

## LANCASHIRE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE

## MOORLAND

### Definition:

**Moorland** covers almost 36,000 hectares of Lancashire of which 15,000 are unenclosed, 13,600 are very large enclosures and over 7,000 divided into smaller enclosures. Much of the area was used in the past for common grazing, only more recently being enclosed.

### Typical historical and archaeological components

Moorland is an important area for the preservation of archaeological remains, both upstanding and buried. In particular remains of Bronze Age and earlier periods are likely to be well represented, these being buried under and within the peat, which also served to make the area unfavourable for later, potentially destructive activities. Cairns and other funerary monuments are well represented within this type, which also contains the best-preserved areas of prehistoric (and later) settlement and field systems in the county (at High Park, Leck).

Since the Bronze Age most moorland has been used mainly for extensive grazing of stock. In the medieval period many of these areas came under Forest Law and, either concurrently or later, became reorganised as cattle ranches or vaccaries. Features associated with these may be present, such as boundary banks and walls. In some areas past industrial activity is prevalent, such as quarries, stone hushing and evidence for mining. Drystone walls are important boundaries within an otherwise often open landscape. Features associated with shooting and game management, such as butts or hunting huts, may also have some antiquity. Other archaeological and historical features include: shelter walls and belts, animal pounds, high level tracks, roads and pack-horse routes, wayside crosses, water management structures, ditches, drainage grips and clearance cairns.

### Enhancing and safeguarding the type

- *Undertake survey.* With few exceptions the moorland of Lancashire has never undergone a systematic programme of research to identify its (historic) heritage assets (archaeological sites, palaeo-environmental resource, built heritage and historic landscape). The reasons for such a paucity of research are associated with the visibility of the evidence, much of which remains buried under (or within) the peat, the types of activity carried out on the HLC type, issues concerning access to the resource and a lack of researchers. One primary consequence of this lack of information is that the historic environment is often under-represented in both strategic and local decision-making. This leads to the potential for damage and a failure to take up the opportunities provided by the historic environment to new development, environmental and community projects, land-use management techniques, local economy and tourism. On the rare occasions when survey work has been undertaken, for example in parts of the North West Water Estate, the number of known sites and structures has been multiplied tenfold. Further research and survey are therefore required in order to understand more fully the archaeological potential represented within this HLC type.
- *Conserve* the distinctive high altitude field enclosures, buildings and communications network. The network of walls, historic trackways and isolated agricultural buildings is a distinctive feature of the moorland landscape, providing time depth and inter-county historical variation – priority should be given to those features according to their period, rarity, documentation, group value, survival/condition, fragility/vulnerability, diversity and potential. Where stabilisation or restoration is not feasible the base courses and foundation stones of enclosure walls and buildings should be maintained as evidence of former activity.
- *Conserve* the evidence for relic occupation and landuse. Moorland contains the best-preserved earthwork evidence for prehistoric settlement, ritual use and land management in the county. It also

includes vaccary and forest features and industrial landscapes, which are distinctive to Lancashire. Priority will be given to the preservation of these characteristic attributes of moorland landscape.

- *Improve management.* Improve the management regime (and advice to it) to minimise the threat of overgrazing and erosion, and damage through the growth of bracken or furze, reversion and scrubbing up. Positive management should be encouraged, potentially with the aid of agri-environmental schemes. Maintenance of thin peat soils, and hence the archaeological remains within them, may be promoted through rotational heather burning. Bracken should be controlled by spraying as opposed to mechanical means that may damage the archaeological resource. Stone clearance and the use of cairns and buildings as sources of building material must be avoided.
- *Avoid damage to the historic environment through mineral exploitation, treeplanting and agricultural improvement.* Full archaeological assessment prior to decision-making should be carried out where appropriate.
- *Enhance interpretation.* The role of humans in the creation and management of moorland is not well appreciated. Opportunities for increased and improved interpretation, and the appropriate extension of access, should be taken whilst at the same time deflecting visitors from sensitive historic attributes.
- Much of this HLC type falls within SSSIs and other nature conservation designations, and is subject to the requirements of the relevant legislation, guidance and policy. Attention should be given to emphasising the historic dimension to such designated areas, either directly or indirectly, and to ensuring that it is considered alongside the 'primary' natural attributes.