

WOODED ESCARPMENT

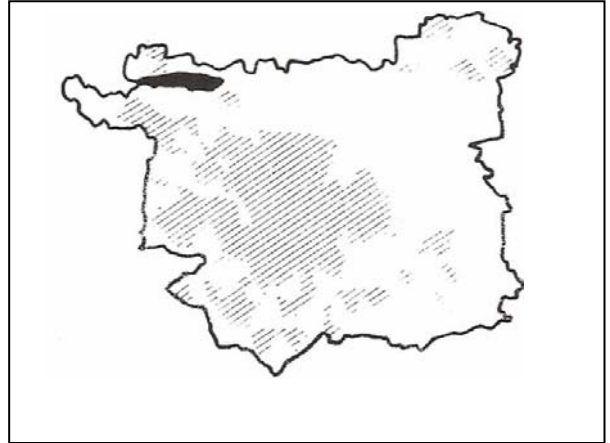
Landscape character

The wooded escarpment landscape type occurs in only one landscape unit: The Chevin (WHF4). It is characterised by a steep sided wooded escarpment occurring on the Millstone Grit escarpment overlooking the Wharfe Valley. The ridge top is characterised by regular, fairly large fields of pasture, bounded by low stone walls, with areas of open heathland forming part of the Chevin Forest Country Park.

The slopes are dominated by dense mixed and coniferous plantations, which extend along the scarp, with only small pockets of isolated pasture to break up their unity. These areas of pasture are bounded by drystone walls and hedgerows. This is a sparsely populated area, with only isolated farm buildings lying along the top of the ridge and scattered housing along the base of the slope. Spectacular views over the Wharfe Valley and beyond can be gained from the top of the escarpment.

Forces for change

One of the most significant changes in the past along the wooded escarpment has been the planting of mixed and coniferous woodland. This has gone hand in hand with a decrease in the amount of heath land present, particularly along higher areas, although current changes in land cover are managed and controlled through the designation of much of the area as a Country Park.



Management strategy and guidelines

The overall management strategy for the wooded escarpment landscape type should be to conserve the characteristic features of the area, which make it of importance, not only in landscape terms but also for recreation and wildlife interests.

Management guidelines which are applicable for all the landscape units within the wooded escarpment landscape type are described below. Detailed management strategies and guidelines for the individual landscape unit are described in a separate document, using the reference listed above left.

- *Opportunities should be sought for creating heathland habitats during the restoration of mineral workings.* Restoration of the old quarries along the wooded escarpment can offer positive opportunities for creative conservation and enhancement of landscape character, in particular the creation of heath land. Currently restoration includes tree planting and while this is appropriate on the slopes, it is not as appropriate on the open escarpment top, where it may appear incongruous against its immediate surrounds and may block views over the surrounding area. Restoration to heath land, if this is done as part of an overall plan for the wider area, may be more suitable.

- *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 covering a larger area than it does at present on the open escarpment top, 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.
- *Conserve the wooded character of the escarpment.*
The major feature of the steeply sloping escarpment is its well wooded nature. Although not an Ancient Woodland, the existing mixed planted woodlands are an important landscape, wildlife and recreational resource. This interest can be enhanced through sympathetic management, with the natural regeneration of native broadleaves encouraged where possible. To maintain species diversity, management should also favour small scale felling coupes.
- *Discourage additional areas of coniferous planting and encourage the diversification of existing areas and softening of edges, through deciduous planting.*
The coniferous plantations along the escarpment form a dark mass of woodland, with generally sharp and regular outlines. Additional areas of coniferous planting should be discouraged, with the aim being to soften the edges of existing woods through deciduous planting. This is particularly appropriate where the plantation levels out on the escarpment top, where particular attention needs to be given to the nature of woodland edges. Any new planting within the existing woodland should be predominantly broad leaved in character, although selection of suitable species will need to reflect a wide range of considerations, including the balance to be struck between nature conservation, landscape enhancement, recreation and timber production.
- *Conserve and restore field boundary walls along the escarpment.*
Drystone walls made from the local millstone grit are a characteristic feature, defining fields of pasture, particularly along the lower slopes. In places, these walls are in poor condition and where possible should be conserved. Priority should be given to restoring those along roadsides and farm boundaries.