



Viewpoint

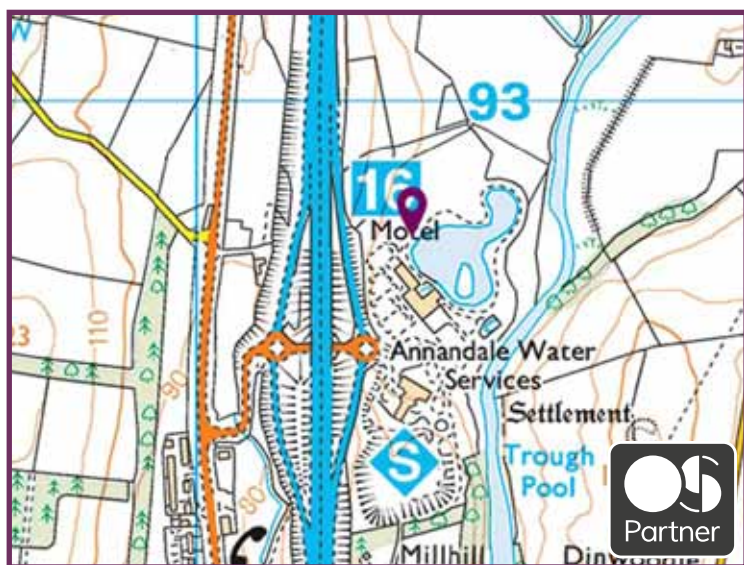
Trunk road tranquility



Time: 15 mins

Region: Scotland

Landscape: rural



Location: Annandale Service Station near Johnstonebridge, Dumfries and Galloway DG11 1HD

Grid reference: NY 10360 92771

Getting there: From the service station car park walk along the path around the left of the main service station building until you are standing with a lake directly in front of you.

Keep an eye out for: The heron that lives on the island within the lake

The noise of engines, car stereos and the disc brakes of HGVs fill the air; along with petroleum odours as cars queue to have their turn at the pump. Visiting one of these places is usually a necessary evil.

But stepping behind the concrete jungle you are instead welcomed into a world at polar opposites with the service station you arrived at.

What makes Annandale Water Service Station an unlikely destination of choice?



Before you lies a lake which, depending upon the time of year, has many species of wildfowl including mute swans, Canadian geese, and mallards which bask in the sun from their island paradise in the centre of the lake.

The noise of the motorway is muted by trees to your left and the gentle flow of water across the lake. Beyond this tranquil refuge rolling green fields and high mountains frame your view.

This terrain formed approximately 500 million years ago when sediment was laid down at the bottom of the Iapetus Ocean, a pre-historic sea which was created and later destroyed by continental plates shifting in the same way they cause earthquakes today.

This sediment was then pushed upwards during a period of mountain building known as the Caledonian Orogeny 450 million years ago.

It is because of this topography that the motorway was constructed here.

The height of the surrounding mountains made it difficult to build routes to link England's northwest with Scotland. During the 19th century Carlisle needed better connections with the ever expanding Glasgow and London. Most valleys were too steep to build road and rail routes.

However, look at the slowly rising and gently undulating hills around you. The landscape is much less severe, and therefore the road we stand next to today was able to be built.

This dip in the landscape has not only enabled a motorway - two roads run parallel to the west and east of the motorway and the West Coast Mainline rail route also weaves its way through the valley floor. In contrast, the hillsides surrounding this area are so challenging that the only road actually transcending the Southern Uplands is 30km from here!

The River Annan that carves its way through the valley floor also plays its part in making this spot a unique attraction.

Whilst the river is now out of view, it is likely to have once run through where Annandale Water is now situated. As the Annan flowed south from its source on top of the Southern Uplands towards the Solway Firth in southwest Scotland, it would have weaved back and forth as it carved out its route.

It is thought that here, the bend in the river (called a 'meander') became very curved. Eventually the neck of the meander became narrower and the river cut through it, marooning the bend and forming what is known as an oxbow lake, like the example from Alaska shown here. The island would have formed when sediment built up on the inside of the old meander, as the river lost energy and deposited its load.

So, without pre-historic seas, ancient mountain-building, and rivers weaving their way through the landscape, the motorway may well have been constructed elsewhere, hiding this site from public view.

Instead, the main link between Glasgow and London opens a secret world of tranquillity and calm behind an unassuming exterior.

Not just a stop-off, but a destination.



Meanders and Oxbow Lakes on the Nowitna River, Alaska