Update of Landscape Character Assessment for Northumberland National Park

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report is an update of an earlier landscape character assessment undertaken in 2007 by Julie Martin Associates, with Alison Farmer Associates and Countryscape, on behalf of Northumberland National Park Authority and the former Tynedale District Council.

The update has been commissioned by Northumberland National Park Authority and undertaken by Alison Farmer Associates in order to ensure it reflects an up to date evidence base for use in the emerging Local Plan for the National Park.

The initial character assessment included Tynedale District plus all of Northumberland National Park. In 2009 Local Authority reorganisation resulted in the creation of a single unitary authority, Northumberland County, which encompassed six districts including Tyndale. Subsequently a study to consolidate existing landscape character assessments for the new unitary authority was commissioned in 2010 and drew heavily on the former Tyndale District and Northumberland National Park assessment and assessments for the other relevant districts.

This update document contains only the landscape character areas and types relating to the National Park area. Care has been taken during this update to ensure revisions to this document remain consistent with the Northumberland County LCA. All drawings have been updated.

1.1 Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape character is the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes one landscape different from another. Variations in geology, soils, landform, land use, vegetation, field boundaries, settlement patterns and building styles all help give rise to different landscapes, each with its own distinctive character and sense of place.

These differences are the product of both natural and human influences. Within the National Park there is enormous landscape diversity, including (from north to south) the smooth, rounded uplands of the Cheviots; the wild Border moors and forests; the craggy sandstone hills around Simonside and the distinctive linear landscapes of the Tyne Gap and Hadrian’s Wall. The varied rocks, landforms and climatic differences have influenced both the natural flora and fauna and the way the landscape has been populated, managed and used by people over the centuries.

Landscape character assessment involves mapping, classifying and describing these variations in landscape character. It also involves making judgements about the character and condition of the landscape, and analysing forces for change, to help us make informed decisions about how we should manage change in the future. In classifying the landscape two types of unit may be identified:

Landscape character types are landscapes with broadly similar combinations of geology, landform, vegetation, land use, field and settlement patterns. Landscapes belonging to a particular type – for example ‘Sandstone Upland Valleys’ – may be found in many different places.

Landscape character areas are unique areas that are geographically discrete examples of a particular landscape character type. For example, the ‘Grasslees Valley’ is a landscape character area belonging to the ‘Sandstone Upland Valleys’ landscape character type.
Landscape character areas share the same elements as the landscape character type, but also have their own individual character and identity.

The assessment adopts a holistic approach that considers the landscapes of Northumberland National Park as a mosaic of different landscapes character types and landscape character areas, each with particular characteristics and subject to particular forces for change. It is intended to provide an understanding of the area’s landscape, through characterisation, together with advice on landscape change, through the preparation of strategy and guidelines material.

1.2 Background

This landscape character assessment takes as its starting point the Character Map of England prepared in the mid 1990s by the then Countryside Commission (Countryside Commission, 1998). This maps and describes variations in the character of the English countryside, defining 159 broad regional landscape character areas known initially as Countryside Character Areas. Within the last decade these have subsequently been updated and renamed as National Character Areas or NCAs and detailed profiles prepared for each.

The NCAs provide the overarching framework for the assessment, which analyses the landscape at a more detailed level, delineating and describing the landscape character types and landscape character areas that occur within each of the NCAs.

Other key changes in planning and strategy work since the original LCA was undertaken in 2007 include the following:

- 2009 publication of Northumberland National Park Local Development Framework
- 2010 Northumberland County Landscape Character Assessment
- 2011 publication of Landscape Supplementary Planning Document
- 2012 Publication of National Planning Policy Framework to replace PPGs
- 2013 National Character Areas updated with new profiles
- 2013 National Park attains International Dark Sky Park status

In addition to this there have been updates in wind farm capacity and sensitivity work, new guidance and advice on forestry and biodiversity, heritage conservation and the establishment of ecosystem services and natural capital assessment. This update takes account of all of these changes.

1.3 Purpose of the Landscape Character Assessment

The National Park has a rich natural and built heritage that is recognised as a key economic and social as well as environmental asset. It includes many features of national and international importance, notably the Hadrian’s Wall section of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site, and the exceptional upland and forest landscapes. The former 2007 landscape character assessment formed the basis for a Landscape Supplementary Planning Document which is referred specifically in Policy 20 of the Northumberland National Park Local Plan and has proved useful in development and land management decision making.

The National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019) sets out government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It consolidated over two dozen...
previously issued documents called Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) for use in England. One of the core principles in the National Planning Policy Framework is that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Local plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside. Paragraph 172 is specifically relevant to National Parks:

Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

This updated assessment is intended to inform future planning decisions and act as a reference source for forthcoming revisions of the Northumberland National Park Local Plan and future revision of the National Park Management Plan. Importantly, it should also help fulfil the landscape information requirements of a much wider range of user groups, including, for example, key landowners and managers such as the Forestry Commission and Defence Estates; those managing and promoting tourism within the National Park; and developers such as housing and wind farm developers.
1.4 Benefits of Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape character assessment can help us protect the environment while accommodating and influencing change. The English landscape has evolved over centuries, created as much by the activities of farmers and foresters, builders and miners as by the underlying physical forces of geology, soils and climate. It is not only a natural resource, on which we depend for our food and water, but also a cultural resource that evokes feelings, memories, associations and attachments, and a place we continue to live in, change and adapt to our needs.

Landscape character assessment can tell us what the landscape is like today, how it came to be the way it is now, and how it may change in future. It can help us to understand the sensitivity of different landscapes to development or to changes in the way they are managed, and so can inform the decisions that we make about change. It can enable us to identify priority areas for conservation, enhancement, restoration or renewal of the landscape and of specific landscape features. There are strong connections to the management of natural and cultural heritage features of geodiversity, biodiversity and historical importance. Landscape character assessment can help us to understand and see these features in their wider, landscape-scale context.

An awareness and understanding of landscape character can inform the way land management schemes and initiatives, such as Agri-Environment Schemes and strategies for woodland expansion, are targeted and implemented, helping to optimise the landscape benefits of public expenditure. In addition, an understanding of the landscape can assist individual land managers, farmers and foresters in making day-to-day decisions that take account of landscape interests.

Landscape character assessment can also contribute to the sustainability of new development by assisting in the preparation of planning policies for developments such as housing, wind energy or minerals. It can inform decisions on where new development should go; and it can help developers assess the landscape impacts of their proposals and how they can be designed to be in keeping with the locality. It can also provide information relevant to ecosystem services and national capital which has developed as a key approach to understanding natural resources and the benefits or services which flow from them.

1.5 Methodology

The original landscape character assessment for Northumberland National Park and Tynedale District was prepared in accordance with accepted, systematic methods, and uses an evidence-based approach as outlined in the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002). This update is also in accordance with that guidance and more recently updated guidance published by Natural England (An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, 2014).

1.6 Content and Structure of the Report

As indicated above, the landscape character assessment includes both a landscape characterisation (that is a classification and description of the landscape character types and landscape character areas) and landscape strategy and guidelines material (highlighting the key issues of change that affect each landscape, the appropriate landscape strategy e.g.
conserves/ enhances/ restores, and the main actions that need to be taken to address the key issues).

The characterisation element of the landscape character assessment is relatively factual and value-free. However, the strategy and guidelines material moves beyond characterisation to make judgements about the landscape and about landscape change that can be used to inform decisions on the landscape. This material is based largely on the professional views of the study team, informed by our analysis of landscape character, key environmental features, and the historical context for landscape change – but there is no assumption that maintenance (conservation) of existing landscape character is the best option.

Instead (and in accordance with the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance) the focus is on ensuring that development proposals or land use changes are planned and designed to achieve an appropriate relationship and ‘fit’ with their surroundings, contributing where possible to enhancement of the landscape, in some cases by creating a new character.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

**Section 2**, on the evolution of the landscape, provides an overview of the physical and human influences that have shaped the landscape. Distinctive geological, landform, historic, cultural, land use, habitat and built features are highlighted and their broad patterns are described.

**Section 3**, on the landscapes of Northumberland National Park, describes the National Character Areas and their component landscape character types and landscape character areas. For each landscape character type, key characteristics and a written description of the landscape, including physical and human influences, is provided. Information on forces for change and their potential impacts on the landscape, together with advice on how best to accommodate change in each landscape character type, is also included, to assist in land management and planning decisions that affect the landscape.

**Section 4** gives an overview of the key features and qualities of the landscapes of the Northumberland National Park. It discusses the principal changes affecting the area’s landscapes and where they occur. It explores their implications for landscape character, condition and values and indicates how they can be tackled, through discussion of strategic priorities and actions, and by making links to ongoing land management and planning initiatives and responsibilities.

The bibliography at the end of the report shows the sources that have been used in preparing the landscape character assessment, and indicates where additional information and guidance for landscape management and planning can be found.
2 THE EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

The landscape of Northumberland National Park has been shaped by the intricate interplay of physical influences (including geology, glaciation, landform, drainage and climate), with a range of human influences across the ages. This section examines the effects of these different factors on the evolution of the landscape that we see today and also gives an overview of the land cover, habitats, fields, settlements and buildings that characterise the modern landscape.

2.1 Physical Influences

2.1.1 Geology

The underlying solid geology Northumberland National Park (Figure 2) is comparatively simple. The northern third of the area is underlain largely by igneous rocks; the central and southern section by sedimentary limestones and sandstones; punctuated by the Whinsill Ridge in the south. The oldest rocks occur in the north; to the south and east progressively younger rocks are exposed at the surface. These rocks tilt to the south and east away from the Cheviots and form a series of alternating scarp and dip slopes, the more resistant strata tending to form higher ground or ‘cuestas’, particularly in the central part of the National Park.

The oldest rocks in the area date from the Silurian period, 400 million years ago; they were formed from thick ocean sediments that today can be seen as outcrops in the stepped valley sides of the Rede and Coquet valleys on the edge of the Cheviots. The Cheviots themselves consist of igneous rocks derived from magma from the earth’s interior in the Devonian period, 380 million years ago, when the area was a centre of volcanic activity. At that time great drifts and layers of extruded lava, andesite, were spread over a wider area, while the massive molten core of the volcanoes was pushed up or intruded, cooled and solidified into granite.

Subsequent erosion of the overlying andesite has revealed the roof of this granite mass, which today forms the rounded tops of the Cheviot Hills. The andesite remains in the wider area around the hill tops, forming the rounded, pink-grey boulders that line the streams or burns and are used in dry stone walls within the Cheviots. Where molten magma came into contact with the overlying andesite, it baked it, forming a hardened metamorphic lava. Today the hardened rocks at this junction stand out as a ring or ‘aureole’ around the granite core. They give rise to an arc of prominent granite and metamorphosed rock bosses similar to the tors of Dartmoor, for example at Housey Crags south of Harthope Burn. By contrast, the igneous rocks of the western Cheviots are more rounded and weathered. Minor intrusions of magma into fissures in the andesite and granite later formed dykes of felsite and porphyrite.

Around 350 million years ago, the Devonian period gave way to the Carboniferous. At this time the Cheviot massif became an island within a shallow tropical sea and layers of sedimentary limestones, sandstones, siltstones and mudstones were deposited in stratified form on river beds or in the sea. Over time, compaction of these sediments with pebbles formed the conglomerates and cementstones of the Cementstone group that can be seen at the foot of the Cheviots, for example in the Coquet gorge near Alwinton, and on the eastern edge of the Cheviots south of Wooler. South and east of these outliers, successively younger sedimentary strata crop out. One of the most prominent is the thick bed of Fell...
Sandstone, laid down within the delta of a huge river system. This rock forms the sharp north- and east-facing scarps and cliffs, often with screes, that overlook the Coquet valley on the edge of the Simonside Hills and at Harbottle. The flatter tops of the Fell Sandstone form open plateaux, characterised by heather moorland, reflecting the strongly acidic character of the underlying rock.

South and east of the Fell Sandstone ridges, the landscape becomes less dramatic, although still underlain by layers of Carboniferous rock (including rocks of the Lower and Middle Limestone and Scremerston Coal groups). The rocks all across this central part of the National Park comprise layers of limestone, shale, sandstone and coal, the latter formed from fossilised wetland vegetation. However, the surface limestone is limited and has little impact on the landscape. The coal seams too are modest and localised, although they did at one time support a number of drift mines in Redesdale and the upper North Tyne valley.

Towards the end of the Carboniferous period, around 300 million years ago, important changes took place. In the Cheviots the whole massif was pushed up by further volcanic activity. Radial faults appeared, creating channels along which rivers would later run and forming the region’s distinctive radial drainage pattern. At the same time, molten magma was pushed up into fissures in the surrounding sedimentary rocks south of the Cheviots, and a thick new ridge of igneous material was laid underground. This material – dolerite – was exposed by erosion of the overlying rocks to create one of the area’s most important landscape features, the Great Whin Sill. The sill, upon which Hadrian’s Wall was built, is more resistant than the surrounding Carboniferous rocks, and runs as a narrow, rolling east-west ridge north of the Tyne valley before turning north-eastwards (and away from the Wall) in the area west of the North Tyne valley. The dolerite cooled quickly and, like the Giant’s Causeway in Northern Ireland, formed hexagonal columns, which can be seen in exposures such as those at Cawfields quarry near Haltwhistle.

### 2.1.2 Glaciation

During the Quaternary period, from around 2.6 million years ago, the underlying rocks of the National Park were heavily modified by the effects of glaciation. During this period the climate fluctuated markedly, the ice reaching its maximum extent only 20,000 years ago, when a vast ice sheet covered much of northern Britain. At this time, all of the National Park, with the exception of some parts of the Cheviots, was covered by ice moving in an easterly or south-easterly direction. On the northern flanks of the Cheviots there may also have been small corrie and valley glaciers, and erosion by these glaciers probably created the trough shape of the College valley for example. Boulders and in some cases extensive rafts of rock were detached from their beds and dragged forward by the ice sheet, then deposited some distance away as erratics – the Kielder Stone, a huge sandstone erratic on the Kielderhead Moors, is an example. Over much of the area the bedrock was covered with glacial till, generally thin and sandy on the upland plateaux, but thicker and heavier on lower ground and in the dales.

The ice streams were particularly strong through the Tyne Gap, from which ice escaped eastwards, carving a glacial trough. This erosional deepening subsequently encouraged tributary rivers such as the River Allen to cut down and form deeply incised river courses. Between the Tyne corridor and the southern margin of the Cheviot Hills, the ice also flowed eastwards, more or less parallel with the east-west strike of the rocks. Here the ice sheet erosion streamlined and accentuated the cuesta landforms, particularly in the vicinity of Hadrian’s Wall. The ice also scoured and lowered the weaker rocks, notably next to the Whin Sill, where it formed basins that were later infilled by loughs, meres and peat bogs. Areas facing the ice, were often steepened and benchd by erosion, giving asymmetric
profiles an effect which can be seen in parts of the Cheviots, for example in upper Coquetdale.

Later, as the ice retreated, there was extensive deposition by glacial meltwaters. On the eastern edge of the Cheviots, near Whooperton, the meltwaters deposited irregular sand and gravel deposits and left behind kettle holes; while north of Wooler, a delta flowing into a vast meltwater lake formed a wide, level terrace of sand and gravel within the River Glen valley on the edge of the Milfield Plain. In the Tyne valley, sands and gravels deposited by the decaying ice formed a mounded topography of kames, eskers and intervening hollows, for example in the floor of the South Tyne valley west of Hexham.

Escaping meltwaters sometimes created new side valleys or cut through solid rock, creating the meltwater channels that can be seen in parts of the Park. Examples are at Humbleton and Yeavering in the Cheviots, where the ends of spurs have been severed from the main mass of the hills; and at Sycamore Gap, where meltwaters cut through the Whin Sill. The freeze-thaw effects associated with the glacial period probably also contributed to the formation of the conspicuous rock bosses or tors that ring the Cheviot Hills.

2.1.3 Landform, drainage and climate

Northumberland National Park includes two separate sets of uplands (Figure 3): the Cheviot Hills in the north, rising to 815m above sea level and made of granite and volcanic rocks and the mainly sandstone hills and ridges in the middle, reaching their highest point at Simonside, 430m high. Between these upland areas there are wide intermediate zones of lower land, concentrated within the principal river valleys, notably the tributaries of the Rivers Tweed and Tyne.

Reflecting both their volcanic origins and later glacial influences, the Cheviots have at their heart a smooth, sinuous cluster of hills, surrounded by a wild, open, windswept landscape with broad moorland plateaux. The hills are visible from modest elevations over much of the National Park and beyond. They are dissected by deep ravines or cleughs, radiating out from the centre, and on the northern hill flanks there are rocky outcrops with dramatic steep slopes that contrast strongly with the agricultural valley and plain landscapes around the eastern fringes of the hills. The rivers include College Burn, Harthope Burn and the River Breamish, which drain northwards to the Tweed; and further south the Ain and Coquet, which breach the Fell Sandstone ridge and flow eastwards to the North Sea. To the west, around Redesdale Forest, Kielderhead Moor and Kielder Forest, are extensive areas of large-scale, high, rolling or undulating plateau, with expanses of sweeping moorland. These areas are drained by the Rivers Rede and the North Tyne, which form broad valleys enclosed by low moorland hills and drain southwards to the Tyne.
The Simonside and Harbottle Hills, comprising Fell Sandstones, form distinctive, angular skyline features with generally level tops, north-west facing scarps, and craggy outcrops with exceptional views. The scarps fringe the southern and western sides of the Coquet valley.

Just north of the Tyne corridor, the sandstone and dolerite crags (the latter associated with the Whin Sill) form notable landscape features. There are also a number of small reservoirs in this area, and a network of small rivers and streams in narrow gorges with crags, loughs and mires.

In climatic terms, Northumberland is the coldest part of England, the upland areas being particularly cool and exposed. Although by British standards most of lowland Northumberland is rather dry owing to the rain shadow effect of the Pennines, the tops of the Pennines and the Cheviot are significantly wetter, and also receive the heaviest falls of snow. The relatively high rainfall in these upland areas, combined with low temperatures, is sufficient to promote extensive peat and blanket bog accumulation on the main Cheviot summit ridges. On the steep slopes around the edges of the Cheviot light, acid, polzolic soils have developed. Much of the rest of the Park is characterised by seasonally waterlogged gley soils on the widespread glacial tills, with better drained brown soils generally occurring in lower rainfall areas and on the lighter glacial and alluvial drifts within the main river valleys. Both soil types are suitable for cultivation, but the gleys require drainage if cultivation is to be maintained.

2.2 Human Influences

2.2.1 Prehistoric

Following the end of the Ice Age, Northumberland was colonised by trees which eventually formed a dense cover of deciduous woodland, dominated by oak and hazel. Gradually, in prehistoric times, humans undertook clearance of the woodland and engaged in increasingly intensive land use.

During the Mesolithic period (c 8000-4000 BC), the tree cover remained largely intact, although locally interrupted by the use of fire to drive game and enlarge the forest glades. The Mesolithic peoples, who were hunter-gatherers, may have had base camps in the river valleys, moving inland and into the uplands in a seasonal cycle to follow wild cattle and fisheries. It is possible that the tree-line on the Cheviots was lowered in this way and permanent moorland initiated. There is some evidence within the National Park of Mesolithic activity, for example at Yeavering Bell and on the edge of Milfield Plain in the Cheviots, although in general there are few visible traces of Mesolithic activity in the landscape.

In the Neolithic period that followed (c 4000-2000 BC), reliance on hunting began to be replaced by domestication of animals and cropping. Settlers extended the processes of tree clearance and seasonal exploitation of the uplands; these influences, combined with climate change, led to the development of moors and peat bogs on the Cheviots. At this time there appear to have been many small scale settlements in lower lying areas. The earliest visible monuments dating from this period are the long cairns, which are communal linear burial monuments, examples of which can be seen at Bellsheil Law in Redesdale.

Later monuments from the Neolithic period include standing stones and henges. Remnants of substantial stone circles can still be seen in the Cheviots at Hethpool and Threestoneburn. However, not all standing stones were in circle form: some were in rows (the Five Kings in upper Coquetdale) or in pairs (the Mare and Foal near Cawfields). Henges, that is circular banks with internal ditches enclosing a central ‘sacred’ space, were particularly common on...
the north-eastern edge of the Cheviots, for example at Yeavering and Coupland. These ceremonial monuments were linked with the wider landscape, for example framing views. Other ritual sites worthy of mention are the mysterious panels of rock art, or cup and ring marks, which occur at many places on the Fell Sandstones and elsewhere, notably at Lordenshaws, south of Rothbury, where there is an outstanding complex of rock carvings.

The National Park includes some of the most important Bronze Age (c 2000-800 BC) sites in Britain. Around a hundred settlements of one or more unenclosed roundhouses have been recorded in Northumberland, the vast majority in the Cheviots, for instance at Standrop Rig and Houseledge. In places, such as in the north-east Cheviots around Humbleton Hill and Fredden Hill, extensive Bronze Age field systems, representing the first large-scale agricultural exploitation of the uplands, can still be explored today. Dating from this period also are many massive hilltop round cairns, notably at Simonside (very close to the Lordenshaws rock art); Thirlmoor in upper Coquetdale; Callerhues Crag above Bellingham; and Sewingshields, just north of Hadrian's Wall. All of these are dramatically located to be visible from afar, and remain prominent landscape features to this day. The hill top of Simonside, which is very distinctive and widely visible, probably formed a sacred site in prehistory.

In the Iron Age (c 800 BC-79 AD), more efficient agricultural implements and weapons of war, as well as a deteriorating climate, appear to have brought major changes in social organisation. Upland settlements of undefended timber roundhouses were abandoned and gradually replaced first by timber-framed ramparts of earth and stone, and later by substantial dry stone walls or concentric banks. Well-known examples of such Iron Age hillforts within the National Park include Yeavering Bell and Humbleton Hill, both in the Cheviots and Harehaugh Camp in Coquetdale. There is a particular concentration of such forts – which are believed to have been both defensive refuges and statements of prestige by native clans – in the northern half of the Park; they are much less common further south. This may reflect tribal groupings at the time.

Many Iron Age hillfort sites have associated earthwork remains of timber roundhouses and agricultural terraces, lynchets and ridges. The evidence for Iron Age agriculture comes largely in the form of ‘cord rig’, that is very narrow, spade-dug cultivation ridges, usually no more than 1.4 m apart and easily distinguished from medieval rig (or ridge) and furrow. These can be seen, for example, in upper Coquetdale, where they were positioned to take advantage of the relatively fertile soils overlying the Cheviot andesites; and south of Hadrian's Wall.

2.2.2 Roman

The Roman period (79-410 AD) began in this area when the Romans moved north to Scotland under the command of Agricola. By this time the lowlands were probably open, farmed and divided into small fields divided by hedgerows; in the uplands the boundaries consisted of stone walls. Plenty of woodland remained, particularly on steep slopes.

Dere Street, which can still be seen today running along the line of the A68 and then across the hills through what is now the Otterburn military training area, was constructed to facilitate the advance to Scotland. This most northerly stretch of Dere Street contains one of the most extraordinary concentrations of Roman marching camps to be seen anywhere in the Roman Empire. The remote site at Chew Green – a large and highly visible group of Roman earthworks on an exposed hillside – is especially remarkable for its complexity, its remote location, and the fact that it is overlain by medieval enclosures. At this time also much of the other Roman infrastructure of the region was also established, notably the Stanegate, the
Roman road from Corbridge to Carlisle; and the Roman fort of Vindolanda, on the Stanegate, which remained in commission throughout the Roman period.

Agricola’s initiative to conquer Scotland was a failure, and in the period 100-120 AD a new frontier emerged just north of the Stanegate, the Roman road from Corbridge to Carlisle. Following his accession as emperor in 117 AD, Hadrian took the decision to build a wall in this area to consolidate the frontier. The initial phase of wall building from coast to coast took place in the period 122-138 AD and dramatically changed the landscape over a wide area.

The Hadrianic frontier consisted of a number of elements, of which the wall itself was just one. Immediately to the north of the wall, except where it followed the precipitous crags of the Whin Sill in its spectacular central section, there was a substantial ditch and mound. In the Northumberland, the wall itself was built in sandstone, stood about 4m high and was possibly surmounted by a wall-walk and parapet (further west, in Cumbria, it was initially built in turf and later rebuilt in stone). Every Roman mile there were small fortlets known as milecastles, which provided access through the wall. Forts were added to the line of the wall at about 10km intervals. Some of the most impressive and best preserved of these lie within the National Park, for example at Housesteads, which has substantial visible remains and a rugged landscape setting. To the south of the wall lay the vallum, a massive ditch with banks to north and south, intended to demarcate the military zone and possibly provide some protection from the south.

The impact of the frontier on the landscape must have been exacerbated by the construction works themselves, and in particular by the vast demand for timber and building stone. There appears to have been rapid forest clearance in some areas (for example east of Housesteads) and quarrying of sandstone all along the route. Remains of Roman quarrying can still be seen today in some areas, such as on Thorngrafton Common and at Limestone Corner on the B6318 Military Road.

The wider influence of the wall on the landscape of the area surrounding it is also evident. To the north of the wall, the wild hills of north Northumberland at this time had clusters of Romano-British settlement, for example in Redesdale, often associated with large tracts of cord rig fields that can be seen to this day. Given that up to around 30,000 troops manned the wall at any one time, these fields may well have been used, at least in part, for the cultivation of grain for the Roman forces. It appears that there was also a symbiotic relationship between the Britons and the Romans in the area just south of the wall, where extensive civilian settlements or vici grew up, dependent on the army for their livelihoods.

From the middle of the fourth century, however, the Roman world in Britain was in decline as the Roman Empire’s capacity to manage its northern frontier diminished. By the fifth century, the Roman army and the way of life associated with it had disappeared from Northumberland. Production fell back to pre-Roman levels; secondary woodland regenerated over Romano-British fields, and many centuries were to elapse before these early fields were cleared and cultivated again in medieval times.

2.2.3 Medieval

The early medieval period (410-1066 AD) saw relatively little change in the way people lived their lives, although there were major shifts in settlement pattern. In the earliest post-Roman phase, sometimes called the Dark Age, the Anglian kingdom of Northumbria, established after invasion by the Angles and other Germanic raiders, covered the whole of the National Park and was ruled from Bamburgh. This period witnessed a change from a settlement pattern based largely on Roman forts, vici and Romano-British farmsteads with
roundhouses, to a system of lowland hamlets and villages, many of which still survive today. By the seventh century, these would have consisted of clusters of timber houses, sometimes around timber churches, as this period also saw the rise of Christianity. It is generally thought that the land at this time was divided into townships (parishes after Christianity was adopted), which in turn were grouped into shires.

The kingdom of Northumbria was converted initially to the Celtic and then to the Roman Church in the mid seventh century. At this time, a magnificent monastery was built at Hexham, parts of which survive beneath the present-day abbey. Church influence was also evident further north, where the Lindisfarne monastery is believed to have owned land in the Cheviots at the Breamish valley. Although stone crosses from this period can still be seen in parts of the National Park, very little of the early fabric of the monasteries at Hexham or Lindisfarne survived the catastrophic destruction caused by Viking raids and invasions in the ninth century. The religious community that had been based at Lindisfarne relocated southwards, eventually settling at Durham towards the end of the tenth century, where it amassed great wealth and land holdings.

In the ninth and tenth centuries, much of Northumbria fell to the Danes and the Norse. It appears that there was relatively little Viking settlement in the areas north of the Tyne Gap, although further south, in the North Pennines, place name and other evidence suggests more widespread Viking settlement, particularly in moorland areas, where transhumance was practised. By the early eleventh century, the kingdom of Northumbria had been reduced in status to an earldom, part of the new kingdom of England, and southward expansion of the kingdom of Scotland to the River Tweed had divided Northumbria in two. This new Anglo-Scottish Border would dominate life in the region for centuries to come.

The late medieval period (1066-1603 AD) saw a series of great changes in people’s lives and in the landscape. These were associated with the consolidation of Norman control after the Conquest, which was followed by a century of relative peace and prosperity and then by three centuries of Anglo-Scottish and internal conflict. Effectively, this meant that much of Northumberland was a lawless waste at what was a very formative time for most English landscapes.

Under William the Conqueror, a feudal system was established whereby land was granted to a small number of loyal barons, who built substantial castles, originally in timber but soon in stone, and established hunting forests in the Cheviots, Coquetdale, and Redesdale. This land holding system of ‘baronies’ and ‘liberties’ affected the land north of the Tyne, where religious control as part of the Bishopric of Wilfred (covering Mid Tyne-dale, was allowed to remain. In this part of the National Park the church, and particularly the monastic orders, were very influential.

The agricultural landscape in the thirteenth century would have been one of villages, largely with timber buildings, surrounded by rig and furrow open field systems. Beyond the fields around each village were areas of common pasture, woodland and waste. While the medieval population was concentrated in villages and hamlets, the hills, which contained the remains of so many late prehistoric hillforts and settlements, were occupied seasonally, the summer ‘sheilings’ or pastures having associated temporary dwellings. A system of drove roads, focused on Roman Dere Street, and connecting southwards to Elsdon, provided important links to Scotland and a route for driving Highland cattle to market.

In 1296, however, Edward I attacked Scotland, initiating a period of fighting between the two counties that lasted until the Union of the two Crowns in 1603. As well as major battles such as Otterburn in 1388 and Flodden in 1513, there was constant raiding or ‘reiving’ across the border; and policies encouraging people to defend themselves encouraged local feuding between powerful families. The result was great suffering and poverty. The area’s medieval
villages were blighted by Scottish raids, a deteriorating climate (a ‘little Ice Age’ that lasted for five or six centuries) and the Black Death. These and later other factors (see below) led to the abandonment and shrinkage of many villages. At the same time, however, wealthier families built defensible hall houses and towers or peles of distinctive style, such as the solid structures found at Thirlwall Castle and Elsdon Tower.). Later, towards the end of the sixteenth century, hundreds of bastle houses (fortified farmhouses) were built, all to the same blueprint and usually within 30km of the border; many of these survive today across Northumberland National Park and include, the Bastles at Woodhouses, Black Middens, Low Cleughs, The Raw and Tosson Tower.

Although the feuding and reiving diminished after the Union, it is fair to say that it took centuries for the Border hills to recover their peace and prosperity. Border ballads, passed down by word of mouth through the generations, still recall the harsh times of the Border reivers.

2.2.4 Post-medieval

The post-medieval period, from the seventeenth century until the end of the nineteenth century, initially saw the reoccupation of old Border sheiling grounds, such as those in upper Coquetdale, and resumption of the cross-border cattle trade, as law enforcement strengthened. Elsewhere, landowners gradually set about improving large areas which had previously been subject to raids by the reivers. The Jacobite uprising of 1745, while having little direct impact on the National Park, had unfortunate consequences for Hadrian’s Wall. The uprising revealed difficulty in moving troops through the Tyne corridor, and to overcome this problem, General Wade’s military road was built, using (and hence obliterating) the remains of Hadrian’s Wall for much of its route between Newcastle and Sewingshields, where the wall rises onto the crags of the Whin Sill.

As noted earlier, shrinking and desertion of villages was apparent from the late medieval period onward, accompanied by consolidation and enclosure of open field strip holdings. However, most of the desertion occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as a by-product of the wider agrarian improvements. Enclosure, either by private agreement or manorial decree, was well underway for the more fertile landscapes of the National Park before the parliamentary enclosures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which were the main force for change further south in England. Deserted medieval villages and associated rig and furrow are, to this day, prominent landscape features in many parts of the National Park, widely seen for example along the A68 between Otterburn and Corbridge. Northumberland is recognised to have one of the most marked concentrations of such features in the country.

By the end of the eighteenth century, large areas of common land within the hills were also being enclosed, this time by Act of Parliament. Vast expanses of moor in Hadrian’s Wall country, Redesdale, and Coquetdale were enclosed in this way in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the commoners being awarded parcels of land in exchange, hence encouraging the expansion of permanent settlement into the traditional sheiling grounds. The end result is that, unlike most other upland areas of England, the Cheviot uplands contain virtually no common land.

Lowland enclosures were generally hedges and upland enclosures stone, walls, the nature of the walls varying according to the available local stone. The process of enclosure enabled the improvement of individual fields by draining, burning, ploughing and liming. Extensive clay tile drainage occurred in the wet uplands; while lime kilns produced quicklime that was used to improve the quality of both pasture and arable land.
The wealth generated by agricultural improvements and enclosures was used to build or enlarge existing country houses, and bastle houses were adapted for more peaceful conditions. Some of the finest houses and parks from this period are concentrated in Northumberland. Hesleyside Hall, Otterburn Hall Roddam Hall, Clennell Hall, Blenkinsopp Castle and Kielder Castle, the latter built as a hunting lodge by the Duke of Northumberland, are examples. More settled conditions and growing industrial wealth also promoted the development of country house estates in the Tyne valley, particularly in the area east of Hexham. The parkland, avenues, plantations, shelterbelts and shooting coverts associated with these estates had – and continue to have – a strong influence on the landscape.

At this time, the rural housing stock of the National Park was extremely poor, most buildings being built of timber and mud, with roofs of ‘black’ heather thatch or turf. Gradually throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these houses were replaced by stone cottages, sometimes within planned estate villages, and by sturdy farmhouses whose roofs initially were local stone flags, or pantiles in the north Cheviots. However, with the coming of the railways Welsh roof slates became more common.

The railways supported the area’s emerging industrial activity. North of the Tyne corridor, the industry was relatively localised in areas such as Ridsdale (West Woodburn) and Hareshaw (on the moorlands above Bellingham), which had substantial nineteenth century iron works. Commercial coal mining also took place from the seventeenth century onwards at Haltwhistle, Elsdon and in the North Tyne valley.

### 2.2.5 Twentieth century

Compared to many parts of England, the twentieth century brought modest landscape changes to the National Park. Agriculture – mainly sheep and suckler cows – continued to be the mainstay of the economy, as they had been in previous centuries, and farming centred on isolated farming communities in the uplands and more prosperous estates in the lowland areas. The overall appearance of the landscape was one of enclosed pasture and in-bye land clustered around sparse farm and village settlement, with vast swathes of open moorland beyond, often used for sporting purposes. In the 1970s, when grants were available for ‘improvement’ of agricultural land, some areas on the upland fringe were enclosed, drained and ploughed, but by the end of the twentieth century these changes had largely ceased, with a new emphasis on environmental measures and on reinstatement of heather moorland.

Major road construction, with the exception of the A68 cross border route through Redesdale, was very limited, a factor that brought an unusual degree of tranquillity to the area. However, the visual appearance of roads changed from the medieval stone horse and cart tracks to those covered in tarmac. The most persistent effect upon the tranquillity of the National Park has probably come from the invention of the combustion engine, powering cars and other motorised vehicles able to make use of the improved road network, or other machinery such as chainsaws and modern forestry harvesters. Indeed 10% of the properties across the National Park are not connected to the National Grid and derive their electricity from diesel generators, giving rise to a distant background sound associated with many of the farmsteads. The area experienced remarkably little industrialisation, with the exception of the prominent roadstone quarry at Biddleston on the southern flanks of the Cheviot Hills, where red whinstone (a mica-porphyrite with a distinctive red colour) is extracted.

However, five new activities markedly changed the appearance and character of the landscape during the twentieth century. These were forestry, water supply, military use electrification and telecommunication.
In 1919, the Forestry Commission was set up to ensure that the nation was never short of timber, and planting of Kielder Forest commenced near Falstone in the North Tyne valley in 1926. By the 1980s, when the planting reached its full extent, the new forest, largely of Sitka spruce, extended from Redesdale in the north to Wark, just north of Hadrian’s Wall, in the south. It covered an area of over 58,000 hectares and formed one of the largest man-made forests in Europe. Land managed for plantation forestry accounts for approximately 20% of the National Park area (20,000 hectares) and includes sections or all of the Wark, Redesdale, Harwood, Simonside, Harbottle and Kidland forestry plantations. A number of new settlements of terraced houses, at Byrness, Kielder, Falstone and Stonehaugh, were constructed in the 1950s to house forest workers. These remain today, and have a very distinctive character.

The construction of reservoirs during the twentieth century also had a huge landscape impact. In 1905 the area’s first major water supply reservoir was completed at Catcleugh in Redesdale. This, together with Kielder reservoir which opened in 1982, (largely outside the National Park), supply water to Newcastle and the Tyne catchment area. These reservoirs are now managed at least partly for recreation.

Military training within the area began in 1912 at Redesdale Camp and expanded during the Second World War at Otterburn Camp to the south, on land that had earlier seen extensive Roman military use. After the war Otterburn was developed as a permanent site for military training. Covering the whole area between Redesdale and Coquetdale, the estate extends to some 23,000 hectares, including accommodation, workshops and other buildings as well as firing ranges and artillery training grounds. There are, inevitably, planning and access issues, but great care has been taken to manage the estate’s important habitats and extensive archaeological landscapes in a sensitive manner.

Just outside Northumberland National Park at Cragside, Rothbury, William Armstrong engineered the world’s first hydroelectric power station in 1878. The electricity was used to light rooms at Cragside House, thereby providing the first proper electric lighting system in the world. Rapid advances and increased uses for electricity saw a massive increase in demand and, on the back of that, the need to be able to transport electricity from the generator to the consumer. The Electricity Supply Act was passed in 1926 and thus the National Grid and Distribution Network were born. Ever since, the National UK landscape has seen a spider’s web of overhead power lines erected, connecting power stations to major cities, industrial centres, airports, villages and most rural communities and whilst not complete, 90% of the properties in the National Park are now connected to the National Grid.

The rise of windfarm development has also lead to the construction of wind energy development in areas just beyond the National Park boundary.

In addition to the overhead powerlines that now crisscross the National Park, other indirect consequences resulting from the use of this new electricity supply include, the rollout of telecommunication infrastructure and the spread and greater use of electrical lighting that has had an effect on the nighttime landscape. The telecommunication infrastructure comprises overhead telephone lines, numerous telephone communication masts and the tallest structure found in the National Park namely, The Hopealone telecommunications mast located in Wark Forest and visible from numerous locations along the Hadrian’s Wall Path National Trail.

Last but not least, the national landscape and recreational importance of the area was formally recognised in 1956 when Northumberland National Park was designated, extending from Hadrian’s Wall in the south to the Cheviot in the north and including Redesdale and Coquetdale, as well as the Otterburn military training area, but deliberately excluded most of Kielder Forest which was designated as a Forest Park in its own right.
2.3 The Modern Landscape

2.3.1 Land cover

Today the landscape of Northumberland National Park is predominantly rural. In terms of land cover (see Figure 4), the upland north, west and south of the area are mainly forest, moor, heath and rough grassland; while the lowland centre and east are dominated by improved pasture and arable land.

There is a strong contrast between the moorland and hill areas, where the isolated farms and hamlets have little or no arable land, and the more favoured valleys, plains and scarplands, where there are larger areas of arable land associated with larger nucleated villages. The poorer quality hill and plateau land supports sheep and cattle rearing; in areas such as the Tyne valley, where the land is of better quality, some mixed farming occurs; but overall the landscape is mainly a pastoral one.

The highest tops of the moors and fells are covered with peat bog. Elsewhere there is a mix of rough grassland (or white moor) and heather (or black moor) on the hill sides and slopes. White moor tends to dominate on the Cheviots, and black moor on the Fell Sandstone Hills and in the Pennines. Hence to local people these two types of landscape are known respectively as ‘the white country’ and ‘the black country’. Many of the moors today – particularly the black moors – support grouse shooting.

Woodland covers approximately 23% of the National Park Landscape, but comprises mainly (20%) productive coniferous forestry, that is concentrated in the Kielder/Wark Forest area and in parts of the Cheviots and Simonside Hills. Native broadleaved and mixed woodland accounts for no more than 3% of tree cover and is generally associated with riparian zone planting along watercourses or within agricultural shelterbelts for livestock and properties. Throughout the area there are many small estate and shelterbelt plantings on the valley sides.
2.3.2 Habitats

The northern part of the National Park forms part of Natural England’s Border Uplands Natural Area; while the southern part belongs to the North Pennines Natural area (English Nature, undated).

In the Border Uplands, much of the bedrock is covered by layers of peat and glacial drift which give rise to the extensive open landscape of moorland and blanket bog seen on the Cheviot Hills and outlying moors. Farming is dominated by sheep and cattle, with game management becoming increasingly important at higher altitudes. Agricultural improvement, heavy grazing and drainage locally give rise to acidic grasslands and extensive areas of purple moor grass-dominated moors. The remaining heather moors are of high ecological value. The Border mires, centred around Kielder Forest, occur where lenses of peat have formed in hollows in the undulating topography.

Key habitats of the National Park as a whole include blanket bog or mire, often of international importance, and characteristic of the high undulating plateaux. Bogs and mires also occur at lower levels, as in the Border mires. These lower mires tend to be wetter, and their character and plant communities vary according to the underlying rock type. Heather and grass moorlands occur in combination with the blanket bog and mire, and cover large areas, particularly on the lower hills and more free-draining substrates in the Cheviots, and Fell Sandstone hills. Where heather is dominant the moors are usually managed for grouse shooting by rotational burning. Where grazing (usually sheep) is heavier, the heather gives way to a range of acid grasslands and bracken.

On the Whin Sill, the thin soils support an unusual and specialised flora of acid grassland species in close association with species more characteristic of calcareous grassland. Rushy pasture, an important habitat for breeding birds, occurs as a mosaic of acid and neutral, wet and dry semi-improved grassland within enclosed, marginal farmland that is grazed by cattle and sheep at varying densities throughout the year. The area’s northern hay meadows, found in valleys throughout the National Park, are recognised as a rare and extremely localized habitat of international importance, linked with traditional low intensity pastoral agriculture in upland and upland fringe areas. Most of such meadows are annually cut for hay and some may be grazed lightly as pasture. They characteristically contain a wide range of grasses and herbs, and can also be attractive to bird life, including yellow wagtail, skylark, grey partridge, redshank, curlew, snipe and in the past corncrake.

Broadleaved woodland habitats are often confined to river valleys and stream sides within the incised cleughs and denes that occur in many parts of the area. Most of the woods are mixed oak woods, sessile and pedunculate oak occurring together. Associated species in the more upland areas include birch, hazel, mountain ash, bird cherry. In the lower reaches ash is more common and sycamore is a frequent coloniser or has been planted. Alder is also typical of the upland woods on the stream sides. In places juniper scrub can still be found associated with upland woodland communities.

The National Park includes several rivers, such as the Coquet, that are of high nature conservation interest, supporting otters, water voles, freshwater pearl mussels, lampreys, water crowfoot beds and metalliferous vegetation. They are generally of high water quality. In the vicinity of the Roman wall is a series of natural water bodies of some wetland conservation interest, with a range of associated habitats including reed swamp, fen and basin mires. Further to the east, in drier conditions and at lower altitudes, are rain-fed mires and mosses where the buildup of vegetation gives the mires a raised profile; here heathers and cotton grasses are the dominant plant species, together with sphagnum mosses.


2.3.3 Field patterns and boundaries

The historic landscape character map for the National Park (see Figure 5) indicates, among other things, the broad differences in field patterns and types that occur across the Park. The map, prepared as part of a historic landscape characterisation project undertaken by Northumberland County Council, Northumberland National Park Authority and English Heritage in parallel with this landscape character assessment, classifies the landscapes that we see today in terms of their predominant historic character and origins. The field patterns and boundaries in the National Park date from many periods and include both ancient and modern features. Many survive from the medieval landscape, and even from earlier periods, but the landscape is dominated by hedgerows and walls established in successive periods of enclosure between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Ancient hedges may be found along old parish and township boundaries and along old roads and lanes. Early townfield enclosures – often irregular in pattern or following the curved alignment of arable strips – are a feature of the lowlands and land close to upland villages. Within the National Park, they are concentrated around the fringes of the Cheviots and in the river valleys. Later enclosures, shown in blue, are found in the former wastes of the upland fringes, where enclosure of land on the moorland fringe continued into the twentieth century.

Hedgerows are generally characteristic of the lowlands, while walls are characteristic of the uplands and upland fringes. Parts of the National Park, such as in Redesdale and around Elsdon, have large sod cast dykes or banks probably post-medieval in age. Hedgerow tree cover varies considerably, with abundant hedgerow trees in the older field systems of the valleys. In the more intensively farmed landscapes of the eastern part of the Tyne valley, field and hedgerow trees are relatively scarce, except within the estate parklands.
Figure 4: Historic Landscape Character

- Communications disused railway
- Fields ancient
- Fields floodplain irregular
- Fields late C19
- Fields other C20
- Fields other irregular upland
- Fields other large lowland irregular
- Fields other medium lowland irregular
- Fields other small irregular
- Fields other small irregular by settlement
- Fields other small surveyed lowland
- Fields other small surveyed upland
- Fields piecemeal enclosure
- Fields reorganised piecemeal enclosure
- Fields surveyed enclosure erratic edge
- Fields surveyed enclosure straight edged
- Fields surveyed enclosure wavy edged
- Industry abandoned extractive site
- Industry active extractive site
- Military active site
- Moorland enclosed upland
- Moorland lowland enclosed
- Moorland open lowland
- Moorland open upland
- Moorland reverted
- Ornamental designed landscape
- Ornamental other parkland and recreational
- Other active industry
- Recreation golf course
- Settlement C20
- Settlement pre-1860s
- Water artificial lake/pond
- Water marsh
- Water natural open
- Water reservoir
- Water river
- Woodland ancient
- Woodland ancient replanted
- Woodland C20
- Woodland late C19
- Woodland pre-1860
- Woodland scrub

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Historic Landscape Character - Source: Northumberland County Council
Particular types of field pattern are distinctive to different parts of the National Park. In the Cheviots, villages and hamlets often retain in-field patterns of great antiquity, used for the more intensive cropping; distinctive patterns of intake from the surrounding moorland can also be seen. The uplands, enclosed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have large rectangular, fields generally enclosed by stone walls or dykes; and ancient tracks give access to the higher ground for summer grazing. A similar pattern prevails on the Fell Sandstone hills. On the Border Moors, cross-ridge dykes, sheep stells and other scattered enclosures are seen within a largely open landscape.

The lower parts of Redesdale and North Tyne are marked by large regular eighteenth and nineteenth century fields divided by walls and fences, with earlier, hedged enclosures near settlements. In the Tyne valley itself, the pastures and arable fields of the valley floor are regular, broad and divided by hedgerows; while the valley sides have pastures divided by stone walls.

2.3.4 Settlement and buildings

In the western and southern parts of the area, on the edges of the Cheviots and Pennines, settlement has always been sparse and has tended to consist of isolated farmsteads and small hamlets; larger nucleated settlements are generally absent except where railways, mining and quarrying have encouraged the development of larger settlements. The character of these larger settlements varies but many, like Bellingham, have features from the industrial period such as miners’ cottages and chapels clustered around a core of older buildings. The later forestry settlements such as Stonehaugh are also very distinctive.

In the valley and lowland areas to the east, nucleated villages of medieval origins, formerly surrounded by open fields, are the main element of the settlement pattern, although within the National Park, the villages are relatively small and often show signs of shrinkage since medieval times. Many of these villages, such as Elsdon, have a strong historic character and are centred on a village green. In some areas, such as upper Coquetdale, there are villages that may have later, planned origins associated with the post-medieval period of agricultural improvement. These planned settlements often have two regular rows of house plots (tofts or garths) facing each other across roads or greens.

Larger towns, notably Hexham, and Haltwhistle can be found in the Tyne valley, just beyond the National Park boundary, near the most fertile agricultural land and river crossing points, and generally have ancient origins. These tend to have a greater diversity of building ages, styles and materials than the rest of the National Park, reflecting proximity to the main transport corridor and the availability of a wider range of materials by rail.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of buildings of all kinds within the National Park are made of sandstone, and this has a strong unifying landscape influence. The only areas that differ are the Wooler district and the valleys that cut deep into the Cheviots, where local granite is used; and the 20th Century forestry worker villages at Byrness, and Stonehaugh, where brick and rendered brick can be seen. The sandstone varies in colour from pink and red (in the north east) to buff (over most of the area), and weathers well. It was usually laid as random rubble, although the more prosperous farmhouses, particularly in the east, are of dressed stone.

Much of the building stock dates from the extensive rebuilding of rural housing stock that took place from the late eighteenth century onwards. The most common form of construction is sandstone with slate roofs, replacing earlier buildings of timber, mud and heather thatch. Heather thatch is now extremely rare, although it can still be seen in a few buildings such as at Causway House. Roofs of sandstone flags are still common in parts
and were formerly more widespread, particularly as far north as Bellingham. In the north east, in the Cheviots and other areas, pantile can be found. Elsewhere roofs are generally of Welsh slate or, in the north, rougher Scottish slate.

Farmsteads in the region display massive differences in terms of scale, with a number of very distinctive building types. These include, near the Scottish border, defensive bastle and byre houses, where cattle were housed on the ground floor with domestic living space above; longhouses of linear plan, dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth century and occurring in the North Tyne and Rede valleys; and later, nineteenth century, courtyard plans in the more prosperous lowland areas, where the house was separated from the farmyard by a wall and roadway and separate cottages were sometimes provided for farm workers.
Figure 6: Landscape Classification

Landscape Character Areas
1. Upland Burn Valleys
2. Rounded Hills
3. Foothills and Fringe Valleys
4. Estate Farmland
5. Sandstone Upland Valleys
6. Rolling Uplands
7. Moorland Forestry Mosaic
8. Rolling Upland Valleys
9. Outcrop Hills and Escarpment
10. Broad Wooded Valley
11. Parallel Ridges and Commons
12. Upland Commons and Farmland
13. Glacial Trough - valley sides
14. Basin Valley and Fringes

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3 UNDERSTANDING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND GUIDING CHANGE

3.1 The Landscape Classification

Variations in the character of the landscape can be mapped and described at a range of scales from the national to the very local. A hierarchical approach was taken to the classification of the landscape, with landscape character types and landscape character areas being identified at three different scales.

First, at national/regional level, are the National Character Areas, whose broad-brush boundaries have been refined and more precisely drawn as part of this study, given its more detailed level of assessment. Nonetheless, at this broad scale the boundaries between different landscapes tend to be somewhat blurred – they are zones of transition, rather than firm lines on the ground.

Next, at local authority level, are the landscape character types. Each has broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field patterns. Landscapes belonging to a particular type may be found in different parts of a National Character Area, and share the overarching character and identity of the National Character Area.

Finally, at a more local level, the landscape character areas are unique, geographically specific, units of a particular landscape character type, which share the same elements as the landscape character type, but at the same time have their own individual character and identity.

The boundaries of the landscape character types and landscape character areas, while more finely drawn than those of the National Character Areas, may also in some cases represent transitions rather than clear and visible lines on the ground.

Figure 6 and Table 1 below show the assessment hierarchy and the location and distribution of the landscape character types and landscape character areas that have been defined. The character types and areas set out below relate specifically to the National Park - character types and areas relevant to the former Tyndale District have been removed as part of this update. Where a landscape character type lies just within the National Park but substantially extends beyond the boundary, the complete landscape type description is still provided. However, for descriptions of landscape areas beyond the National Park boundary reference should be made to the Northumberland County Landscape Character Assessment (August 2010).

The remainder of this section of the report characterises and describes each of the National Character Areas and their component landscape character types and landscape character areas. For each landscape character type – the principal unit within the classification for management and planning purposes – we also present strategy and guidelines material, including an appraisal of the landscape’s key features and qualities, information on forces for change and their potential impacts on the landscape, and advice on how best to accommodate change in that landscape character type.
Table 1: Landscape Classification (note that numbers do not run consecutively due to the removal of character areas and types from this update document where they lie outside of the National Park\(^1\))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Character Area</th>
<th>Landscape Character Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheviots</td>
<td>1. Upland Burn Valleys</td>
<td>C1a. College Valley</td>
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\(^1\) Landscape character type 12 – Broad Wooded Valley and character area 12a North Tyne Valley have not been included in this update as 97% of the type/area falls outside of the National Park boundary. Character area boundaries are transitional therefore reference should always be made to adjoining character areas when close to boundaries. Information on character types and areas beyond the National Park can be found in the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment 2010.
3.2 Cheviots

The Cheviot Hills are part of the wild upland plateaux of the Northumberland moors on the Scottish border which extend across the English/Scottish boarder. They form distinctive, smooth, rounded hills rising to the west of the lowland belt of the Cheviot Fringe. The Character Area lies almost wholly within Northumberland National Park.

- This smooth, sinuous cluster of hills of volcanic origin rises to over 800m AOD and forms a wild, open, windswept landscape with broad moorland horizons.
- There are extensive rolling plateaux of semi-natural grass moor and heather moorland.
- On the northern flanks of the hills are deep ravines and rocky outcrops with dramatic scree slopes, glacial meltwater channels and ice-gouged hollows.
- Coniferous woodland plantations occur on some upper valley slopes where they tend to interrupt the smooth lines of an otherwise open, rounded landscape.
- Steep-sided valleys with fast-flowing burns radiate outwards and have relict semi-natural broadleaved woodland (oak, birch, alder and hazel) and gorse scrub.
- The summit is characterised by mixed areas of blanket bog and heather and by the sculpted forms of granitic ‘tors’; the treeless upper hillsides have coarse ‘white’ grassland and dwarf shrub heath moorland.
- The lower, steeper slopes have a greener appearance indicative of more productive grassland, but show signs of bracken invasion.
- The hills are largely open although the lower slopes have large regular fields defined by dry stone walls or ‘dykes’ dating from parliamentary enclosures.
- The open moorland plateaux are managed as grouse moors and for grazing by distinctive white-faced Cheviot and black-faced Border sheep; there are also elusive wild goats.
- Better quality grassland on the lower slopes is grazed by both beef cattle and sheep.
- There are rare arctic-alpine flora on the scree slopes and species-rich semi-natural grasslands and wet flushes in the valleys e.g. the Coquet valley.
- The valleys also provide sheltered sites for dispersed farmsteads and small hamlets on strategic sites, sometimes with medieval fortified buildings.
- Traditional buildings are commonly of sandstone and slate; but clay pantile roofs are a distinctive feature of the northern valleys.
- The well-preserved remains of extensive tracts of prehistoric landscape (hillforts, settlements and prehistoric field systems) can be clearly seen; the hills are also criss-crossed by ancient Roman tracks and border drove roads.
- There are no modern-day cross-border roads through the Cheviots, however, and this helps maintain a sense of isolation and wilderness.
- Perceptions of remoteness and solitude are affected by military training, as the south-western part of the Character Area lies within the Otterburn Training Area.
Landscape character type 1: Upland Burn Valleys

Characterisation

Key characteristics

- Steeply-incised valleys radiating outwards though rounded hills.
- Fast flowing burns over rock-strewn beds of pink-grey andesite boulders.
- Narrow floodplain or haugh in lower reaches and alder trees typically lining watercourse.
- Scree slopes, rocky outcrops, patches of gorse scrub and bracken on valley sides.
- Areas of in-by pasture defined by stone walls in places, with open grass moorland on steeper slopes above.
- Isolated farmsteads accessed by unenclosed roads or tracks.
- Significant Bronze Age, Iron Age and medieval archaeology including terraces, cairns, hut circles, field boundaries and deserted villages.
- Sense of enclosure derived from steep valley topography.
- Tranquil valleys with a strong upland, remote character.

Description

This character type is located within the rounded hills of the Cheviots which form the northern part of Northumberland National Park. The type comprises steep-sided burn valleys which have cut into the underlying igneous rocks along fault lines. The edges of the type are defined by the break of slope above the valley sides which visually contain the valley landscape.

The underlying geology is evident both on the scree slopes of the steep valley sides and on the valley floor where the pink-grey colour of the andesite boulders is characteristic. On the valley sides it is possible to discern former raised river terraces which illustrate glacial meltwater erosion. Up above, on the upper smooth grassland slopes, there is evidence of natural springs, which in places have caused localised landslips. Overall the valley profiles are often complex, with overlapping spurs of land within the valley bottoms.

Land cover is mainly open matt-grass moorland, with some patches of heather and bilberry principally on the steep and upper slopes which extend beyond the valley into the Rounded Hills landscape character type. The smooth grassland cover is complemented by areas of in-by pasture on the lower slopes and species-rich meadow in places on the valley floors. Pastures are small in scale, comprising improved or semi-improved grassland and defined by stone walls, with occasional post and wire fencing. Added to this general pattern are mosaics of gorse and bracken (reflecting the acidic soils) and patches of broadleaved and
coniferous woodland (age and extent varying between valleys) on the valley sides. Less frequently, there are patches of downy birch and juniper woodland on the upper slopes and in the hope (tributary) valleys. On the valley floor and along the burns there are typically lines of alder trees. Collectively the land cover and vegetation patterns give rise to a richly coloured and textured landscape.

This is a pastoral landscape grazed by sheep and feral goats, the latter having been introduced to the Cheviots in the Victorian period. The grazing tradition is reflected in the dispersed pattern of farmsteads within the valley and the numerous circular sheep enclosures or stells which are characteristic features. Historically these valleys have been occupied since prehistoric times. Evidence of continuity of settlement and farming is found in the earthwork patterns and traces of prehistoric hut circles, field boundaries, terraces and cairns (often on upper slopes and surrounding higher ground) as well as later deserted medieval sites on lower slopes and valley floor. Medieval sites reflect the growth of settlement in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and subsequent depopulation as a result of reiving and Scottish raids. There is a concentration not just of archaeological sites but also of associated historic relict landscape features within this landscape character type.

The water quality of the burns is high and they are important for salmon, sea trout, otter and mink. The valleys are also important for Curlew, whose haunting call can be heard across the hills, Sparrowhawk and Merlin. In spring Dotterel and Snow Bunting are some of the special visitors migrating through the hills.

Today each valley can be accessed to some extent by a single unenclosed metalled road or track, but significant parts of the College and Breamish valleys are accessible only on foot. This inaccessibility and the surrounding high, rounded, open moorland hills give rise to a strong sense of relative wildness and remoteness. Views out of the valleys are limited, reinforcing their enclosed and sheltered nature, but in places there are memorable views to the Cheviot and from the upper slopes there are extensive panoramas across the surrounding hills.

**Landscape character areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C1a College Valley</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This valley is oriented north-south, extending some 8km from the hamlet of Westnewton to the foot of the Cheviot. Side valleys or hopes run off at right angles to the main valley. This is a relatively well-wooded burn valley, reflecting its history and management as part of the College Valley Estate. There are prominent coniferous plantations on the valley sides (extending into the Rolling Hills landscape character type) as well as areas of semi-natural woodland (e.g. Harrowbog Wood). A management plan for the estate reflects the desire to gradually replace extensive coniferous plantations with a mix of broadleaved species and heather moorland. Access to the valley is via a metalled road as far as Hethpool. Beyond this point, access is possible on foot or with a vehicle permit. This valley has a rich cultural heritage with many archaeological features and earthworks dating to the prehistoric period that are revealed in certain light conditions and under snow cover.</td>
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<th>C1b Harthope Valley</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is a narrow, secretive valley accessed via the village of Middleton Mill. Like College Valley, it extends into the hills as far as the foot of the Cheviot. The orientation and relatively simple form of this valley mean that it has some of the most memorable views to the Cheviot. Native alder and birch woodland in the valley floor and along the burn is a notable characteristic of this valley. Bracken and gorse can be found to flank the valley sides, giving rise to attractive russet and gold coloration in winter. There are only a few small coniferous plantations within this valley, and little native woodland beyond that on the valley floor. In its lower reaches, the valley has a relatively wide haugh, supporting improved pastures and areas of alder carr woodland, through which the burn meanders. This valley is popular with walkers, cyclists and bird watchers.</td>
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<th>C1c Breamish Valley</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Breamish Valley extends into the Cheviots from the village of Ingram, taking a sinuous course that weaves between hills such as Hartsid e Hill and Meggrims Knowe. In its lower reaches the floodplain or haugh is well defined and open, with gorse and bracken on the valleys sides. South of Hartsid e Hill the valley becomes more</td>
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</table>
Local forces for change and their landscape implications

- Conifer plantations on valley sides and upper slopes may locally affect this landscape character type, creating dark heavy skyline features or abrupt straight edges running across the contours that may disguise topography.
- Lack of semi-natural woodland management and renewal may result in the decline and loss of areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and wood pasture, particularly where woodland trees are of even age.
- Warmer wetter climatic conditions and insufficient management/clearance may cause an increase in areas of bracken.
- Lack of stone wall and stell management and inappropriate hedgerow planting may lead to a weakening of the enclosure pattern and local features.
• **Introduction of new farm buildings** may affect the unity of traditional vernacular and buildings styles which are a cohesive element of this landscape.

• **Growth of tourism** to the valleys may increase pressure for car parks, signage, vehicular access and erosion of footpaths and result in gradual suburbanisation and loss of tranquillity.

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**Strategy**

These valleys have a tranquil and sheltered character providing access to the upland areas beyond. Their relative inaccessibility and remote character require conservation and enhancement through appropriate management and limited development.

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**Guidelines for land management**

**Forestry and woodland**

Future felling of coniferous plantations should seek to reduce their visual dominance on the valley slopes, either through removal or through restructuring with broadleaved planting. New planting of coniferous woodland should be avoided.

Encourage the regeneration of semi-natural woodland and wood pasture on valley slopes and tributary valleys, in order to diversify the age structure of the woodlands and retain characteristic patterns of woodland in the landscape. Appropriate protection from overgrazing is paramount.

Ensure that new deciduous woodland (oak/ash) planting focuses on tributary valleys and along burns (alder) and follows the natural flow of contours. Protect new planting without creating significant visual intrusion through use of rabbit guards or extensive areas of fencing. Planting should avoid masking areas of downy birch and juniper scrub or rocky outcrops and scree slopes which are local focal points and important for nature conservation.

**Farming**

Encourage the retention of hay meadows on the valley haughs through appropriate management agreements involving the avoidance of herbicides and fertilisers to retain visual diversity of valleys and protect water quality.

Encourage appropriate management of bracken and gorse to ensure it does not become overly invasive and dominant on valley sides.

**Field boundaries**

Hedgerow planting is not characteristic of this landscape type and should be avoided.

**Rivers and wetland**

Manage alder woodland and wet woodland/scrub adjacent to and along watercourses through rotational coppice, select felling and replanting where necessary.

**Historic sites**

Conservation of historic sites and structures, which act as local focal points and reinforce local distinctiveness in each of the valleys, is important. Further survey work to record the diversity and distribution of buried archaeology, earthworks and structures should be encouraged and further information made available to land managers and visitors alike.

New rural development should reflect the local farmstead vernacular in terms of building materials, scale and location. Where inappropriate development has occurred in the past, measures should be taken to ameliorate visual impact or the removal of structures altogether.

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**Guidelines for development**

**Tourism and recreation**

Avoid the proliferation of recreation and tourism infrastructure (e.g. improved road access, passing places, car parks, signage, litter bins and interpretation) and ensure it is sensitively designed, low key and does not exert a semi-urbanising influence on this landscape type.

**Military training**

Encourage the removal of infrastructure (including 1960s houses) that are no longer in use or signage which is no longer required in order to reduce the visual impact of human activity in these remote upland valleys.

**Energy and telecommunications**
Man-made vertical structures which detract from the valley landform, create visual clutter or adversely affect the unfettered rounded skylines which form the distinctive setting to these valleys should be avoided.
Landscape character type 2: Rounded Hills

Characterisation

Key characteristics

- Cluster of smooth, domed hills forming a distinctive horizon.
- Underlying geology comprising layers of extruded lavas and a central massif of granite.
- Extensive rolling plateau of heather and matt-grass moorland creating ‘black moors’ and ‘white moors’.
- Visually simple landscape due to topography and uniform vegetation.
- Little or no tree cover except along shallow burn heads, and in areas where there are blocks of coniferous plantation.
- Numerous relict prehistoric landscapes, Roman roads and forts, medieval field systems, and drove routes important during the period of border conflict.
- Strong sense of wilderness derived from simplicity, openness, little to no settlement and little access except on foot.

Description

Located in the north of the Northumberland National Park, this landscape character type stretches from the Coquet Valley in the south to Kilham Hill in the north and continues seamlessly across the border into Scotland. These hills vary in height from approximately 300m AOD to the Cheviot peak at 815m AOD.

The volcanic origins of the hills give rise to distinctive geology and topography. They comprise layer upon layer of extruded lava (mainly andesite) and a later central lens-shaped dome or laccolith of granite. Although rocky outcrops are rare, where the granite and andesite meet there is an ‘aureole’ of hardened meta-lava. This baked andesite is more resistant to erosion and is evident in the landscape today as a ring of distinctive rocky tors such as those found at Schil and Housey Crags, which mark the edge of the granite core. Other laccoliths or intrusions of magma are also evident such as Harden Quarry where the Harden red or red whinstone is quarried for road stone.

In addition to these solid geological characteristics, the landscape has been altered by glacial and post-glacial activity creating features such ice-gouged hollows or corries, evident at Bizzle and Hen Hole for example.

The gradual weathering of the andesite rock gives rise to relatively nutrient-rich soils. However the leaching of nutrients and high levels of sheep grazing have in many places
resulted in impoverished soils that support extensive areas of matt-grass and other coarse grass moorland: these are the characteristic 'white moors'. In other places, such as on the crests of hills and plateaux, where drainage is poor, peat bog has developed, and cotton grass, sedges, sphagnum moss and dwarf shrubs flourish. Areas of heather moorland and cloudberry, known as the 'black moors' on account of their colour, occur where ground conditions are drier and sheep grazing has been less intense. Collectively these land cover types form extensive areas of semi-natural habitat that is often of high nature conservation value.

Woodland cover is scarce, occurring as scattered oak/elder woodland on hill slopes, or birch and rowan trees clinging to craggy outcrops. Nevertheless there are some extensive coniferous plantation (such as Kidland Forest and Threestoneburn) which sit in stark contrast with the surrounding open moorland.

The rounded hills are a largely unenclosed landscape that has traditionally been managed for sheep grazing and more recently has become important for grouse. Feral goats also graze the hills. Enclosures, where they occur, date to the seventeenth and eighteenth century and take the form of andesite stone walls or dykes; but other evidence of past human activity dates back as far as the Neolithic period. The relatively inaccessibility of this area and lack of major change means that much of its archaeology is extremely well preserved as relict landscapes, comprising settlements, funerary monuments, hillforts, Roman forts (notably Chew Green) and roads, droveways and field systems. In certain light conditions the ghostly shapes of these intact patterns are revealed.

The southern part of this landscape character type falls within the Otterburn Training Area, to which access is restricted. Nevertheless, much of the area is important for walking and recreation, the Pennine Way National Trail forming the most regularly-used route across the area. This is a remote, wild, inhospitable upland landscape, within which weather conditions can change rapidly. Its open simplicity offers extensive views but few distinctive landmarks.

*Landscape character areas*

C2a Cheviot Rounded Hills

*Strategy and Guidelines*

*Key features and qualities*

- **Distinctive white and black moors** reflecting the differences between the grass and heather moorland areas.
- **Open rounded topography** which has a visual simplicity and flowing form and offers panoramic unbroken views.
- **Unique tors** and geological features which stand out as key landmark features in an otherwise simple topography and which graphically reflect the underlying geological history of the area and some of which are designated as SSSIs e.g. Humbleton Hill and The Trows.
- **Extensive semi-natural habitats** including heather and grass moorland and blanket bog e.g. The Cheviot SSSI which covers an area of just under 3500 hectares.
- **A wealth of archaeology** in the form of buried remains and surface earthworks/features e.g. the Roman Fort of Chew Green and Romano-British settlement of Yeavering Bell.
- **Wildness and remoteness** derived from the area's upland character, limited accessibility and lack of overt man-made features.
- **Ecosystem Services** include food provision, climate regulation through carbon storage, soil erosion and water quality/flow and a range of cultural services related to the qualities listed above.

*Local forces for change and their landscape implications*
• **Extensive conifer plantations** may cover areas of upland landscape and extend into upper reaches of valleys and valley sides, creating dark features in an otherwise open expansive landscape.

• **Drainage of upland areas** for farming and forestry may result in a loss of peat bogs and wet flushes and a reduction in biodiversity.

• **Intensification of game management** may encourage increased moorland burning, higher game stocking levels and farming of introduced species such as red-legged partridge in wire pens.

• **Overgrazing of moorland and large scale burning** in some areas has caused loss of natural habitat (particularly blanket bog) and an increase in rough grass moorland although management of heather moorland for grouse has improved the upland heath habitats in some areas.

• **Drainage of moorland and planting of conifer plantations** has led in some areas to the loss of archaeological features.

• **Quarrying of natural stone resources** has caused localised scarring of the landscape.

• **Erosion of footpaths and summits** may affect areas of peat bog, necessitating remedial works along the Pennine Way and Cheviot summit.

• **Increasing off-road use of motorbikes and 4x4s** may cause erosion, noise and visual intrusion particularly on cross border routes.

• **Loss of tranquility** may be caused by military training activity and increased visitor pressure.

• **Development of wind farms**, particularly in the Scottish Cheviots, may have visual impacts on this landscape, affecting its wilderness qualities and the setting of the Northumberland National Park.

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**Strategy**

This landscape is an open, remote and wild one, where the influences of man are generally not prominent, and where topography and vegetation create a visual simplicity. The rarity of these characteristics and their sensitivity to even very small changes suggest that the overall strategy for this area should be one of conservation and sensitive management.

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**Guidelines for land management**

**Forestry and woodland**

Future felling of coniferous plantations should seek to reduce their visual dominance on open moorland areas and upper reaches of valleys, by removal or replacement with broadleaved planting. New planting should reflect landform and contours.

Removal of uncharacteristic woodland planting, particularly coniferous shelterbelts on the valley floor and lower valley slopes, is also desirable in the long term. Where removal is not possible, opportunities should be sought to soften the impact of these woodlands by replanting with native species or by linking the woodlands to those within the tributary valleys.

Encourage the growth of birch and rowan regeneration particularly where it accentuates craggy outcrops. Protect from overgrazing where necessary.

**Farming and moorlands**

Encourage the management of heather moorland through maintenance of appropriate grazing levels and controlled burning. Seek opportunities to extend areas of heather moorland. Discourage the extensive use of wire pens for game stocking which may have significant cumulative visual impacts.

Avoid drainage of upland areas and where feasible encourage the blocking of drains and grips to help conserve upland bog habitats which are nationally rare and contribute to climate regulation.

**Historic sites**

Conservation of historic sites and structures, which act as local focal points and reinforce local distinctiveness in each of the valleys, is important. Further survey work to record the diversity and distribution of buried archaeology, earthworks and structures should be encouraged and further information made available to land managers and visitors alike.

**Recreation and access**

Manage access through this landscape, particularly at viewpoints and summits, to decrease pressure on fragile substrates and habitats.

Manage use of motorbikes and 4x4s through repair, restraint and regulation. Where off-road vehicular use conflicts with other recreational use and National Park purposes undertake impact assessments and monitoring to assist in overall management decisions.
Guidelines for development

Tourism and recreation
Ensure that tourism development is sustainable, sensitively utilises the landscape resource and brings socio-economic benefits to local communities.

Energy and telecommunications
Man-made vertical structures which detract from the open and rounded landform, or adversely affect uninterrupted skylines and unbroken panoramic views, should be avoided.

Care should be taken to prevent landscape and visual impacts associated with wind farm development, whether in Scotland and England, where it may adversely affect the special qualities and setting of the Park.
3.3 Cheviot Fringe

The Cheviot Fringe is a broad valley and plain landscape, which forms a belt of lowland wrapping round the Cheviots and separating them from the Northumberland Sandstone Hills to the east. A very small part of the area lies in Northumberland National Park with most of this Character Area being peripheral to the Park, but forming an important part of its landscape setting. Only those key characteristics that are relevant to the National Park or its setting are listed below. Reference should be made to the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (2010) for further information on character areas beyond the National Park boundary.

- This tranquil, agricultural, valley and plain landscape drains northwards to the Tweed and eastwards to the North Sea.
- It has many features shaped by glaciation, including drumlin fields within the valley lowlands, extensive clay and sand deposits in the Till plain and moraines, eskers and kames within the undulating valley of Whittingham.
- Rivers and streams are often tree-lined and meander between raised terraces and flat gravel benches.
- There is a rectilinear pattern of small coniferous woodland blocks and shelterbelts.
- The flatter, more open arable farmland to the north contrasts with the strong patchwork of mixed farmland, hedgerows and hedgerow trees within the valleys.
- Traditional buildings are generally of sandstone or sandstone rubble with clay tile or stone slate roofs.
- Fortified castles, ‘bastle houses’, ‘tower houses’ and other defensive structures are common.
- Small traditional villages are strategically sited at river bridging points and on the break of slope at the edge of the valley floor.
Landscape character type 3: Foothills and Fringe Valleys

Characterisation

Key characteristics

- Lower slopes and rounded outlier foothills of the Cheviot Hills and associated river valleys.
- Physical characteristics that reflect the junction between the andesite and the softer Carboniferous rocks.
- Evidence of glacial erosion and deposition.
- Lowland pastures divided by hawthorn hedges.
- Small Scots pine plantations, beech woodland, and occasional more extensive conifer shelterbelts on slopes of foothills.
- Clearly-defined valley floors, comprising open floodplain with wet pastures, meadows and meandering river courses.
- Settlements (villages and farmsteads) that tend to be sited at the gentle break in slope between the foothills and the valley floor.

Description

This landscape character type occurs around the outer edge of the Cheviot Hills, forming the immediate setting to the Rounded Hills landscape character type and the National Park. It includes the lower slopes of the Cheviot Hills, rounded outlier hills such as Moneylaws and Housedon Hills, and parts of the valleys of the Glen, Till, Harthope, Breamish and Coquet, which flow between them.

Geologically this type forms the interface between the edge of the volcanic andesite, which characterises the Cheviot Hills, and the Cementstone Group of Lower Carboniferous age comprising limestones, mudstones and sandstones. Glacial activity has had a significant influence on the visual character of the landscape. Fluvial and fluvio-glacial action deposited an extensive mantle of glacial drift across the valleys and lower slopes, forming steep bluffs (now often cloaked in broadleaved woodland) and meltwater channels such as those which can be seen below Yeavering Bell.

Gentle undulations at the edge of the valley floor reflect the presence of glacial deposits such as raised terraces and gravel benches. The substantial flow of meltwater also caused water to build up and become trapped in low lying areas, forming extensive inland lakes. The flat valley floor of the Till and Glen Valleys was formed in this way and contains valuable sand and gravel deposits as a consequence.
Over these glacial deposits, the rivers meander between shingle and gravel bars, their courses often lined with alder or willow. In some places there are also patches of gorse and bracken, both within the valley floors and on the slopes. Although the slopes and valley floors are mainly used for grazing, in areas where there are more fertile and lighter soils on the valley floors there is also some arable use. Fields are enclosed by hedgerows, creating field patterns of medium size, particularly on the valley sides. Many of the hedges are gappy, and there are occasional hedgerow trees. More substantial tree cover occurs in the form of shelterbelts of Scots pine, beech woodlands on slopes, and lining the river bluffs. There are also some coniferous shelterbelts that provide cover for game. Many of the pastures are poorly drained and rushy; this adds texture to the landscape. Visible earthworks such as ridge and furrow also add texture and interest in places.

Much of the present-day settlement pattern dates back to the Anglo-Saxon period, comprising small nucleated villages and farmsteads. Many are located in strategic places such as river crossing points or confluences (e.g. Kirknewton, Alwinton) or at the break in slope between the foothills and valley floors. The vernacular character of the area is strong, with the majority of buildings being of sandstone with a distinctive pink hue, with blue slate roofs. There are notable examples of fortified dwellings or bastles, reflecting the turmoil of the eighteenth century border raids. A number of villages also have rows or terraces of single storey estate cottages, revealing the estate influence on this landscape.

This is a settled lowland landscape with a high degree of tranquillity due to the fact that it lies away from major settlements and roads. The proximity of the adjacent uplands lends a feeling of being on the edge of a wilder, more inhospitable, border landscape.

**Landscape character areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CF3a</th>
<th>Northern Hills, Bowmont Water and Glendale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This area includes the lower reaches of the Bowmont Water valley, Glendale, and associated outlier hills such as Pawstone, Kilham, Watch, and Moneylaws. These distinctively rounded hills form the setting for the river valley which has a clearly defined valley floor but also pronounced raised terraces. The area is relatively well-wooded, with both coniferous plantations and broadleaved woodland on the surrounding hills, and areas of alder woodland and distinctive pollarded willow along the valley floors. The estate management of the area gives it a unified character that is reinforced by the presence of estate cottages. The area’s long settlement history is reflected in the numerous hillforts and hilltop settlements and in early medieval settlements such as Kirknewton and Westnewton within the valleys.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CF3c</th>
<th>Wooler Hills and Happy Valley</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This character area includes the market town of Wooler, the Happy Valley containing the River Harthope, and outlier hills such as Kenterdale, Watch Hills and Westwood Moor. South of Wooler, and along the A609, the landscape has been affected by linear development (e.g. petrol station and caravan park), reflecting the area’s importance as a gateway to the National Park. Within the valley there is a patchwork of arable land, pasture and meadows cut for silage. Fields are defined by gappy hedges and hedgerow trees. Deciduous woodland occurs on the valley sides, particularly on the steep-sided river bluffs, which also have patches of gorse and bracken. The southern part of Happy Valley is deeply rural and scenic.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CF3d</th>
<th>Ingram Hills and Breamish Valley</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this character area the River Breamish emerges from the Cheviot Hills and broadens out into a wider floodplain. The valleys sides comprise outlier hills such as Hoddon and East Hill which are low and receding. On the valley sides and outlier hills evidence of rig and furrow is clearly discernible. On the valley floor there is little woodland cover, most of the area being as open grassland with gorse scrub along river banks.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CF3e</th>
<th>Upper Coquetdale (Alwinton)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Here the River Coquet flows from the Cheviot Hills to meet the River Alwin and broaden out into a wider floodplain. The valley sides are defined by the junction of three different landscape character types, namely the Rounded Hills of the Cheviots to the west, Estate Farmland to the north, and Outcrop Hills and Escarpment (sandstone hills) to the south. The valley floor is broad and open, comprising rushy pastures which are divided by post and wire fencing or the occasional line of trees. This character area forms an important setting for the medieval village of Alwinton which was an important staging post in the movement of livestock across the Cheviots.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Strategy and Guidelines

Key features and qualities

- **Distinctive rounded outlier hills** which enclose, define and contrast with the fringe valley floors.
- **Important glacial history** which gives rise to unique flat topography within the Till valley.
- **Important water courses and margins** which are designated SSSIs.
- **Clumps and linear shelterbelts of Scots pine** that make a significant visual contribution to the valley sides, and when combined with hedges create lines of overlapping vegetation.
- **Natural burn watercourses** with associated riparian trees.
- **Traditional local vernacular and small nucleated villages** along the valley sides that contribute to local distinctiveness.
- **A wealth of historic structures and features** scattered throughout area, including Roman camps and extensive areas of rig and furrow evident on valley sides.
- **Important landscape setting to the Northumberland National Park**. The valleys and outlier hills form the immediate fringe landscape to the higher land within the National Park, bolstering the park’s sense of place.
- **Ecosystem Services** include food provisioning; water availability; regulating soil erosion, quality and water quality; pollination and a range of cultural services related to the qualities listed above.

Local forces for change and their landscape implications

- **Lack of woodland management of shelterbelt planting and semi-natural woodland** particularly on valley bluffs may result in scrub invasion and poor age diversity.
- **Lack of hedgerow and hedgerow tree management** has led to gappy hedges, hedgerow tree loss and an erosion of the historic enclosure pattern.
- **Intensification of arable cropping** on valley floors may result in loss of field margins and encroachment on watercourses.
- **Modern development which does not reflect the local vernacular** on the outskirts of settlements may weaken local distinctiveness.
- **Development of masts and other vertical structures** within the valley floors and on outlier hills may be visually prominent.
- **Sand and gravel extraction** on the valley floor may threaten archaeology, landscape and geological features.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The pattern of this landscape has been eroded to some degree by development and intensive land management practices. The strategy for this landscape is to conserve and restore.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guidelines for land management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forestry and woodland</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a need for management to encourage regeneration of semi-natural woodland on the wooded bluffs and along burns, to reinforce these characteristic vegetation patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarly management of Scots pine and mixed shelterbelts should be encouraged to ensure longevity and any new shelterbelt planting should be carefully designed to ensure it fits with the landscape and reinforces the existing enclosure pattern to form overlapping lines of vegetation. Where existing coniferous shelterbelts detract from the landscape due to their location, scale or edge treatment, restructuring or removal should be encouraged.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

| Farming |
| Retention of wet pastures and hay meadows on the valley floors and protection of buried archaeology and earthworks should be encouraged in order to retain the visual diversity and time-depth of this landscape. |
| Encourage the development of field margins and buffer strips adjacent to watercourses in areas of intensive arable cultivation to manage soil erosion and water quality. |

| Field boundaries |
| Encourage the planting of new hedges and hedgerow trees where they have been lost and the 'gapping-up' of existing hedges with native species such as hawthorn and blackthorn. Encourage less close trimming of hedges and retention of hedgerow trees in order to retain and strengthen the historic field enclosure pattern and |
assist pollination.

**Rivers and wetland**
Creation of landscape margins and buffers adjacent to watercourses would be beneficial where arable land or intensive grazing impinge on the water’s edge. Where erosion has occurred, consider planting of waterside vegetation such as willow, coppicing of existing willow or encouragement of gorse scrub to reduce bank erosion and ensure regulation of soil erosion.

**Historic sites**
Protect historic sites and geological features from loss as a result of intensive arable cultivation through increased survey, awareness and management agreements.

**Guidelines for development**

**Housing and economic development**
New built development should reflect local buildings styles and materials i.e. should be constructed in sandstone and slate or pantiles or in other materials of similar colour. Linear development along roads, which extends urban development into the wider rural countryside and disrupts the nucleated settlement pattern found in this landscape, should be avoided.

**Tourism and recreation**
Tourism-related development (such as caravan parks and recreational grounds) should avoid locations which are visually prominent particularly when viewed from surrounding higher land and where they extend an urbanising influence into open countryside.

**Energy and telecommunications**
Man-made vertical structures which detract from the rounded landform of the outlying hills that define the fringe valleys should be avoided, particularly where they would adversely affect views from within the National Park.
3.4 Border Moors and Forests

This extensive upland plateau, dominated by coniferous woodland, is located in the English-Scottish border country and is centred on Kielder Water to the west of the National Park. To the south-west it drops down to the Solway Basin and to the south it is defined by the Whin Sill scarps running along the Tyne Gap. To the east are the Northumberland Sandstone Hills. The eastern part of the Character Area lies in Northumberland National Park.

- This is a large-scale dissected landscape of high, rolling or undulating plateau with expanses of sweeping moorland, extensive coniferous woodlands, large reservoirs, and wide, long distance views.
- The treeless moorlands contrast with the vast areas of coniferous forest that dominate large parts of the area.
- In places these woodlands are broken up by isolated and enclosed valleys with pastures and settlements.
- There is a network of small rivers and streams in narrow gorges with sandstone crags, loughs and mires.
- The extensive conifer plantations mainly consist of a patchwork of felled areas and different age-classes of non-native conifers.
- There are few broadleaved trees, largely restricted to small woodland blocks, hedgerows and remnant semi-natural woodland in the more sheltered valleys.
- The exposed moorland areas are heavily grazed by sheep and are characterised by both heather and improved grassland.
- Fields are large, open, rectangular, windswept, often poorly drained and subdivided by dry stone walls or wire fences.
- The main agricultural land use is rough or semi-improved pasture for cattle and sheep rearing, with semi-improved or improved in-bye land in sheltered valleys.
- There are numerous peaty mires and mosses.
- Traditional buildings comprise scattered farmhouses and cottages of Fell sandstone with slate roofs on the upper slopes, with a few hamlets in the valleys.
- The area is very sparsely populated overall.
- There are important archaeological landscapes with evidence of settlements, tracks, field systems, sheilings, burial areas and Roman forts and camps.
- Military training area at Otterburn affect perceptions of remoteness and solitude.
**Landscape character type 5: Rolling Uplands**

**Characterisation**

**Key characteristics**

- Broad, open, large-scale, rolling moorland plateau.
- Simple, smooth flowing landform, often featureless with high degree of uniformity.
- Extensive areas of semi-natural vegetation including matrix of heather, matt-grass moorland, raised bogs or mires and patches of bracken.
- Sparse settlement including isolated farmsteads and Victorian hunting lodges.
- Drained by a network of burns that have eroded deep but not visually prominent ravines.
- Sparse tree cover – occasional coniferous shelterbelts and clumps, with limited areas of semi-natural woodland along burns.
- Uniformity of land cover broken in places by In-by pastures associated with farmsteads.
- Military training use over a significant part of the area.

**Description**

This landscape character type comprises elevated land that extends on either side of the Upper North Tyne valley and northwards to Redesdale and Otterburn Training Area. It comprises an extensive area of open upland averaging about 300m AOD, from which there are wide views westward into Kielder and Redesdale Forests and north into the rounded hills of the Cheviots. This landscape also forms an important backdrop to a number of the valleys within the Rolling Upland Valleys landscape character type.

Geologically the landscape character type comprises a succession of sandstones and limestones which have been overlain with a thick glacial deposit of boulder clay. This often gives a smooth, simple appearance to the topography. Where the underlying sandstone breaks the surface, contrasting craggy outcrops add visual interest and focus, for example at Callerhues and Wanney Crags. The underlying geology also has a profound influence on the vegetation cover. In areas where the glacial deposits are deep, drainage is often poor and land cover is dominated by matt grass moorland, peat bog and mosses. This is particularly evident in the west of the area. Further east, where the sandstone outcrops occur, the soils are better-drained and heather moorland is more widespread. The relative simplicity and uniformity of land cover tend to highlight the gently rolling character of the area’s landform. The moorland is drained by a network of burns which carve deep ravines but are not a major feature of the landscape as a whole.
The unenclosed moorland provides grazing for sheep, although significant areas are also managed as grouse moor. Where post and wire fencing divides areas, the effects of differential grazing regimes are sometimes evident – heather moorland ending abruptly along fence lines, beyond which matt grass dominates as a result of more intensive grazing.

Tree cover is sparse although there are notable areas of shelterbelt planting. The geometric form and dark colour of the shelterbelts, which are concentrated around Tarret Burn and Leighton Hill, tend to stand out in stark contrast to the surrounding open moorland. The extent of semi-natural woodland, as found at North Yardhope, is relatively small.

This is an empty landscape; the absence of settlement or development of any sort is striking in some areas. There are however occasional farmsteads and Victorian hunting lodges on higher ground, their presence highlighted by associated shelter woodlands. These properties are generally accessed via minor unenclosed roads, although the B6320 to Lanehead has been upgraded as part of access to Kielder Forest and Reservoir. Small areas of in-bye pasture surround the farmsteads. Their medium-sized pastures, enclosed by dry stone walls, break the uniformity of land cover, their brighter colour standing out against the duller tones of the semi-natural moorland beyond.

At a local level, evidence of past human activity in this landscape adds interest in the form of Roman roads (notably Dere Street) and military forts, signs of prehistoric and later medieval cultivation (sod-cast dykes and rig and furrow), lime kilns associated with agricultural improvement, ground disturbance due to former mining activity, and disused railway routes. These historic features combine with occasional modern man-made features, such as telephone masts, telegraph poles connecting isolated properties, metal sheep pens (particularly along roads), and features associated with present-day military use. Despite the range of man-made features the landscape remains highly natural in its character. It offers both breadth and space in its loneliness, openness and simplicity of composition.

**Landscape character areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMF 5a Otterburn Plateau</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This area falls fully within the Otterburn Training Area and associated infrastructure and activity is characteristic. Some of the roads through the area have been widened to allow easy access to army training vehicles. Dispersed farmsteads are occupied by tenant farmers and may have in-bye pastures and floristically rich hay meadows enclosed by dry stone walls. In places there is some small-scale arable cultivation that supports stock rearing and provides habitat for overwintering birds. The coniferous plantations on the southern slopes of this area, and the larger plantation of Stewartshields, are all used for military training, the latter currently undergoing gradual restocking with mixed species including native broadleaves. This area also contains a rich collection of archaeological features including prehistoric, Roman-British and post-medieval settlement and land management. Field systems with sod-cast banks and rig and furrow are the most visually dominant features; while the remains of bastles are also evident on the eastern edge of the area where it abuts the Grassles Valley.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMF 5b Cottonshope Valley</th>
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<tr>
<td>This is a wide and deep valley within the Otterburn Training Area, mainly comprising acid grassland. It adjoins Redesdale Forest to the west, the dark colour abrupt edges of the plantations imposing a sudden change in landscape character. There is little evidence of human activity other than a few isolated farmsteads and associated in-bye enclosures of improved pasture. Minor military infrastructure occurs adjacent to the valley road. Medieval and post-medieval remains alongside the burn reflect centuries of land management activity and include rig and furrow, sod-cast dykes, linear banks, turf drying platforms, ruined buildings and farmsteads, and stockpens. The southern and northern slopes that enclose the valley reveal the underlying sandstone geology, in the form of distinctive rocky outcrops and stepped skylines. These add interest, for example at Great Dour and Harden Edge.</td>
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<tr>
<th>BMF 5c Kelly’s Pike to Callerhues Crag</th>
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<tr>
<td>This character area forms an extensive upland plateau between Redesdale and the North Tyne Upland Valley. It is used for rough grazing but also managed for grouse, large areas of heather moorland being particularly common on the eastern side of the area. Some of the higher ridges have a distinctive stepped profile and rocky...</td>
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outcrops, reflecting the underlying sandstone geology, whilst other areas have smoother and more rounded shape. Around Tarret Burn and on the north-eastern slopes there are concentrations of coniferous shelterbelts and small scale plantations.

**BMF 5d Shitlington and Ealinghamrigg Commons**

This area forms a relatively narrow ridge between Kielder Forest and the upper North Tyne valley. It offers extensive views northwards across the valley and eastwards towards the Simonside Hills. Rocky crags are characteristic where the underlying sandstone outcrops, for example at Shitlington Craggs. There are few farmsteads in this area and little road access. The most obvious man-made feature is the telephone mast on Ealingham Rigg. Otherwise this is empty moorland that is used for rough grazing.

### Strategy and Guidelines

**Key features and qualities**

- **Open smooth rolling landform** with expansive and panoramic views which are memorable and often exhilarating.
- **High scenic quality, outstanding views**, and an important setting to the Rolling Upland Valleys landscape character type.
- **Extensive areas of semi-natural habitat** including ancient woodland along burns, heather and grass moorland, peat bog and mosses. The upland bogs found within the OTA are of particularly valuable for nature conservation and designated as the Otterburn Mires SSSI.
- **Distinctive craggy sandstone outcrops** which act as visual landmarks in an otherwise largely uniform and simple landscape composition e.g. Great Dour and Harden Edge.
- **A wealth of archaeology** in the form of buried remains, surface earthworks and other features e.g. Roman roads (notably Dere Street) and military forts, signs of prehistoric and later medieval cultivation (sod-cast dykes and rig and furrow), lime kilns associated with agricultural improvement, ground disturbance due to former mining activity, and disused railway routes.
- **Wildness and remoteness** derived from the landscape’s upland character, limited accessibility and relative lack of overt manmade features.
- **Ecosystem Services** include food provisioning; climate regulation through carbon storage; regulating water quality and soil quality and soil erosion and a range of cultural services related to the qualities listed above.

### Local forces for change and their landscape implications

- **Areas of conifer plantation** in places create dark geometric features in an otherwise open expansive rolling landscape – in some cases these are overmature and show signs of wind throw damage.
- **Drainage of upland areas** for farming and forestry may result in a loss of peat bogs and wet flushes and a reduction in biodiversity as well as damage to archaeological sites.
- **Overgrazing of heather moorland** in some areas may cause an abrupt change in vegetation along fence lines and a loss of habitat value.
- **Improvements to in-bye pastures**, where they occur, may affect floristically rich pastures and hay meadows, resulting in a reduction in colour and texture in the landscape.
- **Upgrading of road infrastructure** in response to the construction of Kielder Reservoir and felling from the forests as well as military training on the OTA may alter the pattern and character of the tracks and drove roads found in this landscape.
- **Any development of communications masts or other tall structures** on the open exposed ridgelines of this landscape could lead to visual clutter and further loss of tranquillity which is already undermined by military training activity on the OTA.

### Strategy

The condition of this landscape, including its semi-natural habitats and historic features and patterns, remains good despite some changes associated with coniferous planting and military training activity. The strategy for this landscape is therefore one of conservation.

### Guidelines for land management

**Forestry and woodland**

Future felling of coniferous plantations should seek to reduce their visual dominance in open moorland locations either through removal or through restructuring with broadleaved planting. Existing coniferous plantations
should be felled before wind throw damage occurs and be replanted with mixed native species to soften their outlines.

Planting of new native woodland should focus on natural depressions in the landform and along burns, and should avoid masking rocky outcrops which act as local landmarks and a valuable habitat. Natural regeneration of semi-natural woodland along burn valleys (particularly semi-natural birch and oak-birch and hazel woodland) should be encouraged through the protection of these areas from stock grazing.

**Farming**

Where small-scale arable cropping occurs, ensure it relates closely to existing farmsteads and avoids areas important for archaeology or of nature conservation. Encourage the appropriate management of floristically rich hay meadows in in-bye pastures and discourage the use of fertilisers and herbicides on pastures.

**Moorlands**

Manage heather moorland and sustain and enhance biodiversity through appropriate stocking densities and burning regimes. Monitor trials for predation control in areas managed for grouse.

Encourage reduction in stocking levels where there is scope to regenerate heather moorland and to help prevent abrupt changes between heather and grass moorland along fence lines.

Conserve areas of blanket bog through the avoidance of gripping and physical damage and removal of self-seeding conifers from plantation forests. Restore damaged bogs and flushes by blocking grips and drains to ensure regulation of climate and regulation of soil erosion/quality.

**Historic sites**

Protect areas of archaeological value or sensitivity from inappropriate land management including drainage, woodland planting and arable cropping.

**Guidelines for development**

**Military training**

Encourage the sensitive management of areas used for military training and avoid or minimise any widening of existing tracks and roads or erection of new buildings and signage.

Ensure that any new development of the Otterburn camp accommodation and facilities is focused within or immediately adjacent to the existing camp area and ensure development is not visually prominent over significant distances.

**Energy and telecommunications**

Telecommunications development would be out of place in this landscape which is highly sensitive visually due to its open character; any domestic scale wind turbines should be closely related to existing farmsteads and should not be out of scale or detract from adjacent built structures, landscape features or skylines.
**Landscape character type 6: Moorland Forestry Mosaic**

**Characterisation**

**Key characteristics**

- Simple, expansive upland landscape, generally over 250m AOD.
- Gently rolling topography incised by burns that are often concealed by plantations.
- Mosaic of large-scale coniferous plantations, open grass and heather moorlands and mires, with limited areas of in-bye pasture.
- Enclosed landscape with limited outward views.
- A dynamic landscape with significant areas of ongoing felling and restocking.
- Some broadleaved woodlands and woodland edges that soften the plantation character.
- A generally uninhabited landscape, with only occasional farmsteads and forestry settlements.
- Reservoirs that create expansive views across open water, in contrast to the enclosed character of surrounding woodlands.

**Description**

This landscape character type covers a significant portion of Northumberland National Park and extends beyond the border into Scotland, forming one of the largest areas of forest in Britain. It includes Kielder, Wark and Redesdale Forests, and runs from Hadrian's Wall in the south to the edge of Otterburn Training Area in the north. The expanses of forestry that cover most of this landscape appear dark and imposing when viewed from adjacent landscape character types; and in some areas the straight forest edges contrast with the curving, more natural lines of the surrounding hills, grassland and moorland.

Geologically this landscape consists of sandstones and shales, with occasional limestones and coal seams. Horizontal layering, uplift and glacial erosion have created a characteristic undulating topography, the harder sandstones forming ridges separated by softer eroded shales. In post-glacial times, meltwater accumulated in the upland troughs, initiating the development of peat and creating the areas of raised and blanket bog that can be seen today, for example at Kielder Moor where heather, cotton grass, deer grass and sphagnum moss occur on blanket peat. In the north of the area, the undulating ridges are less common. Here flat tabular hills such as at Peel Fell and Carter Fell are more common.

This is a large scale landscape of high rolling or undulating plateau. The extensive forest cover is largely Sitka spruce with a proportion of pine, larch and broadleaf species, confined mainly to the lower hill slopes, river courses and forest edges. Sitka was chosen as a
suitable species to cope with the poor soil and climatic conditions of the area, and planting of Kielder Forest started in 1926. Over half of the coniferous woodlands were planted between 1945 and 1960, with a second wave of planting during the 1960s and 70s. As a result, many of the plantations are of even age and a number are now second rotation. Since the introduction of the Forest Design Plans in the 1990s felling to restructure and diversify the woodland in terms of age, species composition and physical form is ongoing, creating a patchwork of felling coupes, replanted and regenerating areas, and where recent felling has taken place, a temporarily disturbed character. Restructuring is occurring in Kielder, Wark and Redesdale Forests although in Redesdale and around Kielder Reservoir more forest is managed as ‘long term retention’ because of its visual prominence and sensitivity. In some areas geometric lines and edges of plantations are still apparent although much less obvious than in the past and in Wark Forest the planting of broadleaved woodland along burns is becoming commonplace.

Although the higher sandstone tops occasionally protrude above the trees, and some steeper burn courses or cleughs are unplanted, the hills and valleys are generally covered by forest, and this tends to mask the landform. Views are often contained by trees, although the high open moorland tops and the reservoirs of Kielder Water and Catcleugh allow some extensive views. Within the forest, short range views to features such as narrow burn valleys, gorges, mires and sandstone crags are characteristic.

The unforested parts of this landscape character type are typically covered by coarse grass and heather moorland, grazed by sheep and roe deer. The grassland is mainly rough grazing with rush pasture in areas of poor drainage.

This is a sparsely populated landscape with a dispersed pattern of farmsteads and a number of characteristic settlements built for forest workers, including Stonehaugh, Kielder, Byrness, Sleetbeck and Kershopefoot. Associated with the farmsteads are small areas of in-bye pasture enclosed by stone walls and post and wire fencing. Some pastures show signs of improvement or drainage through gripping, their green fields contrasting with surrounding rough moorland pastures. Damp pastures along burns support diverse meadow grasslands. Roads through the area are few, although forest tracks (comprising loose rough stone) and rides are numerous.

The landscape comprises a limited range of elements. It often feels remote, but seldom tranquil because it is a working forest, and planting and felling operations give it a dynamic character. Where the roads pass through plantations, the landscape has a confined feel that at times can be disorientating and even claustrophobic. This sense of confinement is relieved in the open areas, where the character is more exposed and views are possible. Although forest walks and drives allow access within the forest, their extent is fairly limited, and large areas of forest remain relatively little visited.

**Landscape character areas**

**BMF6a Kielder, Wark and Redesdale Forests**

This character area comprises the large expanses of plantation that stretch from north of Hadrian’s Wall to Otterburn Training Camp. Much of Wark Forest was planted in the in the 1970s prior to the new ‘restructuring’ approach. As a result many of the woodlands in Wark Forest are still dense Sitka blanket plantations and showing limited sensitivity to topography, burns and edges. In contrast, the Kielder and Redesdale Forests have benefited from the new approach whereby diversity of age, species and is a priority. In these latter areas new broadleaved trees have been planted along burns, mixed planting has replaced dense Sitka woodland, and some groups of trees such as Scots pine have been retained or selectively thinned. The edges of woodland have been adjusted to reflect local topography. The Kielder Forest Drive runs through Kielder and Redesdale Forests and provides vehicular access to areas of remote upland in the summer months. In the north of this area is the Catcleugh Reservoir. This is much smaller than Kielder and is not utilised for recreation in the same way; it is therefore considered part of the wider surrounding character area.
Strategy and Guidelines

Key features and qualities

- **Extensive areas of semi-natural habitat** including raised and blanket bog, heather and grass moorland, and diverse meadow grasslands along burns, many of which are designated SSSIs e.g. Kielderhead and Emblehope Moors and Kielder Mires.
- **Distinctive flat-topped sandstone ridgelines and outcrops** which act as visual landmarks in an otherwise largely uniform and inward-looking landscape e.g. Peel Fell and Carter Fell.
- **A wealth of archaeology** in the form of buried remains and surface earthworks/features including defended settlements such as Gibbe’s Knowe and round and long cairns such as Devil’s Lapful.
- **Remoteness and isolation** derived from its upland character, limited accessibility, sparse population and inward looking character.
- **Areas of scenic interest and importance for recreation** in and around Kielder Reservoir and including the Forest Drive which provides access to a unique and remote area of upland.
- **Historically significant forestry settlements** reflecting an important period in England's forestry strategy of the 1960s e.g. Stonehaugh and Byrness.
- **Ecosystem Services** include provisioning services of timber provision, biomass energy and regulation of soil erosion and quality. Cultural services related to the special qualities noted above.

Local forces for change and their landscape implications

- **Ongoing felling and restocking of coniferous plantations** as part of the Forestry Commission policy to restructure and diversify early plantations brings temporary disturbance to the landscape.
- **Past farming and forestry activity** have resulted in the drainage of upland areas causing a loss of peat bogs and wet flushes and damage to or loss of archaeological features.
- **Lack of upland bog and heather moorland management** including overgrazing, drainage and regeneration of Sitka has in some areas led to a decline of important moorland habitats.
- **Upgrading of road infrastructure and creation of new access tracks** in response to the construction of Kielder Reservoir and need to access areas for felling has altered the communications pattern in this landscape.
- **Redevelopment of historic forestry villages** may affect the distinctiveness and integrity of these settlements.
- **Increased tourism and associated infrastructure** such as signage, car parks, visitor centres focused on Kielder Reservoir potentially may create visual clutter or intrude locally on landscape character.
- **Increased use of motorbikes and 4x4s** particularly on cross border routes may cause erosion, noise and visual intrusion.
- **Major wind energy development** in this area in the future is a possibility and may have a visual impact on this landscape, affecting wildness qualities and the setting of the National Park.

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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is a dynamic landscape and one which serves a number of important functions from timber production to recreation and tourism. It has undergone considerable change over the last 50 years and but continues to provide a range of landscape benefits. The strategy for this area is one of continued enhancement.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Guidelines for land management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forestry and woodland</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the ongoing restructuring of existing coniferous woodlands in order to diversify their structure, soften their outlines and enhance nature conservation value through the retention of stands of Scots pine where appropriate and the planting of new semi-natural woodland which relates to local topography. Restructuring may also present opportunities for the removal of woodland where it impinges on adjacent landscapes such the setting of Hadrian's Wall. Consideration should also be given to the removal of woodland that impinges on and has an adverse effect upon adjacent landscape character types.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New woodland planting should avoid areas of nature conservation value such as meadow grassland and should not mask landmark features such as distinctive skyline ridges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage new native planting (oak, ash and alder) along burn valleys and plantation margins.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Moorlands**
Encourage the appropriate management of meadow grasslands particularly along burn valleys. Discourage the drainage of moorland areas through gripping and the improvement of in-by pastures through high use of fertilisers and herbicides. Restore bogs and heather moorland by blocking grips and drains, reducing grazing and stocking levels and removing self-seeding conifers.

**Historic sites**
Conservation of historic sites and structures, which act as local focal points and reinforce local distinctiveness, is important. Care should be taken to avoid planting on or in close proximity to archaeological sites.

**Recreation and access**
Manage the off-road use of motorbikes and 4x4s in this landscape through repair, restraint and regulation. Where the use of recreational motor vehicles conflicts with other recreational use or National Park purposes, seek opportunities to undertake impact assessments and monitoring to assist in management.

**Guidelines for development**

**Housing and economic development**
The historic forestry settlements have a distinctive urban form and character. New built development within or adjacent to these settlements should be carefully designed to avoid loss of settlement integrity and local distinctiveness.

**Tourism and recreation**
Where tourism and recreational development is required care should be taken to avoid exerting a suburbanising influence on the landscape and development should generally remain low-key. New buildings should respect local building materials and styles. Care should be taken to avoid development which is visually prominent or which detracts from the setting of Kielder Water.

**Energy and telecommunications**
Any future wind energy development should avoid areas of importance for recreation and take advantage of the screening provided by the Forest. Areas of broad, rounded landform are most likely to be able to accommodate wind farm development. It is essential to avoid or minimise any impacts on the National Park or on the setting of Hadrian’s Wall.

Wind farm development proposals (either in Scotland or England) should avoid adverse impact on the special qualities of the National Park or its setting.
**Landscape character type 7: Rolling Upland Valleys**

**Characterisation**

**Key characteristics**

- Broad valleys with gently convex valley sides.
- Tributary burns, often well-wooded, carving incised valleys into the hillsides.
- Clearly defined floodplain and mixed farmland on valley floors.
- Consistent pattern of textured rough pastures divided by stone walls on valley sides, with open moorland above.
- Meandering rivers, sometimes marked by alders, but not generally prominent landscape feature.
- Steep, wooded bluffs flanking edges of the floodplain.
- Shelterbelts and clumps of pine or mixed woodland on lower slopes and occasionally on valley floors.
- Historic sandstone villages and dispersed farmsteads on lower slopes.
- Rich archaeology including Roman forts, rig and furrow and fortified bastle houses – heart of reiving country.

**Description**

The Rolling Upland Valleys landscape character type comprises broad valleys which carve through larger blocks of upland landscape. It includes the valleys of the Rivers Rede and North Tyne and their tributaries Elsdon, Lisles, Tarset and Hareshaw Burns. The open moorland of the adjacent Rolling Uplands and Outcrop Hills and Escarpment landscape character types has a significant influence on the character of these upland valleys and provides a strong visual contrast to the valley landscapes. Occasionally extensive coniferous woodland in adjacent landscapes impinges on this type, where seen on the skyline or the upper valley sides.

The underlying solid geology dates from the Carboniferous period, and is overlain with glacial drift and alluvial deposits. Glacial influences are apparent in the profile of the valleys which, although narrower in their upper reaches, have been broadened and deepened by glacial meltwater. Meltwater activity has also left tell-tale signs such as the steep-sided bluffs characteristically found on the edges of the floodplain. The glacial drift of boulder clay, sand and shingle along with river alluvium, supports floodplain meadows and pastures and in some places patches of arable. On the upper valley sides the shallower drift deposits quickly give way to outcrops of sandstone and shale, bringing a change in vegetation to rough grazing and open moorland with gorse, bracken and rushes. Tributary valleys flow...
over horizontal banding in the Carboniferous rocks and give rise to waterfalls, for example along Hareshaw Burn, which flows over exposed rock through a woods of oak and ash.

The unifying characteristics of these valleys are their gentle convex sides, upland context, and repeating pattern of valley floor pastures, valley side rough pastures, and open moorland above. Valley floor pastures and meadows are generally divided by post and wire fencing and in places by hedgerows (often of grown-out hawthorn); while pastures on the valleys sides are defined by stone walls, creating a medium sized enclosure pattern.

The location and extent of woodland varies between valleys. Generally semi-natural woodland occurs most frequently along the river courses (where alder and birch are common) and on the steep bluffs on the lower valleys sides (where oak, birch, ash and beech can be found). In places mixed woodland also occurs, often containing Scots pine (as in the North Tyne valley) or other conifers in the form of shelterbelts (the latter found particularly around Otterburn and south of West Woodburn). A sense of enclosure is felt most keenly in the smaller, narrower tributary valleys, where linear semi-natural broadleaved woodlands flank the watercourses, for example along Tarset, Hareshaw and Lisles Burns. By contrast, the valleys around Otterburn, Elsdon and north of Bellingham are shallow, medium- to large-scale valleys with relatively little woodland on valley floors or sides.

The Rolling Upland Valleys has been a well-settled landscape character type since prehistoric times. Within the valley floor there is evidence of prehistoric and medieval settlement. On the valley sides are extensive patterns of rig and furrow (seen particularly in the fertile Lisles valley). The current settlement pattern is one of small historic villages (such as Elson, Falstone and East Woodburn) located on the lower valley slopes at primary river crossing points and confluences. Many of the settlements have a strong vernacular tradition of sandstone cottages with slate roofs; they are connected via narrow rural lanes lined by hedges or stone walls. There are also remains of medieval castles and bastles (fortified farmhouses) across the landscape, a legacy of the Border reivers. In addition there is evidence of past industrial activity including coal mining and iron smelting, not to mention the railways that now lie disused. In some place more recent landscape elements are noticeable, for example the telegraph poles which criss-cross the valleys in places; recreational developments such as caravan parks and golf courses; and settlement expansion at Bellingham and elsewhere.

This landscape character type shows a high degree of unity as a result of its simple and consistent pattern of landscape elements. Woodland cover adds complexity and variety of visual composition. Although the valleys are not remote and are clearly settled, they have a very distinctive, unspoilt and historic character and are strongly influenced by the wider upland setting.

Landscape character areas

**BNF7a Redesdale**

The Redesdale character area extends from the edge of the Redesdale Forest as far as Bennetsfield. In the west it is a relatively narrow valley influenced by the close proximity of the forest. This area includes the former Redesdale Camp military training area (now disused) and the more ancient Roman camps and fort at Bremenivm north of Rochester, along Sills Burn. Further east the valley broadens out and its course is clearly marked by dense alder and other deciduous woods (e.g. Tod Law and Evistones Wood) and by mixed woodlands flanking the gentle valley sides, giving an enclosed character. Rough pastures and rocky outcrops on the valley sides highlight the proximity of major upland areas. The valley carries the A689, which is one of the busiest cross-border roads.

**BMF7b Otterburn and Elson Valley**

In this character area the River Rede flows through a broad basin which is gently undulating in the west and where landform sweeps gradually up to smooth rounded slopes. This gives rise to an expansive open generous
scale, with a strong horizontal emphasis and often an empty feel. The river itself is insignificant within this expansive valley context and meanders freely, its course only occasionally marked by alder trees. Within the valley there is a predominance of, improved but often wet, rushy, pastures divided by post and wire fencing. There are also occasional coniferous and deciduous shelter belts with Scots pine being a feature giving a linear and blocky character. Elsewhere there has been a significant amount of new woodland planting which will in time alter the sense of openness found in this valley. In places telegraph poles cross the valley floor introducing vertical elements which create visual clutter. The historic settlements of Otterburn and Elsdon are located in this character area. At Elson there is a notable motte and bailey which reflects the private liberty of Redesdale – a feudal stronghold and also Elsdon Tower - an important Pele tower.

BMF7c  Bellingham and Woodburn Valleys
In this character area the River Rede merges first with Lisles Burn and then with the North Tyne near Bellingham. The incised watercourses (see for example along the Rede north of East Woodburn and at Hareshaw Burn); the contrasting broad open hillsides; and the strong evidence of past industrial activity all distinguish this area from the other Rolling Upland Valleys. The valley floor pastures are lined by mature oak and ash trees and post and wire fencing, but the area is generally open and untreed, particularly between Bellingham and West Woodburn. The proximity of the Rolling Uplands landscape character type lends an empty, upland feel to the landscape. In the Lisles Valley the burn is lined with alder trees, coppiced in the past, and on the valley sides there are mature trees and patches of mixed woodland, often following shallow tributary valleys. Pastures are unimproved and wet, and combined with extensive rig and furrow earthworks, this gives a textured feel to the valley sides, where fields are enclosed by stone walls forming a strong visual pattern, particularly around West Woodburn. Mining of coal seams and iron ore smelting in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has left disturbed ground and earthworks, for example at the former Hareshaw iron works above Bellingham; and the line of the Border Counties Railway (disused) can be picked out from time to time. Bastle houses, such as Black Middens, are also features within the valley. The character area includes Bellingham, West and East Woodburn. Bellingham is the largest of the three and sits within a shallow valley with the uplands forming a backdrop and skyline to the north and south. The River North Tyne is a central focus to the settlement and was influential in its siting and development. The town also has a strong association with the disused railways and quarries of the surrounding area. Today it has an important tourist role.

BMF7d  Upper North Tyne Valley
This character area extends from the Kielder Reservoir in the west to the edge of Bellingham in the east, including the upper reaches of the North Tyne Valley and Tarset Burn tributary valley. The valley has a cohesive character with a clearly defined floodplain within which the meandering river is often lined with alder trees. On the valley floor and lower valley sides there is a mixture of arable and species rich hay meadows in medium sized fields defined by post and wire fencing and some hedgerows. In the east, around the parkland of Hesleyside, avenues of mature oak and lime extend onto the valley floor and there is a greater concentration of broadleaved and mixed planting, for example at Riding Wood and Closehill Wood, sometimes extending onto the valley floor. This area has seen one of the largest new native woodland planting schemes in the National Park at Donkeywood. In the middle section of the valley, Scots pine is characteristic of the valley slopes. Further west there is less improved pasture, many pastures being wet or rough (for example north of Garritheth Moor). In this area birch woodland and rocky crags with bracken and gorse are also evident.

Strategy and Guidelines

Key features and qualities

- **Consistent patterns of land use** including valley floor mixed farming and hedgerows, rushy valley-side pastures enclosed by stone walls, and open moorland above, giving rise to high scenic quality, particularly in the North Tyne Valley.
- **Wooded bluffs** along the edge of the valley floors and tributary burns, creating visual enclosure and comprise significant areas of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland and important habitats for lichen. Some, such as Hareshaw Burn and Hesleyside Park are SSSIs, while many others are of local nature conservation importance.
- **The registered historic park and garden** at Hesleyside. This exerts a strong influence on the valley sides and floor west of Bellingham and reflects more settled time in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Three of the original parkland avenues remain and are clearly visible.
- **Historic sandstone villages**. These occur repeatedly along the lower valley sides and act as important visual focal points. Some are Conservation Areas and there are also numerous listed buildings.
- **A wealth of historic structures** scattered throughout area, many of which are scheduled monuments. There are important remains from the Roman period (e.g. Bremenivm Fort), medieval period (e.g. Elsdon
motte and bailey castle and rig and furrow earthworks in the Lisle's valley) and the Border conflicts (e.g. bastle houses such as Three Middens) as well as mining and industrial relics (e.g. Hareshaw ironworks).

- **An important part of the setting to Northumberland National Park.** The valleys act as corridors and gateways to the National Park and to the recreational landscapes of Kielder Water.
- **Tranquility** derived from the predominantly rural character of the landscape, lack of obvious man-made structures and presence of adjacent open moorland. This is most keenly felt away from major trunk roads such as the A68.
- **Ecosystem Services** include food provisioning and water availability; regulating water quality and water flow and a range of cultural services related to the qualities noted above.

**Local forces for change and their landscape implications**

- **Conifer plantations on the upper slopes** may locally affect this landscape character type, creating dark heavy skyline features or altering the consistent patterns and simplicity of land cover that are so distinctive of this type.
- **Lack of woodland management** and replanting programmes may result in the decline and loss of important landscape features such as ancient semi-natural woodland and parkland avenues, particularly where woodland and trees and woodland are of even age.
- **Inappropriate planting of new woodlands on the valley floor** and valley sides may disrupt existing patterns of woodland, which tends to be concentrated on the steep valley side bluffs and in tributary valleys.
- **Improvement of pasture and expansion of arable cultivation** on the valley sides may lead to a loss of the characteristic colours and textures of the pastures and damage to their buried archaeology. It may also lead to erosion, habitat and water quality issues.
- **Loss of field boundaries** through lack of management may weaken the characteristic patterns of enclosure. Many hedgerows on the valley floor are overgrown or have been replaced by fencing and some stone walls on the valleys sides are tumbled down.
- **Introduction of new vertical elements** may adversely affect this landscape, which is sensitive to new structures such as telegraph poles crossing the open, horizontal valley floor, and to masts or turbines on the distinctive moorland skylines above. Such structures may disrupt the flow of the landform, create visual clutter and reduce tranquillity.
- **Development pressures** are evident in Bellingham and other valley settlements, where new housing and tourism developments show signs in some areas of expanding onto the valley sides and altering the historic form and approach routes to settlements.
- **Traffic flows** associated with tourism, timber extraction and Scottish border travel may undermine tranquillity in adjacent areas.

**Strategy**

The defining element of this landscape character type is the pattern of land use and enclosure which progresses from mixed farming on the valley floor where fields are enclosed by hedges, to pastures on the valley sides defined by stone walls, to open moorland above. This is overlain with a varied pattern of woodland and a wealth of historic features, giving each valley a unique character. The overall strategy should be to conserve and restore this land use and enclosure pattern and the unique character of each of the valleys.

**Guidelines for land management**

**Forestry and woodland**

Future felling of coniferous plantations should seek to reduce their visual dominance on the upper valley slopes, either through removal or through restructuring with broadleaved planting. New planting should not extend over the skyline.

There is a need for management to encourage regeneration of semi-natural woodland in wooded bluffs and along burns, in order to diversify the age structure of the woodlands and retain characteristic patterns of woodland in the landscape. Appropriate protection from overgrazing is paramount.

Removal of uncharacteristic woodland planting, particularly coniferous shelterbelts on the valley floor and lower valley slopes, is desirable in the long term. Where removal is not possible, opportunities should be sought to soften the impact of these woodlands by replanting with native species or by linking the woodlands to those within the tributary valleys. Where removal occurs measures to prevent soil erosion should be taken.

Encourage the planting of new woodland on the valley floor where it adds visual interest, enhances landscape structure and complements existing woods on steep side bluffs.

**Farming**
Retention of unimproved pastures on the valley sides and some areas of valley floor and protection of buried archaeology and earthworks (including mining heritage) should be encouraged in order to retain the visual diversity and time-depth of this landscape.

**Rivers and wetland**
Creation of landscape margins and buffers adjacent to watercourses would be beneficial where arable land or intensive grazing impinges on the water’s edge to assist in the regulation of water quality. Similarly the replanting of hawthorn hedges on the valley floor, where field amalgamation or hedgerow loss has occurred, is desirable and aids pollination.

**Historic sites**
Conservation of historic sites and structures, which act as local focal points and reinforce local distinctiveness in each of the valleys, is important. Access and retention of views to these key features should also be retained.

**Guidelines for development**

**Housing and economic development**
New built development should avoid creeping up the valley sides and should not form abrupt edges. It should be constructed in sandstone and slate or in other materials of similar colour (particularly roofs). The approach routes, key views and gateways to settlements should be protected from inappropriate development.

**Tourism and recreation**
Recreational development (such as golf course, caravan parks and playing fields) on the edges of settlements should not extend urbanising influences or uncharacteristic vegetation patterns into open countryside.

**Energy and telecommunications**
Man-made vertical structures which detract from the valley landform, create visual clutter or adversely affect the unfettered skylines which form the distinctive setting to these valleys should be avoided and any such existing structures removed where possible.
3.5 Northumberland Sandstone Hills

The Northumberland Sandstone Hills extend in a wide north-south arc across Northumberland, separating the valleys of the Cheviot Fringe from the agricultural lowlands to the east. This is a plateau landscape, covered mainly by moorland and improved pasture. A small part of the Character Area (the Simonside and Harbottle Hills) lies within Northumberland National Park. Only those key characteristics that are relevant to the National Park or its setting are listed below.

- These sandstone hills form distinctive skyline features with generally level tops, north-west facing scarps, and craggy outcrops with exceptional views.
- They are highest in the south, where they reach over 400m AOD.
- There is a transition from heather and grass moor on the higher ground, through scrub and woodland, to improved farmland and parkland on the lower slopes.
- Extensive plantations of coniferous woodland occur in some areas.
- Broadleaved woodland is associated with rivers and scarp slopes.
- Farmland comprises rectangular patterns of large open fields, bounded by dry stone walls, dating from the time of the parliamentary enclosures.
- However, blocks and belts of coniferous woodland often break up the patterns.
- Varied moorland communities, dominated by heather and rough acid grassland mosaics, are found on the thin, sandy soils of the higher and steeper slopes.
- Wet peaty flushes, mires, loughs and small reservoirs occur throughout the area.
- Traditional buildings were of sandstone and thatch, later replaced by stone slates and Welsh slates.
- There are scattered farmsteads and small hamlets, served by the market town of Rothbury.
- This is an important prehistoric archaeological landscape, with ‘cup and ring’ marked rocks, Bronze Age burial cists, earthwork remains of Iron Age hillfort systems, standing stones, enclosures and cairns.
- Remains of deserted medieval villages and rig and furrow cultivation are common, especially on land to the east and south of the main plateau area.
**Landscape character type 8: Outcrop Hills and Escarpment**

**Characterisation**

**Key characteristics**

- Flat-topped elongated ridges and rounded sandstone hills.
- Distinctive steep scarp faces forming notable stepped, often dark, skyline silhouettes.
- Open plateau and gentle dip slopes clothed in heather moorland, acidic grassland mosaic, coniferous forestry and peat bog/mires.
- Steeper slopes clothed in bracken, heather and broadleaved woodland with craggy outcrops.
- Wet pastures and semi-improved pastures on lower slopes.
- Rich muted colours and textures.
- Little or no habitation but significant archaeological remains.
- Waterbodies including natural loughs and reservoirs.

**Description**

This landscape character type forms a rhythm of repeating hills and uplands stretching from outside of the National Park north of Rothbury to Sweethope Lough in the south. These hills include four distinct upland areas namely the Harbottle Hills, Cartington Hills, Simonside Hills and Sweethope and Blackdown. Due to their height above surrounding farmland, these hills form important backdrops to landscapes such as the Coquet valley as well as offering long distant views to other hills such as the Cheviots. Their distinctive form and rich semi-natural vegetation patterns contrast with the surrounding more intensively-farmed landscape.

The underlying geology of the area is sandstone which forms a sharp north- and east-facing scarp with craggy cliffs, scree slopes and upstanding rocky outcrops. The scarp face creates an indented stepped skyline which is distinctive in views over great distances. Beyond the scarp, the flat tops of the ridges form a broad plateau above the gentler, rounded dip slope to the south. In these latter areas there are fewer distinctive rocky outcrop features although the vegetation continues to reflect the acidic nature of the underlying geology. The highest outcrop is Simonside Hill at 430m AOD.

Much of this area is covered by extensive semi-natural vegetation reflecting the underlying acidic soil conditions and including heather and grass moorland, and, in areas of poorer drainage, peat bog. Rocky outcrops set within the heather moors, together with patches of bracken and gorse, add visual diversity. These areas of moorland are enclosed by stone walls and provide rough sheep grazing; they are managed for grouse. On lower slopes
there is a medium-sized enclosure pattern of improved pastures within stone walls. These fringe areas have an intimate character due to their topography, stone walls and woodlands.

There are some notable areas of ancient semi-natural woodland, particularly on steeper slopes below the scarp face, along incised burns and on the dip slopes where woodland often reflects the rounded topography of the area. Some of these woodlands are grazed and form important and distinctive areas of wood pasture. These contrast with the geometric shapes of the coniferous woodland (comprising pine, spruce and some larch) that have been planted on the open plateau and dip slopes such as Rayles Common, Harwood Forest and Aid Moss. In places the conifer plantations are edged with broadleaved species such as birch, giving a softer appearance; and elsewhere open glades have been created within plantations.

The area is drained by a series of burns which cut incised courses though the moorland and are often clothed in bracken, heather and broadleaved trees and flanked by wet pastures. Elsewhere in this character type there are natural loughs and mires (e.g. Darden Lough and Little Lough respectively) in areas of poor drainage where peat has built up, as well as man-made reservoirs such as Sweethope Lough and Fontburn Reservoir.

Although there is little or no settlement in this landscape character type, the hills have a cultural importance, reflected in the high concentration of prehistoric sites such as burial cairns, standing stones, cup and ring marks and hill forts and in folklore, where the Simonside Hills in particular are thought to represent a ‘ritual landscape’. In addition there are few roads accessing this landscape, although ancient hollow ways cross the area providing access by foot.

While not remote, the semi-natural vegetation and rocky outcrops, which are features of the hills, give a ruggedness and natural character to much of the area. The simple landform and complex semi-natural vegetation patterns provide a rich visual diversity of colours and textures.

**Landscape character areas**

**NSH8a  Harbottle Hills**
This character area runs east-west and lies between the Coquet Valley to the north and Rolling Uplands of the Otterburn Training Area to the south. It comprises an area of extensive heather cover and mixed conifer plantations. Farm steadings occur on lower ground and the area is incised by minor burns such as Holystone Burn. On the north-east facing slope of the Coquet valley above Harbottle, there is a large coniferous plantation which lies contiguous with fragments of ancient semi-natural habitat, including multi-stemmed, formerly coppiced sessile oak woodland, juniper scrub and upland heather heath. A large part of this landscape is an artillery range used for military training. In places the underlying Fell Sandstone is revealed in craggy outcrops.

**NSH8c  Simonside Hills**
This character area forms an expansive upland with some distinctive rock outcrops dominated on its south side by the large scale, geometrically laid out, coniferous plantation of Harwood Forest. To the north and west of the plantation, broad plateau summits undulate in a series of ridges with north-west facing scarp slopes, the thin sandy soils supporting semi-natural heather moorland and acid grassland with some areas of wet mire. The upper hill slopes provide semi-improved grazing, which in place has reverted to rough pasture. The lower slopes provide improved grazing with some broadleaf cover, particularly along minor stream courses. In damper areas there are mires supporting purple moor grass, bog myrtle and sphagnum moss. Dry stone walls are frequent enclosure elements, although many are no longer stockproof and are supplemented with wire fences, which predominate elsewhere.
Strategy and Guidelines

Key features and qualities

- **Distinctive flat topped sandstone ridgelines and outcrops** e.g. Raven Heugh and Leech-hope Crag which act as visual landmarks and are distinctive beyond this character type. The elevation of this landscape also affords long distance views to the Cheviot Hills.
- **Extensive areas of semi-natural habitat** including wet peaty flushes, heather and grass moorland, mires and ancient semi-natural woodland along burns and steep slopes. Many sites are SSSIs and contribute a rich tapestry of colours and textures e.g. Harbottle Moors valued for upland heath and fen, marsh and swamp lowland and Simonside Hills valued for its upland heath, bogs and semi-natural woodland.
- **Remoteness and tranquillity** as a result of upland character, limited accessibility, and sparse population.
- **High scenic quality** derived from distinctive geology, topography and acidic vegetation and reflected in the inclusion of much of this landscape in the Northumberland National Park.
- **An important landscape for recreation and tourism** on account of its scenic quality (including rich colours and textures) and range of habitats and important archaeological sites.
- **A prehistoric archaeological landscape** with a wealth of archaeological features such as ‘cup and ring’ marked stones, Bronze Age burial cists, Iron Age hillfort systems, standing stones, enclosures and cairns many of which are designated as scheduled ancient monuments.
- **Ecosystem Services** include food provisioning, timber provision and genetic diversity of hardy local breeds of sheep; carbon storage and the regulating of soil erosion as well as a range of cultural services related to the qualities noted above.

Local forces for change and their landscape implications

- **Ongoing felling and restocking of coniferous plantations** may influence the shape of plantations and cause local visual and physical disturbance.
- **Farming and forestry activity** may result in the drainage of upland areas resulting in damage to peat bogs, wet flushes and wet pastures and potential loss of buried and upstanding archaeological features.
- **Change in patterns of heather moorland** is occurring, including some ongoing loss of heather though overstocking, drainage and over-burning.
- **Lack of stone wall management and proliferation of post and wire fencing** may lead to a loss of enclosure pattern and visual clutter.
- **Development pressure for radio masts and large scale wind farm developments** potentially could bring loss of tranquility, cumulative impacts and visual fragmentation and cluttering of the distinctive indented skyline which forms the backdrop to many views across this landscape character type and beyond.
- **Tourism and recreation pressure** could result in an increase in roadside development, car parks, interpretation and areas of footpath erosion, particularly around archaeological sites, and subsequent loss of tranquillity.

Strategy

This landscape has a strong identity and many valuable landscape features which remain in good condition. Although there has been some adverse changes such the planting of extensive areas of coniferous plantation and development of radio masts, the overall strategy for this area is to conserve and sensitively manage.

Guidelines for land management

Forestry and woodland

In areas of visually important forest, such as at Holystone, Harbottle and Simonside, encourage continuous cover management or long term retention.

Where plantation restructuring takes place encourage softer plantation outlines with shapes designed to integrate with local topography and with a relatively high proportion of broadleaves suited to the acid ground conditions found here. Ensure that craggy outcrops and visually significant archaeological sites are avoided and are not visually masked by woodland where feasible. Educate landowners and visitors so that the risk of accidental fires is reduced. Encourage the removal of coniferous woodland where it impinges on adjacent landscapes such as river valleys.

Encourage a greater uptake of woodland grants to bring semi-natural woodlands back into active management where they have suffered from neglect.
Farming
Retention of unimproved wet pastures on lower slopes and the protection of buried archaeology and earthworks should be encouraged in order to retain the visual diversity and time-depth of this landscape.

Field Boundaries
The rebuilding and restoration of stone walls should be encouraged through provision of appropriate grants and development of locally-based skills to ensure walls are stockproof and reflect the distinctive enclosure pattern found in parts of this landscape, particularly where it is associated with historic sites.

Moorland
Manage heather moorland and sustain and enhance biodiversity through appropriate stocking densities and burning regimes. Encourage the regeneration and expansion of areas of heather moorland in order to reinforce the distinctive rich colours and textures found in this landscape.

Conserve areas of peat bog and wet flushes through the avoidance of gripping. Restore damaged bogs and flushes by blocking grips and drains.

Historic sites
Conservation of historic sites and their settings should be encouraged particularly where they act as local focal points and reinforce local distinctiveness. Access to key features should be sensitively managed to avoid erosion of the landscape and archaeology.

Guidelines for development
Tourism and recreation
Development associated with recreation provision should be sensitively designed and located to avoid the suburbanisation of the locality and should respect the surrounding landscape context.

Energy and telecommunications
Man-made vertical structures should be avoided in this landscape where they would markedly detract from the distinctive notched skyline of the sandstone outcrops should be avoided. This ridge is particularly sensitive to any skyline structures because of its importance in views, especially those from National Park land to the north and east.
**Landscape character type 9: Sandstone Upland Valleys**

### Characterisation

**Key characteristics**

- Sinuous shallow valleys and narrower incised tributaries within sandstone uplands.
- Valleys enclosed by distinctive, gently convex sandstone hills with acidic vegetation.
- Smooth floodplain meadows and pastures grazed by cattle, sheep and horses and occasional areas of arable.
- Strong topographic, vegetation and land use patterns.
- Meandering rivers that are inconspicuous within the landscape, but lined with alders.
- Steep bluffs clothed in pine and other conifers flanking the valley floor.
- Shelterbelts and clumps of Scots pine and mixed woodland on lower slopes and valley floor.
- Sandstone-built historic villages on lower slopes.
- Rich archaeology including rig and furrow, motte and bailey and fortified bastle houses – heart of reiving country.

### Description

This landscape character type comprises the river valleys which flow through or adjacent to the Outcrop Hills and Escarpment landscape character type. These valleys are similar in character to the Rolling Upland Valleys landscape character type; however they are strongly influenced by their sandstone context to the south and south-east and by the lower-lying land of the Estate Farmland landscape character type to the north and north-west. The Sandstone Upland Valleys type includes the middle reaches of the Coquet Valley from Harbottle in the west to Rothbury in the east, as well as the tributary valley of Grasslees.

As for the Rolling Upland Valleys, these valleys have been heavily influenced by glaciation which has left substantial glacial drift deposits resulting in some areas of undulating terrain e.g. around Hepple and extensive sand and gravel deposits as found at Caistron. Consequently these valleys have fertile soils supporting a mix of pasture and arable cultivation. On the valley sides there is evidence of glacial meltwater erosion in the form of steep bluffs, which are often wooded with Scots pine and conifer or covered in gorse scrub. The profile of the valleys is asymmetrical due to the fact that the valleys are underlain by sandstone to the south and south-east and by glacial deposits over Cementstones to the north and north-west. On the sandstone valley sides the topography rises sharply and the acidic soils support distinctive vegetation, including heather moorland, birch and alder woodland, and patches of gorse and bracken. In contrast the valley sides with glacial deposits rise more gently, forming a rounded profile and supporting large-scale improved pastures and blocks of conifer shelterbelts which rest heavily on the skyline.
The floodplain or haugh within the Sandstone Upland Valleys is well defined and of varying width. The meandering course of the river flows between shingle banks. In places oxbow lakes and former river channels can be picked out as wet patches and undulations within the valley floor pastures.

The valley floor pastures are semi-improved with patches of wet flush vegetation. They are most frequently divided by post and wire fencing; although in places outgrown hawthorn hedges extend up the valley sides. The enclosure pattern is generally small-scale and the fields are grazed by cattle, sheep and horses. The surrounding woodlands give the valleys a sense of enclosure. This is most strongly felt in the tributary valleys where the watercourses are lined with alder trees and broadleaved woodland; and in the Upper Coquet valley where pine and conifer plantations extend onto the floodplain. Elsewhere, as at Warton and Rothbury, the valley floor is more open, although mature oak and ash trees are characteristic within the hedgerows on the lower valley sides.

The river valleys have a settled and sheltered character with a regular pattern of small historic villages occurring at the break in slope between the valley sides and floodplain. Settlements include Harbottle, Holystone, Sharperton, Hepple, Thropston and Rothbury. There are occasional framed glimpses down the sinuous valley to settlements beyond. These villages are of considerable antiquity, dating from the medieval period or possibly earlier, have a strong local vernacular character and are predominantly built of sandstone. At Harbottle there are the remains of a distinctive motte and bailey castle, signifying a feudal stronghold similar to that found at Elsdon in the Rolling Upland Valleys landscape character type; while at Holystone the presence of a natural spring attracted attention in the Roman period and was thought to be instrumental in the establishment of an Augustinian Priory in the twelfth century. Throughout this landscape, the presence of bastle houses reflects the conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and adds interest and further time-depth.

The rich natural resources found in this landscape character type have also led created interesting industrial archaeology. This is particularly seen in the Grasslees valley, where iron smelting and charcoal burning were common in the medieval period. The valley’s alder trees were used in the smelting process and often show signs of past coppicing. Today industrial activity focuses more on the extraction of sands and gravels from the valley floor around Caistron, where gravel lakes and wetland carr are being created post-extraction. In the eastern part of this landscape character type there are signs of urban fringe development including golf course, caravan park and housing development along the valleys sides.

Landscape character areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSH9a</th>
<th>Coquet Valley (Harbottle-Harehaugh)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This character area extends from Alwinton Bridge to Harehaugh and comprises a relatively narrow, sinuous and contained part of the Coquet Valley within which sit the historic villages of Harbottle, Holystone and Sharperton. The valley sides are relatively well-wooded and steep, giving an enclosed character which broadens out between Holystone and Harbottle as the valley sides temporary recede and woodland becomes less dense. The rocky course of the River Coquet meanders across the well defined haugh and is often lined by a visually-prominent fringe of alder trees. Semi-improved pastures and meadows occur on the valley floor, with improved pastures and shelterbelts on the valley sides to the north; while to the south there is a patchwork of broadleaved woodland (e.g. Dueshill Wood) and rough grazing. A strong estate and parkland influence is prevalent around Holystone Grange. Here greater concentrations of Scots pine and rhododendron can be found on the river bluffs and valley floor. This landscape character area has a secretive, deeply rural character and a strong time-depth.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSH9b</th>
<th>Grasslees Valley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This character area comprises the Grasslees and Penchford Burn valleys and their minor tributaries. These burns form narrow, wooded valleys which carve through the sandstone hills and are well lined with alder and birch trees. Throughout this area there are scattered farmsteads and a mix of improved farmland and rough pasture grazed by sheep and in places horses. The haughs are narrow – often only one field deep – and the</td>
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</table>
valley sides are steep, comprising rough pastures and areas of bracken. The archaeology of the area is characterised by extensive medieval and post-medieval remains, dense concentrations of which occur along the Penchford and Grasslees Burns. These remains demonstrate that there was a thriving medieval economy linked to quarries, iron working, coal pits and watermills. Evidence of the use of alder and hazel for smelting is visible in the numerous coppice stools which are characteristic of the area. There are also notable concentrations of bastles (Ironhouse, High Shaw, The Raw, Craig and Headshope) dating from late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Post-medieval settlement, stack stands, sheep folds, sod-cast dykes and rig and furrow are all evident, along with tileeries and limekilns used in attempts to improve the land. Although seemingly wild and natural, the landscape of this area has been significantly utilised and manipulated in the past.

NSHA Coquet Valley (Rothbury)
This character area comprises the River Coquet valley between Harehaugh and Rothbury and is distinguished from other Sandstone Upland Valleys by its open and broad floodplain. It includes the settlements of Hepple, Thropton and Rothbury and has a settled and managed character. At the eastern end of the area the river valley is 'squeezed' and overlooked by the sandstone hills which close in on the north and south. The river meanders though the floodplain, and has cut an incised channel through the deep layers of alluvium. Around Caistron, sand and gravel extraction has created wetland habitats for birds and carr woodland, altering the character of the valley floor. Land use alongside the river is mainly sheep and cattle grazing on meadows enclosed by wire fences; some of the meadows are traditionally managed. On the south-facing slopes of the valley to the west of Thropton, there is an area of arable cultivation bounded by somewhat degraded hedgerows. Numerous mature trees and small woodlands occur both near to the river and further up the valley sides. Although there is some coniferous plantation, many woodlands are semi-natural or on ancient woodland sites.

Strategy and Guidelines

Key features and qualities

- **Exceptional areas of semi-natural woodland** including oak and alder and birch woods along river courses and on steep slopes (inc bluffs) and tributary valleys which add colour and texture. The majority of this landscape types is included in the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI.
- **Areas of natural fluvial activity** where rivers meander unrestricted across flat flood plains associated with shingle banks, ox-bow lakes and wet pastures.
- **Distinctive sandstone built historic villages** forming a repeating pattern along the lower valley slopes and add visual interest and act as local foci.
- **High scenic quality** derived from topography, semi-natural habitats, the colour and textures of vegetation and the variety of enclosed and open stretches of river valley. This scenic quality has led to the inclusion of much of the area within the Northumberland National Park.
- **Rich archaeology** including many standing features dating from the medieval period, including a motte and bailey at Harbottle and fortified bastles as at Woodhouses, as well as landscape features associated with the smelting and charcoal industries. Many of the historic structures are listed and or scheduled.
- **High degree of tranquillity and intimacy** away from major roads and settlements and in tributary valleys.
- **Ecosystem Services** include provision of water and regulation of water quality and flow as well as a range of cultural services related to the qualities noted above.

Local forces for change and their landscape implications

- **The decline in important semi-natural woodland habitats** due to a combination of neglect and grazing by stock has resulted in little regeneration and the invasion of non-native species such as rhododendron in some areas. There may be long term implications for the visual character of the landscape as a result and a loss of historic management practices associated with smelting and charcoal industries.
- **Conifer plantations on upper valley sides** impinge on this landscape and may relate poorly to the pattern of semi-natural woodlands on valley sides.
- **Loss of field boundaries** through lack of management is tending to weaken the characteristic patterns of enclosure. Many hedgerows on the valley floor are gappy or have been replaced by fencing and some stone walls on the valleys sides are tumbled down.
- **Loss of hedgerow trees** through lack of management is occurring, particularly along rural lanes and upper valley slopes where they merge into the Outcrop Hills and Escarpments landscape character type, resulting in a loss of landscape pattern and a more open character.
- **Development pressures** are evident in Rothbury (just outside the National Park) and other valley settlements, where new housing, tourism developments and inappropriate planting (conifers) show signs in some areas of expanding onto the valley sides and altering the character of the valley landscape as well as the historic form and approach routes to the settlements.
Active sand and gravel extraction on the valley floor presents an opportunity to create new wet woodlands and areas of open water by their restoration but may also alter the character of the valley.

Strategy

The defining elements of this landscape character type are the variety of intimate and more open areas along the valley, vegetation associated with the underlying sandstone geology of the valley sides, and the pattern of historic villages. These elements give the landscape a secretive unspoilt quality and time-depth. Disturbance to this pattern has occurred in places through loss of field boundaries, sand and gravel extraction and built development. The overall strategy should be to conserve and restore the landscape.

Guidelines for land management

Forestry and woodland
Encourage the re-coppicing of areas of alder woodland particularly in the Grassless Valley where this management regime was historically significant to encourage longevity of the woodland and increase age structure. In general, there is a need for management to encourage regeneration of semi-natural woodland on wooded bluffs and along burns, in order to diversify the age structure of the woodlands and retain characteristic patterns of woodland in the landscape. Appropriate protection from overgrazing is paramount.

Removal of uncharacteristic woodland planting, particularly coniferous shelterbelts on the upper valley slopes, is desirable in the long term. Where removal is not possible, opportunities should be sought to soften the impact of these woodlands by replanting with native species or by linking the woodlands to those within the tributary valleys or shallow hollows.

Farming
Retention of unimproved and wet pastures on the valley sides and some areas of valley floor and protection of buried archaeology and earthworks should be encouraged in order to retain the visual diversity and time-depth of this landscape.

Rivers and wetland
Creation of margins and buffers adjacent to watercourses would be beneficial where arable land or intensive grazing impinges on the water's edge. Similarly the replanting of hawthorn hedges on the valley floor, where field amalgamation or hedgerow loss has occurred, is desirable.

Historic sites
Conservation of historic sites and structures, which act as local focal points and reinforce local distinctiveness in each of the valleys, is important. Access and retention of views to these key features should also be retained. Where collections of associated archaeological features occur care should be taken to consider the management and conservation of the group value.

Guidelines for development

Housing and economic development
The valley sides and open valley floor are visually sensitive to new development and care should be taken to ensure new development does not extend into these areas in a way which is visual intrusive, resulting in abrupt urban edges or altering the character of existing settlements. Where feasible new development should be constructed in sandstone and slate or in other materials of similar colour (particularly roofs). The approach routes, key views and gateways to settlements should be protected from inappropriate development.

Tourism and recreation
Recreational development (such as golf courses, caravan parks and playing fields) on the edges of settlements should not extend urbanising influences or uncharacteristic vegetation patterns into open countryside.

Energy and telecommunications
Man-made vertical structures which detract from the valley landform, create visual clutter or adversely affect the unfettered skylines which form the distinctive setting to these valleys should be resisted and any such existing structures removed where possible.

Minerals and waste
Further extensive extraction of sand and gravel from the valley floor should be restricted to avoid a significant change in valley floor character. Restoration of extraction areas should seek to introduce characteristic alder woodland and care should be taken to avoid extensive areas of open water which would be visually prominent from surrounding higher land.
3.6 Tyne Gap and Hadrian’s Wall

This narrow but distinctive lowland corridor, centred on the river Tyne, separates the North Pennines from the Border country. To the west lie the pastoral landscapes of the Solway Basin; to the east are the more densely populated Tyne and Wear Lowlands. Most of the Character Area lies beyond the National Park with just a small area on the northern edge of the Character Area around Hadrian’s Wall within the designation.

- This is a narrow east-west lowland corridor that runs through a gap in the Pennine uplands, which are visible to the north and south.
- It is visually contained to the north by the parallel scarps of the Whin Sill.
- Broadleaved woodland and conifer plantations occur on the side slopes and in the intimate wooded valley of the North Tyne.
- Farmland is pastoral in the west, merging to mixed and arable in the east.
- There is a variety of enclosure patterns, with large, walled enclosures predominant in the west and hedged enclosures in the east.
- North of the Whin Sill there is open, windswept semi-improved and rough grazing on elevated land, with loughs and rushy pastures.
- This contrasts with the more fertile floodplain land along the South Tyne.
- Vernacular buildings are generally of Millstone Grit and include scattered large farmsteads, sometimes with bastle and pele tower fortifications.
- Bronze Age stone circles and cairns and Iron Age hillforts are common.
- Very evident remains of the Roman wall, forts and associated features occur on the Whin Sill scarp.
- There are many large country houses, often incorporating earlier medieval fortified structures and set in designed parklands.
- Settlements are located strategically along the valley, which is a significant transport route through the Pennines.
Landscape character type 14: Parallel Ridges and Commons

Characterisation

Key characteristics

- Repeating pattern of elevated ridges and shallow troughs with strong east-west alignment: cuesta landscape
- Dramatic outcrops of igneous rock forming pronounced north-facing scarps and south-facing dip slopes.
- Open moorland with mat- and purple moor grass, peat bog, improved pastures and commons and loughs
- Medium- to large-scale enclosure pattern defined by stone walls and post and wire fencing.
- Extensive Roman archaeology associated with Hadrian’s Wall (including wall, forts, vallum and vici) but also earlier archaeology.
- Limited habitation of dispersed farmsteads nestling into landform and surrounded by shelter planting.
- Limited tree cover of small broadleaved copses and blocks of coniferous plantation.
- Significant area for outdoor recreation.

Description

This landscape character type shows a marked pattern of elevated ridges and shallow troughs with a strong east-west alignment. Its gently rolling, open moorland extends from Greenhead in the west to Wall in the east and offers are views to the edge of Wark Forest in the north and across the Tyne Gap to the Pennines in the south.

Geologically this type comprises sequences of limestones, sandstones, siltstones and shales, into which the band of younger igneous rock known as Whin Sill has intruded. Glacial erosion of this geology by an extensive ice sheet scoured out weaker rocks to form basins or troughs which were covered by glacial deposits, while more resistant rocks such as those of the Whin Sill were left protruding. The result is a landscape with a strong east-west axis, the harder igneous rocks forming a series of dramatic and rugged north-facing parallel scarps and a long line of crags otherwise known as a cuesta landscape. Either side of the outcrops there are expanses of moorland with shallow depressions containing loughs, mires and peat bogs. The outcrops of Whin Sill are seen rising often abruptly from the gently undulating moorland, creating a sense of drama and ruggedness. In places the craggy outcrop ridge is broken by glacial meltwater channels, for example at Whinstone Ridge and Sycamore Gap.
The dramatic geology has been instrumental in the land use and historical development of this area. There are extensive areas of open mat-grass moorland and patches of carr woodland, reed bed and bog habitats associated with lower lying areas and glacial loughs; within these areas the landscape has a large-scale and exposed character.

Elsewhere, the land has been enclosed by sandstone walls or fencing (particularly to the south of Whin Sill and around isolated farmsteads) to create a medium-scale pattern of semi-improved pastures used for sheep and cattle grazing. Many of the pastures are wet, the rushes creating visual texture. Tree cover is limited to small copses of ash and thorn and blocks of coniferous plantation, including Victorian Scots pine plantations set within the pastures, around the traditional sandstone farmsteads or on rocky outcrops. Many of the farmsteads date to the nineteenth century and are located in a dispersed pattern, nestled into the landscape or among rocky outcrops, and connected by minor lanes.

Historically the most significant features relate to the Roman period and are associated with Hadrian's Wall which utilised the Whin Sill outcrop as the foundation for the defensive monument. Only small upstanding sections of the Wall are visible; however the associated ditch and vallum, as well as numerous forts and vici can all be seen to varying degrees. In addition to the Roman remains, this landscape contains historically important earthwork evidence of pre-Roman landscape cultivation in the form of cord rig near Haltwhistle and elsewhere.

Eighteenth century additions to this landscape include the construction of Wade’s military road (B6318) which runs in places along Hadrian's Wall, and small quarries, such as Walltown Crags, along the Whin Sill where the stone was extracted in the twentieth century. More recent man-made features in this landscape relate to the area’s importance for recreation and tourism. Signage, car parks, footpaths and interpretation are frequent and characteristic and are particularly concentrated along the military road and Whin Sill.

This landscape character type feels remote because of its narrow roads, sparse settlement, extensive agriculture management, and exposure to the elements. The landscape seems timeless and unmodified since Roman times. The complex, enduring form of the Whin Sill, set within a simple and uniform landscape of gently rolling moorland and enclosed pastures, remains it defining feature.

Landscape character areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TGHW14a</th>
<th>Thirlwall Common</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This area comprises an open moorland plateau that slopes southwards in a series of subtle terraces. The edge of Wark Forest forms an abrupt and heavy skyline to the north; while to the south there are views to the dramatic Whin Sill escarpment. This landscape is generally unenclosed with the exception of small in-by pastures around Whiteside and Greengate Well, and there is virtually no woodland or tree cover. The area is drained by small burns which form incised ravines but are not noticeable from any distance.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TGHW14b</th>
<th>Haltwhistle, Melkridge and Ridley Commons</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This character area is defined by the dramatic escarpment and associated outcrops of the Whin Sill, which give a strong east-west axis to the landscape. To the north of the escarpment, the landscape comprises open moorland and loughs as well as areas of medium- to large-scale unimproved and semi-improved pastures enclosed by stone walls. Scattered farmsteads are often located in small depressions in the landscape or sheltered by rocky outcrops and surrounded by small copses of trees. To the south of Whin Sill a series of stepped terraces supports small pastures divided by stone walls. Throughout this area there are overt signs of Roman occupation associated with Hadrian's Wall including remnants of the wall, forts, vallum and vici. Visitor signage is also prominent in parts.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TGHW14c</th>
<th>Haughton and Simonburn Commons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This area forms an open moorland plateau which undulates gently, reflecting the underlying geological banding. Locally the sandstone outcrops to form notable features such as Ravensheugh Crags. In places there are small</td>
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in-by pastures, but the majority of this area comprises open mat-grass moorland with the occasional stone wall. To the south the area extends across Hadrian's Wall, forming a simple and yet bleak setting for this important monument. There are occasional isolated conifer plantations, which form focal points in the expansive simplicity of this landscape.

Strategy and Guidelines

Key features and qualities

- **Unique and defining cuesta landscape and geological features** including the Whin Sill, and clear evidence of glacial activity such as meltwater channels (e.g. the iconic Sycamore Gap). Many of the rocky outcrops are included in the Roman Wall Escarpments SSSI designated for its earth heritage.
- **Extensive areas of semi-natural vegetation** including grass moorland, wet pastures, loughs and mires, many of which are designated as SSSI for their nature conservation value e.g. Roman Wall Loughs.
- **Internationally significant archaeological remains** related to the Roman period and in particular Hadrian's Wall which is has World Heritage Site status and is a scheduled monument.
- **Open, exposed and elevated landscape** with extensive views across the Tyne Gap south towards the North Pennines.
- **Outstanding long distance views northwards over areas of wild moorland** character – a key part of the setting of the Wall.
- **Exceptional recreational opportunities** with good footpath access and associated infrastructure.
- **Ecosystem Services** include provisioning services supporting rearing of Whitebred Shorthorn and Blue Grey Cattle and Northumberland Black Face sheep. Regulating services include climate regulation through carbon storage and significant cultural services related to the qualities noted above.

Local forces for change and their landscape implications

- **Maturing of shelterbelts** may be affected by wind throw and the need for felling, which may alter the character of parts of this landscape and the setting to the WHS.
- **Restructuring of coniferous plantations of Wark Forest** may bring temporary disruption to the landscape.
- **Pressures from increased tourism** may result in footpath erosion and damage to archaeological features as well as proliferation of tourism infrastructure such as signage and car parking.
- **Increased high speed traffic using the Military Road** may affect the tranquility of the surrounding landscape and present safety issues in relation to slow moving tourist traffic and junctions to historic sites.
- **Pressure for the development of vertical structures** such as wind turbines and masts in the surrounding area may lead to a loss of tranquillity and wildness.

Strategy

This landscape has a strong identity and many valuable landscape features which remain in good condition. The overall strategy for this area is to conserve and sensitively manage.

Guidelines for land management

**Forestry and woodland**

Encourage the felling and restocking of coniferous plantations, or their removal altogether where they occur on prominent ridgelines or impinge on the skyline and setting of the WHS. Restock shelterbelts with an increase in native species. Seek softer plantation outlines with shapes designed to integrate with local topography.

Maintain the pattern of clumps of mixed woodland species on rocky knolls where they accentuate topography, and in association with dispersed farmsteads where they provide shelter and reinforce the settlement pattern. Discourage any large scale planting of new woodland and ensure that any new planting avoids damage or masking of significant archaeological sites.

**Farming**

Retention of unimproved wet pastures and the protection of buried archaeology and earthworks should be encouraged in order to retain the visual diversity and time-depth of this landscape. Use of fertilisers and lime on pastures should be discouraged.

**Field boundaries**

The rebuilding and restoration of stone walls should be encouraged through appropriate grants and
development of locally-based skills to ensure walls are stockproof.

Moorland
Manage grass moorland and sustain and enhance biodiversity through appropriate stocking densities. Conserve and manage wetlands and mires.

Historic sites
Conservation of historic sites and their settings and areas of earthworks should be encouraged particularly where they act as local focal points and create strong landscape patterns and textures.

Guidelines for development

Tourism and recreation
Any development should be as low-key as possible, conserving the wild character of the Wall’s setting; care should be taken to avoid development that may alter or suburbanise landscape character. New buildings should respect the local surroundings in terms of choice of building material and scale of development. New development should not be visually prominent and should not detract from the scenic quality of the area.

Manage access through this landscape and particularly to points of interest (viewpoints and sites along Hadrian's Wall), by encouraging the use of structured and seasonal paths to decrease pressure on fragile archaeology, substrates, and avoid disturbance to breeding birds.

Transport
Any improvements made to the Military Road to address safety of junctions and reduce speeding must have minimum visual impact on the open moorland character of the surrounding landscape and the WHS. Night lighting should be resisted and signage kept to a minimum.

Energy and telecommunications
Man-made vertical structures which detract from the open expansive character of this landscape and the setting of the WHS would be inappropriate and damaging. Care should be taken to avoid cumulative influences and the cluttering of the skyline particularly in the long distance views that are so characteristic in the vicinity of the Wall.
Landscape character type 15: Upland Commons and Farmland

Characterisation

Key characteristics

- Broad open ridges and plateau areas.
- Intermediate, transitional area between open moorland and forestry and adjoining valley landscapes.
- Dissected by series of burns often in incised cleughs.
- Strong medium to large-scale geometric pattern created by stone wall/hedgerow enclosures.
- Some improved pastures on lower slopes, giving way to unimproved rougher pastures on higher land; all pastures mainly wet.
- Broadleaved trees on lower slopes and in burn ravines.
- Small- to medium-sized coniferous plantations creating 'blocky' character in places.
- Sparsely settled, with isolated farms marked by shelter woodland and connected by straight enclosure roads.

Description

This landscape character type is located above the slopes of the River South Tyne valley and North Tyne valley, forming an intermediate and transitional landscape to the upland moorland and forestry landscapes beyond. Generally it comprises open, elevated land between 200m and 250m AOD, the elevation affording views across the adjacent valleys and to the edge of the Kielder and Wark Forests. This landscape therefore acts as an important visual setting to adjacent valleys.

Geologically the landscape comprises thinly bedded limestones, sandstones and mudstones overlain with glacial till. Parts of the area form a relatively flat plateau, while others undulate gently as a result of drift deposits. In places the banding of the sandstone rock is evident in the undulating topography, in the drainage pattern or in patches of acidic vegetation such as gorse and bracken. The area is drained by a series of minor burns which have cut ravines that in places give a strong grain in the landscape. These burns have birch trees and occasional woodlands along their routes.

Due to its transitional character, this type has a variety of field boundary types, including stone walls on elevated moorland areas, and grown-out, gappy hedgerows with post and wire fencing at lower elevations. In both cases the pattern of enclosure is medium- to large-scale and rectangular or planned in character, reflecting its origins: the eighteenth century enclosure of 'waste' or 'common land'. Similarly the nature of the pastures varies, those on
high ground comprising rough pastures and moorland (including areas of bracken), while those on lower slopes tend to be improved. Nevertheless pastures across the whole area have relatively poor drainage, many containing patches of rushes that add visual texture.

Evidence of past arable cropping in this landscape can be seen in the subtle pattern of rig and furrow which can be found on some of the more elevated areas of rough grassland. In addition, the remains of Hadrian's Wall, comprising remnant sections of the wall and the vallum or ditch, can be seen in parts.

This is a predominantly open landscape, although occasional ash or oak trees in hedgerows or along roadsides, and more extensive areas of geometric coniferous shelter planting (mixed species but commonly Scots pine and larch), can be found in some areas. Where these woodlands occur they create a ‘blocky’ character and provide a sense of enclosure.

There is a dispersed pattern of farmsteads across the area, farms generally being located in shallow dips in the landform and often having and associated plantings of ash and Scots pine for shelter. Buildings are of local stone with roofs of Welsh slate.

This is a textured landscape of muted colours. It is not a heavily populated area and retains a high degree of tranquillity with few overt manmade structures. Patches of open moorland and bracken scrub reinforce a sense of relative wildness despite the obvious farming activity and enclosure of this landscape. It is a simple landscape with few components but has a strong repetitive pattern of field enclosure and plantations.

**Landscape character areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TGHW 15a Eastern North Tyne Slopes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This character area forms the intermediate land between the North Tyne valley and Kielder and Wark Forests. It slopes gently in an easterly direction and is characterised by a strong pattern of deeply incised burns running west-east. These burns sit within open rough pastures on the upper slopes, and become increasingly wooded with birch trees towards the east.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TGHW 15b Grindon Common</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This character area forms an important setting for the North Tyne valley and for the north side of the South Tyne valley and Hadrian's Wall, which runs through the eastern half of the area. It is an upland relatively flat landscape with a strong geometric pattern of stone walls and notable blocks and belts of mixed woodland plantation. The scale is large and beyond the immediate influence of the plantations it is open and bleak. The drainage pattern is weaker than elsewhere, and there are occasional loughs or dams set within shallow hollows.</td>
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</table>

**Strategy and Guidelines**

**Key features and qualities**

- **Strong geometric enclosure pattern** defined by stone walls and hedgerows is a defining element over large parts of this landscape.
- **Remote, marginal and transitional** landscape between open moorland and productive areas of agriculture.
- **Extensive areas of unimproved or semi-improved wet pastures** which create characteristic muted hues and texture.
- **Ancient semi-natural birch woodland** line incised burns which drain the moorland above and create a strong landscape pattern.
- **Expansive long distance views** within this landscape type and to other valley and moorland landscape types beyond.
- **Internationaly important archaeology** associated with Hadrian's Wall and reflected in WHS status.
- **Ecosystem Services** include food provision and water availability, climate regulation and water quality and flow. Cultural services relating to the qualities noted above.
**Local forces for change and their landscape implications**

- **Lack of regeneration of burn woodlands** as a result of lack of management and damage by livestock may weaken the visual drainage pattern and woodland biodiversity.
- **Decline in condition of stone walls and hedgerows** may lead to a fragmentation and weakening of the enclosure pattern in some areas.
- **Improvements to wet pastures** through drainage and use of fertilisers may result in the loss of biodiversity and characteristic muted hues and textures.
- **Erosion to archaeological sites** due to vegetation growth may damage built structures or stratigraphy.
- **Felling and restocking of shelterbelts and plantations** are aging and need renewal. This may change their character but also offers opportunities to increase native species and restore softer outlines, and to pull them back from sensitive areas.
- **Pressure for the development of vertical structures** such as wind turbines and masts in the surrounding area may lead to a loss of tranquillity and remoteness.

**Strategy**

This landscape has a sense of remoteness and comprises extensively managed farmland. It is a transitional area and can appear to be on the 'fringe' of farmland. Land uses and the condition of features can give rise to the impression of neglect in places. The overall strategy for this area is to restore and enhance.

**Guidelines for land management**

**Forestry and woodland**

Minimise the impact of plantation and shelterbelt re-structuring. Encourage the felling and restocking of coniferous plantations with an increase in native species, ensuring that species such as Scots pine and larch – typical of the older shelter plantings – are included. Seek softer plantation outlines with shapes designed to integrate with local topography. Ensure that craggy outcrops and visually significant archaeological sites are avoided and are not visually masked by woodland where feasible. Consider the removal of some plantations altogether where they are poorly located either visually or in relation to adversely affecting landscape features.

**Farming**

Limit the further improvement of upland pasture through reduced use of fertiliser and the re-establishment of moorland and heath. Retention of unimproved wet pastures and the protection of buried archaeology and earthworks should be encouraged in order to retain the visual diversity and time-depth of this landscape. Drainage and the use of fertilisers/lime on pastures should be discouraged.

**Field boundaries**

The rebuilding and restoration of stone walls should be encouraged through provision of appropriate grants and development of local skills to ensure walls are stockproof and reflect the distinctive enclosure pattern found in parts of this landscape. Where wet pastures occur on the edge of this character type and hedgerows have become gappy or overgrown consider the removal of post and wire fencing and the restoration of areas of open grazing.

**Moorland**

Manage grass moorland and sustain and enhance biodiversity through appropriate stocking densities.

**Rivers and wetlands**

Protect incised burns and ravines from stock to encourage regeneration of semi-natural vegetation.

**Historic sites**

Conservation of historic sites and their settings and areas of earthworks should be encouraged particularly where they act as local focal points and create strong landscape patterns and textures. Where necessary remove vegetation which is likely to damage upstanding and buried remains.

**Guidelines for development**

**Housing and economic development**

Farm building conversions and diversification may offer opportunities to restore the vernacular built fabric of the area, particularly farm buildings. Discourage any development of new farm buildings which would compromise the pattern and scale of farmsteads across this landscape.

**Energy and telecommunications**

Care should be taken to avoid cumulative influences and the cluttering of the skyline. Carefully-sited domestic scale wind energy development may be accommodated where landscape offers a degree of containment.
Landscape character type 17: Glacial Trough – valley slopes

Characterisation

Key characteristics

- Valley sides of glacial trough between North Pennines and Northumberland uplands.
- Mixed scale field pattern defined by hedges, post and wire fencing and stone walls on upper slopes.
- Mainly pasture land to west, with increasing arable component in east on shallower slopes.
- Ancient semi-natural woodland associated with natural springs and incised tributary valleys.
- Characteristic waterfalls along tributary burns, particularly on north-facing slopes.
- Areas of coniferous plantation and shelterbelts in places.
- Historic houses, estates and castles, and significant areas of rig and furrow.
- Nucleated settlement and areas of urban expansion.
- Narrow lanes running up and down valley sides.
- Well-settled and sheltered enclosed landscape.

Description

This landscape character type comprises the valley sides of the glacial trough which carries the Rivers South Tyne and Tyne. These valley sides have been identified as distinct from the valley floor both in terms of topography and land use patterns. In places the upland landscape above the valley may descend onto the upper valley sides and where this occurs it may influence the character of the valley slopes below.

This landscape is a glacial trough created by an ice stream which moved eastwards carving though the bedrock. This erosional deepening subsequently encouraged tributary burns to cut down and form deeply incised gullies in the valley sides. Geologically the valley sides consist of mudstones, sandstones and limestones, with coal seams occurring to the east between Stocksbridge and Wylam. As a result of the geology and glacial erosion the valleys sides are generally steep and show a strongly stepped profile in places, becoming gentler to the east. Where tributary valleys cut into bedrock on the valley sides, waterfalls are characteristic.

Some of the tributary valleys are fed by many further smaller tributaries. Locally this creates a complex topography of incised wooded valleys separated by rounded knolls of land. These minor valleys form quiet backwaters off the main valley; they are small scale landscapes with a secretive quality.
The hill slopes are reasonably well wooded with small- to medium-sized broadleaf and coniferous woods joining to provide a network of tree cover, surrounding pastures and on the gentler slopes arable fields. Many of the woods on the northern slopes are associated with large houses and estates, and their parkland trees and shelter belts extend into the surrounding farmland. On the more shaded southern valley slopes large coniferous woodlands (such as High Wood and Cock Wood near Hexham) are more common. The deep tributary valleys add a further element of woodland, mainly comprising semi-natural and ancient woodland.

Enclosures on the middle and upper hill slopes tend to be medium sized, though field amalgamation has created some prominent, larger fields. Steeper slopes tend to be given over to improved pasture; while on shallower slopes arable land is more prevalent, and it is here that most where field enlargement has occurred. Former field boundaries are sometimes visible in the lines of relict infield trees. Enclosure is mainly by hawthorn hedges but on the many country estates, shelterbelt plantings are also an important form of enclosure. On the upper slopes hedges give way to stone walls.

As elsewhere in the Tyne corridor, the landscape supports considerable settlement, comprising small nucleated settlements such as Haltwhistle, Acomb and Corbridge as well as more sizeable towns such as Prudhoe. In some places, for example Riding Mill, the valley floor settlements have expanded up the valleys sides; while in other areas there is evidence of settlement growth or the conversion of farm buildings to office use, for example at Horsley. Settlement on the northern valley side is characterised by a number of castles, halls and other large estates. These reflect both the history of the Border wars and the wealth brought by industrial development in the nineteenth century. Narrow rural lanes run up and down valley sides connecting main communications corridor and settlements with land to the north and south. Other development includes the power lines which cross the northern valley slopes between Haltwhistle and Haydon Bridge.

Landscape character areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HWTG17b</th>
<th>Haltwhistle to Bridge End</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this area the valley sides are characterised by a strong pattern of hawthorn hedges with hedgerow trees and areas of ancient semi-natural woodland in deep gullies which drain the upland to the north. In places the hedgerows are well trimmed and they are sometimes gappy. The land use is pastoral, and valley floor settlements have expanded into this area around Haltwhistle and Haydon Bridge. Pylons cross the landscape and are visually significant.</td>
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</tbody>
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Strategy and Guidelines

Key features and qualities

- **Semi-natural woodland** along incised tributary burn valleys including Whittle Dene near Prudhoe, Dinnetley and Elrington Woods near Haydon Bridge and Painsdale Wood near Blenkinsopp.
- **Wealth of archaeological earthworks** evident in areas of pasture including extensive areas of rig and furrow particularly visible on the southern valley sides near Haltwhistle.
- **Strong enclosure pattern** comprising hedgerows on lower slopes and stone walls on upper slopes which varies in scale along the valley influencing local distinctiveness.
- **Narrow rural lanes** connecting valley settlements and the valley floor with moorland above
- **Distinctive stepped profile to valleys sides** reflecting the underlying banding of millstone grits and coal seams and former glacial activity which created the valley trough.
- **Estate landscapes and large houses** which make a significant contribution to woodland cover and contain notable mature veteran trees and avenues.
- **Historic valley side settlements** many of which have intact historic cores recognised for their architectural value in listed buildings and conservation areas e.g. Hexham and Corbridge.
- **Important setting to Hadrian's Wall WHS.**
- **Ecosystem Services** include food provision and water availability; regulating services in terms of water quality and flow and cultural services relating to the qualities noted above.

**Local forces for change and their landscape implications**

- **Felling and restocking of shelterbelts** may be visually sensitive on valley sides resulting in visual and physical disturbance.
- **Lack of management of semi-natural woodland** as a result of overgrazing or public access may cause decline in woodland structure or species diversity and an increase in fly-tipping.
- **Loss of field boundaries and field amalgamation** in areas of arable farming could in time cause a larger scale enclosure pattern, loss of local distinctiveness and fragmentation of the setting of settlements.
- **Development of equestrian uses** of the landscape particularly in urban fringe areas may result in the proliferation of post and wire or rail fencing and associated features.
- **Conversion of farm buildings for office and residential use** may lead to subtle changes in character and an increase in traffic movement on narrow rural lanes.
- **Growth of existing settlements** may result in raw urban edges, urbanisation of the surrounding landscape setting and loss of settlement distinctiveness.
- **Development of new road infrastructure** could alter the accessibility of some parts of the valley floor and affect the traditional settlement pattern.

**Strategy**

This landscape retains a remarkably rural character and notable visual diversity through the course of the valley, despite its high population and importance as a communications corridor. It is also a landscape which is under pressure from further development and therefore the strategy for this landscape is to strengthen existing characteristics and conserve.

**Guidelines for land management**

**Forestry and woodland**

Manage existing semi-natural woodland through selective felling (to create clearings and encourage understorey and ground floor vegetation), natural regeneration, coppicing and replanting in order to retain a diversity of woodland character. Appropriate protection from livestock is important particularly in the western part of this type where grazing is more prevalent.

Encourage the extension of tributary valley woods through new planting focusing on the steepest slopes and bluffs and expansion of existing woodland areas. This will help reinforce the distinctive pattern of tributary valleys and their intimate and secluded character. Appropriate protection from livestock during establishment and careful grazing management generally will be necessary.

Removal of uncharacteristic woodland planting, particularly coniferous shelterbelts, is desirable in the long term. Where removal is not possible, opportunities should be sought to soften the impact of these woodlands by replanting with native species or by linking the woodlands to those within the tributary valleys.

The planting of new hedgerow trees of oak and ash and the encouragement of tree development as part of hedgerow management is desirable. Action should also be taken to encourage the planting of new field trees of ash, oak and sycamore in areas where existing field trees occur, in order to replace maturing trees and retain the wooded and parkland character of these areas. This is particularly desirable in areas adjacent to settlements.

**Farming**

Maintain and enhance unimproved and wet pastures on the valley sides through limited use of herbicides and fertilisers and retain the biodiversity as well as visual diversity and texture of pastures.

**Field boundaries**

Encourage the regular management of stone wall and hedgerow enclosures particularly where they are highly visible from lanes and higher land and form a significant pattern in the landscape through appropriate trimming and hedge laying and rebuilding of stone walls where necessary. Where hedges have become gappy ensure replanting and ‘gapping-up’ with species typical of surrounding hedges. Ensure all new planting is suitably protected from grazing stock during establishment.

Increase awareness of the landscape implications of equestrian use and encourage the retention and management of existing hedgerow boundaries. Discourage the unnecessary subdivision of enclosures with...
post and rail or wire fencing.

**Historic sites**
Conservation of historic sites and structures, which add to the time-depth of this landscape are important—particularly rig and furrow and avoid damage or loss from ploughing or settlement/road development.

**Guidelines for development**

**Housing and economic development**
New built development which extends onto upper valley sides may be visually prominent. Care should be taken to avoid significant alteration to the settlement form or setting through urban expansion. New development should not form abrupt hard edges.

The approach routes, key views and gateways to settlements should be protected from inappropriate development that would alter the settlement form or local distinctiveness.

New built development should not substantially alter the character, scale or form of existing settlements. All development should respect local vernacular styles and materials; consideration should be given to the preparation of design guidance to achieve this.

The conversion of barns for employment or residential use should pay particular attention to curtilages and signage, which can alter the character of rural buildings. Care should be taken not to suburbanise rural lanes through inappropriate boundary treatment, use of hard kerbing or removal of traditional boundary features.

**Tourism and recreation**
Creation of open space for recreational use adjacent to existing settlements presents opportunities to enhance the setting of towns, strengthen settlement distinctiveness and reinstate landscape patterns where they have been lost. Recreational land uses on the valley sides should seek to reinforce and strengthen local landscape features and in particular valley side pastures, enclosure patterns and wooded burn valleys.

Access to existing wooded tributary valleys, where they lie adjacent to urban areas, should be managed to avoid footpath erosion and to discourage fly-tipping.

**Transport**
Care should be taken to avoid the gradual suburbanisation of lanes which lead into settlements by minimising use of concrete kerbs, lighting and signage.

Resist pressure for new road buildings on the valley sides and where it is unavoidable ensure appropriate mitigation planting which integrates with the existing field boundary pattern and native woodland in tributary valleys and hollows.

**Energy and telecommunications**
The unfettered skylines which form the distinctive setting to these valleys are sensitive to the introduction of man-made vertical structures which might detract from the valley landform and create visual clutter. Where such structures currently exist, opportunities for their removal should be sought.
**Landscape character type 18: Basin Valley and Fringes**

**Characterisation**

**Key characteristics**

- Transitional landscape on the watershed between North Tyne valley to the east and Carlisle Basin to the west.
- Narrow, deep valley and gorge carved by the River Irthing.
- Predominance of pasture, scrub and rough grazing.
- Well wooded character – semi-natural woodland along river and tributary burns, and mature trees associated with settlement.
- Field pattern defined by stone walls and hedgerows.
- Significant historic sites reflecting area’s importance as a defensive frontier over the centuries.

**Description**

This landscape character type lies to the west of the National Park and includes the upper reaches of the Irthing valley and the watershed landscape between this river and Tipalt Burn to the east. The river flows southwards out of the Moorland Forestry Mosaic landscape character type and then westwards into the Carlisle Basin beyond the National Park boundary.

The sinuous course of the river has cut a steep-sided valley or gorge, the northern slopes being steepest and historically providing a naturally defensive location for Hadrian's Wall which runs along their crest. The land to the east, and the southern slopes of the valley, are gentler extending onto Denton Fell and Blenkinsopp Common, which form part of the Pennine Moorland Ridges and Summits landscape character type.

The valley is heavily wooded both within the valley floor and extending onto the valley sides in the form of hedgerows with hedgerow trees and woodland copses and scrub or ‘hanging’ woods on steeper bluff slopes. Elsewhere on the valley floor are wet pastures and patches of gorse along the course of the rocky burn. The combination of woodland, trees and valley floor pastures gives rise to a mature and sheltered character. Further east the land has a transitional character and rises to form the watershed between the two valley systems, where it becomes less wooded and more open, with areas of in-by pastures and rough grazing defined by a mixture of stone walls and hedges.

Settlement consists of dispersed farmsteads located on the middle slopes, with easy access to the upland areas and nucleated villages of Longbyre and Gilsland, both of which have
grown since the construction of the railway in the nineteenth century. Gilsland Spa to the north is situated on the site of a sulphurous spring and has been a popular resort since the eighteenth century.

This landscape has an upland rugged character despite the relatively high concentration of woodland associated with the river valley and settlements. The strong visual presence of the wall and castle at Thirlwall are a reminder of the valley’s importance as a defensible frontier over the centuries.

Landscape character areas

TGHW18a Irthing Valley

Strategy and Guidelines

Key features and qualities

- Exceptional archaeological and upstanding historic remains - this whole area forms part of Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site and many individual features are scheduled monuments e.g. Willowford Camp.
- Ancient semi-natural woodland, particularly in the distinctive 'hanging' woods on the steep bluffs.
- River system valued for its nature conservation as part of the River Eden and Tributaries SSSI.
- Exceptional valley floor meadows and pastures, the majority of which are unimproved and have a rich floristic diversity.
- Small historic settlements reflecting the growth of the area as a result of the mining industry and development of the railway.
- Thick mature hedgerows and hedgerow oaks that combine to create a settled and sheltered character with a high degree of tranquillity when away from the A69.
- Ecosystem Services include food and water provision; climate and water regulation, pollination and a range of cultural services related to the qualities noted above.

Local forces for change and their landscape implications

- Lack of woodland management may lead to loss of structural diversity and biological richness and the eventual loss of areas of woodland.
- Lack of management of coniferous shelterbelts could lead to visually intrusive wind throw damage and create a neglected character.
- Improvements to valley floor meadows may cause a change to biodiversity interest and may also affect river bank erosion.
- Development of signage, road junctions and lighting associated with the A69 may have a continuing urban influence on the surrounding landscape.
- Nearby wind farm development could bring a loss of tranquillity and intimacy in parts of this landscape.
- Inappropriate urban growth might result in intrusive linear development of properties along rural roads.
- Loss of tranquillity may continue as a result of traffic on the A69, the railway and military operations within Spadeadam Forest.

Strategy

This is an intimate and well wooded rural landscape which retains many of its key characteristics in good condition. Although there are some issues relating to land management the overall strategy should be to conserve and restore.

Guidelines for land management

Forestry and woodland

There is a need to manage existing semi-natural woodland through selective felling, natural regeneration, coppicing and replanting. Appropriate protection from livestock is important.

Encourage the extension of valley woods through new planting on the steepest slopes, bluffs and through the
extension of existing woodland areas. Appropriate protection from livestock during establishment and careful grazing management generally will be necessary.

The planting of new hedgerow trees of oak and ash and the encouragement of tree development as part of hedgerow management is desirable.

**Farming**

Maintain and enhance unimproved pastures on the valley sides and valley floor through limited use of herbicides and fertilisers and cutting and grazing regimes which promote flowering and seed setting in order to retain the biodiversity as well as visual diversity and texture of hay meadows and wet rushy pastures.

The restoration of hay meadows should be encouraged through stewardship schemes which seek to promote appropriate stocking levels, remove drainage and reseeding using local seed sources if feasible.

**Field boundaries**

Encourage the regular management of hedged enclosures, particularly where they are highly visible from lanes and on higher land and form a significant pattern in the landscape, through appropriate trimming and hedge laying, thereby supporting pollination.

Where hedges have become gappy, ensure replanting and ‘gapping-up’ with species typical of surrounding hedges. Ensure all new planting is suitably protected from grazing stock during establishment.

**Rivers and wetland**

Creation of landscape margins and buffers adjacent to watercourses would be beneficial where intensive grazing impinges on the water’s edge and causes erosion. Similarly the replanting of hawthorn hedges on the valley floor, where field amalgamation or hedgerow loss has occurred, is desirable.

Encourage the management of river banks and ensure protection against erosion and appropriate clearance of scrub and control of weeds such as Himalayan Balsam, and protecting water quality.

**Historic sites**

Conservation of historic sites and structures, which add to the time-depth of this landscape, is important. Care should be taken to avoid erosion of structures and features as a result of access, grazing or vegetation growth.

**Guidelines for development**

**Housing and economic development**

New built development should avoid substantially altering the character, scale and form of existing settlements. All development should reflect local vernacular styles and materials. Care should be taken not to suburbanise rural lanes through inappropriate boundary treatment, use of hard kerbing or removal of traditional boundary features.

**Tourism and recreation**

Encourage the recreational development of the former mining heritage in this landscape. Care should be taken to ensure new infrastructure such as signage, interpretation and access does not detract from the character of the mining heritage resource or introduce overt urban influences into the wider landscape.

**Transport**

Seek to rationalise signage particularly in relation to the A69 and associated road junctions.

**Energy and telecommunications**

Open, unfettered skylines form the distinctive setting to this incised valley. Care should be taken to avoid the development of man-made vertical structures which detract from the valley landform or create visual clutter.
4 A STRATEGY FOR THE LANDSCAPE

This section gives an overview of the key features and qualities of the landscapes of Northumberland National Park. It discusses the principal changes affecting the area’s landscapes and where they occur. It explores their implications for landscape character, condition and values and indicates how they can be tackled, through discussion of strategic priorities and actions, and by making links to ongoing land management and planning initiatives and responsibilities.

4.1 Key Features and Qualities

The diverse landscapes of Northumberland National Park contain a wealth of landscape interest. National Parks are designated for their natural beauty and opportunities that the area affords for open-air recreation.

As indicated in the last section, a range of key, valued landscape features and qualities is associated with each of the individual landscape character types. It is also possible, however, to identify a shortlist of features and qualities that are particularly distinctive and characteristic of the Park area as a whole. These are often highly valued for the scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational benefits that they provide. The key features and qualities that particularly distinguish the National Park and contribute to its character are described briefly below. Further details of the National Park’s geological, natural, cultural, built and recreational assets and their specific management requirements can be found in sources listed in the bibliography.

4.1.1 A distinctive geology

Section 2.1 summarised the fascinating geological history that underpins the physical landscapes of the National Park.

The area’s key geological assets in landscape terms include the iconic, rounded, faulted hills of the Cheviot granite massif; the Whin Sill, in geological terms the ‘classic’ sill, responsible for some of the National Park’s finest scenery and a natural defensive site for Hadrian’s Wall; the Fell Sandstone outcrops, forming bold tiers of crags and escarpments and strongly associated with prehistoric sites; and Quaternary features including the Cheviot tors, cuesta landscapes created by glacial streamlining, overflow features, moraines, kettleholes, fan and lake deposits on the eastern edges of the Cheviots, and widespread blanket peats and mires.
Figure 7: Natural Heritage Designations

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Source: Natural England
Many of these features are geological resources of scientific importance, carrying SSSI or other designations (see Figure 8). They may also form the basis for distinctive habitats (such as the Fell Sandstone heaths), cultural landscape features and built heritage (such as the granite buildings of the Cheviots); Hence the area’s distinctive geology is a vital contributor to many aspects of its landscape character. It also provides many opportunities to attract visitors to the National Park, and to explain and interpret to them the area’s physical landscape origins.

4.1.2 A rich natural heritage

As described in Section 2.3, Northumberland National Park has a diverse range of flora and fauna. Many areas are of international, national, regional, and local importance, as can be seen from Figure 8, which shows the National Park’s principal natural heritage designations.

The most important habitats – of European importance – are blanket bog (including raised bog and mire), upland heath and species-rich upland hay meadows. All three occur throughout the National Park, but particularly in its western half. As well as being of biodiversity importance, they make a valuable contribution to landscape character. The wide expanses of blanket bog (for example in the Kielder Mires) and upland heath are key elements of all the open moorland and upland landscapes, providing habitats for grouse, waders and invertebrates and a purple haze of heather in late summer; while on the fringes of these areas hay meadows lend visual interest to the more intimate in-bye land.

Other habitats of note include rivers and burns, ancient semi-natural woodland and naturally-occurring mesotrophic lakes in the Hadrian’s Wall area, all of national importance. Although less extensive within the National Park, these habitats are fundamental to the area’s landscape and biodiversity interest. The area’s rivers and burns are among the cleanest in the UK and are home to salmon, sea trout, otters, water voles and rare plants. Its ancient woodlands, although mainly confined to fragments in upland cleughs and gills, are a vital part of the landscape structure; they also contain rare juniper scrub and stands of aspen and provide important lichen, bird, badger and squirrel habitat. Elsewhere the heath and grass mosaic, rock exposures and scree are of regional biodiversity importance. There are also extensive areas of farmland, and coniferous plantation woodland which, although arguably of lesser habitat importance, nonetheless provide hedgerows, field and woodland margins and freshwater habitats that are key elements of local landscapes and contribute to people’s enjoyment of the natural environment.

4.1.3 A wealth of historic monuments and landscapes

There is a special wealth of historic monuments and landscapes within the National Park, some of them almost unique to – or at least highly distinctive of – this part of England. Many of these features are remarkably well-preserved, and their significance and richness are only gradually being recognised. The principal cultural heritage designations are shown on Figure 9, which reveals a wide scatter but also several marked concentrations of features designated for their historic importance.

First and foremost, of international importance, is the Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site, which, as explained earlier, is part of a much wider complex of Roman features, set within a multi-layered historic landscape. However, there are also many earlier historic landscape features, including outstanding multi-period prehistoric landscapes within the Cheviots (for example at Yeavering Bell and Humberston Hill) and Simonside Hills (for example at Lordenshaws and Simonside) that are among the most important in Britain. These historic landscapes often shed important light on man’s relationship with the land. For example, the Hadrian’s Wall was sited on the Whin Sill because of its strategic location and outlook and
Simonside was sacred to early peoples due to its distinctive profile and wide views. By appreciating these relationships, our understanding both of the area’s history and of the landscape we see today is subtly enriched.

As we saw in Section 2.2, there is a wide range of specific historic features, many of which are accessible and highly visible within the landscape, giving a remarkably strong sense of history to much of the area. These include Neolithic long cairns, standing stones, henges and rock art; massive Bronze Age hilltop round cairns; Iron Age hillforts, lynchets and ridges; Roman roads and forts; evidence of Romano-British settlement in the form of large tracts of cord-rig fields; a marked concentration of deserted medieval villages, visible as earthworks and rig and furrow; defensible medieval hall houses and towers or peles and hundreds of bastles or fortified farmhouses. There are few other parts of England where the palimpsest – or layers of human influence – on the landscape can be so clearly seen, and this is one of the area’s strongest attractions in landscape terms. These distinctive features are a key part of the area’s identity, and also have considerable visitor appeal and potential to attract tourists.

4.1.4 Strong farming and vernacular building traditions

The landscape of Northumberland National Park is a living, working landscape, with strong farming and vernacular building traditions that can be seen in the area’s field boundaries, settlement patterns, traditional farm and estate buildings, and other farmed landscape features. Although often given little formal designation or protection, these patterns and features underpin landscape character.

As noted in Section 2.3, particular types of field pattern and boundary are distinctive to different parts of the area and are often a key determinant of landscape character. In lower-lying settled parts, the areas around settlements often retain irregular in-bye field patterns of great antiquity, for example in the Cheviots. Upland areas tend to be characterised by larger, more regular, eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosures by stone walls or dykes. However, some areas still have relatively little enclosure, where much of the land is open, unenclosed common land. On the Border Moors, ancient tracks and drove roads that gave access to summer pastures and were used in the cross-border cattle trade, can still be seen, and although the landscape is largely open, features such as cross ridge dykes, circular sheep stells and other scattered enclosures are very distinctive.

Many parts of the National Park, but particularly the Tyne corridor, are characterised by estate landscapes, with extensive policy and shelterbelt woodland plantings, which are prominent in views, especially from the south. Although relatively few of these designed landscapes have been recognised by inclusion on the national Register of Historic Parks and Gardens (see Figure 8), many more are probably of regional or local importance.

Although much of the National Park is sparsely settled, there are also historic villages, some centred on village greens (as at Elsdon) and some more planned in character. These are increasingly recognised, for instance by Northumberland National Park Authority in its Historic Village Atlas, as a fascinating historic and landscape resource. In addition, there are many traditional buildings and farmsteads, including early bastle, bye and longhouses, and later farmsteads of courtyard plan in the more prosperous lowland areas, that provide focal points in the landscape and reinforce its rural, vernacular character.

4.1.5 Cultural associations
In understanding the key features and qualities of a landscape it is useful to explore the ways in which that landscape has been perceived by writers, artists and in the cultural traditions, dialect and folk music of local people.

Early perceptions of the Northumberland landscape, for example those of the early eighteenth century travellers Daniel Defoe and Celia Fiennes and also later travellers such as William Hutton, who visited Hadrian’s Wall in 1801, unsurprisingly regarded the landscape of this area as fearsome, dreary and inaccessible waste, reflecting the difficulties of travel, the poverty of the area, and the recent history of feuding and reiving.

Many artists have been inspired by the landscape over the centuries and today there is a strong arts community and talented modern artists working in the area.

Among the writers and musicians who have been inspired by the landscapes of the National Park are the local ballad writers, whose ‘Border Ballads’, often focusing on medieval battles and feuds, were popularised in the gothic style by Sir Walter Scott in the eighteenth century and were favourites with the Victorians. Later, twentieth century poets, including Wilson Gibson and Basil Bunting, penned locally-based tales, often based on the life in the area’s farming communities. Northumbrian folk music and traditions, originally developed within local homes and communities, feature the smallpipes and fiddle, and have survived to this day, perpetuated for example by Kathryn Tickell, who has commented that her work is inspired by the area’s landscapes – particularly their sense of space, wide skies and connection with the past. Most recently the acclaimed poet Simon Armitage has launched his ‘Poems in the Air’ series where visitors to the Park can, at specific locations, download poems on their mobile phones, thereby connecting person, poem and place.

4.1.6 Tranquillity, Dark Night Skies and Wildness

One of the key qualities of the landscapes of Northumberland National Park is its high degree of relative tranquillity (Figure 9), dark night skies and relative wildness.

Research by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (2006), into relative tranquillity mapped many layers of information, including what people say adds to and detracts from tranquillity. Factors taken into account included perceived naturalness, birdsong, wildlife, rivers; and freedom from noise, urban development, light pollution and people. The study indicated that a high proportion of the National Park (Figure 9) is in the ‘most tranquil’ category (dark green on the map) and also that, at a national level, the National Park includes what is probably the greatest concentration of ‘most tranquil’ landscapes in England.

Tranquility is undoubtedly a key reason why the National Park is highly valued by many people. It is characterised by open landscapes and wide horizons, free from significant human intrusion. As can be seen from the map, the most tranquil areas generally lie away from major communication routes and built up areas; and the fact that the area is generally very sparsely populated and isolated – in turn a function of its upland character, its border location and its feuding and reiving history – is a key contributor.

Closely linked to tranquillity are dark night skies. In 2013 Northumberland National Park was awarded International Dark Sky Park status and it is now the largest area of protected night sky in Europe covering 1475 square kilometers and comprising the whole of the National Park and 67% of Kielder Water and Forest Park. The International Dark Skies Association (IDA) has given the Park Gold Tier status. Because of the unpopulated nature of the Northumberland Dark Sky Park an exceptional number of stars are visible on a clear night.
Relative wildness, a related concept meaning the presence of a wild or relatively wild character in the landscape due to remoteness, lack of human influence, or evidence of the passing of time and a return to nature, is also a key quality of much of the National Park landscape, particularly characterising the open moorland landscapes of the Cheviots, and the Border moors, where there are wide, open, empty, windswept spaces with little evidence of modern human activity, and an abundance of semi-natural heath and blanket bog habitats. Such places are increasingly rare in England today.

4.1.7 Outstanding recreational landscapes

Finally, the landscape of the National Park is highly valued for recreation. Many of its finest recreational opportunities are closely based upon the dramatic, memorable and outstanding landscape experiences that the area affords. Hadrian's Wall is undoubtedly the key attraction – reinforced by the fact that there are many different opportunities to access the wall and many different Roman remains and features to visit, allowing visitors to build a picture of Roman lives and landscapes. Increasingly, though, other aspects of the area's archaeology and historic landscapes are also valued, thanks in part to the National Park Authority's efforts to promote and interpret less dramatic but equally interesting sites such as the Breamish valley, Simonside and the area's many castles, peles and bastles. Equally, the habitats, wildlife, cultural interest and wildness of the area contribute to providing a very high quality recreational experience.

The walking opportunities offered by the area are also very special and have been further enhanced with the passing of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. As well as the Hadrian's Wall National Trail, which are of national importance, there are very fine walks into the Cheviots from Coquetdale and the Harthope valley, often along ancient drove roads, and along the Fell Sandstone ridges that arc round and to the south of the Cheviots. These walks allow visitors to experience in full the tranquillity and wildness that are special qualities of many parts of the National Park.

Kielder Forest and Reservoir, providing easy access to forest walks and a range of other active outdoor sports, complement the National Park's wilder walking opportunities; while the Kielder Forest Drive, the highest road in England, provides an almost unique opportunity for the less mobile to reach areas of upland landscape. Locally, birdwatching, cycling, riding, fishing and grouse shooting are important activities that also contribute to the local economy.

4.2 Overview of Changes and Issues Affecting the Landscape

The landscape assets of the National Park are constantly changing in response to natural processes and human activity. Throughout the area's long history, changes in agriculture, industry, society and the environment have had a profound and lasting influence over the landscape. Change is driven by a diverse range of forces ranging from the policies of government departments and agencies and the changing relationship between the UK and the European Union (EU) post Brexit, to built and economic development pressures. The implications of change are often difficult to assess and vary according to the specific characteristics, features, qualities and sensitivities of the different landscapes within the area.

Here we briefly examine the principal issues affecting landscape character, and their spatial patterns, before setting out a broad strategy for the area's landscapes and providing further details of the key issues and guidelines for change in specific land management and
development sectors. The analysis is based on research, field survey and on information and views on key landscape issues highlighted by National Park Officers.

### 4.2.1 Landscape changes within the National Character Areas

In 2014 National England completed its review of National Character Areas and the preparation of detailed written profiles for each which included key facts and data, landscape change and also analysis of the ecosystem services provided by each area. These profiles provide an up to date picture of landscape change within the National Park and provide a factual starting point for the assessment of change. Each profile looks at change under the headings of trees and woodlands, boundary features, agriculture, settlement and development semi-natural habitats, historic features, rivers and minerals. The relevant profiles for the National Park can be found at the following link:


### 4.2.2 Principal issues affecting the landscape character types

From a review of the NCA profiles and other sources of information on landscape change we have identified some of the principal issues – both existing and potential – that may affect landscape character in each of the individual landscape character types described in Section 3. The list of issues, and their spatial distribution across the National Park, is presented in Table 3. This is not an exhaustive list but one that identifies the main areas of interaction between landscape character and land management and development – and hence the main areas in which positive action to conserve, restore or enhance landscape character is required.
### Table 3: Principal Issues Affecting the Landscape Character Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape type / management need</th>
<th>Forestry siting, character, form and condition</th>
<th>Native woodland planting and management</th>
<th>Shelterbelt planting and management</th>
<th>Hedgerow tree management</th>
<th>Upland farming futures</th>
<th>Field boundary character, condition and patterns</th>
<th>Moorland management</th>
<th>River and wetland management</th>
<th>Farm buildings - scale, diversification, equestrian uses</th>
<th>Recreation and tourism pressures (traffic, path erosion and off-road vehicular use)</th>
<th>Impacts of traffic, road development, signage, new roads</th>
<th>Military training (visual and noise intrusion)</th>
<th>Energy and telecommunications (scale, visibility, skyline and cumulative effects)</th>
<th>Minerals and waste (visual impact and restoration)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Upland Burn Valleys</td>
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<td>2. Rounded Hills</td>
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<td>3. Foothills and Fringe Valleys</td>
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<td>5. Rolling Uplands</td>
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<td>6. Moorland Forestry Mosaic</td>
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<td>7. Rolling Upland Valleys</td>
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<td>8. Outcrop Hills and Escarpment</td>
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<td>9. Sandstone Upland Valleys</td>
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<td>14. Parallel Ridges and Commons</td>
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<td>15. Upland Commons and Farmland</td>
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<td>17. Glacial Trough – valley sides</td>
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<td>18. Basin Valley and Fringes</td>
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4.3 Broad Strategy

4.3.1 Aims

Change in the landscape is inevitable and, indeed, necessary as we continue to adapt in response to new technologies and new economic, environmental and cultural forces. In the decades ahead the changing global economy and Britain's relationship to the European Union post Brexit will pose new challenges for agriculture, the rural economy and the environment. Changing patterns of work, transport, housing and recreation will bring pressures for new development in the countryside. Many of the changes we have seen over the last fifty years have been at the expense of local character and distinctiveness. We have choices as to how we accommodate change in the future - allowing us to maintain or increase what we value most in the landscape while adapting it to our changing needs. The landscape strategy seeks to inform these choices, identifying priorities for conservation, restoration and enhancement, and establishing principles for land management and development that will be in keeping with landscape character.

Many of these issues affecting the National Park are already dealt with, at least in part, in other existing plans and strategies, including geodiversity and biodiversity action plans, historic environment management plans, environmental strategies, the National Park management plan and development plan and guidance documents of various kinds. The broad strategy and guidelines set out below are intended to complement these other documents – which are referred to where appropriate in the sections that follow – but to focus strongly on landscape character and distinctiveness. The aims are to:

- **Encourage conservation, restoration and enhancement of the landscape character, features and qualities** of local landscapes, by highlighting the factors that need to be considered in making judgements about landscape issues;

- **Ensure that land management and development decisions are sustainable in the sense that they respect the character of the landscape** as well as contributing to wider environmental objectives;

- **Help promote coordinated action on landscape issues** by informing the work of a wide range of government bodies, agencies, non-governmental organisations, land managers, farmers, foresters, planners and developers.

A particular role of the landscape characterisation, strategy and guidelines will be to inform the work of Northumberland National Park, including the review of the Northumberland National Park Local Plan and future review of the National Park Management Plan as well as other strategies and supplementary planning documents which may be developed from time to time.

4.3.2 Strategic priorities

Notwithstanding the long list of issues presented in Table 3, many of the changes currently affecting the landscape of the National Park are relatively small-scale, subtle, and piecemeal compared to ongoing changes in many other parts of the country. Nonetheless their cumulative effects – combined with other, underlying, potential effects associated with wider changes in the economy, technological advances, human lifestyles and our changing climate – may be considerable. The rich and diverse natural and cultural landscape heritage of the area is of national and international importance and is a major contributor to the quality of life of local residents, tourism and the rural economy – hence, at a strategic level, it is very
sensitive to even modest changes, which, in time, could undermine the landscape’s key features and qualities.

Grouping the key landscape issues into a number of broad priority areas, we would highlight the need for:

- **Continuing action to address issues of woodland siting, design and management.** Great strides have been made by the Forestry Commission with the publication of the UK Forestry Standard (3rd edition 2011) which provided guidelines on sustainable forestry management. This standard outlines the context for forestry in the UK, sets out the approach of the UK governments to sustainable forest management, defines standards and requirements, and provides a basis for regulation and monitoring. It also recognises that forests and woodlands are frequently significant components of nationally protected areas such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and as such the landscape impacts of afforestation, clear felling and forest roads are considered in the context of these designations and the policies that apply. The continued emphasis on felling and restocking that is sensitive to landscape character remains paramount.

The Government has also expressed its aspiration to increase the amount of woodland cover nationally, effectively doubling the rate of woodland creation. Whilst it is widely recognised that at least parts of the National Park have potential to accommodate significant areas of new native woodland planting, it is important to ensure such creation is in keeping with the special qualities of the National Park and thus with landscape character. Shelterbelt planting – although a widespread and distinctive part of many of the exposed agricultural landscapes, including parts of the setting to Hadrian's Wall – is sometimes inappropriate in shape or species composition, and action is needed on this issue too. Finally, the relatively rare and valuable semi-natural woodlands of the area – often in riparian locations – continue to need management; while many of the hedgerow trees and designed landscape features associated with the area's numerous eighteenth and nineteenth century estates are in urgent need of renewal.

- **Action to address adverse landscape impacts associated with changing farming practices.** Intensive arable cropping in the margins of the National Park is associated with loss and degradation of hedgerows and field margins, soil erosion, loss of riverside vegetation, and threats to historic sites and archaeological landscapes, including those that form part of the wider setting of Hadrian’s Wall. The introduction of new large-scale or unsympathetic farm buildings and other structures such as polytunnels can also bring adverse visual impacts. In upland fringe areas, improvement, reseeding and drainage of in-bye pasture land, although less common than in the past, can damage distinctive habitats such as hay meadows, and can bring marked changes in the colour and texture of the landscape. Longer term, the future of upland and upland fringe farming is difficult to foresee however changes to agricultural support post Brexit with the development of a new domestic agricultural policy may herald a new opportunity to link future payments to public goods and therefore the environment. National Parks can play a lead role in this process.

- **A renewed emphasis on conserving and restoring the area's stock of dry stone walls and hedgerows,** an important element of landscape character. Around half of the dry stone walls across the area are derelict or in need of restoration to make them stockproof. A similar or even higher proportion of hedges appear to be in poor repair. In the upland fringes, ancient mixed hedges often require renewal by laying or coppicing. In lowland and more intensive agricultural areas many later, enclosure hedgerows are neglected and gappy or have been replaced by either by post and wire fencing or by post
and rail fencing, common where there is equestrian use. All these changes have an incremental effect on landscape structure and patterns; the introduction of inappropriate fencing also has an adverse impact on character. Although in recent years environmental stewardship schemes have been more successful at targeting conservation work associated with boundaries, in places it has been evident that only external boundaries have been targeted for conservation work whereas internal walls and hedgerows remain in a poor state of repair. Key constraints to action include funding and a shortage of traditional walling and hedge-laying skills.

- **Further work on habitat restoration and creation and on conservation and interpretation of the historic environment.** Moorland management – including reductions in stocking levels, measures to encourage heather regeneration, control of bracken encroachment, and blocking of drains and grips to help restore blanket bogs and mires – remains very important for the landscapes of the National Park. Although grass moor has long been characteristic of parts of the Cheviots and Border moors, the loss of heather, wetlands and mires has been very significant in recent decades and restoration needs to continue in the areas where it yields the greatest landscape and habitat benefits. Continued action on the conservation and restoration of hay meadows is also a landscape priority. In other parts of the National Park, riparian management and the creation of new floodplain meadows and wetlands are to be encouraged. The many positive historic environment initiatives of the National Park Authority should be continued, not least because they bring benefits to the whole area in terms of landscape understanding and awareness as well as income from tourism.

- **Management of tourism, recreation, access and associated pressures, particularly those associated with Hadrian’s Wall.** Parts of the National Park are already affected by development associated with tourism and recreation, notably signage, car parking, camping, caravan and chalet sites. The principal areas affected are those close to Hadrian’s Wall – at times subject to considerable visitor pressures – and Kielder Forest (beyond the National Park), an area to which much tourism and recreation provision has deliberately been directed. In landscape terms there is a need to ensure that tourism development and activity continue to be concentrated in key areas, such as The Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre and National Park gateway settlements, where its effects can be managed, and it will not significantly alter the area’s wilder landscapes, whose tranquillity could be undermined. This includes the wider setting of Hadrian’s Wall, whose empty border character and outlook need to be conserved. In more remote moorland areas continued action is needed to restore erosion and to manage off-road vehicle use which may bring noise, erosion and loss of amenity. The impact of new access tracks across moorland, often to provide access to shoots, can be detrimental, and careful siting and design are essential.

**Strict controls over new development, with particular attention to siting and design issues in the setting of the National Park.** Although much of the National Park experiences only limited development pressures at present, greater pressures are experienced in the setting of the National Park such as Tyne Gap, whose landscape, increasingly, is affected by new housing, industrial developments such as the Egger chipboard factory at Hexham, and road infrastructure. Other changes particularly prevalent are farm building conversions, farm diversification and equestrian uses, which may bring subtle, cumulative changes in character and suburbanisation of the landscape, for example due to small-scale road improvements and new boundary treatments. Within the setting of the National Park there is a particular need for attention to siting and design issues. The National Park’s Design Guide supplementary planning document (2011) provides a framework for the achievement of high quality, sustainable design. It seeks to promote a high standard in the design of new development and in sympathetic and sustainable alterations and extensions to traditional buildings.
• **A precautionary approach in relation to any major development with landscape impacts.** In the past there has been concern over the cumulative effects of wind farm development in areas adjacent to the National Park, however since 2016 the UK Government withdrew subsidies for renewable energy projects resulting in a marked decline in schemes coming forward. Nevertheless there has also been an intended relaxation of the planning control regime with regards to hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and a number of schemes have now been approved in areas close to protected landscapes elsewhere in the UK and could pose a threat to Northumberland National Park if sites are identified here. Similarly, major new quarrying or opencasting proposals, even if outside the National Park, could bring major impacts, and a precautionary approach is recommended to prevent significant effects on landscape character, appearance or the setting of nationally and internationally designated areas. Any significant further development of the Otterburn Training Area would also be a key concern. All these issues are important because of their potential to impact on one of the National Park’s key landscape assets – its tranquillity.

An overarching issue, potentially affecting all landscapes, is that of **climate change**, which is likely to bring milder, wetter winters with fewer frosts and little snow; hotter, drier summers; and an increase in extreme events like flooding. The changing climate is likely to affect the flora and fauna of semi-natural habitats that are characteristic of individual landscapes. Agriculture is likely to be affected by increases in the length of the growing season and changing patterns of rainfall. There may be an increase in soil erosion from extremes of winter flooding and summer drought and from changing patterns of cultivation. Where appropriate, the specific implications of climate change for different aspects of land management and development are covered in the next sections.

The next sections examine the effects of change in different land management and development sectors, briefly describing the background and main trends for change, key issues and guidelines for action, and relevant existing initiatives and advice. Inevitably there is some overlap between sectors but we have tried to minimise this or to cross-refer where necessary. Reference details for specific sources of advice can be found in the bibliography.

### 4.4 Sustainable Land Management Guidelines

#### 4.4.1 Forestry and woodland

**Background and trends for change**

Woodland cover, overall, within the National Park ranges from around 5% in the Hadrian’s Wall area to more than 40% in the Border Moors and Forests where Kielder Forest is the dominant landscape element.

The development and expansion of commercial forests in Northumberland is probably the single most significant change in the landscape over the last fifty years. The total area of Forestry Commission woodland – managed by Forest Enterprise – is around 58,000 ha. Kielder, at 51,000 ha, is the largest single forest and as noted earlier is one of the largest man-made forests in Europe. However there are also other forests of considerable size within the National Park, notably Kidland, Harbottle, and Simonside.

These woodlands are all mainly conifers, predominantly Sitka spruce, which is well-suited to local growing conditions, and are relatively even-aged, over half of their area having been planted between 1945 and 1960. Forest Enterprise is engaged in a programme of phased felling and restocking, using Forest Design Plans as a key planning tool. The aim is to fell in small coupes and in the long term create a patchwork of woodlands of varying ages. At
replanting, the opportunity is taken to improve the shape and edges of the woodlands, diversify the woodland structure and species composition with an increased broadleaved component (around 8%), create riparian zones and other open habitat areas, and highlight landform variations. Over the next few decades all the forests will be reworked and improved in this way, and the benefits of redesign are already visible, for example along the shores of Kielder Water where the landscape has been greatly diversified and many new views opened up.

The Forestry Authority, also part of the Forestry Commission, oversees the private forestry sector and dealing with felling licence applications. Private forestry operations within the National Park are generally much smaller in scale. Small conifer plantations are mainly replanted with broadleaves (for example the College Valley Estate in the north Cheviots has a long term programme to convert all of its conifer forests to new native woodland). A modest amount of clear-felling has also occurred, notably at Threestoneburn near Wooler, and on some parts of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) estate.

In forestry areas the requirements for new access tracks for felling activity or to service an activity within the forest, such as quarrying, can result in significant landscape effects, both whilst forestry is in place and if areas are clear felled. SNH has recently prepared guidance on integrating new access tracks into uplands through careful design, where the effects of new tracks is considered both in terms of the currently baseline conditions and future scenarios as woodland is clear felled.

Ancient semi-natural woodland, although a small component of the area’s overall woodland cover (around 700ha in Northumberland National Park, for example) is very highly valued and important in landscape terms. Such woodlands typically include upland oak and upland ash woodlands, often on steep valley sides, and wet woodlands close to river courses. The narrowest gill woodlands tend to comprise smaller species such as rowan, hawthorn and willow. Grazing is the main cause for concern in relation to native woodlands, as stock using woodlands for shelter in the long term prevent regeneration. In the past native woodlands have also been lost to conifer planting and, in the case of wet woodlands, to changes in drainage regime.

Also of considerable landscape importance are shelterbelt woodlands, which date back to the enclosure period, that is from the early eighteenth century onwards. These typically comprise introduced species such as Scots pine, sycamore and beech and are characteristic of many parts of northern England. They are especially characteristic of the enclosure landscapes of the Tyne and Coquet valleys, where they provided farm shelter but are now frequently over-mature and in need of renewal. Later shelterbelts – often larger, more geometric in character and dominated by Sitka spruce and Lodgepole pine – tend to make a less positive contribution to landscape character.

The publication of the Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement for England (2013) sets out the Government's aspiration to increase the amount of woodland cover nationally and enhance the social and economic value of woodland. This amounts to doubling the rate of woodland creation in England to 5,000ha per year and increasing the amount of woodland in active management to 66% (by 2018) in England. This was followed in 2014 by the establishment of a partnership called 'Roots to Prosperity' (consisting of organisations representing timber processors, woodland owners, the supply chain and both local and central government) aimed at providing a blueprint to unlock the potential of the forestry and forest products sector across the north of England to maximise its economic potential. This is therefore likely to be a key driving force for new planting within the National Park.
Those landscape likely to be affected by this drive for increased planting are often the poor quality upland landscapes. This may have some significant implications for parts of the National Park (which is already 21% forestry) especially where the special qualities of the landscape, such as openness or nature conservation interest, are important to be retain. It will be important therefore for the National Park Authority to ensure any new forestry is located sensitively and is based on the principle of ‘Right Tree in the Right Place’. Guidance on new native woodland planting may prove a useful tool in achieving this aim and has been prepared for the Yorkshire Dales National Park\(^2\) including some helpful visualisations to illustrate the positive effects of appropriate planting on landscape character.

In 2017 the UK Forestry Standard (3rd edition) was reviewed and republished. It outlines the context for forestry, sets out the approach of the UK governments to sustainable forest management, defines standards and requirements, and provides a basis for regulation and monitoring – including national and international reporting. Meeting the UK Forestry Standard is important to those engaged in forestry in terms of the marketing of timber and therefore offers a strong incentive to follow best practice in terms of sustainable forest management.

Furthermore, the natural regeneration of forestry and scrub on open moorland, especially as headage of stock has reduced, is a real issue in some places, requiring removal and management particularly where there is nature conservation or archaeological interest.

**Key issues and guidelines for action**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Commercial woodlands</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>The ongoing, sensitive restructuring and design of existing Forestry Commission woodlands using Forest Design Plans is to be welcomed and should continue. In addition, selective removal of small- to medium-size conifer plantations, mainly in private ownership, would be beneficial, for example where these intrude on sensitive skylines or open floodplain landscapes. New small- to medium-size plantations, with an increased broadleaved component, may however be appropriate in other parts of the landscape (see guidelines for specific landscape character types).</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Semi-natural woodlands</strong></th>
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<td>Lack of management and natural regeneration in many small semi-natural woodlands due to grazing by livestock and deer is a key issue. Fencing around small woodlands, particularly along rivers and burnsides, which are also vulnerable to erosion by stock, can help to protect existing woodland and allow regeneration.</td>
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<th><strong>New native woodlands</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>There is also considerable scope for creation of new native woodlands, both through planting and natural regeneration, particularly in sheltered valleys and on lower hill slopes. Ideally new native woodlands should lie close to, or extend, existing areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland and should have a similar site, shape and species composition. Conversion of conifer forests to new native woodland should also be encouraged on former ancient woodland sites and in other areas where the location is appropriate in landscape terms (see guidelines for specific landscape character types).</td>
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<th><strong>Shelterbelt woodlands</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>The landscape importance of shelterbelt woodlands, particularly older mixed shelterbelts, should be recognised and their management and renewal should be promoted. These</td>
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woodlands often provide an effective landscape transition between the wild, open moorland and the domestic, agricultural scenery of the dales; they tend to link closely to small farmsteads, and their siting may also reflect changes in landform and geology.

Veteran trees
Trees and woodland may be vulnerable to the effects of climate change, mature trees in particular being vulnerable to drought, as well as to more frequent winter gales and waterlogged ground arising from increasing rainfall levels. Improved management – and where necessary renewal – of veteran trees may make them more robust and more able to cope with extreme events.

Pests and Diseases
The Forestry Commission and others also recognise the increasing threat from tree pests and diseases, with protecting woodlands (tree health) recognised as a priority. Examples of recent threats in the UK include Chalara dieback of ash, Dothistroma needle blight affecting pines, Phytophthora alni on alder and Phytophthora ramorum on larch and a number of other tree species.

Existing initiatives and advice

Forestry Commission (2017), *UK Forestry Standard - The Governments Approach to Sustainable Forestry*, 3rd edition. This provides guidance on how to meet the UKFS requirements including sub-sections on Biodiversity, Climate Change, Historic Environment, Climate Change, Historic Environment, Landscape, People, Soil and Water.

*Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant Scheme* is a single scheme which supersedes Environmental Stewardship (ES) including organic and upland strands; the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS); and Capital Grant Scheme (CGS) from the Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) programme. Advice on what is included and how to apply can be found at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-woodland-support

Scottish Natural Heritage published guidance on *Constructed Tracks in the Scottish Highlands* in 2015. This provides advice on good design and ways to integrate tracks more successfully.

Northumberland National Park has produced a *Habitat Action Plan for Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland*. This describes the current status of the woodland, factors causing loss or decline, and current action and targets within the National Park. The *Natural Environment Vision 2014-35* for the National Park also sets out a vision for plantation woodlands and forestry as well as native woodland.

4.4.2 Farming and Estates

Background and trends for change

Farming and estates form the dominant land uses within the National Park with more than three quarters of the Park area farmed and these land uses have a key influence on landscape character. The rich wealth of traditional farmed landscape patterns and features
that we see today has developed over the course of centuries and is constantly changing in response to changes in farming practice.

Historically the principal changes that have affected the farmed landscape have included moves from livestock farming to arable and improved grassland, with associated nutrient enrichment, soil erosion and disturbance to archaeological remains by farm machinery. Parkland landscapes have also suffered. In pastoral areas, increased stocking levels, agricultural improvement, drainage and a shift from hay- to silage-making have led to changes in the colour and texture of in-bye land, loss of hay meadows, loss of riverside vegetation and river bank erosion.

50% of the National Park's agricultural land is owned by four owners: Northumberland Estates; the Ministry of Defence, Lilburn Estates and College Valley Estates. There are also a number of smaller estate that own agricultural land within the Park. Consequently the vast majority of practical conservation work is undertaken by farmers and landowners. All of the agricultural land within the National Park (approx. 77,250 hectares) is managed under some form of agri-environment scheme, many of which help maintain traditional upland farming practices.

Farms size varies but is larger than the national average with farms in the Cheviots being on average 1205 hectares and those around Hadrian's Wall being approximately 293 hectares. Many of the farms are worked by tenants which often pass down through the families for many generations and also include a "hefted" stock, which is passed on with a farm to the next tenant. Sheep in "hefted" flocks are instinctively attuned to their home surroundings and are very important in maintaining the existing character of the upland landscape.

In terms of management, all agricultural land within the National Park is managed under some form of agri-environment scheme. The current system of farming subsidies is Countryside Stewardship of which there are three main elements namely:

**Mid Tier:** multi-year agreements for environmental improvements in the wider countryside, that include multi-year options and capital items;

**Higher Tier:** multi-year agreements for environmentally significant sites, commons and woodlands where more complex management requires support from Natural England or the Forestry Commission, that include multi-year options and capital items; and

**Capital-only grants:** a range of grants specific to outcomes for hedgerows and boundaries, developing implementation plans, feasibility studies, woodland management plans, woodland creation (establishment), and tree health – normally 2 year agreements.

Countryside Stewardship also provides support for **organic conversion and management**, and a **Facilitation Fund**, which supports groups of land managers to collectively deliver landscape scale objectives.

These schemes replace previous Environmental Stewardship, the Woodland Grant Scheme and Capital Grants from Catchment Sensitive Farming Programme. Collectively extant schemes and the new range of stewardship schemes make a significant contribution to maintaining traditional upland farming practices.

Following the UK's decision in 2016 to leave the European Union it is unclear how the government will reform farm subsidies post-Brexit, although Government has offered reassurance agreeing to keep overall payments at the same level until 2022. In future there could be significant implications for upland hill farmers within the National Park where a lack of subsidy payment will lead to reduced grazing and possible 'rewilding' with knock on influences on landscape character and special qualities. However, the current Environment Minister Michael Gove has indicated that the Government is likely to advocate a new subsidy
system which rewards farmers for the public benefits they provide including the full range of ecosystem services\(^3\) benefits from carbon sequestration through to water quality and landscape valued for scenic beauty. Mr Gove has described Brexit as "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reform how we care for our land, our rivers and our seas, how we recast our ambition for our country's environment, and the planet".

In the longer term, with climate change, agriculture is likely to be affected by increases in the length of the growing season and changing patterns of rainfall. This may lead to an increase in arable cultivation in the uplands and upland fringes as they become warmer, and a decrease in cultivation, or increased use of irrigation, in the lowlands as they become drier. It may also lead to the introduction of new crops or crop varieties, changes in sowing and harvesting times, changes in the management of livestock and the arrival of new pests and diseases. There may be further increases in soil erosion from extremes of winter flooding and summer drought and from changing patterns of cultivation.

**Key issues and guidelines for action**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arable cropping</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In arable areas it is particularly important to retain and manage hedgerows, hedgerow trees and infield or parkland trees, which are key elements of landscape structure but have been degraded by intensification. Field margins and buffer strips also have a part to play in reinforcing landscape structure. Particular care should be taken to protect the area's wealth of rig and furrow landscapes and archaeological remains from damage by ploughing, and to prevent soil erosion. Maintain and where possible restore to grassland the area’s abandoned settlement sites and field systems.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pastures and hay meadows</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain semi-natural grassland character wherever possible. Avoid ploughing and reseeding of flower-rich pastures and meadows, particularly in upland fringe and riverside locations. Conserve and enhance remaining herb rich hay meadows and restore through low input management. Cut hay meadows at appropriate times, normally July, to allow flowers to seed and to protect nesting birds. Re-create wet grassland by raising water levels or creating shallow pools.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grazing regimes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce grazing levels and inputs on in-bye land, rough grazing allotments and grass moor. Manage riparian margins carefully to prevent poaching. Maintain environmentally sustainable grazing levels and use both cattle and sheep where possible. There is a particular role for native cattle breeds, a traditional feature of these landscapes.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage farm diversification initiatives provided they do not involve intrusive development or generate significant traffic that might erode the area's sense of openness and tranquillity. Diversification proposals that are land based or linked to landscape character – for example rearing of traditional beef breeds or local cheese production – should be particularly encouraged.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm subsidies post Brexit</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Natural capital and ecosystem services approach should be used to forge a closer link between subsidies and payments and delivery of public benefits.</td>
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</tbody>
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\(^3\) Ecosystem Services describe the multiple beneficial 'services' derived by society from ecosystems. These services are many and substantial, underpinning basic human health and survival needs as well as supporting economic activities, the fulfilment of potential and enjoyment of life.
**Impacts of economic and climate change**

The principal implication of climate change for farmed landscape character is that strategies and guidelines must remain flexible to allow for changing physical and economic conditions. New options – for example ‘rewilding’ of some areas where hill farming is no longer viable – should be considered, and could bring new landscape benefits.

**Existing initiatives and advice**

A range of advice is available to farmers in relation to countryside stewardship agreements and can be found at the following link:


There is advice on historic landscape issues, produced by Historic England (formerly English Heritage) in conjunction with Defra and others and entitled *Farming the Historic Landscape*. This introduction for farm advisers contains valuable information on the different types of historic landscapes, sites and structures that may be encountered, and how they can be protected and managed.

**Farming and Rural Enterprise Team**

The Northumberland National Park Authority provide support to farmers for the conservation and restoration of a range of specific landscape features.

In relation to hay meadows, Northumberland National Park’s *Habitat Action Plan for Upland Hay Meadows* contains useful information on factors causing loss or decline, and current action and targets within the National Park.

**4.4.3 Field boundaries**

**Background and trends for change**

As described in *Section 2.3.3* and in the landscape character type descriptions, there is considerable variation in field boundary types across the National Park. Dry stone walls are the dominant boundary feature in upland and upland fringe areas, where they form strong and distinctive landscape patterns. Hedgerows are somewhat less common but in the lower parts of the National Park – including its arable landscapes – make a vital landscape contribution, linking other areas of semi-natural habitat. Other boundary features such as sod cast dykes are localised but nonetheless valuable and distinctive elements of the landscape.

There are many early walled enclosures in the National Park, notably around villages and hamlets in areas such as parts of the Cheviots. Perhaps the most typical, prominent and characteristic type of walled enclosures, however, are the larger and often more regular enclosures dating from the eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries. Unsurprisingly given their age, many of these are now deteriorating and vulnerable. Likewise, in the case of hedgerows, there are many that appear to be in poor repair. In the valleys and upland fringes, ancient mixed hedges often require renewal by laying or coppicing to make them stockproof once again; while in lowland and arable area, where the need for stockproofing is less and intensification has occurred, hedgerows are often overtrimmed and gappy or have been removed altogether.
Given the widespread lack of specialist walling and hedgelaying skills, the high capital cost of these operations, and the limited government funding for such works, neglect and decline of these important landscape resources, and their widespread replacement by fencing, is understandable but remains a landscape issue of great concern. As noted above where grants have been used to fund boundary restoration works they often focus on external estate boundaries often leaving internal walls and hedgerows in a poor state of repair.

**Key issues and guidelines for action**

**Dry stone walls**

Restore drystone walls wherever possible, especially where they are long-established or form key landscape features (for example headwalls separating in-by and out-by land). Walls which are upstanding but with gaps should be considered for restoration where they are substantially complete and where the bulk of the fallen stone is present. Less complete walls may have a lower priority. Repairs should be undertaken using traditional techniques and should be in keeping with the structure and form of original or adjoining lengths. Stone should not be robbed from redundant walls that contribute to the general enclosure pattern.

**Hedgerows**

Priority should be given to the maintenance of existing hedges and to the relaying of old hedges or the planting of new ones where they form an important element of local landscape character or provide connections between other existing semi-natural features such as small woodlands. Wherever possible a locally characteristic mix of native trees and shrub species (see guidelines for landscape character types) should be used. Hedgerow management should observe local management traditions, but overtrimming should be avoided. ‘Singling’ to create new hedgerow trees can be beneficial, particularly in areas of more intensive farming and more limited tree cover.

**Fencing**

Where boundary-top wiring is required for dry stone walls to protect them from disturbance by stock, this should be accepted as preferable to increasing the wall’s height. Newly planted or laid hedgerows should be protected by stockproof fencing. New fencing should not replace walls, hedgerows or sections of walls or hedgerows, which can be restored as described above. Post and wire fencing is generally preferable in landscape terms to post and rail fencing, which is uncharacteristic of this area and can be visually intrusive.

**Traditional skills**

There is a strong shortage of the traditional walling and hedge-laying skills required to implement the above guidelines. Training and support for the development of such skills locally would have benefits for the landscape.

**Existing initiatives and advice**

General advice is available to farmers in relation to hedgerow and boundaries grant at the following link:

4.4.4 Moorlands

Background and trends for change

The extensive moorlands within Northumberland National Park are a key landscape resource. They make a particular contribution to the area’s wild, remote character – a character that is increasingly rare in England today. Both upland heath and blanket bog have been significantly depleted and degraded in recent decades, while grass moor and bracken have expanded and erosion has become an issue in some areas. These changes have tended not only to damage important habitats but also to diminish the area’s wild character – which is particularly associated with the ‘black moor’ of the heaths and bogs – and to put at risk its wealth of archaeological interest. Although these trends have now largely been reversed, continued management and improvement of moorlands must be a central component of any landscape strategy for this area.

Upland heath was in decline over extensive areas between the 1950s and 1980s, principally due to afforestation, increased grazing pressures, inappropriate (large-scale, frequent) burning and the decline of grouse moor management. Since the 1990s, with the introduction of agri-environment measures for moorland management, the status of upland heath has significantly improved. Objectives are to maintain and increase the current extent of heather moorland by managing degraded heathland, ensuring that there are no burn areas on sensitive habitats or steep slopes that would be damaged, and re-creating heathland by reseeding, controlled grazing and forest removal. In the case of blanket bogs, which were similarly lost and degraded in the post-war period, current issues are similar to those for heathland and include inappropriate burning, inappropriate management through grazing, creation of moorland tracks, tree regeneration (mainly on ungrazed sites within forestry), and recreational use in areas such as the Cheviot summit.

A large scale survey between 2007 and 2010 of the blanket bog and heathland habitats found that 69% of blanket bogs were intact, 11% fragmented and 20% degraded while 40% of the heathland habitat was intact, 57% fragmented and 3% neglected.

Northumberland National Park Natural Environment Vision 2014-35 sets out the vision the Authority has for moorlands. Environmental Stewardship will continue to play a key role in the management of upland moorland landscapes and continued care is needed to ensure that new problems do not emerge especially post Brexit. The publication and implementation of the Government’s Biodiversity 2020 strategy has also heralded a new approach to biodiversity conservation work building on the valuable work of Biodiversity Action Plan groups and taking account of two key reports: Making Space for Nature report chaired by Sir John Lawton and the UK National Ecosystem Assessment. These reports concluded that focussing on individual species and sites remained important, but that this needed to happen at a larger scale so our habitats were better able to support more species and that our conservation action should focus on whole natural systems.

Implementing this new approach is undertaken through effective, integrated and joined up approaches to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services including through management of existing systems of protected areas and the establishment of nature improvement areas. The delivery of this will therefore require the Park Authority to develop landscape scale partnerships within the National Park and beyond its boundaries - for example Northumberland National Park is part of the Northern Upland Chain LNP (established in 2012). The Northumberland County Council strategic plan recognises the area as a Nature Improvement Area.
In future, threats may come from the natural regeneration of conifers as 'escapees' from plantations nearby and the effects of climate change which may include the shrinking or drying of wetlands like blanket bog and lowland raised mire, and damage to, or changes in the species composition of heathlands and fragile habitats such as relict arctic-alpine heaths. There may also be an increase in the incidence of accidental moor and heathland fires.

**Key issues and guidelines for action**

**Heather moorland**
Overgrazing has resulted in a decline in heather moorland and an extension of areas dominated by rough grassland, affecting the area's wild, remote character. Moorlands should be managed through reduced grazing levels and carefully controlled burning, so as to maintain and expand heather cover and create mixed aged stands. In the Cheviots, the survival of the distinctive herds of wild goats is also important.

**Blanket bogs and mires**
Drainage of wetlands for agriculture, forestry and military operations has led to a reduction in the visual interest and diversity of vegetation on the peat uplands and flush communities as well as increasing the rate of water runoff and peat erosion. Control or reverse drainage operations to encourage a diverse mosaic of moorland and wetland habitats and maintain landscape interest. Continue to restore the area's important peaty mire and moss habitats, including those within woodlands.

**Grass moorland**
Reduce grazing levels and inputs on rough grazing allotments and grass moor. Encourage the development of more diverse, species-rich grassland habitats and associated landscape interest. Manage riparian margins and wet areas carefully to prevent poaching. Clear natural regeneration of conifers particularly where they affect sensitive natural or cultural heritage sites.

**Historic features on moorland**
Protect the area's important historic landscape features, many of which are sited on moorland, from damage by burning, drainage and other potentially damaging activities and from scrub and bracken encroachment. Key features requiring such protection include evidence of settlements, tracks, field systems, sheilings, burial areas, Roman forts and camps and lead mining remains.

**Existing initiatives and advice**

**The Government's Biodiversity 2020** publication is a national strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services; published in 2011. It sets out the Government’s ambition to halt overall loss of England's biodiversity by 2020, support healthy well functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.

Northumberland National Park has produced a **Habitat Action Plan for Upland Heath** and a **Habitat Action Plan for Blanket Bog**. These describe the current status of the habitats, factors causing loss or decline, and current action and targets within the National Park. Further advice can also be found in the **Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan**.

In 2015 Scottish Natural Heritage published guidance on **Constructed Tracts in the Scottish Highlands**, Second Edition. This document highlights the landscape and visual effects which may arise as a result of the introduction of new access tracts and ways in
which effects can be minimised through good design.

4.4.5 Rivers and wetlands

Background and trends for change

The National Park includes some of the purest rivers and burns in England, with parts of two river systems – the Coquet and the Till – being designated as SSSIs, and most of the area’s rivers including important angling grounds as well as nursery and spawning areas for fish. More importantly for our purposes, the rivers and their associated woodlands and haughs are key landscape features throughout the National Park, and are frequently a defining influence on landscape character. Also notable in landscape terms are the area’s wide range of water bodies, including the important and rare group of mesotrophic loughs close to Hadrian’s Wall, as well as Kielder Water and numerous smaller reservoirs, valued for recreation and public access.

Significant changes that have affected the area’s rivers, lakes and wetlands in recent decades include nutrient enrichment from agricultural drainage; degradation of bankside vegetation through overgrazing, increased rates of erosion due to the loss of this vegetation; water abstraction and river regulation; acidification effects from felling where coniferous plantations have been planted right up to the edge of water courses; and engineering and drainage operations. Measures to tackle these various issues are already in place through agri-environment and other schemes such as the Northumbrian Rivers Project which offers grant aid and advice to farmers and land owners regarding fencing of riverbanks, improvements to bankside and spawning habitat, and creation of new wetlands.

As winters get wetter and a greater proportion of precipitation occurs in intense events, river flows could become more variable, leading to further increases in erosion and flooding. The risk of flooding in some areas is already exacerbated by the presence of development on floodplains or the way watercourses are engineered to prevent flooding of agricultural land. There could also be drought events, resulting in greater shrinking or drying of ponds, seasonal watercourses, wet woodlands and wet grasslands in summer.

The Water Framework Directive became EU legislation in 2000 and requires member states to achieve ‘good status’ for rivers, lakes, coastal waters and ground water, in terms of both water quality and ecological value. The Natural Environment White Paper (2011) brought about Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs). Since 2009 there has been significant Partner effort into delivering land and water management initiatives such as the establishment of the Tyne and Northumberland Rivers Catchment Partnerships (2014) and continued working with the Till Tweed Forum. A Tyne River Catchment Plan was produced in 2012 which outlines key priorities for the area. All these measures could bring landscape changes and benefits in future.

Key issues and guidelines for action

Riparian landscapes

Grazing pressure over the years has meant that many river banks and burnsides are grazed out with no prospect of tall herb communities, reedbed or scrub developing. It has also led to bankside erosion and sedimentation. These problems can be countered by fencing out livestock and reducing grazing pressure and by restoring bankside vegetation, particularly riverside woodland. There may be additional benefits from such measures in terms of increasing their resilience in the face of the pressures of climate change through
improved management and the restoration of greater connectivity.

**Forests and the water’s edge**
The restructuring of coniferous forests, introducing broadleaved edges and standoffs from river courses, and opening up new views to reservoirs, is to be welcomed as it will counter the risk of acidification as well as diversifying and improving the recreational potential of these riparian landscapes.

**Water resources and flood risk**
The impacts of extreme drought and flood events can be reduced by restoring more natural hydrological conditions to river and wetland systems, and particularly by increasing natural flood storage on flood plains and water retention in the extensive blanket bogs of the uplands. This may be achieved, for example, by the creation of new small scale wetlands and washlands which – in the right location (see guidelines for the landscape character types) – have the potential to become interesting new landscape features.

**Existing initiatives and advice**

**Tyne and Northumberland Rivers Catchment Partnership 2014**
Published the Tyne River Catchment Plan 2012 which outlines the key priorities for the area.

Northumberland National Park has produced a *Habitat Action Plan for Rivers and Burns*. This describes the current status of the habitats, factors causing loss or decline, and current action and targets within the National Park. Further advice can also be found in the *Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan*.

**4.4.6 Historic sites and built environment**

**Background and trends for change**

One of the National Park’s special qualities is its historic legacy. The landscape we see today is the result of generations of human activity, historic sites often making an important contribution to landscape character and understanding.

The historic sites and built environment of Northumberland National Park are extremely rich and varied and include earthworks, buildings and structures and buried deposits. Many of these features – notably Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas and of course Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site – have statutory protection, and further details of them can be found on the County Sites and Monuments Record. Although no systematic record has yet been made of all the more commonplace historic features of the wider landscape, such as its historic hedges, walls, woods and meadows, this has been addressed at least in part through the Historic Landscape Characterisation for Northumberland (see *Section 2.3.3*).

Some aspects of change in the historic environment are monitored by English Heritage. The Buildings at Risk Register, which covers Grade I and II* buildings and structural scheduled monuments, is published annually and indicates those buildings and structures at risk through neglect and decay. There are currently 29 Listed Buildings within the National Park which are at risk and 49 Scheduled Monuments.
In addition, the many minor but nonetheless locally important and distinctive historic landscape features remain very vulnerable and continue to be damaged by land use change, development, decline or neglect. This is particularly true for widespread features such as old hedges, walls and sheepfolds; old lanes and tracks; earthworks like lynchets and rig and furrow; designed parklands; and traditional buildings and farmsteads.

Northumberland National Park Authority has been very active in researching, recording and involving local people in historic environment conservation and interpretation. The rich local heritage engenders great pride locally and provides a key tool for educating, informing and inspiring people to take action on landscape issues. There are also a number of existing initiatives aimed at conserving, restoring or interpreting to the public historic landscapes and landscape features. Perhaps the most prominent is the Management Plan* for the Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site (WHS). This covers not only the World Heritage Site itself but also its wider landscape setting, which includes the visual envelope of the wall and associated historic landscape features within 1-6 km of the WHS, in recognition of the important physical and cultural connections that the Wall has with this wider area. Within this area, which has been agreed with the local authorities, there is added protection from development (in that the setting of the WHS is a key material consideration in determining planning applications) and a strong focus on landscape enhancement measures. The Management Plan highlights a number existing or potential landscape issues, notably the impact of forestry on the predominantly open character of the Wall’s landscape setting; to protect archaeological remains from ploughing, drainage and poaching; and to assess and respond appropriately to the potential cumulative impact of wind farm development in the wider area on the WHS and its setting (see Section 4.4.5).

Heritage 2020 was published by the Historic Environment Forum in 2015 as a new framework that aims to demonstrate how partnership working can add value and lead to the delivery of outcomes which will enhance the understanding, protection, and enjoyment of the historic environment in England. It presents five themes: discovery, identification and understanding; constructive conservation and sustainable management; public engagement; capacity building; and advocacy. All are relevant to the work of the National Park. The Northumberland National Park Historic Environment Vision 2014-35, which is currently being prepared, will set out what the National Park Authority will do to achieve the objectives of the current management plan and should seek positive partnership working as advocated in Heritage 2020.

Key issues and guidelines for action

**The setting of Hadrian’s Wall**
Continued protection of the landscape setting of Hadrian’s Wall is critical. The central portion of the Wall, which falls within the National Park, is the best preserved section and is visible over a wide area both north and south of the River Tyne. Priorities are to ensure that tree planting is appropriate to the generally open character of the Wall’s landscape setting; to protect archaeological remains from ploughing, drainage and poaching; and to assess and respond appropriately to the potential cumulative impact of wind farm development in the wider area on the WHS and its setting (see Section 4.4.5).

**Locally distinctive historic landscape features**
There is a strong need across the area to conserve and enhance locally distinctive historic landscape features. Key tools in this process are agri-environment scheme funding, which can contribute for example to arable reversion to pasture to protect archaeological remains.

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* [http://hadrianswallcountry.co.uk/hadrians-wall-management-plan](http://hadrianswallcountry.co.uk/hadrians-wall-management-plan)
hedgerow and wall restoration, and conservation and restoration of historic parkland. The involvement of communities and the maintenance of a healthy and viable farming economy are also essential if these features are to survive. Improved recording of some aspects of the resource – particularly the designed landscape resource of the historic parks and gardens of regional and local importance – would also be beneficial.

**Historic farmsteads and vernacular building traditions**

Traditional farmsteads and buildings are assets which make a significant contribution to both landscape character and local distinctiveness and, through a diversity of uses, to local communities and economies. Without appropriate uses they will not be maintained and may disappear from the landscape. Whilst poor conversion poses a threat, new commercial, residential or other uses which enhance their historic character and significance are to be encouraged.

Existing initiatives and advice

**Heritage 2020**

This is a new framework that aims to demonstrate how partnership working can add value and lead to the delivery of outcomes which will enhance the understanding, protection and enjoyment of the historic environment in England.

**Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site Management Plan**

This plan (2015-19) sets out in more detail the issues and actions required to manage the WHS. These include actions to conserve the special landscape character of the WHS and its setting, while managing the processes of change.

**Historic Village Atlas**

The Historic Village Atlas reveals how seventeen historic village settlements in Northumberland National Park have evolved over the centuries. Aims are to further the study, understanding and enjoyment of the historic villages; reinforce and develop the existing sense of place and belonging of individuals within the communities; provide a springboard for future community-led initiatives; and facilitate the management of the cultural heritage by the Northumberland National Park Authority. The reports describe each village’s historical development and inform judgments on levels of archaeological sensitivity in different parts of the settlement.


The purpose of this guidance is to help secure sustainable development and the conservation of traditional farmsteads and their buildings through the planning system.

4.4.7 Tourism, recreation and access

**Background and trends for change**

Most visitors use a car to get to the National Park (88%) but then walk to get around (66%). The most visited parts of the National Park are undoubtedly the Hadrian’s Wall corridor and just beyond the National Park boundary the Kielder Forest, where many of the visitors are holiday makers. The northern parts of the Park receive fewer visitors and most use is by day visitors from urban Northumberland and Tyneside. Overall, though, the area is one of the least visited in England and there are aspirations to increase visitor numbers in Northumberland National Park because tourism is seen as a vital component of a diverse
rural economy. The effects of tourism development (as opposed to management) are considered further in Section 4.5.1.

The National Park has had a strong focus on increasing access opportunities, improving the rights of way network, developing car parks where appropriate, providing visitor centres, developing a programme of events and activities and working closely with others including recreation and tourism providers and landowners and farmers in managing recreational use. A key management principle in National Parks is that in case of conflict between conservation and recreation, conservation should take precedence. Other organisations that are actively involved in the management of tourism, recreation and access are the Forestry Commission, Historic England, the National Trust, and the Defence Estates in relation to the Otterburn Training Area.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 with its provision for access to open country, has greatly increased the upland areas available to walkers. The Act places duties and powers on local authorities in relation to the management of rights of way and access land; and highways authorities are required to prepare Rights of Way Improvement Plans to address issues such as path condition and conflicts between recreational users. As well as significant issues related to footpath condition, particularly along the Pennine Way and Hadrian’s Wall, activities such as the use of recreational motor vehicles (mainly motorbikes, but also 4x4s) on unsealed routes with public access continue to cause concern in some areas because of the erosion, noise and visual intrusion that they may cause. These issues may become more widespread in future. Over recent years the National Park Authority has undertaken specific work to combat footpath erosion in moorland areas through the creation of sustainable surfaces such as the use of flagstones on routes including the Pennine Way.

There is a limited public transport service available within the National Park and the National Park Authority continue to seek new initiatives to reduce car use and encourage low carbon travel, though the creation of new rights of way such as the new bike trail between Berwick and Hexham and the Sandstone Way long distance route and promoting opportunities for sustainable transport modes.

Key issues and guidelines for action

Recreational landscape character
The relationship between landscape character and recreational activity is an important one. Within the National Park the character and special qualities of the landscape itself, notably its wildness and tranquillity, top many visitors’ list of reasons for coming. These qualities are very fragile but of central importance to recreational activities such as walking, bird watching and appreciation of the historic landscape features of the wild moorland and border landscapes. Other forms of recreation, however, do not rely on these qualities to the same extent. For example rallies and events of various kinds may be accommodated more easily in less sensitive forested landscapes such as Kielder. Further advice on landscape sensitivity to different forms of recreation may be found in the guidelines for specific landscape character types.

Erosion
Erosion can be a serious issue in landscape terms, with habitats such as blanket bog being especially vulnerable to landscape as well as habitat damage as a result of intensive use, sometimes leading to extensive and visible scarring. Areas particularly affected are the Pennine Way near the Cheviot summit and parts of the Hadrian’s Wall Path National Trail where erosion has been difficult to manage because of slopes, pinch points and problems associated with stock management and other activities. Continued input of management expertise and resources is required in these areas to achieve visually sensitive solutions to erosion issues.
Off-road vehicle use
Although most recreational motor vehicle use by motorbikes and 4x4s on footpaths and bridleways is now illegal, it continues (legally and illegally) on some unsealed routes, for example on former cross-border drove roads. As well as causing erosion, the noise, visual intrusion and consequent loss of tranquillity brought by motorbikes especially, can adversely affect quiet recreation and conflict with National Park purposes. This problem is relatively new in Northumberland, but other areas such as the Yorkshire Dales have considerable experience in managing such issues through repair, restraint and regulation. These options may need to be considered in future. The assessment of landscape sensitivity to off-road vehicle use can be a useful management tool.

Access tracks
New access tracks, often to provide access for forestry, farming and grouse shooting, require planning permission and can be detrimental to the landscape. Care needs to be taken on the location, visual impacts, scale and choice of materials for any such tracks as well as the identification of the multiple benefits they may bring to recreation/access.

Sustainable transport
Sustainable transport solutions will be increasingly important in future, particularly in the vicinity of Hadrian's Wall. They offer the opportunity to control and prevent future landscape impacts from congestion and parking associated with increased visitor numbers.

Otterburn Training Area
The National Park Authority has worked closely with the Defence Estates over many years to safeguard and improve access to the Otterburn Training Area, which has much to offer in terms of special landscape experiences and opportunities for open-air recreation. These efforts should continue.

Existing initiatives and advice

The Northumberland National Park Joint Local Access Forum
The Joint Local Access Forum, established in May 2002 under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 advises Northumberland National Park Authority, Northumberland County Council (the highways authority) and Natural England on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation in ways that address social, economic and environmental interests. It covers all of Northumberland. Its objectives include encouraging wider public access and recreation, advising on access and recreation policy, advising on measures to minimise the impact of recreational off-road driving and motorcycling on the landscape and enjoyment, and engaging with a wide range of parties on access issues.

The Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (DfT March 2017) aims to make walking and cycling part of normal everyday life, and the natural choice for shorter journeys such as the commute to school, college, work or leisure trips. It also highlights initiatives to link rail and bus services with cycling.

4.5 Sustainable Development Guidelines

4.5.1 Housing and economic development

Background and trends for change
Northumberland National Park has a population of fewer than 2000 (2011 Census) and is one of the least populated of all English national parks in England with a dispersed settlement pattern. The A68 provides the principal north-south road link cutting though the centre of the National Park while to the south is the A69 east-west route and to the north the A697. Within the National Park the largest settlement is Elsdon while other 'local centres' include Alwinton, Falstone, Greenhaugh, Harbottle, Holystone, Lanehead and Stannersburn. Predominately outside the National Park but within its setting are larger settlements which act as important gateways to the Park and include Bellingham, Haltwhistle, Rothbury and Wooler.

In general terms there is a need to protect and enhance the built environment rather than undertake significant regeneration. Population growth within the National Park is in decline, in contrast to areas beyond the National Park.

Rates of development within the National Park are low by national standards. In the next plan period (2017 to 2037) it is estimated that approximately 2,320 dwellings will be provided in gateway towns.

In terms of the economy, Northumberland National Park has a small ‘working age’ population. Paradoxically, the local rate of economic activity (76%) is higher than the English National Park and national averages (70%) and rates of economic inactivity are correspondingly lower than average. While the number of retired people is higher than the national average, it is lower than the National Park average. Worryingly, the number of young people is in decline.

There were approximately 140 businesses operating from 155 establishments in Northumberland National Park in 2012 according to the latest Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR) data. This has fallen by around 9% since 2009. The data shows that all local businesses and establishments have fewer than 50 employees and the majority has fewer than ten employees. These local businesses provided employment for 420 people in 2012. Local employment fell by approximately 14% between 2009 and 2012, which has resulted in the average size of local businesses falling to three people in 2012 (State of the Park Report 2015).

Employment is crucial to the economic wellbeing of the National Park. The emerging Local Plan will play a key role in ensuring there is enough land available for new employment development while supporting existing businesses.

Farming (and forestry) is the dominant economic sector employing over twice as many residents as any other industry in the National Park. 68% of businesses within the National Park are in the agricultural and forestry sector and account for 55% of employment. This dominance is emphasised when comparing those employed in farming in Northumberland National Park (22%) to the average for other English National Parks’ (6%) and the national average for England (1%). Similarly, the levels of employment in accommodation and food services (16.3%) compared to the average for National Parks (14.7%) and England (6.4%) indicate the importance of tourism to the local economy.

Types and patterns of development can be subdivided into development within and around local centres and gateway settlements and development in the wider countryside, mainly comprising farm building conversions, diversification and small-scale tourism developments. Other forms of development associated with military training, transport, renewable energy and minerals are discussed separately in later sections. The emergence of neighbourhood planning enables local communities to become more involved in planning decisions which
affect their area. Currently there are three neighbourhood plans which are at various stages of preparation and no pending Neighbourhood Area applications within the National Park.

Development around the local centres and gateway settlements is predominantly housing development on infill sites around the settlement edges. Much of this housing has been sensitively sited and fits well with the landscape; however, there are also some notable instances of new housing that adversely affects existing settlement character because its built form and/or materials are not in keeping with local vernacular building traditions. Examples include prominently-sited red brick housing estates on sites at Bellingham and Otterburn, where the traditional building material is sandstone. There are also existing landscape impacts associated with industrial and retail development in the Tyne valley, particularly at Hexham, where the northern and eastern approaches are strongly influenced visually by the Egger chipboard plant and by supermarket and other retail development.

Geographically, the main areas that may be affected by further housing and economic development in coming years are expected to focus on the Tyne corridor. Key issues for the National Park will be indirect landscape and visual effects where the siting of new development may be very prominent.

In the wider rural landscape of the National Park the principal changes occurring are occasional large-scale, unsympathetic farm buildings, farm building conversions, and farm diversification, including farm tourism and equestrian uses. All of these may bring subtle, cumulative changes to landscape character, for example suburbanisation due to small-scale road improvements, lighting, signage and new ranch fencing. Other developments, notably tourism and recreation developments including camping, caravan and chalet parks, and car parks can bring larger scale landscape impacts if not very carefully sited and designed. Current planning policy generally directs such developments – except where very small in scale – to Kielder, which is identified as a tourism priority area and is also the preferred area for outdoor recreational pursuits that are not considered appropriate within the National Park.

The creation of the new National Park Visitor Centre at The Sill (opened in Summer 2017) provides a gateway to the National Park and Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. It includes a landscape exhibition, modern learning and event spaces, local food cafe, modern Youth Hostel, rural business hub and shop specialising in local crafts and produce.

Key issues and guidelines for action

**Siting of new development**
Housing and economic development can bring changes – positive and negative – to the landscape in a number of ways. The character of the wider landscape may affected by visual intrusion where a prominent site with little topographic or vegetational screening is chosen, or where a development is sited or laid out in a way that conflicts with landform or with existing landscape patterns and characteristics. Careful siting of new development is the single most effective way of reducing landscape and visual impacts. The guidelines for individual landscape character types provide baseline information on landscape character and sensitivity that can be used to inform siting of new development within the landscapes of the National Park.

**Landscape settings to settlements**
New development in and around existing settlements may affect their distinctive landscape settings, including key approaches to the settlement, inward and outward views, woodland, trees, river corridors and open spaces. It may, in some cases unnecessarily, erode rural character and tranquillity or result in the removal of key, mature landscape features like hedgerows and hedgerow trees. The landscape settings to settlements should be
understood and respected.

**Design issues**
New built development can result in weakening of local distinctiveness by the introduction of alien building styles or materials and damage to the physical form and open spaces within settlements. These issues are addressed to some degree in existing design guidance for Northumberland National Park (see below). The benefit of such tools is that they link character with design, promote high quality development that respects character, and offer positive opportunities for community engagement in design issues. Beyond the National Park boundary the areas experiencing the greatest pressures for housing and economic development lie in the Tyne corridor. Northumberland Council intends to prepare design guidance which will cover these areas as part of the preparation of a consolidated Local Plan - this guidance should consider effects on the National Park where relevant.

**Existing housing, employment, retail and tourism sites**
Some existing housing, employment, retail and tourism sites such as caravan parks have a high standard of external screening and landscaping. Others – particularly those that have developed in a piecemeal fashion – have a poor appearance in views from surrounding areas and lack an integrated approach to the design and management of elements like structure planting. Existing sites can often be made more attractive by further on- and off-site landscape works and by appropriate landscape management.

**Existing initiatives and advice**

Northumberland National Park Authority has prepared and adopted a Building Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document that is part of its suite of Local Development Framework documents. This provides a wealth of information on the character of buildings in the National Park, as well as advice on maintenance, alteration and conversion. It also gives advice on new build, including very helpful pointers on the form, siting and scale of farm buildings. Landscaping and external details such as how to deal with issues of land form, site boundaries, surfaces and planting are covered too, towards the end of the document – although arguably these issues need to be addressed at the very outset of any building project.

Northumberland National Park Authority has prepared an Historic Village Atlas Supplementary Planning Document which facilitates cultural heritage management but also helps in assessing the impact of new development on the cultural heritage – including the landscape settings – of National Park villages.

Following the designation of the National Park as an International Dark Sky Park the National Park Authority has published a Good Practice Guide for Outside Lighting in Northumberland International Dark Sky Park. This provides guidance for residents and those seeking permission to develop within the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park.

**4.5.2 Military training**

**Background and trends for change**
The Ministry of Defence Otterburn Training Area covers 23,000 ha of upland Northumberland, almost all within Northumberland National Park. It comprises 23% of the
land area of the National Park and some 30,000 soldiers train there each year undertaking infantry manoeuvres, artillery firing and air force ground-to-air attack training.

Otterburn is a working estate, managed by the Defence Estates, with 31 tenanted farms mainly engaged in extensive livestock farming. Much of the land is managed through agri-environment schemes. A high priority has been given to the conservation and management of the natural and historic features of the Training Area and as such there are benefits to conservation in that the land is not farmed or managed as intensively as it would otherwise be. There are approximately 1900 ha of woodland on the estate; most of the remainder is wild moorland and meadows. The area supports ancient woodland and extensive heather moorland habitats, including many areas designated as SSSIs; and the estate is also rich in archaeological remains ranging from prehistoric settlements to Roman roads and marching camps and defensive bastles. The Training Area has outstanding views over the Border hills and the landscape provides dramatic contrasts. There are 102 miles of public road, bridleway and footpath, of which 44 miles are open to the public at all times. The aim is to provide for safe public enjoyment of the estate whenever this is compatible with operational and military training uses, public safety, security, conservation and the interests of tenants.

The Defence Estates has prepared an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) for the Otterburn Training Area (see box on existing initiatives and advice, below) and this addresses a wide range of landscape issues. It makes commitments to manage the moorland, enclosed farmland, woodland and watercourses to high environmental standards taking account of landscape considerations. In relation to military training there are commitments to minimise the impact of military infrastructure and training activities on landscape values.

Aside from roads, vehicle parking and other operational areas, the built estate of the Training Area comprises Otterburn Camp, former farmhouses and agricultural buildings used as troop shelters, an ammunition compound, a maintenance facility and agricultural and residential properties. To meet the needs of the military, there has had to be development on the ranges to support operational training requirements, and in the past this has included improvements to Otterburn Camp; ammunition compound development, construction of moving target railways, new roads, and infrastructure to enable training of new weapons systems, most recently the Artillery System 90 (AS90) and Multi-Launch Rocket System (MLRS).

Developments to improve training facilities at Otterburn are submitted to the National Park Authority as Notices of Proposed Development, which are non-statutory planning applications. It has been agreed between the Ministry of Defence and the National Park Authority that decision-making on such developments would be improved if a five year plan of development aspirations were prepared and this is now in place and included in the ILMP. It currently includes proposals for ranges, troop shelters, refuges, latrines, new tracks, control points and road resurfacing.

Such developments can bring cumulative impacts to the landscape of the National Park, affecting both its landscape character and its quality or condition. In addition, of course, training activity significantly affects the tranquillity of the landscape and constrains public access and enjoyment of at least parts of the National Park. There is general agreement that there will continue to be a need for large expanses of land to be used for military training grounds and that the Otterburn Training Area is suited to this purpose; but at the same time it is recognised that there can be conflict between landscape conservation, access and enjoyment and the accommodation of further major military training activities.

Hence the Northumberland National Park Local Plan indicates that proposals for significant extension of the boundary of the Training Area and the development of major new facilities
such as the construction or widening of substantial lengths of road will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and must be in the public interest. Assessment of impacts is to include the impacts of any proposals on the special qualities and recreational opportunities of the National Park. The development of any additional camp accommodation and facilities is to be focused within or immediately adjacent to the existing camp area.

Key land management issues and guidelines for the Otterburn Training Area have been covered in general terms in the appropriate subsections of Section 4.4, but additional issues and guidelines relating to the impact of development and built structures within the landscape are set out below. Further advice can also be found in the guidelines for the relevant landscape character types.

**Key issues and guidelines for action**

**Infrastructure development principles**
The Otterburn ILMP (see below) lists a hierarchy of principles for infrastructure development in the landscape. These are that development should be kept to the minimum to meet the training requirement; there should be no net increase in the footprint of development; development should be accommodated within the built area of the Camp where possible; development in the sensitive and remote moorland landscapes such as the northern ranges should be avoided; infrastructure should be located where possible in woodland areas, which can better absorb development; careful attention should be given to design of structures; reversibility should be incorporated into infrastructure design; and long term strategic design plans should be prepared to address camp setting, layout and appearance. The continued and rigorous application of these principles is important.

**Road construction and widening**
This remains one of the key issues within the Training Area. There has been significant widening and surfacing of roads within the Training Area in the past and further road development or improvement has potential to adversely affect the wild and remote character of the Training Area. It should be avoided except in exceptional circumstances. The width of all roads and tracks should be minimised and except on public roads, surfacing with gravel is preferable to metalling.

**Obsolete and intrusive structures**
As can be seen from the description above, training activity involves the placement of a very wide range of structures within the landscape and it is critical that these are kept in place only while they are in active use. In addition, in some areas there are existing buildings or structures that are particularly intrusive and out of keeping with the landscape (for example buildings in the Coquet valley) and efforts should be made to relocate and/or redesign these structures to alleviate their impacts.

**Design, siting and landscaping of Otterburn Camp**
Although not widely visible from many directions, there are direct views into the built up area of Otterburn Camp from parts of the A68 to the west. It is important that any upgrading and redevelopment (for example of residential accommodation) should be carefully sited within the landscape. Opportunities to mitigate existing landscape and visual impacts and undertake further planting to better integrate the Camp with its landscape setting should also be sought.

**Existing initiatives and advice**

Northumberland National Park Authority has prepared an **Otterburn Camp**
**Supplementary Planning Document (2007).** This provides a long term planning and development framework for Otterburn Camp which supplements policies within the Local Plan. It sets out a future land use strategy and development principles for the Camp.

The Defence Estates has produced an **Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP)** for the Otterburn Training Area, with close involvement from a wide range of stakeholders. To inform the preparation of the landscape component of the ILMP, they commissioned a detailed landscape character assessment of the Training Area. The landscape chapter of the ILMP sets out principles for infrastructure development (see above), and objectives and management prescriptions for a range of landscape elements. In relation to military training infrastructure, prescriptions include preparation of a five year plan; establishment of training thresholds for different parts of the landscape; appropriate surface dressing of roads; removal of redundant structures and facilities; concentration of new and replacement facilities at Otterburn Camp; and noise monitoring to minimise detrimental effects on tranquility.

### 4.5.3 Transport

**Background and trends for change**

An important landscape asset of the National Park is the generally quiet character of its rural roads and the relative lack of major road infrastructure, which adversely affects tranquility, bringing visual and noise intrusion as well as light pollution. Where new development within the National Park is proposed care should be taken to ensure that there are no adverse effects from increased traffic generation which may undermine tranquility.

Within the National Park the chief landscape and visual issues are those associated with minor road improvements and management of boundaries and verges. Minor road works can erode the distinctive character and rural quality of minor roads and impair the use and enjoyment of those roads by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The character of the landscape may be affected by new landforms, bridges, surfacing, kerbs, lighting and signage. Landscape features like natural landforms, hedgerows and mature trees may be damaged or lost and roadside vegetation can be affected by pollution, salt spray, mud and physical damage. Roadside walls, gates and other structures may be altered or inappropriately upgraded.

Pressure for the construction of new access tracks for the purposes of forestry, farming and shooting is an ongoing issue within the National Park and may of itself bring landscape and visual effects. Where new access tracks are required consideration should be given to their potential to provide multiple benefits for recreation, habitat connectivity and green infrastructure whilst ensuring any landscape and visual effects are minimised and acceptable.

**Key issues and guidelines for action**

**New transport infrastructure and access tracks**

Great care and attention to avoiding and minimising the adverse landscape and visual impacts of new road/access track schemes through careful route selection and engineering design, retention of mature landscape features, on- and off-site planting and lighting design to limit light pollution and retain dark skies, is of the utmost importance. The guidelines for specific landscape character types highlight the key features and qualities of different landscapes that should be respected in the planning and design of new transport.
Minor road works
The character of rural roads and lanes, from sunken holloways and narrow winding lanes in the lowlands to straight enclosure roads in the upland fringes, is often an important component of local distinctiveness. Minor engineering improvements like junction improvements, traffic calming, road widening, easing of bends, kerbing, lighting and signage can have an urbanising effect. Any improvements should respect existing landscape character and features and should avoid introducing new features such as boundary treatments that are alien to the area’s character.

Road verges/Green Bridges and Green Infrastructure
Road verges can be an attractive part of the rural landscape and an important wildlife habitat. They often contain remnants of species-rich grasslands and wild flowers that are declining in the wider countryside; and may also have important historic associations, for example where roads represent former drove roads. Roadside hedges, trees, woodlands and scrub may make an important contribution to landscape character and scenic quality but are very vulnerable to physical damage by vehicles and inappropriate maintenance. The value of these habitats as ecological corridors has given rise to new guidance on the creation of green bridges (see below) to aid movement of species through the landscape and also improved green infrastructure.

Traffic management
Road networks can be designated as quiet lanes or as access only routes where motorised traffic is discouraged. Weight restrictions can reduce through traffic, and the removal of road markings can reduce traffic speed. The provision and appropriate management of cycleways, bridleways and sustainable transport options also helps reduce motorised traffic and its impacts on the landscape.

Existing initiatives and advice

The Local Transport Plan 2011-2026, prepared by Northumberland County Council forms the basis of investment and work programming decisions in respect of the network of public highways. The County Council also provides Parking Standards to dictate appropriate parking provision for new development.

The former Highways Agency (now Highways England) and former English Heritage (now Historic England), published the Effect of Road Schemes on Historic Landscape Character (2007). Although out of print this document does provide useful advice on assessing the impact of roads on historic landscapes, addressing issues of impact on character and exploring the potential to minimise land take, visual intrusion, noise, vibration and other impacts on the historic environment through good design.

Natural England has also published Guidance on Green Infrastructure (2009) which sets out the principles of achieving multiple benefits from road/access track development and the importance of it within spatial planning while the Landscape Institute has provided advice on the creation of Green Bridges (2015).
4.5.4 Energy and telecommunications

Background and trends for change

Renewable energy is central to combating climate change. There has been considerable growth in renewable energy generation especially wind and solar farms in the last decade. Renewable energy development can affect the landscape in a number of ways. Large scale wind farms with an essentially industrial character may be visually intrusive and may affect wildness and tranquility; they may dominate the local landscape and hence detract from its character. Associated infrastructure, including monitoring masts, access tracks, substations and grid connections may damage the landscape fabric and may also be visually intrusive, adding to the ‘visual clutter’ created on many hill tops in recent years by the growth in telecommunications development. New energy crops such as short rotation coppice may introduce novel features, textures or colours to farmland landscapes. At a smaller scale, solar panels, micro-hydro, and domestic wind turbines, typically 9-12 metres in height, have become much more common and may affect both the built environment but also the landscapes of isolated rural areas.

Commercial scale wind energy is likely to bring the greatest changes for the landscape. Due to the upland nature of the National Park and also landscapes beyond its boundary, the wind resource is regionally important and offers considerable potential for energy generation. At the same time this brings concern as to the landscape and visual impacts of wind farms, even when sited outside of the National Park.

Over the last decade there have been a notable number of new wind farm developments in Northumberland and in areas within the setting of the National Park. Although none occur within the National Park those which lie relatively close have resulted in some landscape and visual effects on the protected landscape. Such pressures outwith the National Park has resulted in the Authority seeing to work more closely with neighbouring authorities. Within the National Park wind farm development comprises small scale individual turbines.

Despite the generally positive policy context and the considerable work that has been undertaken to identify areas of least constraint to wind farm development (see bibliography), significant issues and concerns remain. There are difficult judgements to be made on which wind farms will generate least impact in landscape and visual terms; how the proposed wind farms will relate to the landscape and to each another visually; and what the overall capacity of the landscape for wind energy is. There is also the wider question of their impacts on the character and setting of the National Park.

In 2015 an important study into the success of incorporation of wind farm development into the Northumberland landscape was undertaken on behalf of Northumberland County Council. This research reviewed the actual effects of consented and built wind farm development compared to the original landscape and visual impact assessment of each scheme. In found that in some instances the effect had been underestimated. It recommended that wind farm policy should be updated and expanded within the County Council Core Strategy and the preparation of Supplementary Planning Guidance document to provide further detail to policy and address issues of sensitivity and capacity of different character areas to wind energy development and cumulative effects which is perhaps one of the most difficult issues.

Northumberland County Council is currently preparing a supplementary planning guidance document on wind energy. In the interim this landscape character assessment should go part way towards meeting these needs. The guidelines for the landscape character types (Section 3) have identified some of the key characteristics and sensitivities of individual
landscapes that will influence their capacity to accommodate wind farms, and hence should assist planning officers in arriving at judgements on landscape impact. In addition, we give details in the box on ‘existing initiatives and advice’ of useful good practice guides on assessing the landscape, visual and cumulative impacts of wind energy development. These are drawn from Scotland, where there is longer experience of assessing the impacts of major wind farm development.

Related to renewable energy are the effects of the National Grid on protected landscapes. This has come to the fore in recent years with funding from National Grid for the undergrounding of overhead wires and the launch of the Landscape Enhancement Initiative in May 2016 which includes £24 million over six years for projects which reduce the visual impact of National Grid’s existing infrastructure and/or improve landscape quality in the areas affected. The grant funding is available to all National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, which have National Grid overhead lines within or adjacent to them, and which have been assessed by National Grid as part of the project.

Key issues and guidelines for action

**Commercial scale wind energy**
It is important to ensure that wind energy development does not detract from the special qualities of designated landscapes, particularly those of the Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site and Northumberland National Park. The scale and form of wind farms should be compatible with the character of the local landscape and that of the wider area in which they are visible, and steps should be taken to ensure that the cumulative impact of wind farms in any one locality is not excessive. In assessing whether or not a landscape can accommodate wind farm development, its character, key features and qualities will all be of relevance.

The sensitivity of a particular landscape to wind energy development can be judged using the following criteria: scale, enclosure, landform, complexity of landcover and landscape features, man-made influence, skylines and settings, visibility and views, landscape condition (quality), scenic quality, wildness and tranquillity, natural and cultural heritage features, cultural associations and amenity and recreation.

**Other renewable energy technologies**
Other renewable energy technologies – principally biomass, solar, hydro-electric and domestic scale wind energy – are likely to be smaller-scale and to have more limited impacts. They may be acceptable throughout the area provided they are planned with care, avoid sensitive locations and do not detract from the surrounding landscape or cause visual intrusion. For example, sensitive site selection and design in the planting of energy crops is important; while domestic wind energy installations, like commercial ones, should be in scale with the landscape and should avoid sensitive skylines and important views.

**Overhead transmission lines and communications masts**
Overhead power lines and other wires can have an intrusive impact on the landscape. Wherever possible, providers should be encouraged to place transmission lines underground, particularly within nationally designated landscapes; and the presence of existing lines should not be seen as a precedent that reduces landscape sensitivity to overhead transmission lines. Any further proliferation of telecommunications masts should be avoided, and companies should be encouraged to share masts to help minimise new mast construction. Sensitive skylines should be avoided in all cases.

**Existing initiatives and advice**
Scottish Natural Heritage has published *Guidelines on the Environmental Impacts of Windfarms and Small Scale Hydroelectric Schemes*. This document contains much useful advice on the landscape and visual impacts associated with wind farm and hydro development, including a full examination of issues of site selection, layout and design and checklists of landscape and visual information that should be provided as part of any assessment. Although the pace of technological change means that the detail of this guidance rapidly becomes out of date, the principles remain the same and this guidance is invaluable for planners and developers.

*Guidance on the Cumulative Effect of Windfarms*, also from Scottish Natural Heritage, considers the types of cumulative effects that may occur, and provides advice on when and how they should be considered in development control and strategic planning. There is a strong focus on cumulative impacts on landscape and visual amenity, and discussion of the circumstances in which cumulative impacts should be judged to be unacceptable. Technical advice on cumulative landscape and visual impact assessment is also provided.

Other recent guidance published by SNH in relation to visualisations and cumulative effects is set out in the bibliography.

SNH has also published *Large scale solar photovoltaic installations: considering landscape, visual and ecological impacts* (2016).


### 4.5.5 Minerals and waste

*Background and trends for change*

The extraction of minerals, is part of the cultural landscape of Northumberland and has had a considerable impact on the evolution of landscape character.

Mineral extraction can bring changes to the landscape in a number of ways. Natural topography may be damaged temporarily or permanently; mature landscape features like hedgerows and hedgerow trees may be lost; the rural character of the landscape may be eroded by the presence of industrial features such as extraction faces, stockpiles, screening mounds, and processing plant; and the tranquillity of the surrounding countryside may be weakened by noise, light pollution, new access tracks may been needed for extraction of materials, and heavy traffic bringing dust and damage to local lanes and roads. Local distinctiveness may be weakened by insensitive restoration, but conversely there may also be opportunities to create new positive landscape features such as ponds, wetlands and native woodlands – provided that these are appropriate to local landscape character.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guide requires that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) prepare on an annual basis a Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA) either individually or in partnership with other LPAs. Within the North East, Durham County Council, Northumberland County Council, Northumberland National
Park Authority and the Unitary Council’s in Tyne and Wear have prepared a Joint Local Aggregate Assessment.

Harden Quarry has permission for rock extraction up until 2029 and the Joint Local Aggregates Assessment (JLAA 2016) recommends that any future proposals for this site would need to consider the balance between the provision of the material from this site, the need for this material, and the availability of alternatives in less sensitive locations. A further recommendation is that this resource is safeguarded in the Local Plan in order to ensure that the crushed rock resource within the Northumberland National Park is not needlessly sterilised by non-mineral development and is protected over the long-term. This is something which will be considered as part of the review of the NNP Local Plan.

There are currently no sand and gravel quarries in the Northumberland National Park. The JLAA recommends that provision of sand and gravel should be made outside of the National Park in line with national planning policy. It also recommended that this resource is safeguarded in the NNP Local Plan in order to ensure that the sand and gravel resource within the National Park is not be needlessly sterilised by non-mineral development and is protected over the longer-term.

Beyond the National Park further expansion of sand and gravel extraction is possible. Where sites occur within the setting of the National Park they may be of great landscape and visual sensitivity.

Key issues and guidelines for action

**Guiding new development**

The impacts of mineral working on the landscape depend heavily on how sites are selected and designed, and on the character and quality of their restoration. This landscape character assessment provides baseline information on landscape character, key features and qualities, and this can be used to inform site selection and design. Any new mineral development should be in keeping with landscape character and following restoration should contribute positively to the landscape strategy for that area.

**Existing mineral sites**

Mineral sites can be long-lived and many existing permissions were granted many years ago when standards were lower; the operation and restoration of these early sites is now subject to review but there are often residual impacts – particularly visual impacts – that are difficult to control or mitigate. In some areas, especially on the Whin Sill, the cumulative impact of existing sites is significant, and action plans for areas such as these which provide for off-site structure and hedgerow planting could address some of these issues.

**Restoration**

The restoration of mineral workings can offer opportunities for enhancing landscapes and habitats. The creative restoration of mineral workings to restore or enhance landscape character should be encouraged. Particular care should be taken to restore landscapes that are in keeping with their setting. For example, restoration to farmland should include the restoration of landform, field patterns and hedgerows that blend with surrounding countryside; while new wetlands should be located in those parts of the landscape where they might naturally occur.

**Mining and quarrying heritage**

At the same time It should be recognised that some features such as lead mining remains or old quarries may have become important components of landscape character or may offer opportunities to understand and enjoy aspects of the area’s rich geodiversity. Former quarries in Northumberland National Park provide insights into the area’s geology, history
and building materials.

Existing initiatives and advice

*North East Local Aggregates Assessment (JLAA) 2016* sets out the strategy for mineral planning. In general it seeks to ensure provision is made from areas outside of the National Park without having a significant adverse effect on the purpose and special qualities of the National Park.

In relation to mining and quarrying heritage, the *Geodiversity Audit and Action Plans* (2007) for Northumberland National Park includes details of mining and quarrying features that are of geodiversity interest or that offer potential for tourism or natural heritage interpretation.
Bibliography

Landscape Character Assessment


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Annex 1: Landscape Guidelines for Key Settlements within the Setting of the National Park

**Haltwhistle**

Haltwhistle is situated on the lower slopes of the northern banks of the River South Tyne between the upland areas of Haltwhistle Common to the north and Plenmeller Common to the south. It lies just outside Northumberland National Park and Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site. It is a small market town historically linked to the mining industry of the area and the development of the railway. The setting of the town comprises the valley sides of the River South Tyne and the floodplain of the river to the south. Immediately to the east of the town is the incised wooded tributary valley of Haltwhistle Burn while to the west is the parkland landscape of Blenkinsopp Hall. Immediately to the south of the town is the river itself and beyond that open valley floor pastures which form part of the Bellister Castle estate and are crossed by the A69. The impact of the road embankment has been mitigated to some degree by screen planting.

**Guidelines for Siting and Design of New Development**

- Although the majority of the settlement is located on the lower valley slopes some employment development has extended onto the flood plain in the south east, which has altered the character and form of the settlement. Further development on the valley floor should be avoided and measures to mitigate the scale and colour of the existing development should be encouraged.

- The wooded tributary valley of Haltwhistle Burn forms an important wooded edge to the east of the town and helps to integrate built form into the wider landscape particularly when viewed from the south. Development beyond this edge should be resisted.

- There are open views of the settlement from the southern valley sides and as such further outward expansion of the town onto open higher slopes would have a significant visual impact and would alter the traditional historic form of the town. Development onto the open higher valley sides should therefore be resisted.

- South of Woodhead there is an area of lower-lying valley slopes comprising rough pastures. This area has scope for development as an extension of the urban edge due to its lower elevation and reasonable hedgerow and hedgerow tree network. Any development here would need to provide a strong landscape framework, building on the existing field pattern and avoiding adverse impact on the parkland landscape of Blenkinsopp Hall to the west. Care should be taken to use building materials and colours that are in keeping with the local vernacular stone and brick. The scale and form of building should reflect existing building styles within the settlement i.e. terraces or town houses; development of apartments or flats should be avoided, particularly on the outskirts of the town.

- There are opportunities to improve the setting of the settlement building on existing assets and character. In particular, there is potential to create areas of open space for recreational purposes adjacent to the town, especially just to the west. This land has been identified as a provisional area for development; however opportunities to extend the parkland character of Blenkinsopp Hall should also be considered as part
of any proposal. Similarly the open meadows on the floodplain to the south of the town form part of the National Trust Bellister Castle estate and the river valley corridor is known locally as the 'hidden valley'. This area is well connected with the town via a number of river crossings and the possibility of improved recreational access and use should be explored.

**Bellingham**

Bellingham is situated on the northern banks of the River North Tyne between the upland areas of Hareshaw Common to the north and Ealingham Rigg to the south, and on the edge of Northumberland National Park. It is a small market town which retains a strongly nucleated character and association with the disused Border Counties Railway, the route of which runs through the northern part of the settlement. To the west, the North Tyne valley is defined by a characteristic pattern of vegetation – meadows and arable on the valley floor, pastures on the valley sides, and open unenclosed rough grazing and moorland beyond. To the east, the valley broadens out as the River North Tyne meets the River Rede. Here the valley floodplain is more expansive.

**Guidelines for Siting and Design of New Development**

- The northern skyline, comprising Callerhues Crag and the vegetated spoil heaps associated with Harreshaw ironworks, is a key landmark within the setting to the town. Any development, particularly to the north of the town, should not visually compete with or detract from these distinctive landscape features.

- The open, rural valley sides, which are prominent in views when travelling north and approaching the town across the bridge over the North Tyne, also form an important part of the setting to the town. Development should not extend westwards into this area, and existing new development should be screened where possible.

- The disused railway and associated railway buildings within the town present an opportunity to improve access between the town and wider valley landscape and offer a redevelopment opportunity which could strengthen the sense of arrival when approaching from the north.

- Care should be taken to prevent recreational land uses on the edge of the town (such as the golf course, caravan park or playing fields) extending their urbanising influence into the wider countryside through lighting, visually prominent structures or non-native planting. Such changes may undermine the characteristic vegetation and land use patterns of the valley sides and floodplain.

- Linear development along the approach roads to the town, particularly the B6320 south of the river, should be avoided as it would significantly alter the sense of arrival and perceived nucleated character of the settlement.

- To the north and east of the settlement, on the valley slopes between Hareshaw Burn and the minor road to Redesmouth, there is some potential for sympathetic infill development and urban expansion. However, development on the valley floor or along the approach roads to the town should be avoided.

- Any new development should, where possible, seek to enhance the approaches to and sense of arrival in the town, and should be integrated with the landscape through appropriate planting and boundary treatments. Building materials should match
those found in the existing settlement (sandstone and brick) or at least be similar in colour.