

PASTORAL PLATEAU FARMLAND

Landscape character

The pastoral plateau landscape type occurs in four landscape units: Hawksworth Plateau (MGP2); Guiseley Plateau (MGP3); Eccup Plateau (MGP4); and the Rawdon Plateau (LCM16). Found in the north west of the district, mainly on the elevated Millstone Grit Plateau, this landscape type is characterised by medium scale, generally intact fields of pasture, grazed by sheep and cattle. The plateau tops are open and sometimes exposed, with isolated boundary trees and planted woodland strips alongside roads.

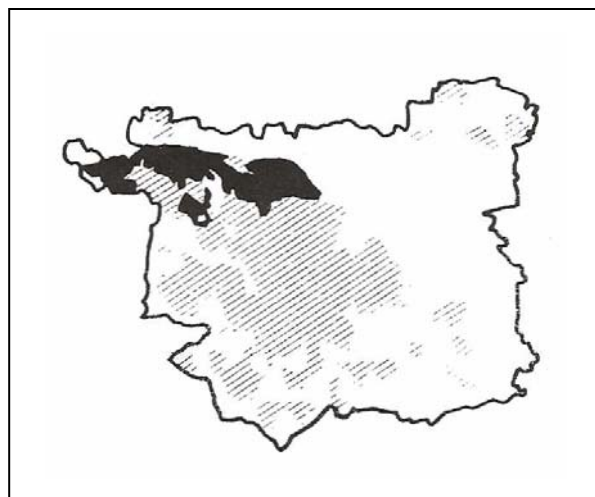
As the land drops, woodland occurs in small copses and as ribbons of semi-natural cover along streams and becks. A mix of hedgerows and (mainly) drystone walls form the field boundaries, being replaced by wire fencing as their condition begins to deteriorate. Small villages form the main settlements within this landscape type, with the urban edge of North Leeds occurring on the outskirts. Here, urban fringe land uses such as horse grazing and golf courses become more common. Extensive uninterrupted views can be gained over surrounding areas, particularly from the higher plateau tops.

Forces for change

Today, parts of the open and largely undeveloped pastoral plateau farmland are under pressure from urban influences such as garden centre and golf course development, and the spread of "horseculture." These activities are having an effect on land use, particularly along the lower slopes and around the edges of settlements and have the effect of introducing a 'suburban' nature to an otherwise predominantly rural landscape. In addition, and as in many of the areas around Leeds, some of the walls and hedgerows are poorly maintained and suffering from neglect.

Management strategy and guidelines

The overall management strategy for the pastoral plateau farmland landscape type should be a combination of conservation of the open undeveloped nature of the pastoral plateau and its characteristic



features with restoration of traditional farmland features where these are in decline or suffering from neglect. The strategy should be to protect the areas from further 'suburbanisation' of the countryside, including the loss of traditional farm buildings and their replacement with inappropriate new development.

Management guidelines which are applicable for all the landscape units within the pastoral plateau farmland landscape type are described below. Detailed management strategies and guidelines for the individual landscape units are described in separate documents.

- *Seek to control the adverse effects of horse grazing in inappropriate locations.* In recent years, there has been an increasing demand for the use of land for horse grazing, including around the pastoral fringes of northern Leeds. In places this has had a significant impact on the landscape, particularly where visible on the open plateau, with the proliferation of temporary structures and ancillary buildings and with impoverishment of pasture due to overgrazing. Where possible, these adverse effects of horse grazing should be controlled, particularly on the open plateau tops, where it introduces a 'suburban' influence into a rural landscape.
- *Conserve and enhance through small scale planting, the wooded copses and strip woodland alongside roads and becks.* The priority for this landscape should be to maintain the open character of the plateau summits. However, tree cover in strip woodland alongside roads and becks is an important feature and should be conserved. Any new woodland planting should complement and strengthen this pattern of strip woodland and should be broad-leaved in character.

- *Conserve and enhance tree cover along field boundaries. particularly on the lower slopes and within the shallow valleys, through regeneration and replanting o/boundary trees.*

The priority for this landscape should be to maintain the open character of the plateau summits. However, tree cover along boundaries on the lower slopes and within the valleys is a characteristic feature. To maintain and enhance this, natural regeneration of boundary trees should be encouraged wherever possible or replanting should be carried out using locally occurring species such as oak, ash and sycamore.

- *Conserve and enhance field pattern through more appropriate wall and hedgerow management.*

The general condition of hedgerows on the lower areas of the pastoral plateau is variable, although some are gappy or dying out at the base. Many hedges would benefit from more appropriate management, which would include allowing hedgerows to grow thicker and planting up individual gaps. They should not, however, be allowed to grow too tall as this would reduce the open nature of the area. Drystone walls made from the local millstone grit are also a distinctive feature of the higher parts of the plateau, contributing significantly to the local character. In places they are falling into disrepair, with some sections being replaced by wire fencing. Where possible, these walls should be restored, with priority given to restoring those along roadsides and along farm boundaries.