Sub type 9d

Ridges

Location

This sub type is found in two parts of the county. In the west it is found at Dean Moor and High Park, north of Cleator Moor. In the south it is found to the north west of Ulverston and north east of Askam in Furness.

Key Characteristics

- Distinct ridges
- Extensive areas of true heathland moorland
- Improved pasture with distinctive stone walls
- Woodland and small belts of trees form prominent features

Physical character

In the west the geology is a mixture of coal measure and sandstone, and in the south there is a mixture of Silurian and Igneous rocks. Distinct ridges rise to around 300m AOD at the highest point. The ridges are steep sided and include a number of rounded hill summits that vary in height. The ridges have a strong topographical and geological link with adjacent higher low fell and fringe areas.

Land cover and land use

The landscape is a mixture of true heather moorland and a more managed farmed landscape. Unmanaged heather cover or bracken on higher ground gives way to pasture on the lower slopes. The improved pasture can be found in distinct rectangular fields bounded by strong stone walls. These form a prominent local feature against the open and unimproved moorland.

Tree cover is sparse and limited to a few remnants of old woodland and small belts of trees. These form strong local features in the open moorland. Streams, becks and tarns form wetland features.

Settlement is scarce. Isolated farmsteads and hamlets are scattered along the sides of the ridges. The landscape has been shaped by man in several ways and features linked to including open cast mining (now restored), quarrying, reservoirs and energy infrastructure intersperse the open moorland and farmed pasture. These introduce a significant man made character to parts of the landscape. In particular the large scale wind turbines and pylons form prominent vertical features.

Ecology

Areas of moorland are present on the higher sections of these ridges, with upland heathland dominant on Kirkby Moor and rush pasture and purple moor-grass dominant on High Park. The lower slopes support rush pastures and swamp, together with improved grassland. These support a range of invertebrates and birds including Curlew, Skylark, Plover and Lapwing. Steeply incised valleys support small upland oak woodlands. Kirkby Moor provides a southwest outpost for red grouse in Cumbria.

Historic and cultural character

Settlement is sparse but in the lower areas is generally nucleated whereas higher up it is dispersed and later in origin. Lower down the fields are irregular and often small, but on higher land they are generally regular and a product of late enclosure. Unenclosed moorland is still evident in the south. The landscape is strongly affected by large-scale quarrying with the quarries at Bannishead being a particularly distinctive feature. Other characteristic archaeological remains are prehistoric settlements and burial cairns.

Perceptual character

These are generally open, large scale landscapes. The unenclosed moorland gives a feeling of wildness. Views are often wide and expansive and uninterrupted and striking views of the Lakeland Fells and Duddon Estuary and Morecambe Bay provide drama and reinforce the sense of wildness. Changes in weather conditions can accentuate the sense of wildness.

Sensitive characteristics or features

The open and distinct ridges and heather moorland and wide and expansive uninterrupted views to sea and the Lakeland Fells provide a sense of wildness that are sensitive to changes in land management and significant infrastructure development.

Vision

This landscape will be conserved and enhanced. Development will be carefully controlled in order to ensure ridges aren't cluttered or dominated by new development. The fragmenting pattern of rough moorland will be repaired, significantly enriching the wildlife and visual interest of these areas. The remnant heather and rough pasture will be improved and extended. Existing features will be enhanced and new features will be created such as tarns, wetlands and small woods creating dramatic focal features in a predominantly open landscape. The pattern of stone walls, hedges and woodlands on lower slopes will be conserved and maintained.

Changes in the Landscape

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

Management Practices

- Surface scarring could occur from quarrying and any move back towards open cast coal mining.
- Much of the original moorland has been lost and remnant patches of heather continue to decline under agricultural pressures of overgrazing and conversion to pasture.
- Marginal land could be abandoned by farmers giving the potential for uplands to revert back to moorland.
- There has been a continued replacement of hedges by fences in the areas that are more intensively farmed.
- Changes to drainage methods and an increase in fertiliser can affect wetland areas.
- Overgrazing and under grazing can reduce and fragment areas of unimproved grassland, heathland and wetlands.

Development

- The Government's commitment to an increase in renewable energy could see increased interest in large scale wind energy schemes. The cumulative effects of schemes could have a significant adverse effect on the character of the area.
- As energy markets change there could be new interest in open cast coal mining.

Access and Recreation

- Public rights of way provide a network of routes that enable quiet appreciation and enjoyment of the countryside. Ongoing maintenance is needed to support this network in the future.
- Current farm stewardship grants provide the opportunity to develop more public access in the countryside. Future grant or other programmes may continue to support this.

Guidelines

Natural Features

- Regenerate suppressed heather on moorland tops through management programmes including reduction in stocking levels, control of bracken, phased cutting and burning.
- Regenerate rough pasture on land which has been 'improved' through controlled light grazing and control of bracken and rushes.
- Restrict further agricultural improvement including ploughing, re-seeding, application of fertiliser, liming or herbicide treatment.
- Recreate heather moorland on land which has been 'improved' to pasture to provide continuity of heather cover. This may involve cultivation to expose peat soils, spreading heather cuttings with ripe seed from a local source and excluding stock until heather establishes.

- Enhance and/or recreate wetland including flushes, small tarns and bog pools. This may include preventing drainage improvements and blocking existing drains to maintain high water levels preventing overgrazing and poaching by stock.
- Protect gills and becks from stock to encourage development of diverse ground flora, scattered trees and woodland.
- Enhance existing reservoirs to soften hard engineering details and integrate with adjacent moorland.
- Restore and reinforce semi-natural moorland top and gill woodlands by exclusion of livestock, natural regeneration, restocking and appropriate management.
- Undertake small scale planting concentrated around farmhouses.

Cultural Features

- Manage stonewalls and hedges in a traditional way.
- Strongly discourage the introduction of fences as replacement boundaries or to sub-divide large fields. Remove fences to restore large-scale allotment rough pastures

Development

- Minimise the impact of development by careful siting and design and seek environmental gains such as heather and moorland restoration.
- Avoid siting large scale wind energy, 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.
- Carefully manage the expansion of major developments such as quarrying, mining, communication masts, large scale wind energy development and energy transmission lines.
- Minimise the impact of surface scarring from quarrying and opencast mining where possible through careful screening or siting.
- Ensure any re-establishment of opencast coal sites is managed and maintained in relation to local character.

Access and Recreation

- Public rights of way should be well maintained and quiet recreational areas and facilities should be improved and developed to be compatible with the pastoral character of this sub type.
- Seek opportunities to enhance access to farmland through farm stewardship or other schemes.
- Promote and enhance existing recreation routes by improving waymarking, providing appropriate surfacing, gates and gaps and interpretation.