PEAK DISTRICT
NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

3: Dark Peak

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Peak District

Landscape Character Assessment

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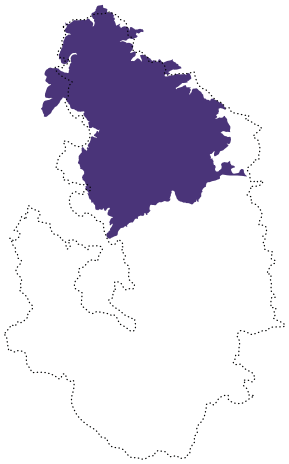
Dark Peak

Dark Peak open moorland © Peak District National Park Authority



Introduction

The Dark Peak is a sparsely settled area of gritstone uplands lying at the southern end of the Pennine Hills. The area comprises an extensive upland plateau with steep gritstone slopes, sometimes with rocky edges, that drop away to lower lying slopes, wooded cloughs and deep valleys, some of which have been flooded to create large reservoirs. It contrasts sharply with the adjoining limestone uplands of the White Peak and is named on account of the dark hues created in the landscape by the peat moors and exposed gritstone. Whilst this landscape character area contrasts with the White Peak, the transition to other landscape character areas such as the Dark Peak Eastern and Western Fringe landscapes is much more gradual; these are landscapes of similar character but tend to be lower lying, more settled and more intensively managed than the Dark Peak with enclosed farmland rather than open moorland predominating. The Eastern Moors to the south-east of the Dark Peak are similar to it in character but lower lying with less deep peat creating a landscape that has been more obviously modified by people than the Dark Peak generally has. In the north, the moorland plateau of the Dark Peak continues into the Southern Pennines.

Physical influences

The Dark Peak is an extensive area of high moorland and adjacent in-bye land that owes much of its character to the underlying coarse sandstones from the Millstone Grit series of the Carboniferous period. As the process of sedimentation that formed the limestones of the White Peak was taking place, a land mass to the north (now Caledonia in Scotland) was shifting: uplifting, folding and tilting towards the south. This created rivers and deltas carrying sediments of fine silt, pebbles and sand into the shallow sea creating mudflats and low lying sand banks. The material that was deposited by these rivers compressed through sedimentation to create the shales, siltstones and sandstones of the Dark Peak, known as Millstone Grit.

The hard gritstone of the Millstone Grit is interspersed with beds of softer shales and together these have given rise to a distinctive topography of high moors dissected by narrow rocky cloughs and broader valleys. Gritstone outcrops, creating rocky tors, often punctuate these extensive areas of upland plateau which define the Open Moors. Vertical cliff faces occasionally define the 'edges' of the moorland summits, where the land falls away into the moorland fringe.

The plateaux tops, rising to 636 metres at Kinder Scout, are mostly covered in blanket peat, usually between 2 and 4 metres in depth, but in places somewhat more. The blanket peat landscapes have a smooth, gently sloping ground surface which, over extensive areas, has been subject to gully erosion and become dissected by a dense network of drainage channels, locally known as 'groughs'. Drainage from the moorland summits often passes into deep, steep sided cloughs within the surrounding slopes, which in turn eventually drain into larger rivers like the Goyt, Etherow and Derwent. The rivers have eroded through the gritstone to form broad, often steep sided, upland valleys, which historically have provided the focus for settlement and farming. Sometimes boulder fields and exposed rock located within these valleys provide a link to the wild moorland character above the valley sides.

Ecological influences

For the most part the soils of the Dark Peak are impoverished and a substantial area in the core of the region is covered in blanket peat. The remaining areas have a mixture of damp humic gleys, humic podzols, podzolic, or at best, shallow brown soils. As a result, semi-natural vegetation is a key characteristic of many Dark Peak landscapes, especially on the Open Moors and moorland slopes, where there are extensive areas of blanket bog, heather and grass moorland.

Extensive tracts of blanket bog on deep peat cover much of the highest plateaux of the Dark Peak. Here cottongrasses dominate, often with heather or with bilberry and crowberry. Natural erosion has been greatly exacerbated by human influences such as air pollution, heavy grazing, fire and drainage, resulting in an extensive network of peat gullies or groughs and, in the most degraded areas, bare peat and peat haggs. These blanket bogs support breeding birds such as the golden plover and the dunlin. On the lower moorland slopes heather dominates, with varying amounts of bilberry, cowberry and crowberry. These upland heaths support birds such as red grouse, meadow pipit, curlew, merlin and short-eared owl. Associated areas of bracken are important in places for breeding twite and whinchat. Acid flushes have developed locally, with carpets of sphagnum moss, sedges and rushes, with local plants such as cranberry, bog asphodel and sundew. Where gritstone crags, tors and boulder slopes occur the exposed rock supports a lichen flora impoverished by air pollution, though relict species of importance can occur locally. Peregrine, raven and ring ouzel breed on some crags. Mountain hares, introduced in the late 19th century, are commonly seen throughout the moors. In the other former moorland landscapes such as Rushup Edge, where much of the land has now been enclosed and heavily grazed, the heathland has been replaced by rough grazing land dominated by grasses such as mat grass or wavy hair-grass, often in association with areas of bracken. Relic moorland species such as bilberry may be present in the sward.

Fast flowing streams have created deeply incised cloughs and valleys whose sides are clothed with heathland often with frequent bilberry, acid grassland and bracken. The numerous flushes and springs arising at the junctions of gritstone and shale on clough sides support particularly botanically rich communities whose species composition varies according to water chemistry. The banks of clough streams and upland rivers support small numbers of dipper, grey wagtail and common sandpiper, whilst wet streamside shale crags are often rich in mosses, liverworts, ferns and insect life. Some cloughs and moorland slopes support areas of upland sessile oak wood. Associated species include birch with holly or hazel in the under storey. On the more base rich soils these woodlands can support a variety of ground flora, including dog's mercury and yellow archangel on shale soils and wavy hair-grass and bilberry on the more base poor soils. Characteristic birds of these woodlands include pied flycatcher, redstart and wood warbler.

In lower areas, as the cloughs widen, the lower valley slopes are characterised by enclosed land on slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged soils that support some unimproved pastures and hay meadows. The former typically comprise acid grassland dominated by fescues and bents, with herbs such as tormentil and heath bedstraw and patches of gorse and bracken, whilst the hay meadows provide a range of flora such as yellow rattle, knapweed, great burnet, bird's foot trefoil and common cat's ear. On less well drained land, where the ground is wetter, the pastures often support soft rush and can provide a breeding ground for wading birds, notably lapwing, curlew and snipe.

Large valley reservoirs support small numbers of wintering ducks, and common sandpipers breed along the shorelines in summer. The drawdown zones of these reservoirs can be of importance for their flora with species such as mudwort and shoreweed present. Conifer plantations are often, though not exclusively, associated with reservoir valley sides, and may have patches of semi-natural woodland or broadleaf plantation within them. The flora is generally limited but can be of importance for fungi. Several birds of note are associated with the plantations, such as goshawk and crossbill.

Human influences

The Dark Peak is now relatively unsettled, due to the harsh climate. However the landscape has been managed for the needs of humans since prehistoric times. The northern Dark Peak has extensive evidence of Mesolithic hunter-gatherers, with stone tools uncovered when peat is disturbed or eroded. There is little other evidence of early human activity. The Dark Peak is a higher landscape and was too exposed and boggy for the kind of later prehistoric settlement found on the Eastern Moors. The Later Prehistoric hillfort on Mam Tor lies on a prominent hill at the edge of the Dark Peak; the occupants probably grazed the high uplands although their main focus is thought to be the adjacent limestone plateau and the Hope and Edale valleys.

The deep valleys which cut into the Dark Peak have been used for agriculture from later prehistory to the present. In the last few hundred years the land use within enclosed fields around each farmstead has been mainly pastoral. The limited arable farming practices on the more favourable soils has declined significantly in the 20th century. The uplands have long been used for rough sheep grazing which, where prolonged, has reduced the dwarf shrub cover, replacing it with cottongrass bog or grass. Some of the upland moors were managed as heather moorland by the large private estates to provide a habitat for grouse. The semi-natural heather moorland and the more closely managed grouse moors give rise to the summer purple moorland tops typical of the Dark Peak.

Before the widespread availability of coal, the uplands provided fuel in the form of peat. Once, peat cutting on the high wastes and commons was a communal right, but when the land was privately owned, landowners gave the right to cut peat, usually from a designated location, to tenants. Domestic scale cutting often took place above farm properties and was of a much smaller scale. This activity was carried out on the moorland tops near to settlements in the lower valleys and the results are still visible in the landscape such as above both Edale and the Upper Derwent Valleys. Tracks and sled runs to peat cutting sites are also still visible in the landscape.

Tracks and braided hollow-ways are also found running to pastures, water sources and quarries. Some are relict trade and commerce routes over the moors, generally running east to west in and out of the Peak District. Transport routes have always crossed the Dark Peak, although these are relatively rare when compared with those that cross the gritstone uplands further south. Some are famed, such as Jacob's Ladder, a packhorse route from Edale up Kinder Scout. Some routes have been formalised into roads whilst others have become relict features in the landscape. Later routes became more innovative, such as the Woodhead Railway tunnels which connected Manchester and Sheffield by rail and went under the landscape; they were the longest railway tunnels in England when completed.

The valleys of the Dark Peak have been used for water catchment with the construction of several reservoirs that were built to supply water to the surrounding urban settlements. The Longdendale Reservoir, built in 1840, supplies water to the Manchester conurbation whilst the Howden and Derwent Reservoirs, built in the early 1900s, and the later Ladybower Reservoir, supply the East Midlands and Sheffield. Along with the large valley reservoirs are a number of smaller reservoirs within the moorland landscape, such as Winscar and Chew reservoirs. The reservoirs support water supply, recreation and forestry as well as some grazing.

The Dark Peak has a very important role in recreational and access history, which began by providing royal hunting grounds and much later becoming an important location in the fight for socially equitable access rights. During medieval times much of the Dark Peak, and the Dark Peak Western Fringe lowlands to the west, made up part of the Royal Hunting Forest of the Peak, with severe penalties for poaching and access limited to a privileged few. By contrast, on 24th April 1932 the right of public access was fought for in the Dark Peak with the famous Kinder Trespass which was instrumental not only in gaining public access to areas of previously private land but also added to the debate that led to the creation of national parks.

The Dark Peak has another, less well known role in the development of rock climbing as an accessible sport to all social classes. Prior to the 1950s rock climbing was a socially elite pastime with expensive gear and difficulties accessing rock faces. Climbers such as Joe Brown and other working class men from Manchester and Sheffield developed a new, less formal approach to climbing with a focus on the Dark Peak and the Eastern Moors. Eventually these climbers evolved the sport, developing gear and climbing styles that are still used today.

Climbing in the north of the Dark Peak © Jemma Simpson, Countryscape

Sense of place

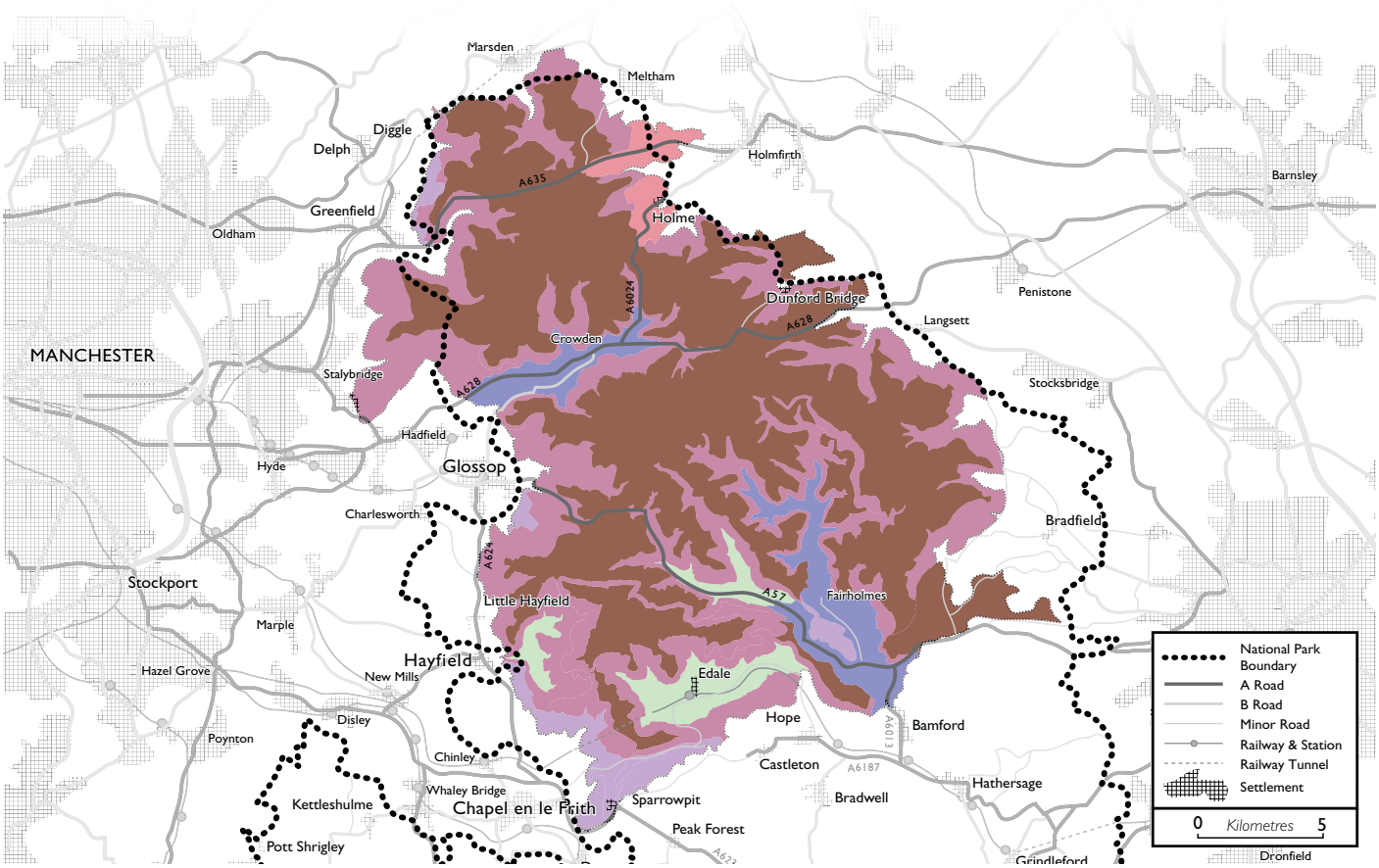
The Dark Peak is famed for its desolate and exposed tracts of moorland top that stretch great distances and create a sense of remoteness. The moorland tops appear dark due to the weathered gritstone bedrock, exposed and blackened in places, and the dark oranges and browns of heather foliage and the grasses and patches of exposed peat in places. During the summer months extensive tracts of blanket bog on the high moors are dominated by the white heads of cottongrasses giving rise to distinctive place names such as 'Featherbed Moss' whilst in the late summer the lower moorlands change to a brighter landscape with the purple heather dominating. The lack of settlement or intensive farming activity ensures that the sense of remoteness prevails; the plaintive calls of the golden plover on the high moors and the 'go-back go-back' call of grouse enhance the sense of wildness.

The moorlands are dissected in places by steep cloughs and slopes, with gritstone outcrops, tors and scree slopes and sometimes supporting streams. These slopes and cloughs are often too steep for agricultural improvement and so support wild, unsettled landscapes. Further down the valleys and slopes the landscape changes, generally becoming enclosed and pastoral. The peacefulness remains but the landscape becomes more intimate and settled with gritstone drystone wall enclosures and isolated gritstone farm properties. The enclosed fields and increased tree cover make the landscape varied in both texture and colour. Moorland vegetation such as bilberry remains along field boundaries and verges.

Some areas supported limited industry, including quarrying, mining and textile production. Now there is no major industry reliant on the landscape and the valleys tend to be a mosaic of woodland and pastoral fields. Some valleys have altered significantly with the building of the reservoirs, creating large human-made features but generally resulting in peaceful, tranquil landscapes. In some valleys the reservoirs are associated with extensive woodland cover, with many coniferous plantations, which provide further recreation opportunities.

Five distinct landscape character types have been identified in the Dark Peak. They have been defined by their broadly repeating patterns of natural elements and cultural factors:

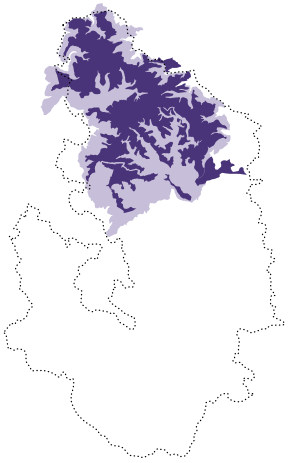
- Open Moors
- Moorland Slopes & Cloughs
- Enclosed Gritstone Uplands
- Reservoir Valleys With Woodland
- Upper Valley Pastures



Open Moors

An open undulating high gritstone plateau with extensive blanket peat covered by cottongrass bog and heather moorland. This is a wild, unsettled landscape with wide views to distant surrounding hills.

Wessenden Head Moor © Peak District National Park Authority



This is a visually prominent landscape which covers more than half the area of the Dark Peak and is associated with the blanket peat on the higher summits at the core of the region.

Key characteristics

- Undulating high gritstone plateau
- Localised rock outcrops and boulders, in the form of rocky edges and tors
- Thick deposits of peat with incised groughs (drainage channels)
- Unenclosed heather and grass moorland and extensive areas of blanket bog
- Rough grazing land
- Wild, unsettled landscape with vast panoramas over surrounding hills and lower ground

Geology and landform

The open moorland is a large-scale, exposed landscape where the underlying Millstone Grit strongly influences the nature of the landform, creating a high, undulating topography allowing wide views to distant skylines. The gritstone bedrock is hard and slowly eroded, giving rise to a moderately undulating landform of highland summits and ridge lines, with occasional rocky outcrops and tors, rising to 636m at Kinder Scout. For the most part, the thick covering of blanket peat gives this landscape a smooth, gently sloping ground surface extensively dissected by a network of drainage channels or groughs, which feed into small rocky clough heads.

Soils and vegetation

Most of the open moorland is underlain by thick deposits of blanket peat. These have developed during the last 10,000 years, with the maximum growth during a warmer period 8,000 to 6,500 years ago, and are, for the most part, between 2 and 4 metres thick. Much of this landscape is covered by blanket bog dominated by cottongrass or a mixture of cottongrass and dwarf shrubs (heather, bilberry and crowberry), which supports northern species such as cloudberry locally. Shallow bog pools occur sporadically, but gullying of the peat is extensive across much of the blanket bog, resulting in drainage and erosion. On shallower peat, or where the land is managed more intensively for grouse shooting, dwarf shrub heath dominated by heather tends to replace the blanket bog, with variable quantities of crowberry and bilberry. Where the peat is wetter, other species such as deergrass and bog asphodel can become more prevalent. Sphagnum mosses, essential to the formation of peat are now not as widespread as they used to be.

Cottongrass © Peak District National Park Authority

Tree cover

The high moors are generally an open, treeless landscape with expansive views. The elevation, wetness of the soils and harsh climate make tree growth difficult. This landscape was more wooded in the past, as indicated by many ancient tree stumps buried under the peat. The evidence suggests that these trees were removed, or died out due to climatic changes, during the Later Mesolithic to Bronze Age.

Land use

This landscape generally has a low agricultural value being used predominantly for sheep grazing, or grouse rearing. Some areas of heather moorland are maintained through regimes of cutting and burning to aid regeneration and management of the heather. The associated infrastructure including grouse butts and occasional shooting lodges is visible in places. Past peat cutting has resulted in areas of moorland where much of the peat has been stripped away. There are some small reservoirs in this landscape character type, they tend to be associated with the edges of the Open Moors and support some recreation. Recreation is an important land use in the Dark Peak with the majority of the character type designated as open access land.

Enclosure

This is a largely unenclosed landscape where the lack of enclosure creates dramatic and expansive open views. On the fringes of the type there is occasional enclosure associated with the adjacent landscapes with gritstone drystone walls surrounding regular medium to large fields.

Settlement and buildings

This is an unsettled landscape with built features existing only locally. There are occasional grouse butts and shooting cabins, and isolated farm buildings built from local gritstone. There are occasional other features such as the War Memorials on top of Pots and Pans Hill in Saddleworth, Lady Cross, a medieval monastic boundary marker close to Round Hill, and prehistoric barrows as at Kinder Low.

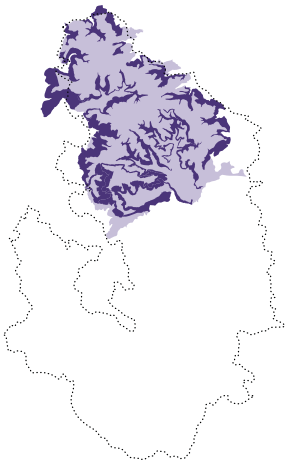
Transport and access

Transport is a limited feature of this landscape character type, however, some of the historic routes continue as important routes through the landscape. A small number of significant trans-pennine roads cross the open moorland. Some were built as turnpike roads, formalised from the pre-existing trackways over the moors. Old tracks are often still evident in the landscape as hollow-ways – sometimes braided where routes were modified to avoid wet areas caused by erosion through frequent use. There are also numerous local tracks and hollow-ways that link old upland grazing sites, water sources and peat cutting areas to settlements in the lower areas. Today, most of the open moorlands are open access land and are only accessible on foot.

Moorland Slopes & Cloughs

Steep slopes and cloughs rising to open moorland on the high plateaux above, with widespread rough grassland and heather moor, grazed by sheep. This is a wild unsettled landscape with exposed views over lower ground.

Alport Castles- the largest inland landslide in England © Peak District National Park Authority



This is a landscape with a scattered distribution, often occurring as a series of narrow strips around the edge of the open moorland core. A number of larger units occur along the north-western edge of the Peak District.

Key characteristics

- Steep slopes and cloughs rising to the moorland plateaux above
- Prominent gritstone outcrops, boulders and scree slopes
- Thin soils over gritstone bedrock
- Rough acid grassland, bracken and heather moorland grazed by sheep
- Exposed views over lower ground, sometimes limited by clough sides
- Numerous springs and flushes arising on slopes and clough sides
- Relict areas of oak-birch woodland in cloughs

Geology and landform

This is a sloping landscape that is strongly influenced by the underlying Millstone Grit geology and defined by the steep upper slopes and edges that fringe the open moorland plateaux. The resulting landform creates a strong sense of elevation with distant and panoramic views over surrounding countryside. There are frequent outcrops of gritstone, most notably at the break of slope where the slopes meet the open moorland plateaux above. Cloughs are a common feature in this landscape, formed by the incision and deep erosion of fast flowing streams.

The slopes and valleys eroded out by freeze-thaw, rock fall activity and down washing from streams create edges often with boulder fields below. Landslips have long occurred in this landscape type: at the end of the late Devensian glacial period, as ice was retreating, glacial modification and over-steepened slopes resulted in landslips. Other causes, more common recently, are water over-saturation that reduces the rock's shear strength and the location of high mass strength rocks, such as the gritstone, overlying weaker rock layers such as shales. Landslips are a local feature here and vary in scale; the landslip at Alport Castles is over 1km in extent: the largest inland slip in England. Mam Tor is known as the Shivering Mountain because of its repeated landslips.

Soils and vegetation

Soils are coarse, loamy and very acid over the gritstone bedrock. Surface water drainage is often impeded by the formation of a thin ironpan and in less steeply sloping areas the soils often have a wet peaty surface horizon. Owing to the poor quality soils, this is a landscape with widespread patches of semi-natural vegetation, usually comprising a mixture of heather and bilberry moorland, with areas of acid grassland. Patches of bracken are regularly extensive.

Where the upper slopes form edges to the moorland and on the sides of steep cloughs, there are frequent extensive amounts of bare rock and scree, which can provide for a range of valuable habitats. Some cloughs support fern banks including beech fern and oak fern, while on land that is inaccessible to grazing, such as ledges, tall vegetation species such as goldenrod may flourish.

The interleaving of permeable gritstone with less permeable shales gives rise to numerous springs and flushes on slopes and clough sides at the junction of the rock types. These often support a particularly diverse flora and insect fauna.

Tree cover

The wet soils, exposure and open grazing on the moorland slopes restrict tree growth, resulting in an essentially treeless landscape. However, scattered trees and patches of scrub often occur within cloughs, while occasional small plantation woodlands can sometimes be found on moorland slopes. Clough woodlands can be wet or dry. Wetter woods tend to be associated with alder, or birch and willow, whereas the drier woodlands are dominated by sessile oak and pedunculate oak, with birch and holly, or hazel in the under storey. Localised 20th century conifer plantations occur in this landscape character type.

Land use

Owing to its elevation and poor quality soils, this is a very marginal agricultural landscape, used primarily as rough grazing for sheep. The slopes support a range of recreation including hang gliding, paragliding and walking. Rock climbing is popular on the craggy outcrops such as at Shining Clough on Bleaklow, Kinder Downfall, Laddow Rocks and Wimberry Stones Brow and also in the many relict gritstone quarries. There was a limited amount of coal mining carried out on the moorland slopes in the north-east of the area on Meltham Moor. There are some coniferous plantations, for example at Bradfield and beside the Snake Pass.

Enclosure

Large areas of this landscape character type remain unenclosed. Occasional drystone walls define ownership boundaries. There are areas of enclosure, particularly around Saddleworth, where much land was already enclosed by 1770 and was further sub-divided prior to the Parliamentary Enclosure Award map of 1834. However, there are many areas where proposed Parliamentary Enclosure did not occur: the land was allotted but remained open and unenclosed. Where field boundaries exist, they are gritstone drystone walls and are localised features in the landscape often defining ownership boundaries.

Settlement and buildings

This is a very sparsely settled landscape with occasional isolated gritstone farmsteads and cottages with stone slate roofs. Some of these farmsteads date from the medieval period but the buildings have been subsequently rebuilt. There are also occasional field barns and stock pens within the landscape, associated with sheep farming and constructed from the local gritstone.

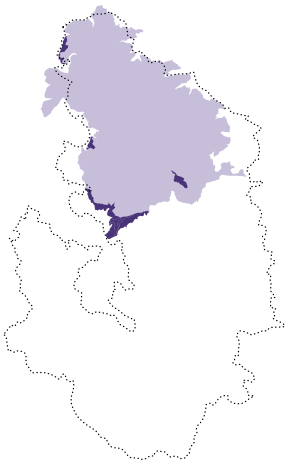
Transport and access

The Moorland Slopes & Cloughs are largely inaccessible to transport with the exception of routes that cross the moors such as the Woodhead Pass. There are smaller tracks throughout the landscape largely providing access to farms. Braided hollow-ways provide evidence that this landscape was once more widely travelled through both for trade and commerce outside of the area and to access pasture, water supplies and peat cuttings locally. These hollow-ways can sometimes be highly visible on the Moorland Slopes & Cloughs. Much of this landscape is designated open access land.

Enclosed Gritstone Uplands

An enclosed upland pastoral landscape associated with high uplands, ridge tops and slopes. This is a landscape of isolated stone farmsteads, straight roads and regular fields enclosed by drystone walls, largely reclaimed from moorland during Parliamentary Enclosure. Localised boulder fields and rocky outcrops are a feature in places, often associated with patches of remnant moorland vegetation.

Windy Knowl, above Winnats Pass © Peak District National Park Authority



This landscape occurs in discrete areas primarily on the western side of the Dark Peak, on lower land running down from the open moorlands. There are two areas in the north, and there is a larger area on the lower south-western flanks of Kinder and the southern slopes of Rushup Edge, as well as an isolated area above Ladybower Reservoir.

- High uplands and ridge tops with some steeper slopes
- Thin soils over gritstone bedrock with localised pockets of peat
- Permanent pasture and rough grazing enclosed by gritstone walls
- Remnant patches of rough land with bracken and gorse, some heather and bilberry
- Regular pattern of medium to large fields
- Straight roads with wide verges of grass and, in some places, heather
- Isolated gritstone farmsteads with stone slate roofs
- Tree groups around farmsteads providing shelter

Geology and landform

This landscape is associated with high and broad gently undulating gritstone plateaux, in places rising steeply to higher open moorlands. The underlying bedrock is Millstone Grit.

Soils and vegetation

The variable nature of the geology and landform give rise to a variety of soil types ranging from free-draining podzols on steeper slopes to wetter, peatier soils on gentler summits. All the soils are characterised by their impoverished, acidic origin and although most of the land is now improved to varying degrees for pasture, many patches of semi-natural vegetation still exist along verges, on steeper slopes and even as isolated patches within some fields. Heath-associated species, such as heather, bilberry and gorse are a common feature in many places. Where the soils are wetter species such as purple moor grass tend to be more common and there are some patches of soft rush, which often support small populations of breeding birds such as snipe.

Tree cover

The sheep grazing, poor soils and exposure restrict tree growth so this is essentially a treeless landscape. However, there are occasional tree groups, generally adjacent to farmsteads and planted to create shelter around properties, using broadleaved species such as oak, ash and sycamore. There are also some shelterbelts and occasional blocks of 19th or 20th century coniferous woodland.

Land use

This is a landscape of mostly improved or semi-improved permanent pasture with sheep and cattle grazing and some rough grazing. There are some reseeded grass leys and very occasional arable fields. Soils are mostly of poor quality and some fields are dominated by rushes or are reverting to moorland, providing habitat diversity.

Enclosure

This is a landscape dominated by Parliamentary Enclosure of open moorland and commons dating from the late 18th and early 19th centuries creating medium to large regular fields. There is some ancient enclosure and some piecemeal and private enclosure which tends to have a slightly smaller and more irregular form than Parliamentary Enclosure. Drystone gritstone walls enclose most fields but there are occasional hedgerows on lower ground.

Settlement and buildings

Settlement tends to consist of isolated gritstone farmsteads with stone slate roofs often dating from the time that the landscape was enclosed from the 18th century. Although isolated properties are the dominant settlement type there are some small groups of settlement, as at Moorfield, adjacent to Glossop. Settlements often use the natural landform for weather protection. Higher up, towards where the enclosure gives way to the open moorland, the landscape is largely unsettled.

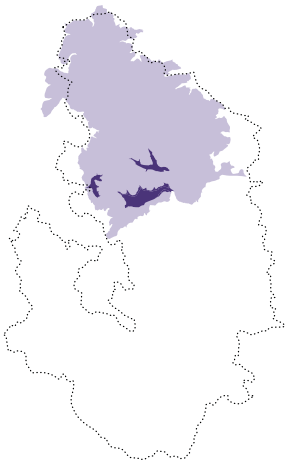
Transport and access

This is a remote landscape. Where roads exist they tend to be straight with even verges, created from the 18th century onwards as part of the enclosure programme. In places larger, busier roads cross the landscape and these tend to be locally dominant features. Within this landscape type there are some older routes, such as packhorse routes. Small, discreet areas of this landscape are designated as access land.

Upper Valley Pastures

A pastoral landscape with a low lying, undulating topography, rising more steeply in places towards nearby hills. Settlement is restricted to dispersed gritstone farmsteads set within a well defined pattern of small to medium sized fields, mostly bounded by hedgerows, but with some walls. Views are enclosed by valley sides and filtered through scattered hedgerow and streamline trees.

Edale Valley © Peak District National Park Authority



This landscape occurs in three locations at the centre of the Peak District: at Ashop Valley, in Edale and near Kinder Reservoir east of Hayfield.

Key characteristics

- A low lying gently undulating topography, rising towards adjacent higher ground
- Network of streams and localised damp hollows
- Pastoral farmland enclosed by hedgerows
- Small to medium sized fields
- Dense streamline and scattered hedgerow trees
- Narrow, winding lanes, sunken on slopes
- Dispersed settlement with isolated farmsteads and small clusters of farms and dwellings

Geology and landform

This is a moderate to steeply sloping valley bottom landscape where rivers have eroded through the Millstone Grit creating an undulating topography in the underlying shale. Further variation is created by small streams which dissect the main valleys as they drain the surrounding high moors. In places landslips on higher ground have created a very distinctive hummocky landform which becomes flatter towards the valley bottom.

Soils and vegetation

Slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged soils are characteristic of the lower lying ground in this landscape, with more free-draining soils on the steeper slopes over gritstone bedrock. For the most part this is a moderately intensively farmed pastoral landscape with some ecologically interesting grasslands, particularly in the Edale valley. Biodiversity value is found mainly in surviving unimproved pastures and hay meadows, which can provide a range of flora such as bird's foot trefoil and common cat's ear. On less well drained land, where the ground is wetter, the pastures often support soft rush and can provide a breeding ground for wading birds.

On sloping ground flushes create wetter areas that can have a significant influence over biodiversity. Flushes differ in character depending on the flow of water, but they generally support a range of species including mosses, sedges and soft rush.

Tree cover

Despite the lack of larger woodlands, tree cover is generally well represented throughout this landscape due to the scattered hedgerow and watercourse trees. Tree cover is densest adjacent to watercourses and through cloughs, where it is often dominated by alder with birch and willow.

Scattered trees also exist adjacent to settlements and along field boundaries. Linear woodlands along watercourses are a feature in places and are sometimes linked to a network of thorn hedgerows. There is plantation woodland associated with Kinder Reservoir.

Land use

This is a pastoral landscape used mainly for sheep and cattle rearing which has been a traditional land use since at least medieval times. Land is managed to maintain water quality around Kinder reservoir. These valleys are also popular for walking, often used as starting locations for walks on the moors. The popular Pennine Way walking route begins in the Edale Valley and leads to the famous Jacob's Ladder, an old packhorse route, up onto the plateau above.

Enclosure

Enclosure is very varied within this landscape character type. Field sizes vary from small to large but are generally not regular or geometric. Enclosure usually pre-dates Parliamentary Enclosure and there is evidence that some pre-dates the mid 17th century. Enclosure is often piecemeal and may sometimes represent assarted enclosure, where the enclosure is created from woodland clearance or taken in from moorland. Thorn and some more mixed species hedgerows and drystone walls enclose fields, with some scattered boundary trees, typically oak and ash.

Settlement and buildings

Settlement is of dispersed gritstone farmsteads with stone slate roofs. Much of this dispersed pattern originates from the medieval period if not before. In the Edale Valley there are distinctive small clusters of the oldest properties: a mixture of farmsteads and cottages known as Booths. This was the name given to the pasturage units that were defined as part of the medieval Royal Forest and let out by bailiffs to villagers and foresters although settlement may have already existed prior to this time.

Other more scattered but post-medieval farmsteads are also common, particularly on the less favourable north-facing slope of the valley. The Woodlands Valley and the Kinder Valley both have a similar dispersed settlement pattern with farmsteads and cottages located along the valley bottoms and lower slopes. Some of these are known to have medieval origins and appear to have grown up as individual farms. There is a Victorian nucleated settlement in the centre of the valley which grew up in association with the creation of the railway station and Edale Mill.

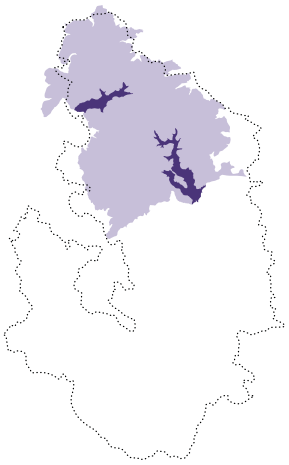
Transport and access

This landscape has varied road access, the Snake Pass road runs through the Upper Derwent Valley and the Kinder Road gives local access through the valley adjacent to Hayfield. There are other routes including narrow winding lanes that provide access to dwellings and farmsteads as well as older routes, such as packhorse routes. The railway line through Edale , completed in 1894, forms the main route between Manchester and Sheffield. Very limited areas of this landscape character type are designated as access land. Vehicular access within the valleys tends to be limited and they are popular for walking.

Reservoir Valleys With Woodland

Steep sided valleys dominated by large reservoirs. Some of the steep valley slopes have been planted with interlocking blocks of coniferous and mixed plantation woodland while others support acid grassland and clough woodlands. Views along the valleys are framed by woodland and the slopes rising to moorland.

Howden Reservoir © Peak District National Park Authority



This landscape occurs in Longdendale and the Upper Derwent Valley.

Key characteristics

- Interlocking coniferous and mixed plantation woodland with some limited semi-natural woodland
- Large reservoirs providing water supplies to adjoining urban areas
- Steep valley slopes, dissected by cloughs
- Land was largely cleared of settlement during reservoir construction leaving occasional isolated gritstone farmsteads
- Pastoral fields bounded by gritstone walls with many relict boundaries

Geology and landform

This is a landscape with a prominent, sloping topography cutting into the gritstone moorland. The underlying geology is mainly hard interbedded gritstones with, in places, softer mudstones which give rise to a fairly unified, steeply sloping landform with narrow valley bottoms. In places the slopes are dissected by deep cloughs.

Soils and vegetation

The soils tend to be shallow and free-draining over gritstone bedrock. Surface water drainage is often impeded by the formation of a thin ironpan and in less steeply sloping areas the soils frequently have a wet peaty surface horizon. Owing to the poor quality of the soils, this was a landscape with widespread patches of semi-natural vegetation, much of which has now been planted with conifer woodlands. In places patches of ancient semi-natural woodland exist, supporting a range of ground flora species including bilberry and dog's mercury. There is bracken associated with acid grassland on the sloping land in these landscapes.

Tree cover

This landscape is extensively wooded, mostly recent conifer plantations of pine, spruce and larch planted on land that was previously open heath, or grassland. Some of the plantations were planted on the site of ancient woodlands that were cleared of native trees. Patches of ancient semi-natural woodland are now linked by the areas of plantation woodland to create a heavily wooded landscape. In Longdendale, woodland is patchier and there are fewer coniferous plantations.

Land use

Although there is some low intensity pastoral farming, water supply with forestry and recreation around the reservoirs are the dominant land uses in this landscape. The valleys have long been exploited for industry. The Upper Derwent Valley was an important location for charcoal production with burning taking place in many locations on the lower slopes. In the 18th century much of this was produced on an industrial scale and used for iron smelting around Sheffield. Quarrying was carried out at several sites in Longdendale, particularly towards the west. Several mills were established in Longdendale using the fast flowing River Etherow for power.

The reservoirs which now occupy the earlier mill sites in Longdendale were built in the 1840s to supply water to Manchester. In the Upper Derwent Valley the Howden and Derwent reservoirs, constructed in the early 1900s, were built to supply water to nearby settlements in the East Midlands. The construction of the later Ladybower Dam led to the flooding of Derwent and Ashopton villages, which were small agricultural settlements. The village of Birchinlee was constructed on the banks of the reservoir as a temporary settlement for construction workers; it was commonly known as Tin Town. The foundations of many of the temporary buildings still survive today.

Enclosure

Enclosure pattern is variable in this landscape character type. In the Longdendale Valley enclosure is characterised by small fields enclosed by drystone walls, whilst in the Upper Derwent Valley walls are often now redundant, within or more commonly at the edges of the plantation woodlands. Much of the enclosure in the Upper Derwent Valley has been modified following the establishment of the reservoirs; prior to this much of the Upper Derwent Valley was deciduous woodland. Enclosure which pre-dates the reservoirs may be ancient although here there are no early historical maps to confirm this in Longdendale.

Settlement and buildings

This is not a significantly settled landscape with just occasional isolated gritstone farmsteads. These are more prevalent in the Longdendale Valley than the Upper Derwent Valley which has a more unsettled character. However, this landscape was formerly more densely settled but was deliberately de-populated in order to establish the reservoirs.

Transport and access

There are roads within this landscape, which tend to run alongside the reservoirs; the road through Longdendale is an old turnpike road. The Longdendale Valley has a historical association with the railway which was completed in 1854 creating the first direct rail link between Manchester and Sheffield via the 3-mile Woodhead Tunnel. The railway line has since been dismantled and is now a popular recreational route. Historically, this character type contained packhorse routes and tracks through the landscape used for trade into and out of the Derwent Valley and across the Dark Peak moorlands. There are areas of access land and many popular walking trails around the reservoirs.

Overall Strategy

Ashop Moor in cloud © Peak District National Park Authority

The underlying geology of the Dark Peak creates a dramatic, upland landscape. The Dark Peak has long been influenced by human activity but retains a distinctly tranquil and remote character; despite intervention it is still a vital landscape. The character contrasts significantly with the more settled landscapes which surround it and this valued contrast should be maintained or, where appropriate, enhanced. In places transportation routes affect tranquillity. There is an opportunity to enhance condition, ensuring ecological integrity and robustness in all of the landscape types. Moorland landscapes in the Dark Peak are likely to be particularly vulnerable to climate change. However, restoring blanket bog to an active healthy condition does provide opportunities for the Dark Peak moors to contribute significantly to carbon sequestration rather than contributing to net carbon release, as in some areas at present. Any changes must be integrated with land uses such as water management, agriculture, grouse moor management and recreation, as appropriate.

The overall strategy for the Dark Peak should therefore be to:

Protect the remoteness, wildness, open character and tranquillity of the Dark Peak landscapes, and manage these landscapes to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

This can be achieved by ensuring that there is:

- sustainable land management systems capable of supporting appropriate land uses linked to the needs of both moorland and enclosed land
- measures to restore degraded moorland landscapes to good condition, delivering effective public benefits including carbon sequestration, water supply, flood risk control and access
- appropriate measures to enhance the recreational and educational value of these landscapes

Derwent Reservoir in the mist © Peak District National Park Authority

To achieve this strategy there are particular priorities for each of the different landscape character types in the Dark Peak.

Open Moors

This is the most open and unsettled landscape in the Peak District, characterised by expansive open views with blanket bog and upland heath. Priorities are to protect or enhance the integrity of moorlands, which are currently in poor condition; to manage obvious linear features such as fencing to enhance the open character; and to maintain the character of the landscape and its component parts within a sustainable upland management system, integrating land uses such as livestock farming, water supply and grouse shooting with carbon sequestration, recreation and amenity.

Moorland Slopes & Cloughs

This is a steeply sloping landscape with dramatic geology such as scree slopes and gritstone outcrops, as well as a diversity of other features including flushes, springs, rush pastures and clough woodlands. Priorities for this landscape character type should be to enhance landscape integrity and connectivity, particularly of the clough woods. This should be achieved through woodland expansion and conservation, whilst maintaining the valued recreational and cultural heritage resources and controlling associated localised impacts such as footpath erosion, within a sustainable land management system.

Enclosed Gritstone Uplands

This is a sparsely settled pastoral upland landscape. Priorities for the landscape include maintaining the historic pattern of sparse settlement and enclosure, and protecting and managing the enclosed character of the landscape, whilst enhancing the ecological value and connectivity of wet pasture in a mixed farming regime.

Upper Valley Pastures

This is a lower lying pastoral landscape with dispersed gritstone farmsteads and cottages as well as a small nucleated settlement. Priorities for this landscape are to protect this historical settlement and enclosure pattern and the views into and out of settlements, whilst enhancing and increasing the extent of habitats within a sustainable farming system.

Reservoir Valleys With Woodland

This landscape has been heavily influenced by human activity with reservoirs, transport routes and large plantation woodlands. The priorities for this landscape include protecting and enhancing the connectivity between semi-natural woodland, replacing coniferous woodland with native, broadleaved species where appropriate; and enhancing recreation and educational opportunities, climate mitigation and the existing, historical enclosure patterns.

Farm below Rushup Edge © Peak District National Park Authority

Issues of change

Conservation

The Dark Peak is a relatively 'wild' upland landscape dominated by large expanses of unenclosed moorland dissected by steep narrow cloughs, with both broader farmed valleys and wooded reservoir valleys in places. The extensive blanket bogs over deep peat have, in particular, been significantly degraded over a considerable period of time through impacts such as atmospheric pollution, wildfires and historic management practices such as heavy grazing and burning. Where upland pastoral landscapes exist, such as the Enclosed Gritstone Moor, management regimes and grazing have left species-poor grass moorland, signalling a loss of heath species and of wet rush habitats. Since the early 1980s these trends have been slowed and even reversed to some extent by measures such as the Peak District Moorland Restoration Project (and more latterly Moors for the Future), the introduction of the North Peak Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) in 1988 and more sustainable management by moorland owners. Changes in agricultural practice have led to a simplification of landscapes. Woodlands are generally limited within this landscape, although clough woods in the Moorland Slopes & Cloughs provide unique habitats. In the Reservoir Valleys With Woodland, the associated woodland planting often tends to be coniferous, and in some places this can isolate broadleaved and ancient woodland resources.

The altitude, topography and associated climate of the Dark Peak have resulted in its particular past human use. This is evidenced by extensive early prehistoric (Mesolithic) landscapes underlying the peat cover of the high moors, along with more visible examples of past human activity such as peat cutting relics, tracks, hollow-ways and other routes across the moors. All of these features are threatened by extensive peat erosion, wildfires and inappropriate moorland management. Away from the moors the historic settlement and enclosure patterns, such as the Booths at Edale, remain relatively intact.

Climate change implications

The Open Moors and the Moorland Slopes & Cloughs are likely to be particularly vulnerable to climate change through increased fire risk; increased drying, desiccation and erosion of the peat; increased flash floods; vegetation changes such as possible bracken spread; and loss of upland species (many of the characteristic moorland birds are likely to decline). There may also be changes in moorland management as a result of increased water demand, decline in grouse numbers and changes in recreational pressure. These changes can affect the overall landscape character, biodiversity, and the cultural heritage component within and beneath the peat. Down slope, changes are likely to adversely affect water quality and flood risk. More positively, there is potential for this landscape to be a key resource for dealing with climate change; rewetted uplands could sequester carbon efficiently alongside other land uses. The Reservoir Valleys With Woodland may be affected by changing management approaches as water catchment and management become national and international priorities.

Demography, housing and employment

The Dark Peak is characterised by very limited settlement with historic farmsteads and small clustered settlements off the main plateau. Changes in the farming economy and farming population coupled with the attraction of a rural lifestyle have meant that some farm properties, particularly on the peripheries of the Dark Peak, are no longer exclusively working farms. Instead, they exist as large domestic properties at times associated with small-scale, part time or 'hobby' farming, and sometimes with horse pasturing. Such ownership changes can be associated with separation of farmstead and land holdings, resulting in increased trends to isolated, large modern agricultural buildings. These large, agricultural buildings can be of a scale at odds with the surrounding buildings and landscape, particularly when located away from farmsteads. In some cases these have been screened with tree planting, although such mitigation is not always appropriate, particularly in the more open landscapes. The unsettled nature of the landscape means that views from Dark Peak settlements, such as Edale, are important for continuing the relationship between landscape and settlement. Despite this unsettled nature, the proximity of settled, urban areas to the Dark Peak means that light pollution is having significant consequences on dark skies.

Tourism and recreation

The Dark Peak is a landscape of extremes with the wild Open Moors, the enclosed farmlands and the Reservoir Valleys With Woodland. Each landscape is valued and cherished by those who visit and live there. The Dark Peak can offer opportunities for solitude and tranquillity that surrounding, more settled landscapes, cannot offer. These are highly valued characteristics, providing an important cultural resource. In some areas there is often high recreational demand for the more active sports of mountain biking, sailing, climbing and motorised off-road driving. There is also increasing pressure to stage more sponsored or themed events in the wilder, more challenging areas. A range of opportunities are available for different levels of use, meaning that the Dark Peak has accessibility to a wide range of users.

Farming and forestry

The tradition of upland grazing in the Dark Peak has been the main force in shaping the current character of the area. Whilst the grazing of agricultural livestock was almost certainly a key influence in creating the current open moorland landscapes, high levels of grazing and associated practices such as extensive burning have subsequently contributed to the degradation of the moors. This has resulted in heather loss and erosion, and gullying of the underlying peat. This process largely accelerated throughout the 20th century until 1988, when the North Peak Environmentally Sensitive Area was introduced and started to encourage a reduction in grazing levels and restoration of eroding areas. Away from the moors, agricultural intensification of farmland has resulted in the loss and decline of semi-natural grasslands and associated wetland habitats. Future drivers for agriculture in the Dark Peak are likely to include Common Agricultural Policy reform, climate change, food security issues, environmental issues (water quality, biodiversity) and the growing demand for local food products.

Grouse moor management has been another important influence on the moorland landscapes of the Dark Peak for approximately the last 150 years, originally by encouraging reduced grazing levels and diversifying the age structure of heather stands, helping to prevent the degradation of areas of heather moorland to grass moor. However, inappropriate burning in some areas, particularly on the blanket peats and on more intensively managed moors, has led to a decline in their condition. Moorland management practices have been increasingly influenced over the last few years by the SSSI status of most of the moorland and other environmental factors such as water quality. Climate change may render grouse shooting unviable in the Peak District by the late 21st century.

Conifer plantations associated with the main valleys and reservoirs form the bulk of woodland cover in the Dark Peak and also occur very locally on the moorland edge. Fluctuations in the timber market, and increased emphasis on the environmental and amenity benefits of forestry over the last decade or more, have led to restructuring of some conifer plantations to favour broadleaved trees and create more varied structure and landform. There are major proposals to convert plantations to native woodland and open habitats in the Alport Valley. Within some moorland cloughs relics of native woodland survive, though these are often grazed and in poor condition.

Minerals and resources

There are no active quarries within the Dark Peak but there are remains of old quarries, which form an important part of the character of the area. They are a valued cultural heritage, biodiversity, educational and, particularly, recreational resource, with many old quarries being used for rock climbing and bouldering. There is a demand for local stone for building, in particular for roofing stone, which has the potential to generate conflicting building and landscape conservation issues.

This is an important water catchment area, providing both drinking water to the surrounding urban areas and a potential future energy source.

Freight Train, Edale © Peak District National Park Authority

Energy and infrastructure

There is an increasing national demand for renewable energy schemes, in particular wind power. The impact of inappropriate wind generation projects could lead to a reduction of amenity value and tranquillity. There may be scope for the development of hydroelectric power schemes, of appropriate siting, scale and design, in some locations where it would not impact significantly on the landscape. There is a visual impact of existing infrastructure associated with power supply, e.g. overhead electricity cables, most notably the grid transmission lines in Longdendale.

Road safety is a major issue in the Dark Peak, leading to an increase in the number and size of road signs. High levels of vehicle use are increasing damage to roads, walls, and verges, and creating an increased demand for parking. An increase in all forms of transport have visual and tranquillity impacts, particularly from the amount of air traffic associated with Manchester Airport and the number of cross-park vehicular journeys. Plans for the construction of a Mottram - Tintwistle bypass have recently been postponed but may arise again in the future, with impacts both directly on the landscape and potentially on the volume of vehicle traffic along the A628, A57 and related roads.

In recent years there has been an increase in visual intrusion of communications infrastructure, particularly telecommunication masts, which can impact on landscape character and the setting of cultural heritage features, buildings and historic landscapes.

Landscape guidelines

Dark Peak

Protect

	Open Moors	Moorland Slopes and Cloughs	Enclosed Gritstone Uplands	Upper Valley Pastures	Reservoir Valleys with Woodland
Protect and maintain historic drystone walls			◐	○	◐
Protect and maintain historic hedgerows			○	◐	○

Manage

	Open Moors	Moorland Slopes and Cloughs	Enclosed Gritstone Uplands	Upper Valley Pastures	Reservoir Valleys with Woodland
Manage the sparse and historical patterns of development	○	○	●	●	○
Manage the network of tracks and footpaths to maximise opportunities to enjoy the landscape	◐	◐	○	◐	◐
Manage and enhance woodlands		◐		◐	◐
Manage and enhance plantation woodlands		○			●
Manage and enhance the diversity of agricultural grasslands			●	●	
Enhance and restore moorland landscapes	●	◐	○		
Manage relict quarries for recreation		◐			
Encourage diverse approaches in moorland management	◐				
Restore clough woods		◐			
Manage the network of minor roads to maintain character and local access			◐	◐	○
Manage and enhance semi-natural grassland and wetland landscapes		○	◐	●	◐
Manage and enhance landscape around reservoirs					●

● This is a priority throughout the landscape character type

◐ This is a priority in some parts of the landscape character type, often associated with particular conditions/features

○ This is not a priority but may be considered in some locations

This will generally be inappropriate in this landscape character type

Landscape guidelines

Dark Peak

Plan

	Open Moors	Moorland Slopes and Cloughs	Enclosed Gritstone Uplands	Upper Valley Pastures	Reservoir Valleys with Woodland
Create clough woodlands		◐			
Develop small-scale renewable energy for local needs				○	○
Create and link patches of wetland farmland habitats	●	◐	◐	○	○
Consider the reopening of small-scale quarries for local stone supply		○			
Create, extend and link areas of heath/moor	◐	◐	◐		

● This is a priority throughout the landscape character type

◐ This is a priority in some parts of the landscape character type, often associated with particular conditions/features

○ This is not a priority but may be considered in some locations

This will generally be inappropriate in this landscape character type

Landscape guidelines explanation

Protect

Protect and maintain historic drystone walls

Drystone walls and associated features such as gateposts are an important historical feature in the enclosed landscapes of the Dark Peak, in particular the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands and Longdendale (Reservoir Valleys With Woodland). Walls and hedges will often appear together, with walls predominating in many areas. In places the management of walls is declining and there is a need to enhance their management in order to protect the historic field pattern.

Protect and maintain historic hedgerows

Hedgerows are an important historical feature within the Upper Valley Pastures, many representing assarted enclosure. The hedges often occur in conjunction with gritstone walls, especially on the upper valley slopes. Many boundaries are gappy and in poor condition, and there is a need to enhance their management to maintain the historic field pattern.

Derwent Reservoir © Peak District National Park Authority

Manage

Manage the sparse and historical patterns of development

The Dark Peak contrasts with surrounding landscapes due to the very limited settlement; this plays a vital role in the character of the landscape. It is important that future development remains very limited in order to maintain this sense of place, which is valued and enjoyed by the surrounding communities and visitors. New development should respond positively to the historic settlement pattern, density, local materials and building traditions. Similarly, where settlement does exist, the views into and out of the settlement should be protected, as they can be important to historical character and sense of place. Traditional buildings are an important feature and their renovation and maintenance should be encouraged. Locating new agricultural buildings can impact on landscape character, and opportunities should be taken to guide site selection.

Manage the network of tracks and footpaths to maximise opportunities to enjoy the landscape

The network of tracks and footpaths should be managed, especially within the Open Moors and Reservoir Valleys With Woodland, to enhance the capacity to provide healthy recreation for a wide range of users. This can be achieved through appropriate low-key landscape management measures which minimize impact on the "wilderness" qualities of the area, and by controlling inappropriate use to retain character, cultural heritage and biodiversity interests.

Manage and enhance woodlands

Woodland in the Dark Peak is not widespread; where it is a landscape feature it needs to be well managed. Some woodland is neglected or would benefit from enhanced management. Opportunities should be sought to enhance diversity and improve woodland productivity, whilst conserving cultural heritage features. There may be opportunities to link woodland management to local wood fuel schemes and reduce reliance on traditional carbon-based energies.

Manage and enhance plantation woodlands

Within the Reservoir Valleys With Woodland, large coniferous plantation woods form a distinctive landscape feature. Plantation woods can also be found to a lesser extent within the Moorland Slopes & Cloughs, for example the Snake woodlands. Opportunities should be sought to integrate them into the wider historic landscape through improved management, including felling and increasing appropriate native tree species, whilst conserving cultural heritage features. This work is already being carried out within the Alport valley, where the technique 'wild by design' is being used.

Manage and enhance the diversity of agricultural grasslands

Many grasslands have been improved and reseeded with a consequent loss of species diversity. There is a need to manage these grasslands in a more sustainable way that restores or protects species diversity whilst supporting productive agriculture. Opportunities to extend and enhance the management of unimproved grasslands should be sought.

Enhance and restore moorland landscapes

Opportunities should be sought for the restoration of degraded moorland landscapes through the re-vegetation of bare peat and rewetting of blanket bog. This could provide a valuable resource in mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration and increased water storage capacity.

Manage relict quarries for recreation

Quarries provide a very important and highly valued recreation resource for climbing and bouldering in the Dark Peak. They also provide habitat to nesting birds, and other flora and fauna. There needs to be a balance between the value and use of quarries as a recreational and/or biodiversity resource using education and partnership working. In many quarries a balance is already evident, with many routes being overgrown and unused, and climbing concentrating on a few, favoured routes.

Encourage diverse approaches in moorland management

The Open Moors are an important national and international landscape that needs to be protected and managed. There is an increasing emphasis on multi-purpose land use for the moors, including recreation, biodiversity and the ecosystem services of flood control, water quality and carbon sequestration. The variety of land uses will require innovative management techniques to ensure that the landscape and its component parts can robustly absorb different pressures. This can be achieved through different cutting and burning regimes, gully blocking, flagging paths as appropriate and reducing fire risk. On the Open Moors, wire fencing defines land ownership and can be an important management tool to control grazing. However, removal of these boundaries, when no longer required or where appropriate, would enhance the moorland character by strengthening the openness and thus enhancing the sense of remoteness and 'wildness'.

Manage clough woods

On the Moorland Slopes & Cloughs, clough woods are an important landscape feature. Opportunities should be sought to enhance the management of these woods, preferably by natural regeneration, without affecting cultural heritage features, historic landscapes and existing ecological features. This would help to reduce erosion caused by increased rainfall run off associated with climate change by stabilising soils, and may help reduce flood risk in lower landscapes by slowing rainwater run off from the uplands.

Manage the network of minor roads to maintain character and local access

The network of minor roads should be managed to maintain their local, small-scale and rural character to ensure good local access whilst discouraging inappropriate driving. Verges and cultural features should be maintained and enhanced, and the impact of signage minimised.

Manage and enhance semi-natural grassland and wetland landscapes

The pastoral landscapes of the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands and the Upper Valley Pastures have seen a reduction in the number and quality of wet pastures. Those that remain provide an important resource which should be managed and enhanced. An increase in horse pasturing is creating particular pressures which need to be addressed. On the Moorland Slopes & Cloughs there is a need to ensure that flush, spring and rush pasture associated habitats are robust and capable of maintaining integrity during periods of heavy water run off, which may become more frequent with climate change.

Manage and enhance landscape around reservoirs

The reservoirs of the Dark Peak offer opportunities for landscape enhancement and improved recreational and educational opportunities. This could be achieved by restructuring existing plantation woodland; establishing small-scale scrub, woodland or linear tree features; diversifying associated grassland or heathland areas; and enhancing provision of recreational and educational facilities where appropriate.

Plan

Create clough woods

Opportunities should be sought to extend and create clough woodlands within the Moorland Slopes & Cloughs, preferably by natural regeneration, without affecting cultural heritage features, historic landscapes and existing ecological features.

Develop small-scale renewable energy for local needs

There are many opportunities to develop small-scale renewable energy schemes within the fringe areas of the Dark Peak. In particular, there are opportunities in the Reservoir Valleys With Woodland to develop hydroelectric schemes and local wood fuel projects. The Upper Valley Pastures of Edale could support other renewable energy sources, including local wood fuel projects. Opportunities should be sought within new development and management of woodland to increase local renewable energy supply where it would have a neutral impact on the character of the area and its component parts. Where appropriate seek positive measures to reinforce the local landscape character as part of new development.

Create and link patches of wetland farmland habitats

The Dark Peak has strong association with wetland habitats. Pastoral landscapes in particular have seen a reduction in the number and quality of wet pastures. These are important landscapes that need to be protected and managed. Opportunities should be sought to extend and link wet pasture and flushes together, whilst protecting cultural heritage features. There may also be opportunities within the flatter pastures of the Upper Valley Pastures to create flood meadows, helping to reduce flood risks downstream.

Consider the reopening of small-scale quarries for local stone supply

Where environmentally appropriate, and when demand can justify supply, it may be acceptable to open up some relict quarry sites over a limited extent and duration to enable restoration of local, vernacular buildings. Such decisions must be made on a site basis and consider all economic, landscape and environmental needs and issues.

Create, extend and link areas of heath/moor

There are opportunities within the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands of the Dark Peak to diversify the existing grassland-based landscapes. This can be achieved by creating new moorland/heath and extending and linking existing patches of moor/heath.

Stream at Ladybower © Peak District National Park Authority

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