

Sub type 9a

Open Moorlands

Location

This sub type is found between Kershope Forest and Spadeadam Forest near Bewcastle in the north, and to the east of Distington and Frizington on the west coast.

Key Characteristics

- High mostly open landscapes
- Undulating semi-improved and unimproved pasture
- Open rough moorland
- Areas of deciduous woodland
- Areas of peat and raised mire

Physical character

There is a mixture of Carboniferous gritstone and mudstone overlain by large areas of peat in the north and coal measures and Permian sandstone with pockets of peat in the west. In the north undulating land is found at between 150-250m AOD with parts rising steeply to 500m. It is intersected by becks, streams and rivers. In the west the topography is less undulating and rises to around 200m adjacent to a moorland ridge and the River Keekle cuts through the landscape and helps define the boundary with the moorland ridge.

Land cover and land use

This is a high, generally open landscape. The predominant land cover is a mixture of semi-improved pasture in large rectangular 'lots' and extensive areas of unimproved and unfenced moorland. In some places the open moorland has been semi improved for farmland and has a more managed character. This is typically found in the west. Fields are mainly bounded by species rich hedges with hedgerow trees or wire fences. Areas of wet mossland intersperse the pasture and moorland and retain a wilder and more unmanaged character.

Deciduous and semi natural woodland can be found in small pockets, shelterbelts and along streams and becks in the more sheltered valleys. These often have straight, crisp edges. In the north the distinct lack of conifer plantations contrasts with the adjacent landscapes and helps define its boundaries.

The lower parts of the landscape are lightly settled, either with small settlements or dispersed, isolated properties. Roads are rural in character and skirt around the lower parts. Pylons run through the west and form prominent vertical features in the open farm and moorland. In the west there is evidence of past mining activities but much of the land has been restored to pasture and moorland.

Ecology

This is a landscape of rough pasture with extensive areas of rush pasture and purple moor-grass and areas of acid grassland. Upland oak woodland is present in steep river valleys and one of the largest areas of alder wet woodland in Cumbria is found south of Bewcastle. Areas of upland heathland are occasional to rare in this landscape, whilst blanket bog is extensive south-east and north-east of Bewcastle. Species-rich springs and flushes are locally frequent, particularly where there is a calcareous influence to the irrigating waters. In the west this landscape provides over wintering habitat for internationally important numbers of Hen Harriers.

Historic and cultural character

The settlement pattern is generally dispersed with some clusters of 19th century industrial workers housing. The fields are often large and formed by late moorland enclosure. There is good preservation of earthworks including prehistoric settlements and medieval shielings. The landscape type features remains associated with the

border, including fortified sites, Roman roads and forts and evidence of coal mining around Moresby.

Perceptual character

In the north the large open landscapes give a feeling of remoteness and the darker, rougher moorland contrasts with the greener, smoother improved pasture. The changes in colour and texture and feeling of remoteness can be accentuated by changes in the seasons and weather. Views stretch to the Scottish Hills and are uncluttered and framed by forest. In the west the landscape still feels large and open but less remote due to its more managed look and past uses. However sudden changes to poor weather can lead to a feeling of remoteness in higher areas. Despite the row of pylons it retains large expansive views of the Lakeland Fells which provide a dramatic backdrop to the landscape.

Sensitive characteristics or features

The open character and expansive views across moorland and higher farmed areas are sensitive to large scale infrastructure development that could obscure or significantly interrupt the views. The small wooded valleys and shelterbelts that intersperse the open moorland and farmland are sensitive to changes in land management. The species rich hedgerows and wet mossland and flushes that provide biodiversity interest away from moorland and the archaeological remains and earthworks that provide cultural interest are sensitive to changes in land management. Contrast of rough moorland with improved pasture provides interest and is sensitive to changes in land management.

Vision

This landscape will be enhanced through restoration and enrichment creating a harmonious balance between the moorlands and woodlands and mining and agricultural features. Semi-natural grassland will be conserved and enhanced, fragmented patterns of rough moorland will be repaired, areas of blanket bog will be restored and semi-derelict pastoral fields will be allowed to revert back to moorland. Degraded areas and neglected

sections of landscape will be restored back to their former beauty through the creation of new landscape features including woodland, wetland and strengthened hedgerow patterns.

Changes in the Landscape

Over the next 10 – 20 years this landscape could be subject to the following changes or issues:

Climate Change

- Climate change mitigation and the Government's commitment to an increase in renewable energy could see increased interest in large scale wind energy schemes and short rotation coppicing and forestry.
- Areas of active blanket bog and peat provide the best carbon sinks after woodland and can assist with carbon sequestration.

Management Practices

- Agricultural intensification and inappropriate management such as overgrazing, burning and drainage could result in the loss of moorland, semi natural grassland, woodland, wetland and stream features.
- Future agri-environment schemes may support beneficial changes in the landscape.
- Planned and incremental expansion of villages could result in the loss of landscape features and field patterns.

Development

- Large scale wind energy infrastructure developments and other vertical structures such as, communication masts, pylons or overhead transmission lines could erode the open and remote character of the landscape and reduce the nature conservation interest.
- As energy markets change there could be new interest in open cast coal mining which could arise in temporary landscape change.

Access and Recreation

- Informal recreation is likely to continue along public rights of way and across the extensive areas of open access land.

Guidelines

Climate Change

- Forestry and coppice planting should reflect any field patterns and the grain of the landscape. They should be sited and designed so that they integrate well with the landscape, retain the open moorland character and do not sit as large unbroken blocks of planting.
- Projects should be encouraged that seek to improve the condition of areas of peat to optimise their carbon capture potential.

Natural Features

- Investigate presence of remnant heather and regenerate through management programmes.
- Manage semi-natural grassland to enhance biological diversity including controlled light grazing, control of bracken and rushes.
- Restrict further agricultural improvement of moorland and unimproved pasture including ploughing, reseeding application of fertiliser, liming or herbicide treatment.
- Enhance and/or recreate wetland including flushes, small tarns and marshy hollows. This may include preventing drainage improvements and blocking existing drains to maintain a high water level, preventing overgrazing and poaching by stock and controlling scrub encroachment.
- Protect gills and becks from stock to encourage development of diverse ground flora.
- Manage areas of blanket bog appropriately and sensitively including the reduction of stocking levels, blocking ditches, removal of conifers and avoidance of burning.
- Ensure habitat connectivity is a priority and the introduction of eco-corridors or 'islands' to create habitats in association with Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP).
- Create a mosaic of irregular shaped areas of mixed woodland sensitive to land form particularly on former areas of coal working and on marginal land and valleys.
- Create woodland belts as sheltered areas suitable as wildlife habitats and for establishment of native woodland.

Cultural Features

- Maintain and enhance the pattern of hedgerows with additional planting and supplementary planting of

scanty hedgerows.

- Consider the removal of derelict hedgerows on the more exposed parts to allow reversion to open moorland.
- Planting of deciduous trees as feature trees, within hedgerows, along water courses and in tree groups to create more interest in the landscape and to act as a foil to the coniferous woodland in the background.
- Create ecological corridors to enhance landscape and nature conservation value.
- Encourage planting and traditional management of hedgerows and replace fences where possible with hedgerows.

Development

- Avoid siting development on prominent edges of the plateau taking advantage of the natural containment offered by intermediate ridges and horizons.
- Minimise the impact of development by careful siting and design and seek environmental gains such as heather moorland restoration.
- Carefully manage the expansion of major developments such as quarrying, mining, opencast coal (due to the location of the resource).
- Avoid siting large scale wind energy, and other vertical structures such as telecommunications masts, pylons and overhead transmission lines in open and prominent areas where it could degrade the open and expansive character. They should be sited to prevent visual clutter with existing pylons.
- Minimise adverse effects of tall and vertical structures such as pylons and turbines through careful siting and managing the numbers of turbines to prevent them becoming a dominant feature in the landscape.
- Ensure new development respects the local landscape character and vernacular.

Access and Recreation

- Public rights of way and access to open access land should be well maintained to allow quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the areas.
- Opportunities should be developed to promote and enhance existing recreation routes by improving waymarking, providing appropriate surfacing, gates and gaps and interpretation.