building materials and walling stone. Slate is the dominant roofing material.
- Broadly speaking, the colour palette of materials in Westmorland and Furness consists of green and blue slates, red and pink sandstone (e.g. in the Eden Valley) and grey limestone (e.g. around Kendal and the Furness Peninsula).
- Traditional field boundaries are still found throughout the district, comprising drystone walls, slate and hedgerows.

### Character Variation

**3.10.** The below statements provide a high-level summary of variations in character across Westmorland and Furness:

- There is variation in the underlying geology, and therefore in characteristic landform and land use across the district. The landscape shows considerable variety, from the upland moors to lowland farmland, to estuarine flats and coastal marshes.
- Rivers and waterways take many forms: larger, faster flowing rivers such as the Eden, Kent and Lune structure the landscape; dynamic estuaries dominate the southern coastline; inland watercourses take the form of upland becks, lowland rivers and straightened drainage channels.
- The threat of flooding comes from various sources depending on location (e.g. coastal)
- The area has many environmental designations with varying degrees of importance ranging from internationally significant sites (Special Areas of Conservation / Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites), to national and local designations. These hold different levels of protection and therefore development restrictions.
- Public transport provision varies significantly across the district. Smaller, rural settlements have limited bus or rail services and so car dependency is high.
- The North Pennines and Arnsdale & Silverdale are designated as National Landscapes for their distinctive and unique landscape character.
- The landscape shows a diverse mix of rolling hills and fertile valleys, interspersed with a patchwork of agricultural land and coastal flats. There are various distinctive features such as limestone pavements, glacial deposits, river valleys, rocky outcrops and coastal marshes.
- Tree cover is mixed, ranging from ancient woodlands to parkland, coppiced woodland and scattered scrub.

- There are eight different National Character Area profiles within Westmorland and Furness, as described in Natural England's National Character Area assessment, and 30 different Landscape Character sub-types as identified by the [Cumbria Landscape Character Toolkit](#) 2011. This evidences the significant variety in the landscape character across the district.
- The variety in historic landscape character across Westmorland and Furness is evidenced by the Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Database (CHLC) which identifies ten distinct historic character areas.
- Given the size of the district and variation in development across it, there is no simple or singular description of settlement character. The historic market towns of Kendal and Appleby-in-Westmorland retain much of their medieval layout, with cobbled streets and historic market squares, while Barrow-in-Furness, a prominent industrial hub, reflects mainly Victorian-era development alongside modern developments and amenities.
- Traditional building materials vary generally between red sandstones, grey limestones and honey coloured millstone grit, in reflection of the changes in underlying geology. Barrow is unusual for the district in that brick is commonly used. Elsewhere, roughcast render or limewash may be found, typically on historically important buildings or elevations.

**3.11.** Limestone is the main source of walling material around Kendal and the Furness Peninsula. Around the Eden Valley, sandstone historically provided walling material, in either pink, brown or red. Less frequently, mixed field stone from glacial deposits has been used.