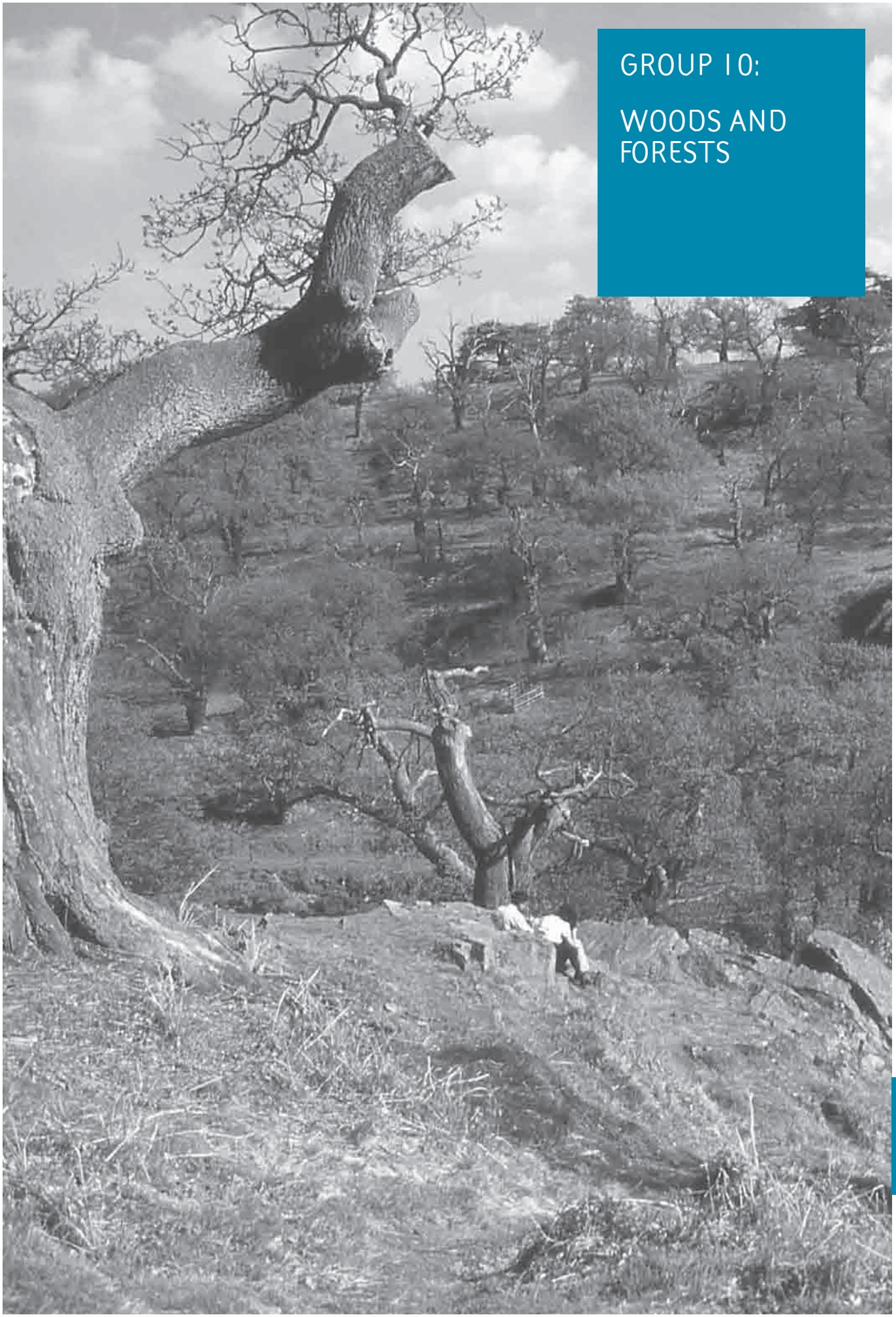


GROUP 10:

WOODS AND FORESTS

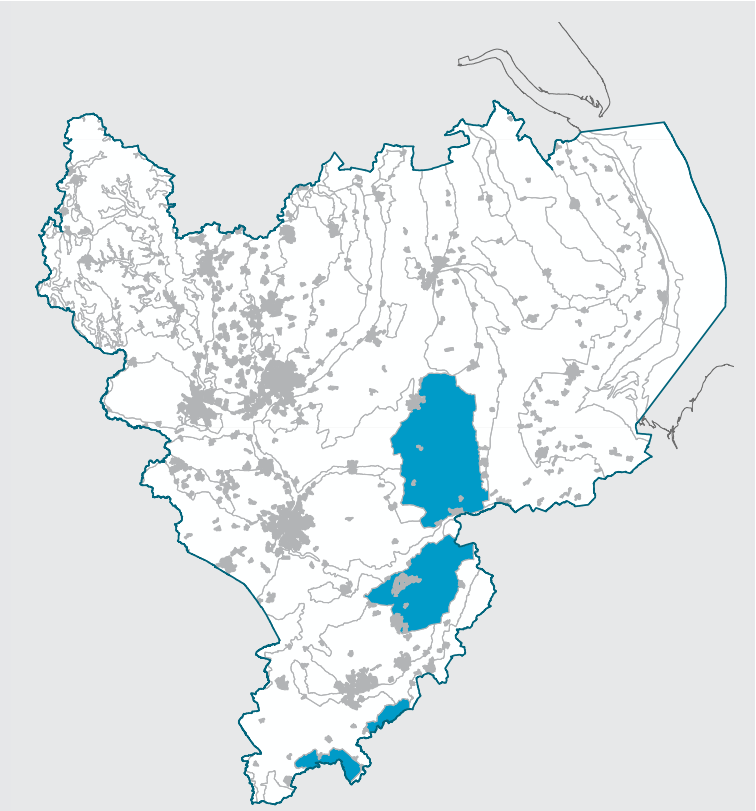
Bradgate Park near Leicester (© Leicestershire County Council)

GROUP 10
PAGES 245-276

10A:

FOREST HILLS AND RIDGES

Woodland forms backdrop to farmland (© River Nene Regional Park/M Williams)



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Broad, elevated plateaux and ridges with undulating landform;
- Till deposits overlie many parts of the Landscape Character Type, obscuring variations in the underlying bedrock geology and imparting a unity of character linked to the predominance of slowly permeable clay soils;
- Extensive areas of woodland of scenic and nature conservation value, including semi-natural and ancient woodlands, with many woodlands forming important remnants of former Royal Forests;
- Where drift deposits are absent, the underlying Middle Jurassic limestones which predominate, together with sandstones and mudstones, have resulted in well drained calcareous and loamy ferruginous soils, and influenced vegetation types including woodland species;
- Woodlands on elevated ground form a backdrop to farmland with predominantly medium and large arable fields, often with low and well clipped hedges and intermittent hedgerow trees;
- Many areas of mature designed parkland and estates add to the wooded character of the landscape; and
- Sparsely populated with a quiet and tranquil character across central plateaux areas and ridges with dispersed settlement pattern of distinctive villages, many constructed in local stone, mainly located in sheltered locations and along valleys.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Forest Hills and Ridges Landscape Character Type is represented in three separate areas within the East Midland Region. The first area comprises the Low Wooded Clay Ridge in the southern perimeter of Northamptonshire across which extends the adjacent areas of the Whittlewood Plateau and Salcey Forest, and Yardley Chase. The Wooded Clay Plateau of Rockingham Forest in the north eastern perimeters of Northamptonshire forms the second area. To the north, the third area comprises the Kesteven Uplands which is predominantly located in south of Lincolnshire but also extends into the eastern side of Leicestershire where it known as the Cottesmore Plateau.

Although there are variations between these three areas, they share some important common characteristics which together present a unity of character. The nature of the underlying geology is particularly significant as the Landscape Character Type is located on a succession of Middle to Upper Jurassic rocks. These range from mudstones, limestones and ferruginous sandstones but with the Lincolnshire Limestone of Great Oolite Group particular prevalent and which forms part of the great Jurassic stone belt that sweeps across the region, and England. Of particular importance, however, is the thick mantle of glacial deposits that masks the underlying geology, mainly comprising till but with smaller areas of glacial sands and gravels. The extensive areas of drift material have obscured the characteristics of the underlying rocks, and softened the landform profile to create a gently undulating plateau and ridges. The till has also influenced the soils resulting in heavy intractable and slowly permeable clays.

Historically, the characteristics of the soils deterred widespread clearance and cultivation of the land resulting in much of the area remaining as woodland and forests. Many areas of woodland, and particularly Rockingham Forest and the Whittlewood – Yardley Chase – Salcey Forest woodlands are of historic importance forming remnants of former Royal Hunting Forests. Many woodlands are ancient and former coppice woods and contain a diverse range of species that are of considerable nature conservation interest.

Large areas of woodland cover remain a significant feature of the Forest Hills and Ridges landscape, with areas of broadleaved as well as commercial coniferous plantations extending across the elevated plateaux and ridges. Whilst not forming continuous belts across the plateaux, the blocks of woodland often coalesce visually with hedgerow trees, smaller copses and coverts and shelterbelts around farmsteads to increase the perception of an extensive woodland cover across the landscape. In some areas this imparts a tranquil and remote character and a sense of being 'back in time'.

The wooded landscape contains large areas of agricultural land, with the farmland and woodland forming a simple harmonious combination, and wooded areas often defining a backdrop to stretches of mainly arable land enclosed by hedgerows and stone walls in some areas.

The till summit areas and ridge tops are sparsely populated, with settlements generally located on the rims of the plateaux and within the valleys, where more easily cultivated land is available. Here, there is generally a more intimate character, with valley settlements tending to be surrounded by small pasture fields, together with a dispersed pattern of farms beyond the village settlements. A more robust network of hedgerows and stone walls is also evident that contrasts with the more expansive and open areas of the wooded uplands.

Larger settlements also contribute to the character of the area, notably Stamford, with a network of historic trackways converging on the town, and similarly for other larger settlements. Within Rockingham Forest the settlement pattern is indicative of its forest history with isolated farmsteads and predominantly small villages, except for settlements such as Brigstock and King's Cliffe. There are also a number of historic parks and houses, and associated parkland which contribute positively to the wider landscape.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

The areas represented by the Forest Hills and Ridges Landscape Character Type are underlain by rocks of the Jurassic Period. They range from the Lower Jurassic Lias Group Whitby Mudstone Formation to rocks from the Middle Jurassic Inferior and Great Oolite Groups. The Northampton Sand Formation, which forms part of the Inferior Oolite Group, has been extensively quarried. The Inferior Oolite, which includes the Lincolnshire Limestone, Blisworth Limestone and Clay formations, is particularly extensive within the Landscape Character Type notably within the Rockingham Plateau and the elevated parts of the Kesteven Uplands. Outcropping to the east and south east of these rocks are the younger Upper Jurassic rocks, notably the softer mudstones of the Kellaways and Oxford Clay Formations and more limited areas of Cornbrash Formation. Outcrops of these mudstones are also present in the southern representation of the Landscape Character Type that extends across the Whittlewood Plateau and Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase.

Whilst the differential resistance of the succession of rocks of the underlying bedrock geology has influenced elevation and the main landform features, they have little surface expression due to the thick mantle of till that overlies much of them together with more isolated patches of glacio-fluvial sand and gravel. The underlying geology is therefore only evident at the fringes of the plateaux and ridges where these deposits thin out and rivers and streams have eroded the mantle of glacial till. Here, the harder beds of limestone and ironstone commonly form dip and scarp topography and many of the steeper scarp faces have been subjected to landslides.

The landform is generally smooth, comprising a gently undulating plateau or low ridges. The underlying rocks have been moulded by rivers and streams to form valleys, with a more pronounced slope profile and undulating landform on the rim of the plateaux and ridges. However, where water action has not been an influencing factor or limited to minor streams and brooks, the landscape retains a plateau like appearance.

The geological diversity for the landscape type is strong with outcrops of Lincolnshire Limestone that have been worked for aggregate and building stone. There are also quarries in the Northampton Sand Formation. Many of the working and abandoned quarries are designated as RIGS/Local Geological Sites. The Ketton Cement quarry is located within this type and displays a complete sequence through the Middle Jurassic rocks of the East Midlands, and is one of the best non-coastal geological sequences exposed in England. In view of the range of geological and geomorphological features, it is important that practices are in place for their care, maintenance and management, and the promotion of their educational and interpretational interest.

Where watercourses have cut through the mantle of till, narrow bands of alluvium extend along the valley bottoms although a number are devoid of alluvium indicating that material is carried further downstream before deposition.

Soils throughout the Landscape Character Type are characteristically stony with a wide range of pebbles and rock fragments. Typical soil types comprise slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils and slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils. Where limestones are exposed beyond the till mantle, and in the valleys, areas of shallow, well drained, brashy calcareous clayey soils are present.

Forest Hills and Ridges (© Natural England)

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The pattern of large tracts of woodland interspersed with farmland that extends across many parts of the Forest Hills and Ridges Landscape Character Type is consequence of the widespread deposits of till and associated heavy wet soils that render these areas less favourable for cultivation. In the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, clearance of land for cultivation is likely to have focused on the valleys and lighter soils rather than the more intractable clays. Much of the land within this type, particularly on the more elevated parts of the plateaux therefore remained as woodland. Roman influence is evident by the presence of principal roads that cross these plateaux and ridges, utilising lower lying gaps in the terrain, as well as evidence of settlements. The iron ore resources within the Rockingham Forest area were also exploited by the Romans, building on the mining that commenced in the Iron Age, notably in the Weldon area.

Following the Roman period, Saxon settlements tended to be sited around the periphery of the central woodlands that were controlled by royal or former royal manors. This ancient pattern of settlement persists to the present day as can be observed in the central forested area of Rockingham Forest, which remains sparsely settled.

The most significant phase in the evolution of the Forest Hills and Ridges Landscape Character Type occurred after the Norman Conquest in the 13th century when the large areas of woodland that still covered the ridges and upland plateaux were appropriated as Royal Hunting Forests to provide a source of fuel and building material, as well as hunting grounds. This appropriation ensured that many areas avoided the intensive clearance and drainage that was to occur in the adjacent lowlands.

The existing pattern of woodlands that extend across Yardley Chase, Salcey Forest, and Whittlewood, and Rockingham Forest in the north east of Northamptonshire are a tangible reminder of this earlier period when the extensive areas of woodland and forests were the domain of the King and his favoured subjects. Further north, within the Kesteven Uplands there is a more tenuous link to the presence of a Royal Forest. However, the many areas of woodland that are present are indicative of a more extensive cover that once extended across the upland plateau particularly on the high and poorer drained land.

Clearances over time, often medieval assarts, created a patchwork landscape of woodland and open field cultivation surrounding nucleated villages, as well as extensive areas of waste and common, and isolated farmsteads cut out of the woodlands. After the medieval period, the area of forest continued to decline as a result of further enclosure for agricultural use, the greatest clearances following the removal of the legal status of the Royal Forests and the effects of the Parliamentary Enclosure Acts. Despite these significant losses, extensive areas of ancient and replanted woodland remain and are a strong and unifying characteristic of the Landscape Character Type.

Forest Hills and Ridges (© Natural England)

Throughout the Landscape Character Type, areas of woodland are generally separated by large fields, mainly in arable use, which tend to have low hedges and intermittent trees. The increase of arable cultivation in recent decades has been mirrored by hedgerow removal and field amalgamation, which has resulted in a number of large fields being created. In the valleys, more intimate areas exist where better maintained hedgerows and dry stone walls and hedges enclose improved pastures.

Building stone varies across the landscape indicating the local and varied distribution of rock types that underlie the till and outcrop in the valleys. Ironstone is more prevalent in villages in the areas forming the western representations of the type whilst limestone occurs to the east.

AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

The Forest Hills and Ridges comprise a harmonious and peaceful rural landscape with large areas of ancient as well as more recently planted woodlands, enclosing a pattern of farmland, parkland and estates, and small stone-built villages. Although there are extensive areas of productive and mainly arable farmland interspersed with numerous farms and small villages, the landscape retains a remote character in many areas. Where longer distance views are possible from unwooded and more elevated areas within the undulating landform, a sense of exposure and openness prevails, with the containing framework of the strong form of the wooded horizons creating a large scale yet simple rural landscape. Elsewhere, where woodland and tree cover is more extensive, the apparent scale of the landscape is reduced with the vegetation cover combining to impart a more intimate character and human scale. Hedgerows and trees are also important textural elements and link with the woodlands to create green networks between areas of woodland and a perception that the landscape is even more wooded than it actually is.

At the broader scale, colours and textures are generally simple, particularly where arable farming occupies much of the undulating landscape contained within large areas of woodland. At a more local scale, the changing cropping regimes and the trees and woodlands add textural elements and colours that change with the seasons. The autumn colours of many woodlands are a particularly striking feature of the landscape.

Associations with Royal Hunting Forests are strong within this Landscape Character Type and add to the landscape's appeal. This is strengthened by the nature conservation value of the woodlands within the landscape, particularly the important stands of ancient woodland.

LANDSCAPE CHANGE AND MANAGEMENT

BUILT DEVELOPMENT

Forces for Change

The Forest Hills and Ridges has distinctive small, nucleated settlements and inappropriate residential development can be particularly damaging, eroding the architectural and historic character, creating visual intrusion, and creating a new urban edge to the countryside. However, significant levels of growth are targeted for some parts of the landscape type, notably Corby and its wider setting that lies within the MKSM Growth area.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the rural character of the landscape and limit the visual impact of any new development by ensuring new development is appropriate in terms of design and scale. Specific mechanisms include Design Statements for those villages and market towns most prone to infill development and the larger scale expansion of settlements lying within the Growth Points. The use of best practice innovative architectural and planning solutions that take inspiration from local distinctiveness and character should be promoted whilst utilising eco-friendly and high quality design. As well as Village and Town Design Statements, Conservation Area Appraisals can also be important tools.

Forest Hills and Ridges (© Natural England)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Forces for Change

The Forest Hills and Ridges is characterised by a number of redundant airfields. These are a potential threat to the tranquillity of the landscape, both in terms of falling into disrepair and being redeveloped for new housing or employment uses. The network of green lanes, comprising tracks connecting farms and villages to the market towns within the area, are also a feature of the landscape; however, the grass verges associated with the network of enclosure roads are under threat.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to manage redundant airfields, ensuring they offer opportunities for positive landscape enhancement. Any redevelopment should follow the footprint of existing structures as closely as possible, limiting visual intrusion and the loss of surrounding landscape features. In addition, certain features of the airfield should be retained, providing a link with the wartime past and a focal point for new settlement.

The aim should be to manage the historic road network, ensuring their continued contribution to biodiversity and recreational network. The priority should be to maintain existing grassland and re-create species diversity on neglected verges.

ENERGY PROVISION

Forces for Change

Given the Government's commitment to renewable energy provision, elevated areas of the Forest Hills and Ridges Landscape Character Type may be under pressure for wind farm development. Such development can create visual landmarks and reduce the sense of remoteness, isolation and tranquillity that is evident within parts of this wooded landscape.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the character of the landscape by appropriately siting and designing new wind energy schemes. There is potential for strategic regional and sub regional level guidance on commercial wind energy schemes, including cumulative impact, informed by the EMRLCA and other studies. In addition, planning guidance should be produced at the county and/or district level where necessary, establishing the most appropriate sites for development and setting out the criteria against which new applications will be assessed.

MINERALS AND WASTE

Forces for Change

The hard stone and mineral resources of the Forest Hills and Ridges have been quarried for centuries, and there are currently a number of quarries within this landscape. The quarries are generally well hidden within the landform but can be visually intrusive from some viewpoints. The pressure for new and expansion of existing quarries, is likely to create further visual intrusion, while reducing the sense of tranquillity and remoteness. In addition there are a number of redundant quarries that have not been restored or have been inappropriately restored, with little regard for the surrounding landscape context.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to manage mineral extraction, ensuring activity is located away from visually prominent locations. Planning guidance for the siting and design of quarries should be produced at the county and/or district level where necessary, establishing the most appropriate sites for development and setting out proposals for after-use including management that ensures that their geodiversity access potential is fully exploited. The aim should also be to plan for the enhancement of redundant quarries that have not yet been restored, ensuring such sites provide opportunities for landscape and biodiversity enhancements, the protection and interpretation of sites of geodiversity interest, and recreation.

AGRICULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Forces for Change

Agricultural intensification has led to the hedgerow removal and decline, significantly changing the field pattern of the landscape. Locally, stone walls have also been removed or are in need of repair. Other features under threat include as areas of grassland and meadows along river valleys, with conversion of permanent pasture to improved grassland for sileage and grass leys, resulting in a more uniform and homogenous landscape. Areas of estate parkland are also a feature of this landscape, contributing to the variety of land-use and land-cover. However, not all of the parkland is well managed and areas of pasture and woodland have been lost to agricultural improvement.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect existing rural landscape features, whilst encouraging positive management of those features lost or under threat. The restoration of hedgerows and stone walls should be given priority to help strengthen the existing field pattern. Where possible, the predominantly pastoral land use should be retained, limiting the impact of agricultural intensification and discouraging the conversion of permanent pasture for sileage and grass leys. As discussed in relation to 'Minerals and Waste', such proposals may be appropriate as part of quarry restoration and enhancement.

The aim should also be to manage parkland landscapes, ensuring their reinstatement and sustained contribution to landscape character and diversity. Restoration plans may be necessary to establish management objectives and guide future projects and proposals.

FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

Forces for Change

Woodland forms a significant component of this Landscape Character Type, and new woodland planting would be generally appropriate, accentuating the wooded appearance of landscape, linking existing habitats, screening development and contributing to the overall woodland coverage in the region. Woodland management is generally good; however, some woodlands are even aged or have been planted with non-native species.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should therefore be to plan for new woodlands, ensuring new planting schemes take full advantage of opportunities to enhance nature conservation and recreation, whilst providing links with existing ancient/semi-natural woodland. However, it is important to retain the Landscape Character Type's traditional land use mix and avoid loss or damage to areas of parkland, grassland and meadow.

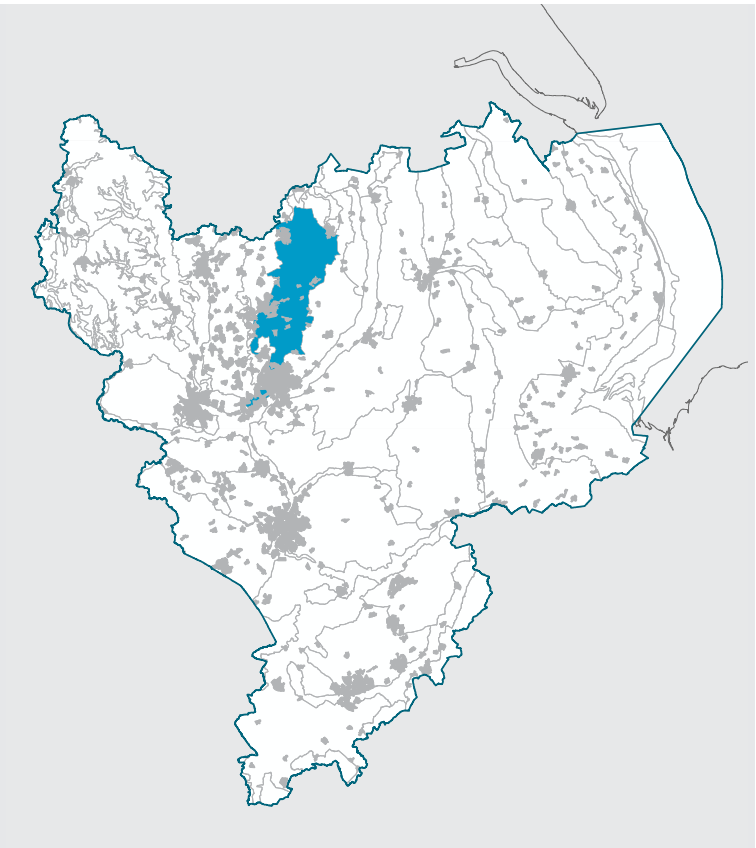
Consideration should also be given to the management of existing trees and woodland. Existing woodlands are typically mixed plantations, and the opportunity exists to enhance biodiversity value and age structure through conversion to broadleaved woodland and creation of woodland edge habitats.

Such proposals should be undertaken in collaboration with the Forestry Commission and local landowners, and financial support may be available through the English Woodland Grant Scheme.

10B:

SANDSTONE FORESTS AND HEATHS

Coniferous woodland, enclosing tracts of farmland (© Nottinghamshire County Council)



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Undulating landform of low rounded hills on sandstone geology with numerous dry valleys;
- Mosaic of broadleaved, mixed and coniferous woodlands creating wooded skylines and enclosing extensive tracts of open arable farmland with large scale geometric fields and neatly trimmed and often treeless hedges;
- Free draining acid soils supporting many areas of unenclosed heathland vegetation often associated with woodland areas and also on marginal land and roadsides;
- Narrow river corridors with pasture, flood meadows and woodland, contrast with adjacent open arable farmland;
- Numerous large estates and associated parkland;
- Frequent evidence of remains of coal mining industry with mining settlements and associated spoil heaps, disused mines and old railway lines, and areas associated with reclaimed pit heaps; and
- Sandstone quarries for aggregates are locally conspicuous.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Sandstone Forests and Heaths Landscape Character Type is confined to one area within the East Midlands Region. Extending from the north of Nottingham to the northern boundary of the region the type principally coincides with the outcrop of the Triassic Sherwood Sandstone Group and Permian Lenton Sandstone Formation, which forms a belt of low undulating hills and the heartland of Sherwood Forest.

While there is a diversity of land uses within this Landscape Character Type, the overarching characterising features comprise the strong pattern of coniferous and broadleaved woodlands and areas of heathland that extend across an undulating landscape of low hills and dry valleys. The wooded horizons frame extensive areas of open arable farmland with large rectilinear fields contained by low hawthorn hedges. The absence of field trees and low hedgerows emphasises the undulating landform and the folds of the succession of dry valleys.

The underlying Permo-Triassic sandstones have resulted in free draining and acidic soils that have influenced the vegetation cover, particularly the many areas of heathland vegetation, and also the predominance of improved arable land principally confined to cereal production and root crops. While livestock rearing is also evident, this is mainly confined to pigs and poultry so there is limited pasture. The exception to this occurs in areas associated with the large estates and associated country houses set in parkland, notably in an area referred to as 'The Dukeries'. Here there are areas of permanent pasture, as well as improved pasture associated with estate villages linked to the estates, set with a wider framework of woodland.

The landscape is rich in industrial heritage. The influence of the coal mining industry is much in evidence across this Landscape Character Type as the Coal Measures that underlie the Permo-Triassic sandstones resulted in the working of the coal within the concealed coalfield area. The legacy of this industrial landscape is marked by former mining settlements with their conspicuous spoil heaps and settling lagoons, disused pit gear and railway lines that served the coal mines. Reclaimed sites are also a characteristic feature. Quarrying of the Sherwood Sandstone for aggregate is also evident in some parts of the landscape.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Within the East Midlands region the Landscape Character Type is principally underlain by the Permian Lenton Sandstone Formation and Triassic Sherwood Sandstone Group which dip gently to the east. The Lenton Sandstone comprises the bright red fine-grained sandstone above which is the much thicker and more extensive outcrop of the brownish red coarse grained Nottingham Castle Sandstone Formation, which also contains quartzite pebbles. These sandstones are represented as a line of low, broadly south west to north east aligned undulating hills. With the highly permeable nature of the bedrock there is a general absence of surface drainage and many dry valleys. The few rivers that do flow across the Sandstone Forest and Heaths are just below the water table and flow in alluvial corridors with occasional wetland marshy flats and narrow man- made lakes. These water features contrast with the predominantly dry hills and rising slopes.

Sandstone Forests and Heaths (© Neil Pike, Natural England)

The Carboniferous Pennine Coal Measures that lie below the Sherwood Sandstone form the concealed coalfield and wereextensively mined during the late 19th and 20th centuries. As a consequence of the gently dipping strata, the mines were progressively deeper to the east. The legacy of this mineral resource has had a major effect on the Landscape Character Type.

In addition to the coal resource, the Sherwood Sandstone is an important source of aggregates for use in the construction industry. While some quarries are now dormant, there are a number of active quarries notably to the north east of Nottingham, for example at Burntstump and Rufford, and a further concentration of sites in areas such as Carlton Forest, Styrrup and Serlby. The sandstone aggregate quarries are of geodiversity interest, and together with a range of geomorphological features, form an important resource that would benefit from practices for their care, maintenance and management, and the promotion of their educational and interpretational interest.

Geological conditions have also resulted in this Landscape Character Type forming an important source of water supply for the wider sub region as the porous sandstones overlie an impervious Permian Marl and form the base of the major aquifer of the East Midlands.

The underlying sandstones have given rise to well drained and acidic sandy soils with a low fertility. The characteristics of this soil type have suited the establishment of extensive woodlands and areas of heathland although many areas of have since been cleared and the soils improved to support arable farmland.

On the lower slopes of the dry valleys the accumulation of head material arising from solifluction processes has resulted in the development of better drained coarse loamy soils which favour arable production.

On the eastern side of the Sandstone Forests and Heaths Landscape Character Type intermittent outcrops of Mercia Mudstone occur which has resulted in the development of localised surface and ground water gley soils derived from the underlying clays. These heavier soils have slightly stoney clay loam surface horizons, and the heavy texture and the soil wetness imposes a limit on cropping types and regimes.

Sandstone Forests and Heaths (© Natural England)

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

From the earliest periods of occupation of the Landscape Character Type the inherent constraints imposed by the porosity and fragility of the soils is likely to have been a major influence on settlement and land use. There is limited evidence of occupation of the area during most of the late prehistoric period and much of the area would have remained as woodland and may have been an important timber resource for adjacent communities as well as for grazing, involving limited clearances.

During the Roman period, archaeological evidence indicates that much of the woodland was cleared, although substantial stands may have remained in the south of the type, based on the density of crop mark evidence. In the post Roman period, however, the area became largely depopulated allowing

much of the woodland to regenerate. In 1086 the area is recorded as wood pasture, and utilised by the larger settlements on the margins of the Landscape Character Type. It can therefore be surmised that at this stage much of the area was covered in extensive stands of oak and birch woodland of varying densities, together with tracts of sandland heath, particularly on the areas cleared by the Romans. The Norman kings soon brought the area under Forest Law and by 1300 there was little land that was not linked to the economies of royal or monastic estates or of local manors and communities. Throughout the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries, documentary references indicate a process of continual piecemeal enclosure, assarting and illegal encroachment by both individuals and whole communities. The woodland was gradually eroded and by the 16th century only the core woods of the surviving royal estates and parks remained.

While common pasture meant there was no need to enclose for animal husbandry, the area nevertheless shared in the trend towards farm engrossment and piecemeal enclosures. Formal enclosures arrived in the 18th and 19th centuries and much of the permanent arable land was enclosed, primarily to allow for improved crop rotation and closer stock management.
The dissolution of the monasteries was a particularly significant stage in the evolution of the landscape as the transfer of the monastic sites and estates was limited to a few powerful and influential families. This led to the establishment of a number of great country houses from the 18th century and their associated parklands and estates notably in areas in the central part of the type referred to as the 'The Dukeries'. This chain of parks continues to have a significant effect on the landscape character. Many of the landowners became progressive agriculturalists and embraced the agrarian revolution investing in the development of agriculture on the sandlands, experimenting with fertilisers and crop rotations and establishing new woodlands and plantations. Together with the enclosure of arable land, the physical framework of this landscape that was established by the end of the 18th and early 19th century has been largely maintained to the present.

The coal mining industry has also had a major effect on the Sandstone Forests and Heaths. The sinking of deep mines in the late 19th and early 20th centuries resulted in the establishment of colliery sites, pit heads, spoil heaps and the adjacent mining settlements, many absorbing smaller existing settlements. The network of railways and roads added further to the transformation of a once simple wooded, heathy and agrarian landscape to one with an industrial focus. Although the coal mining industry has declined, the legacy of this period is still evident. Derelict workings or new landscaped areas are emerging where land has been reclaimed and restored to agricultural and amenity uses; subsidence features can also be seen.

The porous and nutrient low sandy soils of the Sandstone Forests and Heaths have been a constraint to viable agricultural production. Within the last century there have been periods of decline, such as in the early 20th century, when marginal farms were abandoned and once again the sandy soils reverted to a heathland and secondary scrub vegetation. However, modern farming methods have facilitated improvement and the soil is now able to support extensive areas of arable land, with intensive farming particularly evident in the north of the Landscape Character Type.

The settlement pattern in many areas is a dispersed pattern of small villages and farmsteads serving the agricultural area; in the north, small country estates and their parklands are integral to this pattern. The sequence of larger estates that make up 'The Dukeries' form a particularly distinctive area in the central part of the type, such as Clumber Park and Worksop Manor, often with the associated estate villages that were established to serve the estate. Many of the former farming settlements were expanded into colliery settlements although the closure of the mines has led to the subsequent decline of some. A positive and proactive response to the regeneration of a former mining settlement is being achieved near Ollerton, at the Sherwood Energy Village.

AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

The perception of this Landscape Character Type is influenced by the recurring pattern of the undulating or rolling landform of the low hills across which are strongly defined horizons of large areas of woodland, frequently coniferous, interspersed with bracken and heather heathland. Within this framework of woodlands and heathland, the wide expanses of open and generally treeless arable farmland evoke the sense of a simple and empty landscape, particularly where settlement is sparse and confined to occasional farmsteads.

In contrast to this simple and seemingly unchanging palette of landscape elements, elsewhere the legacy of the mining industry and the influences of adjacent larger urban areas are indicative of a more dynamic and emerging landscape. The restoration of derelict colliery land together with the regeneration of former mining settlements is introducing an evolving landscape structure and character as new urban and amenity land uses are integrated within areas of young woodland plantations and emerging heathlands.

Sandstone Forests and Heaths s (© Natural England)

Areas of extensive parkland and estates introduce a further dimension to the perception of the landscape. The extensive areas of planned woodland and ornamental parkland associated with the many estates present a managed and imposing scale to the landscape, as well as an historical association, contrasting with the 'wilder' character of the naturalised areas of heathland.

LANDSCAPE CHANGE AND MANAGEMENT

BUILT DEVELOPMENT

Forces for Change

The Sandstone Forests and Heaths is a sparsely settled landscape, with main urban areas located on the fringes of the Landscape Character Type. The majority of urban growth is located in the larger towns of Nottingham, Mansfield and Worksop. However, villages within easy reach of major towns are particularly vulnerable to development, eroding the architectural and historic character and creating visual intrusion.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to manage growth of settlements, ensuring development is appropriate in terms of design and scale, and to protect the pattern of a sparsely settled landscape, ensuring new development is located close to existing buildings and structures. Furthermore, urban growth should be planned alongside proposals to create new woodland, using tree planting to screen and contain settlement edges. Best practice innovative architectural and planning solutions that take inspiration from local distinctiveness and character whilst utilising eco-friendly and high quality design, should also be encouraged, helping to integrate new development into the landscape.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Forces for Change

There is widespread influence of transport routes, with major roads such the A614 and A617 crossing the landscape. Continued improvement to roads to accommodate the growing numbers of tourists (see 'Tourism and Leisure') and commuters, including new junctions, straightening and widening, further fragments the landscape and reduces the sense of tranquillity.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to manage the expansion of the transport network, ensuring improvements are carefully planned and designed to provide positive environmental and landscape enhancements, whilst having regard to user and safety requirements.

MINERALS AND WASTE

Forces for Change

The Sandstone Forests and Heaths Landscape Character Type is mined for coal and quarried for Sherwood Sandstone. The coal mining industry has had a significant impact on the landscape. The development of collieries, spoil tips and infrastructure has altered the character of many rural areas, and the decline of the coal industry is now leading to their replacement with new forms of industry. In contrast, the sandstone quarries are generally well hidden within the landform and wooded character. The high demand for aggregates, and therefore pressure for new and expansion of existing quarries, is likely to create further visual intrusion, while reducing the sense of tranquillity and remoteness. However, it will offer increased educational and access potential to sites of geodiversity interest including geological exposures.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to manage the redevelopment of former coal mining sites, ensuring new development is appropriate to the landscape and visual context and that heritage features are retained, providing a link with the industrial past and a focal point for new settlement. Sherwood Energy Village, near New Ollerton, offers an exemplar of coalfield regeneration schemes, addressing social, environmental and economic needs in the local area. Indeed, coalfield reclamation also offers significant opportunities for the creation of new recreation and wildlife sites. The aim should be to plan for new landscapes, ensuring restoration proposals include appropriate amounts and type of open space.

The aim should also be to manage quarrying, ensuring activity is located away from visually prominent locations. Planning guidance for the siting and design of quarries should be produced at the county and/or district level where necessary, establishing the most appropriate sites for development and setting out proposals for after-use. As discussed in relation to 'Agriculture, Land Management and Fishing' the creation of new grassland and heathland habitats is likely to be most appropriate.

Sandstone Forests and Heaths (© Sherwood Forest Trust)

AGRICULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Forces for Change

Agricultural intensification and improvement, accompanied by a move towards arable production, has resulted in the loss or damage of many typical landscape features. This includes traditional patterns of field boundaries and areas of pasture and heathland, contributing to a more uniform and homogenous landscape. Indeed, the loss of meadows is particularly evident along river corridors, which would have traditionally defined the river channels and distinguished them from the surrounding farmland, while the loss of heathland is also evident in and around woodlands, reinforcing the woodland edge.
Areas of estate parkland are a feature of this landscape, contributing to the variety of land uses and contrasting with the 'wilder' character of areas of woodland and heathland. However, not all of the parkland is well managed and areas of pasture and woodland have been lost to increasing intensification.

Energy crops are being cultivated to meet renewable energy targets, in particular Short Rotation Coppice (SRC). These fast growing and tall crops can radically change the appearance of the landscape. There is also a requirement for storage and processing facilities, which along with other types of development previously described, can result in the loss of landscape features and increase visual intrusion.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect existing rural landscape features, whilst encouraging positive management of those features lost or under threat. The restoration of hedgerows should given priority, strengthening the hedged field pattern, along with an increase in pasture and heathland, creating a more mixed pattern of land use. The restoration of grassland/heathland habitat is also a priority, accentuating existing features and providing a diverse range of habitats. Such proposals may be appropriate as part of quarry restoration and enhancement.

The aim should be to manage parkland landscapes, ensuring their reinstatement and sustained contribution to landscape character and diversity. Restoration plans may be necessary to establish management objectives and guide future projects and proposals. However, care should be taken to ensure that enhancements do not damage heritage features, such as ornamental historic parkland. The aim should also be to manage proposals for energy crops and consider the impact on views and pattern of land use. The rolling landform and wooded character of the Sandstone Forests and Heaths means operations are likely to be more readily accommodated, but should be avoided in more remote, open areas of this landscape.

FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

Forces for Change

The Sandstone Forests and Heaths is one of the most wooded parts of the region. New woodland planting would therefore be appropriate, strengthening the well wooded appearance, integrating new development into the landscape and as part of future reclamation of colliery sites.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to plan new woodland around key settlements and other suitable locations, creating sites for recreation, education, and nature conservation. Consideration should also be given to the management of existing trees and woodland. Existing woodlands are typically mixed plantations, and the opportunity exists to enhance biodiversity value through conversion to broadleaved woodland and creation of woodland edge habitats, which along with the restoration of heathlands, will help to enhance visual and biodiversity interest.

Such proposals should be undertaken in collaboration with the Forestry Commission and local landowners, and financial support may be available through the English Woodland Grant Scheme.

Sandstone Forests and Heaths (© Natural England)

TOURISM AND LEISURE

Forces for Change

Sherwood Forest is a popular tourist destination, attracting over one million visitors a year. Walking, cycling and horse-riding are the most popular activities and as such many sites experience considerable visitor pressure. Furthermore, a number of tourist facilities have been provided, including a visitor centre at Sherwood Forest Country Park and numerous car parks, picnic spots, and surfaced paths. Such infrastructure can result in the damage, loss and fragmentation of natural features, while visitor centres can cause visual intrusion.

There are also campaigns for Sherwood Forest to be developed as a Regional Park. Such a designation may increase visitor pressure and therefore potential damage to the natural environment. However, it may also benefit nature conservation, landscape and access assets, offering protection and a mechanism for securing additional resources.

Shaping the Future Landscape

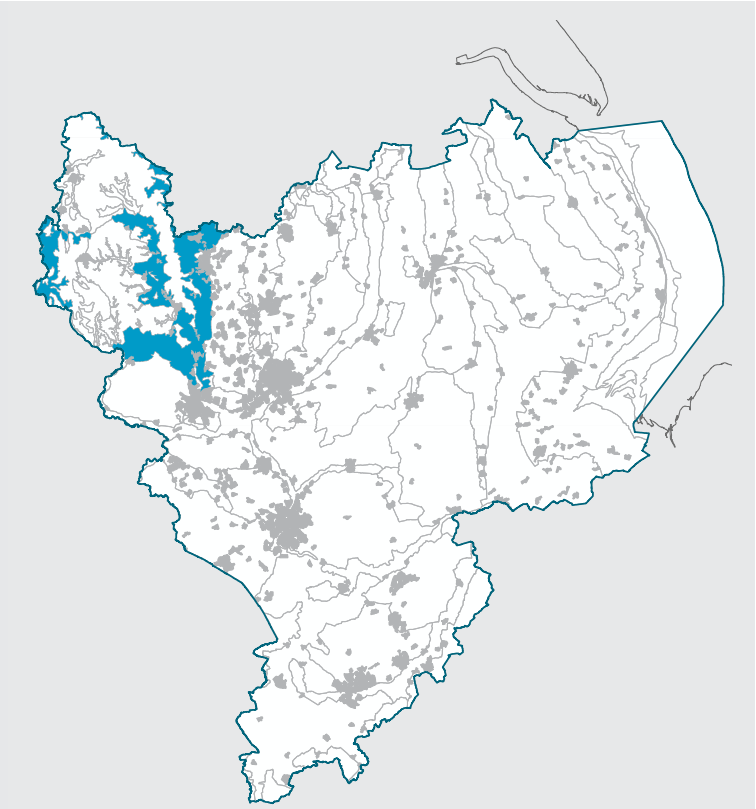
The aim should be to protect the distinctive character of the landscape and consider the visual and environmental impact of any new or extended visitor facilities. The management of public access should be encouraged, helping to conserve the natural environment whilst enhancing Sherwood Forest as a recreational and educational resource.

The aim should also be to continue to promote Sherwood Forest as a Regional Park, whilst ensuring appropriate management strategies are in place in the interim.

10C:

WOODED SLOPES AND VALLEYS

Dense woodland along valley slopes (© Derbyshire County Council)



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Moderate to steeply sloping and undulating valley slopes rising up to moorland and gritstone edges;
- Low lying and gently undulating landform in valley bottoms with network of streams often defined by dense streamline vegetation;
- Areas of semi-improved and acid grasslands together with widespread bracken and localised gorse, particularly on the thinner soils on steeper slopes;
- Densely scattered small to medium sized irregular blocks of ancient and secondary woodlands, mostly on steeper slopes and along streams;
- Permanent pasture for sheep and dairy cattle, particularly in valley bottoms, with small to medium sized, mainly irregular shaped fields enclosed by mixed species hedgerows and hedgerow trees, with dry-stone walls often enclosing a more regular field pattern;
- Network of winding, often sunken lanes particularly on steeper slopes, with rocky banks;
- Dispersed pattern of farmsteads in local stone with stone slate roofs, and with localised clusters of farmsteads; and
- Localised parkland with distinctive large historic halls and houses set in parkland, generally located on the undulating landform of the valley slopes, and associated estate villages and farmsteads and large blocks of plantation woodland within the estates.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Wooded Slopes and Valleys Landscape Character Type is represented across areas within Derbyshire and the Peak District National Park. Within Derbyshire the Landscape Character Type is principally represented within the Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent Valley area where there is mosaic of landscapes, including, at the county/district scale, wooded slopes and valleys, wooded farmlands and settled farmlands. As well as occurring in close proximity to the wooded slopes and valleys, tree cover and woodlands are often a notable component of these latter landscapes. A contiguous area of wooded hills and valleys within the Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire Coalfield on the northern perimeter of the Study Area is also included within this Regional Landscape Character Type.

Within the National Park Wooded Slopes and Valleys occur within a number of areas. These are principally located on the South West Peak within the valleys that rise above Macclesfield and Leek. A further notable area is found within the upper reaches of the Derwent Valley where wooded slopes and valleys are a frequent component of the landscape, particularly on the eastern edge of the main valley slopes extending down to the Derwent Valley. The valley farmlands and estatelands that occur within the wider Derwent Valley area are also included within the Regional Landscape Character Type as areas of woodland and trees are notable features that contribute to a wooded character and sense of enclosure.

Further areas of Wooded Slopes and Valleys also occur in the Yorkshire Fringe of the National Park within the series of valleys that drain eastwards towards the Sheffield conurbation and further north to Holmfirth. A small area is also located within the Dove Valley where it forms an extension of the Landscape Character Type that occurs to the east within Derbyshire and beyond the designated area.

The character of the Wooded Slopes and Valleys Landscape Character Type is principally derived from the mosaic of woodlands and trees that form a continuous feature throughout the landscape. These are interspersed with more open areas within the valley bottoms and also across the moderate to steeply sloping valley landscapes. The sense of enclosure that the woodland and tree cover imparts is enhanced by the contrast with the open and treeless character of the moorland summits and the gritstone edges that are often a prominent feature at the tops of the steeper slopes. Areas of small to medium size areas of ancient and secondary woodlands, many of irregular outline, are widespread. They are particularly associated with the agriculturally poor soils on the steeper valley slopes as well as the heavier soils at the base of valleys. Watercourses in the valley bottoms are often defined by lines of trees and linear woodlands. Together, these woodlands provide important wildlife habitats and linkages to more isolated areas of uncultivated land as well as to the hedgerow network within the pastoral farmed landscape principally located in the valley bottoms.

Bracken and smaller areas of gorse are present on the heathy acid grassland that occurs on the thin, well drained soils overlying the sandstone, with bracken particularly widespread on the steeper slopes, as well as along field boundaries and on road verges.

Wooded Slopes and Valley near Grindleford (© Paul Clarke, Natural England)

The lower valley slopes and valley bottoms have a pastoral and settled character. The pattern of smaller woodlands is enriched with a network of species rich hedgerows and hedgerow trees that enclose medium to small mainly irregular shaped fields. In more elevated areas, however, and particularly within the Peak District, the hedgerows give way to a prevalence of gritstone walls.

A pattern of dispersed farmsteads constructed in local stone with stone slate roofs, and with localised clusters of farmsteads is evident across this Landscape Character Type. Within more limited areas, notably the Derwent Valley, there are some large estates with associated historic houses and associated parkland. The extensive areas of ornamental and estate woodlands and plantations, and pattern of estate villages and pastoral farmland contribute to the character of the valley where these are present.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

The Landscape Character Type is principally located on the Carboniferous Millstone Grit Group, which outcrops as a horseshoe shape surrounding the broad structural dome of the Peak Limestone Group (Carboniferous Limestone Supergroup) that forms the prominent limestone plateau of the White Peak at the core of this upland area. The sediments were deposited in a coastal environment with large river deltas building out into the shallow marine waters and forming massive coarse sandstones, known locally as gritstone, interbedded with siltstones, and mudstones. In common with the Peak Limestone, the Millstone Grit sandstones are resistant to erosion and form the upland gritstone moors area of the Dark Peak, as in the Kinder Plateau. They also form distinctive escarpments or 'gritstone edges'.

A series of rivers have cut through the Millstone Grit to exploit the softer mudstones and created broad valleys as in the Derwent Valley to the east of the White Peak, and steeper and more incised valleys within the south western part of the Peak District National Park – the South West Peak. The sequence of mudstones and interbedded sandstones and gritstones has resulted in a dissected and undulating landform and, in places, a more continuous sweeping landform with low ridges associated with the classic dip and scarp topography, with the sandstone beds locally producing extensive dip slopes.

The Pennine Coal Measures outcrop to the east of the Millstone Grit, with the Lower Coal Measures predominantly consisting of massive sandstones and mudstones with limited coal seams. These occur on the north western edge of the Coalfield area with a broadly undulating topography dissected by moderately steep valleys and form part of the Wooded Slopes and Valleys Landscape Character Type.
This landscape offers much in the way of geodiversity interest resources, for both geomorphological features and rock outcrops. The wide range of natural exposures and former quarries also provide a rich resource. In view of the range of geodiversity and geomorphological features, it is important that practices are in place for their care, maintenance and management, and the promotion of their educational and interpretational interest.

Soils are variable and reflect the range and nature of the underlying geology and steepness of the slopes. Over the gritstone bands and on steeper slopes they mainly comprise shallow, free-draining soils that are coarse and loamy. On the lower lying slopes, or over the mudstone bands, slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged gley soils are found. Soils are generally poor and consequently the dominant land use is permanent grassland for pasture or hay.

Small streams, springs and wet flushes are also evident at the junction of the mudstones and gritstone, while on the better drained soils over sandstone there are occasional arable fields. Many of the steep scarp faces are unstable and landslides are extensive in places.

Ash and oak are the principal tree species together with coniferous woodland plantations on estate land. There is often a good woodland ground flora reflecting continuous woodland cover for hundreds

of years. Frequent fields of semi-improved and acid grasslands, with bracken and gorse are present on the steeper valley slopes together with fields of improved grassland on more easily accessible areas. On the poorer soils, there are remnants of acid grassland with patches of bracken. Within the area of Wooded Slopes and Valleys that extends into the coalfield area there are densely scattered patches of ancient, semi-natural woodland interspersed with the mixed farming areas, as well as patches of 'heathy' vegetation on areas of uncultivated land on the freer draining sandy soils that have developed from the underlying sandstone.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Very early colonisation took place within the valleys on the fringes of the White Peak and Dark Peak upland areas as there is evidence of prehistoric settlement within a number of caves that have been discovered in the Derwent Valley. The Romans were active in the area and the Roman road, Ryknild Street, skirts part of the eastern boundary of the Derbyshire Peak Fringe that forms the eastern extent of this Landscape Character Type.

The Wooded Slopes and Valleys have strong associations with earlier periods of industrial exploitation. The area has a long tradition of lead and iron mining and quarrying, particularly around Ashover. This, together with former quarries for building stone, has left a rich industrial heritage on the landscape. The decline of lead mining and smelting in the 19th century saw a consequent decline in the population within the upland villages. The combination of steep, often boulder strewn, slopes and poor soils meant that much of this land was never suitable for arable or intensive pastoral farming so woodland and rough grazing has dominated the landscape for centuries.

There is a predominance of small to medium sized regular and irregular shaped fields in small areas between the woodlands, and enclosed by a mixture of thorn hedges and gritstone walls. In some areas, such as above Bamford and Hathersage in the Upper Derwent Valley, larger areas of fields can be found. Many of these fields are unimproved, and potentially of medieval or early post-medieval date. On steeper slopes some of the irregular enclosures may be ancient, associated with scattered individual medieval farmsteads rather than the villages with a more communal form of agriculture.

There is evidence that the woodlands in many of the valleys were important for high quality timber and as coppiced woodland for white coal (kiln dried wood), used for lead smelting from the 16th to 18th centuries.

Where estates are owned and managed within the Wooded Slopes and Valleys Landscape Character Type, such as Chatsworth and Haddon in the Derwent Valley, their influence is extensive. More sophisticated or 'advanced' agricultural practices led to more intensively managed permanent pasture within a regular pattern of medium to large scale fields. Contained within a mosaic of coniferous woodlands and parkland, this forms a strong pattern. Views are framed by the sloping landform and interlocking blocks of woodland, with the imposing large houses and halls, and associated nucleated 'estate' villages and outlying farmsteads complementing this pattern of features within the landscape.

Wooded Slopes and Valley, Hathersage (© Paul Clarke, Natural England)

AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL INFLUENCES

The Wooded Slopes and Valleys, together with the associated valley farmlands and estatelands, is a generally peaceful landscape. In contrast to the open and exposed gritstone moors that rise above these Wooded Slopes and Valleys, where they occur in the Pennine Uplands, these areas possess a more intimate scale and softer appearance. The many areas of woodland strengthen the sense of enclosure and limit longer distance views. Within the more open areas that are present within the mosaic of woodlands, the perception of the contrasting sense of openness and connection with distant horizons and summit areas, is enhanced.

LANDSCAPE CHANGE AND MANAGEMENT

BUILT DEVELOPMENT

Forces for Change

Residential development is affecting historic settlement pattern, including ribbon development and conversion and enlargement of existing properties. This damages the historic settlement pattern, resulting in the loss of surrounding landscape features and creation of visual intrusion. The effect of urbanisation is also evident within parts of this landscape, particularly on the western edge of Chesterfield and around Matlock and Darley Dale.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the distinctive character of settlements and consider the visual impact of any new development. Best practice innovative architectural and planning solutions should be encouraged that take inspiration from local distinctiveness, whilst utilising eco-friendly and high quality design, along with planting of new trees around settlement fringes to help integrate new development into the landscape.

ENERGY PROVISION

Forces for Change

There is a strong history of using water as an energy source within the Derwent Valley and there is potential to reconnect to this cultural heritage with new forms of hydroelectric power generation. This opportunity has been generally welcomed in the Peak District Landscape Strategy. Harnessing of this source of renewable energy will support of the government's wider agenda for energy provision from renewable sources.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to ensure that the siting and design of hydroelectric power installations and their associated infrastructure is carefully considered in relation to the landscape character and scale of the valley.

AGRICULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Forces for Change

There has been a general decline in the extent of unimproved grassland and the quality of semi-natural habitats along the river corridors. There has also been agricultural intensification, leading to a decline of field boundaries, and evidence of farm diversification, with holdings being used for hobby farming and 'horsiculture'.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect existing rural landscape features, whilst encouraging positive management of those features lost or under threat. The restoration of hedgerows and stone walls should be given priority, strengthening the field pattern, along with an increase in pasture, creating a more mixed pattern of land use.

FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

Forces for Change

The landscape is generally well wooded, with small to medium broadleaved woodlands on the steeper, uncultivated slopes of the valley. This creates a strong sense of enclosure and intimate character. However, increasing woodland cover has resulted in the loss of views and species-rich grassland. Woodland management is also sporadic in places, resulting in scrub encroachment.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to manage and where appropriate restore a mosaic of habitats and opening up key views by managing existing woodland, limiting the invasion of scrub and removing invasive species where they are encroaching on species-rich grassland. Where it would not encroach on important views or other semi-natural habitats, establishment of new, particularly native, woodland should be encouraged to link existing woodland blocks, and appropriate tree planting may form part of schemes to integrate development into the landscape.

Consideration should also be given to the creation of complementary habitats adjacent to woodland, enhancing physical links between existing woodland blocks. However, care should be taken not to encroach on semi-natural habitats within the valley floor or on fringes of the adjoining moorland summits which are very sparsely wooded. Account should also be given to the management of boundary trees, particularly veteran trees, associated with mixed species hedgerows.

TOURISM AND LEISURE

Forces for Change

The Wooded Slopes and Valleys is a popular tourist destination, both as a gateway to the Peak District and as an attractive and intimate landscape in its own right, and as such, this area experiences significant visitor pressure. Indeed, the valleys are popular with walkers and day-trippers, which can reduce the sense of tranquillity, and there are a number of car parks along the valley floor, which can result in the loss and fragmentation of natural features.

Shaping the Future Landscape

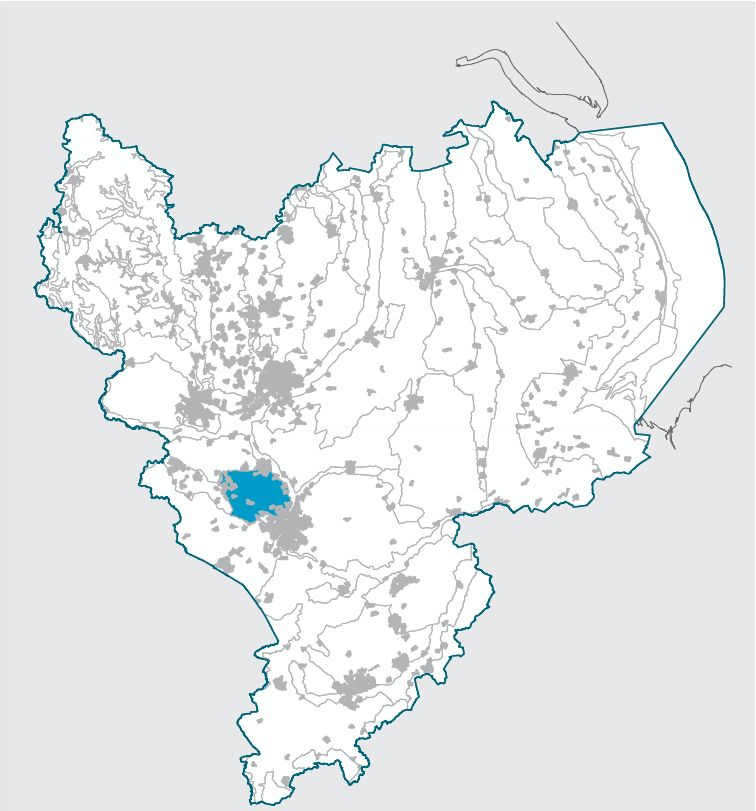
The aim should be to protect the distinctive character of the landscape and consider the visual and environmental impact of any new or extended visitor infrastructure. The management of public access should be encouraged, helping to conserve the natural environment whilst enhancing visitor experience.

Wooded Slopes and Valleys, Hathersage
(© Paul Clarke, Natural England)

10D:

FORESTED ANCIENT HILLS

Distinctive mixture of woodland and farmland (© Leicestershire County Council)



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Upland landscape of ancient Pre-Cambrian igneous rocks, rising out of lowland farmland;
- Distinctive rocky outcrops and knolls on elevated slopes and summits with extensive open areas;
- Clear, fast flowing streams on upper slopes that support an abundance of wildlife;
- High proportion of woodland cover;
- Land use is a distinctive mixture of woodlands, predominantly pastoral farmland, heathland, and parkland;
- Strongly rectilinear patterns of parliamentary enclosure fields and roads bounded by a mix of dry stone walls and hedges;
- Remnant historic parks and associated houses;
- Large reservoirs and pools are common landscape features; and
- Occasional villages and scattered farmsteads within the upland area, often constructed in the dark local stone, in contrast to larger villages and settlements located mainly at the edge of the elevated ground.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Forested Ancient Hills Landscape Character Type is confined to a single area within the East Midlands Region comprising the Charnwood Forest area. The uniqueness of this Landscape Character Type is attributable to the underlying Pre-Cambrian geology which only occurs in this part of the region and has given rise to a distinctive area of elevated land with exposures of rugged rocky outcrops that rise above the surrounding lowland plain.

Overall, the Forested Ancient Hills has a well wooded character derived from the many areas of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodlands that are present, including ancient and wet woodlands. Within this pattern of woodlands, a mosaic of land uses extends across this elevated and dissected Landscape Character Type, comprising more open upland areas with heathland, mixed arable and pasture farmland, and remnant medieval parks, which together contribute to the diversity of the area. There is a notable concentration of SSSIs within the Forested Ancient Hills which is indicative of the high biodiversity value of many parts of the area it covers. The network of hedgerows and associated hedgerow trees that extends across the predominantly pastoral farmland contributes further to the sense of a well-wooded character.

The more elevated and open areas of the Forested Ancient Hills Landscape Character Type command expansive views to the surrounding lowland plain and distant horizons. In contrast, at lower elevations views are contained by the intricate pattern of woodlands and farmland and convey a secluded and intimate character.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

The Forested Ancient Hills has a distinctive geological history. The underlying structure of the landscape is formed by Pre-Cambrian and Cambrian rocks which have been folded to form a series of semi-elliptical outcrops, interrupted by faulting and partially obscured by later Mercia Mudstone strata of the Triassic Period and more recently by superficial deposits (head) in the Holocene. These ancient rocks comprise a complex mixture of slates, volcaniclastic sandstones, breccias, tuffs and intrusive igneous rocks that have all been extensively quarried. The discovery in 1957 of a Charnian fossil in the ancient volcaniclistic rocks was of international importance as it provided evidence that primitive life forms existed in Precambrian period. Recent new discoveries have established Charnwood Forest as having one of the best Precambrian fossil assemblages in the world.

Beacon Hill (© Leicestershire County Council)

Charnwood Forest offers great potential for geodiversity interest with extensive natural and man made exposures. The geology is varied with many RIGS / Local Geological Sites and also many SSSIs for both geodiversity and biodiversity. The uniqueness of the landscape also offers great potential for geomorphological features. As well as the Precambrian rocks, many of the quarries also expose a spectacular unconformity with the overlying Triassic rocks and Pleistocene sediments. Relict landscapes and geomorphological features are also preserved such as the fossil Triassic tors at Budden Wood

Quarry, Mountsorrel. In view of the wide range of geodiversity and geomorphological features, it is important that practices are in place for their care, maintenance and management, and the promotion of their educational and interpretational interest.

The elevated core of the Forested Ancient Hills follows a broadly north west – south east orientated spine rising to summit areas of 278m at Bardon Hill and 245 m at Beacon Hill. The drainage pattern generally follows this north west to south east landform trend with wider and more open valley sections within areas underlain by the Mercia Mudstone in contrast to the deep gorge-like valleys where watercourses have cut through the harder Pre-Cambrian rocks.

At the heart of the Forested Ancient Hills the older rocks give rise to the thin, infertile and stony acidic soils that support a heathland vegetation but where Mercia Mudstone is present the land is more fertile. In contrast to the surrounding lowland areas, which have a predominant pattern of either urban or agricultural land cover, the Forested Ancient Hills has a more complex pattern with a mosaic of woodland, parkland, heathland and farmland. The woods are predominantly secondary. Oaks are the main deciduous tree but there are conifer woodlands and mixed plantations together with ancient woodlands, such as at Buddon and Swithland. Here, sessile oak and birch are characteristic of the thin acid soils rocks and pedunculate oak and ash are characteristic of the deeper soils on the mudstones.

Overall, the woodland cover is much greater than in the neighbouring lowland areas and is likely to increase within the western part of Charnwood Forest that is located in The National Forest. The parks are characterised by their mature oaks. Bradgate is the largest, and it is here and at Beacon Hill that the two main areas of heathland, now substantially invaded by bracken, can be found. However, there are patches elsewhere which typically include heather, bilberry and dry heathland grasses, with purple moor grass on the wetter areas.

Much of the agricultural land is divided up by a regular pattern of hawthorn hedges with oak trees together with dry stone walls but there is also the much less regular pattern and mixed hedges of ancient enclosure. Pasture is the predominant land cover but there are occasional patches of arable.

There are a number of large reservoirs within the Landscape Character Type which are an important water resource for the surrounding urban sub region. The hard rock resources have also resulted in a number of large quarries on the outer rim of the area, although the oldest of these are now partially encroached upon by scrub vegetation.

Bradgate Park near Leicester (© Leicestershire County Council)

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

There is evidence of occupation of the Forested Ancient Hills and exploitation of the natural resources since Neolithic times. The exceptionally hard stone present together with the wood from the forests provided the resources for making hand-axes and finds date from this period. The discovery of a late Bronze Age hoard (1700 – 600BC) provides further evidence of prehistoric occupation, although this is likely to have been limited to localised focal points. An Iron Age hill fort dating from 600BC to AD43 is located at Beacon Hill, one of the highest points in Charnwood Forest, and attributable to the Coritani tribe which occupied this area at the time of the Roman Invasion.

Use of the Landscape Character Type's resources continued in the Roman Period with quarrying of the local Mountsorrel granite, and also the Swithland Slate, for roofing. There is evidence of these materials in Roman remains in the local area including the Roman military outpost of Ratae Corieltauvorum, the site of which is now occupied by the city of Leicester as well as sites in the wider area extending into Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, where transportation of these quarried materials was facilitated by the Roman road network. The Anglo Saxons also continued to exploit these resources.

The forested character of the Landscape Character Type is formally recorded in the Domesday Book, identified as the woodland tract of Hereswode. The area remained generally uninhabited, with only one small settlement recorded at Charley. Thus, by the end of the 11th century much of the Forested Ancient Hills remained unclaimed and it was not until the 12th and 13th centuries that the land began to be cleared and settled. The surrounding villages located beyond the core of the Forest area each had a proportion of the extensive wooded area. As new villages were created, principally in the lower and more fertile valleys, each took substantial areas of land out of the Forest for agricultural use. A settlement pattern therefore began to evolve with a ring of villages surrounding the higher ground together with a smaller number of villages in the core of the Landscape Character Type.

A secluded location and cheaply available land for cultivation favoured the establishment of monastic settlements within the Landscape Character Type in the medieval period. These included Garendon Abbey and Ulverscroft Priory, established in 1133 and 1150 respectively, an Augustine Priory at Charley Hall in 1190, and Alderman's Haw in 1220. These establishments resulted in the reclamation of the higher land beyond the valley bottoms and clearance of the forest so deforestation was a notable process during this period. During this period a number of medieval hunting parks were also established around the core of the forested upland area utilising land that was too poor for agriculture but ideal for game hunting by the Lord of the manor and his guests. Examples include Groby, Bradgate, Quorndon, Beaumanor and Bardon.

A number of larger country houses and associated parklands were established towards the end of the medieval period. The 15th century Bradgate House and Park (now Bradgate Park) is a notable example and also retains the mosaic of woodland and clearings that was typical of its earlier use as a medieval hunting forest.

From 1600 to the early 19th century there was very little change or colonisation within the Forested Ancient Hills and the area remained largely unenclosed. By this stage, however, the woodland cover that once extended across much of the Landscape Character Type was depleted and many of the hunting parks had also gone leaving large areas of moorland, heathland and pasture.

The combination of the effects of the 1829 Enclosure Act and the establishment of commercial quarrying of the granite brought significant changes to the landscape. The Enclosure Act was the final stage in the gradual piecemeal enclosure of the forest lands that had been progressing since the 16th century and a culmination of a process that has brought the most significant man made change in the evolution of this Landscape Character Type. The remaining unenclosed woodland, moorland / heathland, and open farmland was divided up into many privately owned farming units marked out with hedges or stone walls together with a rationalisation of the roads and trackways within the forested areas. According to the Enclosure Award Map of 1829, almost 11,000 acres of open moorland within Charnwood Forest were enclosed and brought into cultivation.

At various times in the past, the Precambrian rocks were worked for building stone. The expansion of quarrying in the late 18th century, and into the 19th to 20th centuries, introduced major change to the landscape, focused at sites such as Mountsorrel and Shepshed initially producing granite setts but subsequently principally for roadstone aggregate. The Soar and Wreake Navigations and Charnwood Forest Canal (now defunct) enabled the aggregates to be transported countrywide. In addition Swithland Slate was quarried commercially from

the mid 18th century when, with the introduction of gunpowder, quarries were workable to a far greater depth. Competition from roofing tiles and Welsh slate quarries forced the Swithland Slate industry into decline, eventually ceasing at the end of the 19th century. The quarrying activity has left a significant industrial heritage footprint within the area. Further 19th century landscape change associated with the effects of the industrial revolution was the construction of Swithland, Cropston, Blackbrook and Thornton Reservoirs and the introduction of railways with branch lines to serve the quarries.

From the 20th century to the present day the Forested Ancient Hills Landscape Character Type has continued to change and evolve. The progressive expansion of the settlements on the perimeter of the upland areas and consequent loss of farmland and open areas is particularly notable. There has also been a reduction in grazing of the surviving heathland areas and a change from pasture to arable farming in response to the period of agricultural subsidies as well as a reduction in hedgerows and hedgerow trees due to intensified farming practices. Infrastructure developments have also had their effect notably the construction of the M1, telecommunication masts and the more limited presence of small and localised wind turbines.

Forested Ancient Hills (© Roger Rixon)

AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

The elevated landform of this Landscape Character Type, with its exposed rocky outcrops and crags, and the perception of a well wooded cover provides a strong sense of place and identity that distinguishes it from the surrounding lower lying plain. Overall it is a colourful, peaceful and unified type.

The mosaic of woodland cover, interspersed with farmland, heathland and parkland, and rocky summits results in a range of experiences. Thus, an enclosed and secluded character pervades where there is a high concentration of woodland, balanced by a gentler and more pastoral experience within the rural agricultural landscape that prevails on the lower lying vales that extend through the area. In further contrast, the more elevated areas with their open summit areas and rocky crags and areas of heathland afford extensive views across the surrounding lowland landscape providing a sense of exhilaration and expansiveness, as well as remoteness.

The peacefulness of this predominantly rural landscape is sometimes broken or interrupted by infrastructure elements that serve as reminders of the pace and effects of evolving technology and progress. These comprise the MI motorway, transmission lines along the Rothley Brook, prominent adjacent telecommunication masts and some localised wind turbines.

The ancient settlement pattern of villages that ring the upland area, the remnants of the former medieval forests and heathland, and the pattern of quarries, both active and disused, provides a tangible reminder of the historic development of the area.

LANDSCAPE CHANGE AND MANAGEMENT

BUILT DEVELOPMENT

Forces for Change

Large scale modern development is damaging landscape character, creating visual intrusion, resulting in the loss of surrounding landscape features and increasing the risk of coalescence of outlying villages. This trend looks set to continue, with 17,800 homes to be built in and around Leicester as part of the 'Three Cities Growth Point'. Proposals also include sustainable urban extensions at Coalville and Loughborough. More minor but suburbanising influences through farm building conversions and enclosure of large gardens by railings are also damaging character.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the character of the landscape and limit the visual impact of any new development by locating it on previously developed land or close to existing settlement. Mechanisms include Design Statements for those villages and towns most prone to infill development and expansion, the use of best practice innovative architectural ideas and planning solutions that minimise impact on local landscape and townscape character and tree and woodland planting around settlement fringes to help integrate new development into the landscape.

MINERALS AND WASTE

Forces for Change

The hard stone of the Forested Ancient Hills has been quarried for centuries, and there are currently a number of quarries within this landscape. These are generally well hidden within the landform but can be visually intrusive from some viewpoints. There is a high demand for aggregates, and Charnwood Forest is a major source of hard rock aggregate for central and southern England. Therefore, pressure for new and expanded quarries, is likely to create further visual intrusion, while reducing the sense of tranquillity and remoteness.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to manage mineral extraction, ensuring activity is located away from visually prominent locations. Planning guidance for the design of quarries should be produced at the county and/or district level where necessary, establishing the most appropriate sites for development and setting out proposals for after-use. Restoration plans for quarries also need to ensure that the geodiversity resource is protected and managed, including access to sites and areas for their valuable educational and interpretational interest.

AGRICULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Forces for Change

There is marked evidence of agricultural and forestry intensification resulting in the loss or damage of many typical landscape features, including pasture, heathland and field boundaries. This weakens patterns of land use and contributes to a more homogenous landscape.

Proposals for the '6Cs Growth Point' include a major sub-regional Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy, which seeks to enhance the network of green spaces and natural elements in and around the three cities of Leicester, Nottingham and Derby. The Consultation Draft of the 6Cs GI Strategy recognises Charnwood Forest as being a key element of sub-regional strategy.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect existing landscape features, whilst encouraging positive management of those features lost or under threat, creating a stronger and more mixed pattern of land use. The restoration of hedgerows including new hedgerow oaks and stone walls should be given priority particularly around urban areas, helping to integrate new development into the landscape. Furthermore, grazing should be reintroduced where appropriate, increasing the extent and quality of heathland.

The aim should also be to contribute to the green infrastructure vision , managing change to ensure the most valuable areas are protected and that new green infrastructure increases the occurrence of traditional land-uses, such as woodland and heathland.

FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

Forces for Change

Woodland forms a significant component of this landscape, and new woodland planting would be generally appropriate, making a contribution to increasing the overall woodland coverage in the region and integrating new development into the landscape. Indeed, much of this landscape is within The National Forest, which encourages new planting and appropriate management.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should therefore be to plan for new woodlands, ensuring new planting schemes take full advantage of opportunities to enhance nature conservation and recreation. However, care should be taken to ensure new woodland does not damage the area's traditional land use mix. Consideration should also be given to the management of existing trees and woodland. Existing woodlands are typically mixed plantations, and the opportunity exists to enhance biodiversity value through conversion to broadleaved woodland and creation of woodland edge habitats, which along with the restoration of heathlands, will help to enhance visual and biodiversity interest.

Such proposals should be undertaken in collaboration with the Forestry Commission and local landowners, and financial support may be available through the English Woodland Grant Scheme.

For those areas in the Forested Ancient Hills that lie within The National Forest, design guidance for woodland creation should be in accordance with the National Forest Strategy, 2004-14 that has been consulted on and endorsed at the national level. Much of the area includes the 'Wooded Parkland' and 'Enclosed Farmlands' landscape types identified in the National Forest Strategy, together with a smaller area of Coalfield Village Farmlands. With this mosaic of landscape types at the more local scale, a range of woodland planting options is appropriate. In general smaller scale mixed broadleaved woodlands are considered appropriate in the Wooded Parkland that respect the historic landscape character. Elsewhere, larger scale woodlands are promoted with a range of estate farmland and farm woodlands as well as areas of commercial plantations, together with small-scale planting in remnant pastoral landscapes around villages and linked to estates.

TOURISM AND LEISURE

Forces for Change

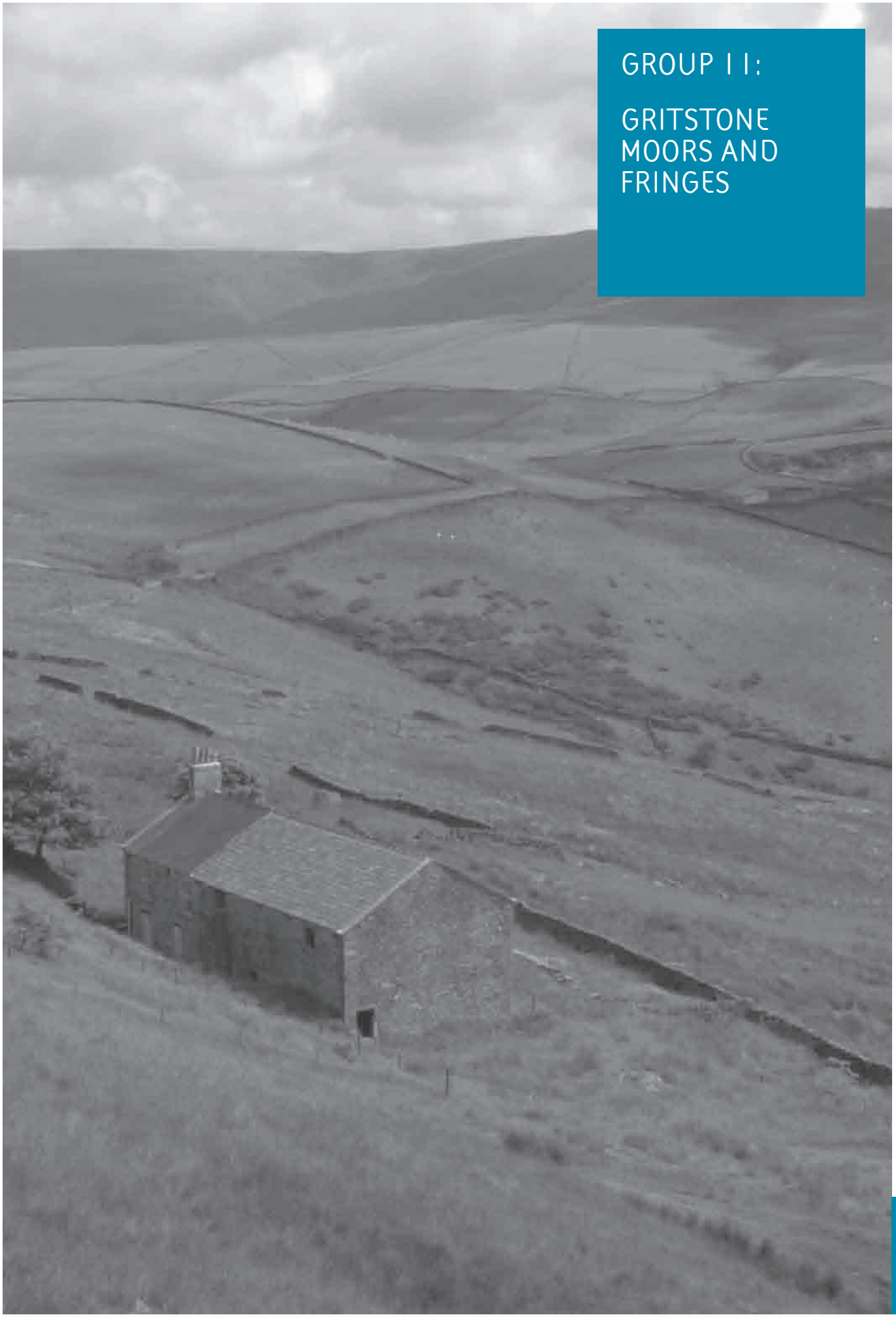
Charnwood Forest is a popular leisure destination, containing a number of country parks and reservoirs. Some of these sites experience considerable visitor pressure, resulting in a loss of tranquillity, and many sites include infrastructure such as car parks, picnic sites, and viewpoints, which can result in the damage, loss and fragmentation of natural features.

There are plans for Charnwood Forest to be developed as a Regional Park. Such a designation may increase visitor pressure and therefore potential damage to the natural environment. However, it would also benefit nature conservation, landscape and access and a mechanism for securing additional resources.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the distinctive character of the landscape and consider the visual and environmental impact of any new or extended visitor facilities. The management of public access should be encouraged, helping to conserve the natural environment whilst enhancing Charnwood Forest as a recreational and educational resource. This should be undertaken in coordination with the sub-regional green infrastructure strategy, using less vulnerable assets to accommodate leisure activities and encouraging sustainable access.

The aim should be to continue to promote Charnwood Forest as a Regional Park that recognises its special character, particularly in respect of its international geological significance, whilst ensuring appropriate management strategies are in place in the interim.



GROUP 11:

GRITSTONE MOORS AND FRINGES

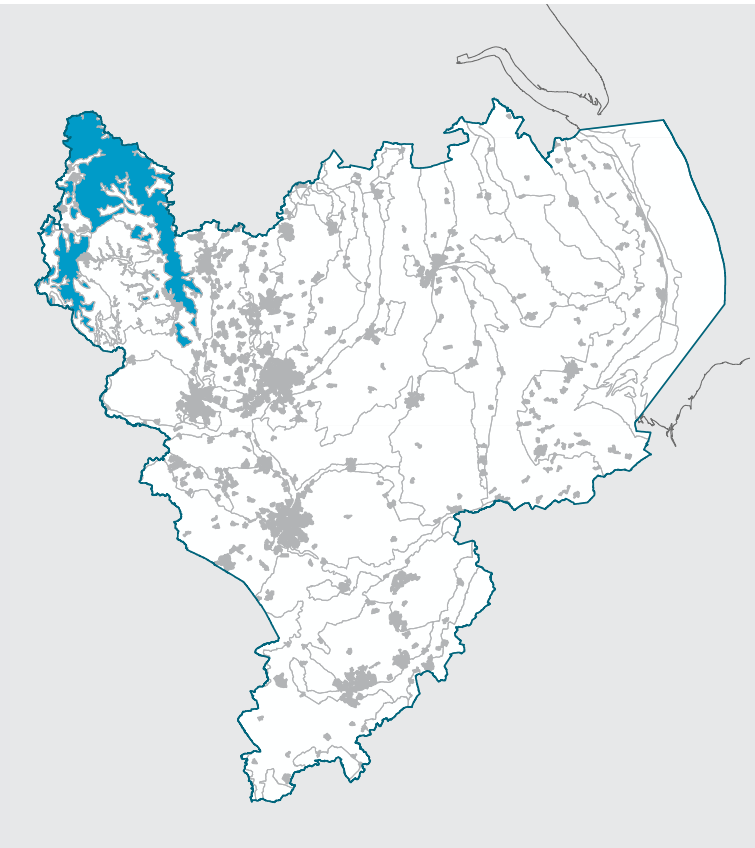
Isolated farm building within enclosure (© Derbyshire County Council)

GROUP 11
PAGES 277-304

11A:

OPEN MOORS AND INBYE LAND

Empty and remote open moorland
(© Derbyshire County Council/M Williams)



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Dramatic moorland plateaux with gritstone outcrops and edges, drained by steep sided cloughs and surrounded by moorland slopes;
- Uninterrupted panoramic views across undulating upland moors create empty and remote character;
- Moorlands drained by deep cloughs, often containing rough grazing with relict areas of oak-birch woodland;
- Thin, unproductive soils as well as extensive tracts of peat moorland give rise to treeless landscape;
- Unsettled character across open moors and only sparse settlement on the fringes of moorlands. Limited evidence of modern human intervention adds significantly to wild character;
- Enigmatic evidence of prehistoric ritual activity;
- Inbye enclosures around dispersed gritstone farmsteads and associated small tree groups and cultivated moorland fringes on lower slopes;
- Durable and robust architecture displayed in dispersed farms, agricultural buildings and occasional settlements on moorland fringes; use of local gritstone, with typical blackened appearance, contributes significantly to visual unity of landscape and unique sense of place; and
- Evidence of recreational pursuits and enjoyment of the landscape.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The dark and enigmatic plateaux of rolling terrain and steep slopes, punctuated by edges, rocky tors, landslides and boulder fields are some of the most remote and distinctive areas in the East Midlands.

The elevation, thin soils and areas of peat moorland give rise to a treeless landscape characterised by heather moor and peat bog with only limited evidence of settlement, generally in the form of isolated old farms surrounded by inbye land. The extent of semi natural habitat cover, managed by extensive sheep grazing and occasional burning for game, adds significantly to the wild character of the landscape and is highly valued for its biodiversity interest.

The uplands are drained by steep sided cloughs, often cloaked in rough pastures and occasional oakwoods. These provide shelter in an otherwise open and exposed upland area. The cloughs and lower moorland slopes are also more widely farmed and settled, with evidence of piecemeal and parliamentary enclosures.

The remote moors contain little evidence of human intervention. Some of the more visible and enigmatic features are associated with ritual monuments from the later prehistoric, standing stones and cairns perhaps marking the limits of territories of communities living in the neighbouring lowland valleys.

The landscape has long been important for recreation. The tranquil and remote upland landscape is popular walking country, with wide areas of open access land allowing ramblers to roam across the moors. Crags and cliffs attract climbers, and shooting is also a popular pastime and important for maintaining heather moorland habitats.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

The underlying geology of coarse sandstones of the Carboniferous Millstone Grit Group has had a profound influence on the character of the landscape, in the shape of the land, the natural vegetation and patterns of settlement, architecture and land use. Various rock types characterise the Millstone Grit Group, although all were formed through rivers and deltas depositing fine silts, sands and pebbles as mudflats and sandbanks. These materials were then compressed over several million years to form alternating bands of hard 'gritstone' and softer mudstone beds.

The hard and slowly weathered sandstone and gritstone and softer mudstones together give rise to the distinctive topography of elevated plateaux of broadly rolling terrain and steep slopes. Sandstone and gritstone outcrops are particularly distinctive where they punctuate the rolling moorland tops and create rocky tors and vertical cliff faces, known as edges. These rocky tors and edges add significantly to the wild character of the open moorland and increase the sense of exposure. The steep scarp faces of many of the sandstones are unstable and have been subjected to landslides.

The most elevated areas of the landscape are the plateaux tops. The highest is Kinder Scout, rising to 636m AOD. However, the remainder all generally lie above 500m AOD, forming the most elevated areas in the region.

Grindsbrook Clough Dark Peak (© Jim Horsfall, Natural England)

This landscape type offers a high potential for access to areas of geodiversity interest with many natural and man-made exposures. Good geomorphological features are also well represented. In view of the range of geodiversity and geomorphological features, it is important that practices are in place for their care, maintenance and management, and the promotion of their educational and interpretational interest.

The soils of the plateaux are impoverished, and the combination of elevation and high rainfall has created extensive areas covered in blanket peat, which has developed slowly over the last 10,000 years. These form distinctive rounded domes in many places although this smooth and simple landscape is dissected by gully erosion and sinuous drainage channels, known locally as 'groughs'. Landcover is typically semi-natural blanket bog communities over deep peat and wet heather moor habitats on lower moorland slopes. Natural erosion of the peat is often evident, exacerbated by air pollution, heavy grazing, fire and drainage, resulting in bare peat and peat haggs. Where gritstones are exposed as crags, tors and boulder slopes, the exposed rock supports lichen flora, and some form breeding sites for peregrine and raven. The poor quality of the soils has limited agricultural improvement and ensured that large, continuous tracts of semi natural habitat remain. The significance of these vast areas of landscape has been recognised through large areas of open moor being designated as a Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation.

Watercourses draining the peat often flow into steep sided cloughs which eventually form more significant rivers such as the Derwent. Cloughs are characteristically deeply incised, albeit relatively broad in some places and contain fast flowing juvenile streams. Some have been dammed to form small reservoirs. At the junction of the gritstone and mudstone on clough sides, flushes and springs emerge, which support particularly rich botanic communities. The soils of the valley sides are acid-loamy upland soils with a wet peaty surface and well suited to upland rough pasture. Some isolated semi-improved pasture fields are also notable on the margins of the moors, although even here the semi-natural heathy and rushy vegetation is evident on sloping ground and as isolated patches in some fields.

Tree cover is not a common characteristic of the Open Moors and Inbye Land Landscape Character Type, natural regeneration being limited by the open grazing, wet soils and exposure. However, some sheltered cloughs and moorland slopes support sessile oak woods, which often contain birch and a holly or hazel understorey and rich ground flora. Few are ancient in origin, and some coniferous plantations are evident, often extending up onto the moorland slopes from broader lowland valleys. Small tree groups associated with isolated farmsteads are also a defining characteristic in this otherwise open, treeless landscape.

Open Moors and Inbye Land, Stanage Edge (© P Clarke, Natural England)

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Whilst the open moors retain a remote and empty character today, there is evidence of considerable activity in prehistoric times, including extensive finds of stone tools from Mesolithic hunter-gatherers discovered when the peat has become disturbed or eroded. It is unlikely that later prehistoric farming communities found the hostile upland environment suitable for widespread settlement, although it is suggested that the area provided upland grazing for communities living in the more sheltered valleys or on the adjacent limestone plateaux to the south. Whilst some evidence does indicate early settlement and farming, such as Bronze Age field systems on Bamford Moor, much evidence of prehistoric communities is in the form of ritual monuments. Hilltop burial cairns and stone circles perhaps mark the limits of territories of communities living in the neighbouring valleys.

The current character of the landscape of open grazing and occasional enclosure and inbye land has emerged over the last 100 years. Whilst wide areas on the open moors remain unenclosed, occasional drystone walls on the moorland slopes and cloughs define ownership boundaries. These are locally irregular and regular in form indicating different periods and types of enclosure; typically parliamentary enclosures are evident on the more sheltered fringes of the moors and identifiable as medium to large regular fields. Smaller and more irregular fields are evidence of much older enclosure or as a result of private landowners. On the moors, enclosures are generally expansive although small scale enclosures are associated with the inbye of isolated farmsteads, many of which have medieval origins.

In later centuries, up until coal was widely accessible, the landscape was an important source of peat fuel. Peat cutting was a communal right throughout the medieval period until land fell under private ownership. It often occurred on the moorland tops close to settlements, and the remnants of this activity can still sometimes be seen in the form of tracks and sled runs.

The open moors is an unsettled landscape with few built features beyond occasional grouse butts, shooting cabins and isolated robustly built gritstone farm buildings, stock pens and field barns. Many properties on the moors were located to take advantage of natural shelter and are often surrounded by trees. Many farms on the lower lying moorland slopes date to the period of parliamentary enclosure.

Whilst of marginal value to agriculture, recreational pursuits have long been enjoyed across the open moors. In the medieval period, the landscape formed part of royal hunting grounds, and since the 19th century, some of the upland moors have been managed as heather moorland by large private estates to provide habitat for grouse. The periodic burning and regular grazing has produced much of the characteristic land cover of the high moors, and distinctive strips of alternating colour and texture differentiate the old and new growth. More modern recreational land uses are also evident with gliding clubs located on some prominent hills. Walking and rock climbing are also very popular activities. Developments during the 20th century in this landscape have had a profound influence on these pursuits; Kinder Scout Plateau is celebrated as the destination for the mass trespass in April 1932 that had far reaching consequences for public access provision, including the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) that now legislates for a limited right to roam across wide areas of the open moors.

AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

The open moors are the most elevated and remote areas in the East Midlands, noted for their desolate and timeless character and expansive views across open, treeless country. The sense of exposure and wildness is further enhanced by only sporadic modern intrusions, harsh climate and widespread semi-natural habitat.

The vast tracts of uniform land cover create a great sense of visual unity in the landscape, further enhanced by the dark gritstones, exposed on dramatic cliffs and rocky tors, and used in the construction of drystone walls and occasional farm buildings.

Whilst the landscape's grandeur and identity is directly linked to its scale and simplicity, often to be observed in sweeping panoramas from vantage points on exposed hilltops, significant local variation can be observed. Indeed, seasonal changes in the heather foliage and acid grasslands and flushes provide significant seasonal interest; in the summer, white cotton grass and purple heather dominate, giving way to more subdued hues in autumn.

Open Moors and Inbye Land, Hathersage (© Paul Clarke, Natural England)

In contrast to the open moors, sheltered and extensively grazed cloughs, irregular intakes around farmsteads and more regular enclosures on the fringes of the moor, represent less hostile environments and transition to the more densely settled and farmed lowlands.

Occasional roads and tracks cross the moors. Whilst surfaced roads represent a modern intrusion in the otherwise semi-natural moorland landscape, they often follow ancient packhorse tracks and Roman routes through the hills. Travelling along these routes is often highly evocative, particularly on the highest moorland plateaux.

LANDSCAPE CHANGE AND MANAGEMENT

BUILT DEVELOPMENT

Forces for Change

The Open Moors are unsettled, with very limited scope for accommodating residential or commercial development. By contrast, limited settlement is evident on the fringes of the moors landscape. In these fringe locations, housing demand is affecting the architectural and historic character of villages and is beginning to encroach on the pastures and woodlands that define the edges of the moors, and provide a transition between the upland and lowland landscapes.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the distinctive character of the open moorland landscape. Built development in these areas should be resisted. Towards the fringes of the moors where existing settlement is characteristic, features such as stone walls and limited tree planting should be used to integrate new development into the landscape. The planning and design of any new development should be sensitive to local landscape and settlement character and respect the local vernacular style and building materials.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Forces for Change

Transport infrastructure is a limited feature of the Open Moors and Inbye land, and most of the moorland is only accessible by foot. However, there remain a number of old track-ways across the moors that would have traditionally linked farms, areas of grazing and surrounding settlements. Today these are commonly used as recreational routes. There is also evidence of new access roads to assist land management. These can create visually prominent detractors and reduce the sense of remoteness

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to ensure that any new transport infrastructure is restricted to access tracks away from the moorland areas, ensuring appropriate siting and use of materials..

AGRICULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Forces for Change

Grazing is important for the vegetation structure and overall ecology of the moors. However, changes in agricultural practices have led to areas of over-grazing, leading to the conversion from heather to grass moor. Furthermore, grazing and stock sheltering in clough woodland is leading to a decline in habitat diversity.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect existing rural landscape features, whilst encouraging positive management of those features lost or under threat. In particular the restoration of stone walls and inbye land will help create a more mixed pattern of land-use and provide visual interest locally. Alternatively, it may be desirable to allow reversion of inbye land to moorland.
The overall character of the moors remains unenclosed, and care should be taken to ensure that the sense of openness is not reduced.

Open Moors and Inbye Land, Stanage (© P Clarke, Natural England)

Open Moors and Inbye Land (© P Clarke, Natural England)

The aim should be to protect the distinctive open character of the landscape and consider the visual impact of any new structures. New agricultural buildings in particular should be carefully sited away from the open moors and visually prominent locations and be located amongst existing buildings where possible. Specific design guidance for farmsteads may be appropriate, establishing the criteria for new development. The opportunity to conserve and upgrade existing barns and buildings should also be explored.

The aim should also be to manage the frequency of grazing, ensuring landscape and biodiversity character is enhanced or restored. Best practice guidance should be established for grazing generally on the moors, and the frequency and intensity of grazing should be considered on a site by site basis.

FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

Forces for Change

The open moors are characteristically treeless, with woodland cover generally limited to the cloughs and valleys and around settlements on the fringes of the moors. As described earlier, existing woodland fringing settlements is under threat from new residential development and inappropriate grazing.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect existing woodland fringing the moors close to settlements, ensuring landscape and biodiversity character is maintained. New tree planting on the moors should be resisted and the open character of these areas should be protected. The priority should be given to managing characteristic habitats and features, such as heather moorland.

Open Moors and Inbye Land, Stanage Edge (© Tom Marshall, Natural England)

Open Moors and Inbye Land, North Lees (© P Clarke, Natural England)

TOURISM AND LEISURE

Forces for Change

The Peak District is a major tourist destination, and the open moors in particular are popular for walking, climbing and shooting. Indeed, much the landscape is 'open access land' giving members of the public unrestricted access to the countryside without the need to follow dedicated footpaths. However, in a few particularly sensitive locations recreational activity can result in the loss of tranquillity in rural areas and can physically damage the moorland vegetation. Furthermore, there are an increasing number of car parks, view points and picnic sites along main roads across the moors. As with any new development this can cause visual intrusion and result in the loss of landscape features. The effect is particularly evident in locations with little or no settlement.

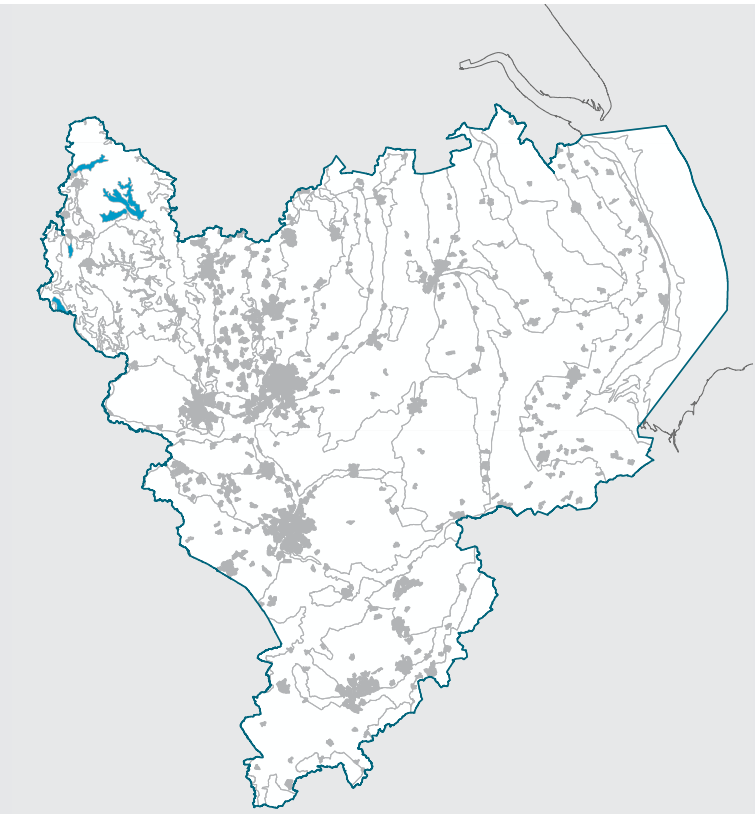
Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the distinctive open character of the moorland landscape and consider the impact of visitors and any new tourist facilities. The management of public access should be encouraged, helping to conserve the natural environment whilst enhancing the moors as a recreational resource.

11B:

MOORLAND VALLEYS

Steeply sloping incised moorland valley
(© LDA Design LLP)



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently undulating albeit steep sloping valley topography, rising to adjacent moorland plateaux;
- Network of streams and localised damp hollows; some lower valleys dammed to form large reservoirs, supplying water to urban areas;
- Valleys characterised by pastoral farmland, with small to medium sized fields enclosed by hedgerows on lower slopes and gritstone walls towards the moorland plateaux;
- Interlocking coniferous and mixed plantation woodland with some limited semi-natural woodland cover;
- Narrow winding lanes along lower valley slopes or valley bottom; often sunken, when traversing slopes up onto the adjacent moors; and
- Dispersed settlement pattern of isolated farmsteads and small villages; reservoir valleys largely cleared of settlement prior to flooding, leaving occasional gritstone farmsteads.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The steep sided Moorland Valleys dissecting the elevated gritstone plateaux have long been the focus of settlement and farming. As such, several centuries of clearance, enclosure and agricultural improvement have created a cultural landscape of woodlands, verdant pastures, gritstone walls, hedgerows, ancient farmsteads and occasional small settlements. The diversity of land uses and built elements represents a dramatic contrast to the remote and lonely moorland plateaux close by, although the upper valley slopes mark a transition between the two. Here, the sense of enclosure lessens, and there is an increased occurrence of rough grazing and semi-natural moorland vegetation, particularly adjacent to brooks and flushes.

The construction of large reservoirs has had a significant influence on the character of the Moorland Valleys Landscape Character Type. From the 19th century the damming of streams to create large water bodies and extensive planting of conifer trees on the steep valley slopes has created a dramatic, albeit artificial visual character.

Many routes in the Moorland Valleys follow ancient trails through and onto the adjacent gritstone plateaux. Several are known packhorse trails, although some may have origins in the prehistoric period. Active and disused rail routes are also evident. These were developed to replace the packhorse trails in order to carry goods and raw materials between industrial centres in the neighbouring lowlands of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. The valleys remain important to communications, and several carry major roads through the uplands. These provide easy access to dramatic valleys from several major conurbations, and as such, make the Moorland Valleys a popular visitor destination.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Erosion of the underlying geology of coarse sandstones of the Carboniferous Millstone Grit series and softer mudstones has given rise to a generally unified, steeply sloping landform with narrow valley bottoms.

The valley sides, notably on less steep areas where iron pans have formed, are characterised by acid loamy upland soils with a wet peaty surface, giving way to freely draining or seasonally wet slightly acid loamy soils on steeper slopes over gritstone bedrock. Whilst some areas of semi natural habitat are evident, notably species rich grasslands in the Edale Valley, this is, for the most part, a moderately intensively farmed pastoral landscape.

In some areas, the poor quality of the soils, and limited productivity gives rise to the retention of semi natural habitats, unimproved pasture and hay meadows. On poorly drained land, particularly rich botanic communities can be found and many areas serve as breeding grounds for wading birds. On sloping ground wet flushes, giving rise to mosses, sedges and soft rush, are also locally significant.

Areas of ancient semi natural woodland are also a notable habitat resource, and make a significant contribution to the wooded character of tracts of landscape. Significant planting of conifer woodlands is also evident, often on the site of former ancient semi natural broadleaved woodland. Woodlands are particularly characteristic of reservoir valleys. The Vale of Edale is notable for the absence of large scale woodlands and conifer plantations. This may reflect the gentler valley form being more amenable to agricultural improvement and management for grazing. Here, woodlands are confined to narrow belts along deeply incised cloughs, although scattered hedgerow and trees along watercourses on the valley floor contribute to the perception of a well treed character within the Vale of Edale.

There is a range of features of geodiversity interest within the valleys of this upland landscape with evidence of geomorphological features associated with fluvial processes. It is important that practices are in place for their care, maintenance and management, and promotion of their educational and interpretational interest.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The Moorland Valleys has been the focus for agriculture from later prehistory. However, whilst these sheltered valleys with permanent supplies of running water would have been the focus of settlement, communities would have also relied on the uplands for various resources such as grazing and peat for fuel.

Little is known about early settlement in the valleys, although it may have been similar to the existing pattern in the Vale of Edale. Here, small farming communities are dispersed along the more favourable south facing valley slopes and located adjacent to brooks draining into the main river channel. Several settlements have the suffix 'booth'. A booth was the name given to pasturage units defined as part of the medieval hunting forest and let by bailiffs to villagers and foresters. As such, the villages can be traced to the medieval period, although may have much more ancient origins. In Edale, the booths developed into small gritstone settlements although a period of expansion and building in brick occurred with the creation of Edale Mill and railway station.

Vale of Edale (© P Clarke, Natural England)

Elsewhere the deep, steep sided valleys have been used for water catchment. The reservoirs were built from the mid 19th century to supply potable water to industrialised cities such as Sheffield and Manchester. Since their construction they have remained a prominent landscape feature and continue to attract visitors and for active recreational activities and relaxation. The construction of reservoirs necessitated evictions and destruction of communities such as Derwent and Ashopton; however, some traces of buildings can be seen in periods of particularly low water.

Despite reservoirs removing many traces of past land use and settlement, the framework of dry stone walls surrounding former farmsteads can still be traced up the valley sides, with hedgerow boundaries often prevalent on lower slopes. The date of these enclosures varies, and in many instances they pre-date Parliamentary Enclosure with some perhaps originating before the mid 17th century. The irregular nature of some enclosures also suggests that they originated as assarts. In Edale, where coniferous plantations and reservoirs are absent, the intricate patterns of enclosures can be best appreciated, with irregular but linear fields, bound by hedgerows stretching up onto the valley slopes from the wooded river channel. These give way to larger walled enclosures on the upper valley slopes and unenclosed areas on the open moors.

Communications routes are also a key characteristic of the Moorland Valleys. Tracks and braided hollow ways in the modern landscape may mark much more ancient routes along the valley sides and up the steep slopes onto the neighbouring moors. Of particular interest are the remnant Roman roads and packhorse trails which developed in the medieval period to allow 'jaggers' to carry goods and materials through the moorland hills. Building on the packhorse trails, the Victorian and modern period has seen the consolidation and improvement of communications routes. Metalled roads and rail lines now traverse the gritstone plateaux through the Moorland Valleys, providing easy access to dramatic moorland scenery for the large population in the neighbouring urban conurbations of Manchester and Sheffield.

AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL INFLUENCES

In contrast to neighbouring uplands, the Moorland Valleys Landscape Character Type has an intimate, pastoral and settled character. This is particularly evident in the Vale of Edale, which retains the pattern of ancient villages and farms, rail lines and multiple routes through and up the sides of the valleys. Reservoir valleys also often have a busy character, particularly in summer months when visitors are attracted by the dramatic valley scenery and large expanses of open water.

Views in the valley bottoms tend to be truncated by landform, riverside tree belts and hedgerows, further enhancing the intimate human scale of the landscape. However, on the valley sides, views become increasingly expansive with elevation, with upper slopes affording dramatic views across the valley below to neighbouring uplands.

On the uplands, the often muted or monochromatic expanse of heather moor and peat with dark gritstone crags and tors, contrasts with the patchwork of enclosed pastures, with verdant areas of improved pasture interspersed with rushy pasture, occasional arable fields, deciduous woodlands and coniferous plantations. The dark, reflective waters of the reservoirs set within dramatic valleys also add significantly to the aesthetic qualities of the valley landscape.

Moorland Valleys, Up the Snake Pass (© P Clarke, Natural England)

LANDSCAPE CHANGE AND MANAGEMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE

Forces for Change

There are roads along the valley floor, typically following the course of the river or reservoir. Due to relative lack of infrastructure within the Peak District, these roads can be busy, providing access across the moors landscape. Road improvements are therefore commonplace, designed to improve traffic flow. This has an urbanising effect and brings a degree of standardisation to the countryside.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the existing character of the rural road network, whilst having regard to safety requirements. During the summer months, as a consequence of tourist activity, these roads can become very congested, further reducing the sense of tranquillity. As part of a wider vision for visitor management (see 'Tourism and Leisure') the aim should also be to manage seasonal traffic, using public transport alternatives and park-and-walk systems to limit the number of cars within the valley landscape.

AGRICULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Forces for Change

There is generally pastoral farming within the valleys, characterised by small, enclosed fields. However, there is evidence of agricultural intensification, leading to the loss and damage of features such as stone walls and wet pastures and hay meadows. Indeed, the loss of pasture and meadows is particularly evident along the valley floor, which would have traditionally defined the river channels and distinguished them from the valley slopes. Furthermore, the practice of grazing and stock sheltering in woodland is leading to a decline in habitat diversity.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to plan for the creation of new grassland habitats, strengthening the character of existing features and providing a diverse range of habitats. Such proposals may be supported by Environmental Stewardship grants. The aim should also be to manage the frequency of grazing, ensuring landscape and biodiversity character is enhanced or restored.

FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

Forces for Change

The landscape is generally well wooded, with large woodlands along the valley sides. This creates a strong sense of enclosure and intimate character. As described earlier, existing woodland is under threat from grazing.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should therefore be to protect existing woodland, ensuring landscape and biodiversity character is maintained. There is likely is be little opportunity for new woodland; however, existing woodlands are typically coniferous plantations, and the opportunity exists to enhance biodiversity value through conversion to mixed woodland and the creation of woodland edge habitats. However, care should be taken not to encroach on semi-natural habitats within the valley floor or on fringes of the adjoining moorland summits which are very sparsely wooded.

Moorland Valleys, Snake Pass (© P Clarke, Natural England)

TOURISM AND LEISURE

Forces for Change

The reservoirs within the Moorland Valleys are popular tourist destinations, used for water sports and as a basis for circular walks. In a few particularly sensitive locations recreational activity can result in the loss of tranquillity in rural areas and can physically damage existing habitats and vegetation. Furthermore, there are an increasing number of car-parks, view points and picnic sites along main roads through the valleys. As with any new development this can cause visual intrusion and result in the loss of landscape features.

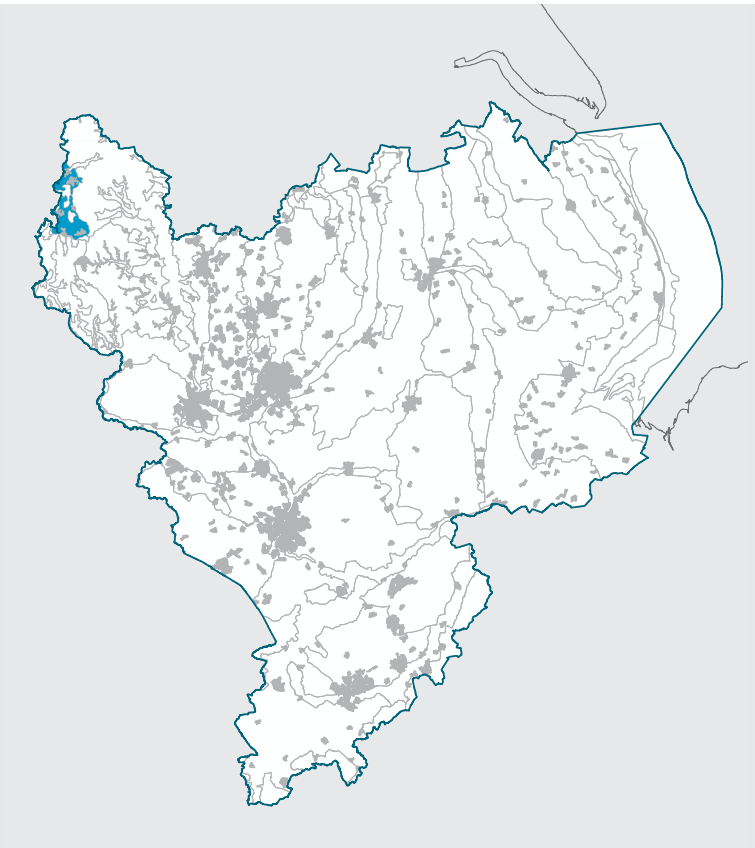
Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the remote character of the landscape and consider the impact of visitors and any new tourist facilities. The management of public access should be encouraged, helping to conserve the natural environment whilst enhancing the reservoirs as a recreational resource. Considering the limited transport infrastructure and relative distance from major settlements, this should include traffic management options.

11C:

SETTLED VALLEYS AND ENCLOSED GRITSTONE UPLANDS

Woodland and grassland along valley floor (© Derbyshire County Council)



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Complex landform of hills and valleys created by streams and rivers draining the adjacent uplands;
- Poorly drained soils generally managed as improved pasture, with localised species rich grassland on wetter ground and steep slopes;
- Wooded character associated with tree belts along streams and cloughs and scattered hedgerow trees and tree groups around settlements and farmsteads;
- Small irregular fields enclosed by hedgerows and occasional drystone walls, particularly at higher elevations;
- Well settled landscape of scattered farms and nucleated settlements, often with distinctive built environment relating to industrial heritage; and
- Enclosed landscape with views filtered by trees; extensive views from elevated areas along valleys to surrounding lowlands and urban areas.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Settled Valleys and Enclosed Gritstone Uplands Landscape Character Type is associated with the lower slopes of broad upland valleys formed by rivers eroding the Millstone Grit and Coal Measures. The landscape is well settled, with villages and towns located in sheltered locations to take advantage of the better agricultural soils. Soils and landform are best suited to pasturing cattle, and wide areas of the landscape are characterised by improved pastures. Despite this, some limited areas retain ecological interest. Although there is only limited woodland cover, the landscape is perceived as well treed, notably through the retention of belts of woodland along cloughs and valleys and dense hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees.

Hedgerows have a particularly important function in linking isolated areas of semi natural habitat. Early industrial development in the form of textile mills initiated a wave of settlement expansion. This continued throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries following the arrival of the Peak Forest Canal and rail line which were constructed to carry materials such as limestone and gritstone, quarried from the adjacent uplands to markets in the industrialised cities and towns to the west.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

The complex and intricate character of the Settled Valleys and Enclosed Gritstone Uplands is strongly influenced by the underlying geology and the action of rivers and streams draining into the River Goyt. For example, undulating lower valley slopes are evident where Millstone Grit Group mudstones or Pennine Coal Measures are exposed. Till is also evident in many valleys, further softening landform features. Hills and ridges mark areas of harder gritstone that are more resistant to erosion. The larger hills are capped by moorland plateaux. These 'outliers' have become separated from the main area of Open Moors and Inbye Land to the east by the action of rivers and streams cutting steep valleys around them. Narrow belts of alluvium and river terrace gravels are also evident fringing the main watercourses. The River Goyt is the principal watercourse and meanders through an increasingly wide floodplain to the east of Buxworth.

Both natural and man-made geological exposures are present in this landscape type so the geodiversity interest is high. There are also good geomorphological features. It is therefore important that practices are in place for their care, maintenance and management, and promotion of their educational and interpretational interest.

Local differences in the underlying geology and landform give rise to similar variations in the type and productivity of soils. Soils on the lower, less steep valley slopes over shales are slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged and loamy over clay. On steeper sloping landform over gritstone, there are coarser loams over the underlying bedrock or finer loams over slowly permeable subsoil.

The nature of the soils and landform mean that stock rearing and dairying is the predominant agricultural land use, with much of the land down to permanent pasture. On steeper sloping landform, land tends to be less intensively grazed, resulting in coarser and more acidic grassland. Occasional hay meadows and heathy vegetation on thin soils are also significant and add to local biodiversity interest.

Belts of broadleaved woodland are a characteristic of steep sided cloughs and along sections of the alluvial floodplain fringing the canal and main river channel. At higher elevations, poorer soils and exposure result in lower levels of tree cover and hedged boundaries. In this generally improved agricultural landscape, the dense network of well treed hedgerows and wooded streams, as well as small clumps of trees surrounding villages and farms also have an important role in offering linear belts of habitat, and in linking otherwise isolated areas of biodiversity interest. Tree cover is sufficient to give the overall effect of a well treed landscape.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The landscape has long been settled although there is only sparse evidence of prehistoric activity in the area. The Murder Stone, a prehistoric megalith is a notable exception, sited on a low hill overlooking the Goyt Valley.

Up until the industrial age the landscape would have been sparsely settled, with isolated farms and small settlements, perhaps continuing dispersed patterns of settlement stretching back into the Saxon period. Indeed, it is thought that much of the area fell within the Royal Forest of Macclesfield, a hunting reserve owned by the Earls of Chester. Local communities would have been engaged primarily in agriculture but some small scale stone quarrying and textile manufacturing in the later medieval period would have been an important part of the local economy.

From the 18th century, the landscape became increasingly well settled, with settlements along the main river valleys expanding rapidly following the establishment of water powered textile mills. Further settlement expansion followed the construction of the Bugsworth Canal Basin, sited at the head of the Peak Forest Canal. Located on the southern fringes of the river valley floodplain, the canal linked Bugsworth to Manchester and the trans-Pennine canal network, and as such, was vital to the haulage of gritstone, coal and lime to wider markets. The coming of the railway in the mid 19th century provided a further stimulus for growth. Road infrastructure is also a significant feature of the landscape, further emphasising its strategic location. Major road and rail lines hug the lower valley slopes immediately off the floodplain. Elsewhere, a dense network of lanes link rural communities and farms to the main centres of population and to the adjacent moors.

Many of the larger settlements have a distinctive character, derived from the building traditions of the Manchester area and to its industrial heritage. Of particular interest are the gritstone terraces and mills. More recent settlement expansion has also occurred and significant post war industrial development is evident along valleys.

Surrounding the settlements and extending up the valley slopes and hillsides is a pastoral landscape divided into a patchwork of small irregular enclosures, interspersed with isolated farmsteads and rural hamlets. Hedgerows are most common on lower slopes and along the floodplain and characteristically well treed. It is possible that several hedgerow boundaries mark the remnants of cleared woodland. Gritstone walls are more common on the upper slopes and towards the moorland plateaux.

AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

In contrast to the neighbouring upland moors, the Settled Valleys and Enclosed Gritstone Uplands landscape has an intimate pastoral and settled character, interspersed with strong evidence for the Landscape Character Type's industrial heritage and strategic location for the transportation of goods to cities and towns to the west. This is particularly evident in the Goyt Valley, where the ancient pattern of villages, farms and gritstone enclosures is overlain by features associated with rapid growth and development in the industrial age, such as the canal, rail line, mills and terraces of gritstone cottages.

Larger towns, notably Glossop, exert a localised urbanising influence on their hinterland, and significantly reduce perceptions of remoteness and tranquillity. Despite this, some remoter areas continue to retain a rural and tranquil character.

Views in the valley bottoms tend to be truncated by valley landform, tree belts and hedgerows, enhancing the intimate human scale of the landscape. However, on the valley sides, views become increasingly expansive with elevation.

LANDSCAPE CHANGE AND MANAGEMENT

BUILT DEVELOPMENT

Forces for Change

The Settled Valleys and Enclosed Gritstone Uplands is a densely settled landscape, with many of its towns rapidly expanding during industrialisation in the 19th century. Development pressure continues today, with demand for housing, commerce and industry on the fringes of larger towns, creating visual intrusion and resulting in the loss of remaining rural areas.

Modern development is also affecting smaller settlements, with new residential development on the village margins and along arterial roads, altering the distinctive form of outlying settlements and damaging traditional features, such as mill buildings and industrial age terraces. Furthermore, farm buildings are being sold off for residential conversion, bringing a degree of suburbanisation and gentrification to the countryside.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to manage growth, ensuring development is appropriate in terms of type, scale, design and location and consider the visual impact of any new development. Best practice innovative architectural ideas and planning solutions that are sensitive to local character should be employed. Planting of new trees and appropriate boundary treatments around settlement fringes should also be encouraged, helping to integrate new development into the landscape. Village Design Statements may also be appropriate, identifying features to be protected and ensuring appropriate use of vernacular styles and building materials for new development. As well as Village and Town Design Statements, Conservation Area Appraisals can also be important tools

INFRASTRUCTURE

Forces for Change

There is widespread influence of transport routes, with a dense road and rail network crossing the landscape. Continued improvement to roads, including new junction and widening, further fragments the landscape and reduces the sense of tranquillity, whilst also generating further development. Road improvements are also commonplace on more minor roads, better connecting isolated villages with larger towns and cities.

Furthermore, the network of enclosure roads is a distinctive landscape feature of the Settled Valleys and Enclosed Gritstone Uplands. However, these are under threat from lack of management and inappropriate planting.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to manage the expansion of the transport network, ensuring improvements are carefully planned and designed to provide positive environmental and landscape enhancements, whilst having regard to user and safety requirements.

The aim should also be to protect the existing character of the rural road network, ensuring improvement are sympathetic to the prevailing character. This includes historic routes, ensuring their continued contribution to biodiversity and landscape character.

AGRICULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Forces for Change

There is marked evidence of agricultural intensification resulting in the loss or damage of many typical landscape features, including field boundaries and remnants of semi-natural vegetation. This weakens pattern of land-use and contributes to a more uniform and homogenous landscape.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect existing landscape features, whilst encouraging positive management of those features lost or under threat. In particular the restoration of field boundaries should be given priority, along with an increase in grassland and pasture, creating a stronger and more mixed pattern of land use. The restoration of hedgerows and permanent pasture alongside streams and rivers should also be considered, enhancing their visibility, whilst increasing the occurrence of semi-natural habitats. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to consider the managed decline or removal of field boundaries and allow some areas to revert to extensive moorland grazing.

FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

Forces for Change

The landscape is generally well treed, and notably in cloughs and on steep sided land. This creates a strong sense of enclosure and intimate character. However, woodland cover is generally sparse in some places.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to plan new woodland where coverage is poor, and seek to locate on steeper sloping land and in close proximity to existing woodlands. Small sized and irregular shaped woodland blocks are likely to be most appropriate, complimenting existing areas of woodland and reinforcing the intricate character of the landscape. Tree planting along hedgerows should also be considered, especially in areas of decline. Consideration should be given to the management of existing woodland restoring age and ecological diversity. This should include the creation of woodland edge habitats, which along with the restoration of grassland, will help to create a mixed pattern of land-use. However, care should be taken not to encroach on semi-natural habitats within the valley floor or on the fringes of the adjoining moorlands.

Such proposals should be undertaken in collaboration with the Forestry Commission and local landowners, and financial support may be available through the English Woodland Grant Scheme.

TOURISM AND LEISURE

Forces for Change

The Settled Valleys and Enclosed Gritstone Uplands is a popular destination, providing a gateway to the more isolated and remote moors and valleys of the Peak District. As such, many of the larger towns contain tourist attractions and accommodation, while camp-sites and holiday cottages are a feature of more rural areas. Furthermore, golf courses are common on the edges of Glossop and Bollington, which capitalise on the undulating landform and scenic views.

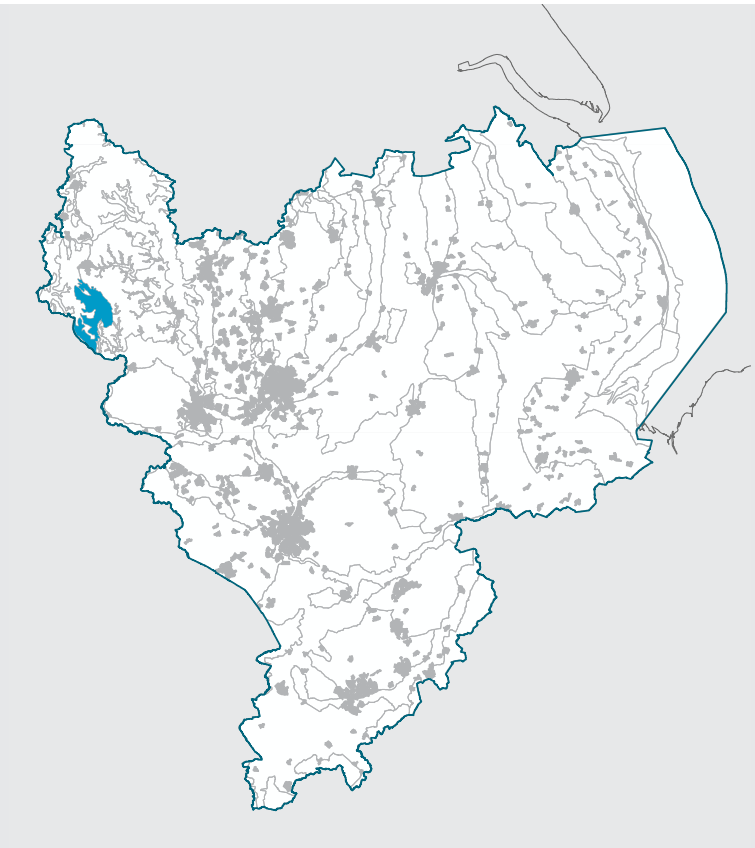
Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the distinctive intimate character of the landscape and consider the visual impact of any new tourist facilities, including golf courses. In addition, the diversification of farms to provide attractions and accommodation should be carefully managed to ensure a balance is struck between maintaining rural character and supporting the rural economy.

11D:

UPLAND PASTORAL HILLS AND VALLEYS

Upland Pastoral Hills and Valleys, Chinley (© P Clarke, Natural England)



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Topography of broad shallow valleys, steep sided hills and ridges and deeply incised cloughs and stream valleys;
- Irregular small to medium sized fields of permanent pasture enclosed by gritstone walls and hedgerows on lower slopes and along valleys;
- Occasional species-rich meadows, rushy pastures on wetter ground and patches of bracken and heather on marginal areas that have not been improved or drained;
- Sparse woodland cover, scattered trees along hedgerows, around settlements and along streams and cloughs contribute to well treed character;
- Settlement pattern characterised by small nucleated or linear villages and hamlets and dispersed gritstone farmsteads linked by narrow winding lanes; and
- Rural and intact traditional landscape character, with limited evidence of industrialisation.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Upland Pastoral Hills and Valleys Landscape Character Type is a traditional mix of dispersed gritstone farmsteads and small ancient villages set within rolling valley pastures interspersed with wooded cloughs.

The undulating character of the Upland Pastoral Hills and Valleys is strongly influenced by the underlying geology and the action of rivers and numerous tributary streams draining eastwards from the high gritstone plateau between Axe Edge Moor and Merryton Low to the deeply incised Limestone Dales and Upland Limestone Pastures of the White Peak area.

Whilst there is evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of numerous hilltop barrows, much of the historic character of the landscape derives from the medieval period when small villages and isolated farmsteads were established within or on the fringes of the Malbanc Frith or Forest. Over the centuries, increasing areas of land were enclosed and improved to form the current landscape of small to medium sized irregular fields.

The consistent use of gritstone and limestone in boundary walls and in the construction of farms and villages, coupled with widespread pastoral land uses interspersed with occasional wooded cloughs and well treed hedgerows, gives the landscape a consistent visual identity and strength of character. There is only limited evidence of industrialisation, and as such, the landscape retains a deeply rural and traditional character.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

The geological framework of the landscape is a complex mix of interbedded sandstones, gritstones and mudstones and occasional limestone strata. The higher land marks areas of harder gritstone, which is more resistant to erosion. Here, land rises to around 400m AOD and forms several large moor capped hills and ridges that project into the lower pastoral valleys and act as watersheds between the upper Hamps, Manifold and Dove Rivers. Elsewhere, lower steep sided hills and ridges such as Sheen Hill and Hollins Hill form distinctive local landmarks and form watersheds between smaller tributary streams. It is likely that prior to agricultural improvement, these hills would also have been capped by moorland.

Geological exposures are present in the disused quarries within this landscape type and together with a range of geomorphological features, are of geodiversity interest. It is therefore important that practices are in place for their care, maintenance and management, and promotion of their educational and interpretational interest.

The rivers occupy broad valley features underlain by soft mudstones, although their upper reaches are often deeply incised. As the main rivers flow onto the adjacent limestone landscapes, the main valleys of the Manifold and Dove become much deeper and narrower and form distinctive topographic features known as Dales. The main rivers are also fringed by distinctive flat alluvial floodplains and occasional gravel terraces.

Local differences in the underlying geology and landform give rise to similar variations in the type and productivity of soils. Across land fringing the upper moorland slopes, soils are slowly permeable acid upland soils with a peaty surface, giving rise to remnant patches of wet heath and bog. Soils on the valley slopes and low hills tend to be heavy and prone to seasonal waterlogging. Loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater occur along the major valley of the Manifold.

Much of the landscape is managed as improved pasture for stock rearing and dairying or is cut for hay or silage. Widespread improvement has meant that there is only limited semi-natural habitat which is generally in the form of occasional species rich pastures and meadows and wet or marshy grasslands. Occasional acid grasslands and localised patches of bracken, heather and bilberry are also evident, particularly on the less intensively grazed slopes and upper valley sides fringing the moors. Woodland cover is sparse, although narrow belts of broadleaved woodland are a characteristic of cloughs and areas of steep sloping landform. At higher elevations, poorer soils and exposure result in lower levels of tree cover and hedged boundaries.

In this generally improved agricultural landscape, the dense network of well treed hedgerows and wooded streams, as well as small clumps of trees surrounding villages and farms, also have an important role in offering linear belts of habitat, and in linking otherwise isolated areas of biodiversity interest. Tree cover is sufficient to give the overall effect of a well wooded landscape.

Upland Pastoral Hills and Valleys, near Chapelenlefrith (© P Clarke, Natural England)

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

There is only sparse evidence of prehistoric activity in the area. However, barrows located on valley slopes above the River Manifold and other streams, and on the adjacent upland moors and Limestone Dales fringing the landscape, may mark the edge of territories of later prehistoric communities farming in the valleys.

Similarly, little is known about early medieval settlement in the landscape although it is possible that it may have been limited by much of the area falling within the Malbanc Frith or Forest, which extended between Beresford and Leek. Despite the inferred limitations on settlement arising from the application of Forest Law, it was during the medieval period that the existing settlement pattern of widely distributed farmsteads and small villages emerged. Villages such as Longnor developed as local market and service centres and were perhaps located to take advantage of trade routes through the adjacent hills. The villages would have been surrounded by open fields, leading to communal grazing and wood pasture on the surrounding hills. Evidence of such farming can still be seen, with narrow strip fields being preserved in hedgerow patterns around Longnor and Butterton.

In the wider landscape it appears that much of the land was managed as pasture whether for common grazing or as part of the hunt. Several modern farms have the suffix 'booth' which was the name given to pasturage units defined as part of a medieval hunting forest and let by bailiffs to villagers and foresters. Other farms are probably later in origin, and perhaps part of late and post medieval enclosure of woods and marginal grazing land.

The irregular pattern of the fields evident in the landscape today suggests that much of the landscape was cleared and enclosed by the mid 19th century at the latest. Drystone walls are most common on the upper valley slopes, with hedgerows common on lower lying land. A particularly distinctive pattern of hedged fields is evident around Warslow and Butterton.

Despite their early origins, many structures in villages and hamlets are constructed from the local gritstone and date from the 17th to 19th centuries, when substantial rebuilding appears to have taken place. Several ancient village churches were also rebuilt in the Victorian period.

Larger villages of Longnor, Warslow and Butterton have a compact nucleated character set around the junction of several roads. However, elsewhere a linear settlement pattern prevails, such as at Sheen, Newton and Fawfieldhead.

The landscape is crossed by a relatively dense network of sinuous routes bordered by drystone walls and hedgerows. Several major roads may mark the course of ancient trading routes along the valley sides. Elsewhere, narrow lanes preserve local movement patterns that were established to connect the outlying farmsteads and isolated hamlets to local centres.

Unlike the Settled Valleys and Enclosed Gritstone Uplands further to the north, there is no evidence of rail lines or canals having been constructed in the landscape. As such, the industrial period does not appear to have had a significant effect locally and the villages and landscape more generally retain a deeply rural character. Whilst cottage industries such as silk weaving would have had an important role in the local economy there appears little to have stimulated major settlement expansion in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Upland Pastoral Hills and Valleys near Hathersage
(© P Clarke, Natural England)

AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

The verdant rolling valley pastures and well maintained hedgerows and drystone walls give a high level of visual unity to the landscape, as well as contributing to a strong sense of place and local identity. This is further enhanced by the ubiquitous use of gritstone and limestone as the principal building material in the isolated farms and occasional small villages and hamlets. Despite the proximity of the industrial towns of the Potteries, the absence of major transport infrastructure or industrial development also creates a deeply rural and tranquil character.

The agricultural landscape is carefully controlled, with only very limited areas of semi natural habitat in evidence, giving the landscape a productive and utilitarian character. Where present, areas of species rich grassland and semi natural woodland along cloughs and valleys gain added significance. Views in the valley bottoms tend to be truncated by valley landform, tree belts and hedgerows, enhancing the intimate human scale of the landscape. However, on the valley sides, views become increasingly expansive with elevation.

LANDSCAPE CHANGE AND MANAGEMENT

BUILT DEVELOPMENT

Forces for Change

Modern built development is affecting the villages of the Upland Pastoral Hills and Valleys and eroding the architectural and historic character. Development on settlement margins can be particularly damaging, creating visual intrusion and creating a new urban edge to the countryside.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the distinctive character and pattern of settlements throughout the landscape and consider the visual impact of any new development. Specific mechanisms include Village Design Statements, guiding the design of new development, and best practice innovative architectural ideas and planning solutions that minimise impact on local landscape and townscape character. As well as Village, and where approriate, Town Design Statements, Conservation Area Appraisals can also be important tools. The landscape around settlements is well treed, and therefore limited tree planting can also be used around settlement fringes to integrate new development into the landscape.

Upland Pastoral Hills and Valleys, Losehill Ridge
(© Phil Sturges, East of England)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Forces for Change

The network of enclosure roads is a distinctive landscape feature of the Upland Pastoral Hills and Valleys. However, these historic rural roads and lanes are under threat from lack of management.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to manage these historical assets, ensuring their continued contribution to landscape character.

AGRICULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Forces for Change

There is marked evidence of agricultural intensification, accompanied by a move towards arable production. This has resulted in the loss or damage of many typical landscape features, including field boundaries and pasture, contributing to a more homogenous landscape. There are also a number of new and derelict agricultural buildings, reflecting changes to farming techniques and machinery. Such structures can reduce the sense of remoteness in rural areas and cause visual intrusion, enclosing previously open views.

A key characteristic of the landscape is the transition between the 'wild' moorland to the west and the more 'managed' limestone pastures to the east, which is under threat from both agricultural intensification and lack of management.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect existing rural landscape features, whilst encouraging positive management of those features lost or under threat. In particular the restoration of stone walls will strengthen the strong field pattern and sense of enclosure. Retention of the existing areas of pasture and meadow will continue to

strengthen the predominantly pastoral land use while opportunities to introduce greater botanical diversity for grasslands and increase the occurrence of semi-natural habitats will further enhance the biodiversity of the area.

The aim should be to protect the distinctive open character of the landscape and consider the visual impact of any new structures. New agricultural buildings in particular should be carefully sited, away from visually prominent locations and amongst existing buildings where possible. Specific design guidance for farmsteads may be appropriate, establishing the criteria for new development. The opportunity to conserve and upgrade existing barns and buildings should also be explored.
The aim should also be to protect transitional nature of this landscape. Proposals that change land use or promote new landscape features should be carefully considered in the context of the adjoining Landscape Character Types, helping to conserve the overall character of the Peak District.

FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

Forces for Change

Woodland cover is generally sparse; however, narrow belts of broadleaved woodland within cloughs and frequent hedgerow trees give the impression of a well treed landscape. There is also more recent evidence of planting close to settlements or around isolated farm buildings. While new tree planting can be used to screen or soften views of buildings and create opportunities for recreation and nature conservation, new planting can introduce inappropriate and visually intrusive elements in the landscape, especially on the fringes of the adjoining moorland summits which are very sparsely wooded.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the distinctive character of the landscape by ensuring the type, scale and location of new woodland and tree planting is appropriate. Tree planting should generally be limited to cloughs or field boundaries where trees are already a local feature, in and around established settlements as part of a planned aim for visual containment of new built development, or to accentuate key features, such as hilltop barrows. Priority should be given to managing more characteristic habitats and features, such as meadow and grassland as part of enhanced habitat reserves.

TOURISM AND LEISURE

Forces for Change

The Upland Pastoral Hills and Valleys is a popular destination, providing a gateway to the more isolated and remote moors and valleys of the Peak District. Indeed, there is a dense footpath network in this location along with areas of open access land. As such, camping and caravan sites and holiday cottages are a feature of more rural areas, along with local tourist attractions, such as craft centres.

Shaping the Future Landscape

The aim should be to protect the distinctive intimate character of the landscape and consider the visual impact of any new tourist facilities. In addition, the diversification of farms to provide attractions and accommodation should be carefully managed to ensure a balance is struck between maintaining rural character and supporting the rural economy.