

E3 Tockholes – Rivington – Edgeworth Fringe

The farmed fringes extend across the long southern slopes of the West Pennine moors forming a transition area between the moorland summits and the extensive urban areas of Bolton and Bury which occupy the land to the south. They also include the lower agricultural land in the area around Tockholes. Tree cover is significant throughout the area with ash, oak, willow and sycamore found in large woodland blocks, clumps, shelterbelts and along field boundaries. Small to medium sized coniferous plantations are also a common feature and extend out from the reservoir valleys. Pasture predominates as the main land cover, although some areas appear to have been taken out of agricultural use and are unmanaged, with areas of rough grassland beginning to scrub up or utilised as horse paddocks. The decline in farming is also reflected in the condition of the enclosing stonewalls, many of which are in a poor state of repair. In the past the area has been quarried, and the remains, including numerous slag heaps, are apparent in the landscape as, for example, around Withnell. The area is crossed by a network of narrow rural lanes which connect the scattered settlements, hamlets and farmhouses. At the highest parts of this area there are long views out over the large urban conurbation on the lower land to the south. This area, in common with many of the rural fringes, is vulnerable to increasing pressures from the surrounding urban areas.