

Foothills

Location

This sub type is found along the North Pennines scarps, to the south, east and west of the Lake District fells. A small part of this type west of Tebay meets the criteria for National Park designation and is being considered for designation in 2010/11.

Key Characteristics

- Rolling, hilly or plateau farmland and moorland
- Occasional rocky outcrops
- Hills are dissected by numerous streams and minor river valleys
- Areas of improved grassland, unimproved heathland and extensive conifer plantations
- Semi natural woodland in the small valleys
- Large areas of farmland are bounded by stone walls and hedges

Physical character

The geology is predominantly Carboniferous limestone. However it varies throughout this type as it forms a transition between coastal plain, farmland and the high fells of the Lake District and North Pennines.

In Carlisle and Eden the type is characterised by rolling, hilly or plateau farmland and moorland generally 150-250m AOD adjoining the North Pennines AONB.

In west Cumbria this is a broad type transitional in character between the general countryside and the distinctive open moorland and fell found mainly in the Lake District between 100 - 250m AOD.

In South Lakeland this type comprises slightly lower rolling hills between 50 - 200m AOD.

Land cover and land use

At lower levels in all these areas land use is predominantly improved pasture and meadows and there is a strong pattern of stone walls giving way to hedges at lower levels. At higher levels improved and semi improved pasture give way to open moorland. Small woodlands are common on steeper slopes and alongside streams and rivers. Numerous field boundary trees and tree clumps occur around farms. Small coniferous shelterbelts contrast with large scale plantations. Occasional marshy hollows and small tarns with willow scrub add interest.

Settlements are generally dispersed and sparse. Farmsteads are isolated, and sometimes large in scale. Villages, hamlets and farms are often discrete features, concealed by the rolling topography sited along the base of slopes following the grain of the land. In the main, minor roads criss cross through the landscapes serving the scattered farms and hamlets. These are often tree lined and follow the line of the slopes. Lines of pylons, the A66 and the M6, large scale modern agricultural buildings, quarrying, spoil heaps and coniferous plantations form large scale man made features in some parts of the landscape. These can detract from the overall character of the landscapes.

Along the North Pennines land cover ranges from improved grazing land with some arable to unimproved heathland or moorland with extensive conifer plantations. Most farmland has a pattern of large fields tending to be square with stone walls or hedges in generally poor condition. Many of the areas offer good views towards the Pennine scarp.

In the west the farmland varies between pastoral landscapes with small fields to rolling higher topography with fine long distance views.

In the south, numerous streams and minor river valleys dissect the hills. These are sometimes steep sided with

woodlands and occasional rocky outcrops. The M6 motorway and west coast mainline form a strong linear feature running adjacent to the landscape type around Tebay.

Ecology

Largely an agricultural landscape, but includes many small pockets of ecological interest. In the north and east there are areas of upland heathland and acid grassland, whilst rush pasture is frequent on poorly drained ground throughout, as are species-rich hedgerows, though these tend to be confined to lower ground. There are many small river valleys and these often support small upland oak woodlands. These woodlands are particularly notable along the upper River Belah east of Brough, where they are accompanied by stands of species-rich grassland. Occasionally there are outcrops of limestone and these support areas of limestone grassland and upland ash woodland. Species-rich springs and flushes are present where there is a calcareous influence to the irrigating waters. The numerous rivers and becks provide habitat for species such as otter, dipper and, along the River Eden, freshwater pearl-mussel.

Historic and cultural character

The settlement pattern is dispersed and the field systems mainly a product of late enclosure. In the east around Kendal settlements are more nucleated and both here, and around Furness, field patterns are linked to ancient enclosure. Some of the farms originated as late sixteenth or early 17th century bastles. Traditional farm buildings are limestone built and the field boundaries generally consist of dry stone walls. Ring garths and intacks are identifiable. Upstanding archaeological remains are widespread and include prehistoric stone circles and cairns, medieval shielings and droveways, remnants of late medieval deer parks and the prolific remains of past industries. These include quarrying and lead mining in the Pennines. Some areas, like Warcop Common, are especially rich in archaeological remains.

Perceptual character

These are mostly small to medium scale enclosed landscapes with open moorland in higher parts. The landscape is transitional and is often seen against a backdrop of the larger fells and pikes of the Lake District and North Pennines. At lower levels the feeling is more intimate due to the topography and woodland cover containing views in some places. On higher land open views to the surrounding fells and sea give an expansive feeling to the area. In some cases the views open across valleys where farmland and towns, such as Kendal and Appleby, are framed in the landscape. The landscapes are diverse varying from pasture to woodland to moorland and give a different feel with each season. The rich green of improved fields often contrasts strongly with the mottled and subdued hues of surrounding fells. Although easy to access the countryside is attractive and peaceful and is highly valued locally and is often as a rural backwater.

Sensitive characteristics or features

The strong matrix of stone walls and hedges provide a framework to the improved and semi improved pasture. Wooded ghylls, woodland and hedgerow trees provide interest and support biodiversity. These are sensitive to changes in land management. Farmsteads and villages are discrete and dispersed and follow the grain of the rolling topography and are sensitive to unsympathetic expansion and redevelopment. Rural roads connect farmsteads and settlements following the flow of the topography and are sensitive to highway safety improvements or access to new developments. The remote, peaceful and rural farmland is sensitive to additional large scale coniferous plantations. The contrast in scale with Pennine Scarps and Lakeland Fells and more intimate farms and woodland are sensitive to large scale infrastructure development.

Vision

This landscape will be conserved and enhanced.

Field boundaries, woodland, other natural features, cultural and historic features will be conserved and enhanced to reinforce the distinctiveness of the areas. Farm-scale woodlands will be supported in relation to

agricultural change and to reinforce existing woodland patterns. Unimproved heathland will be managed and conserved. New large-scale forestry will be resisted and the boundaries of existing plantations will be softened and a diversity of tree species will be supported. Existing settlements and built features will be conserved and new development will respect the grain and scale of the landscape. Informal and small-scale recreational activities will be managed to support nature conservation interests and local distinctiveness.

Changes in the Landscape

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

Climate Change

- Changes in agricultural practices to help mitigate against climate change, such as short rotation forestry, could affect landscape features and local character.
- There could be an increase in alien species along river and streams in response to climate change and temperature rises.

Management Practices

- Agricultural intensification and changes in agricultural policy and practices, along with the erection of new large scale farm buildings could affect landscape features and local character.
- Over grazing along streams can reduce woodland regeneration and a lack of variation in vegetation.
- Continued neglect and removal of field boundaries including walls and hedges could further erode these features in the landscape.
- Afforestation pressures have decreased in recent years but could be replaced by short rotation forestry as a response to the need to provide more renewable energy sources in rural areas.
- Agri-environment schemes could provide opportunities for habitat creation and boundary enhancements.

Development

- Planned and incremental expansion of settlements and farmsteads and the use of non vernacular materials could erode local character.
- Upgrading the national grid and the development of more large scale wind energy schemes could erode

the open and generally undeveloped character, particularly close to national landscape designations.

- There could be a short term return to open cast coal mining in areas along the west coast.
- Other development pressures include quarrying extensions and communications masts.

Access and Recreation

- Public rights of way and areas of open access land 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.
- Recreation which, although often low key in these landscapes, could increase as more people utilise these areas to access higher peaks, particularly along the edge of the national parks and North Pennines.
- Increased road traffic associated with recreation could change the character of the local road network.

Guidelines

Natural Features

- Encourage sustainable management of moorland, woodland, ghyll woodland and wetland areas and habitats.
- Reduce the artificial appearance of straight edged plantations by feathering in broad leaved species and by leaving open areas along edges and water courses to help them assimilate into the landscape.
- Support better management of ancient and semi natural woodlands.
- Refrain from additional large-scale plantations and encourage small farm-scale plantations that enhance the landscape characteristics.
- Encourage planting of a mosaic of new, well-designed woodland incorporating open areas and recreational provision.
- Support the development of a mosaic of habitats through woodland, wetland, species rich grassland and heathland to improve nature conservation value and robustness to climate change.
- Encourage appropriate planting of locally native woodland alongside rivers, stream and ghylls.
- Ensure that 'linked patterns' of vegetation are created to enhance landscape and nature conservation value.

Cultural Features

- Retain and restore dry stone walls, traditional gateposts and features on a whole farm basis where appropriate.
- Retain and restore hedgerows to enrich the more prominent farmland particularly in Carlisle/Eden.
- Restrict the replacement of walls and hedges by post and wire fences and encourage planting and traditional management of hedgerows.

Development

- Protect village fringes from unsympathetic development.
- Resist development of important open spaces such as small pastures or woods within villages.
- Ensure that new farm buildings are integrated into the landscape by careful siting and design and redundant modern buildings are removed.
- Protect uncluttered skylines and key views to and from the area from large-scale energy infrastructure developments such as large scale wind turbines, pylons and expansive areas of biomass planting that may erode the character of the area.
- Conserve the rural character of the existing small road network.

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.