

GRITSTONE MOORLAND

Landscape character

The gritstone moorland landscape type occurs in the far north west of the District, as part of the larger Rombalds Moor, which stretches away to the west. It is found in only one landscape unit: Hawksworth Moor (MGP6) and forms an open and exposed, gently rounded upland moorland area, dissected by a series of small becks and drains.

Dominated by dense swathes of heather and crowberry, the moorland is enclosed by drystone walling, which separates the semi-natural area from the fields of semi-improved pasture along its fringes.

Within these fields, patches of scrub and isolated stunted trees add variety to the vegetation cover. Reservoir development occurs along the fringes, where commanding views can be gained over the urban areas to the south and south-east.

Forces for change

Much of the character of the gritstone moorland landscape type has resulted from traditional methods of maintaining heath land, through grazing, cutting and burning, which controls scrub invasion and allows the rejuvenation of young heath land plants. Past threats have tended to arise from the reclaiming of the moor to create geometric blocks of semi-improved pasture, which cut sharply into the edges of heathland areas. Today, one of the biggest threats to the moorland is through neglect, with the abandonment of many of the traditional methods of land management. Additional changes could result from further, highly visible reservoir development along the fringes of the moor.



Management strategy and guidelines

Due to its unique character, the overall management strategy for the gritstone moorland landscape type should be one of conservation of the existing landscape, through the promotion of traditional land management techniques and the control over further development along its fringes.

Management guidelines which are applicable the gritstone moorland landscape type are described below. Detailed management strategies and guidelines for the individual landscape units are described in a separate document, using the reference listed above.

- *Identify opportunities for re-establishing heather moorland on suitable sites.* Heather moorland once covered a larger area in the Leeds District than it does today, with fields previously reclaimed from the moorland and improved for grazing. With the recent changes in agricultural policy and the introduction of schemes such as Countryside Stewardship, the creation of a diverse heather moorland could be considered on sites where the soils are suitable. This would provide visual diversity, enhance nature conservation interest and re-establish an important historic feature in the landscape.

- *Encourage traditional management practices and stocking levels which maintain moorland vegetation.*
Effective management is needed in order to maintain the gritstone moorland landscape. Traditionally this has taken the form of grazing by sheep, which if undertaken at the correct level of intensity can prevent invasion by scrub and encourage the healthy regeneration of young heather shoots. Burning and cutting can also be used as management measures. This type of traditional management should be encouraged, through the promotion of such schemes such as Countryside Stewardship.
- *Conserve and restore field boundary walls along the edge of the moor and along the roadsides.*
Drystone walls made from the local millstone grit are a distinctive feature of the moorland and its surrounds, contributing significantly to the local character. They define the edges of the moorland area, but in places are falling into disrepair. Where possible, these walls should be restored, with priority given to restoring those along roadsides and along the edge of the moor.