

## A3 Wharnccliffe Unenclosed Moorland

As with character area *A1 Thurlstone and Langsett Unenclosed Moorland*, this landscape falls within the Countryside Character Area 51: Dark Peak (as defined by the Character of England Map) and is distinguished by its high elevation, landform patterning, homogenous land cover and land use qualities.

This character area represents a relatively small pocket of isolated moorland occupying an elevated, gently rolling ridge between the strong valley cutting of the River Don to the west and the more subtle valleys of Hall Wood Dike and Mark Brook to the east. Topographically, the land ranges from 317 AOD at its highest point (Wharnccliffe Chase) to approximately 250 AOD, marking the ridgeline at Wharnccliffe Craggs. Wide panoramic views can be gained to the ridge near Stocksbridge, to the west, and across to the suburbs of Sheffield to the east.

The underlying geology comprises Lower Coal Measures formed of alternating bands of sandstone and shale. Two disused quarries, Bimshaw and Laycock, provide visual clues to industrial archaeology of the area. Another historic landscape component is Wharnccliffe Chase. The chase, probably created during the second part of the thirteenth century, was the private equivalent of a Royal Forest and belonged to the Wortley family. The chase would have been used for deer hunting and grazing and continues to function as a deer park today. Grouse butts, scattered over the moor, indicate that the moor is used for grouse shooting.

Due to the elevation and distinct land cover, the moorland evokes a wild character. Sheep grazing forms the predominant land use activity and development is an uncommon characteristic. Only one farmstead, Wharnccliffe Farm, exists to the west and there are no major roads; simply a series of informal tracks winding across the landscape. The combination of these elements results in a simple and tranquil landscape.

The vegetation predominantly comprises unimproved grassland, although small blocks of mixed plantation woodland (such as those of Burnt Hill and Hollow Plantation) bring vertical interest, colour, contrast and a change in texture. The woodland interrupts, to a degree, the unified and open character of the rolling moorland. Hague's Wood, to the south, is a large woodland block connecting to Wharnccliffe Wood; forming a visual and physical link with the character area *B1 Upland Don River Valley*.

Two communication masts and a line of pylons carrying overhead cables bring obvious human influence upon the landscape, diluting to a degree, the sense of wilderness. Human activity on the boundary of the area also influences its character. Here the decline of traditional stone boundary walls and unmanaged fields around farm buildings, bringing a sense of decline to the landscape.