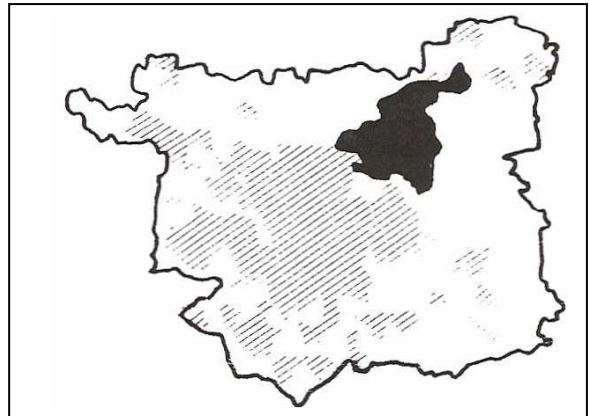


SMALL SCALE FARMED RIDGES & VALLEYS



Landscape character

The small scale farmed ridges and valleys landscape type occurs in only one landscape unit: Wike Ridge to East Rigton (MGP5).

It is characterised by an undulating series of settled and farmed ridges and valleys, crossed by a number of streams and becks. The ridges tend to be open, with a regular pattern of larger arable fields and with little tree cover. In contrast, the valleys are characterised by small fields of permanent pasture, grazed by sheep, cattle and horses.

Hedgerows are prominent on the slopes and within the valleys, with linear semi-natural woodlands occurring along the winding becks. A high density of closely spaced settlements with traditional village cores are linked by a network of minor roads. New developments include a number of golf courses which stretch along the valley slopes. Views from within are constantly changing depending on the nature of the landform.

Forces for change

One of the characteristic features of the small scale farmed ridges and valleys, is the contrast between the enclosed pastoral and wooded valleys and the more open arable farmland on the higher ground. The valleys appear to have undergone little change in recent years, remaining fairly intact. On the valley slopes and along the ridge tops,

however, many of the characteristic farmland features are showing signs of neglect, with hedgerows becoming gappy and many hedgerow and roadside trees dying without being replaced. Remnant parkland areas have also fallen into decline. Recent influences include the development of new housing around some of the villages and the construction of several golf courses, which lend a 'manicured' feel to the rural landscape.

Management strategy and guidelines

The overall management strategy for the small scale farmed ridges and valleys landscape type should aim to maintain the contrast between the open ridges and the more enclosed valleys whilst maintaining the integrity of the settlements. It should be a careful balance between conservation of the characteristic features of the landscape and restoration of these features where they are in decline.

Management guidelines which are applicable for all the landscape units within the small scale farmed ridges and valleys landscape type are described below. Detailed management strategies and guidelines for the individual landscape units are described in separate documents, using the references above left.

- *Any new development should reinforce the existing pattern of small rural villages. whilst preserving their character and individual identities.*
Within this landscape type, there are a number of closely spaced villages, each with their individual and characteristic identities. Conservation of this character and individuality should be a priority and all new development should be carefully sited and seek to harmonise with the local vernacular styles.
- *Seek to retain grassland along the valley bottoms and where possible consider a re/urn to traditional grassland management.*
Traditionally, the valley bottoms in this area would have been used for grazing. Although this is still the case in the majority of places, improvements in drainage have resulted in some fields being under arable production. This has the effect of breaking up the wooded and pastoral continuity of the river corridor. Given the current need to reduce surplus cereal production and to control nitrate leaching into water courses, the valleys would be suitable areas to return to permanent pasture and to return to traditional grassland management.
- *Conserve and enhance the wooded continuity of the river valleys and enhance their value as landscape. wildlife and recreation corridors.*
The series of wooded valleys within this landscape type form key linear features and important landscape and wildlife corridors. To maintain this value, natural regeneration of bankside trees should be encouraged. New small scale planting may also be appropriate, designed to reflect the sinuous nature of the watercourses, but care should be taken to avoid ecologically important sites, such as unimproved grasslands. Consideration should be given to encouraging recreational access along these valleys.
- *Conserve and enhance tree cover in the valleys and on the valley slopes through regeneration and replanting of hedgerow trees.*
Hedgerow trees are important features within this landscape type, particularly in the valleys and on the valley slopes, helping to reinforce the feeling of enclosure. To maintain and enhance this tree cover, natural regeneration of hedgerow trees should be encouraged wherever possible or new planting should be carried out, using locally occurring native species.
- *Where opportunities exist, consider restoring areas of former parkland.*
Although landscaped parks are not a particularly prominent feature within this landscape type, there are some remnant areas. As well as their historical importance, parklands provide diversity and interest in the landscape. True parkland in permanent grassland with large scattered trees is in decline. Wherever possible, consideration should be given to reinstating areas of former park and new planting to replace old trees.
- *Seek to control field amalgamation and hedgerow loss, particularly along the ridge tops. restoring hedges where these have been lost or are in poor condition.*
Field pattern is one of the dominant visual elements in this landscape, particularly along the valley slopes and the ridge tops, forming a structure that complements the settled character of the landscape. The regular fields are bounded by mixed and thorn hedgerows. In places, particularly on the ridge tops, hedgerows are becoming thin and gappy, which results in a more open, neglected landscape. Replacement hedgerow planting or restoration through more appropriate management should be encouraged in these areas, complementing the shape and scale of existing fields.