

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - *Land Management*

Limestone Estatelands

Landscape Type Description

A sparsely populated 'upland' landscape characterised by thin limestone soils, estate plantations and large rectilinear fields defined by dry stone walls. Although still retaining a remote character, the stone walls convey a sense of human presence and the reddish soils a sense of warmth to this landscape. Closely associated with the higher parts of the Cotswold escarpment, this is a well ordered landscape of large open spaces framed for the most part by woodland edges and belts of trees.



Key Characteristics

Primary

- Upstanding rolling plateau, capped with oolitic limestone
- Thin, stony soils with characteristic orange colouring
- Large rectilinear fields defined by drystone walling
- Dominant use of stone for building
- Woodland of planned character—estate plantations and belts of trees

Secondary

- Scattered settlement, largely restricted to isolated stone farmsteads
- Discrete woodlands with dominance of beech in woodland composition



Current Concerns

The essential large scale and spaciousness of these landscapes could become fragmented and diluted by land use changes. Whilst these areas can accommodate considerable amounts of new woodland planting, the siting and scale of such woodland will be a critical factor in order to ensure that the dominance of the landform and the sheer visual expanse of the landscape is not compromised: the introduction of too much new woodland on the plateau area could easily result in closing down the views and creating an uncharacteristic sense of enclosure. The planting of further large plantations would enhance the estate character of the landscape, providing care is taken to recognise and conserve the dominance of large open spaces.

Ongoing deterioration of the stone walls gives cause for concern for the long term perpetuation of this distinctive characteristic. Initiatives to secure the ongoing repair and maintenance of the network of stone walls should be encouraged. Reinforcement and expansion of the characteristic belts of trees could usefully strengthen the structure and scale.

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Guidelines for Land Management

How to use this sheet

The aim of this information sheet is to provide *general guidelines* about the priorities for land management activities - focusing on relevant landscape features - within this Landscape Type. However, Landscape Types are generic descriptions of landscape character and any advice **must** be interpreted within the context of the site in question. Please also visit the Landscapes of Worcestershire mapping pages <http://gis.worcestershire.gov.uk/home/wcc-lca-maps> to click on your area and read the more specific ecological and landscape descriptions.

In the case of any habitat work, specialist advice should be sought from the County Ecologists and/or the appropriate agency (Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Defra) to ensure that the work is appropriate, is carried out at the right time of year, in the correct manner and in the best possible location. Surveys may need to be carried out to assess the sites for presence of protected species or existing habitat. With this in mind, please read on for opportunities for land/habitat management activities appropriate to this Landscape Type...

Woodland and Trees

The general guidelines for woodland and trees in Limestone Estatelands are to:

- **enhance** the structure of the landscape by encouraging new woodland planting that is well-sited to retain the long distance views and open character of the plateau
- **restore** and **enhance** the linear patterns of tree belts

Ensure that any woodland planting integrates with the enclosure pattern to create a cohesive framework of regular pattern. Woodland planting that contributes to the retention of medium/large-scale character is likely to be beneficial to these landscapes but small-scale planting proposals could be detrimental and will require particular scrutiny. New or replacement tree planting should be predominantly broadleaved, favouring beech, together with oak and ash, as the major species.

Enclosure Pattern and Stone Walls

The general guidelines for enclosure pattern in Limestone Estatelands are to:

- **conserve** the large-scale estateland character of the farmed land by maintaining the strong characteristic rectilinear field pattern
- **conserve** and **restore** field boundary walls, especially along roadsides, using locally sourced stone

This is a well-ordered landscape characterised by large regular fields, defined by stone walls. The introduction of beneficial management to improve the contribution that existing features, such as patterns of stone walling and woodlands, make to the scale of the landscape will also be beneficial. Linkage of stone wall fragments is also encouraged, to ensure that a coherent network is retained.

Grassland

The general guidelines for grassland in Limestone Estatelands are to:

- **conserve** all remaining areas of permanent pasture
- consider opportunities for converting arable land back to pasture

This is a landscape formerly associated with extensive sheep walks, although much of this permanent pasture has now been lost to arable uses. Whenever possible, the retention of permanent pasture should be encouraged, along with exploring opportunities for converting arable land back to pastoral use.

For more information visit our website www.worcestershire.gov.uk/lca or contact the Worcestershire County Council Environmental Policy Team on 01905 766038