PEAK DISTRICT
NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

4: Dark Peak Western Fringe

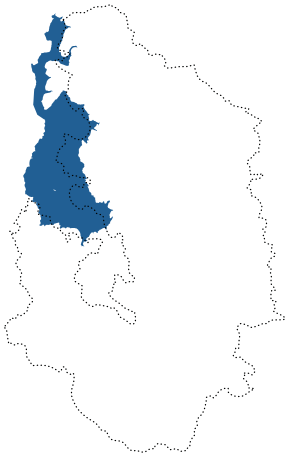
July 2009

Peak District

Landscape Character Assessment

Dark Peak Western Fringe

Pob Green Uppermill © Peak District National Park Authority



Introduction

The Dark Peak Western Fringe comprises the sloping and lower lying landscapes of the Goyt, Etherow and Tame valleys. It contrasts with the Dark Peak in that, although it includes enclosed moorland landscapes, it is more settled and has been cultivated to a much greater degree than is the case in the adjoining wilder uplands. Equally, the early industrial character of the former mill settlements is very different from that of the adjoining coalfields in the Manchester Pennine Fringe. Mills are a prominent feature of this area exploiting local power sources: firstly employing the streams running off the Dark Peak for power and from the 18th century using some of the coal mined locally.

Physical influences

As in the other areas surrounding the Dark Peak, the physical structure of the Dark Peak Western Fringe is strongly influenced by the underlying geology. This comprises a sequence of shales and gritstones belonging to the Millstone Grit series, which have been eroded in different ways to produce a distinctly undulating topography. The upstanding, higher ground tends to be formed from gritstone, while the valleys and other lower lying areas are cut into the underlying, softer shales. These beds then pass beneath the more rolling Lancashire Coal Measures that extend from the west towards the lower slopes of the Dark Peak particularly between Glossop and Whaley Bridge. The Coal Measures consist of interbedded grey shales, siltstones and sandstones with occasional beds of coal and ironstone.

The steep slopes of the adjoining Dark Peak give way to lower lying valleys and adjoining floodplains in the valley bottoms of the Dark Peak Western Fringe. Deep and narrow, steep sided cloughs, often a characteristic feature within this sloping ground, carry water that has drained off the moorland summits down into larger rivers, such as the Goyt, Tame and Etherow.

Glaciation had a strong impact on the form of this landscape. During the last ice age, the Devensian, the Peak District was a peri-glacial tundra with snowfields and frozen ground. The Peak District Western Fringe was influenced by the Devensian glaciation with the erosion of ice stream valleys and the deposition of significant deposits of glacial till. During the tundra peri-glacial conditions wind erosion damaged the Millstone Grit creating a dust, know as loess, which was deposited across the Peak District.

Ecological influences

For the most part the soils of the Dark Peak Western Fringe are seasonally waterlogged, gleyed soils found over the shale beds on lower lying land, where they are used for improved permanent pasture. These are often associated with deep, loamy and clayey soils that have developed on glacial deposits and in places on alluvial deposits on the valley floors. On the upper slopes of the gritstone hills shallow, in places impoverished, mineral soils can be found which tend to produce agriculturally poor pasture land containing occasional rough patches and remnant moorland vegetation that reflect the original semi-natural character of these landscapes. On hill summits such soils are often impoverished and have peaty topsoils, giving rise to patches of enclosed acid grassland and moor often used for rough grazing.

On the enclosed moorland heather dominates, with varying amounts of bilberry, cowberry and crowberry. These upland heaths support birds such as red grouse, meadow pipit and curlew. Where there has been prolonged grazing acid grassland has replaced the heathland. Associated areas of bracken are important in places for breeding whinchat. Acid flushes have developed locally, with carpets of sphagnum moss, sedges and rushes.

Fast flowing streams have created deeply incised cloughs and valleys whose sides are clothed with acid grassland and bracken, with occasional relic heathland vegetation such as bilberry. 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 grey wagtail, 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, eyebright, 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.

Human influences

The Dark Peak is renowned for its remote, isolated moorland summits, however, the lowlands of the Western Fringe have been settled for a long time: land has been cultivated for agriculture, mainly pastoral land uses with some small scale quarrying and coal mining. Fast flowing rivers have been used as both water supply and to power early industry.

There is a Roman fort at Melandra Castle, to the north of Gamesley, and no doubt there were Romano-British farmsteads scattered in the valley around, but little archaeological evidence for these has been found. During medieval times, much of the Dark Peak Western Fringe was managed as a Royal Hunting Forest with severe penalties for trespass or poaching. The Royal Forest of the Peak ran through the southern parts of this fringe area, from the Etherow southwards and the Goyt eastwards, and was managed as a hunting forest with Chapel-en-le-Frith as one of the administration centres for this. Indeed, the name means Chapel in the Forest and reflects the building of a chapel by foresters during the medieval period.

The upper slopes of the landscape are settled with occasional, dispersed gritstone farmsteads associated with pasturing, with improved pastures and enclosure, while small hamlets are found further down in the less exposed, but wetter, valleys. Dispersed farmsteads were common here prior to industrialisation and are sometimes located close to coal mining and small scale quarrying which would presumably have played a part in the local economy

before the 19th century. Relatively large scale quarrying was carried out on the moorland and slopes, such as at Chinley Churn and Cown Edge, whilst coal mining was widely carried out in the area, from Saddleworth southwards through Glossop and New Mills to Whaley Bridge, with particularly important evidence surviving from early mines at Ollersett Moor.

The river valleys, that higher up the slopes consist of relatively undisturbed clough heads, widen out into land that has long been managed for both stock pasturing, settlement and industry. The valley slopes and bottoms have been used as a resource for grazing and stock rearing. The fast flowing rivers provided power and water for, at first small scale and then larger, industrial sites. Such was the case around Uppermill and New Mills where, over time, many mills were eventually located along the riverbanks and included cotton mills, woollen mills, dyeing and bleaching works, paper mills and print works. As urban populations surrounding the Dark Peak increased, people settled mainly around the lower lying land of the valleys near the larger mills, with hamlets growing into towns associated with the growing industry. For example, Glossop originated as one of several closely-spaced but small medieval hamlets with open fields which were partly subsumed in the 19th century by urban development. Routes cross over the moorland through this fringe landscape and other routes run along the valleys, joining up fringe settlements and providing access to wider markets outside of the area.

Although these lower lying areas are on the fringe of the Dark Peak, the development which has taken place here is closely linked to the opportunities provided by the Dark Peak landscapes, for instance building materials from gritstone, and water power. The adjacent coal measures meant that these settlements were ideally placed to exploit two resources: the water running off the Dark Peak and the coal that existed around the mills and in mines further west in the lowlands, particularly to the north-west around Bolton and Oldham. This location, at the interface between two significant topographical regions, gives these fringe landscapes a unique character different from those further east within the Dark Peak and those further west.

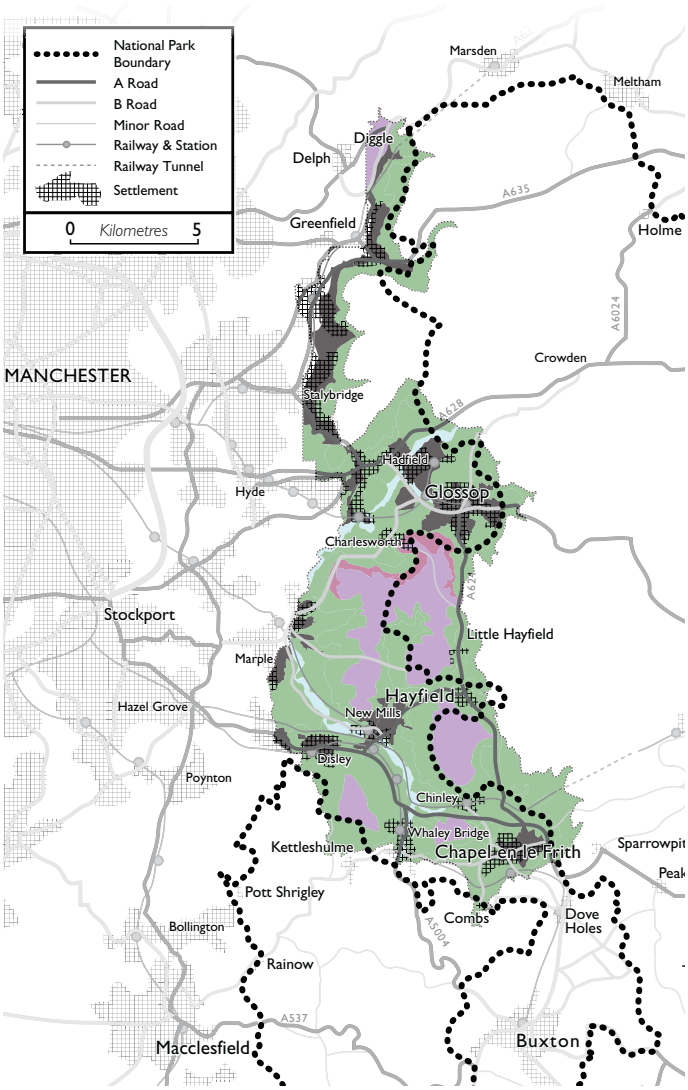
Sense of place

The landscape becomes more enclosed and pastoral away form the remote moorland tops of the Dark Peak. Within the national park the landscape remains peaceful but the isolation diminishes as the landscape becomes more intimate and settled with gritstone walled enclosures and isolated gritstone farmsteads, often with associated field barns and sheep pens. The improved fields and tree cover increase towards the valley bottoms creating variety in the landscape and intermingling with gritstone buildings that become more dominant towards the main areas of settlement. Relict moorland vegetation, such as bilberry, is often found along field boundaries and verges.

In places the landscape remains unsettled, particularly on steeper ground and up into the narrow, steep cloughs where access is limited. These locations can be important habitats for nesting birds and other species. Settlements tend to be larger here than in the core of the Dark Peak, with several small urban centres including Glossop, Stalybridge and New Mills. These settlements are strongly associated with past industry, and include old mills, old industrial sites, railways and dense settlement, often with characteristically small gritstone terraced properties. Although these settlements often have an industrial association they also have a strong link with the Dark Peak.

The Dark Peak Western Fringe can be sub-divided into a number of different landscape types, each of which is characterised by a particular aspect of the wider Dark Peak Western Fringe character. They have been defined by their broadly repeating patterns of natural elements and cultural factors:

- Moorland Slopes & Cloughs
- Enclosed Gritstone Uplands
- Valley Pastures With Industry
- Riverside Meadows

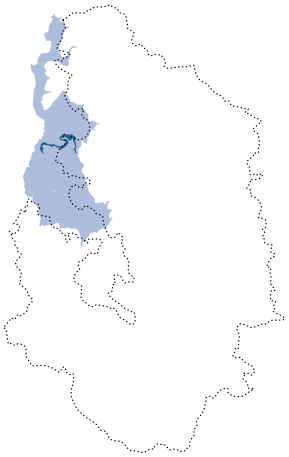


Dipper © Peak District National Park Authority

Moorland Slopes & Cloughs

Steep slopes and cloughs rising to precipitous gritstone edges and scree slopes, with rough grassland and heather moor grazed by sheep. This is largely an exposed, unsettled landscape with views over lower ground.

Coombes Edge, Charlesworth © Peak District National Park Authority



This landscape occurs in one location within the Dark Peak Western Fringe, in the west of the area, along Coombes Edge and around Long Clough.

Key characteristics

- Steep slopes and cloughs, in places rising to precipitous edges
- Prominent gritstone outcrops, boulders and scree slopes
- Thin soils over gritstone bedrock
- Rough acid grassland and heather moorland grazed by sheep
- Exposed views over lower ground, sometimes limited by clough sides

Geology and landform

This is a sloping landscape, strongly influenced by the underlying Millstone Grit which forms the upper slopes fringing the moorland summits. The resulting landform creates a sense of elevation with panoramic views over surrounding countryside and settlements. The slopes were eroded by freeze-thaw processes, land slips and down washing from streams. There are some outcrops of gritstone, on steeper slopes most notably where it forms distinct edges with precipitous rock faces as at Coombes Edge.

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 can have a wet peaty surface horizon. Owing to poor quality soils, this is a landscape with patches of semi-natural vegetation with a mixture of heather and bilberry, and acid grassland where mat grass and purple moor grasses are dominant.

Upper slopes and steep clough sides have gritstone outcrops. Some support fern banks while on land that is inaccessible to grazing, such as ledges, tall vegetation species such can flourish.

Tree cover

The poor soils, exposure and grazing on these moorland slopes restrict tree growth, resulting in an essentially treeless landscape over much of the type. However, scattered trees and patches of scrub occur within cloughs and occasional small coniferous plantation woodlands are found on moorland slopes.

Land use

Owing to its elevation and poor quality soils, this is a marginal agricultural landscape used primarily as rough grazing for sheep; there are some improved pastures but these tend to be small and localised. The slopes support a range of recreation such as walking on footpaths and bridleways that cross this character type, particularly along Coombes Edge.

Enclosure

Not all of this landscape character type is enclosed reflecting its steep nature. Of the areas that are enclosed, their date is uncertain as there is no map coverage before the 19th century. Fields are generally irregular in shape and enclosed by gritstone drystone walls.

Settlement and buildings

This is a very sparsely settled landscape with only occasional isolated gritstone farmsteads with stone tile roofs on lower slopes.

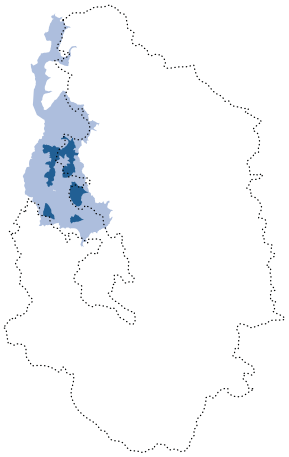
Transport and access

The Moorland Slopes & Cloughs are largely inaccessible to transport with the exception of routes that cross over the moors, such as Monks Road. There are smaller tracks throughout the landscape mainly providing access to farms. Braided hollow-ways provide evidence that this landscape was once more widely travelled through. There are pathways and bridleways, often following the contours, particularly around the western facing slopes. Some of this landscape character type is access land.

Enclosed Gritstone Uplands

An enclosed upland landscape associated with high, gently undulating upland tops. This is a landscape of isolated stone farmsteads, straight roads and regular fields enclosed by drystone walls. Patches of remnant moorland vegetation are a feature in places within this landscape character type.

Knarrs Nook nr Hollingworth Head © Peak District National Park Authority



This landscape occurs on the edge of the moorland core, on the western margin of the Peak District, on the uplands centred on New Mills and to the west of Hayfield.

Key characteristics

- High rolling upland with some steeper slopes
- Thin soils over gritstone bedrock with localised pockets of peat
- Remnant patches of rough land with bracken and gorse, some heather and bilberry
- Permanent pasture and rough grazing enclosed by gritstone walls
- Regular pattern of medium to large fields
- Straight roads with wide verges of grass and, in some places, heather
- Scattered gritstone farmsteads with stone slate roofs and some relict quarry and coal mining sites
- Trees grouped around farmsteads for shelter

Geology and landform

This landscape is associated with a high, gently undulating gritstone upland top. The underlying bedrock is Millstone Grit, which is often exposed as rock outcrops particularly on the steeper slopes where it sometimes forms small gritstone edges.

Soils and vegetation

The variable nature of the geology and landform gives rise to a variety of soil types ranging from free draining podzols on steeper slopes to wetter, more peaty soils on gentler summits. All the soils are characterised by their impoverished, acidic origin and although most of the land is now improved for pasture, many patches of semi-natural vegetation still exist along verges, on steeper slopes and even as isolated patches within some fields. There is moorland vegetation in some locations, in places on Marley Moor. Heath-associated species, such as heather, bilberry and gorse, are a common feature in places. Where the soils are wetter, species such as purple moor grass tend to be more common. There are some patches of soft rush on the wetter soils, 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 of mainly broadleaved species such as oak, ash and sycamore. Tree groups are planted adjacent to some farmsteads to create shelter around properties. There are some shelterbelts and occasional blocks of 19th or 20th century coniferous plantation woodland within this type.

Land use

This is a landscape of mostly improved permanent pasture with sheep and cattle grazing and some rough grazing. There are some reseeded grass leys and very occasional arable fields. However, the soils are mostly nutrient poor. Acid grassland exists where the soils have not been improved and some fields are dominated by rushes or are reverting to moorland habitats providing ecological interest.

Historically, there was quarrying and mining associated with this landscape. At Chinley Churn there are particularly extensive relict quarries where surface quarrying and underground stone extraction was carried out. Historically, the landscape would also have supported coal mining as around Whaley Moor, Aspenshaw and Ludworth Intakes. There are extensive mining remains at Ollersett Moor dating from the early 18th to late 19th century.

Enclosure

The land here was enclosed from upland waste and commons. The date of the enclosure in this landscape varies with some ancient, irregular enclosure that predates mid 17th century historical mapping, as for example to the north-west of Hayfield. Later enclosure is more common. Some was probably enclosed prior to the late 18th century as part of private agreements, other areas could well have been enclosed as late as the 19th century.

Drystone gritstone walls are the prominent enclosing element, particularly on higher ground, although in some places enclosure is created by hedgerows and fencing; this tends to occur towards the fringes of the landscape and not on the higher ground.

Settlement and buildings

Settlement tends to consist of isolated gritstone farmsteads with stone slate roofs often dating from the time that much of this landscape was enclosed from the 18th century onwards. Settlements often use the natural land form for weather protection. Higher up, towards where the enclosure gives way to the open moorland, the landscape is largely unsettled.

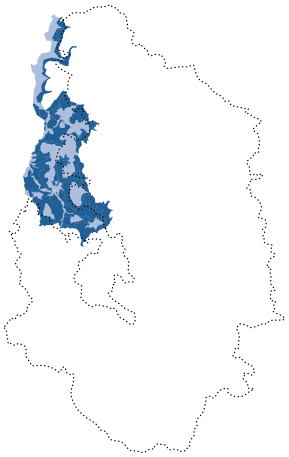
Transport and access

This is a landscape with limited vehicular access with a few roads and tracks associated with farmsteads. Within this landscape type there are older routes and names such as Monks Road suggest historical context associated with landowners such as those at medieval abbeys. There is a network of footpaths throughout this landscape including the Pennine Bridleway and some small areas of access land.

Valley Pastures With Industry

A small scale, settled pastoral landscape on undulating lower valley slopes. There are filtered views through scattered hedgerows and dense streamside trees. Stone built terraced housing on lower slopes is associated with historic mills. There are dispersed gritstone farmsteads as well as small clusters of farms with associated dwellings. Pastoral farmland is bounded by hedgerows and drystone walls.

Pastoral valleys with industry © Ivan Gajos, Countryscape



This landscape character type exists as a large area running from the north to the south of the Dark Peak Western Fringe running from Bleak Hey to Stalybridge and from Arnfield to Chapel-en-le-Frith.

Key characteristics

- A low lying undulating valley topography, rising towards adjacent higher ground
- Network of streams and localised damp hollows with millponds and leats
- Pastoral farmland enclosed by hedgerows and drystone walls
- Small to medium sized fields
- Trees are dense along watercourses and scattered along hedgerows and around settlement
- Dispersed settlement with isolated farmsteads and small clusters of dwellings
- Stone built terraced housing associated with historic mills
- Narrow winding lanes, sunken on slopes

Geology and landform

An undulating lower valley floor landscape with rounded hills and shallow to steep valley sides, incised by steeper cloughs in places. The underlying geology is of interbedded Millstone Grit combined with shales and siltstones. To the south of the area, below Glossop and westwards, the coal measures influence the underlying geology. The coal measures consist of interbedded grey shales, siltstones and sandstones with occasional beds of coal and ironstone (the latter dispersed through particular beds of other rocks). The valley is mostly covered with glacial till deposits. Where the river level has altered, a series of terraces have been cut into alluvial deposits.

Soils and vegetation

Soils are characterised by base poor, gleyed soils which are waterlogged, lacking oxygen and nutrients. Where the soils are permanently wet the horizons tend to be rich in organic matter and often intergrading into peat deposits. Along river channels soils tend to be alluvium, created and carried by relict rivers. This is an agricultural landscape with limited biodiversity value as much of the land is improved, although there are occasional, isolated patches of unimproved grassland which enhances biodiversity. Mixed species hedgerows provide an important habitat linking woodland and other habitats. In wetter fields there are rushy pastures which provide diversity as do the heath species such as heather and bilberry that are often located along verges.

Tree cover

Woodland exists as shelterbelts and often densely along streams and tributaries giving the impression of a well wooded landscape even though much farmland exists. There are scattered ancient woodlands throughout the character type such as around the western side of Shire Hill; these further contribute to the wooded nature of the landscape. Most woodlands are broadleaved and contain species such as oak, ash and sycamore. There is some coniferous plantation woodland such as around Dovestones Reservoir in the North of the area.

Land use

This is a pastoral landscape of cattle and sheep grazing. In some areas, agriculture is more intensive with dairying and stock rearing. There are reservoirs in this landscape, such as the Coombes Reservoir, the Bottoms Reservoir and the Dovestone Reservoir. There are also some industrial mills surviving in the valley bottoms, as for example around Birch Vale, Chinley and Uppermill.

Areas such as Whaley Bridge and New Mills were also historically important for coal mining and the coal extracted was very important in the 19th and early 20th centuries to provide fuel for local manufacturing and industry. While not much remains at surface of these once important mines, there are rare examples of Cornish steam engine houses and other colliery structures still standing.

Enclosure

This is a landscape of small to medium fields, many of which are known to pre-date the first historical mapping of the mid 17th century. Other enclosures are also irregular but undated, while there are examples of regular enclosure such as to early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure fields to the south-east of Glossop. Within this landscape character type there are several small areas of narrow fields that reflect piecemeal enclosure of strips on medieval open fields associated with the settlements, to the east of Hadfield, around Padfield, and to the south of Glossop at Charlesworth, Whitfield and Chunal.

Settlement and buildings

This is a settled landscape with distinctive gritstone mill settlements and dispersed outlying settlement. Beyond the urban centres, such as Glossop, New Mills and Whaley Bridge, there are three distinctive forms of settlement in the landscape: dispersed farmsteads, farmsteads clustered with other dwellings in hamlets, and terraces associated with historic mills.

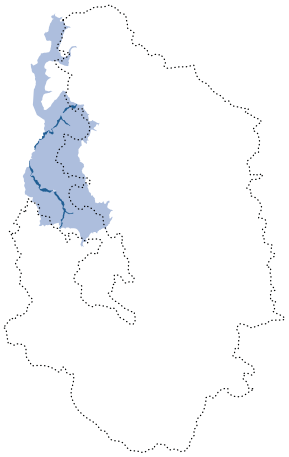
Transport and access

This landscape has a relatively strong network with some busy roads and many smaller winding lanes that connect areas of settlement. There are two train lines running through this landscape. There were once further railway branches in this landscape character type that have now closed, some now forming recreational routes such as the Sett Valley Trail.

Riverside Meadows

A small scale pastoral landscape characterised by a meandering river channel in a flat alluvial floodplain. Views are often tightly framed by lines of riverside trees. Patches of wetland vegetation are a distinctive feature associated with the river channel.

River Goyt Furness Vale © Peak District National Park Authority



This landscape character type exists in two locations within this fringe landscape along the River Etherow and further south along the River Goyt.

Key characteristics

- A flat alluvial river corridor
- Meandering river channel with shingle beds and marginal vegetation
- Seasonally waterlogged alluvial soils
- Grazing meadows, often with patches of wet grassland
- Dense waterside and scattered hedgerow trees

Geology and landform

This is a river valley bottom landscape and has a narrow almost flat floodplain. There are deposits of alluvial silts sands and gravels. Hollows within the floodplain reflect the past courses of the river.

Soils and vegetation

The floodplain is characterised by gleyed soils that are either continuously or seasonally waterlogged. The river enhances the fertility of the soil when flood water deposits nutrients that replenish the wet soils. The meadows are either seasonally or permanently wet, creating wet pastures which support soft rush and some sedges.

Tree cover

The river banks are densely lined with alder and some willow. This creates an intimate landscape where views are filtered by watercourse trees and framed by the adjacent wooded slopes. In places there are small copses of willow carr and poplars.

Land use

This is a pastoral landscape with permanent pasture dominating due to heavy soils and seasonal waterlogging. There is some semi-improved grassland. In the past, land uses have been more industrial, the fast flowing rivers were used to power industry. Away from the urban areas on the narrow floodplain some mills still survive and are often converted to other uses, while other mills have been demolished and only remnant mill ponds and races give evidence of this past industry in this tranquil landscape.

Enclosure

Enclosure in this landscape is often irregular, particularly along the River Goyt where it s origin is unknown. Generally, small fields are bound by mixed species thorn dominated hedgerows creating a sense of enclosure adjacent to the river; the presence of riverside trees enhances this sense of enclosure.

Settlement and buildings

This is a largely unsettled landscape where the wet ground and risk of flooding make development difficult. There are occasional gritstone farmsteads on the higher ground above the valley bottoms and several sites of former mills.

Transport and access

There are few roads within the character type due to the wet nature of the soils creating limited opportunity for road building. In places roads and the railway line cut through the landscape to cross over the river. Crossing points vary with some gritstone bridges and, later, metal bridges. The Peak Forest Canal follows the floodplain in places. The Bugswoth Canal Basin was an important transport hub created in the late 18th century that today forms an important leisure resource.

Overall Strategy

Chinley Churn & Cracken Edge from Eccles Pike © Peak District National Park Authority

The Dark Peak Western Fringe consists of sloping and lower lying land adjacent to the Dark Peak, more settled in character than the Dark Peak landscapes. The settlements have a strong historical and visual association with the Dark Peak and represent a wealth of cultural heritage resources. This character and link to the Dark Peak should be protected and managed in order to maintain the distinctive character. The landscapes of the Dark Peak Western Fringe provide an important resource and transition between the more settled and urban areas associated with Manchester in the west and the Dark Peak in the east. There is a need to enhance condition, ensuring ecological and cultural integrity and robustness in all of the landscape character types, and to manage the existing small-scale character of settlements, maintaining density in order to prevent significant urbanisation of character. The transitional nature of this landscape means that good partnership working with neighbouring authorities is important.

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

Protect and manage the settled, cultural character and the biodiversity and recreational resources of these landscapes through sustainable landscape management, whilst maintaining strong cultural associations with the Dark Peak landscapes.

This can be achieved by ensuring that there is:

- a land planning and management system capable of maintaining and enhancing the settlement patterns and cultural landscape resources
- a sustainable land management system capable of supporting the retention and expansion of habitats

Bugsworth Basin © 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 Western Fringe.

Moorland Slopes & Cloughs

Within the National Park this landscape character type is restricted to a small area around Coombes Edge and Long Clough, to the south of Glossop. This is a steeply sloping landscape with dramatic geology such as scree slopes and gritstone outcrops, as well as flushes, springs, rush pastures and clough woods. Priorities for this landscape character type should be to maintain open views of the dramatic gritstone edges and the mosaic of small-scale semi-natural grassland, heath and woodland/scrub mosaics within a sustainable land management system.

Enclosed Gritstone Uplands

This is a sparsely settled pastoral upland landscape largely restricted, within the National Park, to two areas around Ollersett Moor/ Chinley Churn and Cowan Edge/Motley Moor/Lantern Pike. Priorities for this landscape character type include managing the sparsely settled character and protecting or enhancing the historical enclosed character of the landscape, whilst enhancing the ecological value and connectivity of wet pastures and heath in a sustainable farming system.

Valley Pastures With Industry

This is a lowland, settled, pastoral landscape with settlement often associated with gritstone-built mills. The priority in this landscape character type is to protect the existing historical settlement and enclosure pattern within a sustainable farming system. This includes retaining the pastoral land uses which are, in places, being significantly altered by horse pasturing activities through the introduction of new boundaries, often post and wire fencing, field shelters and other associated infrastructure.

Riverside Meadows

Within the National Park only Bottoms Reservoir falls within this landscape character type. There are no strong landscape priorities other than ensuring any infrastructure development is minimised and in keeping with the local building styles and materials. Opportunities for hydroelectric power could be considered.

Issues of change

Conservation

The Dark Peak Western Fringe has cultural value largely associated with industrial heritage features including mills and their infrastructures, trackways and small scale remnant quarries and canals (e.g. the Peak Forest Canal), often linked with coal mines. These cultural features are essential to the character of the landscape. In the south of the area the relict Royal Hunting Forest landscapes leave an important influence.

The Dark Peak Western Fringe is largely a pastoral landscape. The higher landscapes, such as the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands, have seen heathland vegetation reduced to isolated patches and road verges. This loss is generally associated with agricultural improvement and overgrazing. In the lower lying landscape character types, changing agricultural practices have seen a reduction in wet pastures and flood meadows, which provide ecological diversity and potential flood alleviation resources, particularly in the Riverside Meadows landscape character type. Hedgerows in the lower lying landscapes provide links with woodland but are often degraded and in poor condition; this limits their ecological value and visual unity within the landscape.

Climate change implications

If landscapes are not sufficiently managed and 'climate proofed', issues such as erosion and habitat loss, particularly in the uplands and on sloping land most affected by heavy rainfall run off, will be exacerbated with the changing climate. This could cause significant landscape change. The Riverside Meadows may provide a useful flood water storage resource, which could mitigate the impacts of heavy, energetic rainfall events that may become more regular as the climate changes.

Features of these landscapes, such as faster flowing rivers, have in the past been used to generate energy and provide power to mills. Opportunities to reapply such power sources should be considered as a means of reducing reliance on carbon-based energies and thus mitigating the landscape impacts of climate change.

Demography, housing and employment

The landscapes of the Dark Peak Western Fringe have a settled character in comparison with the Dark Peak. In places, there is an urban fringe character. The drive to meet national housing targets brings the potential for development pressures adjacent to the National Park boundary, and this could impact on the surrounding landscapes and their historical settlement patterns and densities. As with other landscapes associated with the National Park, in some areas, changes in the agricultural sector have led to farms being bought as domestic properties rather than as working entities. In the Dark Peak Western Fringe, this change in the agricultural character of the area is associated with the introduction of horse pasturing, which can affect the historical agricultural character of the area through changes in the pattern and nature of field boundaries and through damage to pastures and to soil integrity.

Tourism and recreation

The less settled landscapes of the Dark Peak Western Fringe are valued for the opportunities to experience solitude and tranquillity due to their close proximity to existing and historical industry and settlement. The recreational opportunities that are provided by these landscapes are highly valued by local communities and represent an important resource. Honey-pot areas are currently small, but there is a growing demand from horse riding and mountain biking.

Farming and forestry

Much of the agricultural land in the Dark Peak Western Fringe is used for permanent pasture, generally managed at a low to moderate level of intensity. Occasional patches of rougher ground survive in places such as Ollersett Moor, with remnants of heather moor elsewhere (Coombes Rocks, Matley Moor and Lantern Pike). The field pattern is generally in decline, with a loss of boundaries in places, whilst many of the drystone walls that define the pattern are in poor condition, representing a loss of this cultural heritage resource. There has been a move from agricultural production to the use of land for horse pasture in many places, often associated with the development of stabling and post and rail fences. In places, this introduction of uncharacteristic field boundaries is degrading the historical enclosure pattern.

Woodland is not a significant feature inside the National Park within the Dark Peak Western Fringe, where tree cover is largely restricted to small woods, plantations and scattered trees and scrub along watercourses. There is a variable scattering of trees along some field boundaries and groups of trees around farmsteads and other dwellings. Many of these woods and trees are of a similar age and are declining due to lack of management.

Minerals and resources

There is only one active gritstone quarry within the Dark Peak Western Fringe, which lies on the edge of the National Park at Glossop. There are landscape impacts associated with this site, including visual intrusion, adverse effects on wildlife habitats, roads and tranquillity. There are the remnants of former quarries, reflecting the former industrial nature of the area; these relics contribute to the cultural heritage resource of the landscape and as a recreational resource, as many old quarries are used for rock climbing and bouldering.

In the northern part of the area, small reservoirs are a significant cultural feature, where streams descending from the Dark Peak moorlands have been dammed. These provide opportunities for landscape enhancement and recreation.

Energy and infrastructure

There is an increasing demand for national renewable energy schemes, in particular wind power. There is also increasing potential for solar power, water power, and other renewable energy sources. The impact of inappropriate wind generation projects could lead to a reduction of historic landscape character, amenity value and tranquillity. Historical exploitation of hydroelectric power has been an important influence in this area since the industrial revolution and there are opportunities to revive this resource. There is a visual impact of existing infrastructure associated with power supply, in particular overhead electricity cables. There are opportunities for planting native woodland and improved woodland management linked to local wood fuel usage.

High levels of vehicular use is increasing damage to roads, walls and verges and creating an increased demand for parking. Traffic routes that cross the Park can be very busy and become congested. This affects the 'gateways' in and out of the Park, reducing the visitor experience and causing problems for local people.

Church Inn, Pobgreen, Saddleworth © Peak District National Park Authority

Landscape guidelines

Dark Peak Western Fringe

	Moorland Slopes & Cloughs	Enclosed Gritstone Uplands	Valley Pastures with Industry	Riverside Meadows
Protect				
Protect and maintain features associated with the historic industrial character		◐	◐	◐
Protect and maintain drystone walls, hedgerows and historical enclosure patterns		◐	●	◐
Manage				
Manage the historical patterns of development	○	○	●	●
Maintain the network of minor roads to maintain character and local access	○	○	○	
Manage and enhance woodlands	◐	○	◐	◐
Manage and enhance semi-natural grassland and wetland landscapes	●	○	○	●
Manage and enhance the diversity of agricultural grassland	◐	◐	●	●
Manage and enhance areas of heath/moor	◐	●		
Manage and enhance landscape around reservoirs			●	
Plan				
Create new native broadleaved woodland	●	○	◐	◐
Create, extend and link areas of heath/moor	◐	●		
Develop small-scale renewable energy for local needs	◐	◐	◐	◐

● 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 features associated with the historic industrial character

Whilst most of the 19th century mills in the area lie outside the National Park, there are one or two mills, mill ponds and mill leats present. Small gritstone quarries are also a feature of the higher ground within the Valley Pastures With Industry, and in the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands. These features should be protected and maintained for their cultural heritage significance and, where appropriate, their educational and recreational potential.

Protect and maintain drystone walls, hedgerows and historical enclosure patterns

Enclosure is an important cultural feature of the Dark Peak Western Fringe, although it is not always evident on the Moorland Slopes & Cloughs, largely due to gradient. In some places, such as the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands, the historical enclosure pattern has declined and is not always evident. This historical enclosure pattern needs to be enhanced, particularly the enclosures which pre-date parliamentary enclosure. Equally, where drystone walls are in declining condition these would benefit from enhanced management to maintain this cultural heritage resource and the recognisable landscape character. Hedgerows in the lower lying landscape can often be in poor condition and require enhanced management to ensure good condition and visual unity within the landscape.

Manage

Manage the historical patterns of development

The mill towns and terraced houses so characteristic of the Valley Pastures With Industry in this area fall outside the National Park. Within the National Park, the settlement pattern consists of small hamlets and dispersed settlements associated with the older historic agricultural landscapes. It is important that future development respects and maintains this valued sense of place and historical development patterns. Similarly, where settlement does exist, the views into and out of the settlement should be protected, as they are important to character and sense of place. Opportunities should be sought to influence potential future development that lies outside the National Park boundary but could impact on the National Park. 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 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 woodlands

Woodland in the Dark Peak Western Fringe is limited; where it is a landscape feature, it needs to be well managed. This Dark Peak Western Fringe is largely treeless: there are patches of scrub within cloughs that would benefit from linking to the wider landscape mosaic. There are a few relatively small coniferous plantation woodlands in places, and these would benefit from removal or replacement with broadleaved woodland as appropriate. In the lower landscapes, woodland tends to be associated with boundaries or watercourses; there are patches of ancient woodland and small broadleaved plantations which would benefit from enhanced management.

Manage and enhance semi-natural grassland and wetland landscapes

The pastoral landscapes of the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands and the Valley Pastures With Industry 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 the diversity of agricultural grassland

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

Manage and enhance areas of heath/moor

The Dark Peak Western Fringe has areas of enclosure from moorland. In such locations, there are often patches of relict heath/moor habitat. Opportunity should be sought to manage and enhance their condition in order to create a more robust and connected ecological resource.

Manage and enhance landscape around reservoirs

The series of generally small historic reservoirs in the northern part of the area 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.

Eccles Pike and Chapel en le Frith © Peak District National Park Authority

Plan

Create new native broadleaved woodland

In the Dark Peak Western Fringe, small blocks of mainly broadleaved plantations, clough woods, linear streamside and field boundary trees are important features. This woodland network would be enhanced by managing the age structure of existing trees, creating new small-scale woods and managing hedgerows to provide linkages between existing sites. Increased woodland cover creates areas of shelter and shade and may be useful for mitigating the impacts of climate change; on slopes it also reduces water flow and can reduce flood damage to lower lying landscapes.

Create, extend and link areas of heath/moor

There are opportunities within the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands of the Dark Peak Western Fringe 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.

Develop small-scale renewable energy for local needs

There are many opportunities to develop small-scale renewable energy schemes within the Dark Peak Western Fringe: there are opportunities in the Valley Pastures With Industry to develop hydroelectric schemes linked to the historic use of water power. Opportunities should be sought within new developments and through the management of woodlands 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. Renewable energy can help to reduce reliance on traditional carbon-based energy.

Long Clough, South of Glossop © Peak District National Park Authority

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