Natural England Commissioned Report NECR001

Trends in pastoral commoning

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NATURAL ENGLAND

Introduction

Natural England commission a range of reports from external contractors to provide evidence and advice to assist it in delivering its duties. The views in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of Natural England.

Port Meadow, Oxford, mentioned in the Domesday Book 1086

Background

This report was commissioned by Natural England to provide an understanding of the extent, role and significance of pastoral commoning in England and to identify trends from which likely future scenarios can be predicted.

The findings will be used by Natural England, Defra and others when considering environmental policies, and the development of management schemes suitable for protecting public interests on common lands.

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Further information
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TRENDS IN PASTORAL COMMONING IN ENGLAND

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TRENDS IN PASTORAL COMMONING IN ENGLAND

A Study for

Natural England

By

The Pastoral Commoning Partnership

with H&H Bowe Limited

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Preface

The task to *'paint a picture'* of pastoral commoning in England has identified a diversity of immense complexity in physical, social, cultural and economic terms. At one extreme are robust and stable pastoral commons and at the other are clear examples of fragile and disappearing communal systems showing evidence of a complex of vulnerabilities.

The nature of the research and the complexity of the situation determine that the findings are to be interpreted within the limitations that are self evident. However, key trends and processes of change and use have been identified. Arising from this are areas of concern and possible opportunity.

The overview is one of diversity and complexity [S.2. and Appendix D], reflecting to a large extent the processes of custom over long time periods. Custom is 'local' and the key to diversity. Each common is special and the response of commoners and other stakeholders relating to the sample commons and the associated summaries [Section 4 and Appendix D] provides strong evidence. The research found that on the commons where traditional practice had survived there is a sense of pride and place that provide a strong foundation on which to build. The diversity of commons suggests caution in making generalisations but there are trends that are observable.

There is also a clear implication that commoners and other stakeholders are somewhat disconnected but not necessarily distant. The evidence that commons are truly multi-functional is strong and that the skills, knowledge and understanding to optimise outcomes demands a more integrated approach. At a basic level, concepts of grazing levels are confusing and need to be the subject of a common understanding.

The interactions between environmental and agricultural practice likewise provide opportunities to improve and share in the process of predicting sustainability on economic and environmental grounds.. A possible way forward could be to identify a small but representative sample of 'demonstration common grazings' where stakeholder partnerships could innovatively share in professional development to provide the connections that multi functional land management requires. Extension working through facilitation by all parties; graziers and other stakeholders can potentially lead to shared understanding and outcomes that contribute positively to a sustainable future. The challenge to develop a discrete approach to Continuing Professional Development linked to commoning presents an opportunity to contribute to the adjustments that will continue to necessary if sustainable responses are to be effected.

Communication seems to offer some scope to all interested parties . The increasing role of commoners associations and the initiatives to form wider networks through Federations and a National Foundation offer a timely and potentially practical way forward.

The historical context [S.2] reflects a management approach that was essentially local. Grazing rights were complemented by other benefits such as rights of turbary, estovers, bracken, stone and many others. In total these contributed significantly to the economy of the community and individual farms. The study has identified little benefit from common rights other than grazing. Despite evidence of improved

agricultural efficiency in recent decades [Appendix A] and the potential for adding value [S.4], primary production is contributing to farm incomes on a declining scale. The research has identified support to add value to the primary produce which is an important aspect of sustaining the motivation of graziers.

However the decoupling of support from grazing stock and the issues surrounding the Single Farm Payment has drawn the fragility of primary production into sharp focus. [N Trust evidence, S2] Primary production is now complemented through a range of *'public goods'* [S.3] which make commons of national significance for flora, fauna, access and cultural landscape which are strongly 'externally focussed'. The challenge to Natural England and Defra to link market and public goods into a coherent and sustainable system demands timely and deep deliberation.

Pastoral Commons in the twenty-first century will continue to evolve though at a pace that may be revolutionary especially in the area of public goods and under the influence of global climatic changes. The process of adjustment can be significantly enhanced through collaboration and mutual understanding. The evidence from the research suggests a fund of willingness to make the commons work. Some of the findings of this study offer opportunities for immediate response whilst there are others that suggest lines of further research.

Andrew Humphries MBE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This research was commissioned by Natural England to provide an understanding of pastoral commoning in England. Pastoral commoning is defined for this research as the grazing of common land with livestock. To aid the analysis, common land has been divided into types by geographical location and/or characteristics

The research combines data from desk studies with new field data gathered from 18 commons across England and from 20 national and regional stakeholders with an interest in common land. The field data reviews changes over a twenty year period until 2007 and anticipated changes over the following twenty years to 2027.

The data collected from the sample of commons should not be considered as being representative of each geographic type. The diversity within each type and a relatively small sample would make extrapolation from the specific to the whole area unwise.

Findings

Commons are extremely variable, depending on their geography, livestock type and numbers, livestock systems, recreational interests, role of owners and external stakeholder involvement. However a number of general trends are detectable.

1) **The overall tendency is towards fewer active graziers on each common and an increase in farm size**.
   - Over half of the respondents reported a decline in the number of active graziers from 1987-1997, and over two-thirds reported a further decline from 1997-2007.
   - The general exception to this decline is where stewardship schemes have specifically encouraged an increase in graziers such as the New Forest and the Malvern Hills.
   - Over half the commoners reported that their farm size had increased over the last twenty years.

2) **Management of common land has become increasingly time consuming**.
   - Of the factors absorbing increased time on upland commons, reduced labour, fewer graziers and public access issues were cited as having the greatest impact.
   - Over two thirds of commoners said that recreation levels had increased a lot over the past 20 years.

3) **Commons are increasingly managed through commoners associations, and are subject to agri-environment schemes**.
   - The number of commoners' associations closely involved in grazing management doubled over the twenty years ending 2007.
   - 78% of the commons in the study were in agri-environment schemes.

4) **There are widely different views on appropriate grazing levels**
   - Over 80% of commons groups and stakeholders considered that graziers' views on appropriate grazing levels differed from those of non-commoning stakeholders, and *vice versa*.

- Different objectives and different levels of knowledge were the two main reasons identified, with more joint working and better information cited as ways to reduce these differences in the future.

5) **Stock numbers have declined in most cases, with a shift away from native breeds**.
   - In the uplands the numbers of livestock units grazed declined for sheep in 1987-1997 and 1997-2007 while cattle numbers declined from 1997-2007. Overall on the sample upland commons winter sheep numbers have fallen by over 70% and summer numbers by over 40%.
   - The emphasis on off-wintering of sheep and cattle has resulted in shift in breeds kept with often a move towards more cross bred stock. By 2007 none of the sample commons out wintered cattle.
   - In the lowlands there was a small increase (mainly cattle) during the period 1987-2007, although this was from a significantly depressed start.
   - The presence of a sporting interest in a common is a significant factor dictating stock numbers as grazing pressures have been reduced for game management purposes.

6) **The vegetation of commons is undergoing long term change**.
   - Scrub and bracken (where present) are reported by commoners to have increased significantly from 1987-2007. Reasons given for change include altered grazing levels, and climate change (milder winters).

7) **The reasons why commoners continue to graze commons are complex and involve personal values**, **not solely geared to economics**.
   - Whilst the price of livestock is the most important factor underlying commoners' motivation for grazing, tradition and maintenance of farming systems are highly significant factors.

8) **Despite the depressed state of pastoral farming, commons are still an economic asset**.
   - Data collected 2004-2006 revealed that hill farms with common land derived more income than those without, mainly due to economies of scale, Hill Farming Allowance and environmental schemes.

Future Scenarios

Current trends are anticipated to continue

1) **The number of full time commoners will continue to decline in the uplands, with some abandonment possible.**
   - The current generation are likely to remain as graziers but the low level of net income relative to alternative occupations is discouraging the next generation from taking over grazing commons.
   - Unless prices and profits improve, the numbers of graziers will decline as commoners retire or die.
   - This reduction in labour is predicted to reach a critical threshold below which collaborative management and the hefting of stock continues to break down.
   - Pastoral commoning will decline to unviable levels without new commoners
   - On lowland commons, where commons are often grazed by non-commoners, no new changes were revealed.

2) **Landscape quality will be affected, especially in the uplands**
   - Scrub and bracken encroachment are anticipated to increase, which may restrict recreational use and make shepherding more difficult, with traditional boundary walls less likely to be maintained.

3) **The impact on agriculture and local communities is less certain**.
   - The greatest concerns of commoners are reduced output, abandonment of land, and amalgamation of farms. A breakdown of hefting and a loss of traditional breeds are cited as additional concerns by stakeholders.
   - Loss of skills and heritage is cited as the most frequent impact on communities, by both commoners and stakeholders.

4) **Payments from agri-environment schemes and the Single Payment Scheme underpin the current system**
   - Unless commons are supported by environmental payments, or prices and profits improve, trends 1-3 will be exacerbated

5) **The provision of a range of public goods from common land is dependant on continued grazing and collaborative management**.
   - These public benefits include landscape management, nature conservation, access and the protection of archaeological remains and they have increased over the last twenty years as the condition of commons has improved. Without a thriving commoning community the continued flow of the public benefits is at risk.

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the *Trends in Pastoral Commoning in England* report commissioned by Natural England and awarded to The Pastoral Commoning Partnership through H&H Bowe Limited.

The project has lasted three months with the objective of providing an understanding of pastoral commoning in England and to establish current trends from which future scenarios can be predicted.

1.1 Aims of the project

1.1.1 Part 1
To collate existing information on the broad types of commons in England and the practices that exist. Make a broad assessment of the levels of grazing and record the types of grazing livestock.

1.1.2 Part 2
To collect information from a selected sample of commons to assess the current state and trends of pastoral commoning and draw conclusions on possible future scenarios.

1.2 The Research Team

This work has been undertaken by the Pastoral Commoning Partnership which is a national network of organisations working directly with commoners. It is in the process of developing a constitution for a Foundation for British Common Land. As it is not yet a legal entity the contract was held by H&H Bowe Limited, a firm of rural practice chartered surveyors based in Carlisle who provide specialist advice on Common Land matters. All members of the team are active professionally in managing commons or providing advice to commoners. Many also are or have been livestock farmers.

The team comprised:

Project Director:	Andrew Humphries
Project Manager:	Paul Harper
Report Authors:	Julia Aglionby, Roger Connard and Andrew Humphries
Data Analyst:	David Morley
Interviewers:	John Atkinson, John Pedley, John Thorley, John Walden, Cherry Seage, Fiona Southern, Andrew Stables, Carl Walters

1.3 Methodology

A detailed methodology is given at the start of chapters 3 and 4 for Parts 1 and 2. A geographical approach was used to illustrate the broad types of common and to aid the presentation of data. This, and the availability of good quality data, provided the basis for the selection of sample commons that were used as case studies to inform part 2.

The method has departed from the brief in that the team concluded that the data received from stakeholders fitted much better into Part 2 than Part 1 and was useful in validating the results from the commoners. In addition a number of stakeholders were invited to a validation meeting to discuss the questionnaire results from the commoners and the other stakeholders. This was valuable in identifying any other typical features relating to different commons types that the commons questionnaires had not identified.

1.4 Structure of the Report

The report comprises four main sections;

Chapter 2 Provides a historical, cultural and economic background of pastoral commoning in England

Chapter 3 Is a desk study overview of the broad types of pastoral commoning in England as identified on a geographical basis.

Chapter 4 Presents the primary field research conducted specifically for this study. Commoners and stakeholders were interviewed and the results analysed and presented. A summary of the results of the commons questionnaires is shown at appendix D.

Chapter 5 Provides an analysis of the main findings as to the current state of pastoral commoning, the drivers for change and the future scenarios that can be expected on pastoral commons.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

The appendices are an important part of this report as they not only provide the data that supports the conclusions but also contain data on the economics of hill farming on farms with and without commons and summary data of registered rights on common land.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF PASTORAL COMMONING

'Only for a brief moment in history and in a few places on earth have men known anything but an agrarian environment'[1]

[A Whitney Griswold, Farming and Democracy]

For most of that time communal land use in its' various forms has been the basis of pastoral agriculture. Contemporary views may see pastoral commoning as anachronistic and an inefficient use of resources, yet the recent passing of the 2006 Commons Act with a clear focus on the agricultural use and management of common land suggests otherwise. In 2005 Jim Knight Minister for Rural Affairs, Landscape and Biodiversity re-emphasised the relevance and role of common land in our society as:-

- *Central to our hill farming culture*
- *Our single most important wildlife resource*
- *Our single most important open space.*[2]

The future for active and sustainable pastoral commoning depends in significant part on a clear understanding of the character and complex of values that have evolved *'time out of memory'*. Commons provide a unique continuous link with the genesis of pastoral agricultural practice. This section provides an overview of the historic and contemporary characteristics of England's pastoral commons.

2.1 Context of this Research:-

- Pastoral commoning represents a continuous husbandry system of immense diversity and antiquity, which has made a unique contribution to the cultural landscape of rural England.

- Research is necessary to formulate hypotheses and for direct use in the formulation of policy.

- Sustaining pastoral commoning as a basis for community development and the provision of a unique range of public goods depends on understanding of how things work.

- Pastoral Commons are about relationships. These include the physical attributes, management arrangements, patterns of interaction between commoners and with other stakeholders and the outcomes that are sought.

[1] Charles Warner Introduction, In Charles Warner Ed. *Agrarian Conditions in Modern European History*New York, nd. P.1.
[2] Fifth National Seminar on Common Land and Town and Village Greens. University of Gloucestershire.
Web; www.glos.ac.uk/ccru

2.2 The Evolution of Pastoral Commoning.

This section attempts to provide an overview of the characteristics and values that relate to pastoral commoning and that inform the case studies and desk study that follow.

Long before the pressures arising from population growth and modern concepts of private property, *customary grazing grounds* dominated much of England. Initially being available for communal use without restriction they represent *pastoral commoning without defined rights* but subject to customary practices. This situation may be regarded as originating the first pastoral farming practices with a community focus.

As communal grazings came under pressure, due to population growth and the attendant enclosures, a system of limitation through the introduction of rights emerged to ensure a sustainable resource. The definition as to who should be entitled to grazing and other associated rights, and the degree to which these rights could be excercised marks the emergence of *common property rights* in respect of pastoral grazings.

During the later medieval period manorial courts played a major role and marked an evolutionary change in the practice of limiting common pasture rights. The decline in manorial courts in the late 18th and 19th centuries followed by a significant period of *agricultural depression* left commoners without a robust management framework and a system of husbandry vulnerable to a range of potential pressures.

Under The Administration of Justice Act 1977,[s.23, and schedule 4] as from October 17th 1977:-
'all courts baron, courts leet, and similar courts shall cease to have jurisdiction to hear and determine legal proceedings, they may continue to sit and transact such business as was customary immediately prior to the legislation'

Some thirteen specified courts together with the customary business that they may undertake are listed in part three of the schedule.[3] Over time the management framework of pastoral commons had evolved as a combination of statute and custom. The earliest legislation to impact on the customary communal grazings came with the Statute of Merton 1235, and the Statute of Westminster 1285 which primarily limited the right of the Lord of the Manor to enclose[4]. This embraced the principle that *approvement* or *enclosure* was subject to the proviso that there remained *'sufficient pasture on the wastes' for their tenants*.' This arrangement provides strong indications that pressure for enclosure was a live issue even in the thirteenth century, and equally significantly that the *'concept of rights'* exercised the minds of legislators. The 2006 Commons Act finally replaces the Statute of Westminster 1285 and is primarily concerned with agricultural management of common land; ie *pastoral commoning.*

[3] Paul Clayden, *Our Common Land*, Henley on Thames, 2003, p.57.
[4] GD Gadsden. *The Law of Commons,* London 1988. pp.210-211.

2.3 Customary Practice

Throughout the period since the Statutes of Merton and Westminster, custom has continued to play a vital role in expressing and conserving local diversity. Sir Edward Coke [Chief Justice 1606-16] in 1641 characterised custom around two principles; *'common usage'* and *'time out of mind*, adding that:-

"Customs are defined to be a law or right not written; which, being established by long use and the consent of our ancestors , hath been and is daily practiced".[5]

For Carter in *Lex Customaria* in 1694 the principles or pillars had become four: *antiquity, continuance, certainty and reason.*

'For a custom taketh beginning and groweth to perfection in this manner. When a reasonable Act once done if found to be good, and beneficial to the People, and agreeable to their nature and disposition, then do they use it and practise it again and again, and so by often alteration and multiplication of the Act it becomes a Custom ; and being continued without interruption time out of mind, it obtaineth the force of a Law'.[6]

In a real sense custom and culture are intertwined and out of custom came a sustaining of local community; a sense of shared responsibility and accountability, the notion of *'good neighbourhood.'* This strong community based element is exemplified in the following example from the Isel Manorial Court in Cumberland in 1662. , concerning a *drift* or *gather* to check the legitimacy of the animals grazing.

'*that every tenant and occupier of every tenement within this Lordshipp upon lawful warneinge given before the sun be sett the day before, shall ether goe themselves or else send a sufficient person to helpe drive the moore provided the drift be made between sun and sun.'*
[C/DX/ 128/5/3. CRO.]

The relevance of custom in this contemporary enquiry into *'Trends in Pastoral Commoning'* is that over many centuries *custom* which is essentially *local* has been at the centre of the management process, and has relevance for the implementation of future policies and supporting legislation. Within the case studies in this research are a number of customary elements that emphasise its cultural importance. The Court Leet at Danby, The Freemen of the Town Moor at Newcastle and the Court of Verderers of the New Forest are all diverse and particular examples. The Reeve at Burgh by Sands and the Conservators of the Malvern Commons also play a distinctive role. Additionally for the contiguous commons of the Lake District and parts of the Pennines in particular, the Shepherds Guides which contain the individual sheep identification marks, which are claimed to date from Viking times illustrate antiquity and continuance, which are clearly identified as vital features of cultural landscape for World Heritage Status.

2.4 Post-War Changes

[5] Quoted in EP Thompson, *Customs in Common*, New York 1993, pp.128-9.
[6] Ibid.

Following World War Two, agricultural policy unequivocally stimulated a revival in production agriculture as a strategic priority. However the national mood also exhibited a growing interest in conservation and access to the countryside. In the absence of effective management frameworks for commons, the potential tensions between and within stakeholder interests, presented a real dilemma. The absence of anything other than voluntary consensus or cooperation to bring equity to grazing arrangements became clear for upland areas in particular. The problem had been articulated in the report of the Committee on Hill Sheep Farming in England and Wales under Earl De La Warr, presented to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries in January 1944. Noting that *'in few areas' were the rights and obligations of the users of common land clearly defined…'* the report recommended that:-

'New legislation is required to clarify the rights and obligations of the users of common land and to ensure that the Executive Committees , acting in consultation with panels of local farmers shall have the necessary power to control stock and to maintain standards of management."[7]

No discernable response followed in the short term during which time legislation to affirm the growing interest in the environment came through the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act [1949] which juxtapositioned conservation with the production aims of the Agriculture Act [1947]. The 1949 legislation included the establishment of a Nature Conservancy Service. Subsequently the Royal Commission on Common Land 1955-1958 [Cmnd. 462.] recommended inter alia, the registration of ownership and rights. This was enacted, albeit not without problems, under the Commons Registration Act 1965. The second strand of the Royal Commission's recommendation regarding a new management framework was intended to follow, once the facts of ownership and rights had been determined. The protracted process of establishing registers and dealing with objections through the Commons Commissioners took many years to complete. Additional difficulties in reconciling stakeholder interests further frustrated progress, which had been pursued by the Common Land Forum [1986] under the Countryside Commission.[8], The Commons Act 2006 followed on almost fifty years after the Royal Commission, and has a focus on agricultural management.

2.5 Economic overview

Contemporary with the Royal Commission report a survey of hill farm economics undertaken by the University of Durham produced a report for the three years 1957-1959 from an identical sample of hill farms in Cumberland Westmorland Northumberland and Durham. Although a regional report the area contained 41% of the area of England's commons and probably more than half of those engaged in active pastoral commoning. The sample of 28 farms were divided into four groups:-

- Group A – 8 farms with stinted fell rights.
- Group B –9 farms with unlimited fell rights
- Group Ci. -6 farms under 1000 acres with fell grazing in sole occupation
- Group Cii- 5 farms over 1000 acres with fell grazing in sole occupation.

[7] Cmd.6498. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Agricultural Improvement Council for England and Wales, *Report of the Committee on Hill Sheep Farming inEngland and Wales.* 1944.
[8] Common Land, The report of the Common Land Forum, *Countryside Commission, CCP 215*, 1986.

Group B represents the high fell farms with only 18% of land in sole occupation and 82% communally grazed compared with 34% and 66% respectively in group A. The weather was favourable in 1956/7, less so in 1957/8. 1959 was exceptionally dry in the summer, effecting a shortage of grazing and a lower demand for store lambs in the lowlands.

Table 2.1
Financial Results for 1957-1959
Output, Input and Profitability per 100 "adjusted" acres

		Gross Output £	**Total Inputs** £	**Farm Profit [net farm income]** £	**Management and Investment Income** £
Group A	1957	379	320	140	59
	1958	394	333	140	61
	1959	363	348	91	15
Group B	1957	311	270	99	41
	1958	318	288	88	30
	1959	306	282	83	24
Group Ci	1957	920	749	390	171
	1958	886	836	269	50
	1959s	830	804	245	26
Group Cii	1957	281	183	125	98
	1958	264	195	96	69
	1959	254	211	70	43

[Source Hill Sheep Farming in the North of England 1957-9 University of Durham, Dept of Agricultural Economics 1961 Report 146 FM.]

Despite the small sample size the marginal profitability and vulnerability is clearly shown in table 2.1. Over the same period whole farm figures for regional dairy farms returned profits averaging £1400 , mixed farms £2700 and cropping and feeding farms £3450. Subsequent management surveys continued to identify the vulnerability of farms with common rights being more exposed to climatic and market conditions with few options compared to those in more favoured conditions. By the 1980's separate performance standards for farms with common rights declined and disappeared from the data as discrete figures. The 1974 Newcastle report noted the difference in management and supervision that is implied by communal grazing. Those farms with sole occupation of the high fells over two years averaged a lambing percentage of 94, compared to 89 for commons in similar circumstances. For upland farms sole occupation of the grazing was reflected in lambing percentages averaging 122 compared to 109 for those with common rights. The reality at that time was a sector in which the most disadvantaged farms were vulnerable to natural and market conditions with little capacity to respond to either. The livestock produced were frequently sold in *store or unfinished condition'*. The capacity to produce and market finished lambs lay more strongly with farms able to utilise improved land resources.

A contemporary report has been prepared by Charles Scott of the Farm Business Survey Unit Newcastle [see appendix A]. Farms with common rights had not recently been a separately identified group within the designated farm types. Out of 29 Hill Rearing Farms in the contemporary sample, 14 have common rights. The results for three years 2004/5/6 are weighted to reflect the incidence of size and type of farm within the agricultural business population. These probably equate most closely with the category B farms in the 1957-1959 survey, being the more extensive high fell farms.

2.5.1 Results from the 2004-5-6 Survey.

Table 2.2 presents a summary of output and Net Farm Income [NFI] over the three year period showing an apparent narrowing of the gap between farms with and without common rights. One factor may be the larger size of the farms with rights and it may be that over recent years such farms have expanded their common land stock enterprise due to the withdrawal of others. This is suggested by the flock size figures but with a stocking rate of only 0.65 Grazing Livestock Units per adjusted hectare[9] If this is so, the question may be posed as to whether the improved enterprise structure has been at the expense of a reduced communal human resource to undertake the care and management of the commons. Although the figures do not include upland farms with common rights, others have noted that where commons attach to larger enclosed farms the use of the common may have changed through the use of the common in part to provide *holding ground* for stock which are not representative of the traditional form. For example the use of the common in late summer and early autumn for weaned ewes from crossbreeding flocks may be significant.

Table 2.2
Profitability of Hill Rearing Farms in Northern England 2004-2006

		£ 2004	£ 2005	£ 2006
With commons	Total output	80,256	83,607	84,470
	Total variable costs	23,673	23,092	26,500
	Farm Gross Margin	56,584	60,515	57,970
	Total fixed costs	34,759	37,311	42,553
	Net Farm Income	21,824	23,204	15,417
	Management & Investment Income	**8,404**	**10,100**	**1,359**
Without commons	Total output	59,868	54,779	62,670
	Total variable costs	19,987	16,329	17,328
	Farm Gross Margin	39,882	38,450	45,342
	Total fixed costs	30,387	31,679	30,815
	Net Farm Income	9,495	6,772	14,527
	Management & Investment Income	**-1,541**	**-4,309**	**1,416**

Source Newcastle Comparison of Hill Rearing Farms 2004-2006, Jan 2008.

[9] Adjusted hectares are expressed as the equivalent area of permanent pasture. Rough grazing is converted on a pro- rata basis.

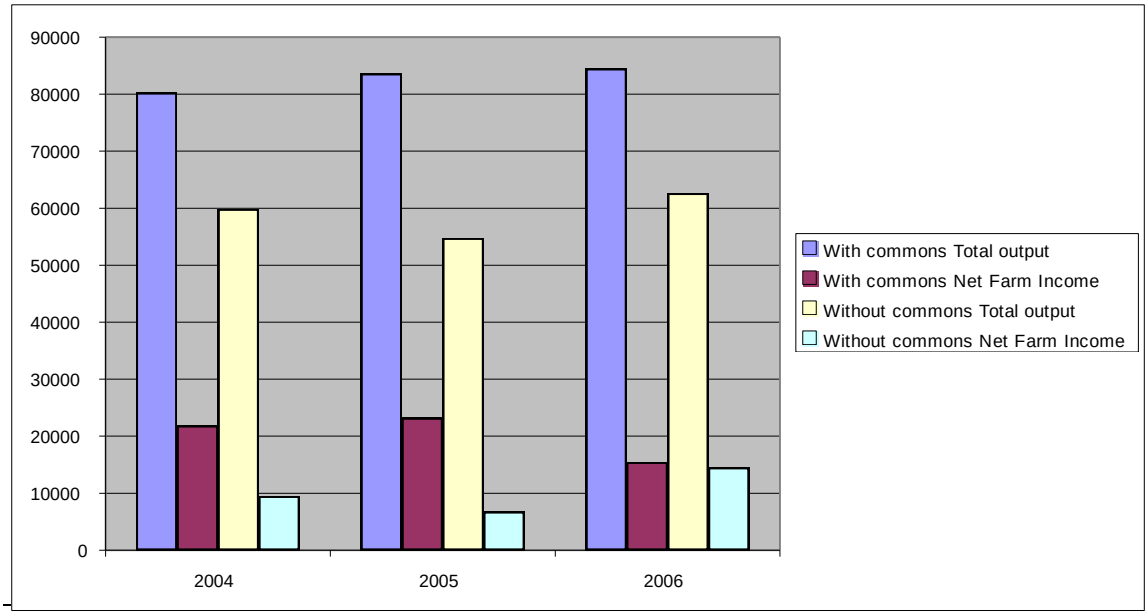
Scott also noted the greater relative significance of the HFA [Hill Farm Allowance] and environmental payments for the *common rights group* which raises concerns as agri-environmental schemes move to the new UELS [Upland Entry Level Scheme] and HLS [Higher Level Stewardship]. For HLS in particular the competitive nature of the application process raises interesting questions. In general ESA has been perceived in practice as a criteria based entry rather than competitive scheme. The increased risk in future to the sustainability of some pastoral commons may be anticipated, since competitive entry implies significant differences in support payments. Furthermore, the Single Payment [SPS] over the first two years shows an equivalence per Grazing Livestock Unit which is greater than the Net Farm Income. The SPS is base don notional area but due to the method adopted by the RPA for commons many commoners face a reduced notional area and hence reduced levels of support.[10] This clearly demonstrates the continuing fragility of the core farming business.[11]

2.5.2 Summary of results

Figure 2.1 shows how over the period under review there is an apparent consistent gain, albeit narrowing, both in terms of farm Total output and Net Farm Income (NFI) for those farms with common grazings over those without.

In general terms the farms in the sample that do have common land are larger in adjusted farm area than their counterparts without common grazing; they have larger sheep flocks and have smaller beef herds. They also have been consistently able (until 2006) to derive more income from the HFA and environmental schemes than their without-commons counterparts.

However the report points to positive changes as well. In respect of agricultural efficiency the figures present a lambing percentage of 111 for farms with common



[10] *pers comm*.. Pauline Blair secretary of Buttermere Commons Association
[11] Charles Scott, With and without Common Grazings. A comparison of Hill Rearing Farms in Northern England 2004 to 2006. *A report for The Federation of Cumbria Commoners prepared by the Farm Business Survey Unit, Newcastle University. Jan 2008.*

Figure 2.1 – Hill Rearing farms 2004 to 2006; Total output & Net Farm Income (£ pa)

rights and 88 for those without, suggesting considerable progress since the 1959 report. In respect of marketing the reliance on store sales has reduced. Farms with common rights sold on average 46% of lambs as finished, and only 13% stores. For farms without rights the figures are 26% and 40%; the latter perhaps reflecting a better grown lamb and also the possibility of cross-breds capable of attracting a stronger demand from buyers. The balance in the disposal of the lamb crop is in the sale of surplus ewe lambs and the provision of breeding replacements. The potential to widen and continue the use of FBS data as a means of cost effectively monitoring a sample of farms with and without common rights seems to have merit.

Increased productivity via technology transfer has been a feature of the steady progress of hill and upland farming systems albeit with a somewhat cautious approach to manage risk for systems which are vulnerable to market adjustments. From the fifties the role of experimental husbandry and demonstration farms has played a key role. Initially dealing with ewe nutrition in winter, lactation, ewe fertility and land management, cost effective improvements have been applied

Table 2.3

Increased Productivity Through Technology Transfer, 1960's -1980's.

Development Farm	**Type**	**Output of kg/ha of lamb 1960's**	**Output of kg/ha of lamb 1980's**
Redesdale Experimental Husbandry Farm	Hill farm in sole occupation Northumberland	16	55
Sourhope , HFRO	Hill farm sole occupation,Roxburghshire	28	66
Low Beckside , Lake District [Newton Rigg College]	Hill farm with significant Common Rights	26	37

Source –paper to Kendal Discussion Group
A Humphries c.1985

The figures in table 2.3 give a general indication of progress on farms with different levels of constraint. The Newton Rigg farm Low Beckside, highly dependant of common rights and with around 6% of 'green improved ground' indicates the more limited ability of farms with a greater proportion of common land to apply technology to the production process.[12]

The North Yorkshire Moors National Park Authority have attempted to evaluate the economics of sheep production on the open commons of the area using data from the FBS unit at Askham Bryan College York and Scottish Agricultural College. The data is based on standards and represents a broadly based modelling approach. This suggests at least a need for a more robust source of factual evidence and

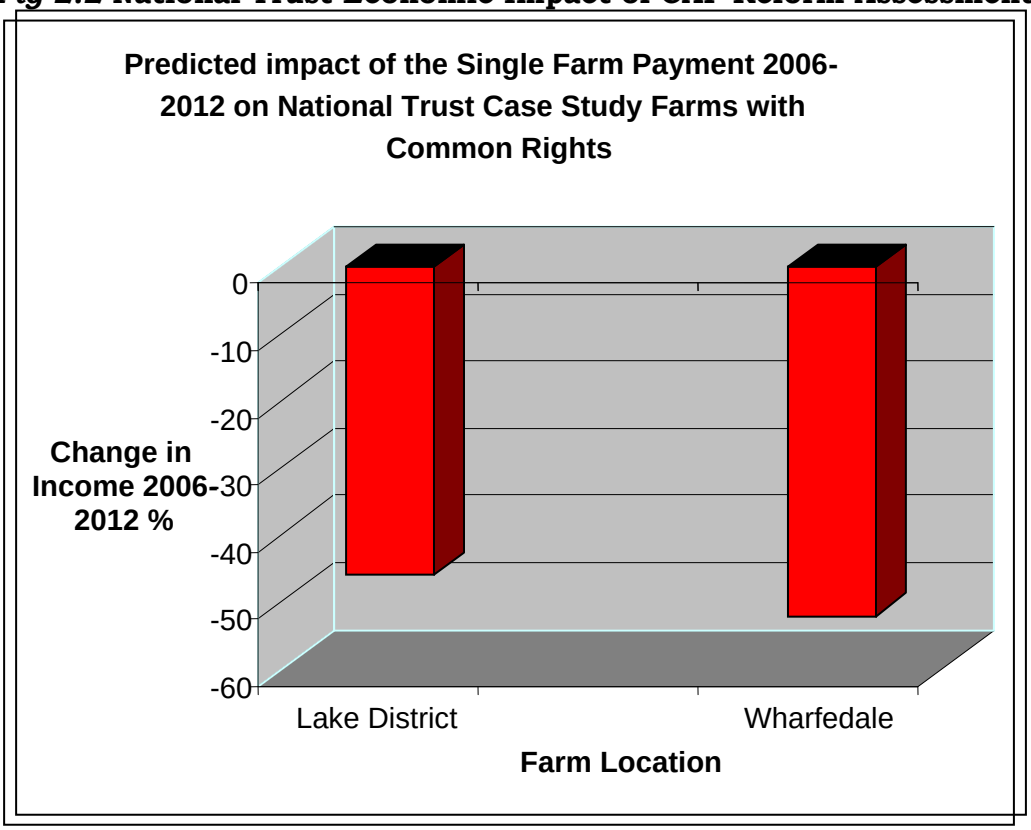
[12] A B Humphries, The Heafs of England, *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England,* Vol 162, 2001,pp.97-111.

weighted data rather than modelling the use of standard farm management data area to inform local stakeholder interests.[13]

2.5.3 National Trust Economic Assessment 2006.

The National Trust which has a major interest in common land through its upland estates has independently examined assessed the outlook for its holdings particularly in respect of the Single Farm Payment [SPS] and the projected decline in its value by 2012. The working draft published in June 2005 based on a study of 60 of its farms in Cumbria, Yorkshire Northumberland and the Peak District. Key factors arising from the study included a likelihood that the impact of a reduction in support will increase the pressure for amalgamations, and that additionally the decoupling of support will not only identify more clearly the underlying lack of profitability of hill livestock, but may accelerate a decline in grazing activity and perceived prospects for farm viability. [14]For farms with common rights the reductions in income 2006- 2012 were projected as -46% for the Lake District, -57% for Wharfedale.[see fig 2.2 National Trust 60 Farm Analysis - Impact of SPS Updated December 2006][15]

Fig 2.2 **National Trust Economic Impact of CAP Reform Assessment 2006.**



Source: Adapted from Impact of CAP Reforms on the English Uplands National Trust Policy Update March 2006

[13] Rachel Pickering,Note on the costs of running a moorflock , August 2007 , in correspondence from Michael Graham , North Yorkshire Moors National Park Authority. The note also refers to the 2005 Hill Sheep Economics Study 2005 by the Askham Bryan unit of the Farm Business Survey.
[14] The National Trust, *Impact of CAP reform on the English Uplands, A National Trust Discussion Paper*, June 2005. The figures were updated in March 2006 to reflect the actual payment rates.
[15] Ibid.

In an overview of the economics of extensive livestock grazing following the 2005 CAP reform Dwyer in an analysis of two ADAS reports, indicated a rather mixed range of impacts and responses, suggesting the need for careful monitoring to establish the direction of change in practice. Some decline in cattle grazing in upland environments may be expected but that individual circumstances and responses are likely to be more diverse and unpredictable.[16] Clearly the potential impact on the environment needs to be under review and the capacity to undertake informed decisions on farm business planning will be an important aspect. There appears to be a lack of integrated predictions and targets on physical and financial aspects of agricultural performance in current agri-environmental schemes. Vegetation change implies a change in diet for the grazing animal and perhaps both physical and financial outputs from the core farming enterprise. Such changes have not to date been central in the design or monitoring of agri-environment agreements by site. The issue of CPD [continuing professional development] or the skills listed in staff appointment specifications may hold some possibility of addressing the issue at least in part as a means of optimizing agreements to sustain the environment value of commons.

The Defra Review of agri-environment schemes [APO2/14] which had embraced the Hills Task Force Report 2001 aimed to agree the approach and principles the Countryside Agency's advice to Defra on the future shape of agri-environment schemes. The first recommendation stated that the objectives *'should continue to address biodiversity, landscape, the historic environment and amenity'.*[17] The inclusion of sustainable agricultural units and, in this instance, communal grazing would seem to be a reasonable addition, on the premise that all these are valued outputs from the countryside for the social and cultural benefits they bring.

Public goods of high value interact with and significantly depend on the farming practices of commoners. Both in the area of primary production and public goods it seems that the potential exists to move either into a spiral of decline or to sustain and regenerate pastoral commoning through adding value and collaborative delivery of public goods. Whether and how that can be achieved will include a timely consideration of the consultation responses of commoners and other stakeholders in this study.

2.6 Wider Economic Context

The economic value of commons in monetary terms is not capable of articulation, especially within the scope of this study. Clearly the importance of the agricultural value of pastoral commons is important to communities of graziers. Even here this cannot be expected to reflect similar values since the scale of commoning, the relative importance of the common and the alternative opportunities to use time in other activities suggest a more complex picture. The reality is that pastoral commoning has been noted as in decline for many decades in respect of numbers of participants. The Royal Commission on Common Land 1955-1958 noted that from the 1870's to the Second World War the depressed economic state of agriculture led to the disappearance of commoners particularly in the uplands. The impact of traffic on commons with unfenced roads was cited as a notable influence whilst

[16] Dr Janet Dwyer, *The Economics Of Extensive Livestock Grazing After CAP Reform 2005, Countryside and Community Research Unit, University of Gloucestershire*, September 2005.
[17] www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/ archive /board_meetings/board/papers/CA_AP02. 17.03.08.

many authorities in lowland England reported to the commission remarks such as 'no known commoners' Graziers on urban fringe commons the Commission asserted had real problems in exercising their rights due to difficulties with litter, dogs and other disturbance.[18]

As a source of direct economic benefit the financial value of commons has become increasingly marginalised and subordinate to the values ascribed by an increasing range of non right -holder stakeholders who may be local but increasingly more distantly domiciled. This suggests that to evaluate the importance of commons in a pecuniary sense may be inappropriate with the exception of the pastoral participants.

2.7 Social Values

Commons have a special link with social values; by definition the concept of communal.

The underlying issue of primary production supporting fewer farming families is not only part of a long term pattern , but now is perceived as reaching a critical stage. Brown has evidenced a decline in grazing levels and participation in pastoral communing in the crofting communities where Grazing Clerks reported only 50% of shareholders as active graziers and 76% of shares actually used.[19]

The decoupling of support payments has put the underlying agricultural viability into sharper focus. Policy also focuses more on initiatives to add value and shorten supply chains. Paradoxically public goods of high value interact with and depend on the farming practices of commoners and their low value economy. The inter-relationship between these two facets of economic values seems to encapsulate a complex challenge.

Brown's analysis of Common Land in Western Europe focuses on the social opportunities with specific reference to England [inter alia.]. On the one hand for isolated farmers the carrying out of communal shepherding tasks such as gathering, or attending, shepherds' meets and commoners group meetings in itself provides valuable social interactions and the building of social capital. Such interactions contribute beyond the confines of the common.

"You must co-operate on these fell farms, especially with these common lands….when it's widespread and you're depending on farms in other valleys getting your stray sheep… and that therefore builds up quite a common thing in the social world as well, because they are your neighbours and you know their feelings …you get on better with them when you meet up in groups or meetings and such like"

Strengthening social cohesion allows networks to function for the sharing and exchanging of knowledge and other resources. Seasonal labour needs, help at times of illness and difficulty and even word of mouth recommendations of diversified

[18] Cmnd. 462, paras. 108,137,138.174.
[19] Katrina M Brown. *The Role of Common Grazings in Rural Development, The Crofter , 2002,Number 57*, p.4.

businesses are all identified.[20] There is evidence of the potential for considerable progress in the building of social capital for the mutual benefit of pastoral commoners and the wider rural and non rural population. The multi -functional role of pastoral commons invites initiative to test such possibilities.

2.8 Capacity Building

Over time a number of organisations have formed to advocate on behalf of pastoral commoners and to build bridges with other stakeholders. The New Forest Defence Association was one of the earliest. Formed in 1909 at a time when the growing urban population of Southern England were increasingly the cause of concern to commoners, it has a long history of advocacy. More recently the New Forest National Park set up a Commoning Review as one of its first priorities. Described as 'a commoner led review' the process demonstrates the potential for mutual respect and support. Key sections deal in a detailed and informative way with economics, environment and critically the issue of encouraging a greater involvement by young commoners in shaping the future of commoning. The outcome has been to recommend the establishment and support of a young commoners groupand has already resulted in the first phase of an affordable housing programme.

Following the 1985 Dartmoor Commons Act the Dartmoor Commoners Council was established and more recently in response to changing market and environmental circumstances other groups have formed. The Federation of Cumbria Commoners [2003], The Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Moorland Graziers [2004] and the Welsh Commoners Forum [2007] alongside the Dartmoor Commoners Council, all provide clear encouragement to commoners and others to work in the common interest. These groups have tangibly demonstrated the capacity to work positively to sustain pastoral commoning. The combined outcomes of these initiatives can properly be described as building social capital; a key issue in adjustment to change.

2.9 Education, Academic Research, and the Cultural Landscape.

On the wider front Commons are gaining the interest of educational interests including academic researchers. Currently a three year project *'Contested Common Land ': environmental governance, law and sustainable land management c.1600-2006* is being funded by the Landscape and Environment Programme of the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The programme is a joint study by the Universities of Newcastle and Lancaster. The project focuses on local management of commons since the 16th century, tracing governance mechanisms in the light of the changing legal context and changing perceptions of the value placed on common land.[21].

To celebrate the UK Year of the Visual Arts in 1996 the internationally known sculptor Andy Goldsworthy proposed his *Sheepfolds* project for Cumbria, inspired by the cultural landscape of the pastoral commons and the interactions between the farming community and their environment[22].

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[20] Katrina M Brown,'Common Land in Western Europe; anachronism or opportunity for sustainable rural development', *IASP European Conference, Brescia, Italy, 2006*. The paper focuses on common land in Scotland and The Lake District.

[21] Website [currently under construction] at http://commons.ncl.ac.uk/

[22] Michael Hue-Williams, *Andy Goldsworthy Sheepfolds*,London.nd. circa 2000.

Currently a proposal to seek World Heritage Status for the Lake District as an exceptional landscape and place further links to communal grazings. The steering group make particular mention of the *'statesmen's landscape'* and the assessment of outstanding significance refers specifically to *'Commons: valued for their visual openness'* and to the history of communal land management as unenclosed grazing .[23]

2.10 Environmental Values of Pastoral Commons and Cultural Landscape

The summary in tables 3.2 and 3.3 illustrate the relative environmental value of England's common land and endorse the description by Jim Knight that they are of exceptional environmental value. The list illustrates quantitatively the significance of common land in respect of landscape flora and fauna although some qualitative improvements remain key objectives for Natural England. Additional values include access which following the CROW Act [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000] embraces all common land much of which had long been used by custom.

Prominent among those who recognised the 'public goods' linked to commons were the literary figures of the Lake District. Wordsworth successfully led the opposition to enclose Grasmere common by the agent of Lady le Fleming, leaving the common in its state of semi natural beauty and the commoners with their rights of commonage and goosage.[24] The Laureate held local hill farmers in genuine regard and expressed their capacity to appreciate the cultural landscape in his poetry

'and grossly that man errs who should suppose,
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the shepherd's thoughts'..
[William Wordsworth, The Sheep Fold]

Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley the prime mover in the establishment of the National Trust and profoundly influenced by Ruskin, wrote with deep commitment and understanding of commoning in his description of being *'on Hellvellyn with the shepherds'* showing genuine understanding of the special cultural nature of communal grazing and its effect on commoners he quoted from a poem by the shepherd *'Jossy'* remembering a colleague who had died at his post:-

"Well met are the shepherds from Wythburn and Naddle,
From Matterdale, Patterdale ,far,far away;
Well met are the sheep who, in spite of the raddle,
And ear-bit and flank-smit, have wandered away'…[25]

The words describe the complex identification system thought to derive from Viking times. The continuance of large areas of contiguous commons has ensured the survival of such customary practices and the associated gatherings or shepherd's meets albeit under somewhat different arrangements.

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[23] Chris Blandford Associates,*Lake District Candidate World Heritage Site*, Steering Group-Technical Advisory Group Report2006.The Statesmen's Landscape [p.6.]
Proposed Lake District World Heritage Site*, Study of Cultural Landscape Significance*, Chapter 4, p.22.

[24] K MacLean, *Agrarian Age, A Background for Wordsworth*, London 1950, p.21.

[25] Quoted by HD Rawnsley from his day at the shepherds' meet , in Rev.HD Rawnsley , *Life and Nature at the English Lakes,* Glasgow1902,p.241.

Almost seventy years on Crayston Webster a Westmorland land agent wrote on the issue of enclosure and the commons in his prize essay in the journal of The Royal Agricultural Society 1868. He summarized the continuing resistance to enclosing commons and the nature of the objections:-

'perhaps we should more seldom enjoy a leg of four year old wether mutton, while the school of lake poets would doubtless pronounce it as a ruthless profanation, if their grand mountains were to be defaced by rigid lines of six-foot walls, set out by the surveyors parallel ruler.':-

The observations show a continuing sensitivity and emerging interest in public goods. The reference to landscape is clear, but additionally the potential loss of four year old wether mutton has a resonance with the modern concept of slow food, a potential market for the twenty first century.[26]

English Heritage do not have separate data-sets for commons in respect of archaeological sites, although the inclusion of data for Scheduled Ancient Monuments [SAM] suggest that commons may be disproportionately important. The Council for British Archeology stated in 2000:-

'In particular the combination of ancient common rights and 19th century legislation have fortuitously conspired to keep much common land open and unimproved which in turn has served to preserve archeological sites monuments and landscapes in a far better state than in surrounding areas of more intensively farmed and developed land.'[27]

Muir ascribes some of the finest prehistoric settlement and field remains to their association with common land .Examples include the Iron Age field settlements in Wharfedale, most of the Bronze Age settlements and Reaves on Dartmoor and a variety of Romano-British and Roman remains in the Pennines.[28]

These examples show the strong relationship over time between environmental values and pastoral commoning. Changing approaches to management need to sensitively respect the multiple values of common grazings as a continuum of fundamental value.

Fig 2.3 illustrates the decline in the grazing of lowland commons and contrasts with the continuing salience of upland commons to farming businesses, albeit in a state of increasing fragility.

Several of the Commoners Groups are engaged in work to foster understanding of pastoral commons including the New Forest and Dartmoor in collaboration with National Park Authorities and in other broadly educational activity. The Federation of Cumbria Commoners produced a DVD for decision makers to provide a focussed explanation to those less directly engaged with commoning but with responsibilities relating to it.

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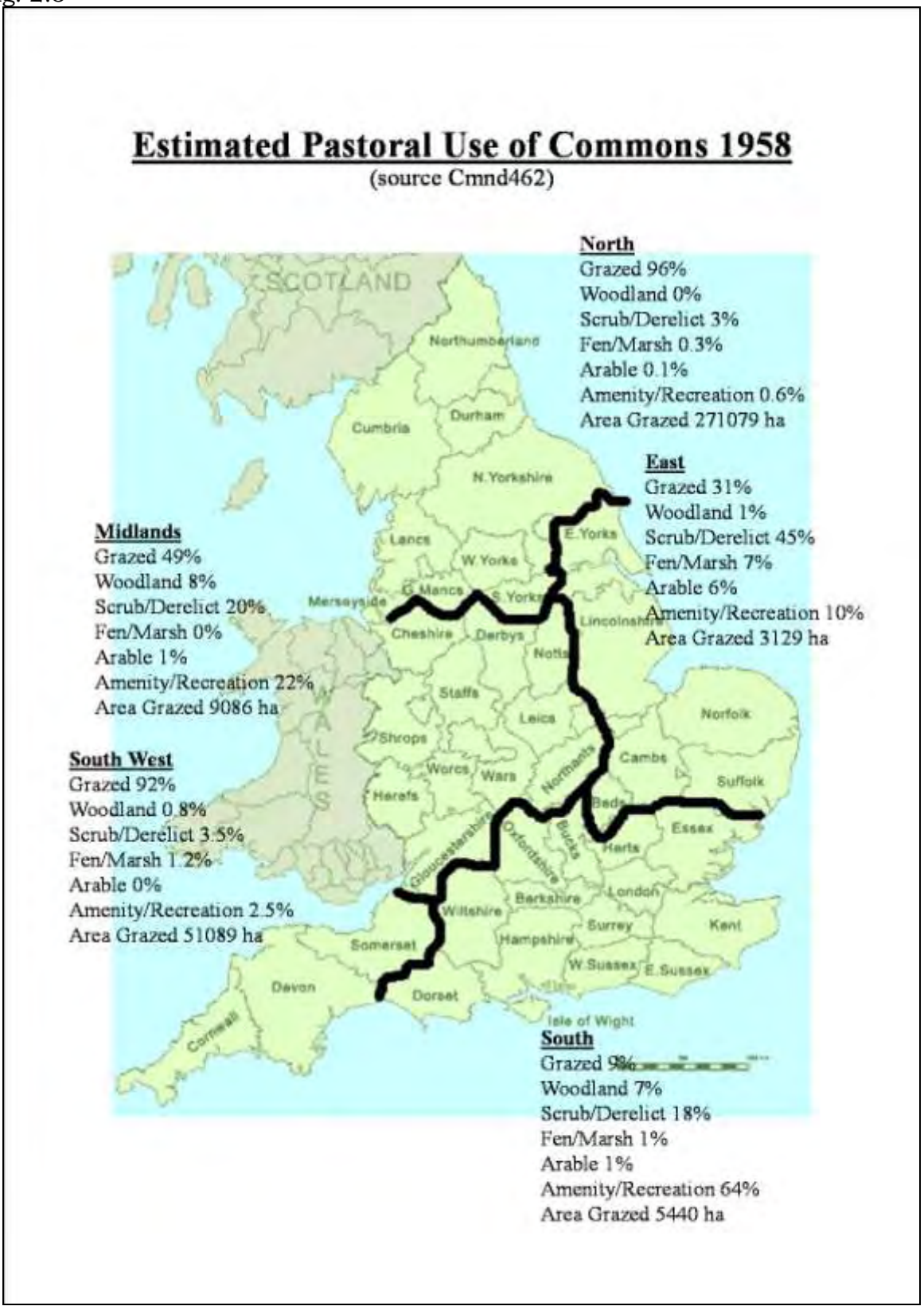
[26] Crayston Webster,'The Farming of Westmorland', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, 2nd. Series. Vol 4*, p.16.
[27] Comments to DETR , April 2000 *, Consultation on Greater Protection and Management of Common Land in England and Wales*. www.britarch.ac.uk/conserve/Commons.html date 10.02.08.
[28] Richard Muir, *The New Reading the Landscape*, Exeter 2000, pp.62-63.

Recognising the limitations from data at the time of the Royal Commission on Common Land 1955-1958 the report does nevertheless provide information that gives an estimated use of pastoral commons at that time.

Fig. 2.3



For England and Wales in total the estimates of usage were summarized as:-

33% stinted grazing and 46% unstinted , with 1.9% woodland, 0.3% arable, 0.6% bog fen and marsh, 7.8% scrub and derelict and 10.4% amenity and recreation.[29]

2.11 Diversity on England's Pastoral Commons

Any study of pastoral commoning will confront the issue of diversity which paradoxically makes description, analysis and progress challenging. Fig 2.4 illustrates some of the key variables from which even more complex combinations may arise. However the use of representative case studies can be valid and useful with sensitive interpretation. Using a range of types with a regional distribution to reflect major groupings and with an awareness of the issue of bias can identify some of the issues of diversity and change; informing the next stage of research and as a more immediate issue, policy development. Clearly the complexities of pastoral commons need first to be identified and generally characterized as a precursor to more intensive and detailed study.

2.12 The Commons Act 2006 and Pastoral Management Governance Characteristics of Pastoral Commons in England.

'Good neighbourhood' has characterised the shared aims of governance in relation to pastoral commons so long as formal arrangements have been described.[30] Reciprocity and respect have been the glue that has bound commoners together. Yet over the last two centuries the system of governance has been in decline. Many writers on the subject have noted the critical importance of 'salience' in sustaining active management.[31] Yet the institutional arrangements are clearly vestigial at a time when the perceived importance and potential role of pastoral commons, at least in relation to public goods is of a high order.

The manorial courts provided a relevant form of delegated legal jurisdiction that enabled communities to manage the use of commons though shared responsibility through mutually agreed rules. Those courts are long gone with the few survivors retaining only limited customary controls.

A number of commons regulated under the Commons Act 1876 have bodies of Conservators made up of varying representation of commoners, owners and others. Other commons have management arrangements under specific legislation. For example Town Moor Newcastle upon Tyne is subject to the Newcastle upon Tyne Town Moor Act 1988, whilst the Dartmoor Commons are subject to the Dartmoor Commons Act of 1985. In the case of the New Forest the Court of Verderers is a widely acknowledged example of a management system that is still of critical importance and influence.[32]

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[29] L Dudley Stamp, *The Land of Britain, Its Use and Misuse,* Third Edition , London 1962, p.484.
[30] A Winchester , *The Harvest of the Hills,* Edinburgh 2000, pp. 39-40, 45-47.
[31] Katrina M Brown, *Common Land in Western Europe:anachronism or opportunity for sustainable rural development, IASCP European Conference, Brescia, Italy 2006*.
[32] See Land Use Consultants. *Agricultural Management of Common Land in England and Wales*, prepared for DEFRA, Feb 2005.

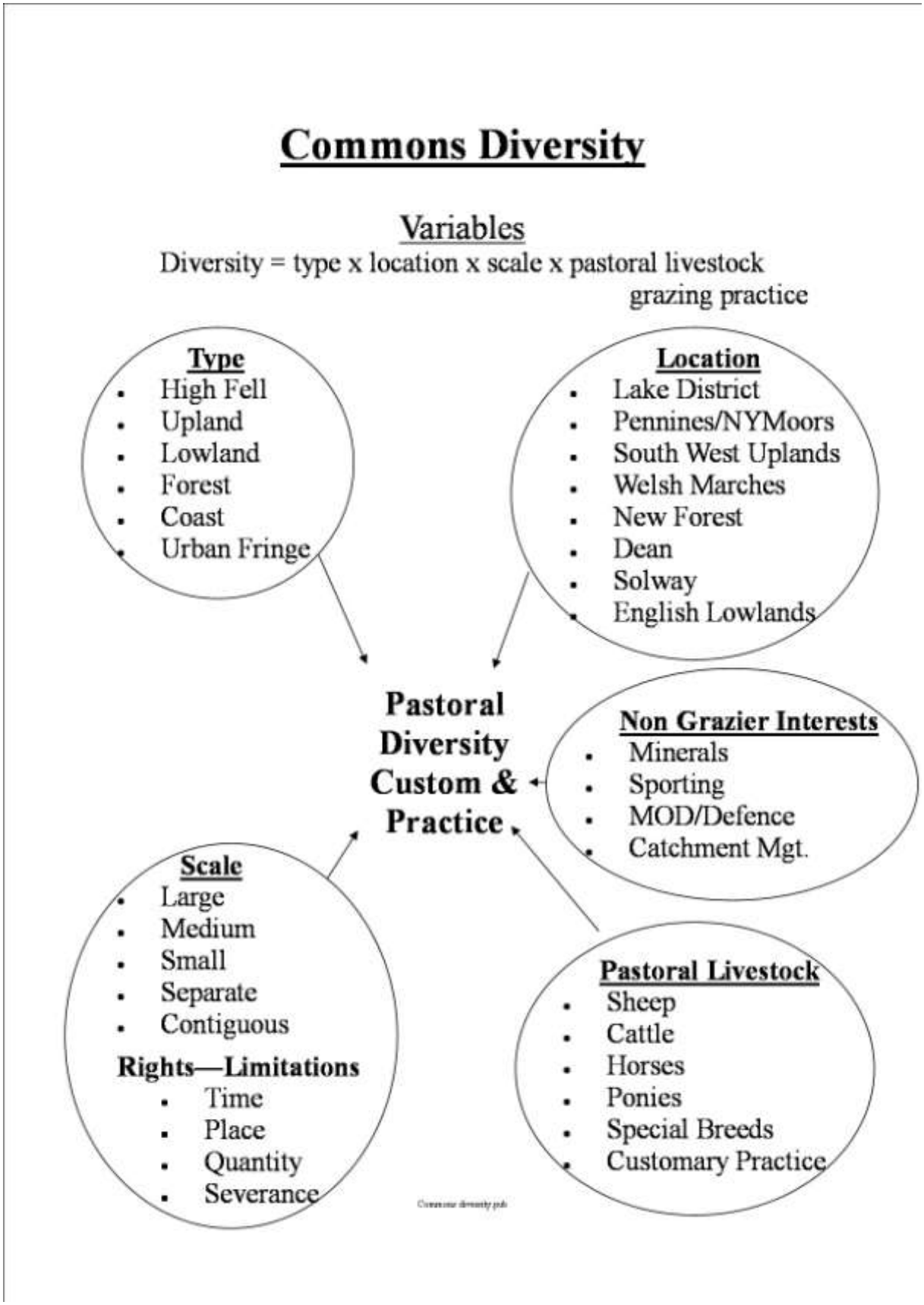

Commons Diversity
Variables
Diversity = type x location x scale x pastoral livestock grazing practice
Type
High Fell
Upland
Lowland
Forest
Coast
Urban Fringe
Location
Lake District
Pennines/NYMoors
South West Uplands
Welsh Marches
New Forest
Dean
Solway
English Lowlands
Pastoral Diversity Custom & Practice
Non Grazier Interests
Minerals
Sporting
MOD/Defence
Catchment Mgt.
Scale
Large
Medium
Small
Separate
Contiguous
Rights—Limitations
Time
Place
Quantity
Severance
Pastoral Livestock
Sheep
Cattle
Horses
Ponies
Special Breeds
Customary Practice

Fig 2.4

For the majority of pastoral commons however the governance has become reliant on voluntary collaboration or consensus through voluntary associations possessing almost no capacity to take binding decisions. Such associations have increased in

number to act in relation to agri-environment agreements. In some locations, groups of commoners over a wider area, formed umbrella organisations to improve their capacity to sustain active pastoral use. The Cornish Commons provide an example; through the Cornwall Commoners Association,[33] formed as mutual aid organisation in 1936, in response to the difficulties facing graziers at that time.

In 1967 a study in land use conservation and management of commons in England and Wales financed by the Nuffield Foundation was published to provide practical management proposals based on field studies, though neither that study nor the Common Land Forum of 1986 effected a real change in the pace of progress, but marked an underlying identification of the importance of management structures.[34]

More recently in response to contemporary need several new umbrella groups representing large constituencies of pastoral commons have emerged. In 2003 the Cumbria Federation was formally established and subsequently afforded affiliation status to Lancashire commoners. The Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Moorland Graziers, and the Welsh Commons Forum followed closely. This timely development was not only to provide a voice for commoners but to promote more effective communication between and mutual understanding of stakeholders. Subsequently discussions have progressed and moves initiated to establish a national network or Foundation for Common Land which through an Observatory will provide a single point of contact for all stakeholders. Objectives are intended to embrace education and trans-national links.[35] These trends suggest that in spite of the reduced salience of commoning there remains an underlying commitment and attachment to a special and perhaps unique element of pastoral husbandry.

Much has been written about the so called *'tragedy of the commons'* and the consequences of individual rather than a communal focus on use. There is a clear need to distinguish between *'open access resources'* [*res nullius- no ones property*][36] and *'common property resources'* in which the concept of property and rights is fundamental. A common property right is a claim to a benefit stream and properly describes pastoral commoners in England. However rights and responsibilities are inextricably linked and the lack of robust governance of commons is of wide concern to graziers and to the stakeholders in public goods that are consequential on pastoral practice.

This recent movement to establish better communications and mutual understanding suggests that in spite of the perceived decline in pastoral commoning there remains a strong aspiration to regenerate and sustain the associated husbandry practices within a modern framework of management. In order to be effective, those engaged in common property regimes need to be no less

[33] Denman Roberts and Smith, *Commons and Village Greens*, London 1967, p.373.
[34] See DR Denman, RA Roberts, and HJF Smith, *Commons and Village Greens,* London 1967.
[35] See Appendix F for diagrammatic outline. For further information email info@cumbriacommoners.org.uk
[36] David W Bromley,' Commons, Property, and Common-Property Regimes', in Daniel W Bromley[General Editor] and [Co-Editors] David Feeney, Margaret A McKean, Pauline Peters, Jere L Gilles, Ronald J Oakerson, C Ford Runge, James,T Thomson, *Making the Commons Work,* San Francisco, 1992.p.4.

able to exercise rights and responsibilities than those grazing comparable land in sole occupation.

The 2006 Commons Act focussed clearly on improved agricultural management as a key aim of the legislation.

'There has been a lack of effective mechanisms for managing agricultural activity , in particular grazing, on common land…Part 2 of the Act will enable the appropriate national authority to establish commons councils without the requirement for primary legislation…. Commons Councils will also be able to secure compliance with such agreements [ie.agri -environment] through their rule-making function.'[37]

The findings of this research will need to be carefully considered in relation to the 2006 Act particularly respecting the issues of management of a multi-functional resource and the inter-relationships between stakeholder interests. Delivery in practice needs to adequately recognise the unique role and responsibility of those holding common grazing rights.

[37] Explanatory Notes, *Commons Act 2006,* Chapter 26pp.7-8.

3. OVERVIEW OF PASTORAL COMMONS TYPES AND PRACTICES

3.1 Introduction

The localised nature of the origins of commons dictates that the categories set out in this section of the report should be viewed not as divisions but rather as the colours of a spectrum that merge, often seamlessly, into one another. Each common has its own particular character, traditions and identity, even though it forms part of this broader picture.

This duality is evident in the physical attributes of commons. On the ground, and especially in the upland areas, they often run undetectably into an adjacent common, or into contiguous unenclosed land that lacks the status of common. To many, this boundary is both unseen and irrelevant; recreational users, for example, can know and enjoy the attraction of their environment, regardless of its particular legal status. Particularly in modern times, for many purposes the boundaries that divide commons from each other and from other land are inappropriate ones. Statutory bodies, such as County Councils and National Park Authorities are much more likely to have policies relating to, say, moorlands or public amenity areas than to common land as such. The attributes of an area that make it worthy of a conservation designation, again particularly in the uplands, will often not be linked to the boundaries of a specific common; thus it is more appropriate for SSSIs to straddle both commons and other land, and their individual units to be based primarily on, say, habitat types rather than limits that were established many years ago and which serve a different purpose.

Yet for individual commoners, and their neighbours, these boundaries remain of the utmost significance. The history of common land is filled with examples of prolonged and expensive litigation brought in order to establish the precise boundary of a common, often involving quite small tracts of land. Traditional hefts and livestock gathering practices are based firmly upon these limits, even though the inevitable overlap at unfenced boundaries will usually make co-operation with adjoining commoners or other farmers highly desirable. Traditional husbandry cannot be divorced from the characteristics and demands of commons and their established boundaries.

One of the consequences of the inappropriateness of commons boundaries for many modern-day purposes is that data relating specifically to common land is often either not available, or is only indirectly or partially so. The principal sources for the outline descriptions that follow are the MAGIC maps and the Natural England "Nature on the Map" data,[38] the Natural England Character Area landscape descriptions (JCAs) and Natural Area profiles (NAs) and the Biological Survey reports[39].

For the purposes of the present report, all these sources have some limitations. Although the MAGIC maps provide an immense amount of detailed data, they do not enable more than estimates to be made of common land areas in relation, say,

[38] *www.magic.gov.uk* ; *www.natureonthemap.org.uk*

[39] *The Common Lands of England - A Biological survey 1988-2000.* The work was carried out by the Rural Surveys Research Unit at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth on behalf of the NCC and its successors.

to SSSIs; they reveal the existence and scope of agri-environmental agreements, but since the content of these is normally confidential, no assessment of any changes to grazing patterns and levels can be derived from them. The "Nature on the Map" information includes details of individual SSSI units, but does not distinguish between common and other land, except very occasionally as part of the comment on a particular unit; the site contains no information on undesignated common land.

The Character Area and Natural Area material can give a good general overview, but covers a wider area and does not distinguish common land as such. The descriptions were produced over a decade ago and may not always reflect the situation in 2008. In contrast, the Biological Survey deals exclusively with common land. However, because it is based upon registration counties, its very detailed data and summaries are not aligned to the broad common types related to grazing that this report uses, which do not follow county boundaries. This survey, too, was produced almost a decade ago and is often based on much earlier material.

In addition to the main sources referred to above, each of the outline descriptions that follow draws on other relevant material, particularly in relation to grazing and grazing levels. The contrast between upland commons, regarded as subject to overgrazing pressures since at least the 1970s, and lowland commons, which are increasingly the subject of undergrazing concerns, is evident throughout. The overgrazing issue has been explored in a number of literature reviews[40].

Data relating to overgrazing has tended to be concentrated on areas designated as SSSIs. Table 3.1 shows an analysis of the PSA target condition assessments for the whole of the English SSSI area, together with the figures for common land both as a whole and as the part that is under a CSS or ESA agreement[41].

It should be noted that the agreement figures do not include WES or ES agreements; the addition of these would raise the proportion of SSSI common land which is in some form of agri-environmental agreement from the 49% shown (102,996ha out of 210,806ha) to well over half.

The importance of common land in the context of statutory designations generally is well illustrated in Table 3.2; a breakdown of the figures into land above and below the 300m contour follows in Table 3.3. These figures are based on a total area of common land of 369,394ha (about 3% of the total land in England)[42].

[40] *See e.g. Review of the historical effects of burning and and grazing blanket bog and upland wet heath, English Nature Research Reports No. 172,* and, more recently, the *Report on the Impact of Hill Farming, Vol 2 paras 2.1.6 and 2.1.16,* prepared for Defra in 2004 by the IEEP, Land Use Consultants and GHK Consulting.

[41] Source: Natural England, 2007 figures. The current overall condition assessment proportions are "favourable" 45%, "unfavourable recovering" 35%, "unfavourable no change" 14% and "unfavourable declining" 6%.

[42] Areas exempt from registration, such as the New Forest, bring the total to 399,040ha

Table 3.1

	National SSSI condition		*SSSI registered as Common Land*		*SSSI registered as Common Land under CSS and ESA*	
SSSI condition	*Area (ha)*	*%*	*Area (ha)*	*%*	*Area (ha)*	*%*
Favourable	*482,031*	*45*	*39,641*	*19*	*16,310*	*16*
Unfavourable recovering	*329,578*	*31*	*102,511*	*48*	*57,418*	*56*
Unfavourable no change	*171,056*	*16*	*56,520*	*27*	*24,441*	*24*
Unfavourable declining	*90,926*	*8*	*11,992*	*6*	*4,695*	*4*
Part destroyed	*710*	*0*	*142*	*0*	*132*	*0*
Total area	***1,074,301***		***210,806***		***102,996***	

Table 3.2

Designation	Area (ha)	Area of common land (ha)	As % of total common land	As % of designation
National Park	1,051,275	176,660	48%	17%
AONB	2,063,611	112,204	30%	5%
SSSI	1,076,980	211,003	57%	20%
SAC	967,923	179,528	49%	19%
SPA	727,890	122,107	33%	17%
Ramsar	374,932	8,265	2%	2%
SAM	49,742	5,504	1%	1%
Land with any of the above	4,082,621	323,739	88%	8%

Common land can, of course, be subject to rights of common other than grazing rights, but none of these are of major significance in modern times. Of much greater importance are a variety of uses based on other rights. The sporting rights will normally belong to the owner of the common; their use may often have a significant effect on the management of the land and this aspect is referred to briefly in the

sections that follow. Of more universal application is the use of common land for a variety of recreational activities, whether through custom or by virtue of the legal right of access created by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 or earlier legislation. This use, also, is referred to only briefly in these descriptive outlines, but may, particularly for lowland commons, have a major influence on the potential for the exercise of grazing rights.

Table 3.3

		Above 300m			Below 300m		
Designation	Area (ha)	Area of common land (ha)	As % of total common land	As % of designation	Area of common land (ha)	As % of total common land	As % of designation
National Park	1,051,275	128,106	35%	12%	48,554	13%	5%
AONB	2,063,611	71,398	19%	3%	40,806	11%	2%
SSSI	1,076,980	140,635	38%	13%	70,368	19%	7%
SAC	967,923	129,390	35%	13%	50,138	14%	5%
SPA	727,890	84,761	23%	12%	37,346	10%	5%
Ramsar	374,932	0	0%	0%	8,265	2%	2%
SAM	49,742	2,436	1%	5%	3,068	1%	6%
Land with any of the above	4,082,621	213,860	58%	5%	109,878	30%	3%

Common Types

This report has divided the Common Land into the following types (table 3.4) and here follows a description of each type as a result of a desk study. Each broad type except Lowland, Coastal and Exempt is described under the headings: Location, Landscape and Land Cover; Designations and Agri-Environment Agreements; Grazing, Grazing Levels and Change. The exceptions use some example commons to give a picture of the main characteristics.

The vast majority of grazed common land is in hill and upland areas hence the category hill and upland has been subdivided by region and within each region. A map showing the geographical area each type covers is attached at figure (3.1).

Table 3.4

Type	Region	Name
Hill and Upland	North	Lake District
		Pennines North
		Pennines Limestone
		Pennines Urban
		North York Moors
	South West	Exmoor
		Dartmoor
		Bodmin
Lowland	National	
Coastal	National	
Exempt Commons[43]		New Forest

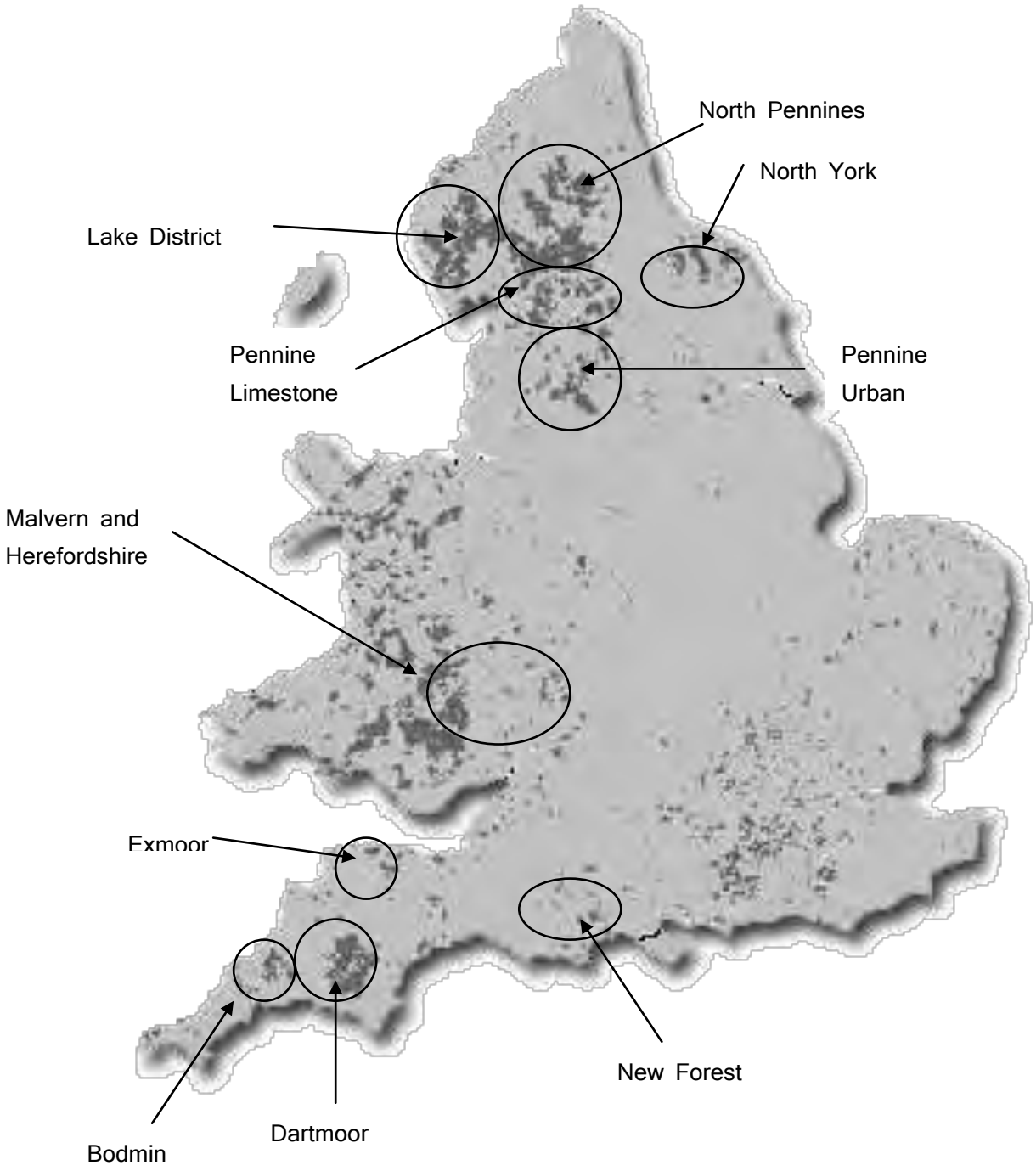
Stakeholder Data

Stakeholders were interviewed using the questionnaire (see appendix C) to obtain up to date information and to ground truth the findings of the desk study. In the process of undertaking the report we found the information collected from these interviews contributed substantially to the body of knowledge on Pastoral Commoning, both the current state and future trends and we have therefore included the results in Chapters 4 and 5 including comparing the results of Commoners with Stakeholders. The reason is that the interviews produced "living" data of great interest which we felt would be lost if merged into the more academic desk study. Additionally such data while valid as the view of the person(s) being interviewed, is subjective and dependant on their personal and professional experiences. Details of the stakeholders included are given in section 4 at table 4.5.

[43] *Exempt commons are those that are not subject to the Commons Registration Act 1965. The New Forest is the largest example of this type.*

Distribution of Commons Types

Fig 3.1 (Lowland and Coastal Commons are distributed across the country so are not marked)



3.2 HILL AND UPLAND (above LFA Line)

3.2.1 NORTH

3.2.1.1 LAKE DISTRICT

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

The Lake District is bordered on the northwest by a low lying coastal strip of land leading on to the Solway Firth, and on the east by the Eden Valley. To the southeast it merges into the Orton and Howgill fells, which in turn lead to the Yorkshire Dales. A gentler landscape, to the south, runs down to Morecambe Bay.

"The wild, exposed and open high fells are characterised by rough grassland, dwarf shrub heaths, peatlands, bracken and areas of rock outcrop and screes. In the north and west, the Skiddaw Slates have been eroded to form smooth, steep-sided rounded humps such as Blencathra, Skiddaw, Black Combe, Bowscale, Carrock Uldale and Caldbeck Fells. In the south, the harder Borrowdale Volcanics result in the rugged scenery of exposed crags, ridges and vertical rock exposures characteristic of the Helvellyn, Sca Fell, Buttermere and Langdale ranges. The presence of rock basins, arêtes, gills, tarns, waterfalls and fast-flowing streams form distinctive elements in the landscape. Deep, U-shaped glaciated valleys radiate from the central core of the area to form typically steep-sided, open, rugged fellsides with rocky outcrops and boulder-strewn fields. The exposed hillsides, which consist of unimproved rough grazing land and are drained by narrow ghylls and streams, form semi-wild and rugged landscapes." (JCA8)

Nearly a third (63,993ha out of 199,000ha) of JCA8 is common land (see Fig 3.1). Three major groupings surround Keswick; to the north is Caldbeck and its associated commons, to the west the Buttermere and Derwent fells, and to the south the Helvellyn/Langdale ranges. Between Penrith and Windermere lie the eastern group, while in the west there is an almost unbroken chain of commons running from Ennerdale down to Black Combe in the far south.

"The high fells today consist predominantly of grasslands with a range of dwarf shrubs, heaths, peatlands and bracken, with broadleaved woodland on the deeper soils. Rocky outcrops and screes are also common. "(JCA8)

DESIGNATIONS AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENT AGREEMENTS

The Lake District National Park covers 2,292km², an area that is broadly similar to JCA8 but with the addition of the more low-lying ground to the south and southwest of Windermere. Some 18% (42,000ha) of the National Park has SSSI status (see Fig 3.2). Major SSSIs with a high percentage of common land include the Skiddaw Group SSSI (10,384ha), the Buttermere Fells SSSI (6,144ha) and the Helvellyn & Fairfield SSSI (2,488ha). These all form part of the Lake District High Fells SAC (27,004ha). In the south, and just outside the JCA8 boundary, is the Subberthwaite, Blawith and Torver Low Commons SSSI (1,862ha), which also has SAC status.

The Lake District ESA is a "whole farm" Stage III scheme introduced in 1993, with a total eligible area of 205,000ha. Uptake for common land started relatively slowly, so that by 1997 less than a quarter (16,392ha) of the eligible tot was under

agreement. A study commissioned by MAFF found that the principal reason for common land not being entered was the difficulty in securing the agreement of all the rights holders, a secondary reason being that the stocking rate requirements were regarded as too strict.[44] Uptake subsequently increased, so that by the closure of the scheme (for new entrants or renewals in 2005 over 70% was under agreement (see Fig 3.3 illustrating uptake in the central area).

Of greater significance for commons and other upland areas is the impact of WES and SWES agreements entered into in the period following the Foot and Mouth disease devastations of 2001; this is referred to later. More recently, there are now 3 areas of common land that have entered into Higher Level Environmental Stewardship agreements, these being Brackenthwaite (Buttermere), Patterdale and Mungrisdale/Saddleback.

Grazing, Grazing Levels and Change

Grazing on the Lake District commons is overwhelmingly dominated by sheep. The relatively small numbers of cattle have been further reduced in recent years, while ponies remain limited to a handful of commons. Studies by English Nature and others during the last 2 decades of the 20th century concluded that there was a serious overgrazing problem on many fells, and on commons in particular.

"The land cover of the Cumbria High Fells reflects the landform and climate of the area and the influence of management since prehistoric times when broadleaved woodlands covered all but the highest crags. They have lost most of their natural woodland cover, suffer from impoverished soils, are subject to soil erosion and are undergoing major ecological change as a result of subsidy-induced overgrazing[45].

In response to these assessments, the uplands were targeted to achieve substantial stocking reductions. In a report entitled "Sustainable Grazing Initiative in Cumbria – 2002-2005", English Nature summarises the results achieved and the methodology used to achieve them. In many cases a combination of ESA and WES or SWES agreements were used for the same piece of ground. Although aimed primarily at SSSIs in order to secure at least a "recovering" condition assessment for PSA target purposes, the report recognises that a "whole fell" approach (i.e. to include non-SSSI land as well) was often necessary to reduce encroachment from adjoining commons, without the need for fencing on the open fell (see e.g. the commons and other unenclosed fell surrounding the Helvellyn/Fairfield SSSI (Fig 3.4)).

The often dramatic de-stocking required under these agreements (often around 70%) has raised questions as to the possible abandonment of grazing on the commons at some future time. A case study of the impact of hill farming in an area in the southwest of the Lake District[46] sets out some of the concerns thus:

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[44] *CEAS Consultants (Wye) Ltd, Economic evaluation of Stage II and III ESAs 1997*

[45] JCA 8

[46] *"An assessment of the impacts of hill farming in England on the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the uplands and more widely", Volume III. Institute for European Environmental Policy, Land Use Consultants and GHK Consulting.*
February 2004. See Fig 3.5 for map of the area.

"Two critical issues raised by farmers and the National Trust were the level of manpower necessary to gather stock and swale (burn) the commons, which is largely independent of the number of stock kept, and the impact that reducing stock numbers has on the heft. Stock tends to wander more when stock numbers are low and the inconvenience and cost of driving round from one side of large commons to the other (a two hour trip around the Walna Scar group of commons in a Landrover) to collect a few animals that had wandered is great, relative to the benefit of keeping the animals on the common. Fortunately few commons in the area were completely slaughtered out during the FMD epidemic of 2001. This did occur on Ulpha Common and the National Trust, with Rural Enterprise Scheme money, is running a project to re-heft a new flock on the common. However, it was agreed that the high cost of doing this made it unlikely that, in the foreseeable future, any large areas of common that are abandoned would be restocked thereafter, unless under a ranching situation where free movement of stock and high losses were accepted.

It is not only the loss of livestock hefts that would make restocking of abandoned fells extremely unlikely. Farmers' knowledge of their fell (such as stock movements or prevalence of disease in different areas) is based on long experience that would be more difficult to replace, in comparison to the more uniform situation on in-bye land. It was also suggested by an NFU representative that flocks may be genetically 'tuned in' to particular fells (for instance in terms of resistance to parasites or suitability to mineral levels in vegetation)."

The SGI report (above) seeks to address these and other issues; for example, the generally higher condition score of ewes that results from much lower stocking rates, or, especially, off-wintering, leads to an increased number of twin lambs that will not become heafed on the fell in the traditional way. In spite of these attempts at reassurance, there remains substantial disagreement on the long term merits of severe de-stocking; in essence it is a divide between an approach that sees grazing primarily as a management tool to maintain or enhance the botanical character of an area and an approach that values vegetation primarily for its contribution to nutrition. Recent[47] and on-going[48] studies will improve understanding of at least some of the issues involved, but this inherent difference in approach is likely to remain. Perhaps broader interests, e.g. the Lake District's status as a candidate World Heritage Site (Cultural Landscapes), may ultimately decide where the correct balance between the differing approaches should lie.

[47] *e.g. CEH et al, Environmentally sustainable & economically viable grazing systems for restoration & maintenance of heather moorland: E&W - BD1228. 2002-2007*

[48] *e.g. ADAS UK Ltd, Assessment of the impact of hefting (heafing or learing) – BD 1242*

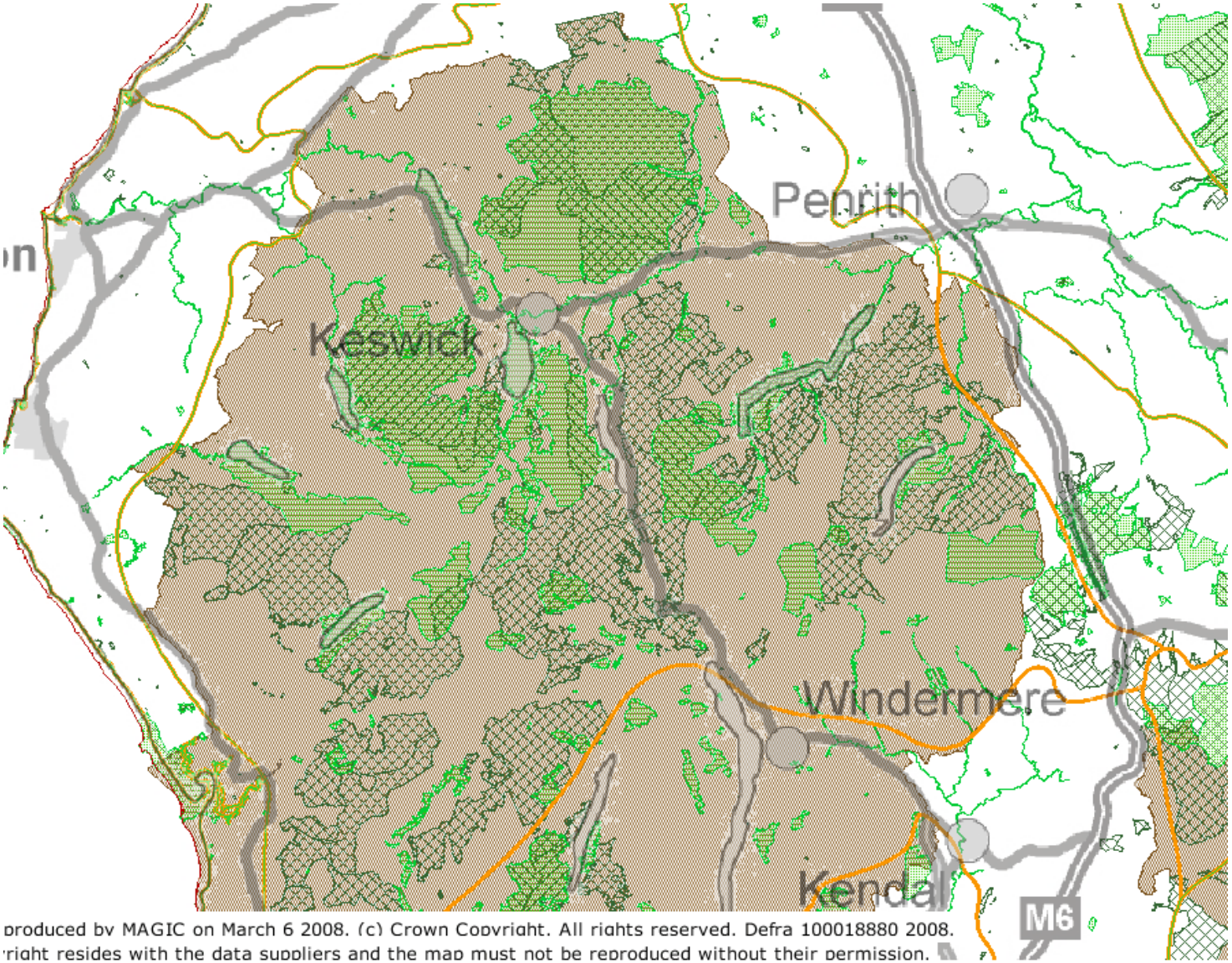

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Fig 3.2

Lake District, Location of Common Land and Environmental Designations

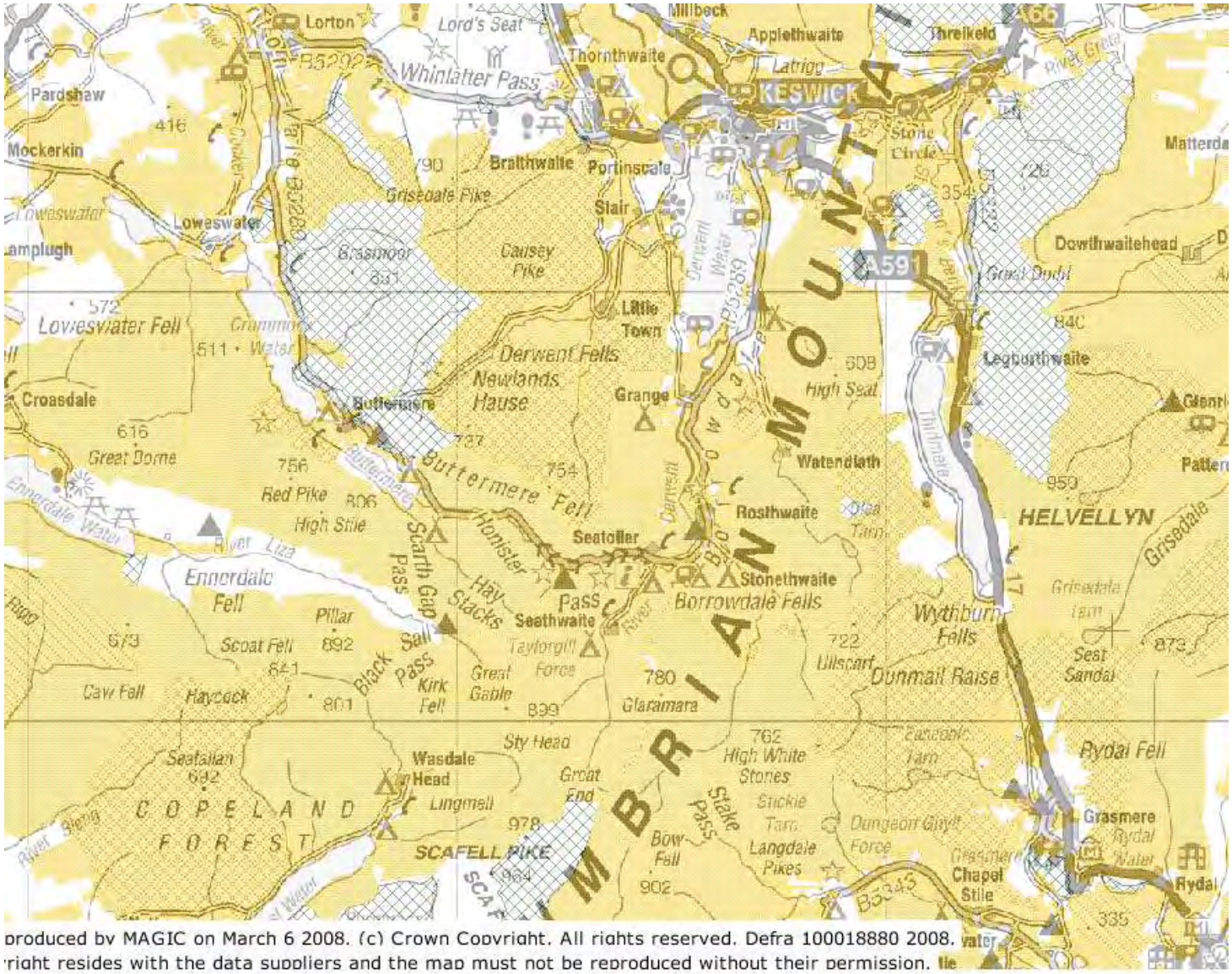

Fig 3.3

Lake District, Uptake of ESA Agreements

- Counties and Unitary Authorities (GB)
- Natural Areas (England)
- Environmentally Sensitive Area Agreements (England)
- Registered Common Land (England)

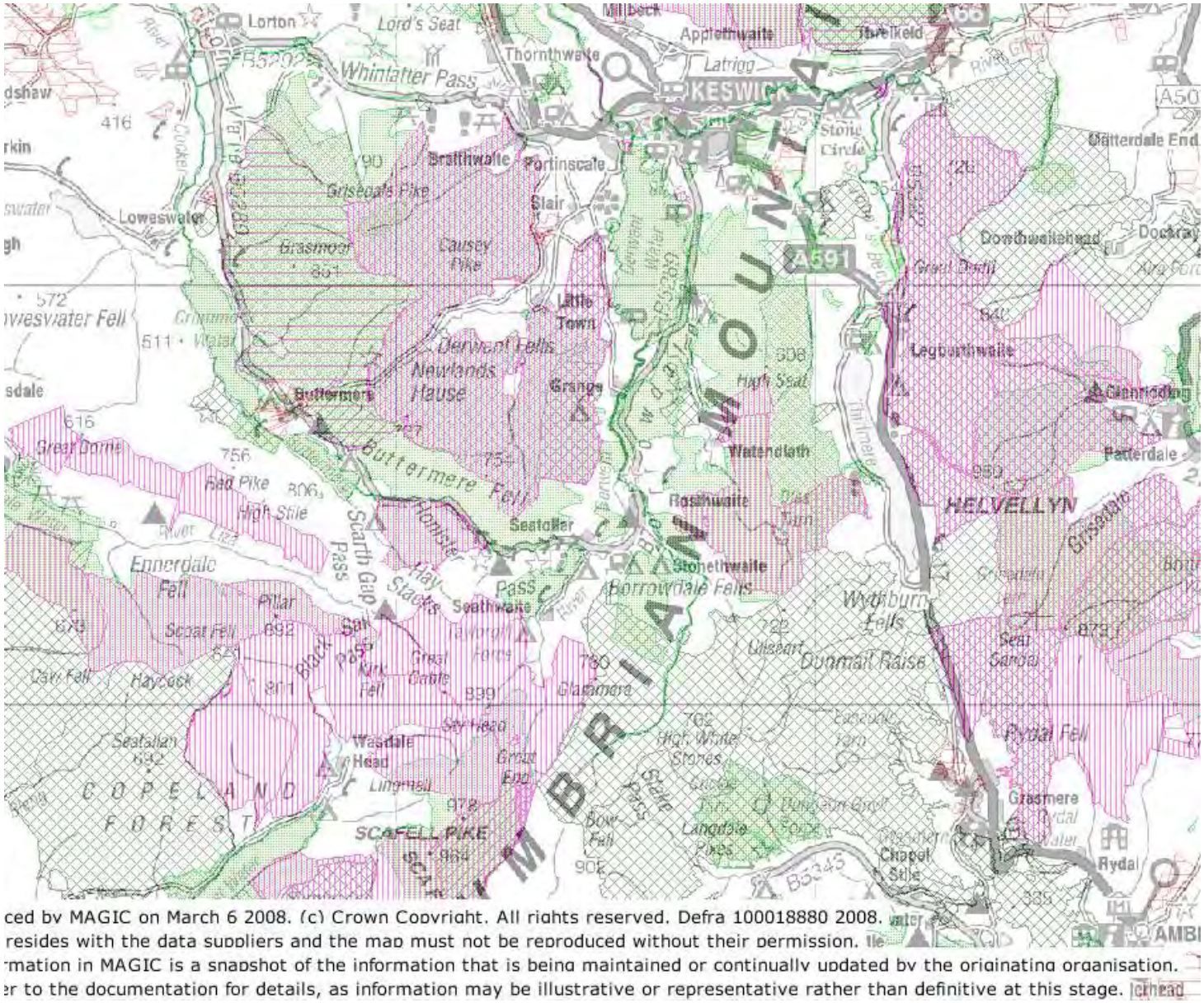

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Fig 3.4
Lake District Agri-Environment Agreements (Excluding ESA's) in the Helvelyn/Fairfield Area

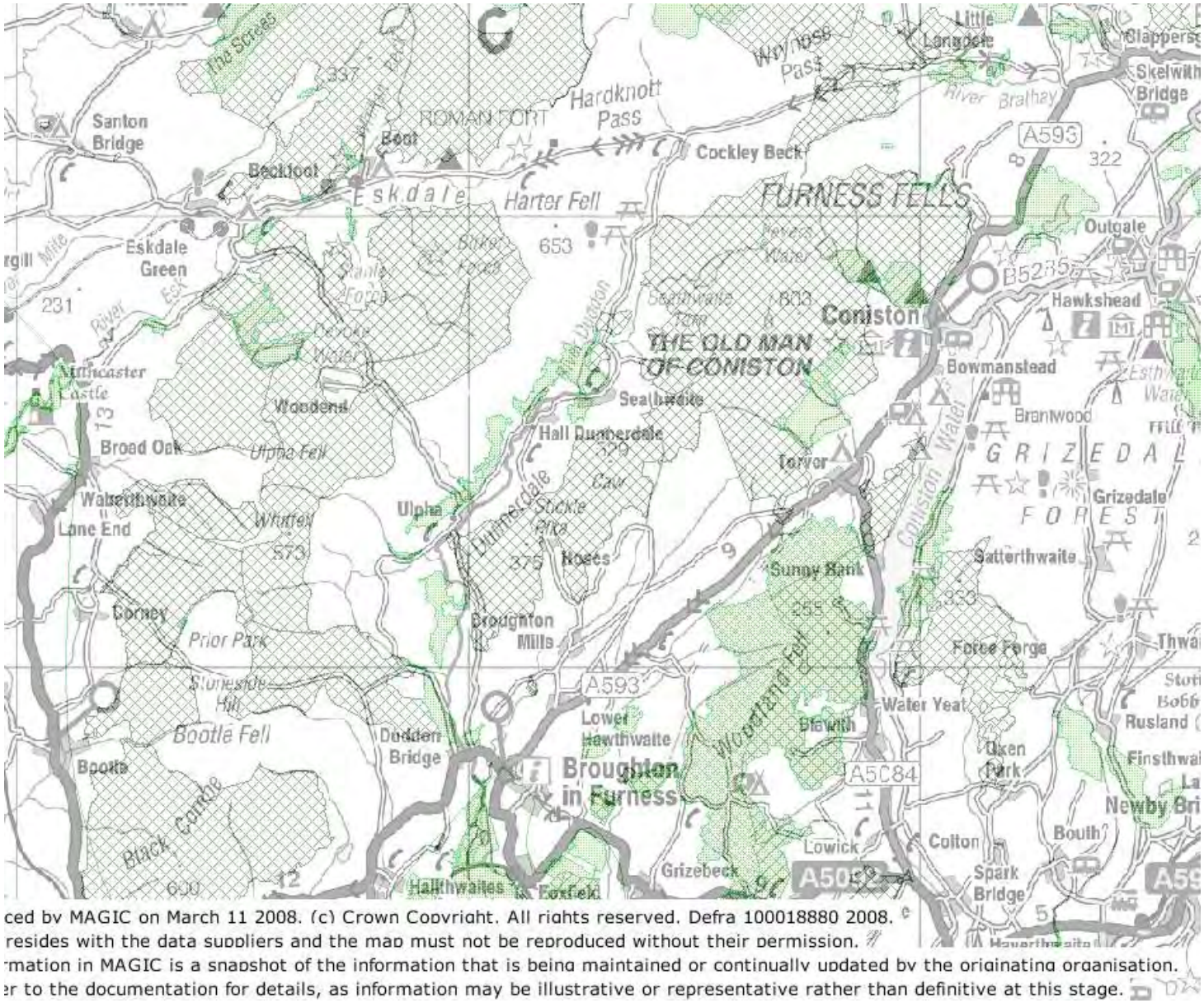

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Fig 3.5

Lake District, South West showing Common Land and Environmental Designations

- Counties and Unitary Authorities (GB)
- Natural Areas (England)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)
- Registered Common Land (England)

3.2.1.2 PENNINES NORTH

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

The area is delineated by the North Pennines AONB and Character Area JCA10 (Natural Area 4), the boundaries of which broadly overlap. Administratively it straddles the borders of 3 counties – Durham, Northumberland and Cumbria (See Figs 3.6 and 3.7) [49]

"From the high summits of Cross Fell and the bleak expanses of blanket bog on the plateau above Lunedale, to the high ridges between the eastern and northern dales, the moorland landscapes of the North Pennines are some of England's wildest places. They are home to some of our rarest and most charismatic wildlife and have an unspoilt sense of naturalness and remoteness found in few other places on our crowded islands.

This sense of wildness is more imagined than real, as even the most remote summits have been affected by grazing animals under the control of humankind for centuries. Most of our moorland landscapes are also the product of management for grouse shooting and this continues to be a key motive force in their conservation. There are few man made structures on the moors and most of those that occur, such as the redundant mine shops and smelt mill chimneys, contribute to their wild character. This, and the often dramatic weather, can make them feel like a place apart from the world below. A walk on the moors offers a sense of tranquility and isolation that is difficult to find elsewhere in England."[50]

Of the 2,146km² comprising the JCA10, some 58,624ha (27%) are common land. The commons are in 6 main blocks, the Northumberland commons to the southwest of Hexham, 3 groups of Durham commons to the north, south and west of Weardale, the Cumbrian commons to the east of the Eden valley, and the Stainmoor commons on the Cumbria/Durham border in the far south.

The 3 principal NCC Phase 1 habitat types in the AONB are set out in table 3.5[51]. The AONB as a whole (including non-common moorland) has 36% of England's upland heathland and 20% of England's blanket bog[52].

[49] The National Parks shown are Northumberland to the north, the Lake District to the West and the Pennine Dales to the south

[50] *North Pennines AONB Management Plan 2004-2009*

[51] Source: Biological Survey. These are countywide figures, but since, particularly for Northumberland, the commons are overwhelmingly located in the AONB, they may be taken as fully representative. The Cumbrian commons i.e. on the west of the Pennines North area, contain a much lower proportion of dwarf shrub heath.

[52] *North Pennines AONB Management Plan 2004-2009*

Table 3.5

County	Habitat type	Area (ha)	% of common land area
Durham	Dwarf shrub heath	10,379	36%
	Bog	8,932	31%
	Acid grassland	6,751	24%
Northumberland	Dwarf shrub heath	2,411	25%
	Bog	3,543	45%
	Acid grassland	1,322	14%

DESIGNATIONS AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

An astonishingly high 47% of JCA10 is designated SSSI, with the majority (79%) of the commons included in this designation[53].

As can be seen from Figs 3.8 and 3.9, the only large groupings of commons that are without an SSSI designation are those in the south on the Cumbrian side of Stainmoor and those in the centre around the head of Weardale. All the SSSI commons are SACs and SPAs. Half of the 8,669ha Moorhouse – Upper Teasdale NNR is common land.

With very few exceptions, all common land is now in some form of AE scheme. Table 3.6 summarises the position for each of the main blocks of commons, including (for SSSIs) conditions assessments for PSA target purposes.

GRAZING, GRAZING LEVELS AND CHANGE

English Nature's "Sustainable Grazing Initiative" in Cumbria has already been described in the context of the Lake District commons, but the Sheep WES scheme was targeted at securing sheep stocking reductions in the uplands generally, with particular emphasis on SSSIs and common land[54]. As noted in the context of

[53] RDS Environmental Stewardship Guidance Notes 2005

[54] EN Information Note 1 – The National Picture, 2004; paradoxically, as the Note itself observes, in the lowlands the emphasis was put on funding the re-introduction of grazing – see Information Note 2

Table 3.6 SSSI Status

SSSI	Area (ha)	Commons included	Commons area	Agri-environment Scheme	Target Condition assessment (for whole SSSI)
Allendale Moors	5,289	Allendale (pt)	4,800 (est.)	CSS WES (pt)	19%F, 24%U/R, 56%U/NC, 1%U/D
Hexhamshire Moors	9,436	Allendale (pt) Hexhamshire	2,500 (est) 1,914	HLS, WES (pt)	12%F, 54U/R, 34%U/NC
Muggleswick, Stanhope, Edmundbyers & Blanchland	9,120	Muggleswick Stanhope Edmundbyers	2,231 3,101 711	ELS plus HLS WES	3%F, 77%U/R, 4%U/NC, 16%U/D
Not SSSI		Wolsingham Moor Waskerley Park	827 769		
Not SSSI		Wellhope etc	1,250	CSS	
Pt SSSI		Burnhope	1,669	WES	
Not SSSI		Ireshope etc	850		
Moor House & Cross Fell	13,817	Ousby etc Milburn Forest etc	3,701 5,367	CSS and WES WES	F4%, U/R89%, U/N7%
Appleby Fells	10,693	Dufton (pt) Dufton (pt) etc	2,474 6,348	CSS and WES WES	U/R76%, U/NC23%, U/D1%
Bollihope, Pikestone, Eggleston & Woodland	7,947	Bollihope Pikestone etc	3,096 3,623	CSS and WES WES	F1%, U/R35%, U/N60%, U/D4%
Not SSSI		Westernhope	1,060	CSS	
Not SSSI		E Stainmoor	1,508	WES	
Not SSSI		Winton etc	3,715	CSS	
Bowes Moor	4,489	Bowes Moor	4,489	ELS plus HLS	F19%, U/R81%

Dartmoor (page 73), stocking level data are on unenclosed uplands are notoriously difficult to ascertain, and the terms of agri-environment agreements are confidential and not normally published[55]. On the North Pennines in particular the sudden stock reductions caused by Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 clouded the picture still further[56].

However, the general thrust of the SWES programme was clear:

"Overgrazing in the uplands is a massive obstacle to sustainable management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The scheme will fund stock reductions and support shepherding on SSSIs currently in poor condition through historic heavy grazing. This year's scheme will build directly on last year's successes. New agreements will be sought close to those set up last year, looking for whole-fell agreements where possible. In addition, the scheme will be extended to cover new targeted upland areas, where more sustainable sheep grazing levels will result in habitat improvement. SWES is proving to be most valuable as a "top-up" to existing agri-environmental schemes."[57]

The need for some form of co-coordinated grazing management where the contiguity of commons creates much larger unenclosed areas has already been referred to. This is particularly true of the North Pennines where, as the Biological Survey notes, "there is an extensive, elongated tract of common land that straddles the boundaries of Cumbria, Durham and North Yorkshire and includes over 150 contiguous commons"[58]. The extensive array of WES and SWES agreements required to cover such an area is shown in Fig 3.9a.

[55] *For an exception, see the New Forest CSS*
[56] *The Biological Survey (Cumbria, p54) suggested that grazing levels on some commons had doubled during the last 100 years, citing CL5W Milburn Forest, but no source for this estimate is given*
[57] *EN Information Note 1*
[58] *Biological Survey (England) p13*

Fig 3.6
Pennine NorthCommon Land and Environmental Designations

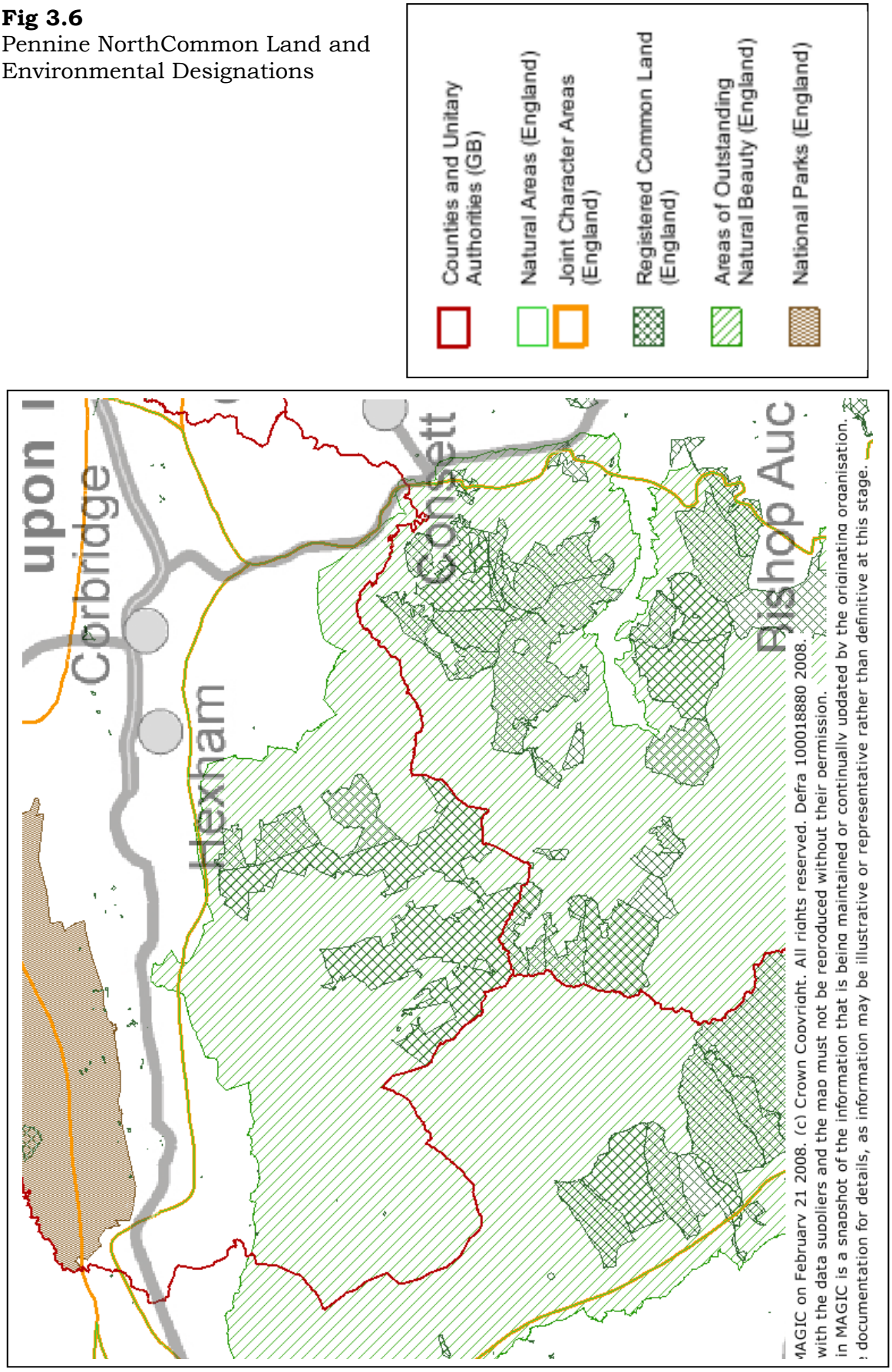


Fig 3.7

Pennine North Common Land and Environmental Designations

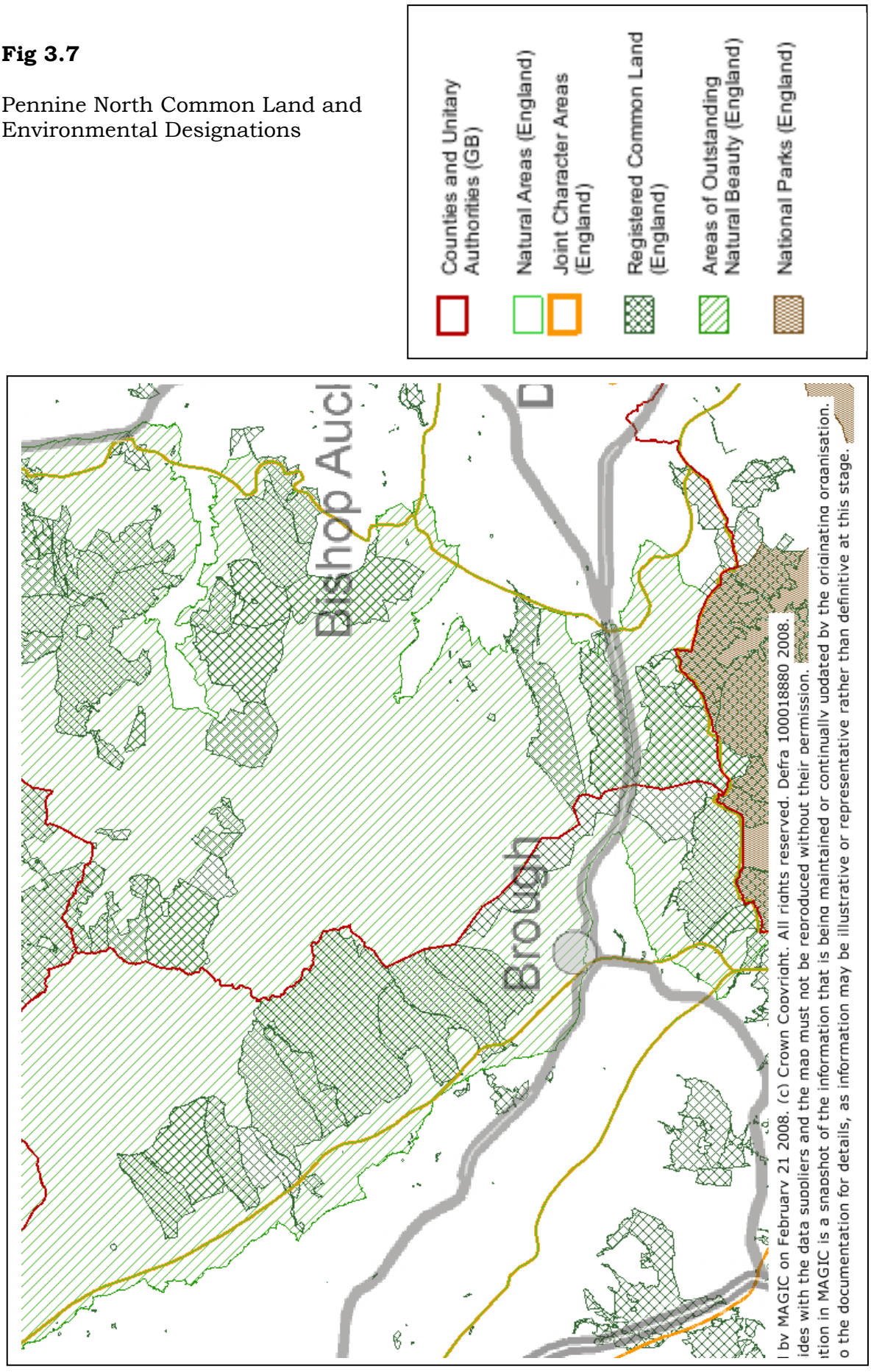


Fig 3.8

Pennine North SSSI Sites

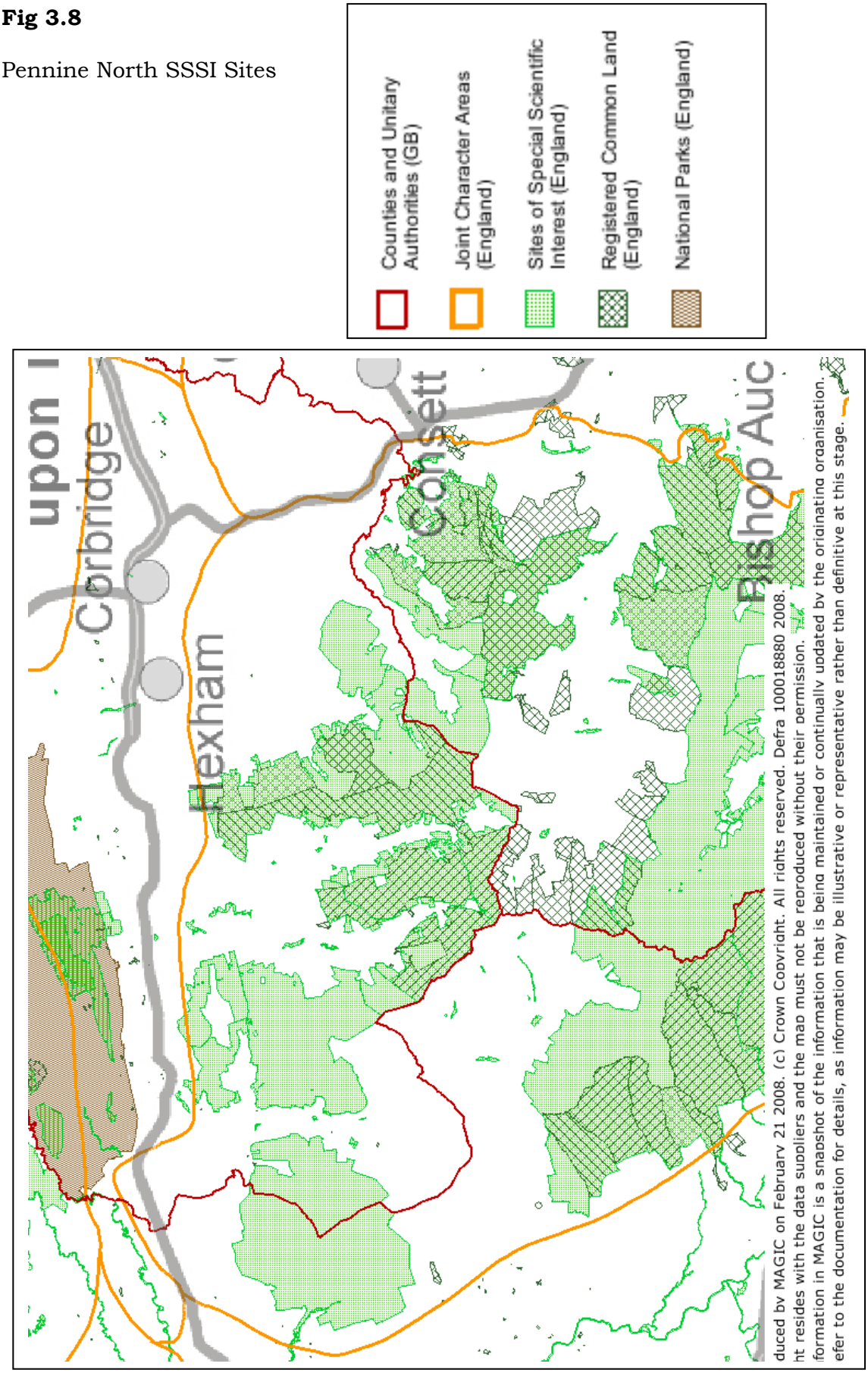


Fig 3.9

Pennine North SSSI Sites

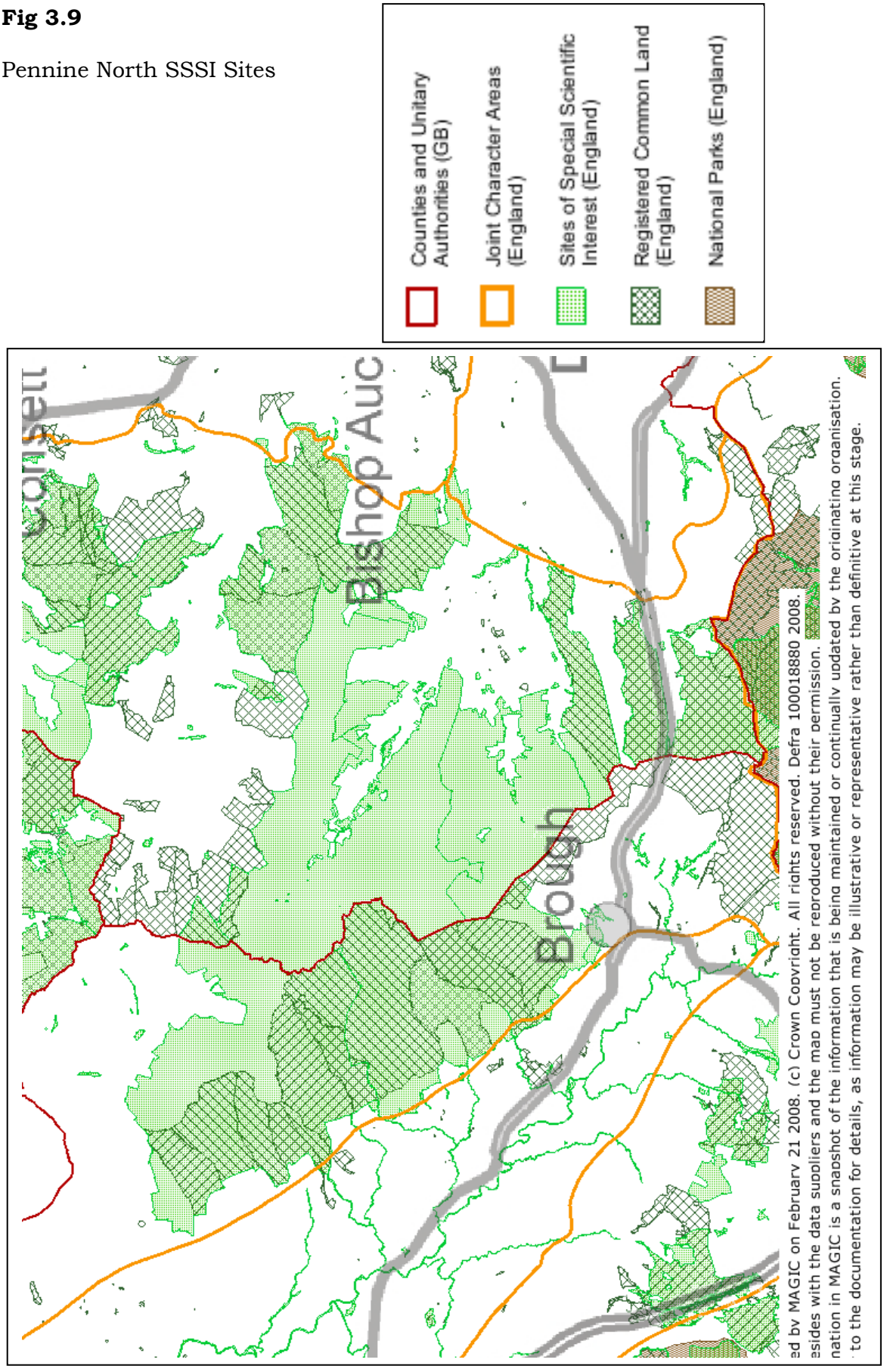
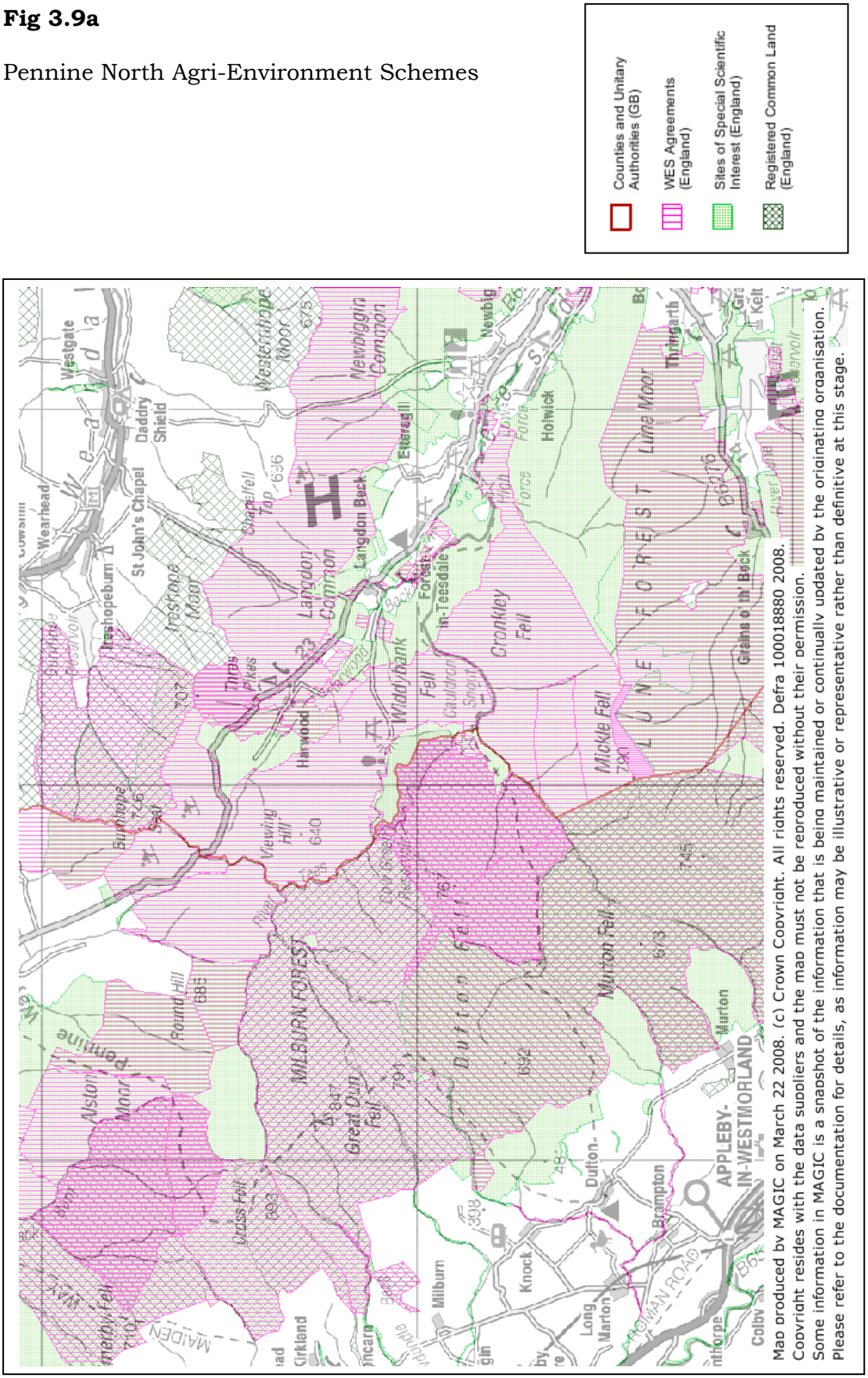


Fig 3.9a

Pennine North Agri-Environment Schemes



3.2.1.3 PENNINE LIMESTONE

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

This type is broadly delineated by the boundaries of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, an area of some 1,762km² (see Fig 3.10). Character Area JCA21 and Natural Area 8 (both 2,400km²) cover a similar area, except that they also include the Nidderdale AONB which adjoins the National Park on its south-eastern boundary. The North Pennines AONB lies immediately to its north, while to the north-west are the Howgill Fells (JCA18) and the distinct block of limestone uplands that constitute the Orton Fells (JCA17). To the south-west lies the Forest of Bowland AONB.

It is estimated that the commons account for just over 25% (around 45,000ha) of the National Park. The largest blocks are in the north, running westwards from Swaledale to Mallerstang and the Howgills. Other commons are spread throughout the National Park, with particularly sizeable groupings in the west (Whernside and Ingleborough) and in the extreme south near Skipton (Embsay and Barden Moor).

The Yorkshire Dales differ from the Pennine uplands to the north and south in that the influence of the limestone is here greater than that of the acidic gritstone. The areas with a predominantly limestone habitat are mostly in the Craven uplands to the south and west, but there are many smaller pockets elsewhere. The landscape is one of striking contrasts between the moorland summits and the less exposed dales below.

"The moors are high and wild, with extensive areas of rough grazing and very large, often hardly visible, walled enclosures. These high summits dominate the skyline above the dales, providing extensive views out over the enclosed land below and dividing one dale from another. There are extensive areas of heather moorland, especially in the south (Bolton Abbey), north (Swaledale) and in the east above Nidderdale." (JCA21)

The total area of moorland is estimated at 925km², being just over one half of the National Park[59].

Thus the 45,000ha of common land constitute just under a half of the moorland. The Profile for Natural Area 8 (which includes the Nidderdale AONB) estimates the moorland NCC Phase 1 habitat areas to be: Blanket Bog 44,000ha, Acidic Grassland 46,000ha and Heathland 24,000ha (out of a total moorland area of 118,000ha).

DESIGNATIONS and AGRI-ENVIRONMENT AGREEMENTS

As can be seen from Fig 3.11, the commons are mainly, but by no means exclusively, within the various designated SSSIs. In the north, Upper Swaledale is the centre of 3 large SSSIs: Arkengarthdale, Gunnerside & Reeth Moors (7,634ha) to the north, Mallerstang-Swaledale Head (6,234ha) to the west and Lovely Seat-Stainton Moor (10,132ha) to the south. The first 2 of these are almost entirely

[59] *YDNPA, Park Profile 2007*

composed of common land. In the west, the main group of commons forms part of the Whernside SSSI (3,859ha) or the Ingleborough SSSI (5,208ha). Here also is the Ingleborough National Nature Reserve (1,024ha), a small part of which is on common land. All the major SSSI commons are within the North Pennine Moors SPA (147,282ha) and the North Pennine Moors SAC (103,130ha).

Throughout the area, there has been widespread take-up of agri-environment schemes. Fig 3.12 shows the mixture of WES, SWES, CSS and ES (ELS and HLS) agreements that, for example, cover the commons in the north of the area. Despite the additional complications that common land presents when compared with non-common areas, the overwhelming majority of SSSI moorland commons are currently subject to agreements, the main exceptions being Barden, Embsay and Hazelwood Moors (part of the West Nidderdale, Barden and Blubberhouses Moors SSSI) in the south, Gunnerside and Muker Common (part of the Arkengarthdale, Gunnerside and Reeth Moors SSSI) in the north, and Angram and East Mallerstang Commons (part of the Mallerstang-Swaledale Head SSSI) in the west.

GRAZING, GRAZING LEVELS AND CHANGE

As described by JCA21,
"The unique character of the area stems from the characteristic pattern of underlying geology and a distinctive pattern of pastoral farming which has shaped the landscape for centuries. The relatively high altitude, short growing season and high rainfall has meant that the area has always had limited possibilities for agriculture, which is restricted to the rearing of livestock. A self-contained farming system, of small holdings based upon a flock of sheep and a few cattle, providing its own winter feed needs and using all grades of pasture, rough grazing and moorland to the fullest extent, has created the landscape and is an integral part of its character.

The close relationships between rock types, landform, climate and the resulting history of man's activities can be clearly seen in this landscape. Change has been slow and relatively limited in its effects and, as a result, evidence of man's activities has survived, from the earliest periods onwards, creating an overwhelming sense of continuity with the past."

But nowadays, change is faster, the farming systems are much less self-contained and farm sizes have increased significantly. Between 1995 and 2003, farms in the Yorkshire Dales between 5ha and 50ha halved in number, whereas those greater than 50ha more than trebled (as also did those less than 5 ha).[60]

Compiled in 1997, the Natural Area Profile (NA8 p11) was in no doubt as to the main cause of habitat deterioration:
"There are distinct differences between the areas of moorland managed for grouse shooting and those just used for sheep grazing. Grouse moor managers have generally managed to hold sheep stocking at levels appropriate to maintenance of the heather whereas most other moorland has been heavily grazed and the heather lost. Grouse moors support much of nature conservation value; however uninterrupted sheep grazing and burning do limit habitat diversity. Drainage has also had an adverse effect on the condition and diversity of moorland communities".

[60] *YDNPA Education File "Hill farming – Changing Times"*

The Profile draws attention to a 70% increase in sheep numbers between the 1950s and 1997[61]. However, over the period from 1995 to 2003, there was a decrease in the National Park in livestock numbers, of about 10% for cattle and 15% for sheep[62]. It is clearly too early to assess the long-term effect on habitats of this and subsequent decreases. For the 3 large SSSIs covering the part of the area shown in Fig 3.12, the current PSA target conditions assessments are shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7

SSSI	% Favourable	% Unfav. recovering	Unfav. No change
Arkengarthdale etc	24	53	23
Mallerstang etc	6	28	66
Lovely Seat etc	32	59	9

[61] This figure relates to the area as a whole; the increase on common land could, of course, have been more or less.
[62] *YDNPA Education File, supra*

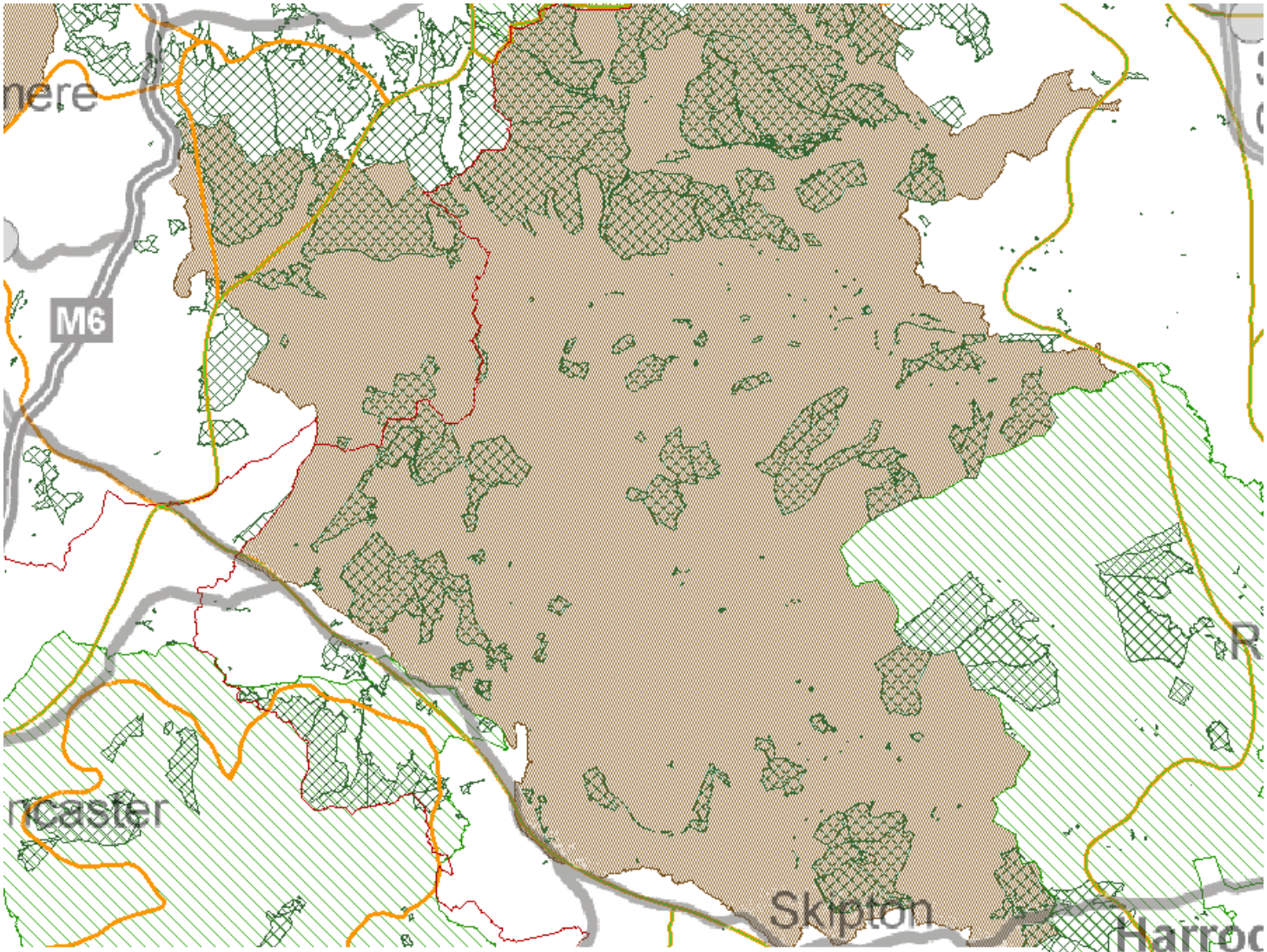


Fig 3.10
Pennine Limestone Common Land and Environmental Designations

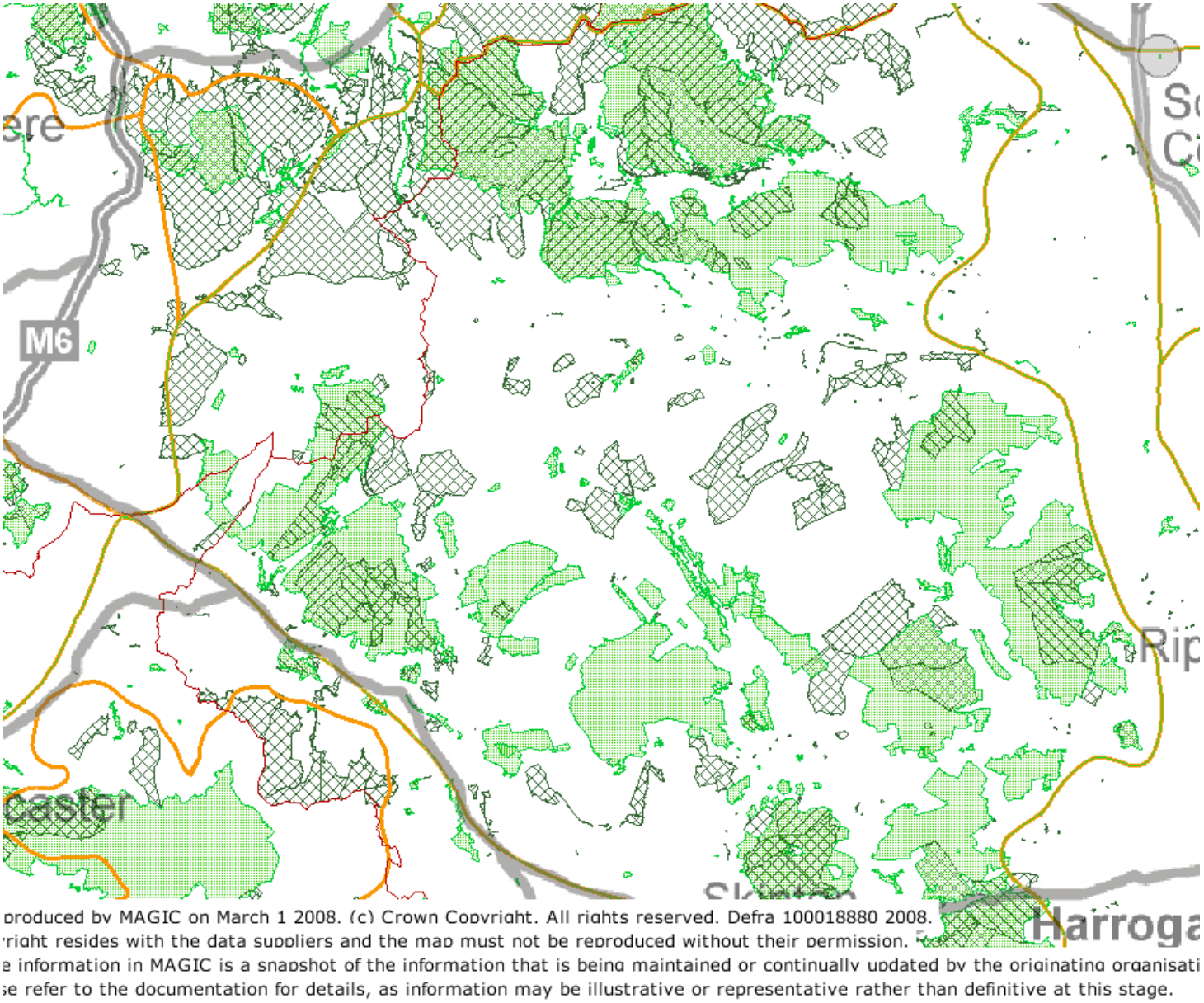


Fig 3.11
Pennine Limestone SSSI Sites

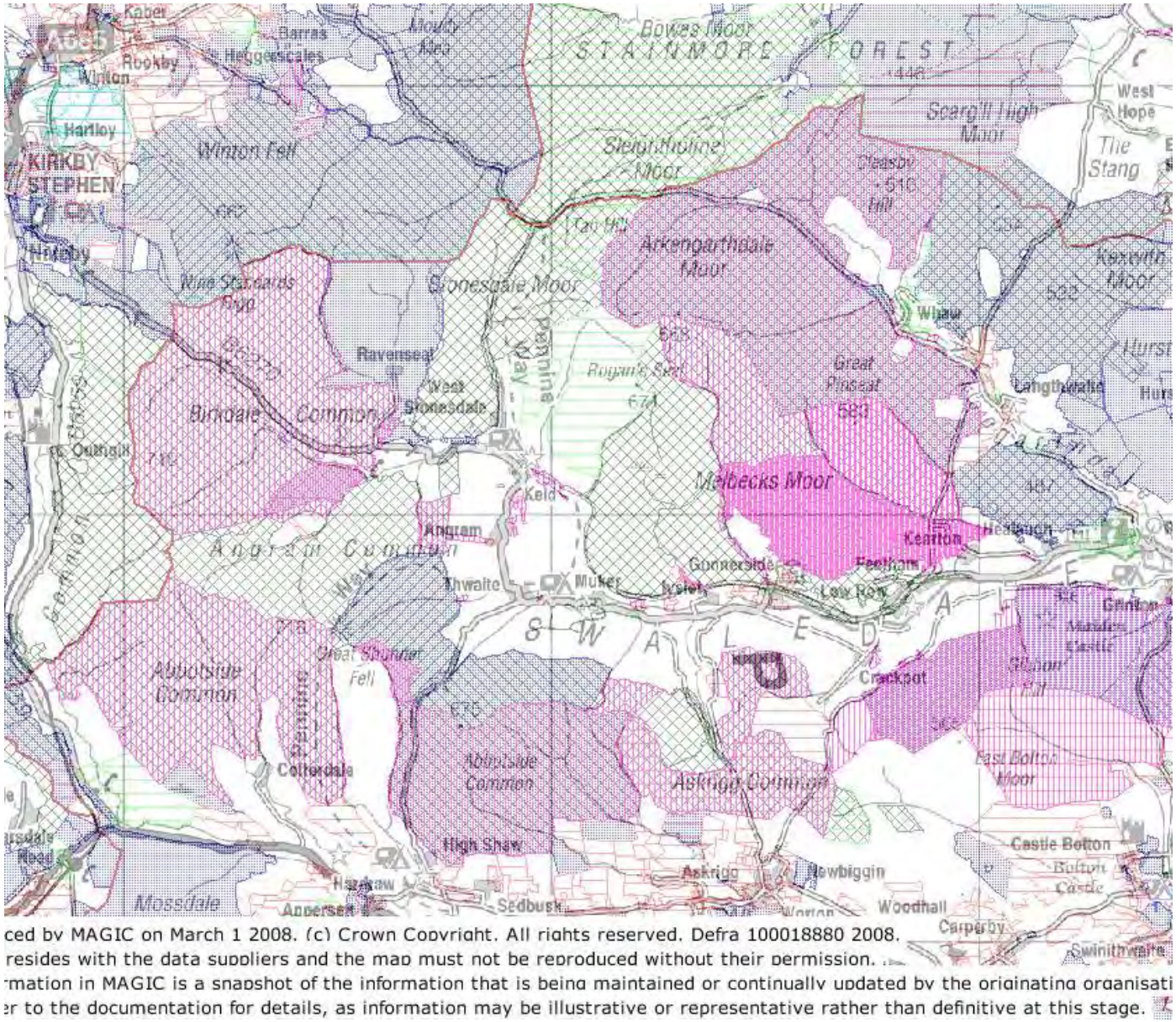


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Fig 3.12
Pennine Limestone Agri-Environmental Agreements

3.2.1.4 PENNINE URBAN

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

These commons broadly lie within Character Area JCA 36 (Natural Area 14), described thus:

"*The area lies between the northern boundary of the Peak District National Park and the southern boundary of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It lies between the great conurbations of Lancashire and Greater Manchester to the west and West Yorkshire to the East. Over seven million people live within an hour's drive of its centre and the conurbations generate increasing demands for transport, mineral extraction, power transmission and generation and urban encroachment as well as an intense pressure for recreation, sport and tourism. This is a large-scale sweeping landscape of exposed upland moorland and pasture. The area shares many characteristics with the Bowland Fells and the Dark Peak but the evidence of man's intrusion into this landscape has removed the sense of unspoilt wilderness which distinguishes the other regions." (JCA36)*

The moors are a patchwork of common and non-common land, the largest single block lying on the main Pennine ridge immediately to the north of the Peak District National Park. Other major areas of contiguous commons are Ilkley Moor, several blocks to the north of Hebden Bridge, and moors on the Pennine spur to the north of Rochdale and Bury (see Fig 3.13). Most of the Commons lie within the West Yorkshire registration district, but some are in Greater Manchester and Lancashire, and a few in North Yorkshire.

"This area is predominantly upland heather moorland, acid grassland and rough pasture although some of the heather moor has been lost to grassland in many areas due to changes in management. The effects of enclosure, overgrazing, uncontrolled burning and atmospheric pollution have reduced the once varied vegetation to one dominated by purple moor-grass (Molina caerulea), mat-grass (Nardus stricta) and cotton grass (Eriophorum spp.). The core of the area however supports the mosaic of natural upland habitats which include blanket bogs, heather moor and wet heath which are rare enough to be of European importance." (JCA36)

DESIGNATIONS AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

The South Pennine Moors SSSI (20,944ha in 3 blocks) falls entirely within this area. It is estimated that about half the SSSI is common land, the highest proportion being in the southern block, between Todmorden and the Peak District National Park (see Fig 3.13). The whole of the SSSI is designated SAC and SPA.

The area falls outside any of the ESA schemes except for the southernmost tip, which lies within the North Peak ESA. Here the National Trust has entered the 2,500ha of its Marsden Moor estate into the scheme (see Fig 3.14). As can be seen from Fig 3.15, a number of commons in the northern segments of the South Pennine Moors SSSI are now under WES agreements. Keighley Moor (W Yorks CL600) and the adjoining Scott Hill Moor (N Yorks CL11) are the only commons in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. No commons are as yet in Environmental Stewardship; commons outside the SSSIs (mainly those in the west of the area) are not in any agri-environmental scheme.

GRAZING, GRAZING LEVELS AND CHANGE

Grazing rights on the commons are predominantly for sheep, though there are some cattle rights also. The Biological Survey for West Yorkshire recorded observations on grazing and grazing levels in the course of its site visits, made some ten years ago[63].

Table 3.8 shows the variable picture that emerged.

Table 3.8		
Grazing	Types of stock	No. of commons
	Sheep	51
	Cattle	15
Grazing intensity[64]	Heavy	9
	Moderate	13
	Slight	11
	Variable	17
	No information	11

In a comment, the Survey states (p37):

"However, the major portion of the unenclosed moorland commons have a long history of a sustained high grazing pressure and this has had a marked effect of the vegetation composition. For example, much of the grassland is dominated by unpalatable species such as Nardus stricta and Juncus squarrosus. In addition, high levels of grazing by sheep are considered to have contributed to some extent to the degradation of the South Pennine Blanket mires, especially when combined with the effects of burning (see elsewhere). Other factors influencing the likely effects of sheep grazing on the moorland vegetation include the location of supplementary feeding points (localised trampling and eutrophication), the amount of shepherding (or indeed, lack of it these days), the time of year that stock are present on the common (now often all year)."

For the purposes of the PSA target, the current overall condition assessment is "Favourable" (F) 0.37%, "Unfavourable recovering" (U/R) 21.55%, "Unfavourable no change" (U/NC) 74.27% and "Unfavourable declining" (U/D) 3.81%; these figures, of course relate to both common and non-common land. Table 3.9 sets out the assessment in relation to the 9 largest commons with SSSI status (all South Pennine Moors SSSI except Marsden and Wessenden Moors (Dark Peak SSSI)).

In its assessment of the changing countryside, JCA36 makes reference to *"over-grazing of areas of common land by large operators"*. It is not clear on what evidence this is based, but the point is listed by the Countryside Quality Counts (CQC) project in its assessment of change for the period 1999-2003. The CQC response, however, is to make reference to figures showing the Countryside Stewardship uptake for JCA36 to have been consistently above the national average since 1999; as the area of common land entered into CSS was only 503 ha in total

[63] Although the survey covered the whole of the county, these results for grazed commons can be taken as directly applicable to the Pennine Moors

[64] This assessment was based on the surveyor's assessment as part of the Biological Survey for West Yorkshire.

(see above), this illustrates well the need for common land to be more clearly identified in data if the issues that it raises are to be adequately addressed.

Table 3.9

Common	CL No.	Area (ha)	Target assessment (overall)	Agri-environment agreement
Marsden Moor (NT)	W Yorks 39	1216	U/R	ESA
Wessenden Moor (NT)	W Yorks 37	966	U/R	ESA
Rishworth Moor	W Yorks 427	1599	U/NC	
Butterworth	Lancs 675	839	U/NC	
Blackstone Edge	Lancs 674	666	U/NC	
Langfield	W Yorks 121	605	U/D	
Oxenhope & Midgley Moors	W Yorks 498	1012	pt U/R, pt U/NC	WES
Heptonstall Town Moor	W Yorks 139	669	U/NC	WES
Ilkley Moor	W Yorks 207	1085	U/NC	

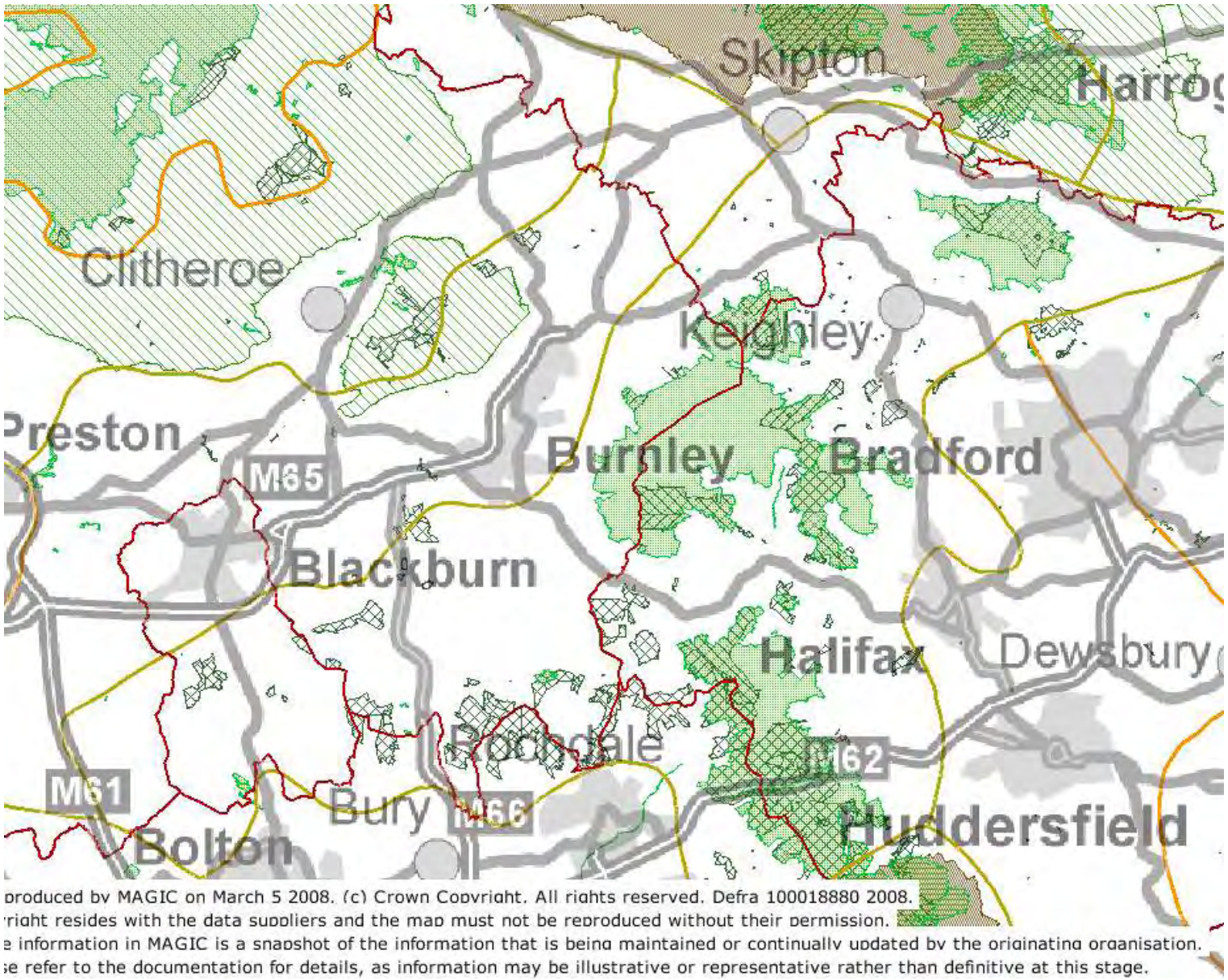


Fig 3.13
Pennine Urban Common Land and Environmental Designations

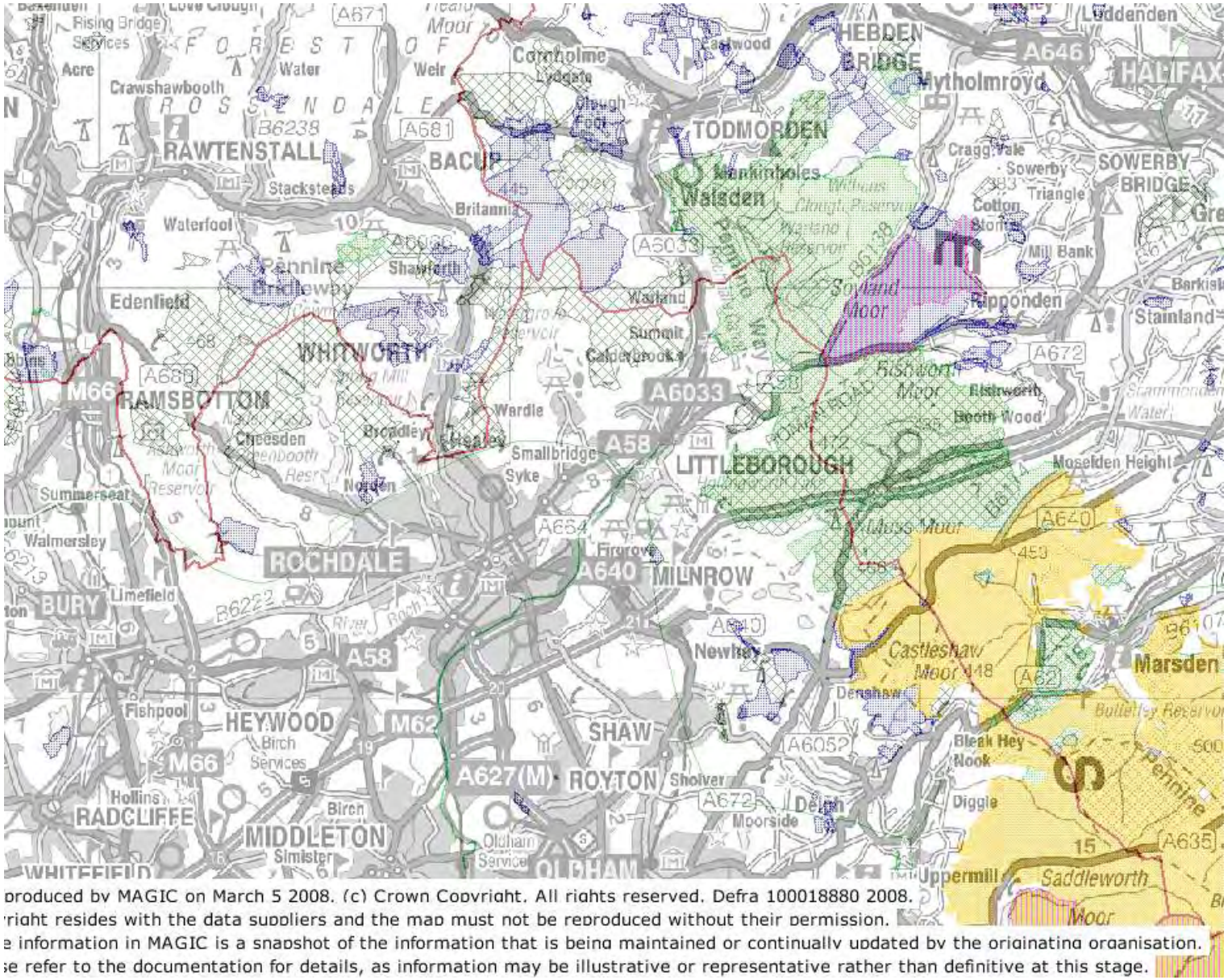


Fig 3.14
Pennine Urban Environmental Designations and Agri-Environment Schemes

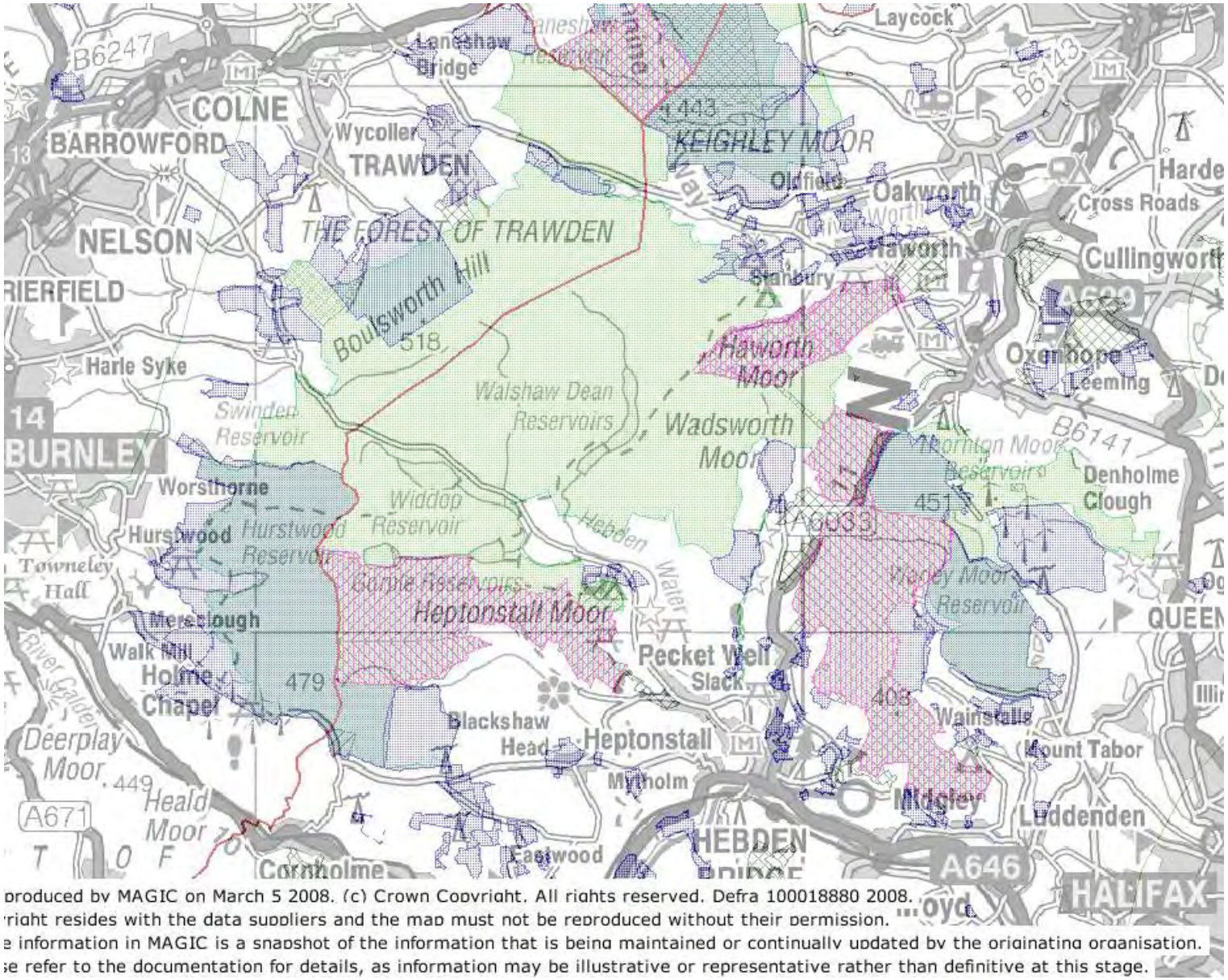


Fig 3.15
Pennine Urban Environmental Designations and Agri-Environment Schemes

3.2.1.5 NORTH YORK MOORS

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

The North York Moors National Park (1,436km²) is bounded on the northeast by the North Sea and on the South by the Vale of Pickering. To the north and west lie the Tees valley and the Vale of Mowbray, thus making the moors stand out as a clearly defined block of relatively high ground. Character Area JCA25 (Natural Area 17) is slightly more widely drawn (1,659km²), but mainly correlates with the National Park boundaries.

Although often perceived as an archetypal upland landscape, the North York Moors are much lower lying than many other areas of moorland. Table 3.10 shows that over 80% of the SSSI area is below 350m above sea level.[65]

Table 3.10

Altitude (m)	SSSI area in band (ha)	As %
450 +	8.72	0.02%
400 - 450	1,922.29	4.36%
350 - 400	,224.16	14.12%
300 - 350	,049.65	18.26%
250 - 300	11,861.28	26.90%
200 - 250	11,584.59	26.27%
150 - 200	3,807.77	8.64%
100 - 150	615.03	1.39%
50 - 100	21.66	0.05%
0 - 50	0.00	0.00%
Totals	44,095.15	100.00%

Rainfall, averaging no more than 1061-1290mm annually even on the higher moors is well below that normally associated with upland areas.

The common land in JCA25 (see Fig 3.16) totals some 23,678ha. Four very large commons (Westerdale, Glaisdale/Danby/Leaholm, Egton High and Spaunton Moor) are found in the central area, the 4,977ha of Glaisdale/Danby/Leaholm Moors being split into northern and southern sections on either side of Danby. To the east are the large commons of Goathland and Fylingdales Moor, whilst in the west, Urra and Bilsdale East Moor is the only common of major size.

"Landcover comprises extensive tracts of heather moorland changing in colour from purple in summer to almost black in winter, much of it managed for grouse shooting, which results in a distinctive mosaic pattern of different aged plants mixed with burnt areas and lines of grouse butts. Some moorland is managed for sheep grazing and small areas are unmanaged. Other habitats on the moor tops include small areas of upland heath/grass mosaic, heather/blanket peat grassland mosaic, rough grassland and peat bog."[66]

[65] *Source: North York Moors NPA, Moorland Research Review 2000-2005*

[66] *North York Moors National Park Landscape Character Assessment 2003*

The area has one of the largest continuous expanses (499km²) of heather moorland in England and Wales[67].

More specifically, the extent to which heather moorland dominates the vegetation on commons can be seen in Table 3.11, which shows the Biological Survey assessment of the major habitat types for each of the 7 largest commons.

Table 3.11 North York Moors commons - Principal Phase 1 Habitat types

Common	CL No.	Total area (ha)	D11 Dry dwarf shrub heath	D2 Wet dwarf shrub heath	C11 Dense bracken	E18 Dry modified bog	Other
Goathland Moor	CL4	3118	1145	1612	404	18	
Westerdale Moor	CL8	1644	1357		56	147	
Urra & Bilsdale E Moors	CL53	1859	1607		144	51	
Glaisdale, Danby High/Low & Leaholm Moors	CL63	4977	2782	1009	658	472	
Fylingdales Moor	CL76	2870	1225	1478			
Egton High Moor	CL81	2320	1520	200	242		
Spaunton Moor	CL162	3294	1624	943	325		
Totals		20082	11260	5242	1829	688	
As %		100%	56%	26%	9%	3%	6%

DESIGNATIONS AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

As can be seen from Fig 3.16, all the major areas of common are part of the North York Moors SSSI, representing just over 50% of its 44,095ha. All are also designated SPA and SAC. Despite the relatively low altitude of some of the common land (see above), all is Less Favoured Area (SDA). Fig 3.17 shows the widespread adoption of WES and SWES agreements, though only Fylingdales Moor is in a Countryside Stewardship Scheme. None, as yet, is in Environmental Stewardship. The only major areas of common not in any form of agri-environment scheme are parts of Glaisdale/Danby and Egton High Moors, amounting to around 1,500ha in total.

GRAZING, GRAZING LEVELS AND CHANGE

In contrast to many other upland areas where overgrazing has been regarded as the prime cause of unfavourable condition, ecological surveys of the North York Moors have consistently reported overgrazing to be a localised rather than a widespread

[67] *Source: NPA Management Plan*

problem. It may therefore be seen as surprising that the current condition assessment for PSA target purposes of the North York Moors SSSI as a whole is "*favourable*" 12%, "*unfavourable recovering*" 41%, "*unfavourable no change*" 42% and "*unfavourable declining*" 5%. Possible explanations for these figures are considered in the NPA's recently published "Moorland Research Review 2000-2005":

"Traditional land management practices certainly play a part: frequent burning (a response to the faster growth of heather on the North York Moors than in other upland moorlands) appears to promote species-poor heathland dominated by ling (Calluna vulgaris). Unfavourable burning practices were considered to result in adverse habitat condition in just under half the SSSI area. By contrast, excessive grazing pressure is only a localised problem, causing unfavourable condition in just 4.1% of the SSSI area. This confirms previous observations (e.g. Jerram, Clayden & Rees, 1998) and contrasts with many other upland areas where over-stocking has been considered a primary cause of ecological degradation, in the recent past. Inappropriate supplementary feeding of livestock impacted on 1.5% of the SSSI whilst drainage works, insensitive scrub control, illegal use of vehicles, under-grazing and fertilizer use or other agricultural activities caused damage to just one or two monitoring units each."

After noting the lower altitude and rainfall of the North York moors when compared to most other upland areas, it continues:
"Consequently, the more montane dwarf-shrub components of higher, cooler and wetter upland moors are rare on or absent from the North York Moors and the bryophyte (moss and liverwort) flora is probably also naturally impoverished.

The only way of improving habitat condition assessment criteria for the North York Moors is to gain a better understanding of the interactions between land management practices, climate, geography and perhaps additional factors such as atmospheric pollution."

In a case study of the southern moors, undertaken in 2003 as part of research commissioned by Defra into the impacts of hill farming the Report drew attention to *"the low agricultural productivity of the moors and extensive management"*[68]. It continued (p49):

"Because of the low altitude and relatively harsh climate, much of the moorland is more akin to lowland heath. It has low agricultural productivity and is extensively managed. Most local contacts believe that under-grazing is more of a problem than over-grazing. Over-grazing does occur in isolated areas, such as at feeding sites, and is being addressed by measures such as discouraging supplementary feeding of sheep on the moor. In general over-grazing has not been a problem, even in the past. There are some localised instances of over-grazing of moorland, mostly through lack of management of the flocks rather than excessive absolute numbers.

In the hefted system in operation on the moorland, removal of sheep flocks causes problems as it leads to vacant hefts, causing sheep to spread out and making them harder to control. Road deaths from roaming sheep have increased, affecting the viability of many sheep enterprises. The National Park and English Nature's Wildlife

[68] *"An assessment of the impacts of hill farming in England on the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the uplands and more widely", Volume III. Institute for European Environmental Policy, Land Use Consultants and GHK Consulting.* February 2004.

Enhancement Scheme (WES) have started to offer gathering payments, recognising the environmental benefits of controlling grazing."

A study of hill sheep producers in the area, undertaken by Askham Bryan College's Rural Business Research Unit on behalf of the NPA and English Nature, reported that more than half the respondents intended to remove their flocks from the moor if further support were not to be available when the current agri-environment schemes terminated[69].

[69] *North York Moors NPA Press release 10 May 2006*. Note also the report in the Defra case study (above) that graziers in the Danby area had declined in number from 150 in the 1960s to 23 in 2003 (p43).

Fig 3.16
North York Moors
Common Land and Environmental
Designations

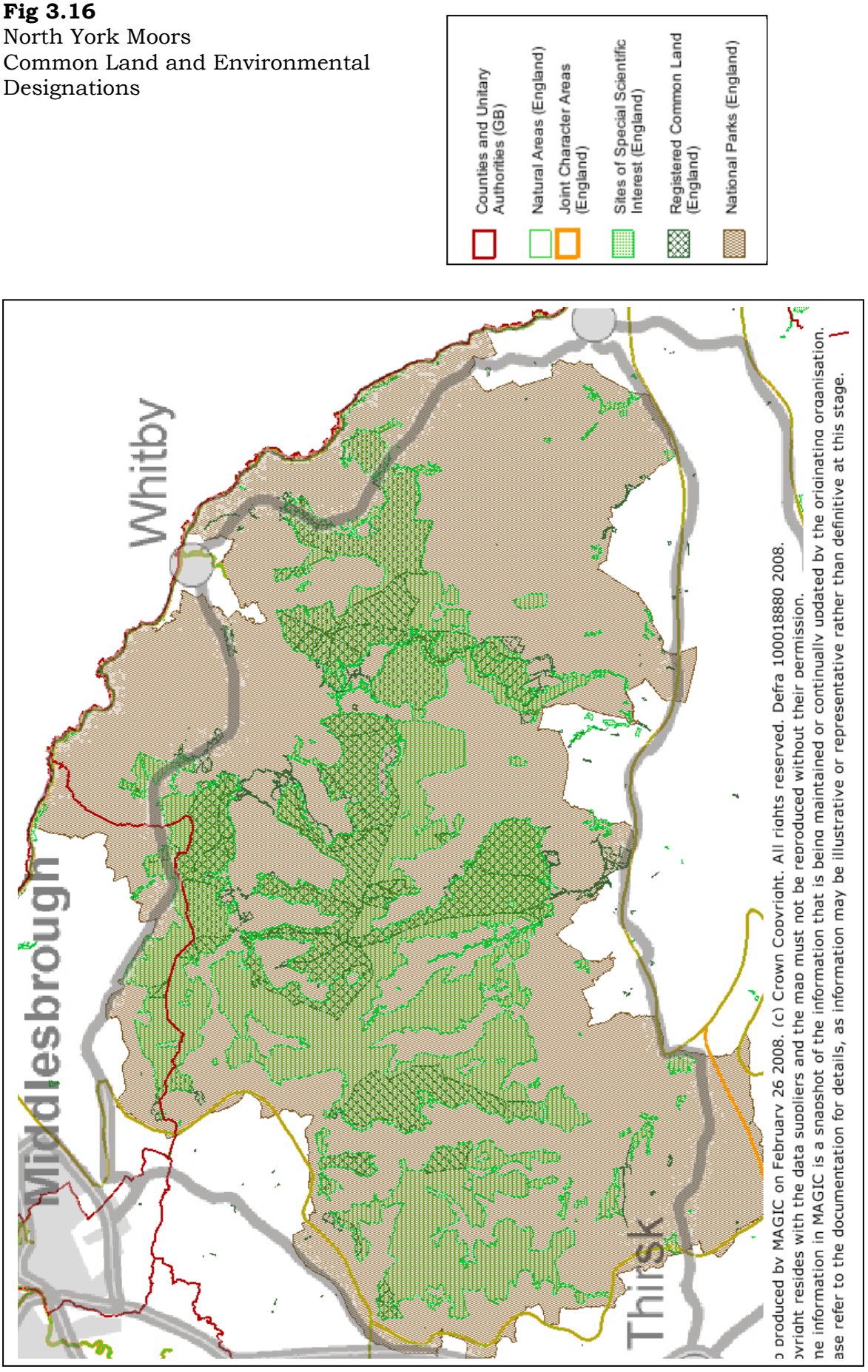
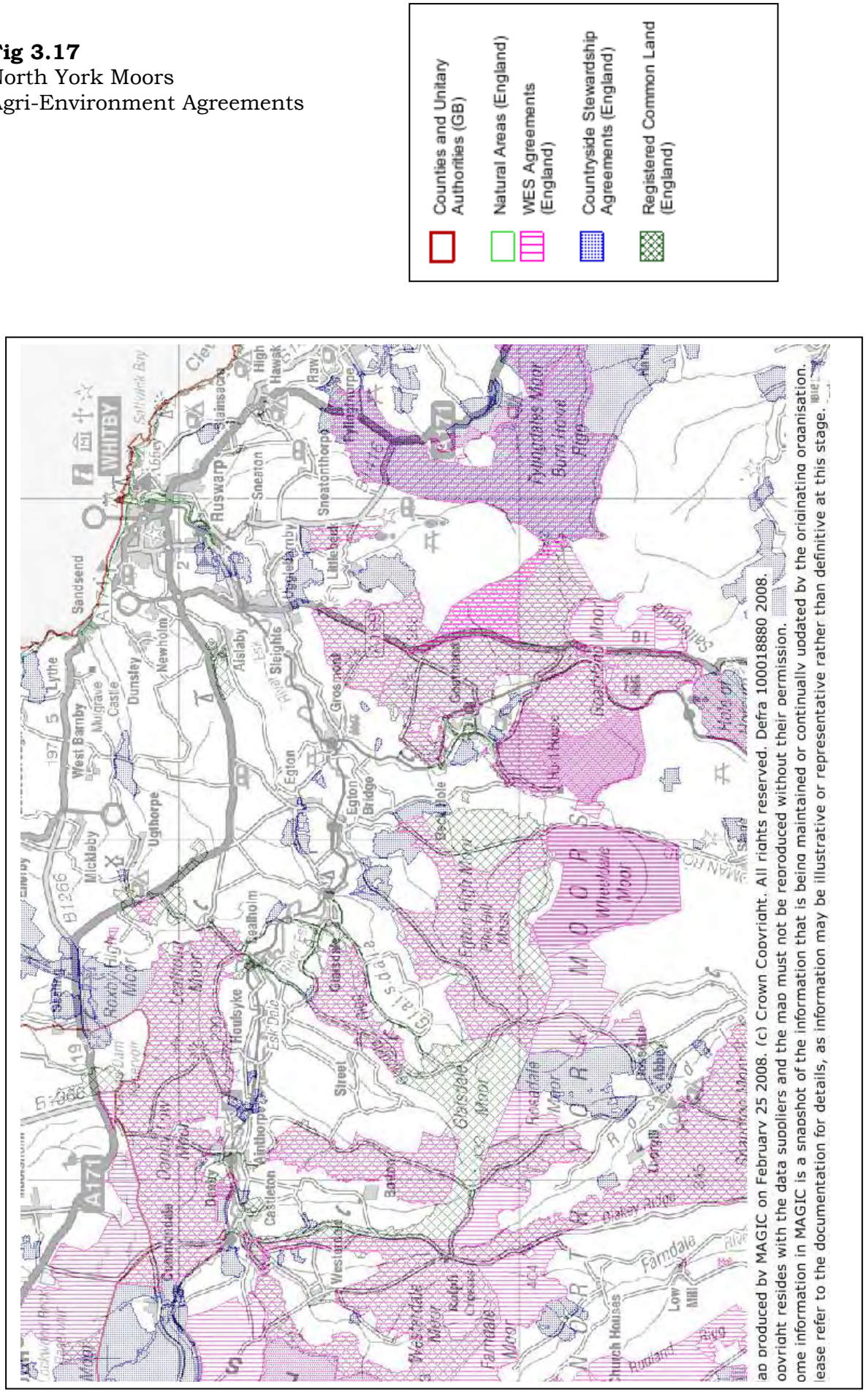


Fig 3.17
North York Moors
Agri-Environment Agreements



3.2.2 South West

3.2.2.1 EXMOOR

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

Straddling the border between Devon and Somerset, the Exmoor National Park covers an area of 693km².

"The central moorlands are a landscape of grass, heather and bilberry, largely devoid of settlement. Their remote upland character is emphasised by wandering groups of Exmoor ponies and occasional glimpses of red deer. On the outer edges of Exmoor and the Brendon Hills, heather moorland is common but the central areas of Exmoor are often seemingly vast sheets of purple moor grass, bleached almost white for much of the year. Hutton describes this landscape as 'a bare rolling waste very like the sea, with its long heaving monotony of grey water, without a voice, without life and without human habitation, there is only the sound of wind and of running water'. In the south, at the transition to the Culm, the moorland is wetter and more fragmented, with gorse, bracken and heather." (Natural England JCA 145)

Unlike Bodmin and Dartmoor, where the bulk of the moorland is common land, here the commons (see Fig 3.18) account for only 4,811ha (about a quarter of the total moorland area). The major block of common land (around 1,750ha) lies to the northwest, on the Devon side of the border, and forms part of the North Exmoor SSSI. The other significant areas of common are Dunkery Hill (644ha and at 519m the highest point on Exmoor), Withypool Common (787ha) and Winsford Hill (586ha), the last 2 being part of the South Exmoor SSSI. On all these commons, the main habitat type is heather moorland.

DESIGNATIONS AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

In total, the North and South Exmoor SSSIs cover 13,130ha of moorland and most of the area is within the Exmoor Heaths SAC (10,699ha). The commons form part of the Exmoor ESA, though as can be seen from Fig 3.19, significant areas of common land, such as Dunkery Hill, Withypool Common and the adjoining commons of Ilkerton Ridge and Furzehill Common were never entered into the Scheme. Dunkery Hill, however, is now in a Wildlife Enhancement Scheme, though not (apart from Winsford Hill) any of the other major commons (see Fig 3.20).

GRAZING, GRAZING LEVELS AND CHANGE

There are 19 registered moorland commons, and around 123 commoners with grazing rights on one or more of these. However, the actual number of active commoners has been estimated to be as little as around 20[70]. A postal survey of Exmoor farmers, conducted by Land Use Consultants for the Southwest Uplands Federation in 2007, found that, of those respondents who were active commoners, around twice as many grazed sheep as grazed cattle. A smaller number grazed Exmoor ponies, these staying on the moorland all the year round. Scottish

[70] *Moorlands at the Crossroads*, see post

Blackface and Swaledale are the main hardy breeds of sheep, while the suckler cows tend to be Limousin, Hereford or Angus crosses.

The Exmoor NPA Management Plan 2007-2012 para 6.22 drew attention to a, perhaps unintended, consequence of the uptake of agri-environment schemes:
"There is already a trend away from keeping stock that are well adapted to grazing the moorlands in favour of stock better suited to their more productive in-bye ground. In part, this has been in response to the requirement of the past 12 years not to graze any cattle at all (particularly dry cows) on moorland in winter. Whilst this policy has had benefits in reducing damage to habitats it has also contributed to the spread of gorse and bracken, replacing heather and all other vegetation; a change in breed of cattle, from hill breeds, to less hardy breeds (such as Limousin X cows) that generally fare better than traditional breeds in winter housing, and the need to put up large winter housing sheds."

Table 3.12 shows the current SSSI condition assessments that are made for the purposes of the PSA targets, from which it can be seen that of the 14 units comprising the 4 major common areas, 3 are considered "*favourable" (F),* 9"*unfavourable recovering" (U/R),* 1 "*unfavourable no change" (U/NC)* and 1 "*unfavourable declining" (U/D).*

Table 3.12 Exmoor Commons				
Common	SSSI unit	Area (ha)	Target assessment	
Northwest group	40	395	U/R	
(Brendon Common	41	454	U/R	
to Ilkerton Ridge)	42	251	F	
	43	280	U/R	
	46	57	U/NC	
	48	296	U/D (see note)	
Dunkery Hill	11(pt)	547	F	
	12(pt)	561	F	
Withypool Common	3	182	U/R	
	4	363	U/R	
	5	224	U/R	
Winsford Hill	7	121	U/R	
	8	108	U/R	
	24(pt)	407	U/R	
Note. MAFF reviewed this common for overgrazing but concluded that it was not "significantly" overgrazed, a view with which EN disagreed.				

In its Management Plan 2007-2012, the Exmoor NPA attaches great significance to the role of grazing animals in maintaining the moorland character. It states (para 2.17):
"The most distinctive elements of the Exmoor landscape are its moors and heaths that afford a sense of wildness that is very rare in southern Britain. These areas have been created by grazing and require grazing to survive. However, changing

agricultural practice is leading to a decline in grazing of moorlands by livestock and a risk of them "scrubbing up" as gorse, bracken and young trees invade."

The question left open, of course, is "How much grazing?" The condition of the moorland was examined in a major study prepared by Land Use Consultants for the Exmoor Society in 2004[71].

The details of its careful and comprehensive review of all aspects of the moorlands are outside the scope of this overview, but, especially in the context of the commons, two short passages are particularly worthy of note. Describing the farming systems, the report states (p64):

"It is important to stress that the moorlands play only a minor role in modern livestock farming on Exmoor, even amongst those farmers with a relatively high proportion of their farm as moorland. Instead, the moorlands provide the relatively few farmers with access to moorland with an extensive area of relatively poor quality grazing large area 'beyond the farm gate' which can be used to take the pressure off and rest the more productive and nutritious in-bye grassland. However, the financial contribution of the moorlands through the ESA scheme is more significant."

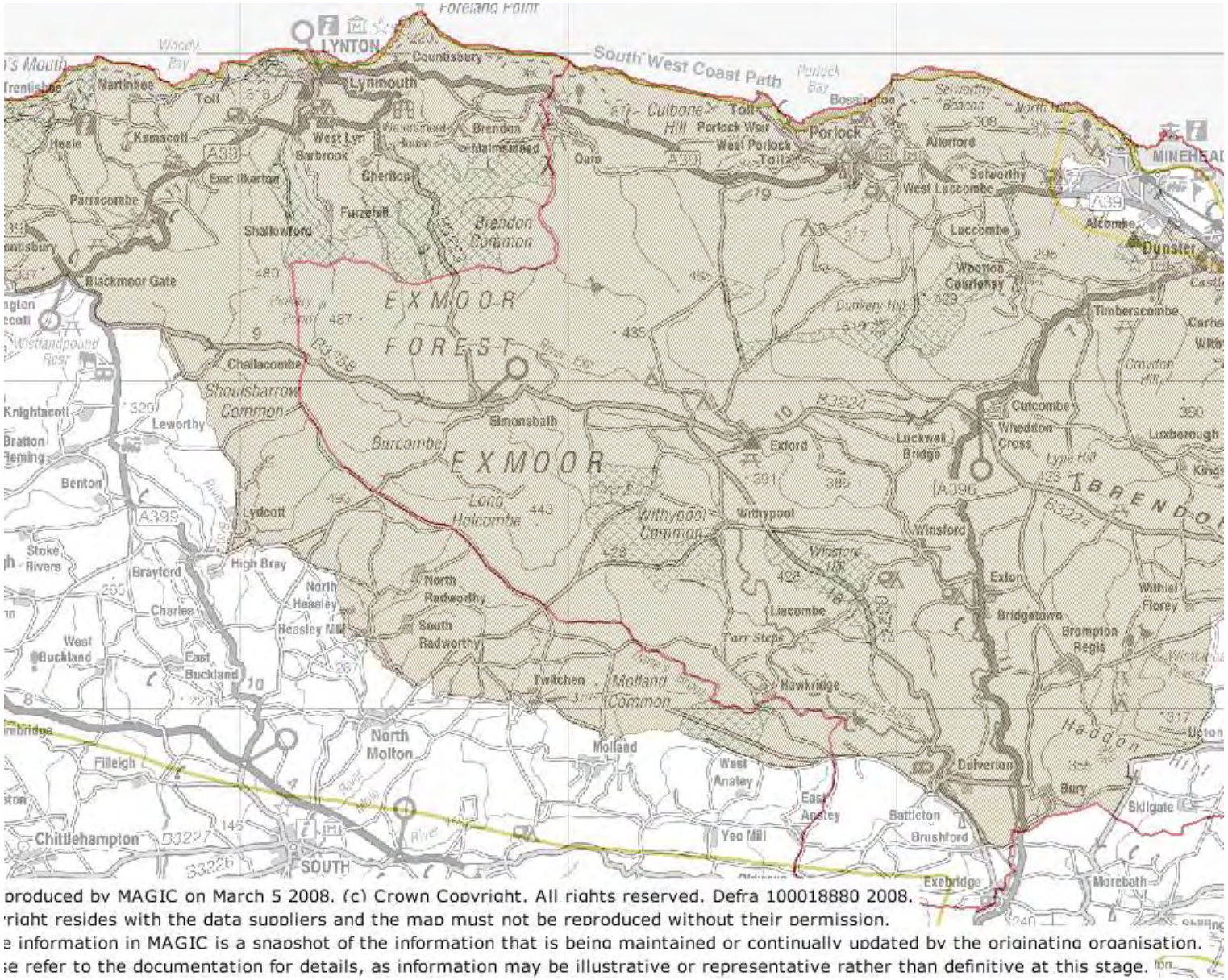
This is an aspect of management that may, at least currently, be relevant only to Exmoor, but the second passage, taken from the Report's overall conclusions (p96) sums up well an issue that affects all upland grazing:

"It is on the topic of the agricultural management of the moorlands that there is most disagreement. Although the outright conflict of the late 1970s and early 1980s is fortunately long past, there remains a gulf of understanding between moorland farmers and the different groups representing conservation interests over what the optimal condition of the moorlands' vegetation cover should be and how best to provide this. On the one hand, the biological monitoring of the moorland SSSIs undertaken by English Nature shows that a high proportion of the moorlands are in poor or even declining condition. On the other hand, many farmers complain that the grazing and burning regimes they are being encouraged to adopt to improve this condition are not practical in agricultural management terms, are not financially viable and will not ultimately be effective."

[71] *Moorland at the Crossroads – The State of the Moorlands of Exmoor 2004*

Fig 3.18

Exmoor
Common Land and
Environmental
Designations



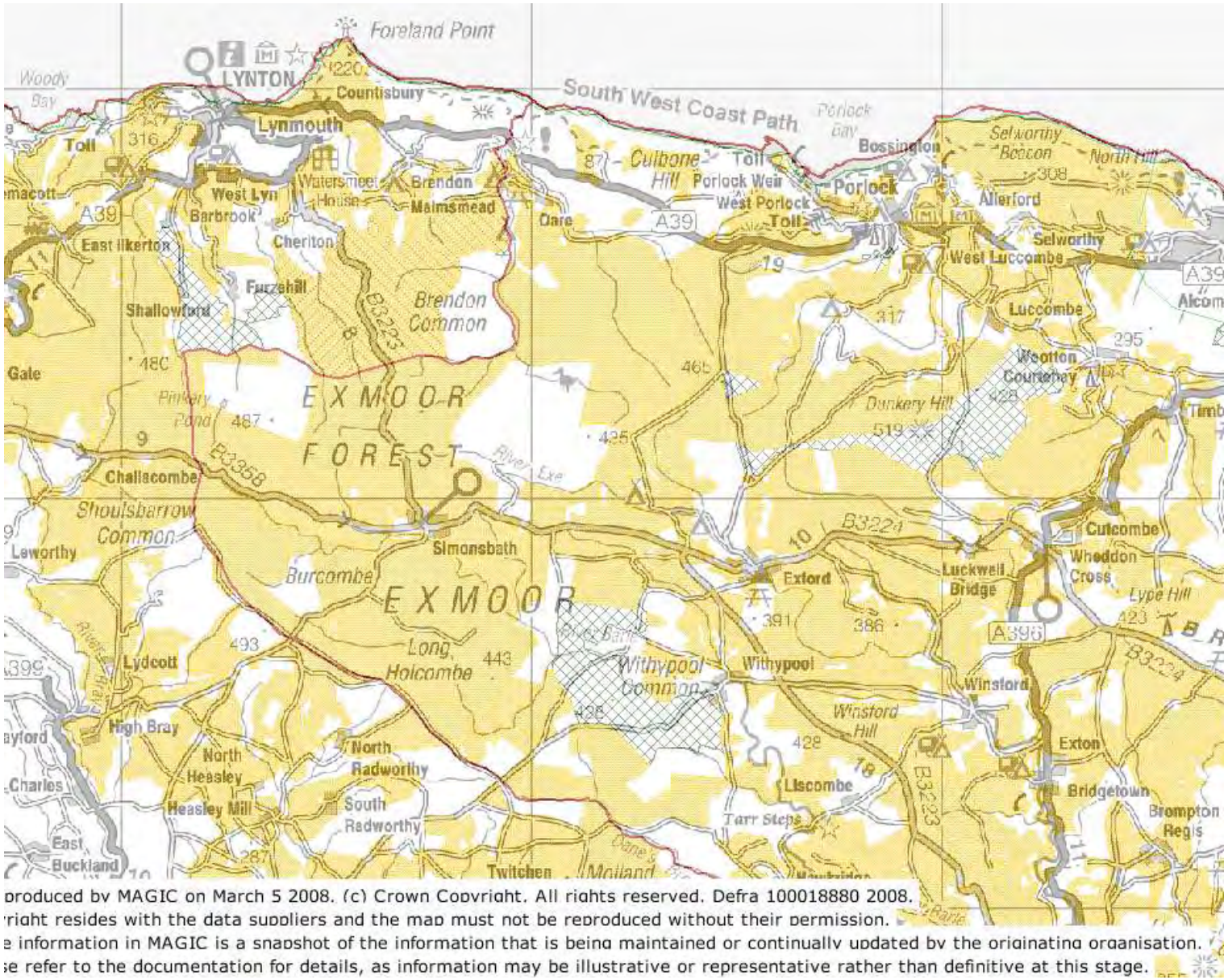
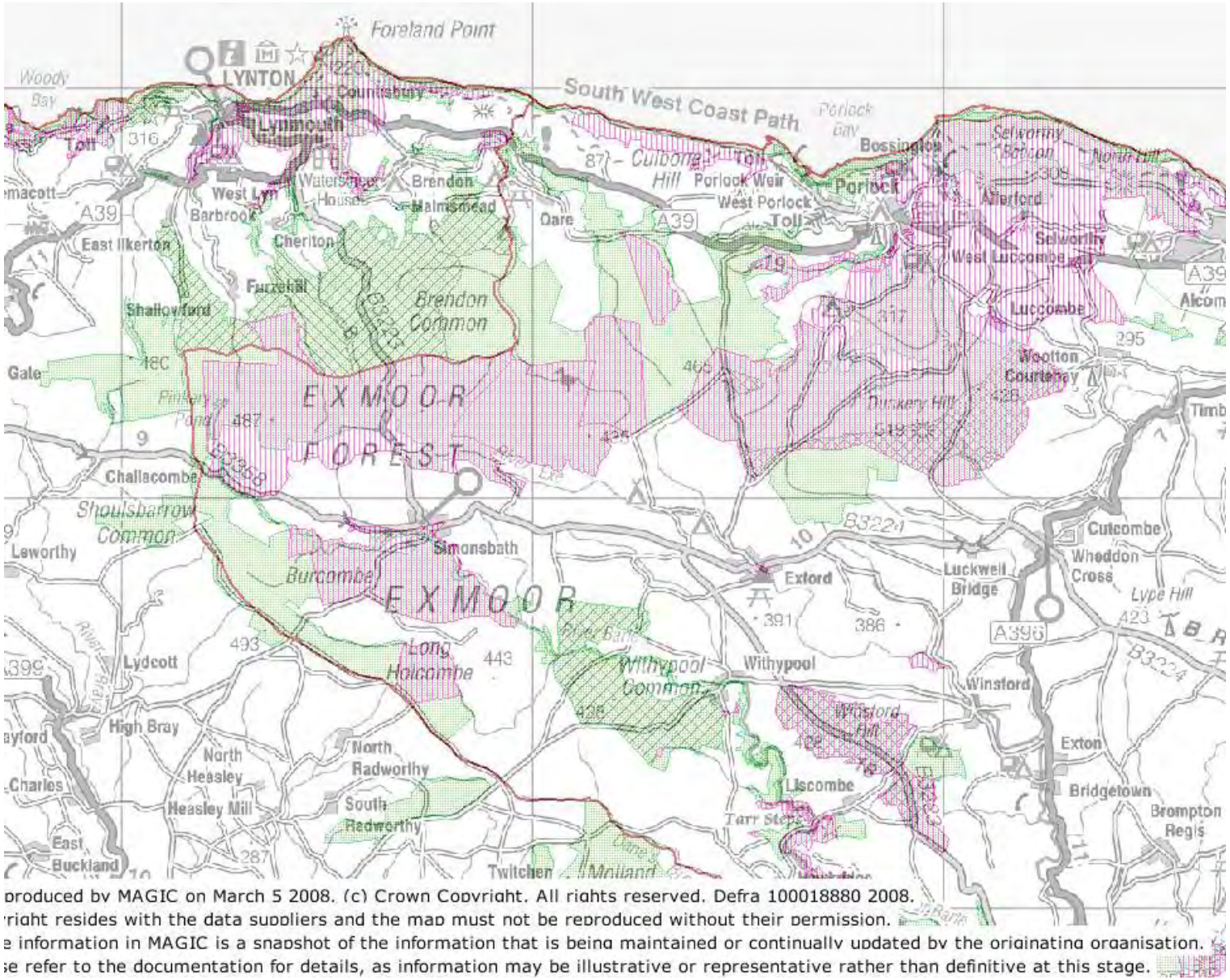


Fig 3.19
Exmoor
ESA Agreements

Counties and Unitary Authorities (GB)
Natural Areas (England)
Environmentally Sensitive Area Agreements (England)
Registered Common Land (England)



Counties and Unitary Authorities (GB)

Natural Areas (England)

WES Agreements (England)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)

Registered Common Land (England)

Fig 3.20
Exmoor
WES Agreements

3.2.2.2 DARTMOOR

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

"*Dartmoor is the largest and most southerly upland landscape in southern England, rising dramatically out of the surrounding lowlands to dominate much of South Devon. To the north are the open, rolling ridges of the Culm and to the south the sheltered and long-settled land of South Devon. At its core is an irregular moorland plateau. Here, the high rainfall sustains a blanket of treacherous bogs and mires. From these, the land rises through heather, bracken and grassland slopes to bare crests with dramatically-shaped tors, clitters and broken rocky slopes. The few stunted and distorted trees are an essential part of the bleak, windswept upland character of the moor which is dominated for much of the year by sombre colours such as browns and greys. The Dartmoor mists and fogs, the absence of settlement and the evocative views of prehistoric monuments, such as standing stones, stone circles, reaves and hill forts, are the essence of this landscape, where only forestry plantations and reservoirs are evidence of modern influence*." (Natural England – JCA 150)

The commons, amounting to 35,882ha within the Dartmoor National Park, are found in 2 main blocks, one (around 17,000ha) lying to the north and west of the B3212 Moretonhampstead to Yelverton road and the other in the south (around 14,000ha). In addition, there is a rather more fragmented group of commons in the east. There are 8 commons over 1,000ha in size, but the contiguity of commons means that the total areas for management purposes are considerably greater than the size of any individual common.[72]

"The vegetation of the common land is almost entirely rough grazing with a small area of woodland. Central areas of heather and grass moorland are surrounded by tracts of rough grassland, bracken, gorse and heathland. Height ranges from 152 m to 621 m (500 ft to 2,039 ft) above sea level." (Dartmoor National Park Factsheet)

DESIGNATIONS AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

The boundaries of the Dartmoor National Park are broadly the same as the Dartmoor Character Area (JCA150) and the Dartmoor Natural Area (Area 92). The 2 largest SSSIs are North Dartmoor (13,560ha)[73]and South Dartmoor (7,113ha); others include East Dartmoor (2,110ha) and Holne Woodlands (1,010ha). These 4 consist almost entirely of common land (see Fig 3.21). The Dartmoor Special Area of Conservation (23,158ha) also is almost entirely commons.

The eligible area of moorland within the Dartmoor ESA was 43,282ha. After a slow start (only 3,537ha entered by 1997), the next 7 years saw a dramatic change in uptake so that by the end of 2004 there were 31,574ha entered in Tier 1E (the basic moorland tier) and 6,431ha in Tier 2B (the higher rate heather moorland tier). Uptake of the winter cattle removal option was 29,328ha.[74]

---

[72] In Devon nearly 100 commons are contiguous with others.

[73] This area broadly coincides with the 3 ranges used for MoD training; access is prohibited on firing days.

[74] *Moorland Vegetation Monitoring in the Dartmoor ESA 1994-2003, ADAS Report to DEFRA*. Although these figures relate to all moorland rather than just commons, the very high correlation between the two means that they also give a valid picture in relation to common land.

Additionally, and more recently, there has been considerable uptake of Wildlife Enhancement Schemes, including Sheep WES, as can be seen from Figs 3.22 and 3.23 (nearly 10,000ha in the North Dartmoor SSSI and around 4,400ha in South Dartmoor)

As well as dealing with access issues, the Dartmoor Commons Act of 1985 enabled the setting up of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council to maintain and promote proper standards of livestock husbandry on the commons in and about the Dartmoor National Park. The Council is composed primarily of the elected representatives of the commoners (other interested parties, such as the NPA, are also represented) and is financed by an annual fee levied on all commoners. Regulations, drawn up by the Council, deal with a variety of aspects of commons management, including health issues and ensuring that animals are properly hefted (leared) in accordance with custom and practice.

GRAZING, GRAZING LEVELS AND CHANGE

Registered rights exist on Dartmoor for:

"*145,000 sheep, 33,000 cattle, 5,450 ponies and 12,330 other potential grazing units. In practice the numbers actually grazed are much smaller. Scottish Blackface sheep are the commonest breed of sheep though Dartmoors are still kept, particularly on the moorland borders. The main breed of cattle is Galloway, sometimes crossed with Hereford*".[75]

A postal survey carried out in 2002 for the Dartmoor NPA by Exeter University included questions as to the use of common grazings. Summarising the results, it concluded:

"The issue of the use of commons grazings is complex since the nature and degree of use of commons grazings is at the heart of the 'farming and the environment' debate. The key
findings were:
• 66 per cent of farms with cattle made no use of commons grazings;
• the overall proportion of farms making any use of commons grazings was 48 per cent;
• the proportion of farmers planning to reduce their use of common grazings over the next few years is greater than the proportion which increased their use over the last few years."[76]

As elsewhere, both past and present grazing levels on large blocks of common land can be difficult to assess. In a detailed Monitoring Report on the Dartmoor ESA for the period 1994-2003, ADAS[77] summarised the problems thus:
"Data recently collated by RDS (unpubl.) for 23 Dartmoor commons suggest that there have been significant reductions in stocking rates under ESA agreements. Overall this indicates a large reduction in annual LUs of c.55%. However, accurate moorland stocking data are notoriously difficult to obtain, especially for commons. This reflects

[75] *Dartmoor NPA Commons Factsheet*
[76] *The State of Farming on Dartmoor 2002, p39*
[77] ADAS, Moorland Vegetation Monitoring in the Dartmoor ESA 1994 – 2003. Defra Project MA01016. October 2005

the difficulty of counting stock on extensive moorlands and hence the reliance on information supplied by graziers and commons associations. Thus, it is uncertain how reliable the figures are, especially those for the pre-ESA agreement period. Conversely, the ESA agreement figures were based on monthly maxima and actual numbers may often be lower, at least in some months (e.g. early-mid summer). It is also the case that on many commons stock reductions had already been imposed by MAFF under overgrazing controls prior to entering ESA agreement. Nevertheless, it is clear that there have been major stocking reductions over the monitoring period."

A current driver in determining stock rates is the Government's PSA targets. Tables 3.13 and 3.14 below list all commons in North and South Dartmoor SSSIs greater than 200ha, from which it can be seen that of the 42 commons listed, 9 are assessed as in "favourable" (F) condition, 29 as "unfavourable recovering" (U/R), 2 as "unfavourable no change" (U/NC) and 2 as "unfavourable declining" (U/D).

Table 3.13[78] North Dartmoor SSSI - units over 200ha

SSSI unit	area (ha)	Target Assessment	WES or SWES	Comments
3	326	F	Y	
4	337	U/R	Y	
8	530	U/R	Y	Sheep/cattle ratio 55/45
9	554	U/R	Y	Sheep/cattle ratio 55/45
10	350	F		
11	476	F		
12	448	U/R		
13	320	U/R		
15	201	U/NC	Y	Condition caused by overgrazing (NE)
17	218	U/R	Y	No cattle Jan - Apr
19	748	U/R		
22	282	U/R	Y	
24	395	F		Sheep, cattle grazing impact light
26	434	U/R		
28	267	F	Y	
29	544	U/R	Y	
30	200	U/R	Y	
31	378	F	Y	
32	333	U/D		Fire
34	366	U/R	Y	
36	431	U/R	Y	
38	202	U/R		Not common land
42	450	U/R	Y	Cattle removed in winter
44	218	F	Y	Cattle removed in winter
46	366	F		
48	405	U/R	Y	
51	251	U/R		Cattle removed in winter
62	233	U/R	Y	Sheep/cattle ratio 85/15
69	207	U/R		Not common land
	10,470			

[78] MAGIC map and NE "Nature on the Map" website

Table 3.14[79] South Dartmoor SSSI - units over 200ha				
SSSI unit	Area (ha)	Assessment	WES or SWES	Comments
3	259	U/D		Not Common
10	273	U/R		Cattle removed in winter
11	200	F		
12	201	U/D		Condition caused by overgrazing (NE)
15	234	U/R	Y	
20	240	U/R	Y	
22	435	U/R	Y	
25	335	U/R	Y	
27	227	U/R	Y	
29	216	U/R	Y	
32	382	U/R		
34	268	U/NC		Condition caused by overgrazing (NE)
37	355	U/R		
40	271	U/R	Y	
48	221	U/R	Y	
50	216	U/R	Y	
	4333			

[79] MAGIC map and NE “Nature on the Map” website

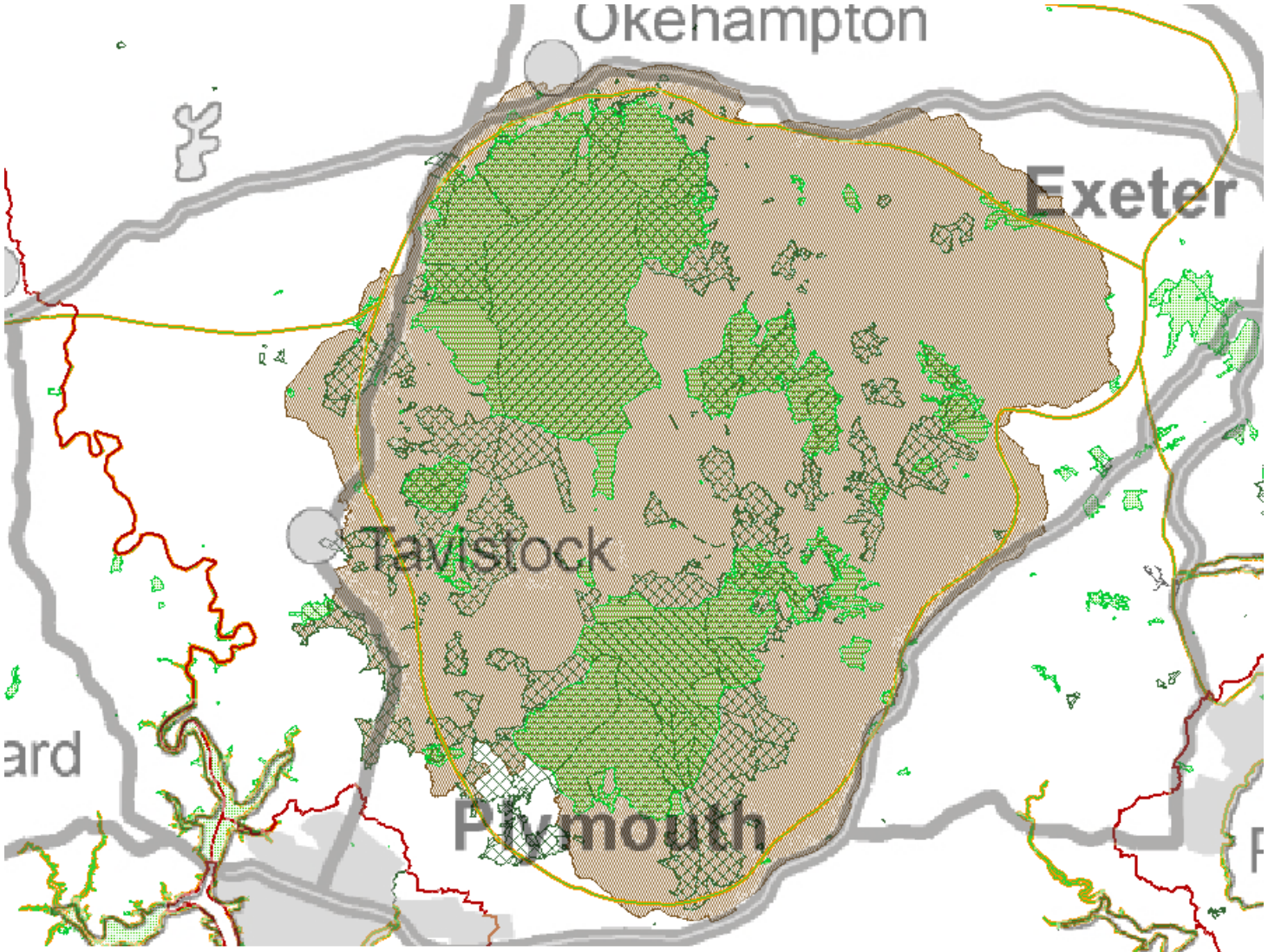


Fig 3.21

Dartmoor Common Land and Environmental Designations

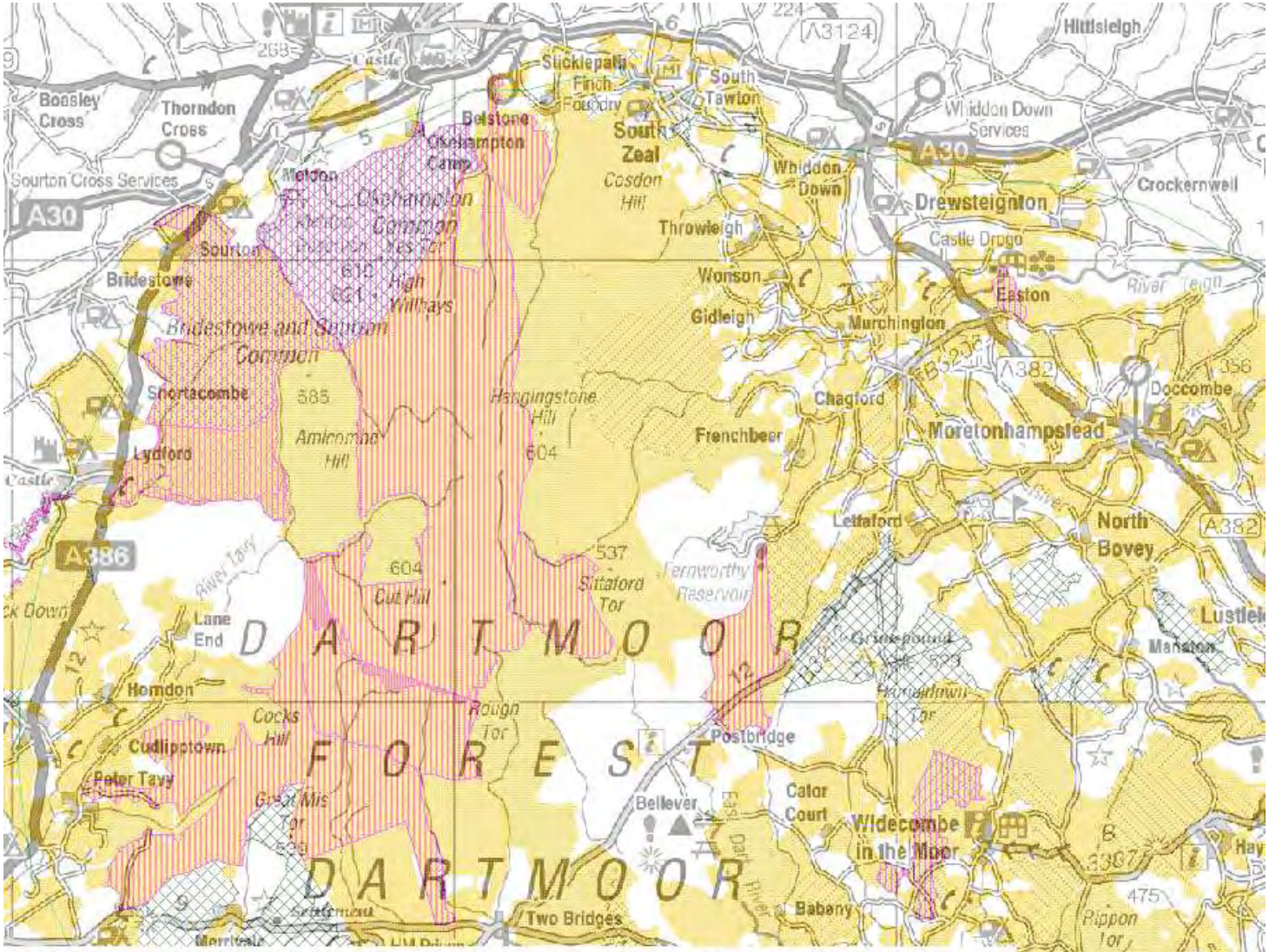


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Fig 3.22

Dartmoor North Agri-Environment Agreements

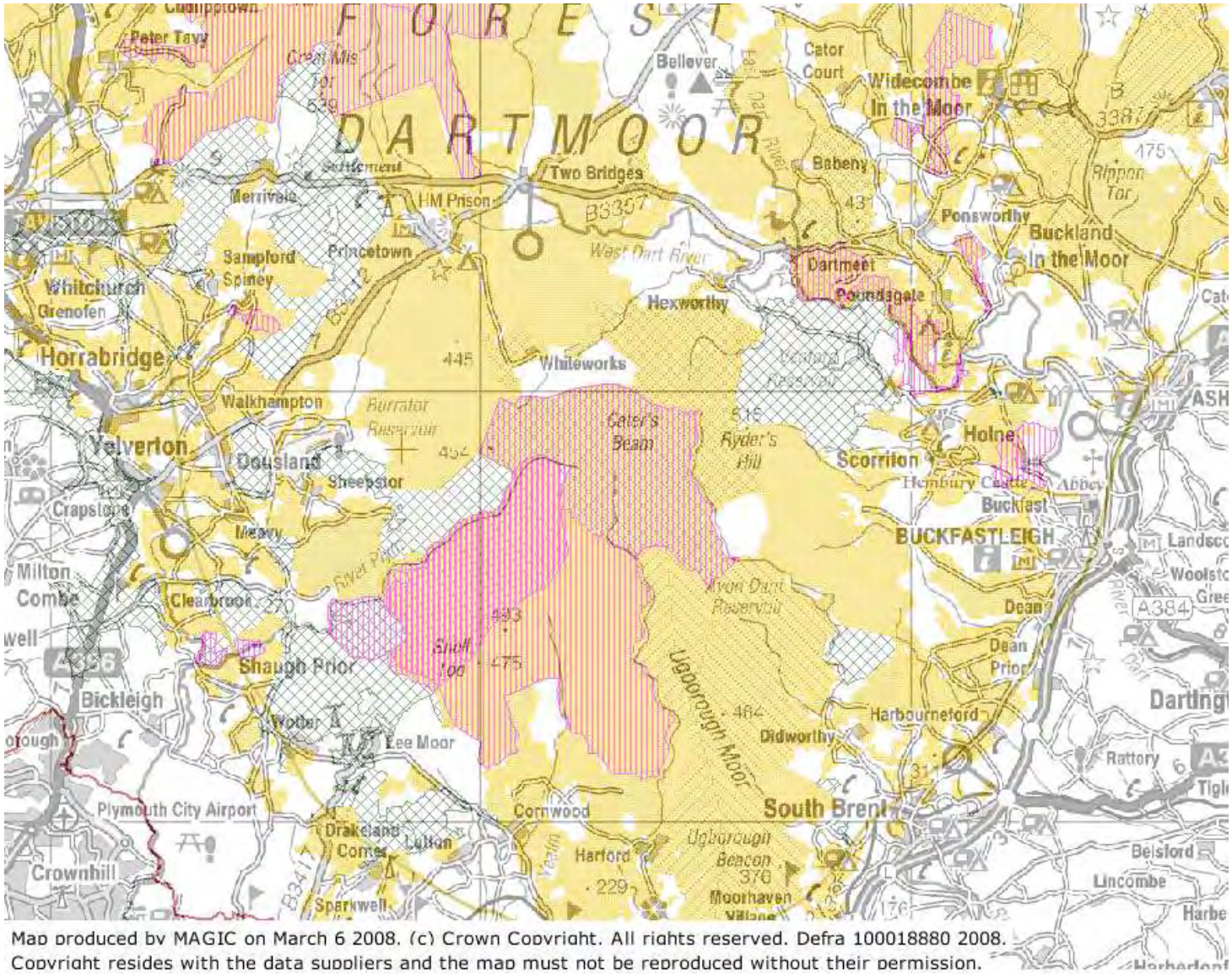

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Fig 3.23

Dartmoor South Agri-Environment Agreements

- Counties and Unitary Authorities (GB)
- Natural Areas (England)
- Joint Character Areas (England)
- WES Agreements (England)
- Environmentally Sensitive Area Agreements (England)
- Registered Common Land (England)

3.2.2.3 BODMIN

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

Situated in the north-east part of Cornwall, Bodmin Moor is the most south-westerly upland area in England.

"Its warm, wet climate, harsh farming conditions and land use history have created a unique area with a distinctive landscape character, a special nature conservation interest and an independent spirit."

More than 30 pastoral commons, totaling 6,687ha, are located within the Bodmin Moor Character Area JCA 153 (Natural Area NA94), from which the above and the following general descriptions are taken. Of the 10 largest commons in Cornwall, 9 are to be found here (up to 1,012ha), though as usual the contiguity of commons (and, also, non-common unenclosed land) can make the total area on the ground much larger for practical management purposes.[80]

"The granite uplands of Bodmin Moor are exposed and desolate, an open, traditionally treeless moorland with extensive peat bogs and mires. Although less extensive than Dartmoor to the east, and to some degree less hostile and threatening, Bodmin is a similar wild moorland landscape topped by granite tors and clitter slopes, where Neolithic and Bronze Age enclosures are also found. The wildness of the landscape is thrown into relief by the small pockets of enclosed pasture. Shallow valleys, dominated by scrub woodland and bogs, in which abandoned prehistoric and medieval hamlets lie alongside modern ones, cut through the higher ground. The central part of the moor is lower, rolling and more gentle in aspect. It is also less remote being crossed by the main A30 road, from Launceston to Bodmin, which carries heavy traffic, especially in the summer."

"Common grazing of the moor by sheep, cattle and ponies has had a major influence on the landscape. The level of grazing means that grass moorland, mainly of purple moor grass and bent grass, is widespread while heather is restricted to limited areas. The different types of moorland vegetation create a varying mosaic of colour and texture, which changes with the seasons. Enclosed and improved pasture provides a further contrast with its brighter green grass. In places the open moorland is often dotted with granite tors and boulders. Reservoirs and forestry plantations break up the moorland, especially in the eastern and southern areas."

"Bodmin Moor's land cover is a mosaic of heather, extensive grassy marshes, wet heaths and gorse scrub. Rocky outcrops are generally present only at the highest points. In the valleys there is a wide variety of scrub, woodland and enclosed pasture fields. Small enclosures within the moorlands and around their edges contain pasture or rough grassland, with a striking difference between the irregular shape of ancient enclosure and the regular pattern of parliamentary enclosure. On the higher ground, the banks are generally treeless, but trees become more common on the lower and more sheltered ground as both forestry plantations and as clumps and shelterbelts around farmsteads."

The dominant habitat for almost all the Bodmin Moor commons is NCC Phase 1 category B11, unimproved acidic grassland. However, as the Biological Survey

[80] fn Nearly half of all commons in Cornwall are contiguous with others – Biological Survey (Cornwall) p8

reports, other categories of grassland are present, though in much smaller quantities, on commons such as Cardinham Downs CL138 (Improved grassland B4 - 172.06ha) and Tolborough Downs CL685 (Marshy grassland B5 – 54.91ha). Wet heaths (D2 and D6) are represented on at least 7 of the commons totalling over 1,500ha, while valley mires and flushes (E21 and E31) are also to be found, though amounting in all to less than 200ha.

DESIGNATIONS AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

Bodmin Moor constitutes a major part of the much-fragmented Cornwall AONB (see Fig 3.24). The Bodmin Moor North SSSI includes almost all the common land north of the A30 road, the commons forming around 75% of the total SSSI area (3,553ha out of 4,889ha).

Almost all the Bodmin Moor commons now have Countryside Stewardship agreements, in part brought about through the existence of the "Bodmin Moor Project", a 2-year pilot project initiated by the then MAFF as part of the "Upland Experiment". "To bring common land into environmentally sensitive agricultural production" was one of the aims of the project, and 30% of the common land was entered into Countryside Stewardship under it[81]. Additionally, all the commons that are SSSIs (with one exception) are also in Sheep Wildlife Enhancement Schemes (see Table 3.15 and Fig 3.25).

GRAZING, GRAZING LEVELS AND CHANGE

Bodmin Moor was one of the areas examined in a survey of farmers in 2007, undertaken for the South West Uplands Federation by Land Use Consultants. The survey showed that nearly 80% of respondents held common grazing rights, and about half of these exercised them. Most farmers used their rights to graze sheep (40% of respondents), ahead of cattle (about 35%). Ponies were grazed by 18% of respondents. The survey showed that the overall balance of livestock kept (all land), measured in LSUs, was 79% cattle as contrasted with 21% sheep, but this ratio almost certainly does not reflect the position on the commons where the proportion of sheep is likely to be much higher.

The Biological Survey (Cornwall) p25 lists the livestock types observed on those commons visited during the course of the survey. With the exception of only 3 of the smaller commons, both sheep and cattle were present on all commons listed. Horses were present on almost all the commons that are included in the Bodmin Moor North SSSI, though they were less frequently recorded on the non-SSSI commons.

In its Natural Area Profile of Bodmin Moor (made in 1995), English Nature noted that "*changes in agricultural practices, particularly since the Second World War, have affected the critical balance of over/under grazing on the Moor*". It continued:

"A reduction in control over the common land and the introduction of agricultural subsidies after the Second World War encouraged farmers to increase livestock numbers, replace native sheep and cattle with more hardy breeds which can stay out

[81] *CCRU and ADAS "Economic Evaluation of the Upland Experiment" 2003*

Table 3.15 Bodmin Moor Commons				
CL No.	Area	SSSI	Sheep WES	Countryside Stewardship
107	162.13			Yes
108	529.55			Yes
110	433.20	433.20	Yes	Yes
124	945.53	945.53	Yes	Yes
128	82.17			Yes
130	77.92			No
134	62.35			Yes
137	499.40			Yes
138	172.06			Yes
142	87.00	87.00	Yes	Yes
143	14.57	14.57	Yes	Yes
144	49.60	49.60	Yes	Yes
145	65.80	65.80	Yes	Yes
148	352.23			Yes
149	182.19			Yes
158	157.68			No
159	158.34			Yes
162	6.26			Yes
164	116.68			Yes
165	221.00	221.00	Yes	Yes
166	103.64	103.64	Yes	Yes
181	14.57	14.57	Yes	Yes
183	145.75	145.75	Yes	Yes
184	97.10	97.10	Yes	Yes
185	66.14	66.14	Yes	Yes
186	445.34	445.34	Yes	Yes
187	178.14	178.14	Yes	Yes
194	599.19	599.19	Yes	Yes
195	31.90	31.90	Yes	Yes
685	54.91	54.91		No
	6,112.34	3,553.38		
NB Some of the smaller commons have not been included				

on the Moor throughout the year and to provide winter feeding. These activities promoted the development of unimproved grassland at the expense of heathland and more diverse vegetation over much of the north Moor and parts of the south Moor.

However, in contrast, the smaller, isolated commons of the south Moor have suffered from a lack of grazing because farmers are unwilling to put their stock on commons without cattle grids. In these areas undergrazing has encouraged the spread of Gorse and Bracken with the subsequent loss of heathland.

The effects of undergrazing can also be seen on some parts of the north Moor where the wet heathland vegetation is dominated by rank Purple Moor-grass. This is probably because farmers are using the inbye land rather than the Moor during early summer, the time of year when Purple Moor-grass is at its most palatable.

The addition of sea sand and fertilisers, especially since the Second World War, has also affected the vegetation. Large patches of unimproved grassland and heath have been replaced by semi-improved grassland. Livestock prefer the sweeter grasses of the sanded areas, creating localised areas of overgrazing. Shepherding may have a role to play on Bodmin Moor to encourage stock to graze the less palatable moorland vegetation. Therefore, both prolonged overgrazing and undergrazing are significant problems on Bodmin Moor, leading to the loss of heathland, deterioration of other vegetation types and the consequent decline and loss of species which rely on this habitat type, such as Nightjar, Hen Harrier, Stonechat and the Small Red Damselfly (English Nature, 1993)."

The Biological Survey, recommended that grazing pressure should be relaxed on 9 of the commons that it visited, 5 within and 4 outside the SSSI areas. It is not clear whether this implies that it saw no problems with the grazing regimes on the other commons.

For PSA target purposesin 2008 Natural England assessed 8 of the 10 SSSI units that consist of commons as "unfavourable recovering", one as "unfavourable no change" and one as "favourable".

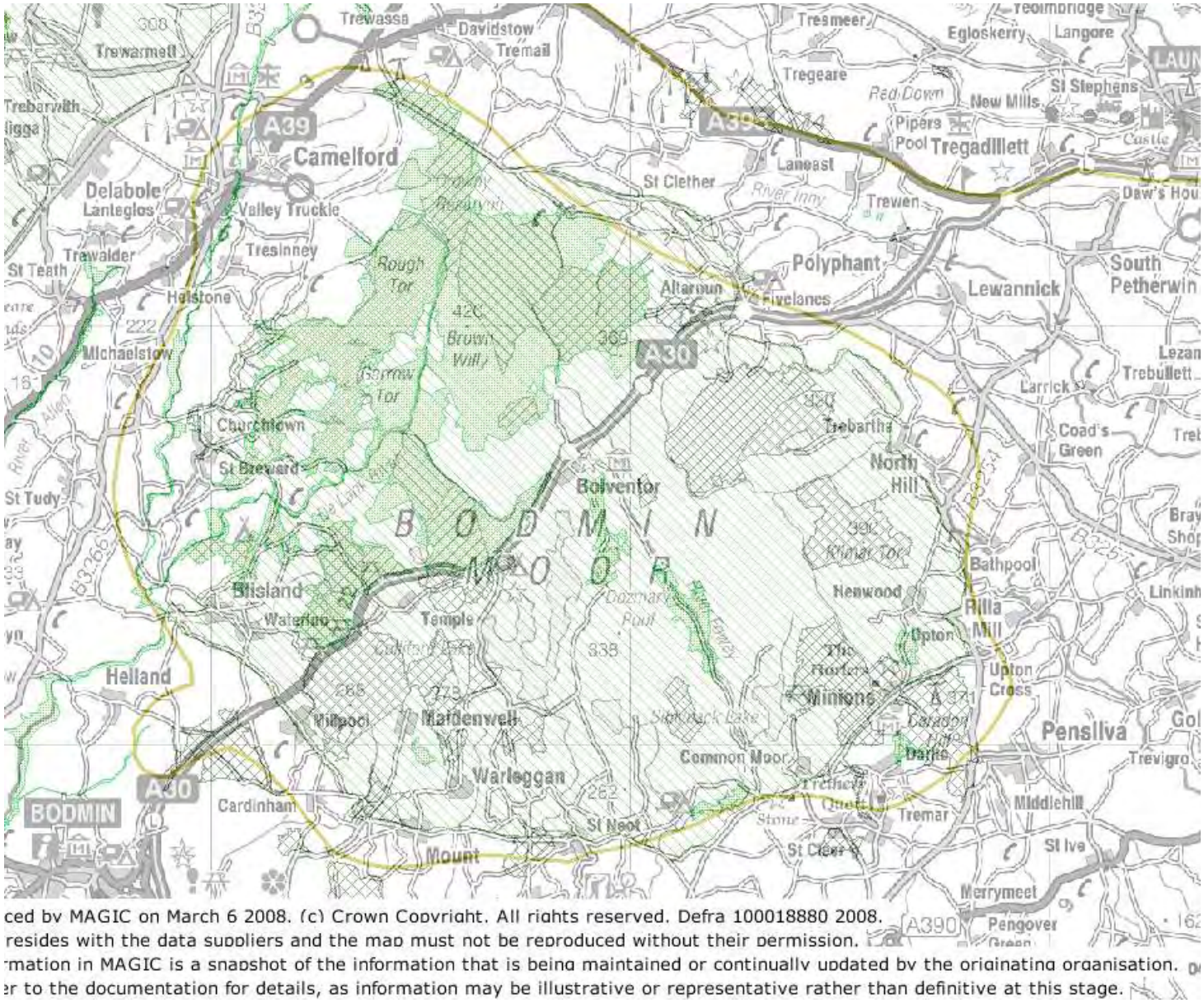

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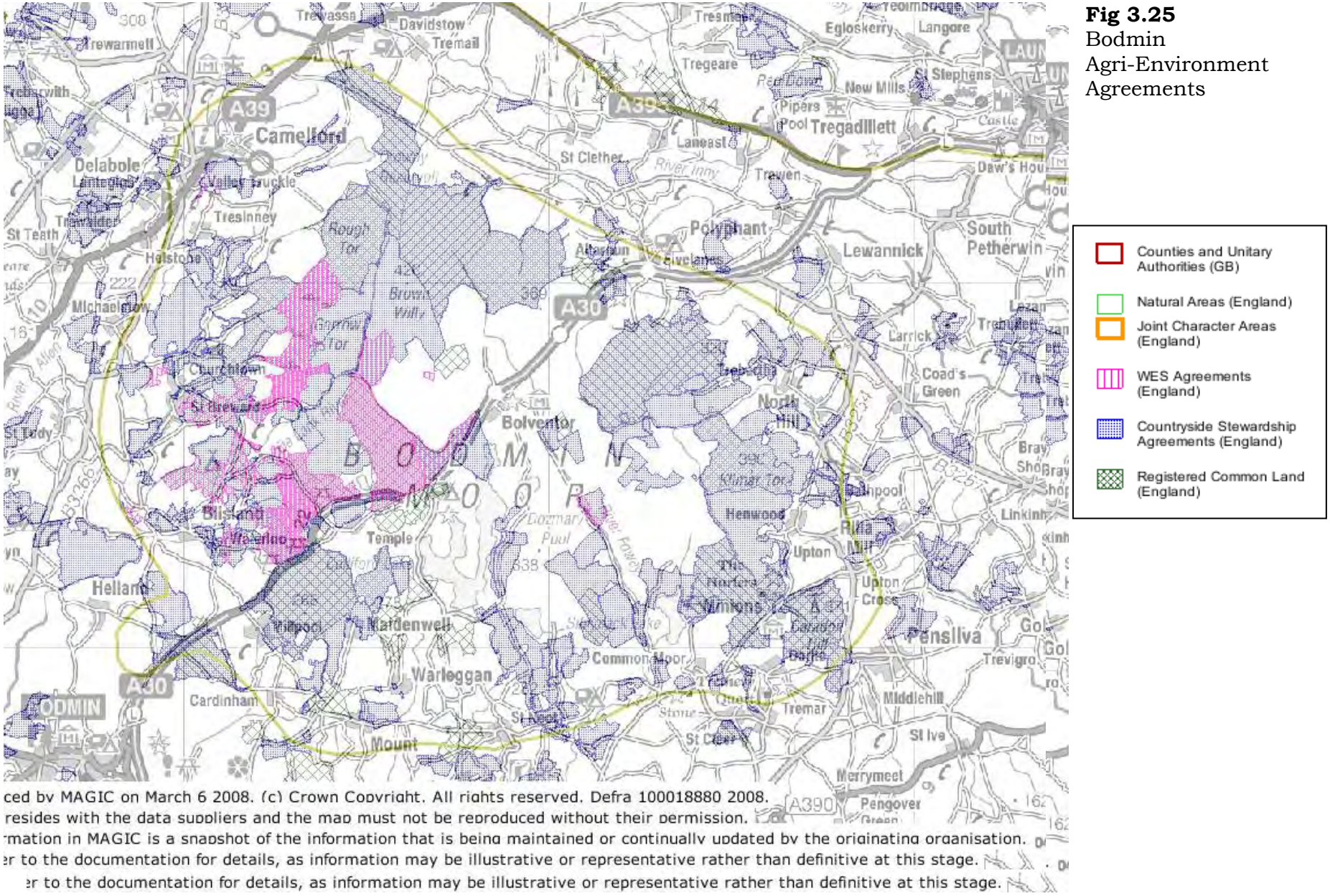
Fig 3.24
Bodmin
Common Land and
Environmental
Designations

- Counties and Unitary Authorities (GB)
- Natural Areas (England)
- Joint Character Areas (England)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)
- Registered Common Land (England)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England)



er to the documentation for details, as information may be illustrative or representative rather than definitive at this stage.

Fig 3.25
Bodmin
Agri-Environment
Agreements

3.3 LOWLAND COMMONS

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LANDCOVER

On lowland commons, in contrast to many upland areas, it is undergrazing (or the complete absence of grazing) that has for several decades been a major environmental concern.

"Specialisation and intensification in lowland farming has led to increasing areas of lowland commons being isolated from the farming systems around them. Consequently, many commoners keep no livestock on their farms, so grazing management of the common no longer takes place. In other cases, the land to which the rights are linked is no longer used for farming at all. Some commons are traversed by roads and farmers are very concerned about the number of stock killed or injured by cars; lack of fencing for stock management can be a significant deterrent to commoners exercising grazing rights. Also, on commons with high recreational use, uncontrolled dogs can make stock keeping especially difficult.

Where undergrazing occurs, the common will change in nature from a grazed habitat to scrub and ultimately woodland. Areas of scrub are important in providing diversity but they should not be allowed to increase at the expense of more highly valued open habitats. Appropriate levels of grazing prevent scrub from taking over and altering the character of a common. It also maintains the general quality and species richness of the ground vegetation. Lack of grazing or undergrazing results in the loss of a wide range of flowering plants and associated birds and invertebrates typical of heathland or grassland."[82]

Although in terms of total area common land is heavily concentrated on the uplands of northern and southwest England,[83] it is in the lowlands that the greatest number of commons are found (see Fig 3.28). Nearly 88% of all commons are below 250m in altitude, though the majority of these have no registered rights[84]. This does not mean, however, that they cannot be grazed, since their owners will normally be entitled to use or let the residual rights.

DESIGNATIONS, AGRI-ENVIRONMENT AGREEMENTS, GRAZING AND GRAZING LEVELS

In terms of statutory designations, the contribution of lowland commons is immense. For example, there are approximately 22,094ha of registered common land in Hampshire, Surrey and East and West Sussex[85]. Of these, 87% (19,248ha) are designated SSSI, which is 54% of the total SSSI land in these counties. On these SSSI commons, the 3 major broad habitat categories are "Dwarf shrub heath-

[82] *English Nature, Common land – unravelling the mysteries. 1999*

[83] The Biological Survey notes that the 834 commons above the 250m contour line cover 267,000ha, over 70% of the English total.

[84] 65% of all commons are without registered rights.

[85] Source: Biological Survey.

lowland" – 9,828ha (51%), "Broad-leaved, mixed and yew woodland-lowland" – 4,150ha (22%) and "Littoral sediment" – 2,675ha (14%)[86].
In 2005, 27% of these were assessed for PSA target purposes as being in adverse condition, with undergrazing being recorded as the cause on 27 of the management units (1,805ha).

Where an owner of common land, such as the National Trust or a local authority, wishes to re-introduce or increase grazing, it has a number of options, none of which is without its problems. It may be that there are commoners with livestock willing to use, or to increase their use of, the common if changes can be made e.g. the provision of fencing or cattle grids. But often it will be the owning body itself that has to take on the direct responsibility. To assist in this situation, the Grazing Animals Project was set up in 1997. It is core funded by Natural England, with additional funding from other conservation bodies, and runs a wide range of services including advisory publications and training courses[87].

Often the process of introducing grazing will start with a consultant's feasibility study or through initiatives such as county Wildlife Trusts e.g. with the Herefordshire Commons Community Project. A number of the issues likely to be involved are mentioned in the passage quoted at the beginning of this section, but, to amplify these, 4 specific examples are now briefly considered; they illustrate a range of situations, both in a broadly rural setting and in a more urban context[88].

THE WIDER PICTURE
In the introduction to each of the 8 regional JCA volumes, the Countryside Commission makes an impassioned plea for greater recognition of local distinctiveness:

"Most of us have a strong sense of local pride. As we move rapidly towards a global society, we increasingly value the 'anchor' that our local identity gives us. We have pride in both our immediate surroundings, whether it is town or country, and also in feeling that we are part of something that is different, that has a unique sense of place. The character of the countryside is an important part of what many of us take pride in. It may be that we live in the countryside, or that it provides our workplace. It may be that we visit it often, or travel through it. It may even be that we have only experienced it through other media - literature, art, television. But for one or all of these reasons, we identify and take pride in the character of England's countryside.

The irony is that as we increasingly begin to appreciate our local distinctiveness, we are also beginning to realise how vulnerable that distinctiveness can be. In an age of mass production, standardisation, economies of scale and international markets,

[86] *South East Commons and their Conservation Management* – a report by Entec Ltd in association with Asken Ltd for English Nature and the Countryside Agency. 2005

[87] See *www.grazinganimalsproject.org.uk.* See also the *Lowland Grassland Management Handbook* (Natural England)

[88] See also the Malvern Hills section, above, and the case study commons elsewhere in this report. There are many other examples, each with their own specific issues, where grazing has been increased, re-introduced, or contemplated; see e.g. Chailey Commons LNR (E Sussex), Chorleywood Common (Chilterns), Allonby dunes (South Solway AONB), Minchinhampton, Rodborough and Painswick Commons (Cotswolds) and Holt's Heath Common (Dorset).

those elements of our countryside that have traditionally been driven by local influences are being quickly eroded. The materials and style of new buildings, the breed of cattle in the field, the shape of the hedgerows, the village sign, the farm gates and buildings are just a few examples. In all of these there is a trend towards uniformity: it is becoming ever more difficult to identify from your surroundings which part of the countryside you are in. It is, therefore, more important than ever that we understand what contributes to the character of England's countryside.
Then, we can recognise the impact on this character of the decisions we take, both as individuals and as a society."

Although these paragraphs are written in general terms, to many people lowland commons are a focus for the sentiments expressed. Each common has its own local character and often reflects much of the history of an area. It is evident that an appropriate grazing regime for many commons is increasingly being regarded, not just as a facet of history, but as a vital conservation management tool in the present day. The greater the interval since the cessation of grazing by commoners, the more challenging, the more elaborate and the more expensive it would seem that the re-instatement process is likely to be. This may well sound a warning note for the potential consequences of excessive de-stocking on the upland commons also.

EXAMPLE COMMONS TO ILLUSTRATE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

MALVERN HILLS

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

"The Malvern Hills comprise a narrow ridge of rounded hills rising majestically to 400 m or more above the Severn and Avon Vales to the east. To the west they subside to the Herefordshire Lowlands and to the Herefordshire Plateau in the North West. They are one of England's most striking landforms, an eastern outlier landscape of the rugged hills of the Welsh Marches." (JCA103)

The ridge (the "Main Hills") divides naturally into 3 main sections, North (Common CL16 (Worcestershire) – 238ha), Central (CL14 – 152ha) and South (CL 10,11 and 12 – 210ha). Castlemorton Common (CL9 – 275ha) is a gently undulating lowland common to the east of the ridge, contiguous with CL12 and also managed by the Malvern Hills Conservators.

The Main Hills are primarily acidic grassland with a thin soil cover, broken at times by rock outcrops. Bracken, gorse and scrub border these more open areas, with semi-natural broadleaved woodland on the steep slopes. The Biological Survey data for the Main Hills, compiled in 1996 but mainly from earlier records, records the 4 principal Phase 1 habitat types as follows:

Table 3.16

Habitat type		Area (ha)	As % of total area
C11	Continuous bracken	185	31%
B11	Unimproved acid grassland	173	29%
A111	Semi-natural broadleaved woodland	99	16%
A21	Continuous scrub	36	6%
	Other	107	18%
		600	100%

DESIGNATIONS AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENT AGREEMENTS

The whole of the Main Hills is within the Malvern Hills SSSI (746ha); part of Castlemorton Common (79ha) is also designated as an SSSI. These commons are the central feature of the much larger Malvern Hills AONB (105km²), Malvern Hills JCA103 (83km²) and Malvern Hills and Teme Valley Natural Area 57 (276km²) (See Fig 3.26.) None of the land has LFA status.

From Fig 3.27, it can be seen that all the common land within the SSSIs is covered by WES agreements. The North and Central Main Hills are in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and, since November 2007, Higher Level Environmental Stewardship. Only the non-SSSI part of Castlemorton Common is without any agri-environmental agreement.

The Malvern Hill Conservators was first set up by Act of Parliament in 1884, and with extended powers given by subsequent Acts, the Conservators are responsible

for the management of all the commons in the area, together with other land acquired mainly by purchase (about 1,200ha in all). The responsibilities of the 29 members (part appointed by local authorities and part elected locally) are, in brief, the protection of the area from encroachments or damaging change to its natural aspect, and the maintenance of it as an open space for public recreation and enjoyment. The Conservators have power to make byelaws, but must not do anything that would interfere with commoners' rights.

GRAZING, GRAZING LEVELS AND CHANGE

Although Castlemorton Common has continued to be used by commoners for the grazing of cattle and sheep on a reasonably steady basis, a decline in the use of the Main Hills, and resultant undergrazing, has been of increasing concern to the Conservators. The 2000-2005 Management Plan conveniently summarises the near abandonment of use thus:

Table 3.17 The approximate number of grazing animals on the Main Hills since the 1960s.

	Prior to 1960	1966	1979	1990	1997
Sheep	1500	850	550	450	250
Cattle	150	50	0	0	0

The plan considered the reasons for this decline to include the hazards of road traffic accidents, attacks by dogs, fear of stock wandering away and downturns in the profitability of livestock farming. The foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001 led to a further decline in grazing levels.

In response to this situation, the Conservators obtained Heritage Lottery funding to establish its own flock in the southern Main Hills.[89] By 2003, this flock numbered 220 ewes. Following a successful application for s194 consent to erect temporary fencing, and with the help of a Countryside Stewardship agreement, a small herd of Galloway cattle has been introduced onto the North and Central Hills.[90]

In their Management Plan 2006-2012, the Conservators comment favourably on the effectiveness of the re-introduction of grazing in controlling scrub, bracken and grass growth. According to the Minutes for the Conservators' meeting of 10 January 2008, current stocking on the Central Hills is 24 cows and followers and about 250 ewes belonging to a grazier; the Conservators themselves own and manage the stock on the North Hills (14 cattle and 50 ewes) and the Southern Hills (150 ewes). However, the Management Plan indicates that the Board is currently considering ways in which it might move away from having a direct role in maintaining a grazing regime:

[89] The Conservators do not themselves own any common rights, but as owners they can take up residual, unused rights.

[90] The s194 application, available on the Conservators' website, sets out in detail the proposed use of and justification for the temporary fencing. On the Conservators' management role more generally, see also the 2005 Report to Defra by Land Use Consultants on the *Agricultural Management of Common Land.*

"While the Hills and Commons are all Common Land and therefore have grazing rights across them these are not always taken up for various reasons. Where this is the case the Malvern Hills Conservators take up these unused rights and carry out the grazing with their own "Conservation Flock/Herd". Where graziers are still active they are encouraged and supported in their actions and financial help is sought from various countryside stewardship schemes. Ideally common graziers would be the only graziers on common land and the organisation will continue to work towards this goal but until this is the case the Conservators will intervene and deliver the grazing where necessary.

Encouraging commoners to graze is not an easy task because many of the properties with commoners' rights have passed to individuals with little or no interest in exercising them. If this trend continues it is difficult to see how the tradition of a working common can be maintained. In the past the National Trust have bought farms/properties adjacent to Commons that they own with rights attached and let them with the condition that the common rights of grazing are exercised at an agreed level. This prevents the Trust from having to implement the grazing themselves while still maintaining their role as a landowner rather than a farmer. This option is something that will be considered by the Board."[91]

EWYAS HAROLD COMMON

This privately owned, rural common in Herefordshire (CL16) extends to 51ha; its history has recently been published as part of a detailed study[92]. From its earlier state in the mid-nineteenth century as a valued, productive resource for the community, with its use regulated by the manorial court, stocking levels were well in decline by the 1960s. The larger farmers who, although few in number, accounted for a high proportion of the rights, "*were not interested in maintaining stock on the common. It was too distant from their holdings, the quality of grazing was too poor and the problems of managing their stock were too great*". In the late 1960s the common was grazed by about 100 sheep, up to 40 cattle and a few horses, but despite efforts to improve stocking levels by active management, the spiral of lower stocking levels and greater scrub regeneration proved irreversible:

"There has been only one 'active commoner' still turning out stock for the last decade. The Commoners Society agreed to allow him to graze up to one hundred sheep above the registered rights attached to his property. However, frequently there is no stock on the common during the summer months (the period when common grazing is permitted). The grazing is too poor to turn out ewes with lambs or fatten lambs for market; it is now considered suitable only for 'dry sheep' (pers. comm. RW and LL). The old smallholders, commoners with typically twenty sheep, poultry and a few cattle, who were still utilising their rights, have died or left the common. Their properties are now occupied by people whose lifestyles or interests are incompatible with maintaining stock.

The more overgrown the common, the more difficult it is to manage stock on an unenclosed area, and the poorer the quality of the grazing. This all conspires to ensure that the larger farmers are unlikely to re-stock the common." (p123)

[91] p42. See also the report in the Malvern Gazette 11 January 2008.
[92] *Parkes P. A pasture in common. Rural History (2005)* ***16****, 1, 111-132*

ASHDOWN FOREST (CL1)

The Forest covers an area of 2,590ha between Uckfield and East Grinstead; it is all common land and since 1988 has been owned by East Sussex County Council. It has had its own legislation since 1885, the most recent Act being in 1974. Although there are some 730 rights holders, grazing had almost completely ceased by 1983, with an attendant increase of woodland and bracken at the expense of the former grass-heath mix. A review of aerial photographs taken from the 1920s to 2002 suggested that woodland coverage had increased from 7.1% to 49% of the area[93].

In 1985, the Conservators commissioned a study which recommended a combination of mechanical measures and extensive grazing in a safe (i.e. from traffic and uncontrolled dogs), enclosed area. By 1998, the enclosed area had been enlarged to 547ha and was stocked with 900 Beulah sheep and 100 Welsh Black and Shetland cattle. In 2004 a Grazing Action Plan was produced, recommending that grazing should be extended into the open area of the Forest[94].

The Plan concluded:

"Consultation with a number of heathland wildlife site managers has shown that many are determined to introduce grazing. In every case, these managers are experiencing difficulties and it is a measure of how valuable they consider grazing to be that they continue. The Conservators will also face difficulties in the short term, but once grazing is made possible, the future of the Forest heathland will be more certain."

The latest development, partly in an attempt to overcome the problems associated with fencing, has been to introduce "close shepherding". In 2007, the Conservators bought 56 Hebridean ewes and took into employment a shepherd with dogs to graze selected areas of the Forest. Each night the sheep are brought back to a fenced enclosure. The project is by way of a trial and will be reviewed in 2010.

CANNOCK CHASE (CL89 and 92)

The possible re-introduction of grazing to Cannock Chase (701ha) and Brindley Heath (148ha) in Staffordshire presents challenges that are similar in many ways to those on Epping Forest. Both are close to densely populated areas, both are crossed by busy roads and both have high recreational use. However, unlike Epping Forest, Cannock Chase has no recent tradition of grazing[95].

Cannock Chase lies within the Cannock Chase AONB (6,800ha) and the commons are designated SSSI and SAC, especially for their extensive heathland and lowland

[93] Source*: English Nature Research Report 535, Ashdown Forest – a review of grazing*

[94] *English Nature Research Report 602*

[95] There was considerable use by the military during WWI and 2, as well as coal mining during the 19th and 20th centuries, though it appears that it was grazed by its own breed of sheep, the Cannock Grey-faced, until around 1900.

mires. Cannock Chase District Council undertakes a small amount of conservation grazing, using Dexter cattle, on 3 of its nearby Local Nature Reserves, with management entirely by its own Countryside Service.

Staffordshire County Council (the owner of the commons) and others have recently commissioned a study to assess the feasibility of introducing grazing and the practical implications involved in any such undertaking[96]. At the end of a comprehensive review, the Study strongly recommended the introduction of a grazing scheme. It noted, among other factors, that scrub and tree species were already beginning to re-colonise areas after earlier clearance work, the level of deer and rabbit browsing and grazing being insufficient to contain these. Fencing options were reviewed to counter the traffic danger. The Study also noted that the recreational value of the area was extremely high[97]. It suggested an initial stocking of 16 female Exmoor ponies and 58 cows for the main site, plus 21 beef cattle on Brindley Heath; it was considered preferable that grazing levels should start low, with the option of increase if monitoring showed that the objectives were not being met.

In a subsequent survey, the County Council found that 65% of respondents expressed interest in the re-introduction of grazing, though with some reservations about the move if it meant areas being closed to the public[98].

[96] *Penny Anderson Associates Ltd, Cannock Chase Grazing Feasibility Study*

[97] There are an estimated 1.27 million visits per year, with some 22% of visitors walking dogs on the site.

[98] See the report in the *Express and Star newspaper, 5 October 2007*

Fig 3.26

Malvern
Common Land and Environmental
Designations

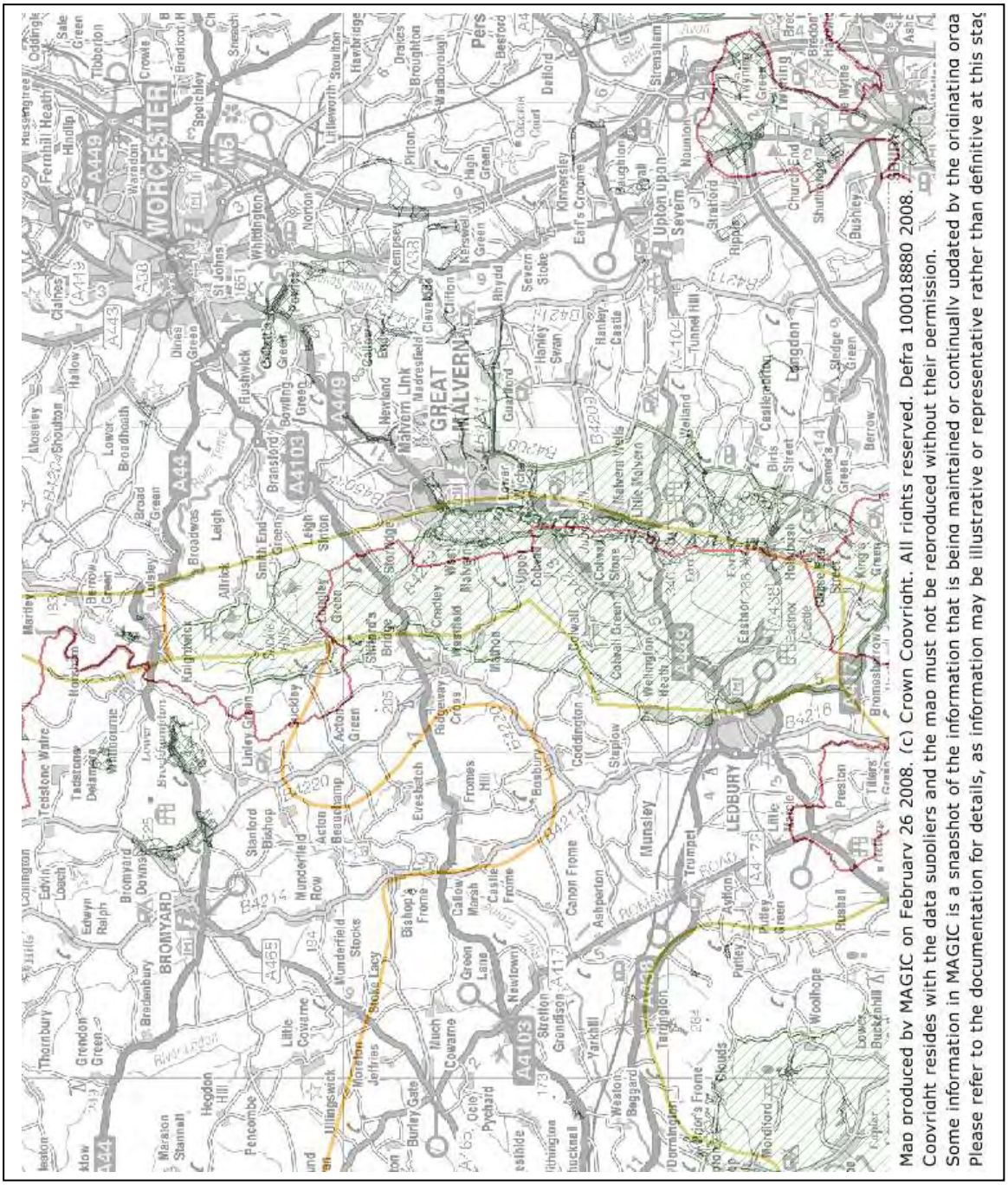


Fig 3.27

Malvern
Agri-Environment
Agreements

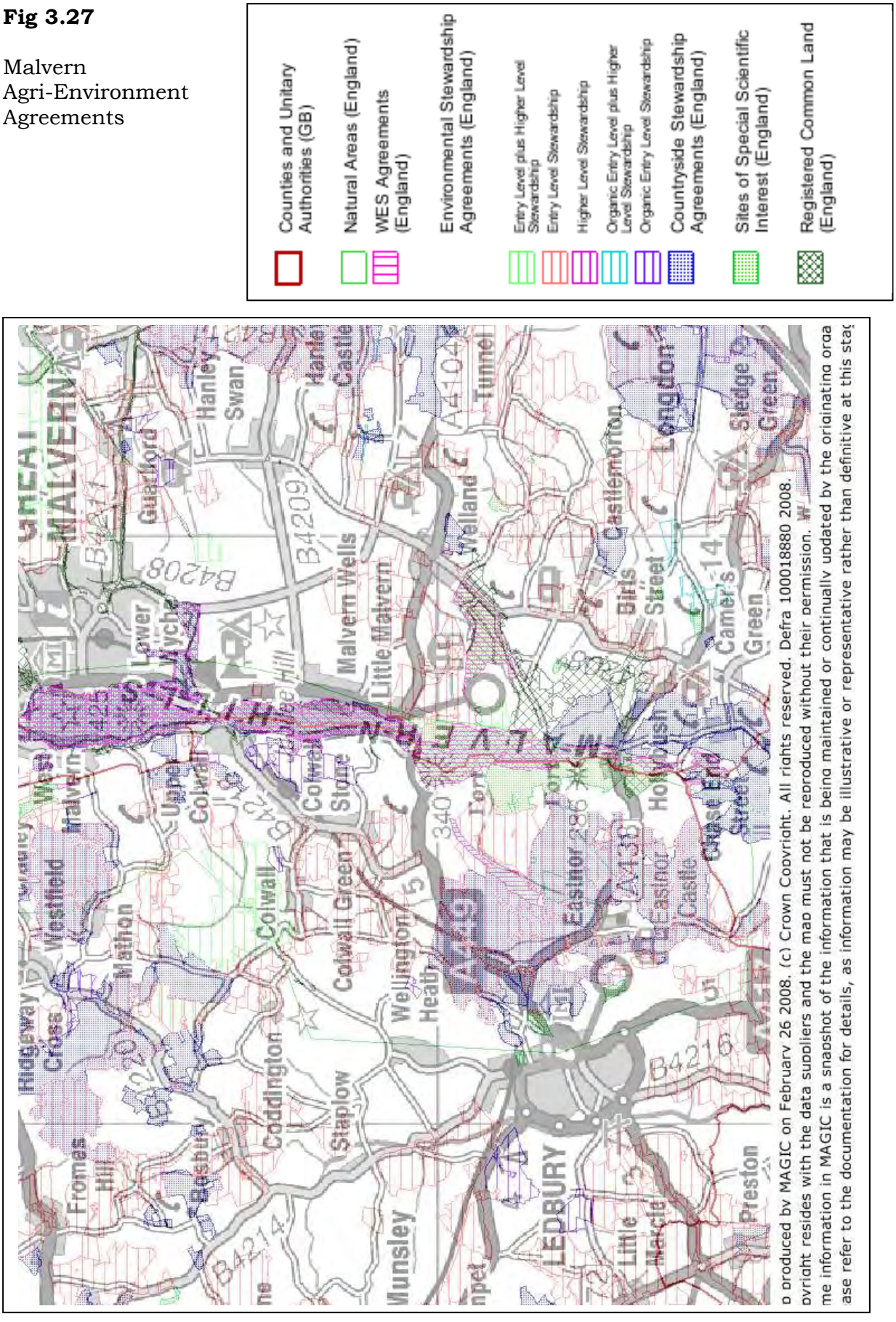


Fig 3.28

3.4 COASTAL

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

There are in all 102 commons with coastal locations (NCC Phase 1 Habitat category H) which cover a total of 6,591ha (see Fig 3.29). For pastoral commoning purposes, the most important sub-category is H26 (Saltmarsh, dense/continuous) with an area of 2,541ha. This short outline will concentrate on the counties with the 4 largest areas of this habitat, namely Cumbria (CL26 – 446ha and CL70 – 268ha), Norfolk (CL65 – 336ha) and Lancashire (CL45 – 306ha).

"Saltmarsh" is recognised as a priority habitat of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and grazed saltmarshes may also belong in the "Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh" category. Saltmarsh develops on the upper and middle tidal levels where fine sediments can build up and permit the growth of salt-tolerant plants; the most recent surveys estimate that England has about 45,500ha of this habitat. A grazing marsh, on the other hand, is defined as periodically inundated pasture; it is estimated that only a small proportion (about 10,000ha) of this type of grassland is semi-natural. Clearly there may sometimes be an overlap between these categories.

EXAMPLE COMMONS TO ILLUSTRATE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

CUMBRIA

Skinburness and Calvo Marsh Commons (CL26 – 642ha) and Burgh Marsh (CL70 – 470ha) lie within the Upper Solway Flats and Marshes SSSI (see Fig 3.30). Both are assessed for PSA target purposes as in favourable condition, but with the added comment in the case of Skinburness that it is slightly undergrazed in places (Jan 2005). These commons form part of the Solway Coast AONB, which notes in its 2004 Management Plan (p34):

"The marshes in the Solway Coast AONB lie in an unbroken coastal ribbon from Rockcliffe marsh in the east to Skinburness marsh to the west. All of the marshes are grazed and have been for around 1000 years. This grazing regime has created a vegetation type and habitat structure enjoyed by wintering wildfowl, breeding waders and ground nesting passerine birds. Further improvements for nature conservation have been made through the implementation of numerous Agri-Environment schemes. The grazing is managed by private landowners and marsh committees with the notable exception of the RSPB on Campfield Marsh. As well as being grazed the marshes are shot over by the South Solway Wildfowlers Association who have a very comprehensive conservation regime. The marshes are subject to other recreational activities such as birdwatching, walking, and even mushroom picking.

On the more extensive marshes such as Rockcliffe, Burgh, Newton Arlosh and Skinburness there are three distinct vegetation zones corresponding to high, middle and low marsh. This tiering effect is due to sea level change at about 10-8,000 years ago. The outcome is that different parts of the marsh are sea washed for longer periods than others due to the variation in the height of tides. To the seaward edge of the marsh the plants are more salt tolerant than those at the back of the marsh. This has created three separate habitats and landscape types."

Both commons are within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, the Solway Firth SAC, the Upper Solway Flats and Marshes RAMSAR Site and SPA (43,656ha); both are in Countryside Stewardship Schemes. The grazing and management practices on Burgh Marsh are the subject of a detailed study elsewhere in this report.

NORFOLK

Of the 4,420ha of common land in Norfolk, some 43% is accounted for by 3 large coastal commons which lie in close proximity to each other on the north coast within the North Norfolk AONB (see Fig 3.31). The commons form part of the North Norfolk SSSI (7,861ha), which is a SAC, SPA and RAMSAR site. The largest of these, CL65 (Brancaster/Burnham Harbours/marshland – 1334ha) includes the Scolt Head Island NNR (which is also a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve).

The Phase 1 habitat analysis for CL65 and CL124 (the second largest) is set out in Table 3.18:

	Table 3.18	CL65	CL124
H11	Inter-tidal mud/sand	810ha	120ha
H26	Dense/continuous saltmarsh	336ha	140ha
H68	Open dune	140ha	38ha
G26	Brackish running water	42ha	
H65	Dune grassland		33ha
F1	Swamp		10ha
J4	Bare ground (sand/mud)		9ha
	Other	6ha	10ha
	Total	**1334ha**	**360ha**

The common rights register contains 164 and 50 entries respectively; as well as rights for cattle, sheep, horses and geese, there are estovers, piscary, herbage, shellfish, bait, samphire, seaweed, sea lavender, wildfowl and reed. Some relate to part only of the units. For both commons, the rights are administered by the Scolt Head and District Rights Holders Association, but no grazing currently takes place (pers.comm.).

A concise overview of the rise and fall of saltmarsh grazing in north Norfolk is provided by the Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee in a Management Note (Annex 1 v3):

"The saltmarshes in north Norfolk extend over 2,200ha and range from pioneer salt marsh (with samphire) through to middle and upper saltmarsh communities with some transitions to tidal reed beds. In places the saltmarsh is limited naturally by higher ground, but elsewhere their landward extent is constrained by sea walls. Between the 16th and end of the 19th century approximately 50% of the saltmarshes were reclaimed for freshwater grazing marsh and arable. …….
[Grazing] was a traditional activity before the second world war on the north Norfolk coast when sheep were the main stock grazed and were kept on the marshes during the day and folded on arable at night thus helping to manure the land. Since the War grazing has ceased except for a few horses at Brancaster."

LANCASHIRE

The Biological Survey records 633ha of saltmarsh on common land (13% of the county's total), of which most is to be found in Morecambe Bay. Here the Morecambe Bay SSSI (25,665ha), SAC (61,538ha), and SPA and RAMSAR Sites (36,985ha) can be found. Common CL45 ("Salt marshes" – 419ha) adjacent to Carnforth is much the largest, though a narrow strip of commons runs south towards Hest Bank (see Fig 3.32).

Some 306ha of this common is Phase I Habitat H26 (Dense/continuous saltmarsh). It has registered rights for 220 cattle and 626 sheep. The Biological Survey considered that the grazing pressure on this common, and those adjoining it, was high, resulting in a very short sward that could provide little cover for nesting birds. It noted also that much of the saltmarsh was managed for turf cutting. Since the survey, the common has been entered into a Countryside Stewardship agreement and the current SSSI condition assessment for the southern strip is "*favourable*". The major part adjacent to Carnforth is assessed as "*unfavourable recovering*", with the comment:

"Reduced sheep grazing on outer marsh has enabled a taller sward to develop and provide nesting sites for redshank on the northern end of the marsh. This is predominantly red fescue and mud rush dominated. The inner marsh is cattle grazed and has a mosaic of vegetation heights and species. The grazing is seasonally controlled to avoid disturbance to nesting birds around the lagoons. The southern end of Warton Marsh receives a much higher level of grazing despite the area being grazed as one unit."

GRAZING LEVELS

From the standpoint of nature conservation there is general agreement that grazing should not be introduced on a previously un-grazed saltmarsh, but that in other cases continuing, or restoring, grazing on coastal grazing marsh or wet grassland is essential for the development of structure in the vegetation. The Saltmarsh Management Manual, produced jointly by Defra and the Environment Agency,[99] recognises that the selection of an appropriate grazing regime will be dependant on the particular nature conservation objectives for the marsh. It sets out 3 possible approaches:

*"**Lightly grazed**. Grazing by native herbivores, such as ducks or geese, and/or low levels of intermittent grazing by livestock (typically at a ratio of 2 to 3 sheep or 0.7 to 1.0 young cattle per hectare, between April and October (Beeftink, 1977). This level of grazing is probably replicates most closely the 'natural' un-grazed system, typically proving good structural diversity and a wide range of species of plants and invertebrates, plus grazing intolerant species.*

***Moderately grazed**. Livestock grazing at typical densities of 5 to 6 sheep or 1 to 1.5 young cattle per hectare between April and October (Beeftink, 1977). This level of grazing produces an 'intermediate' conservation value and the communities that result are very dependant on the type of grazers used (e.g. cattle tend to produce a more structurally diverse vegetation than sheep).*

[99] *See www.saltmarshmanagementmanual.co.uk*

Heavily grazed. *In terms of nature conservation, this is the least preferred option. Grazing levels are typically 9 to 10 sheep or 2 to 2.5 young cattle per hectare, again, between April and October (Beeftink, 1977). These stocking densities really only apply to the agricultural sector rather than saltmarsh management, as the botanical and invertebrate biodiversity achieved is low. In addition, breeding birds nests can be affected through trampling."*

The need for a site specific, flexible approach is stressed by both the Manual and other guides[100]; a good example of such an approach is at the Holkham NNR (not common land, but adjacent to Brancaster)[101].

[100] *See www.english-nature.org.uk/livingwiththesea/project_details/good_practice_guide*
[101] See the NNR Guide, under the heading "Cow Power"; for advice where a habitat beneficial for invertebrates is the prime management objective, see *www.buglife.org.uk.*

Fig 3.29

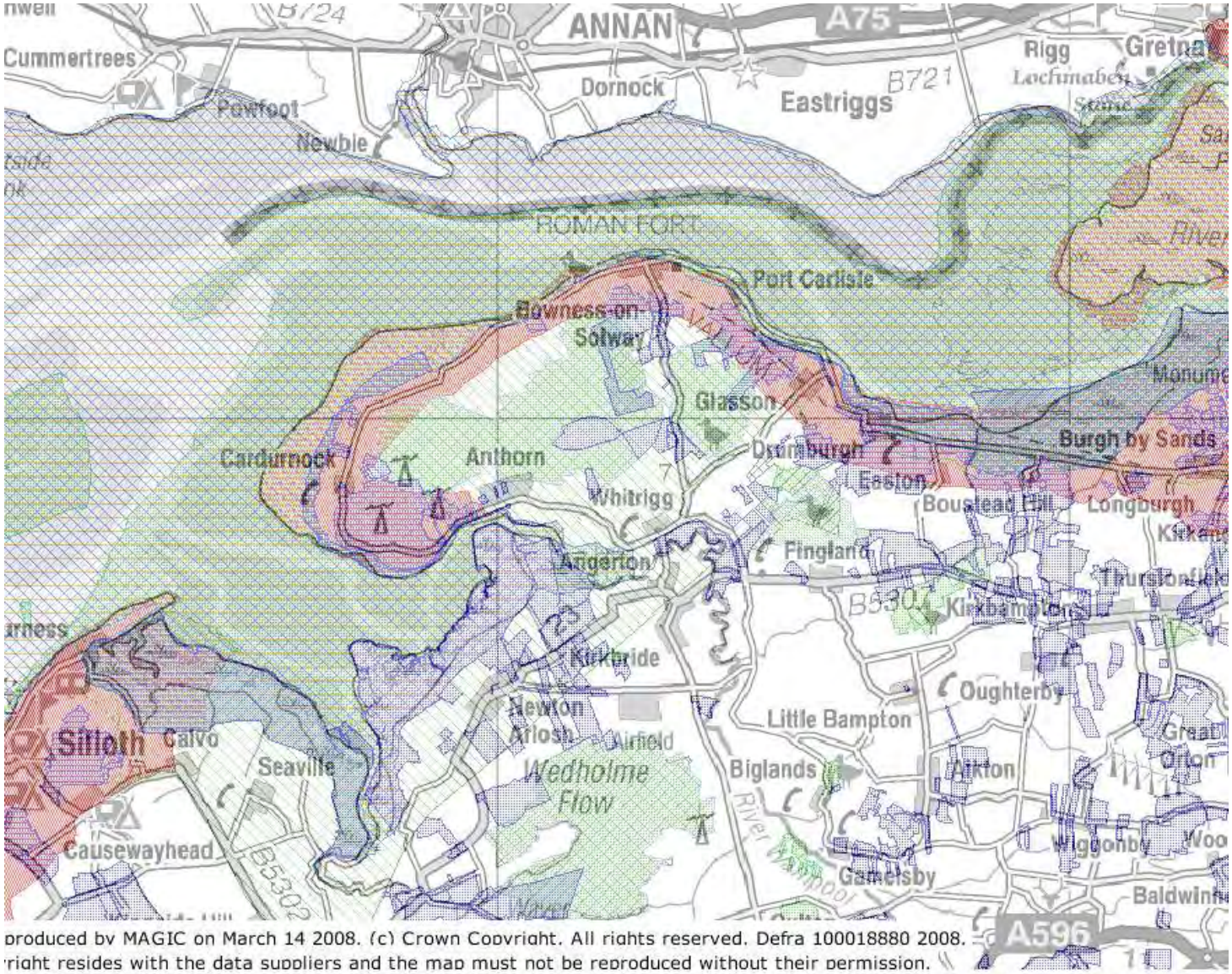


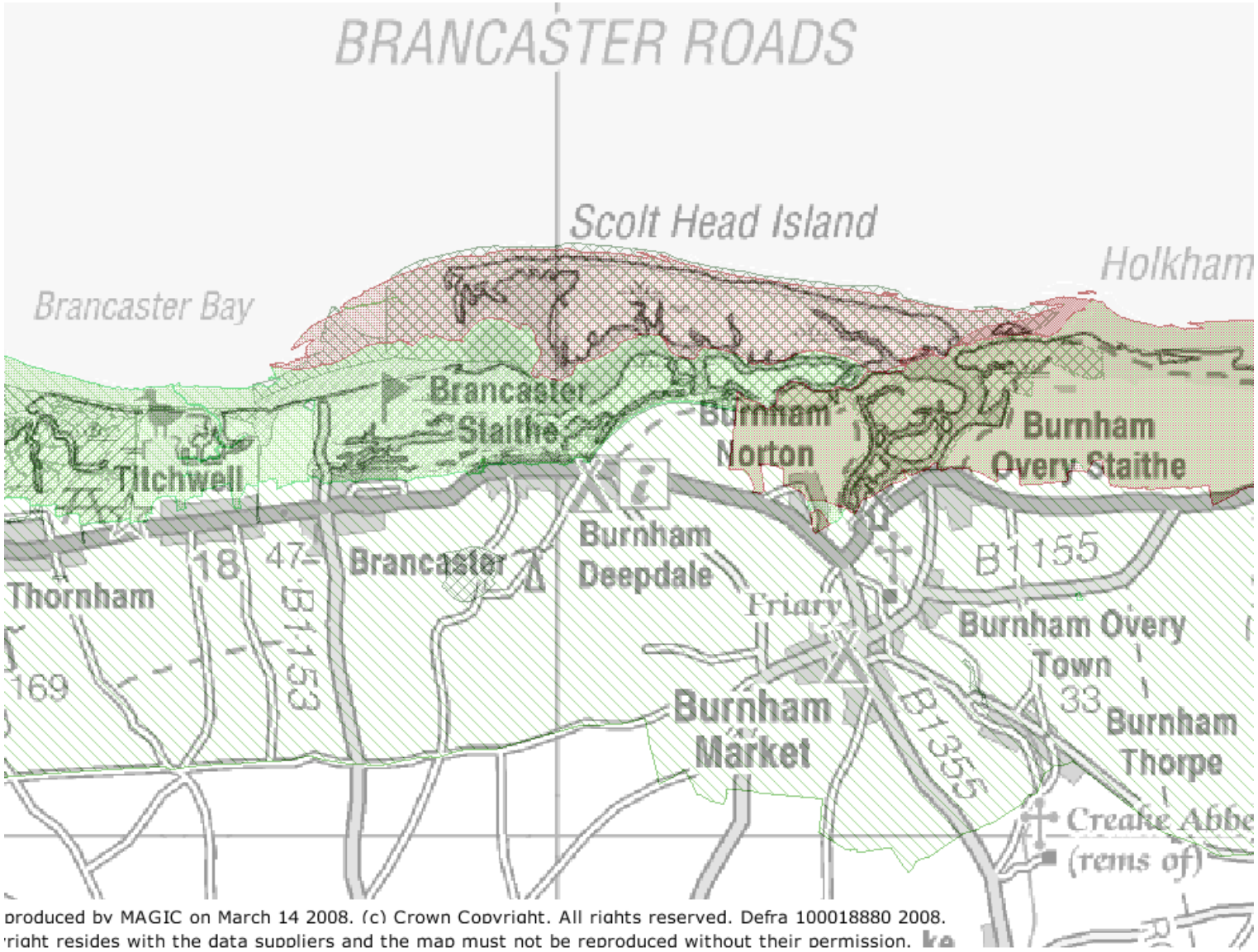
Fig 3.30

Coastal, Cumbria Common Land and Environmental Designations

- Countryside Stewardship Agreements (England)
- Ramsar Sites (England)
- Special Protection Areas (England)
- Special Areas of Conservation (England)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)
- Registered Common Land (England)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England)
- World Heritage Sites (England)

Fig 3.31

Coastal, Norfolk Common Land and Environmental Designations



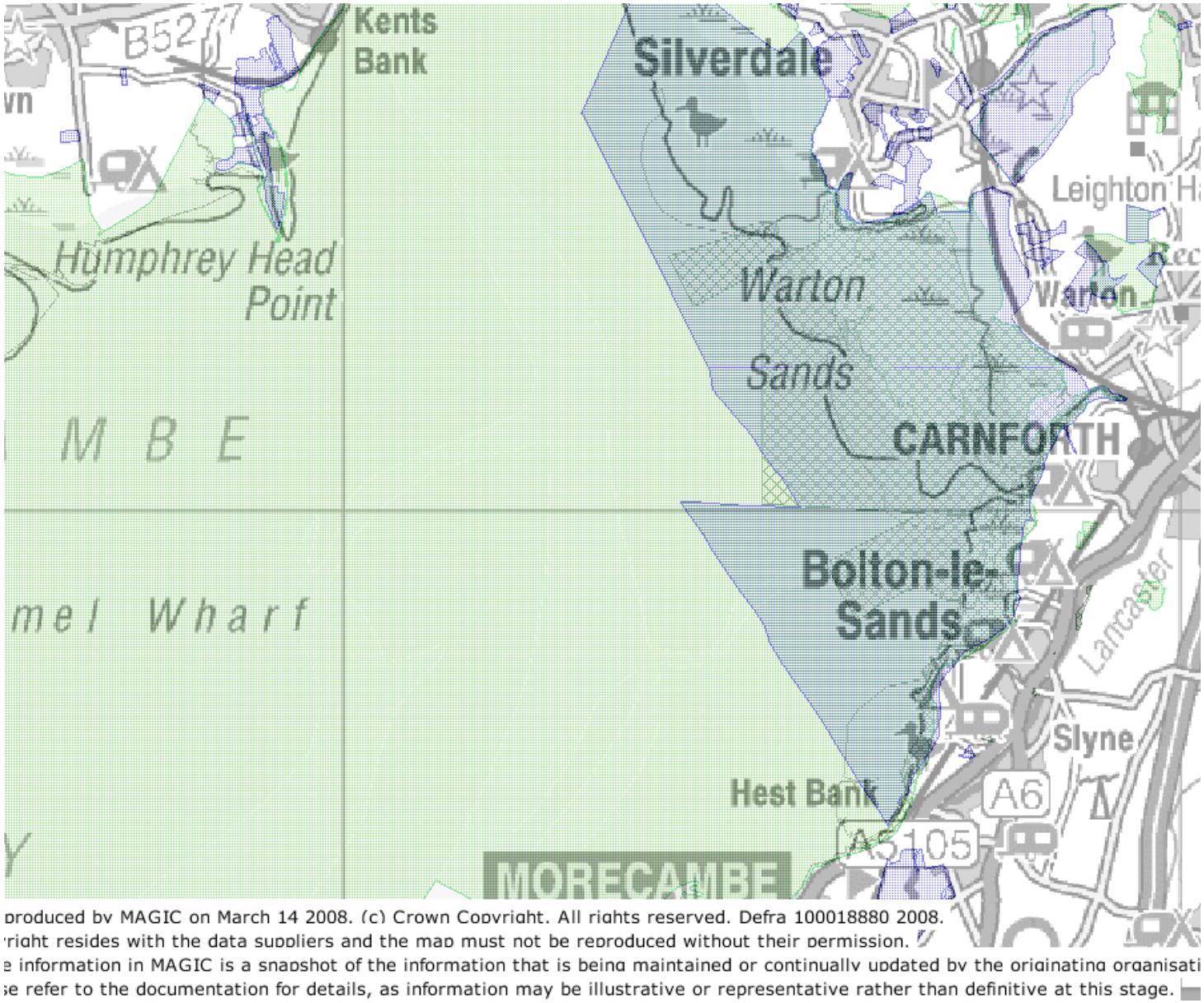


Fig 3.32

Coastal, Lancashire Common Land, Environmental Designations and Agri-Environment Agreements

3.5 Common Land exempt from the 1965 Act - NEW FOREST[102]

The New Forest was chosen for the purpose of this study as the example of exempt common land, it is not though the only area with active grazing and a note on Epping Forest is included at the end. The majority of the other areas are significantly smaller.

LOCATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND COVER

The New Forest lies to the north of the Solent, between the conurbations of Southampton and Bournemouth. It is by far the largest tract of land subject to common rights that has its own governing legislation and which is specifically excluded from the provisions of the Commons Registration Act 1965. The "Perambulation" delimits the area (375km²) that the commoners' stock can graze, contained by cattle grids and fencing (see Fig 3.33).

"Some two-thirds of the Forest area is lowland heath, dominated by heather, often in mosaics with gorse and bracken, open patches of closely grazed grassland, and scattered birch and pine. Some stretches of heath are dominated by gorse, with birch and bramble. The woodlands form one of the largest tracts of semi-natural woodland in southern England. They are dominated by large oaks, with an under storey of holly and patches of bracken. Where grazed, a wood-pasture is formed, with patches of grass and bracken under the canopy of oak." (Joint Character Area 131)

"Within the open New Forest, the complex of heathland, mire and pasture woodland do not occur anywhere else on so large a scale and nowhere else do they occur in combination. Although it may appear to be wild, the area owes its character to the historic common grazing system that creates a landscape of unique identity and survives here in one of the last places in lowland Europe." (Natural Area 77)

DESIGNATIONS AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENT AGREEMENTS

The New Forest National Park was designated in March 2005. Its area (570km²) embraces the land within the Perambulation and a buffer zone around it (See Fig 3.33). The area included in the New Forest Character Area (JCA131) and the New Forest Natural Area (NA77) is greater still at 738km². The New Forest SSSI (28,924ha) covers about 80% of the land within the Perambulation (see Fig 3.34); an almost identical area is designated SAC (29,253ha) and SPA (27,997ha).

"Overseeing commoning is the responsibility of the Verderers Court. This comprises 5 elected and 5 appointed Verderers whose role is to regulate the exercise of Rights of Common and development on the Forest. Their role is underpinned by New Forest Acts and byelaws which are enforced under their statutory responsibilities. The Verderers are assisted by 5 'Agisters' who, between them, oversee commoning activities across the whole of the Forest – each with his own geographic area of responsibility. They monitor the condition and oversee the welfare of de-pastured animals, and organise the annual drifts when the animals are 'rounded up' and 'marked' (tail hair is cut on the ponies – with different patterns indicating which Agisters' area they are from) to indicate that marking fees have been paid – a form of annual census. The drifts provide an opportunity to: brand new foals; remove any

[102] Certain common land was exempt from the provisions of the Commons Registration Act 1965 usually due to their regulation by a separate Act of parliament.

animals that commoners wish to sell or return to their holding; check that animals are not illegally de-pastured by anyone without Forest rights; and ensure that 'marking fees' (annual fees, paid to the Verderers for all animals de-pastured on the Forest) are paid where appropriate."[103]

Ponies and cattle, together with smaller numbers of pigs and a few donkeys and sheep are the animals that have been grazed in recent years. The Verderers' records (see www.verderers.org.uk) show that over the last 50 years pony numbers have normally been in the range 2,000 to 4,000 and cattle 1,500 to 2,500. For pigs, around 200 has been the norm, though with occasional dramatic increases. The overall trend for pony numbers has been upward, whereas cattle numbers have undulated but remained reasonably constant overall.

The Verderers' Countryside Stewardship Scheme is a 10 year agreement which began in 2003 and covers all the land within the Perambulation (see Fig 3.35); its full details are posted on the Verderers' website. The Scheme is open to all commoners who satisfy the eligibility and qualifying criteria. There are limits on the number of animals on which payment can be claimed, and the payment (currently set at £60 "basic" rate for ponies and cattle (£40 for pigs)) can be, and has been, reduced where the total numbers claimed exceed 5,000. In 2006, the numbers in the Scheme were 3,494 ponies, 97 donkeys and 1,808 cattle.

GRAZING, GRAZING LEVELS AND CHANGE

The 2005 Grazing Management Plan, prepared as part of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, sets out the background thus:

"Commoning in the New Forest is an ancient tradition which can be traced back, with some certainty, to Saxon times. There are currently some 470 practising commoners; commoners who de-pasture stock on the Forest. Rights of Common in the Forest are attached to land or property and are conferred by its ownership or occupation. Unlike other Common land elsewhere in the country, there are no limits which are at present enforced by either the Verderers or the landowners, defining the numbers of stock associated with properties carrying these rights, and it is a combination of market forces and available grazing which determines stocking levels. Current economic pressures and social change are significant factors affecting commoning, which provides negligible (or, arguably, negative) financial returns. Traditionally, commoning has been an extension of a smallholding economy. Commoners comprise a diverse but generally close knit community and perpetuate a tradition which for many of them is a way of life. The absence of realistic financial returns, housing difficulties for young, aspiring commoners who are excluded from the market by soaring prices, and the high percentage of commoners who are over 60 and will inevitably give up commoning in the next 10 – 25 years, cast doubt over the long-term future of commoning. Yet it is vital to the ecology and landscape of the Forest, which depend on the grazing activity of ponies and cattle."

More recently, the economics of commoning, and its future prospects, have been the subject of a detailed study forming part of the Commoning Review, set up by the

[103] *Countryside Stewardship Management Plan*, see below.

New Forest NPA and which reported in September 2007. In 2006 there were 594 commoners exercising their right to turn stock into the open Forest.[104]

Nearly 70% of these turned out ponies only, 17% turned out cattle only, and 13 % turned out both species. Of those turning out ponies, over 75% turned out fewer than 10, a number which, according to the study, is generally considered to be the lowest limit for a viable herd. For cattle the relative proportions are less extreme, but the figures still show that 22% of commoners turn out over 70% of the cattle on the Forest. Having examined the economic data, the Report concluded that, despite CSS and SPS payments, all commoners were losing substantial amounts of money as a result of commoning.

In a passage quoted in the CSS Grazing Management Plan, an earlier review had considered that[105]
"a significant long term reduction in grazing pressure would cause rapid changes in the plant and animal communities comprising the Forest heathlands. The overall impact would be a rapid expansion to dominance of the more aggressive and competitive species (e.g. Molinia and scrub) at the expense of the less competitive species, and a dramatic impoverishment of the Forest Flora and fauna adapted to the long tradition of Open Forest grazing management. From a nature conservation perspective, this would particularly impact on those features of special interest for which the Forest is designated, and would therefore be catastrophic and unacceptable".

Several recent studies have draw attention to the difficulties faced by those younger commoners who wish to continue the commoning tradition.[106] Recent high turnout figures (see e.g. the Minutes of the CSS Advisory Group, 15 November 2007) may suggest that there is no immediate danger of severe undergrazing, but all the many, diverse interest groups are unanimous in recognising growing longer term threats to the future of commoning.

EPPING FOREST

Like the New Forest, Epping Forest is a common that has its own legislation and was exempted from the the provisions of the Commons Registration Act. Its 2,458ha are surrounded by urban development and are owned and managed by the City of London. Grazing on the Forest continued to be carried out by commoners throughout the 1970s and 1980s but was in severe decline; it had ceased completely by 1996[107].

In 2002, the conservators approved a proposal for the re-introduction of cattle in partnership with a commoner. A herd of 50 free-ranging Longhorn cattle, watched over by a herdsman, now graze an area to the north of Chingford during the summer months. They are also used in smaller numbers to "spot-graze" other

[104] This figure is significantly higher than the 300-500 range that the NPA referred to in its 2003 Interim Management Plan
[105] *New Forest SAC Management Plan 2001*, produced on behalf of the New Forest Life 2 Partnership
[106] See e.g. *New Forest NPA Interim Management Plan 2003* and the *Commoning Review 2007*
[107] For these and other details, see
www.corpoflondon.co.uk/Corporation/living_environment/open_spaces/epping_forest

areas of grassland and heathland for a few weeks at a time. There are permanent pounds with handling facilities for use as necessary.

The current Management Plan looks to extend the area of potential grazing to around 800ha and to increase the number of cows up to a maximum of 150 by 2012. The initial consultation showed good general support, though with concern over the erection of permanent fencing expressed by the Friends of Epping Forest and the Open Spaces Society. Although some 150 ha continue to be cut mechanically, the Conservators are in no doubt as to the importance of grazing:

"The success of this grazing re-introduction project is key to the long-term conservation of the Forest. It will ensure that the essential character of the Forest is not lost."[108]

[108] Epping Forest "Grazing" leaflet

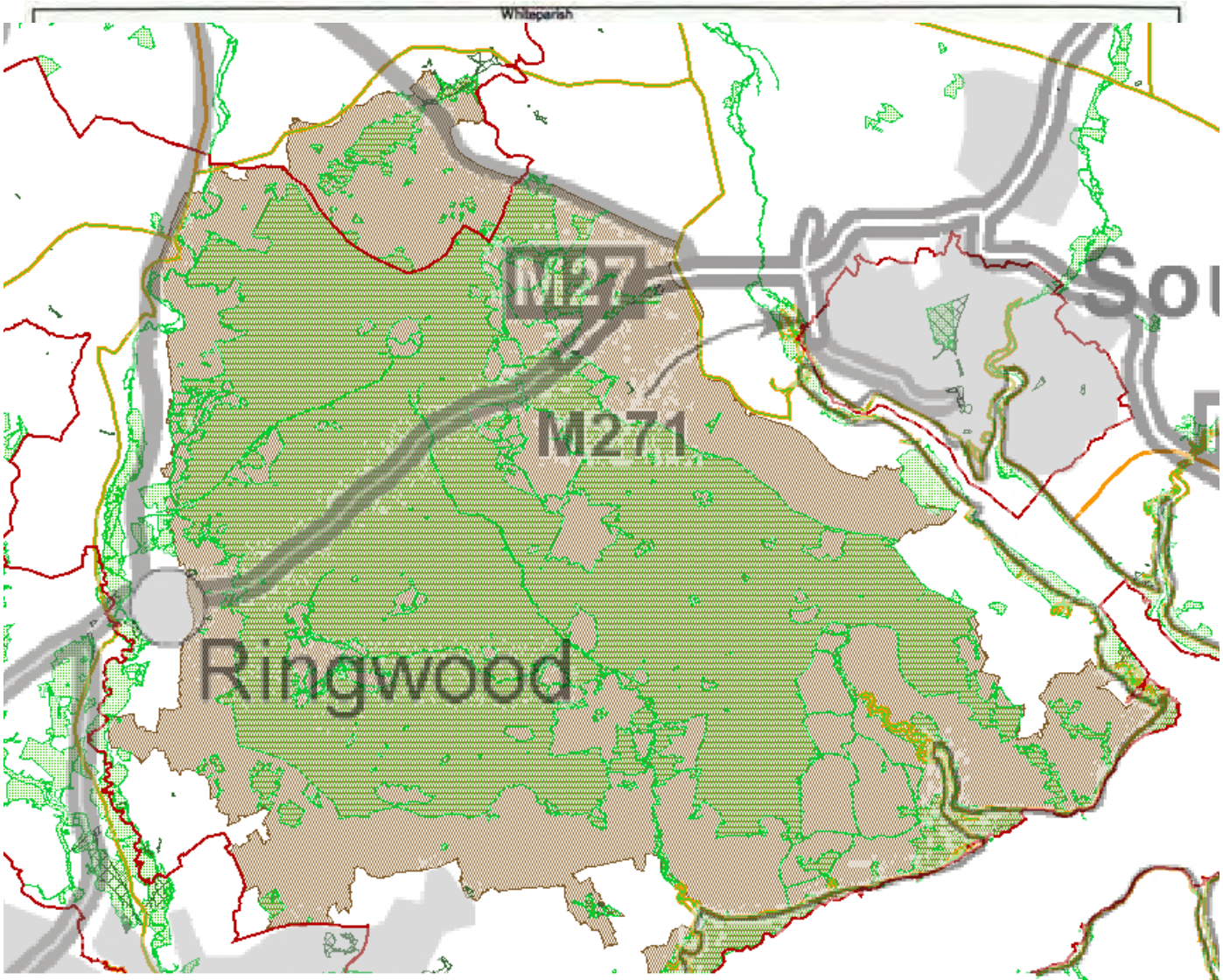
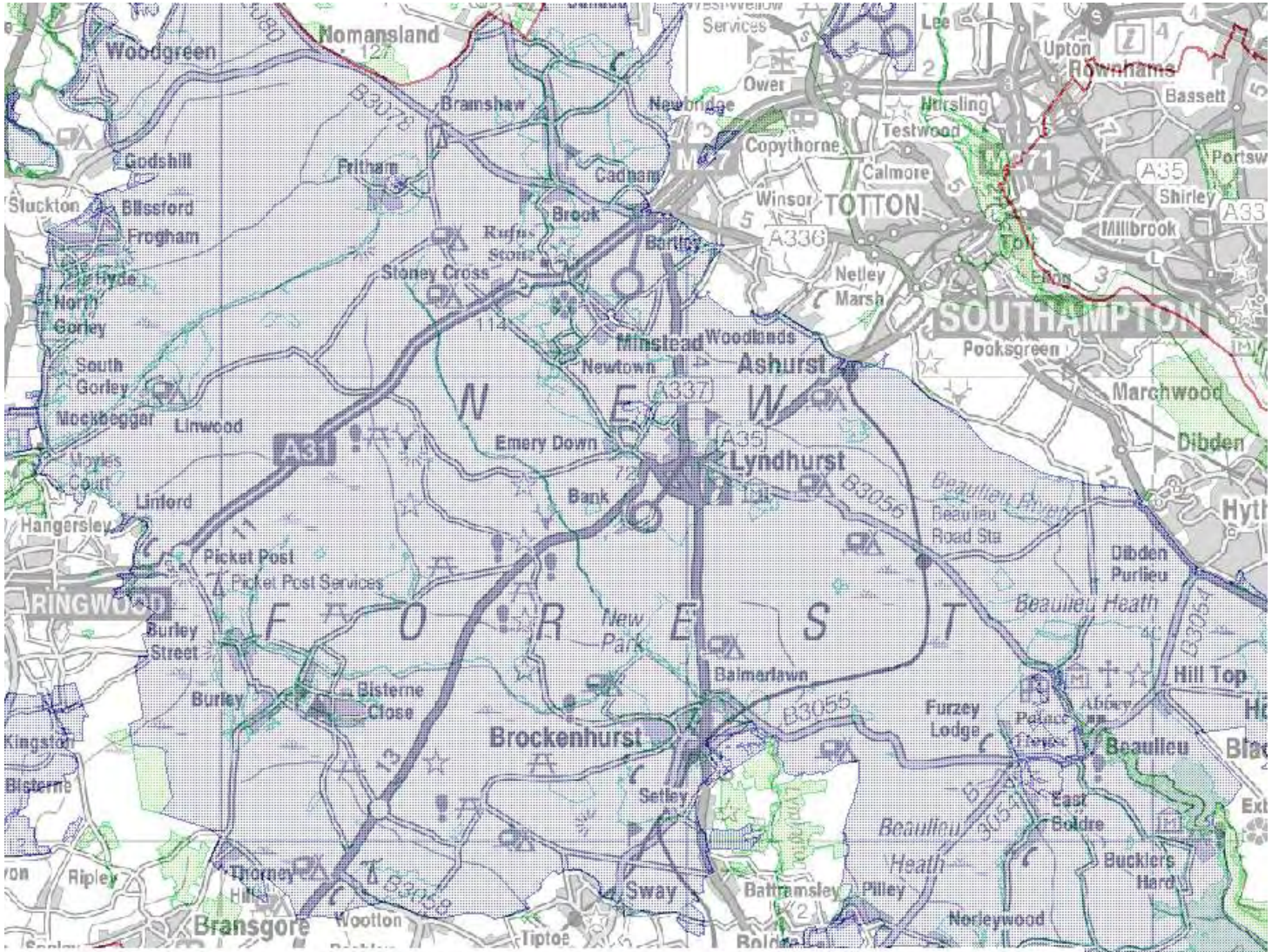


Fig 3.33
New Forest
Boundary of Common Land

Fig 3.34
New Forest
Environmental Designations



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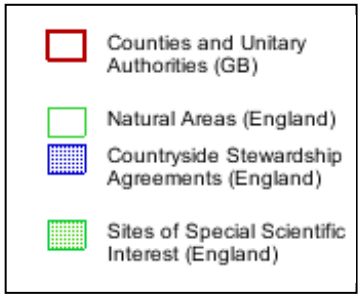


Fig 3.35
New Forest
Agri-Environment
Agreements

4 CURRENT STATE AND TRENDS OF PASTORAL COMMONING

In this section the report focuses on the results from the data collected through a series of meetings and interviews with stakeholders and commoners. The purpose of these was;

A. to assess what the current state of pastoral commoning is in England,
B. to assess what motivates commoners to graze common land; and
C. to identify predicted future trends and drivers for change that will affect how common land is used over the next twenty years.

4.1 Data Collection Method

One group of commoners was chosen from each broad common type as outlined in section 3 (see table 3.4). These should not be considered as being representative of that geographical type as the diversity within an area and a sample size of one would make extrapolation from the specific to the whole area unwise. They do though help us paint a picture of pastoral commoning in England in 2008, how it has changed and the predictions of change over the next twenty years.

The stakeholders were identified together with Natural England as those organisations whose brief includes Common Land and Commoners; a cross section of environmental and agricultural bodies; local and national organisations; government and non-governmental institutions were chosen. It is not exhaustive but includes the majority of key stakeholders in this area. Some of these stakeholders are representatives of commoners but the difference between these and those from the sampled groups of commons is that their outlook is broader and not restricted to a particular location. They are included as they have informed views about commoning.

The stakeholders chosen are detailed in table 4.6

The approach to the collection of data was to be personal and to use local contacts as much as possible. The reasoning was to ensure participants were comfortable in talking to the interviewer and so that the interviewer would have an understanding of the situation on the ground. In order to ensure consistency in the data collected a detailed questionnaire was developed for both stakeholders and commoners with instructions for the interviewer. Specimen copies of these are included in appendices B and C.

All interviews of commoners groups were undertaken face to face except three while the stakeholder interviews were interviewed either in person or on the phone having been sent a copy of the questionnaire in advance.

4.2 Data Analysis

The data collected was entered into a database specifically designed for this project. This has enabled us to manage and query the data to ensure patterns are identified where they exist and to undertake statistical analysis where appropriate. It should be stressed that not all the data are robust enough to be presented and that with a sample size of 18 across a wide variety of commons any statistical analysis should be treated with caution; for instance a mean average can hide a huge range in variation. It is for this reason we have used bar charts to illustrate the spread of results particularly where matters have been ranked.

4.3 Data Presentation

For each commoners group interviewed, in addition to completing the questionnaire, the interviewer prepared a descriptive summary of the questionnaire. These are attached in full at appendix D and are recommended to the reader as providing a fascinating insight into the diversity of commons around England. This main report does not try to repeat the information in those summaries rather bring it together to weave a picture of the complexity of pastoral commoning and tease out patterns and themes that repeat across the results.

This report therefore follows the format of the questionnaire. Where Commoners and Stakeholders were asked the same questions these are presented side by side to show similarities and differences between those active in grazing commons on a day to day basis and those who have an interest in Commons from one step removed.

As there are a large amount of data we have used bar charts as a visual method of painting the picture, this is a useful way of presenting qualitative data as well as drawing together quantitative data. The references shown next to many of the graphs and headings e.g. C10 or S12 refer to the relevant question in the questionnaire with the “C” referring to the Commoners questionnaire and the “S” to the stakeholder questionnaire.

4.4 The Findings

Eighteen commons groups were interviewed; table 4.1 provides the general details for each common.

In attempting to identify patterns, the data has been divided, where helpful, into upland and lowland commons. The New Forest and Selborne Common have been excluded from the lowland group as they are significantly different and skew the data.

4.4.1 The Current State of Pastoral Commons

The area of the commons in the sample ranges from 50 hectares to 30,000 hectares and the numbers of rights holders from 2 to 600. These two facts illustrate the danger of averaging data across the commons as the mean hides the diversity of the sample. Table 4.1 also details the numbers of rights holders for each common (or group of commons) and the number of active graziers. Excluding the outlier of the New Forest where 96% of the rights holders are active the average number of rights holders that are active is 28%.

In table 4.2 the conservation designations of the commons interviewed are detailed which shows the high level of designation with only 3 commons having no designation. Table 4.3 looks at the restrictions imposed by agri-environment scheme common by common and these are discussed further on. Table 4.4 details the range of recreation uses on each common.

These four tables illustrate the enormous diversity among commons and why it is often inappropriate to extrapolate from one common to another.

There is a large variety of livestock breeds used on common land across the country. While there will be variety within common types the data collected from the questionnaires indicated the main types of livestock and breeds used are as detailed in Table 4.5.

Sample Commons Interviewed

COMMONS - GENERAL INFORMATION **Table 4.1**

CL Number	Common Name	Description	Common Group	Area (ha)	No of Rights Holders	No of Active Graziers	% of Rights Holders Active	Owner
103	Selborne	Lowland Rural	Lowland	101	2	0	0%	National Trust
9	Malvern Hills & Commons	Malvern Hills	Lowland	1200	300	7	2%	Conservators
34	Corfe Common	Lowland Rural	Lowland	124	7	0	0%	National Trust
64	Maidenhead & Cookham	Lowland Urban	Lowland	326	14	5	36%	National Trust
70	Burgh by Sands	Coastal	Lowland	500	97	30	31%	Rights Holders - stinted pasture
888	Town Moor	Lowland Urban	Lowland	388	not known	6		Newcastle City Council
999	New Forest	Wood & Heathland	Exempt	30000	600	575	96%	The Crown
18	South Stainmore Common	Pennine North	Upland	1043	15	5	33%	John Brazil Trust
44	Black Hill & Black Mountain	Other Upland	Upland	625	38	8	21%	Lord of the Manor
63	Manor of Danby	North York Moors	Upland	6478	121	11	9%	Viscount Downe
82	Haslingden Moor	Pennine Urban	Upland	228	10	4	40%	Lord Clitheroe
133	Cefn Hill	Other Upland	Upland	141	12	7	58%	John Williams
135	Vagar Hill	Other Upland	Upland	41	13	4	31%	John Williams
168	Brendon Common	Exmoor	Upland	0	28	7	25%	??
186	Davidstow, West Moors & High Moors	Bodmin	Upland	1481	not known	26		5 owners
194	Peter Tavy	Dartmoor	Upland	1103	45	16	36%	Duchy of Cornwall ++
272	Scales Moor	Pennine Limestone	Upland	414	7	4	57%	recently deceased
394	Above Derwent	Lake District	Upland	383	not known	10		National Trust

COMMONS – CONSERVATION DESIGNATION **Table 4.2**

CL Number	Common Name	Description	Common Group	Designations					
				SSSI	SAC	SPA	Ramsar	AONB	Nat Park
103	Selborne	Lowland Rural	Lowland	Y					
9	Malvern Hills & Commons	Malvern Hills	Lowland	Y				Y	
34	Corfe Common	Lowland Rural	Lowland	Y					
64	Maidenhead & Cookham	Lowland Urban	Lowland	Y					
70	Burgh by Sands	Coastal	Lowland	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
888	Town Moor	Lowland Urban	Lowland						
999	New Forest	Exempt	Other	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y
18	South Stainmore Common	Pennine North	Upland					Y	
44	Black Hill & Black Mountain	Other Upland	Upland	Y					Y
63	Manor of Danby	North York Moors	Upland	Y	Y	Y			Y
82	Haslingden Moor	Pennine Urban	Upland						
133	Cefn Hill	Other Upland	Upland						
135	Vagar Hill	Other Upland	Upland						
168	Brendon Common	Exmoor	Upland	Y					Y
186	Davidstow, West Moors & High Moors	Bodmin	Upland	Y					
194	Peter Tavy	Dartmoor	Upland	Y	Y				Y
272	Scales Moor	Pennine Limestone	Upland	Y	Y				Y
394	Above Derwent	Lake District	Upland	Y	Y				Y

COMMONS - AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES

Table 4.3

CL Number	Common Name	General Stock Numbers	Seasonal Stock Reduction	Off wintering	Heather Mgmt	Feeding restrictions	Stock Type	Bracken & Scrub Control	Sward height Mgmt	None
9	Malvern Hills & Commons							Y	Y	
34	Corfe Common		Y			Y	Y	Y		
64	Maidenhead & Cookham									Y
70	Burgh by Sands	Y								
103	Selborne						Y	Y		
888	Town Moor									Y
999	New Forest	Y					Y			
18	South Stainmore Common	Y	Y			Y				
44	Black Hill & Black Mountain		Y		Y			Y		
63	Manor of Danby				Y	Y				
82	Haslingden Moor									Y
133	Cefn Hill							Y		
135	Vagar Hill							Y		
168	Brendon Common	Y	Y	Y						
186	Davidstow, West Moors & High Moors	Y	Y	Y						
194	Peter Tavy	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y			
272	Scales Moor									Y
394	Above Derwent	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y		

COMMONS - OTHER INTERESTS **Table 4.4**

CL Number	Common Name	Sporting	Walking	Riding, Biking	Other Common Rights	Bird Watching	Arch & Geology	Forestry	MoD
9	Malvern Hills & Commons	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		
34	Corfe Common		Y	Y			Y		
64	Maidenhead & Cookham		Y	Y					
70	Burgh by Sands	Y			Y	Y			
103	Selborne		Y						
888	Town Moor		Y	Y					
999	New Forest		Y	Y			Y	Y	
18	South Stainmore Common	Y							
44	Black Hill & Black Mountain	Y	Y			Y			
63	Manor of Danby	Y	Y	Y	Y				
82	Haslingden Moor		Y						
133	Cefn Hill		Y			Y	Y		
135	Vagar Hill		Y			Y	Y		
168	Brendon Common	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		
186	Davidstow, West Moors & High Moors		Y	Y		Y	Y		Y
194	Peter Tavy	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y
272	Scales Moor		Y	Y					
394	Above Derwent	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		

Common Type	Livestock Type	Predominate Breeds
Lake District	Sheep	Swaledale and Herdwick
Pennines North	Sheep	Swaledale
Pennines Limestone	Sheep	Used to be Dalesbred now Swaledale for Mule market
Pennines Urban	Sheep Cattle	Used to be Swaledale and Gritstones now Cheviots Galloway common now continental breeds
North York Moors	Sheep	Scottish Blackface
Exmoor	Sheep	Scottish Blackface and Exmoor Horn
Dartmoor	Sheep Cattle	Scottish Blackface Galloways but now Cross bred Continental Breeds are common
Bodmin	Sheep	Blackface, Welsh Mountain and Cheviot There are now no cattle but in 1997 there were 300 hardy cattle
Lowland	Cattle and Sheep	Range of breeds from Dexters, Longhorn and Galloway to Limousin crosses
Coastal	Cattle and Sheep	Friesian X and continental cattle Sheep used to be Swaledale, now more mixed
New Forest	Ponies and Cattle	New Forest Ponies and a range of Cattle Breeds

Table 4.5

Table 4.6 Stakeholders Interviewed

Organisation	Person Interviewed	Broad Common Type
CLA	Pauline Blair	Lake District
Federation of Cumbria Commoners	4 committee members	Lake District Pennine North
Dartmoor Commoners Council	Ian Mercer	Dartmoor
Duchy of Cornwall	Chris Gregory	Dartmoor
Friends of the Lake District	Jan Darrall	Pennine Limestone Lake District
FWAG/Cotswold Project	Jenny Phelps	Lowland Rural
LEADER+ Cumbria Fells and Dales	Geoff Brown	Lake District Pennine Limestone
Herefordshire Nature Trust	Tim Breakwell	Lowland Rural
Moorland Association	Martin Gillibrand	(Heather Moorland)
National Farmers Union	Andrew Clark	Pennine uplands, Lake District, Welsh Borders, South West, Lowland
National Sheep Association	John Thorley	Lowland Rural, Malvern
National Trust	Peter Carty Neil Johnson	Long Mynd Lake District
Natural England	Susanna Philips Jonathan Bradley	Exmoor, Dartmoor, Bodmin, Lowland rural, Pennine Urban
New Forest	Emma Wrigglesworth	Lowland Heath/Wood Pasture
North York Moors National Park Authority	Rachel Pickering	North York Moors
Open Spaces Society	Kate Ashbrook[109]	
RSPB	Bill Kenmir	Lake District
Yorkshire Dales NPA	Adrian Shepherd	Pennine Limestone Pennine North
Federation of Yorks Commoners & Moorland Graziers	Several committee members	Pennine Urban
Young Commoners	Selected members of commoners families	Lake District

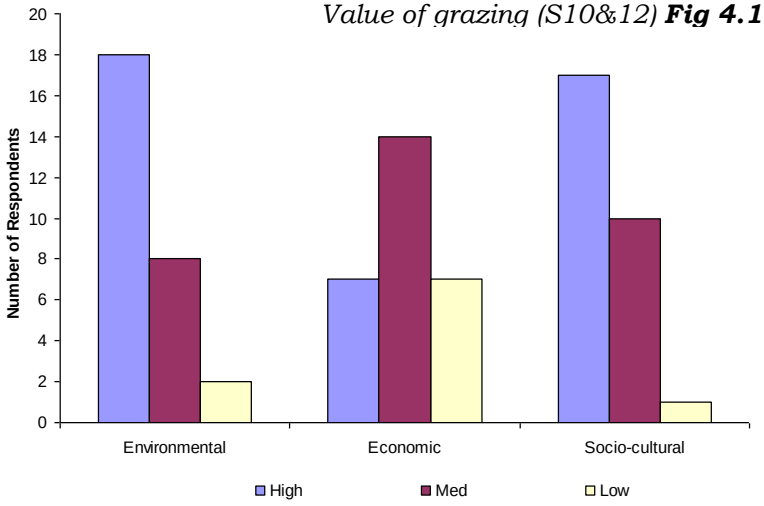
[109] Kate Ashbrook concluded the Open Spaces Society was not in a position to comment on pastoral commoning as it was outside their remit. They were therefore not included in the analysis.

Questionnaire Results

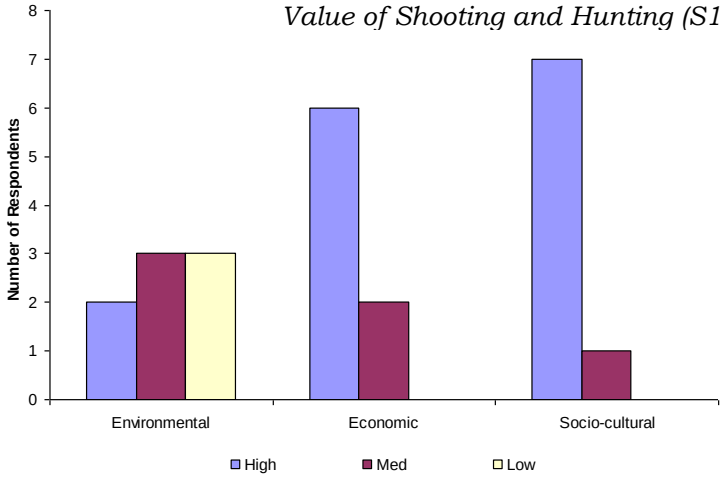
Common Land use, its current state and value to society

Stakeholders (figs 4.1 and 4.2) were asked to value the environmental, economic and socio-cultural values of grazing, among other items. The consensus was that the value of grazing to environmental and socio-cultural factors is high. The views on the economic value of commons grazing were variable though it was recognised as important to those who did it. All recreational activities on commons whether sporting, active and passive recreation were given high economic and socio-cultural values but low environmental values (fig 4.3 and 4.4).

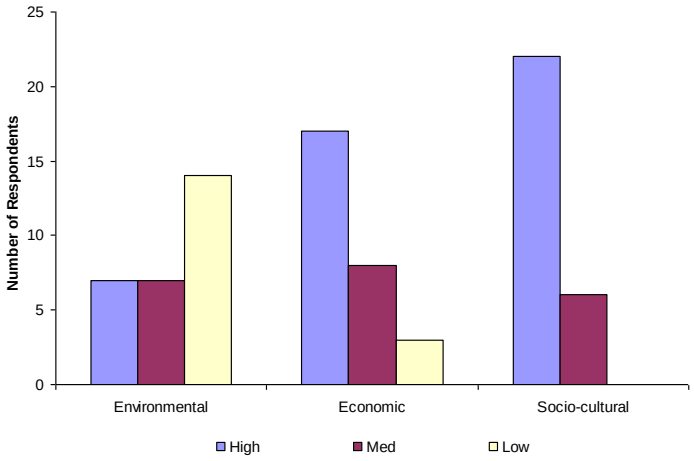
Value of grazing (S10&12) ***Fig 4.1***



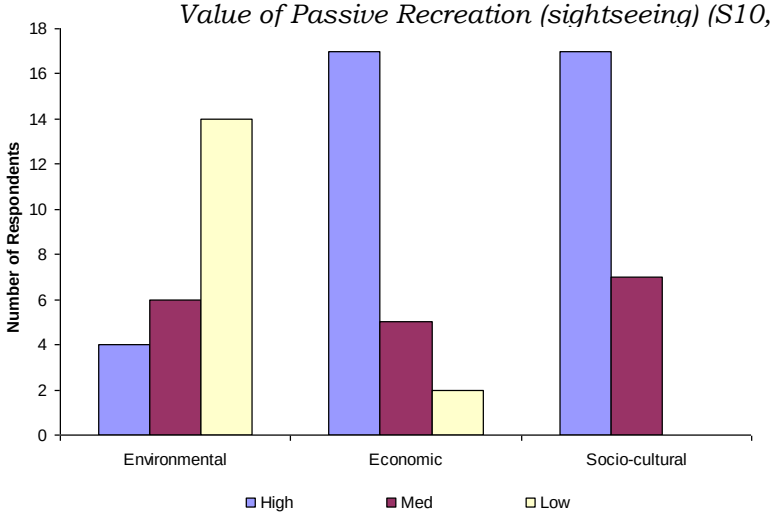
Value of Shooting and Hunting (S10&12) ***Fig 4.2***



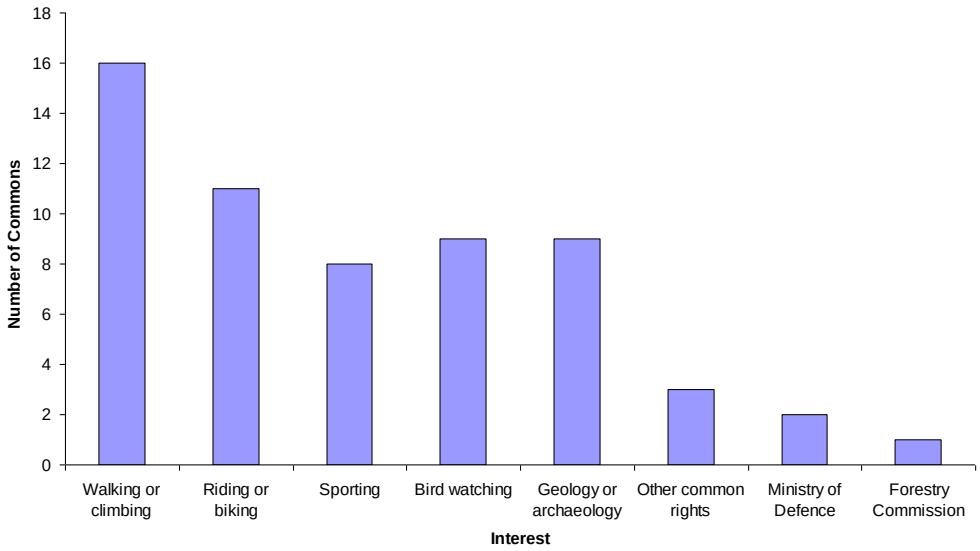
Value of Active Recreation (walking, climbing, riding and biking) (S10,12) ***Fig 4.3***



Value of Passive Recreation (sightseeing) (S10,12) ***Fig 4.4***



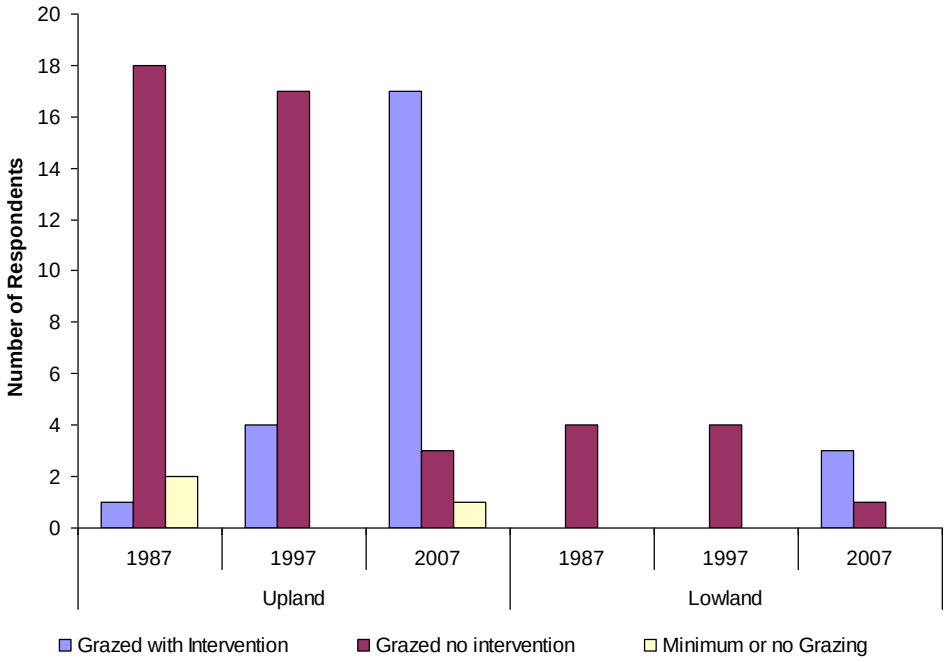
While grazing is central to determining the vegetation on Common Land it is far from the only activity taking place or the only value of commons. In order to place grazing in context with other interests fig 4.5 illustrates the wide range of interests on the Commons in this study. Commoners were also asked how has recreation use changed over the last twenty years and 67% said it had increased a lot and a further 22% that recreation use had increased a little.



Other Interests in Using Common Land. ***Fig 4.5***

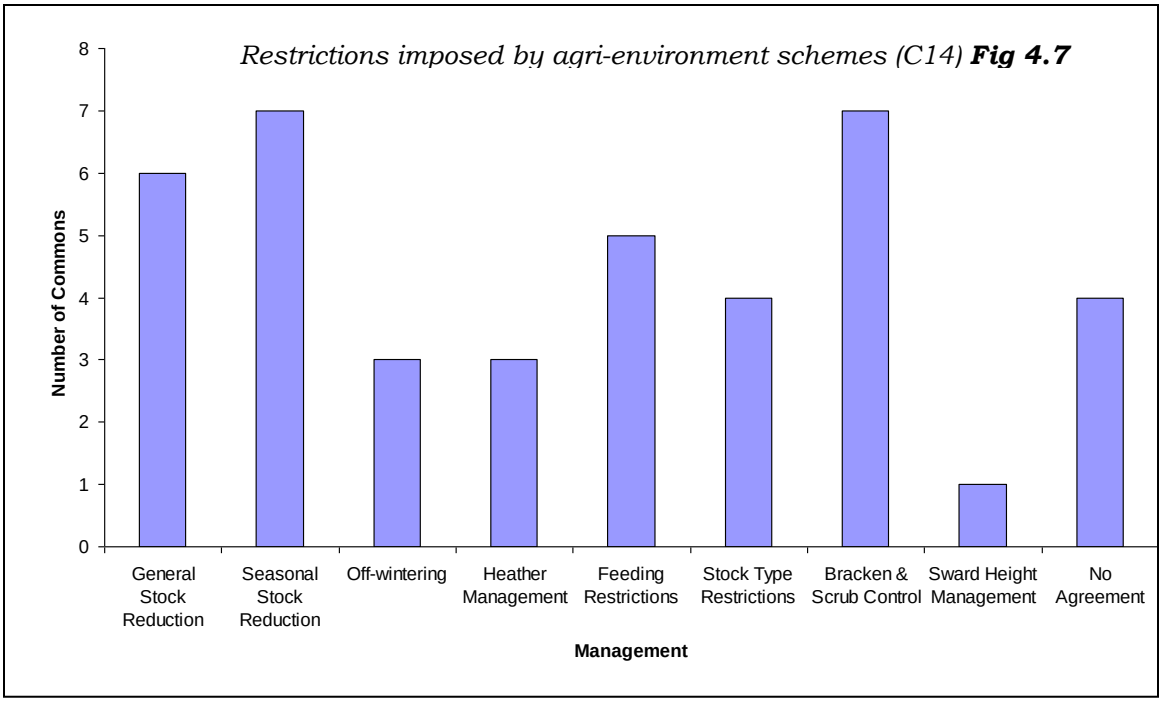
Grazing and Agri-Environment Agreements

Stakeholders were asked (Fig 4.6) if they considered there had been change in the grazing regime over twenty years and the responses indicate there has been a significant shift towards intervention over the twenty years. The interventions mainly relate to agri-environment schemes but may also include the purchase of rights by Natural England or a sporting interest. It is noticeable that the major interventions occurred after 1997.

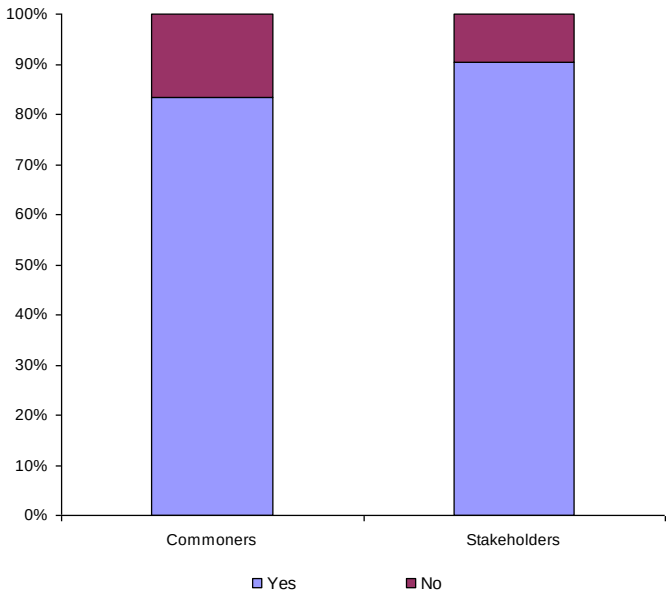


Stakeholder view on the grazing status of Commons (S9) ***Fig 4.6***

This ties in with the findings from the commoners shown in table 4.3 that 78% of the Commons investigated had an agri-environment scheme of some sort including WES, CSS, ESA and HLS. This high figure is not surprising given that 72% of the commons are are SSSIs. The schemes impose a wide range of restrictions (fig 4.7) on the management of the common with bracken / scrub control and seasonal stock reductions being present on half of the commons that had agreements.



Difference in Perception of Grazing Levels



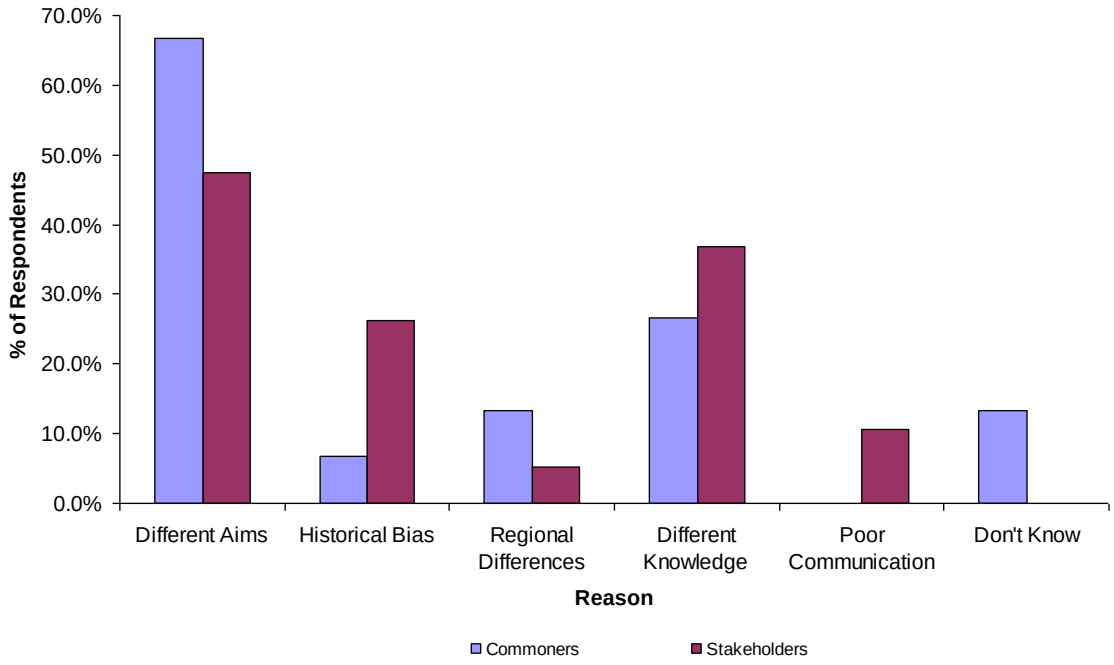
Grazing levels ***Fig 4.8***

Both Commoners and Stakeholders were asked (fig 4.8) if they considered there was a difference in the perception between different parties interested in their Common / Common type as to what is the appropriate grazing level. Upland commoners identitifed a difference in opnion as to the correct grazing level but the other commoners did not. Slightly more stakeholders thought there was a difference in perception but this is not statistically significant. The overall

picture is very clear; both stakeholders and commoners are in agreement that there is a difference in perception over what is the appropriate grazing level.

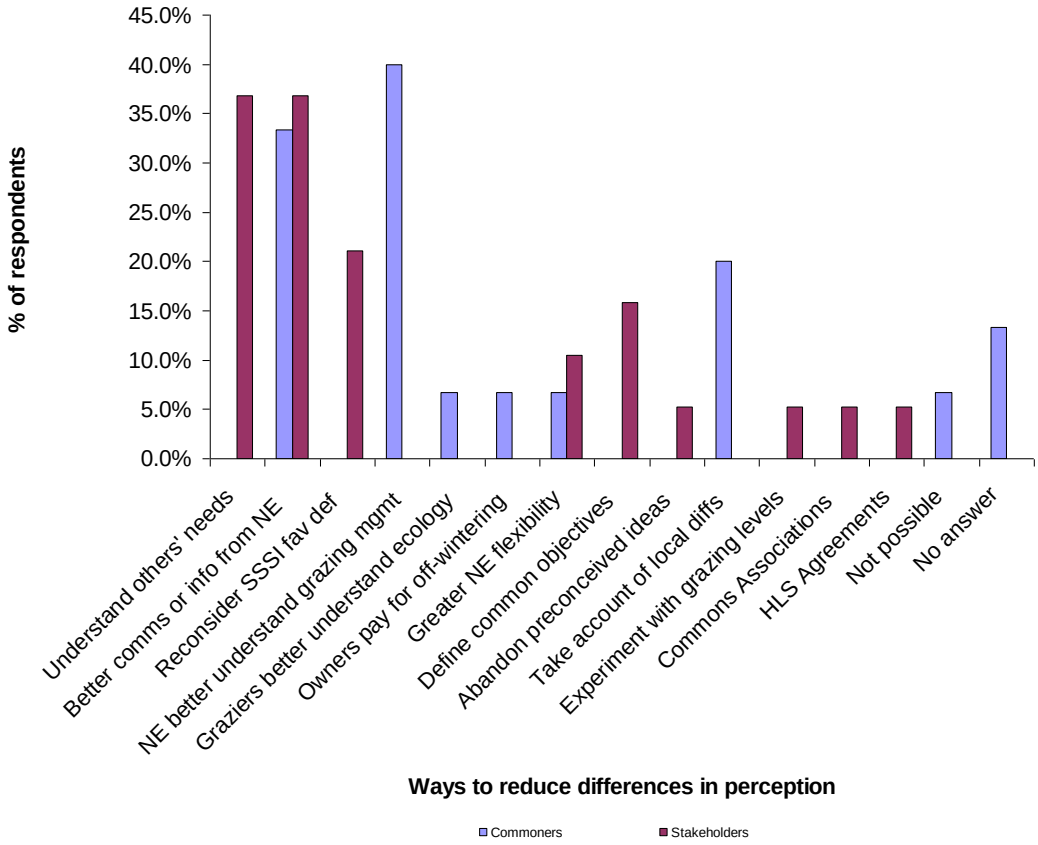
When asked for the reasons a difference between commoners and stakeholders appears (fig 4.9), commoners are clear that stakeholders have different aims. The stakeholders tend towards explaining the difference in perception as a result of lack of knowledge, poor communication and that there is a historical time lag in perceptions.

Reasons for Difference in Perception of Grazing Levels (C17/S7) ***Fig 4.9***

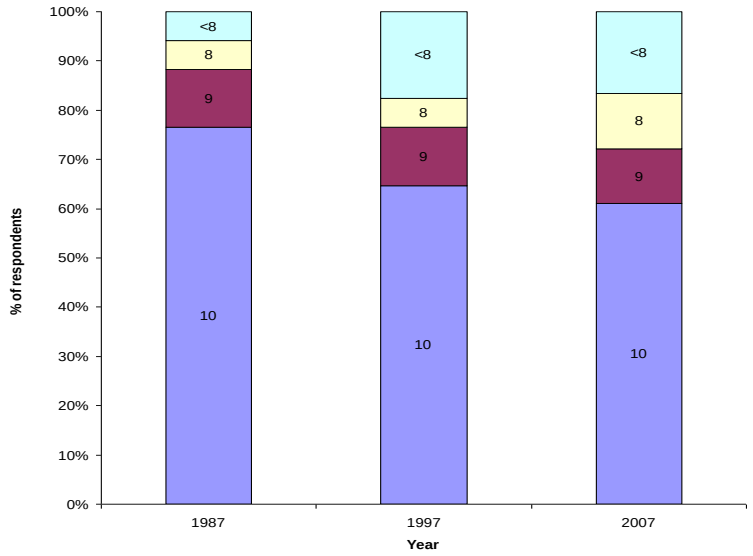


The reasons for the difference in perception came out again when asked how the differences could be resolved (fig 4.10) with commoners focusing on the need for Natural England to understand grazing management while stakeholders thought there should be a mutual understanding and common objectives. Both groups were clear that better communications and information from Natural England would help. The stakeholder from the NE overgrazing team thought it would be useful to share the data from ecological studies with commoners so to improve communication. Commoners expressed the need to take account of local differences e.g. in geography, natural vegetation and farming practices.

Ways to Reduce Differences in Perception (C18/S8) ***Fig 4.10***



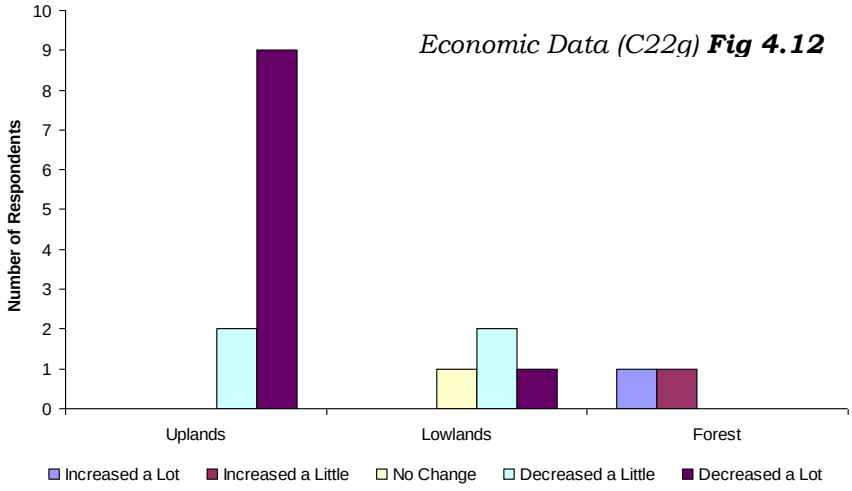
Importance of Commoning in maintaining the farm enterprise (C21)



Importance of Commoning ***Fig 4.11***

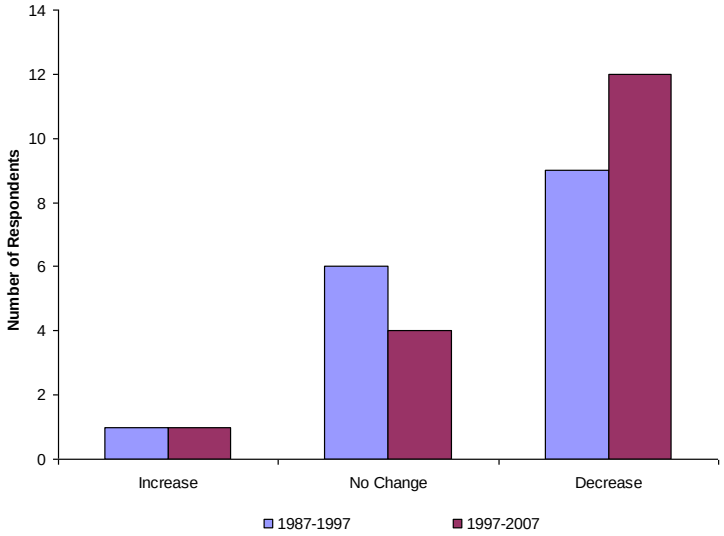
In this question (and other scoring questions) respondents were asked to use a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being not important and 10 very important. The responses indicate that commoning is very important for maintaining the current farm enterprise both in the uplands and lowlands. This also applied to the responses to the question as to the importance to overall profitability so the results are not presented.

While commons are seen as important the overall picture of economic return from farming is depressed as the response in fig 4.12 below shows; except in the New Forest there has been no increase in profitability and in the uplands there has been a large decrease over the last 20 years.



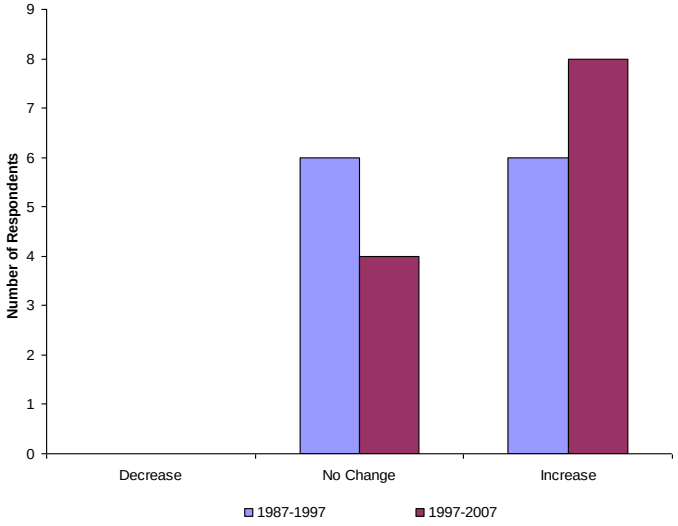
Economic Data (C22g) ***Fig 4.12***

Change in Number of Farms/Graziers on the Commons (C22a) and in the Size of Farms that graze the Common (C22b)



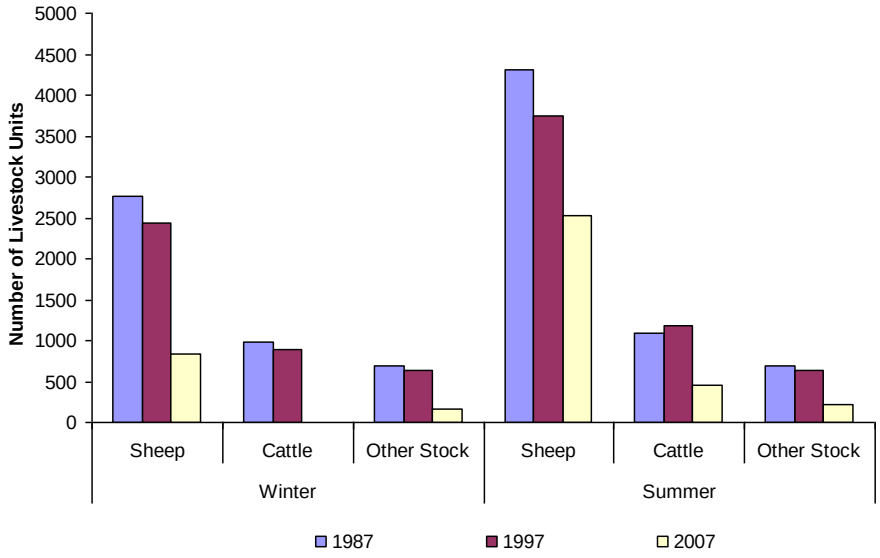
Change in number of active graziers on the common ***Fig 4.13***

Over the last 20 years there has been a decrease in the number of graziers and farms grazing the common (fig 4.13). Many farms changed their farm enterprises after the 2001 foot and mouth epidemic or as older farmers retired or died no successors took their place. The common rights were either taken on by a neighbour or left dormant. While the number of farmers active as commoners has reduced the size of the farms of those remaining has increased over the 20 years 1987 to 2007 (fig 4.14).



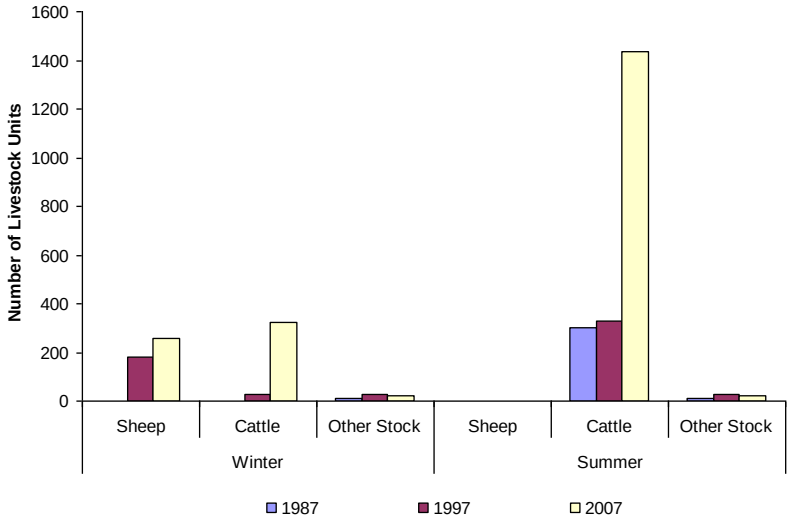
Change in size of farms grazing the Common ***Fig 4.14***

Change in Stock Numbers on Common Land over the last 20 years (C19)



Change in Livestock Numbers (Upland) ***Fig 4.15***

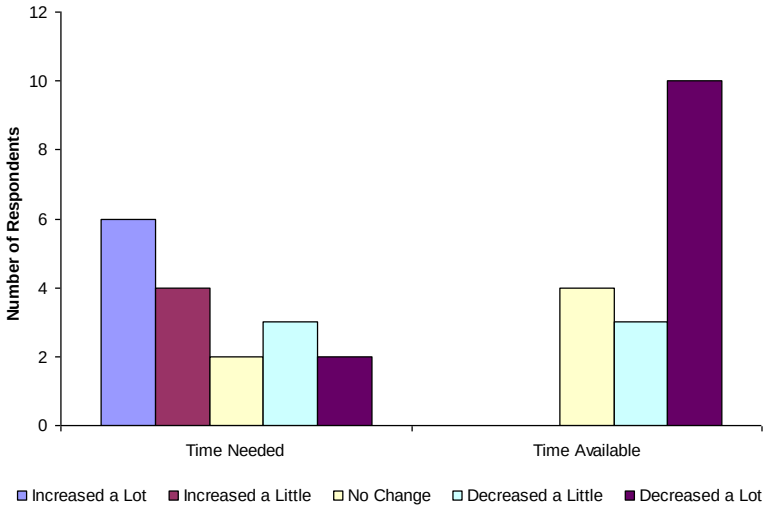
The questionnaire sought information on the numbers of sheep, cattle and other stock over the last 20 years. These have been converted into livestock units and are presented separately for upland and lowland commons (figs 4.15 and 4.16). There is a statistically significant reduction in sheep levels in both the winter and the summer in the uplands. In the lowlands there has been a significant increase in cattle numbers over the last ten years which ties in with the increase in agri-environment schemes on lowland commons reintroducing cattle.



Change in Livestock Numbers (Lowland) ***Fig 4.16***

Time Required to Manage the Grazing Activity on the Common (C22e)

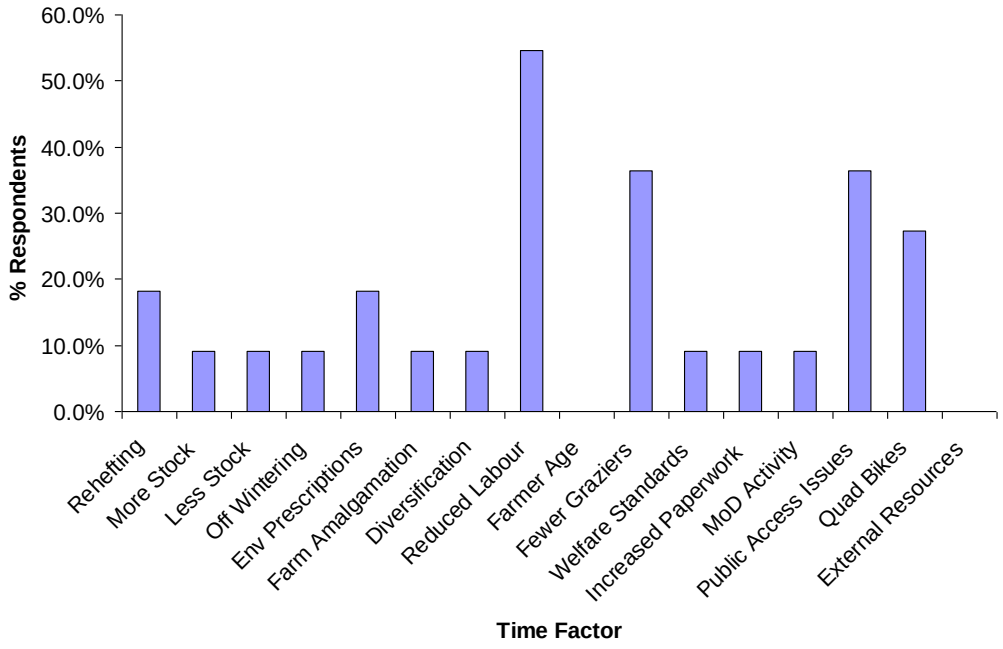
In painting the picture of how and why graziers use common land they were asked whether the time needed to shepherd their common had increased or not over the last twenty years and whether they had more or less time available. These results relate to the individual commoner as the results from asking about effort on the whole common were not considered robust enough. As figure 4.17 shows, on the majority of commons more time is needed and there is less time available. This finding was validated when we met with a group of stakeholders to discuss the findings. Many felt that the reduction in shepherding was the main factor driving localized overgrazing.



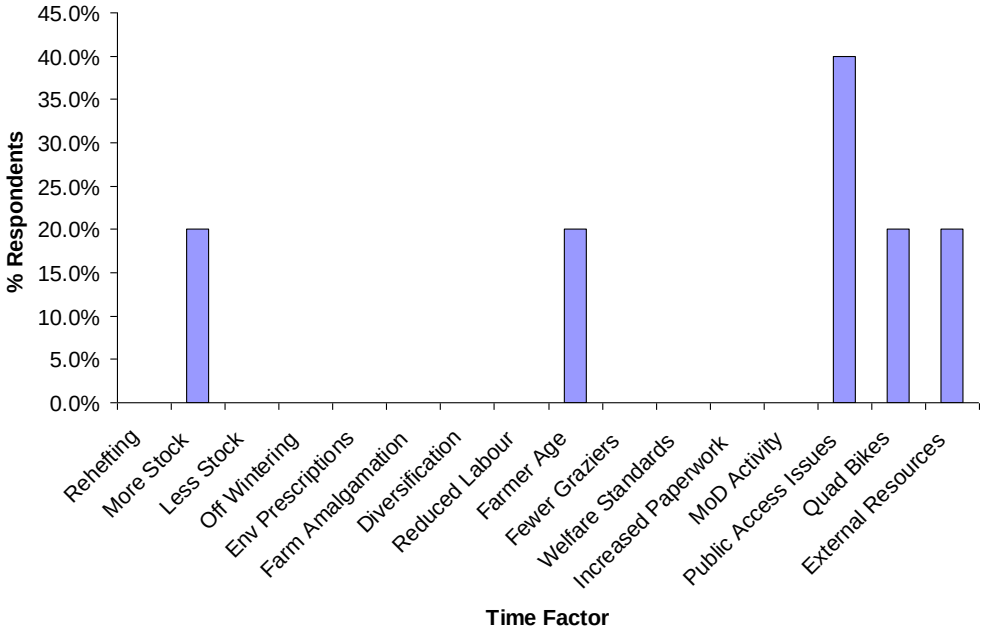
Change in Time Needed and Time Available to manage the common ***Fig 4.17***

When the figures for time needed are split between lowland and upland commons (figs 4.18 and 4.19) it appears that it is on upland commons where most of the increase in effort has occurred but this is not statistically significant, again this may be due to the small sample size of lowland commons. The overwhelming reasons given by farmers are the reduction in labour; both fewer paid staff and fewer graziers as well as the increasing age of commoners. The time available is less because farmers are trying to farm larger areas of land with reduced labour and increased bureaucracy. Public access problems were also cited by over 30% of respondents as a factor that requires more time; these are both on upland and lowland commons.

Factors affecting time required to manage upland commons (C22e) ***Fig 4.18***



Factors affecting time required to manage lowland commons (C22e) ***Fig 4.19***

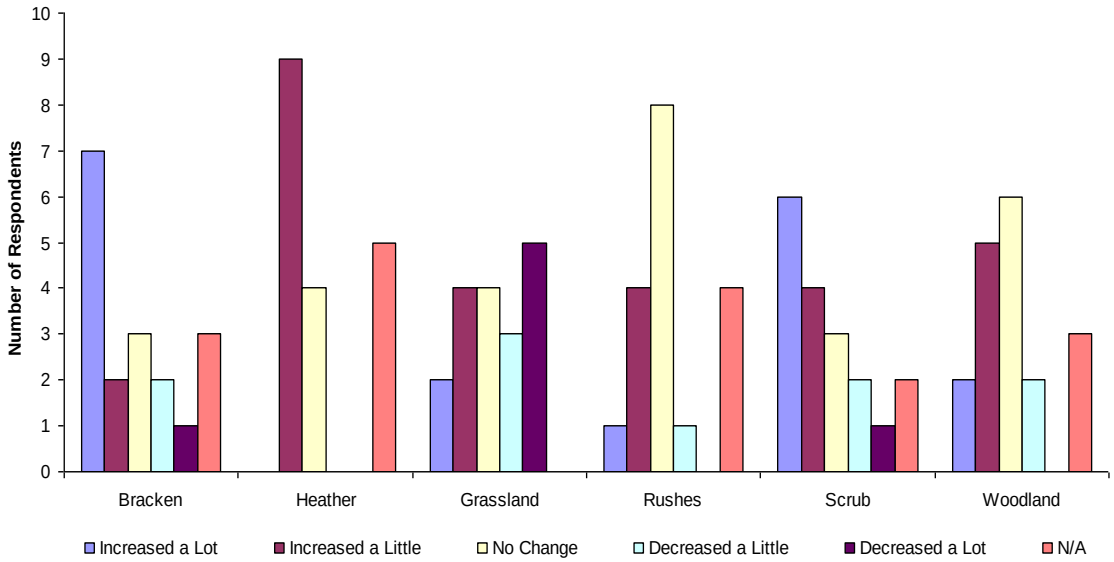


Has there been a Change in Habitat and Why?

Commoners are on the common far more often than external stakeholders and as such, their observations over the past 20 years in the above context were considered to be valuable. These findings are not based on any measurements but on their perceptions. Due to the mosaic of habitats and the diversity of commons this data is difficult to analyse and draw conclusions from. For instance if a common has no heather they will have responded "no change". A more detailed analysis separating the types of commons gave no clearer picture.

The points that can be drawn out from fig 4.20 are:

- bracken has increased significantly on the sample commons where it is present
- heather has increased a little on a majority of the sample commons where it is present
- sample commons where grassland has increased are more than matched with those where it has decreased
- rushes have increased a little on some of the sample commons
- scrub has increased significantly on the sample commons
- woodland has increased a little on some of the sample commons



Change in Habitat over 20 years (C22f) ***Fig 4.20***

Respondents were asked reasons for their views and while the answers given were varied (see fig 4.21) 67% gave a change in grazing management as the reason for the changes in habitat. It is perceived as the most important factor though not the only reason.

Reasons given for a Change in Habitat ***Fig 4.21***

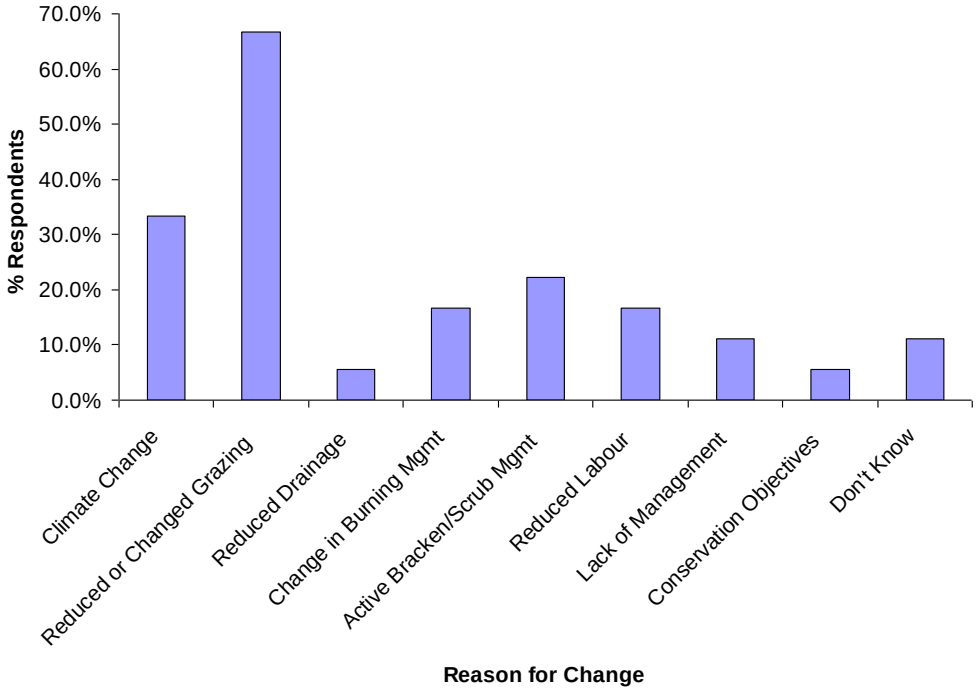
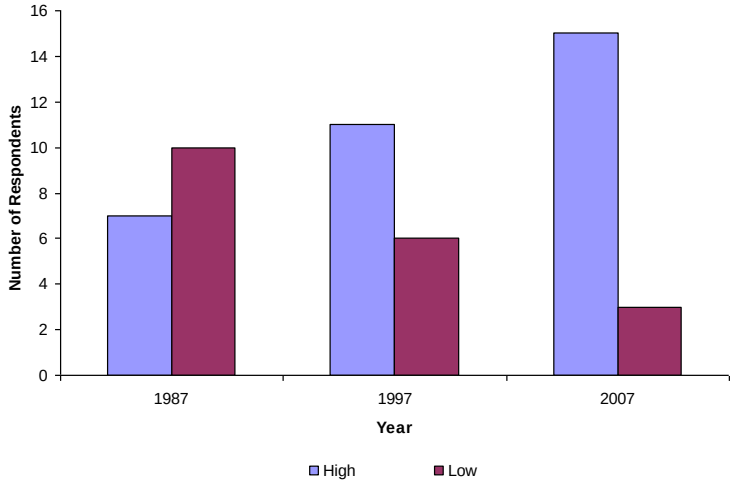


Fig 4.21

Level of Involvement of Commons Associations in Management



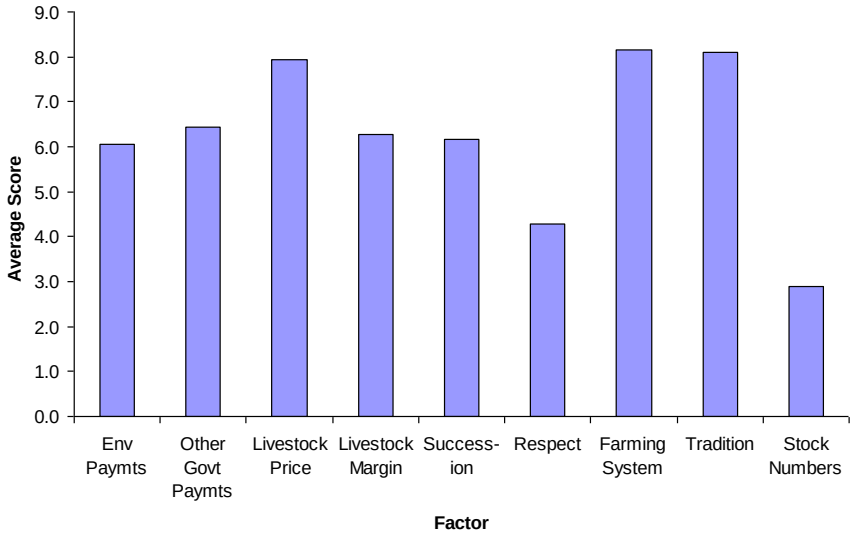
Involvement of Commons Associations ***Fig 4.22***

Commoners were asked what the involvement of their Commoners Association has been in grazing management in 1987, 1997 and 2007 and from the results (fig 4.22) it can be seen that the role of Commoners Associations has increased over the twenty year period.

4.4.2 Motivation to Graze the Common

Commoners have many complex reasons that influence why they use Common land. If policy makers wish to design policy for specified outcomes on Common Land it is essential to understand what motivates farmers to graze commons. This section of the data collection was therefore targeted at understanding the relative importance of a range of motivating factors.

Commoners were asked what motivated them to graze the common and to respond through a scoring system with 10 being very important and 1 not important for a set number of factors. There was the opportunity to list additional factors if they wished to as the list was by no means exhaustive.

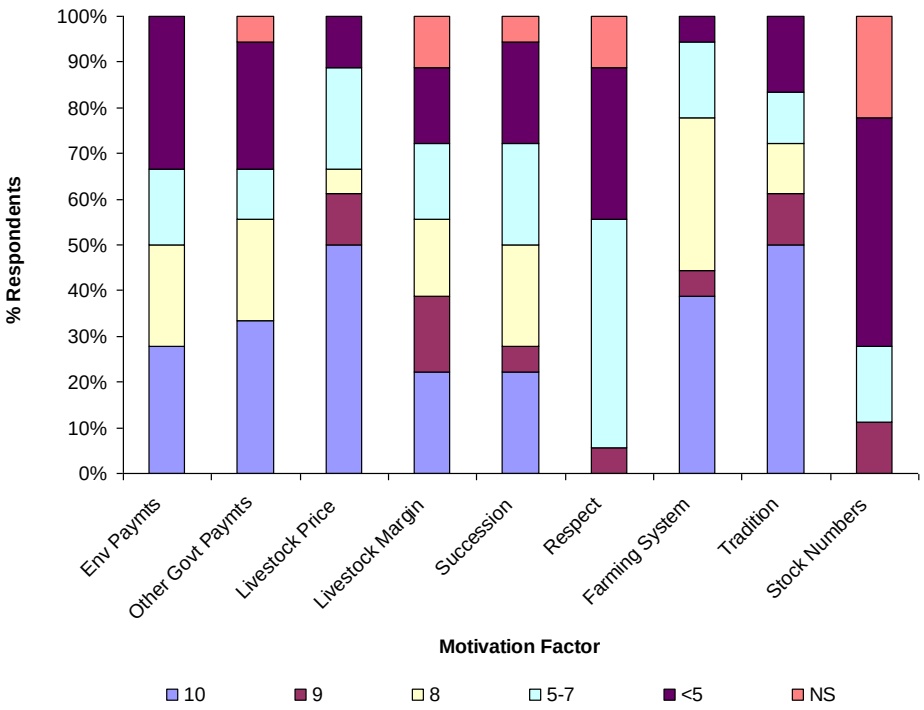


Average Score for each Motivating Factor ***Fig 4.23***

What was interesting was breaking down the average score (fig 4.23) to show the cumulative scores (fig 4.24). Livestock prices and tradition were the factors that scored 10 most often and if the score of 9 is also included, the contribution of commons to the farming system and profit margin were the next most important factors that motivated farmers to graze the common. Additional motivating factors mentioned were; livestock quality and job satisfaction.

Again an analysis between lowland and upland commons was undertaken and the differences were not statistically different. They breakdown did suggest that succession and maintenance of the farming system was important on upland farms, while maintaining a tradition was important on lowland commons

Cumulative % of scores for each motivation factor ***Fig 4.24***



4.4.3 Future Expectations and Drivers for Change

In looking at the future, commoners were asked to consider how a range of factors would change over the next ten years if their common continued as it is or if the existing agri-environment scheme (AES) ended. Stakeholders were only asked what their view would be if the current agri-environment schemes stayed the same. The factors they were asked to consider were:

- grazing levels
- numbers of land managers (farmers and gamekeepers)
- recreation users
- bracken and scrub cover[110]

Looking into the future is always difficult and all answers represent personal or group perceptions depending on their experiences and the influences upon them. The commoners provide an insight from the active land manager while the stakeholders often have their own agendas which may not be related to grazing but as a whole the stakeholders represent a wider range of interests. Each factor is considered in turn. On each page the commoners' views are at the top of the page and the stakeholders' views at the bottom.

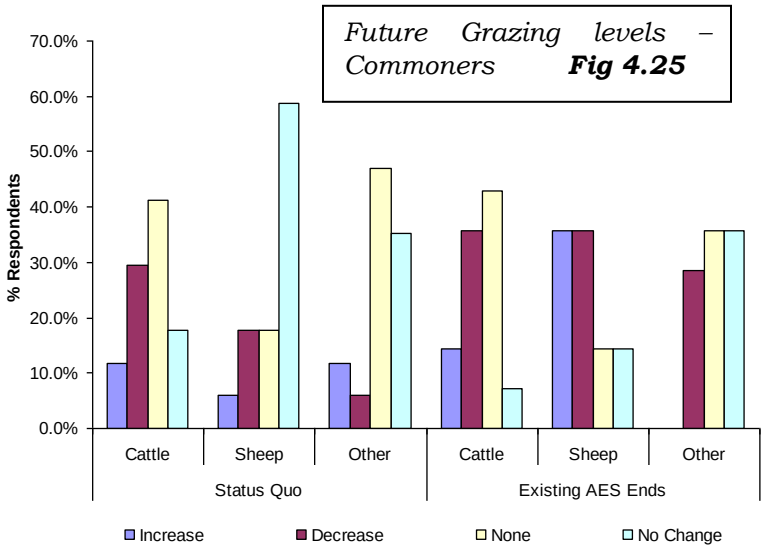
Commoners and stakeholders were then asked what the impacts of the changes they had predicted would be on:

- landscape
- nature conservation
- agriculture
- recreation
- community

The respondents were allowed a free answer on the impacts of predicted changes and therefore the bar charts reflects the qualitative data collected. Unsurprisingly there were common themes that repeated and these are collected together to show the percentage of respondents who gave each answer; i.e. which was the most cited impact. As the commoners and the stakeholders were asked the same question their answers are given side by side to enable a comparison of the differences and similarities of the views of the two groups.

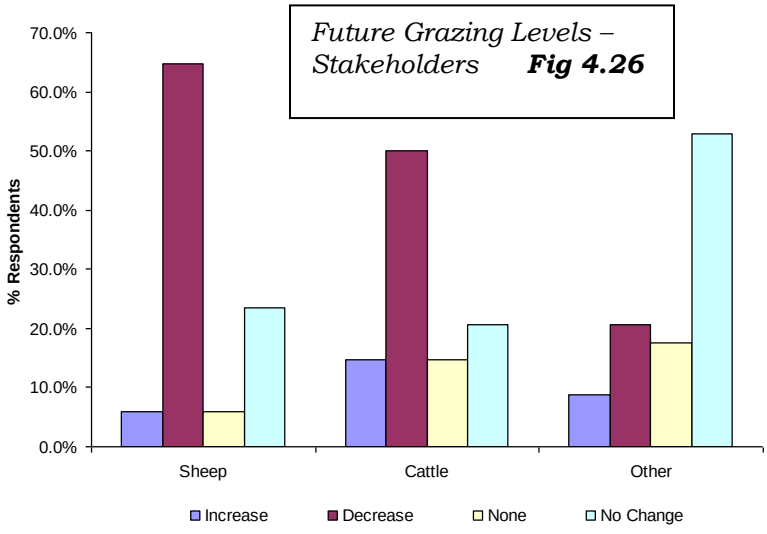
[110] If land is covered by scrub or bracken the area available for grazing is reduced and stock will either fail to thrive or move to graze more sensitive areas.

Future Expectation of Grazing Levels (c26 / S15)



Future Grazing levels – Commoners ***Fig 4.25***

Under existing agri-environment schemes (or continuing with no scheme in place), upland commons do not expect to increase stocking levels but if existing schemes end, there appears to be a fairly even split between those expecting to intensify and those expecting to reduce stocking levels further (fig 4.25). In contrast, stocking levels on lowland commons appear as likely to increase as decrease with the status quo, but if existing schemes end they expect the number of stock to fall. Stakeholders generally expect stock numbers to fall on upland commons but the picture is more mixed for lowland commons (significant at the 95% confidence level).



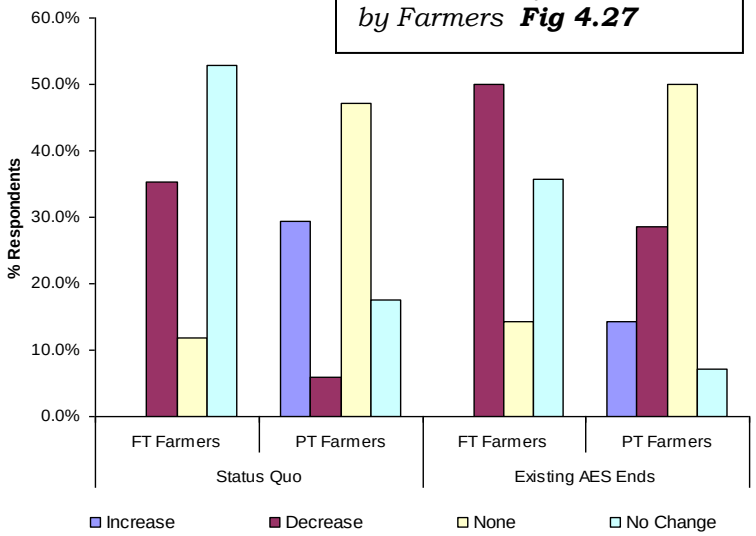
Future Grazing Levels – Stakeholders ***Fig 4.26***

There is a statistically significant difference (at 95% confidence level) in the expectations of stakeholders and commoners with respect to sheep numbers. While stakeholders almost universally expect stock numbers to fall, commoners have a more mixed outlook, with the majority expecting that sheep numbers will not change (fig 4.26). The difference appears similar for cattle numbers, although this is not statistically significant.

Future Expectations of People involved in Land Management (C26/C15)

Whether existing schemes end or not, upland Commoners expect there to be a movement away from full time farming towards part time, whereas on lowland commons they expect that the number of farmers will generally decline if existing schemes end (fig 4.27).

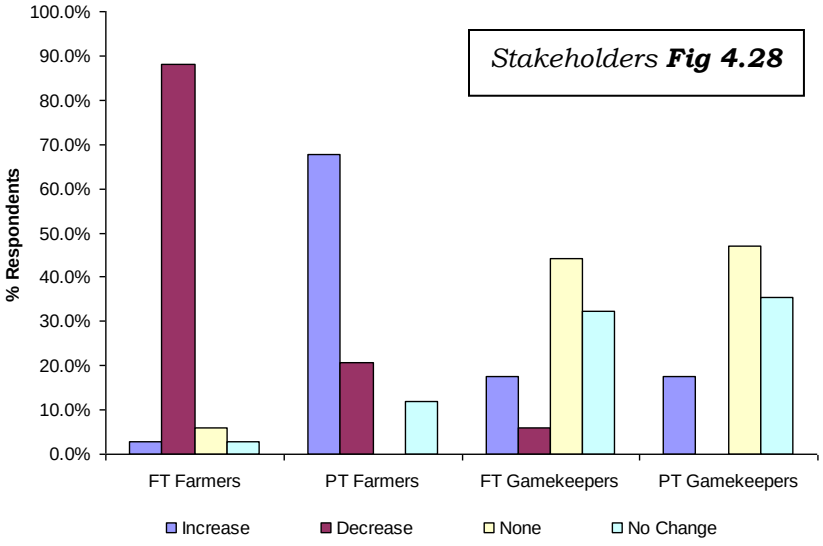
Future Level of Involvement by Farmers ***Fig 4.27***



There is a universal expectation that the number of full time farmers in the uplands will fall but this is not the case in the lowlands (significant at the 95% level). Some substitution away from full time farming towards part-time farming is expected generally across all commons. A small increase in gamekeepers in the uplands is anticipated.

Stakeholders expect the number of full time farmers, to fall while the majority of commoners believe the number will remain the same (significant at the 95% confidence level).

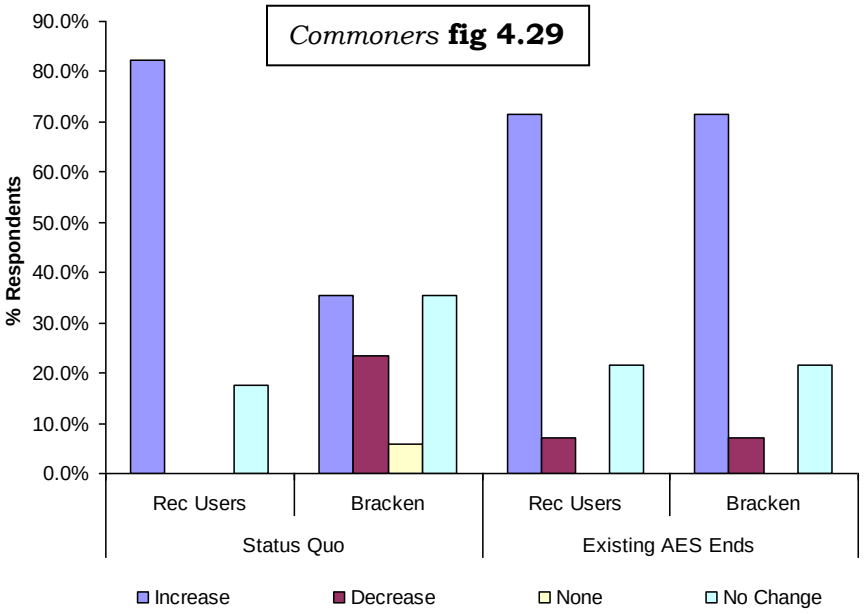
Stakeholders ***Fig 4.28***



Stakeholders expect a substitution away from full time and towards part time farming, but commoners do not appear to share this expectation (significant again) (fig 4.28). They have a much more mixed expectation of the future number of part-time farmers.

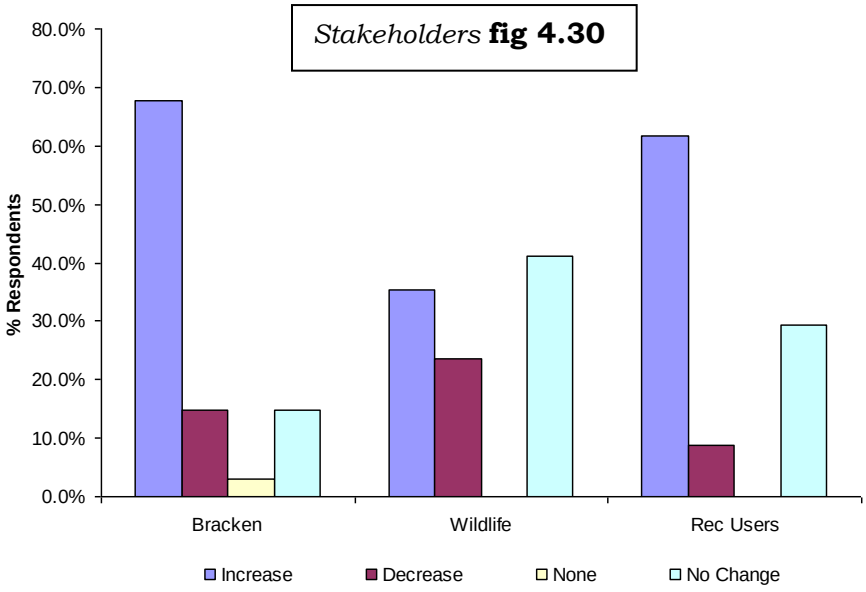
Future Expectations for Recreation and Habitat Condition (C26/S15)

Commoners expect the number of recreational users to increase across the board in both scenarios and Stakeholders share the expectation that recreational use will rise.



Commoners only expect bracken to increase on lowland commons if existing agri-environment schemes end but on upland commons it is expected to increase regardless. Stakeholders expect bracken cover to increase generally across the board.

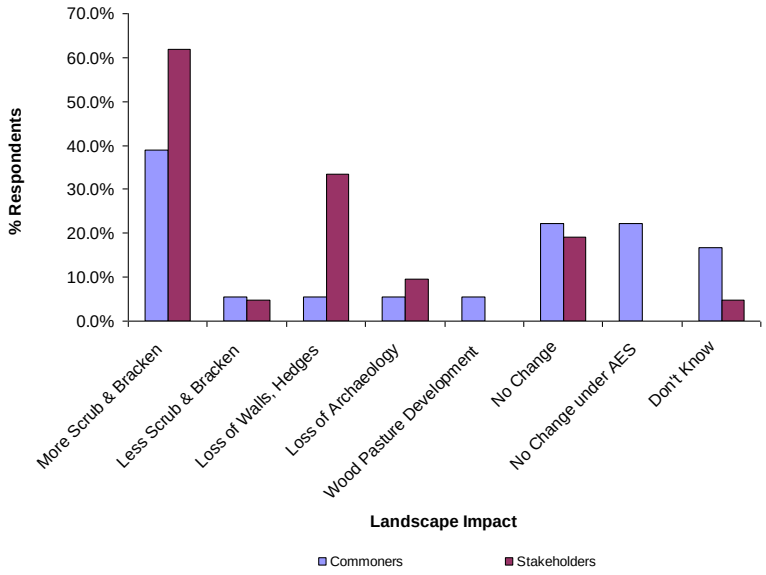
The data collected on expectations for wildlife by commoners was not considered robust enough so is not included but that from stakeholders shows a mixed view with some increase, some decrease and some no change, the responses being fairly well spread across the three categories ().



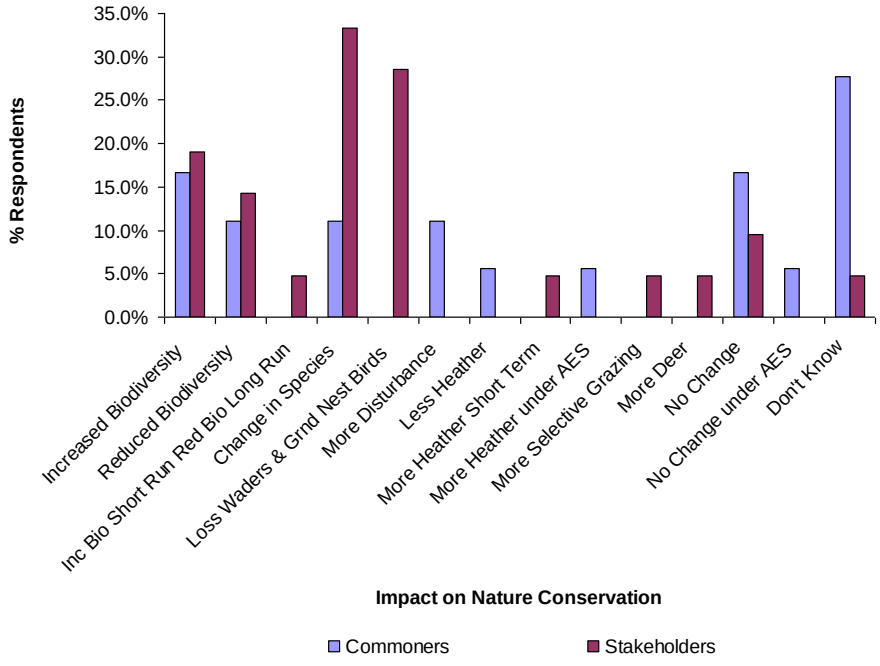
Impact and Effects of Future Changes on Common Land (C26a/S15a):

Fig 4.31

Landscape:
The most common answer by both stakeholders and commoners was that there would be more scrub (fig 4.31). Stakeholders were also concerned about the loss of landscape features such as walls and hedges. The loss of archaeology was a concern of commoners and stakeholders from Dartmoor.



Nature Conservation: ***Fig 4.32***



The "Don't Know" category was the most popular category for commoners while stakeholders said there would be a change in species (fig 4.32). There was little clarity of opinion to this question which reflects the diversity of commons across the country where respondents are answering depending on their local and or personal experience.

Agriculture: ***Fig 4.33***

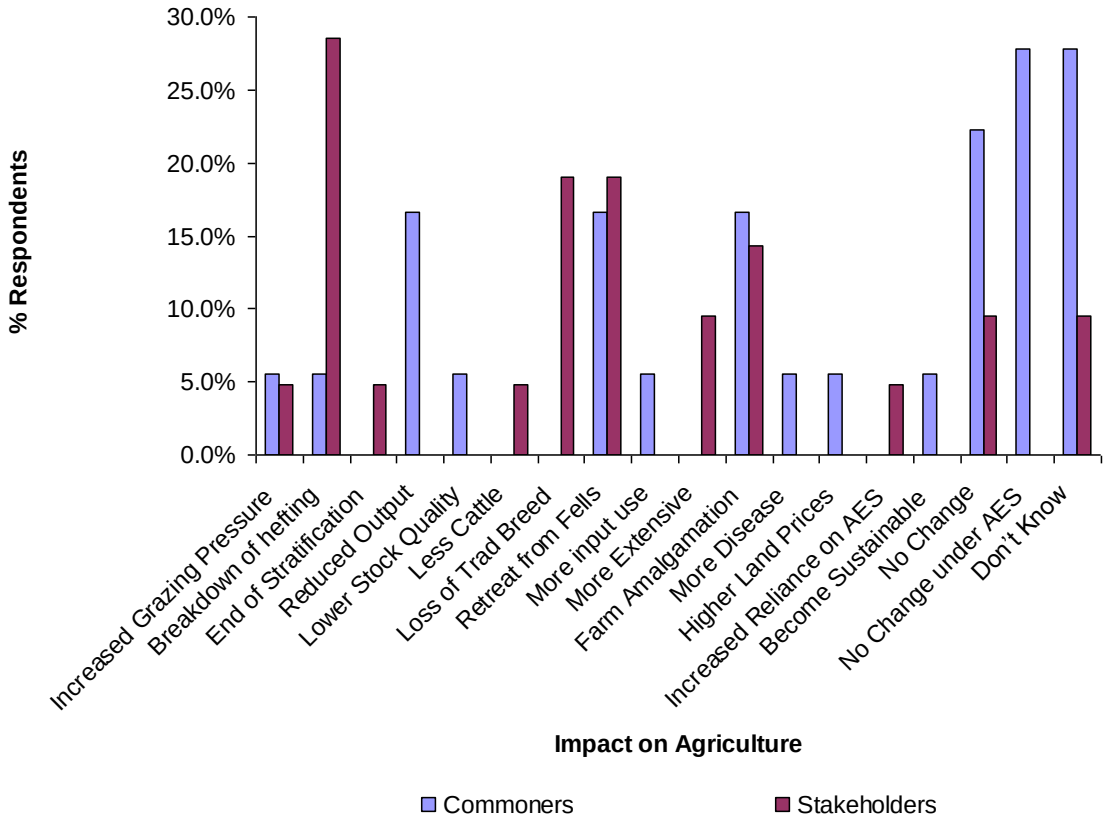
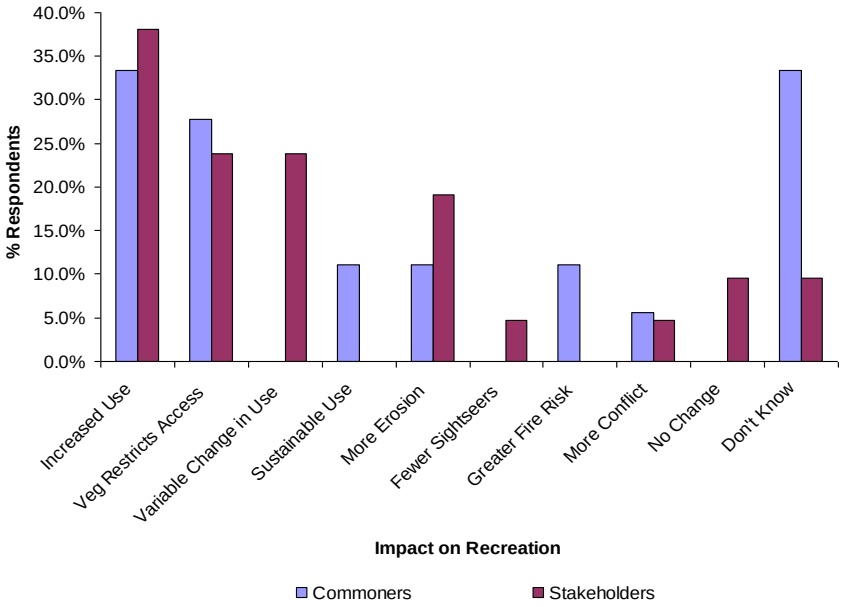


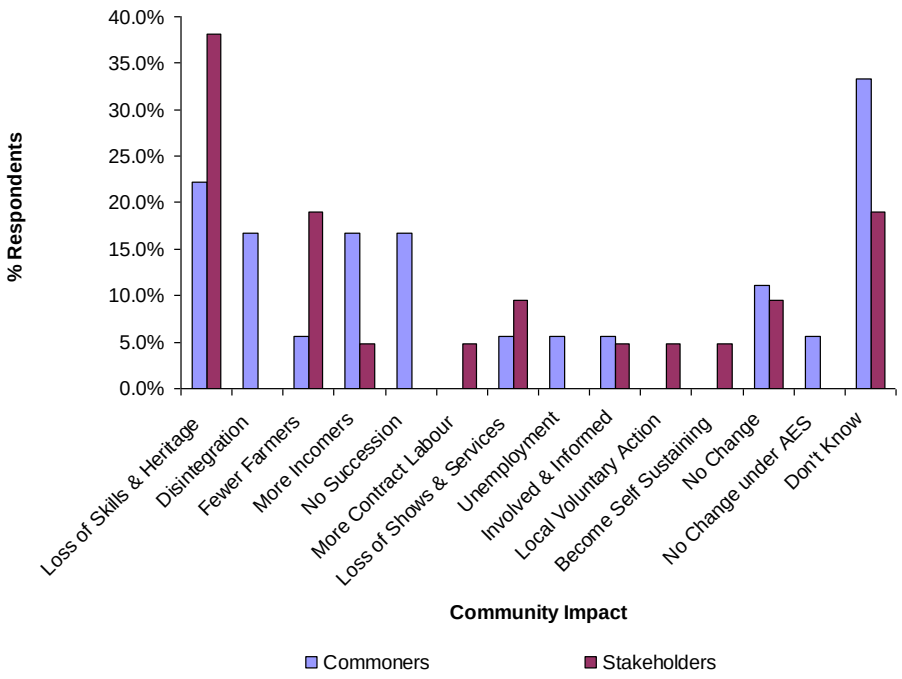
Fig 4.33 illustrates the wide range of views on how agriculture on common land will be affected by changes over the next ten years. Themes recurring among stakeholders and commoners were farm amalgamation, a retreat from the hills/fells and a move to a lower output or more extensive system. Stakeholders were more specific about expecting a breakdown in the hefting system and a loss of traditional breeds. The most common response from commoners was no change or they did not know what the change would be which perhaps reflects the independent hill farmer who reacts to change rather than predicting change and planning ahead in anticipation.

Recreation: ***Fig 4.34***



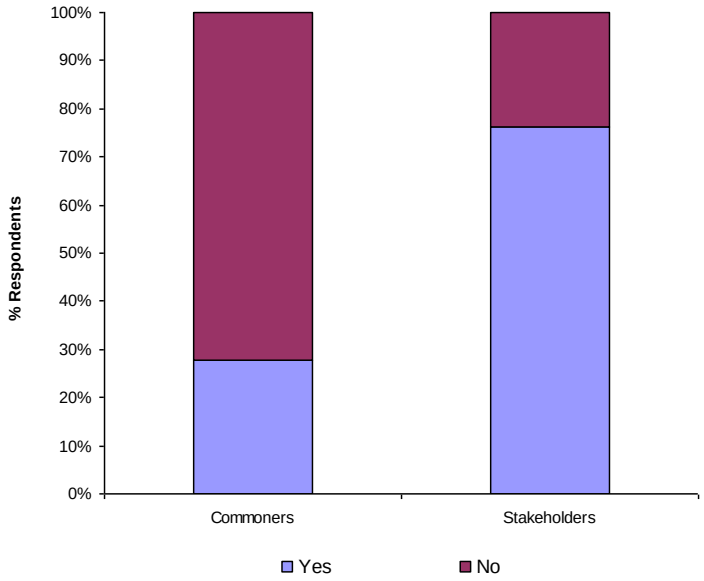
Commoners and stakeholders expect an increase in recreation on Common Land but also both groups expressed concern that a change in vegetation may restrict access to the land by the public (fig 4.34). Increase in erosion was also mentioned and a large number of commoners, 35%, did not know what the impact on recreation would be. The range of answers again reflects the diversity of recreation interests on common land.

Community: ***Fig 4.35***



The most cited impact was the loss of skills and heritage and the majority of the impacts are predicted to be negative though many did not know what the future would bring (fig 4.35).

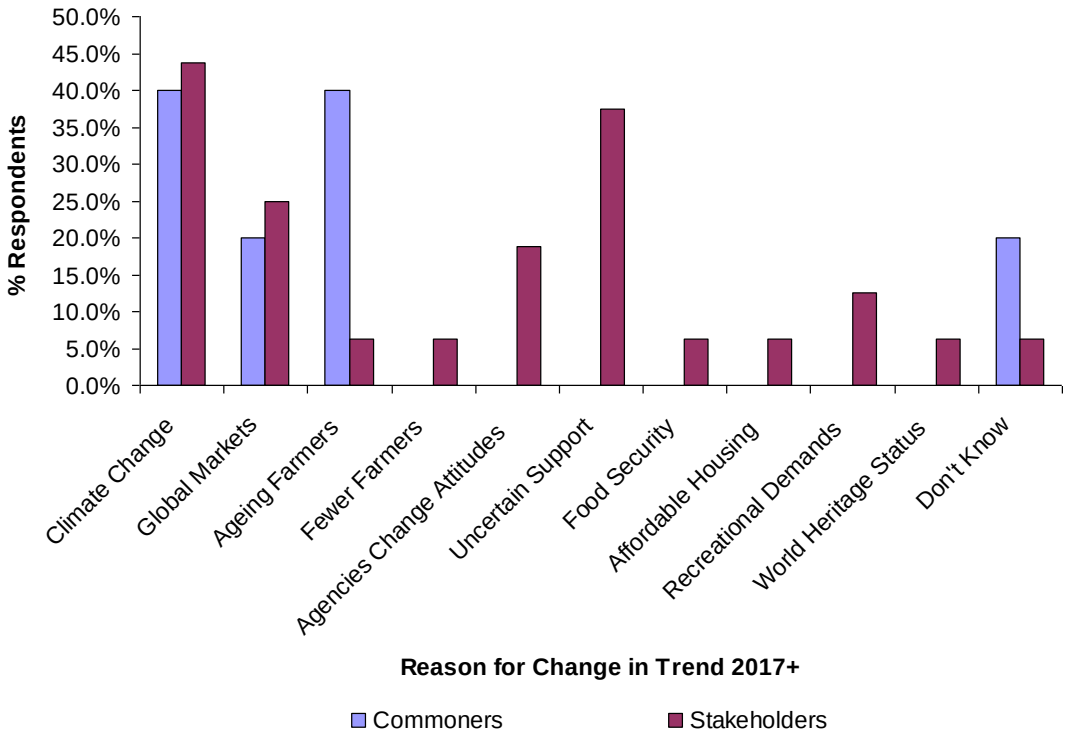
Difference in Trends for 2017-2027 compared with 2007-2017 (C27/S17)
Fig 4.36



Commoners and stakeholders were asked if they say the trends from 2007-2017 being continued over the following ten years to 2027 or not. The bar chart (left) shows a stark difference in the views of the commoners and stakeholders. Less than 30% of commoners anticipated a difference while nearly 80% of the stakeholders think trends will change.

Commoners gave three reasons why trends would change; climate change, global markets for food and ageing farmers (4.37). Stakeholders gave a much wider range of answers but aside from climate change and global markets there are no other common themes.

Reasons for Difference in Trends ***Fig 4.37***



Ways to make Grazing the Common more Self-sustaining (C28/S14)
Fig 4.38

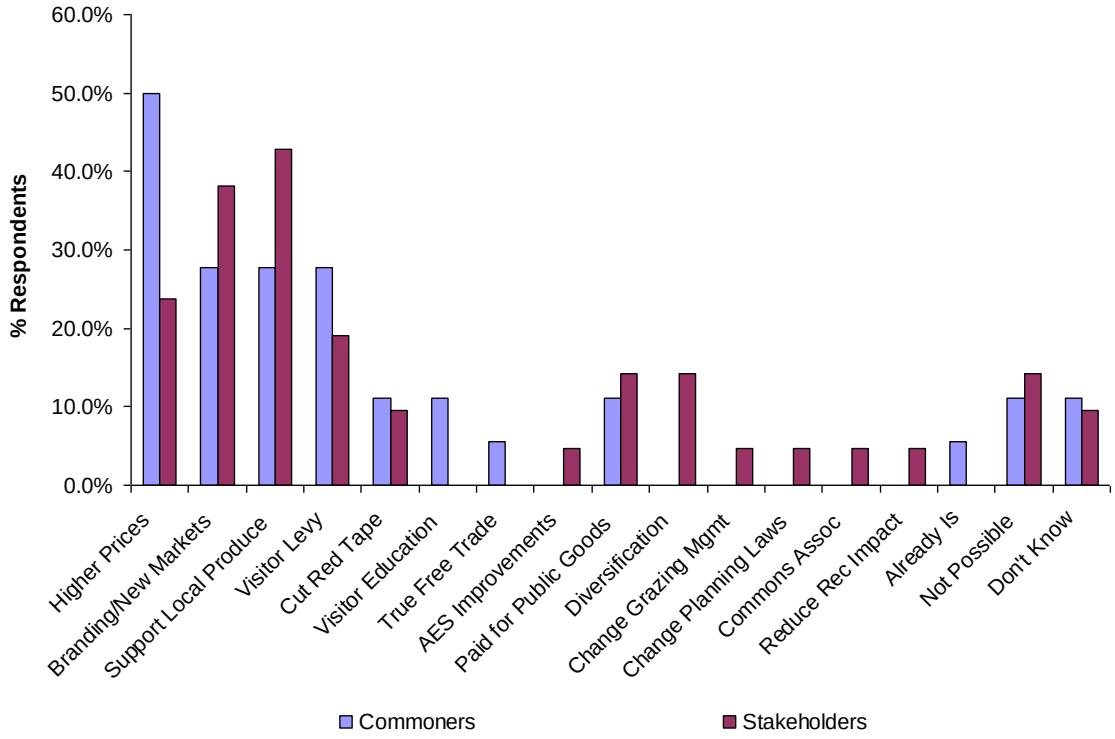


Fig 4.38 above shows that 50% of commoners consider higher prices for their livestock as the way to make commons self-sustaining. The next two ideas of branding and supporting local produce would also result in higher prices. These suggestions were also popular among stakeholders. Other suggestions are rarely repeated by more than one or two respondents so while of interest do not suggest any common approach to the question.

Drivers for Change (C29/S18)

The purpose of this question was to find out the most important drivers for change in relation to the future management of common land for the next 20 years. Commoners were asked the question in relation to their common (figs 4.39 and 4.40) while stakeholders in regard to the type of common they have experience of (figs 4.41 and 4.42). The data is first presented as average scores and then a cumulative score of the results for each factor. There was a set list of drivers as shown but respondents were invited to add additional drivers if they wished and these are listed separately below.

There is no statistical difference between the scores for 2007-2017 and 2017-2027 for the commoners or the stakeholders. Additionally there was no statistically significant difference between the scores of the commoners and the stakeholders. The cumulative scores stress how important farm profitability is to the management of the common in the future and all the other factors that are given scores of ten and nine relate to skills and supporting infrastructure for labour to manage the common.

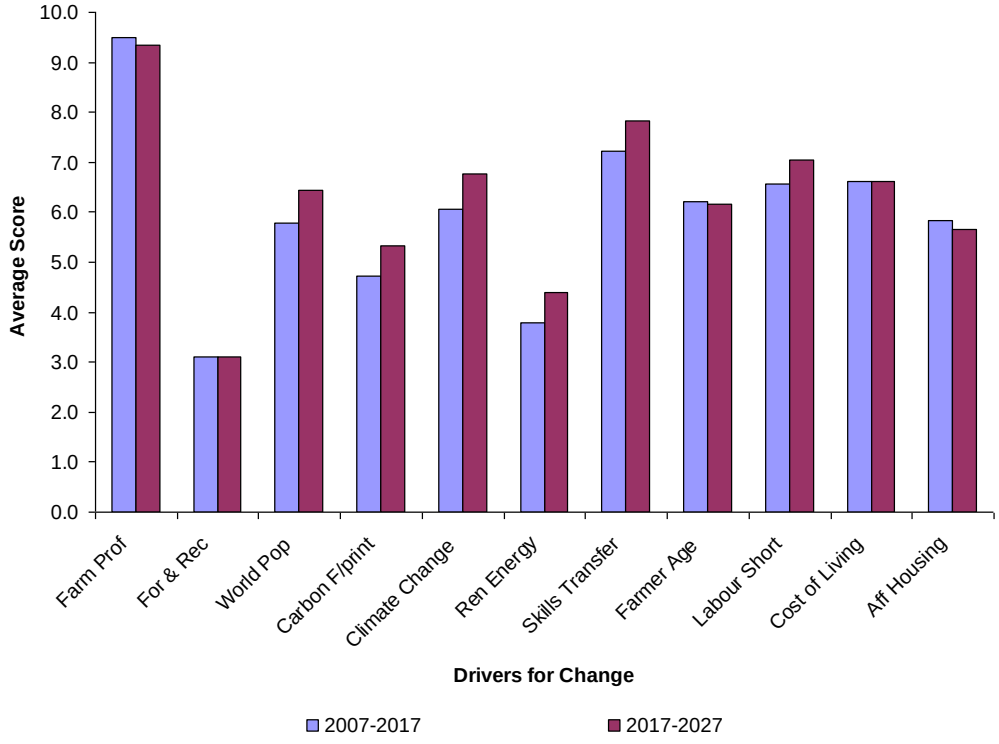
Additional factors from Commoners
(each mentioned once, typically scoring 8-10):

- Purchase of rights by Natural England (common specific)
- Statutory designations
- Local population growth
- Availability of other grazing
- Agri-environment schemes
- Planning policy
- Managing other people
- Loss of young farmers
- National Trust policy (on NT owned common)

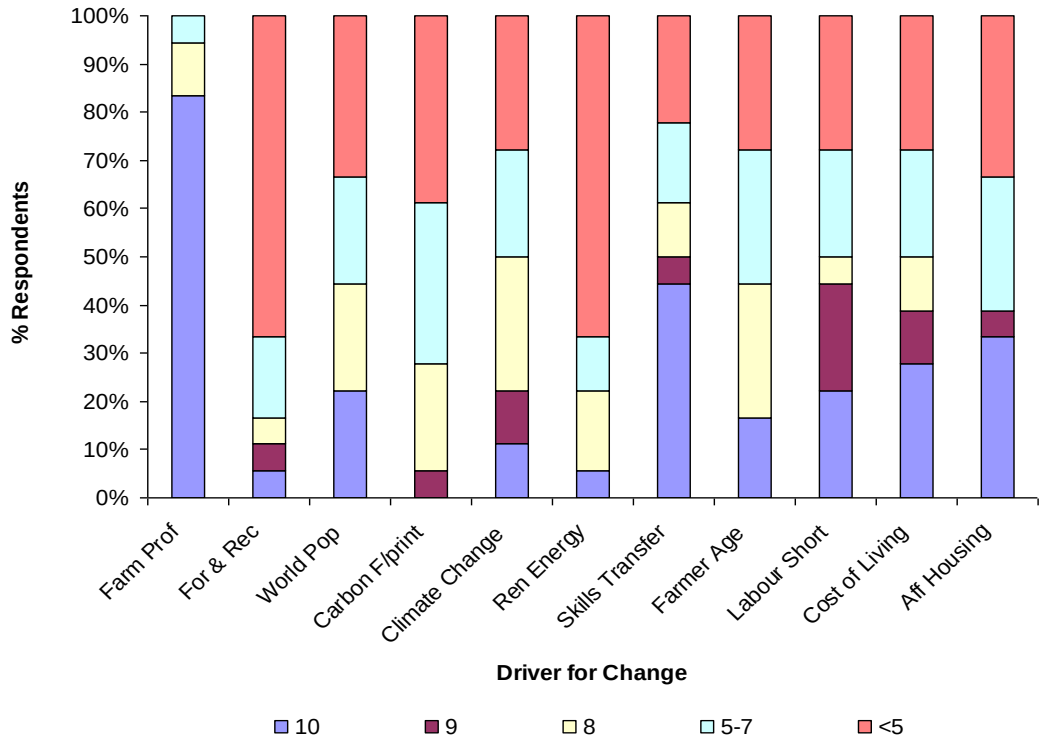
Additional factor from Stakeholders:

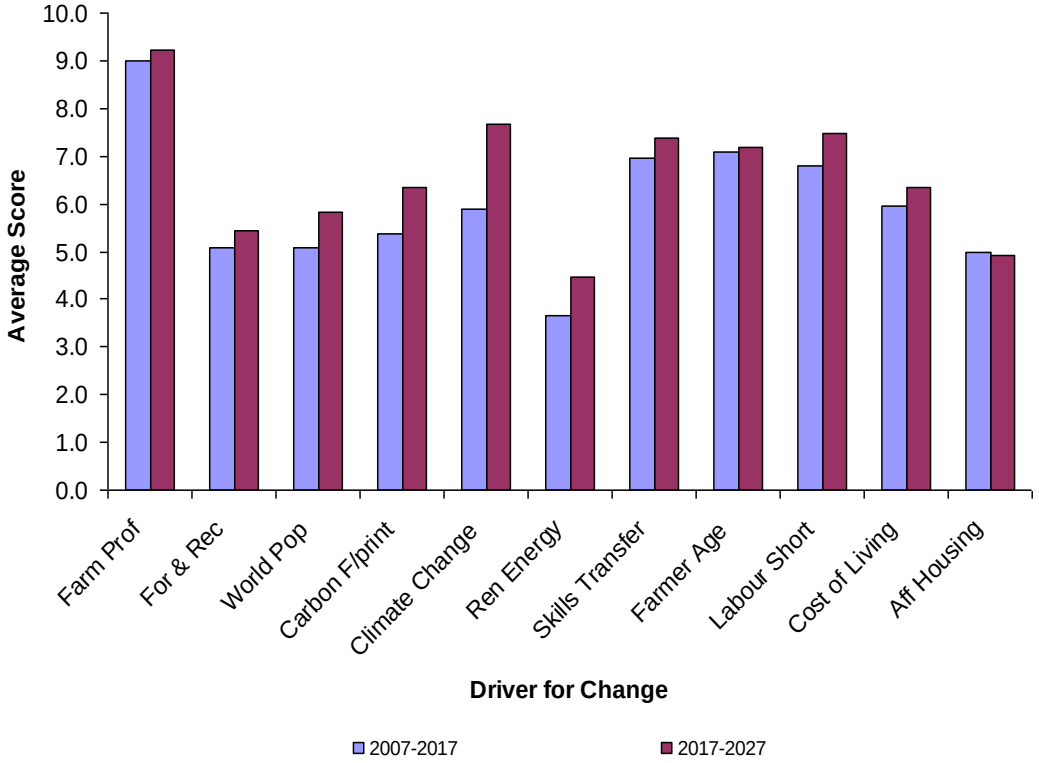
- Agri-environment schemes (raised by 3 independent stakeholders)
- Critical mass of farming community
- Water quality

Commoners Scores ***Fig 4.39***

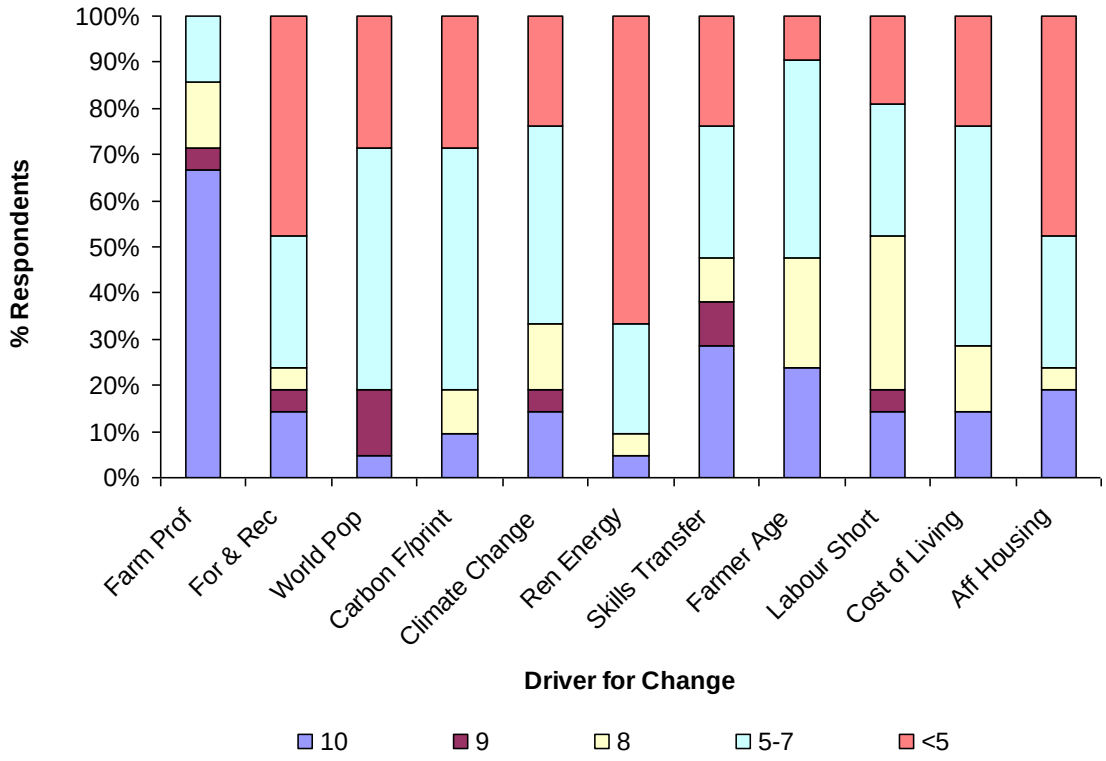


Cumulative Scores from Commoners for 2007 – 2017 ***Fig 4.40***





Cumulative Scores from Stakeholders for 2007 – 2017. ***Fig 4.41 above and Fig 4.42 below***



5. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This report has presented data on the background to pastoral commoning in Chapter 2, examined the current status of pastoral commoning across a range of types of commons in Chapter 3 and presented the results of questionnaires undertaken specifically for this research project in Chapter 4. Further information is given in the descriptions for each sample common (appendix D)

In this chapter the objective is to bring together this data and draw out findings as to:

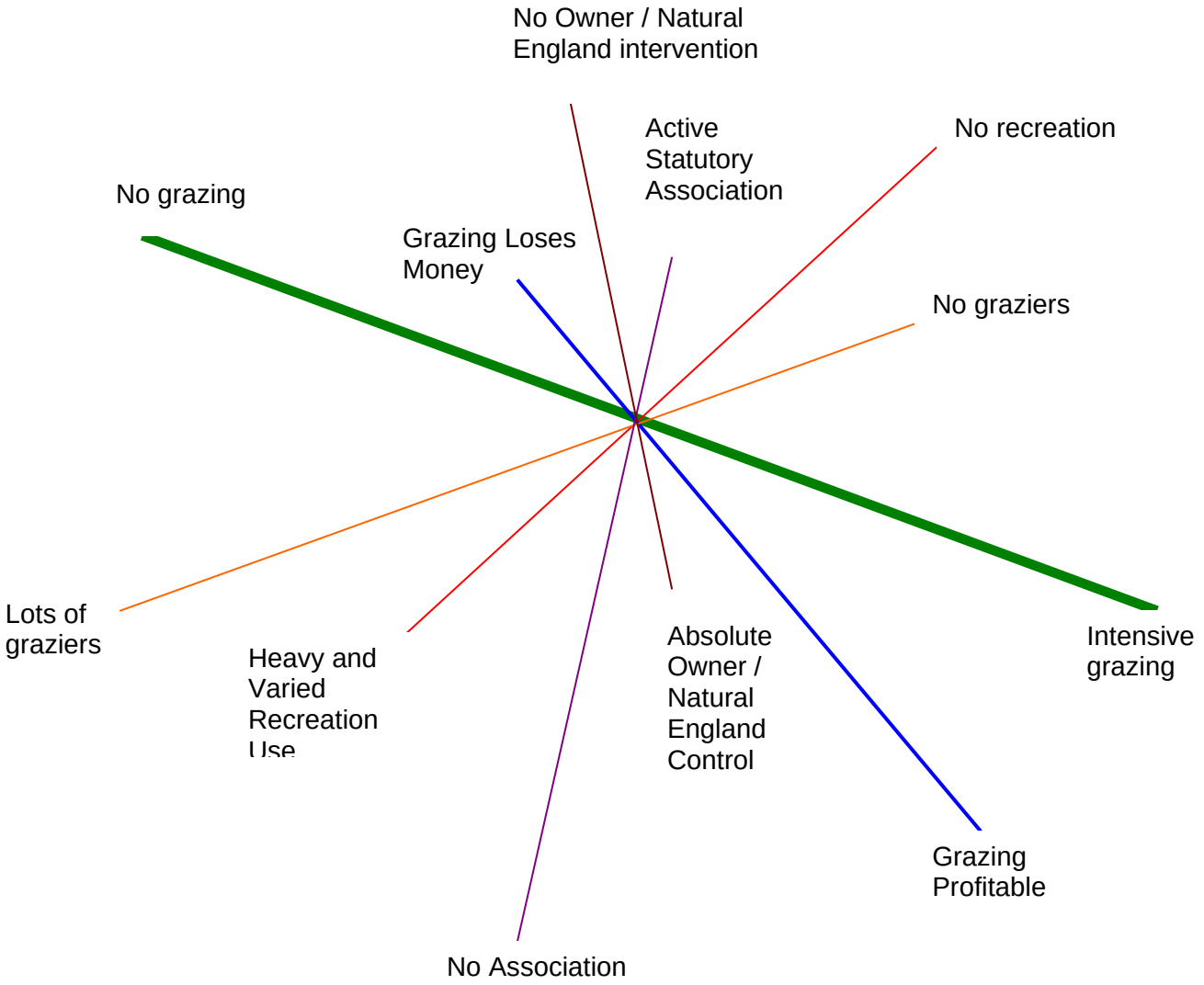
1. The broad types of common that exist & the main practices that exist within each category,
2. An assessment of the level of grazing within each category and the factors that affect grazing levels, and
3. The current state and trends in pastoral commoning, looking backwards and forwards 20 years

Data from social science research is often full of limitations and this research on Common Land and its use for grazing is no different. The questionnaires aimed to provide a taster to show the situation across the whole of England; they dipped into particular commons as examples of a common type not attempting to be statistically representative.

Even when commons are geographically close by they may be at a different stage of utilisation. Grazing levels vary significantly on different commons and should be considered not as a set point but on a continuum from the abandoned to the heavily grazed. There are other continua that intersect the grazing continuum e.g. degree of management by an association or other body, numbers of active graziers, the economic profitability of grazing commons, level of recreation and level of intervention by the owner or other stakeholders with legal rights. Every common is at an intersection of these six (and other) continua (fig 5.1) for instance geography, business structure but these are common to all hill farms so for simplicity focus is concentrated on the commons specific factors.

The analogy of a game of pick-up sticks with sticks that you pick up and let drop can be used. This is the complexity of pastoral commoning. Every common is a different pattern and over time the interactions between the sticks will change, as you try to adjust one stick the others move as well.

Fig 5.1



The Pick-up-Sticks Hypothesis; the status of pastoral commoning on a common is defined by the intersection of a minimum of six continua

While the limitations of the data collected are fully recognised this does not detract from the value of the data in enabling a picture to be constructed as to how commons are being used by graziers and what will drive graziers to continue actively managing their commons in the future.

The findings relating to the Broad Types of Common, the practices and grazing levels are presented in table 5.1.

The findings in relation to Current State & Trends are presented in two ways; first as an examination of the factors that have been identified as determining the state of pastoral commoning and second by looking at Upland, Lowland, Coastal and Forest commons in turn. A summary of future scenarios for pastoral commoning is provided and the chapter concludes with an image of the inputs and outputs from the Commoner (fig 5.2).

5.1 A summary of the Broad Types, Practices & Grazing Levels

Chapter 3 gave an overview of common types divided on a geographical basis. This method of division of types was debated by the team, as there are clearly other ways of grouping commons together with similar characteristics however; the team concluded it was the most suitable because it would make the most sense to the practitioner whether a commoner or officer delivering schemes in the field. This chapter shows there is a wide variety of practices and intensity of grazing on common land both across the country and within a "type".

There are general trends and characteristics for each type and these are summarised in table 5.1. While Chapter 3 broke down Hill and Upland into various sub-categories for the conclusion these have been brought together. Malvern and Herefordshire have been separately analysed in the above table within the Lowland category.

In assessing the grazing levels the categories of heavy, medium and light are used. These have been assessed from the perspective of the agricultural productivity of the land. 'Heavy' would be near the maximum carrying capacity of the hill or fell from an agricultural perspective, 'medium' is where there has been some intervention to prevent further environmental degradation of the vegetation e.g. ESA Tier 1 schemes or some common rights purchased by the shooting interest and 'light' is where grazing has been reduced to achieve restoration of the vegetation from an environmental perspective e.g. ESA Tier 2, Countryside Stewardship Schemes, HLS.

In some areas there has been no intervention but grazing levels have reduced as a result of a decline in interest in grazing as on many lowland commons and on many lowland commons intervention is to achieve favourable status . The Biological Surveys referred to in Chapter 3 gave information on grazing levels, these provide a useful baseline but the evidence from the questionnaires indicates that there has been a significant reduction in grazing levels over the last ten years with many of the papers referred to using primary information that is more than ten years old.

Table 5.1 ***Summary of Current State and Past Trends by Common Type***	*Hill and Upland – North*	*Hill and Uplands – South West*	*Lowland Midlands Malvern Hills and Herefordshire–*	*Lowland - other*	*Coastal*	*Forest*
Grazing Levels *(see text for definition of heavy, medium and light)*	Medium and declining except North York Moors where light. Almost all sheep	Medium and declining, mixture of sheep, cattle and ponies	Medium and increasing in some areas. Sheep and cattle	Light mostly cattle	Medium and stable mostly cattle	Medium mostly ponies and cattle
Numbers of Full Time Commoners	Decreasing	Decreasing	Increasing or Static	Static	Static	Decreasing
Scrub and Bracken	Increasing	Increased	Decreasing due to increasing grazing	Controlled by schemes	Not an issue	Increased
Recreation	High though in North Pennines Shooting is the main recreational activity	High on Dartmoor, Medium on Exmoor and Bodmin	High	High	Low	High
Biodiversity *(as assessed by SSSI condition)*	Complex: Lake District, Pennines North and Pennines Limestone mostly unfavourable recovering. North York Moors and Pennine Urban unfavourable no change	Mostly unfavourable recovering	Malvern - Recovering Herefordshire: Cefn & Vagar Hill - Not a SSSI. Black Hill- unfavourable -no change	Variable	Favourable	Favourable and Recovering

5.2 Factors that Affect the State of Pastoral Commoning

These are the factors illustrated in fig 5.1. Here they are described separately but are closely interlinked and inter-dependant so should not be considered in isolation.

In this report all those who graze common land have been included in that they are pastoralists on Common Land. Strictly pastoral commoning is the grazing of Common Land by person(s) with a legal right other than as or through the owner of the soil. This report takes a broader view including licencees and tenants of the owner as the focus here is not solely on legal rights but on the act of grazing.

5.2.1 Grazing Levels

While the number of registered rights limits the total grazing by commoners on a common the study showed that in none of the case studies was grazing at the legal maximum[111]. The grazing level was affected by the five factors detailed below (sections 5.2.2 – 5.2.6). Overall the grazing pressure on the case study commons has decreased significantly over the last twenty years both in the winter and the summer. There are two exceptions, Selborne and Malvern where grazing has been reintroduced. The reduction in sheep grazing has been much more pronounced than cattle grazing though there is now no winter grazing of cattle on any of the commons.

The definition of grazing intensity requires care as it depends on the objectives sought. As mentioned above the agricultural perspective is quite different to the ecological with the former seeking to maximise livestock output while the latter will be targeted as the protection of specific habitats and species.

5.2.2 Numbers of Grazing Commoners

In three out of five lowland commons no grazing is undertaken by commoners but they are grazed by others; either through a committee letting the stints or through the National Trust as owner granting a licence to a local farmer.

The picture on lowland commons shows what happens when there is no incentive to graze common land, it is abandoned. In the uplands commons are still actively grazed but this study has shown that the commoning system is fragile and unravelling. A decline in the number of active graziers has occurred on most upland commons over the past 20 years (see fig 4.13) and this trend is continuing and may accelerate as existing commoners retire or die (see the summaries for Haslingden and Scales in appendix D where it is predicted the number of commoners could reduce to two in the next twenty years). Once the number of graziers reaches this level, while legally it is still a common, in

[111] See RPA data on registered rights in appendix E

practice the characteristics of shared grazing and the collaboration that goes with this disappears.

On the other large upland commons there are more graziers and the situation looks stable for this generation as the commoners are low risk takers and are unlikely to change their farming system. On several commons e.g. Above Derwent, Bodmin and Exmoor graziers commented they could not justify continuing without the income from agri-environment schemes. Already on many upland commons there are debates around the issue of time required to gather relative to the numbers of sheep on the common

Some commons are more hopeful; on South Stainmore in the North Pennines four out five graziers have successors already active on the farm and on the Coastal Common, Burgh by Sands the Stint committee said there was still good demand for the stints which are auctioned on an annual basis. Town Moor is similar to Burgh in this respect.

The New Forest is an unusual situation where there are a large number of graziers but the majority only turn out small numbers of stock and grazing the Forest is not central to their livelihood.

5.2.3 Economic Profitability

This is the over-riding factor that determines the current state and how pastoral commoning will change. Commoners are in all cases (except the New Forest) driven by the profit they can make from farming in particular they are motivated by the profit from livestock and the prices received for their stock. While many commoners mentioned the price of stock an equal number commented on overall return and the need to take account of increasing fertiliser and feed prices. On several commons graziers were continuing to farm the common in spite of that enterprise making a loss due to a desire to maintain their traditional farming system.

While there is no statistically significant difference in the scores between livestock margin and livestock price many more commoners chose to give price rather than margin a score or nine or ten. This was validated by the meeting of stakeholders who agreed farmers are heavily motivated by the actual price received in the auction rather than the actual profit made (prices are often perceived to correlate with profit). High prices boost self-esteem and give farmers respect among neighbours as the auction is a public meeting of their peers and prices are reported in the local papers, a feature general to all livestock farming not just pastoral commoning.

Economic profit is a complicated matter made up of several elements. There is the profit from the flock or herd on the common, the profit from the livestock on the farm on the whole and the profit including government support including Single Payment Scheme, Hill Farm Allowance and agri-environment schemes.

On three of the four commons that have no agri-environment scheme there was a concern that the lack of a scheme and the money that flows from it would threaten the viability of future grazing. Many commoners who had schemes recognised that without that flow of cash they would not continue grazing or would not be able to employ a shepherd to manage the stock. Some commoners said they would replace the income by intensifying their stocking but most said they would stop grazing.

In measuring profit and assessing the incentives for the next generation to become commoners it is not enough to make a profit, the profit must be sufficient to provide an incentive to enter farming rather than an alternative career and in particular be sufficient to buy a home in their locality. The need for affordable suitable housing and for the financial return from farming to compete with other jobs was repeated many times by commoners and stakeholders. To achieve this, profit must increase in real terms for instance in line with the retail prices index or wages.

5.2.4 Intervention by the Owner of the Common or Natural England

The pastoral commoning system on all the sample commons except Haslingden and Newcastle Town Moor has been affected by intervention from Natural England and or the owner of the Common. Intervention from owners has occurred for many years but has declined over the 20th century as the role of Manorial Courts was eroded. This contrasts with intervention from the state which has been more recent; in most cases since the early 1990s when agri-environment schemes started on Common Land.

An important intervention on northern commons has been the role of grouse moor owners who have reduced numbers significantly on many moors through buying common rights and limiting the numbers of rights let with farms they control. This is because there is a financial incentive to the grouse moor owner to reduce sheep numbers so to maximise grouse numbers. A grouse moor is valued on the size of the "bags" i.e. the number of grouse shot over a period of years and the size of the bag is inversely correlated to a large degree with sheep numbers.

Other owners who affect grazing levels are environmental organisations including the National Trust who own much of the Lake District common land as well as many lowland commons, and smaller organisations such as Friends of the Lake District. They affect grazing by owning a common or rights and then limiting grazing where they consider a common over-grazed or introducing grazing where there is none.

Aside from intrinsic value of the biodiversity commons produce many other goods and services which have resulted in other organisations buying commons. United Utilities own significant areas of common land in Cumbria around reservoirs and they are planning a large catchment management project to among other matters improve water quality. This will include off-wintering of sheep through paying for sheep sheds and encouraging commoners to reduce

numbers. The Ministry of Defence owns over 4,500ha of common land as part of a training area at Warcop. Here they found pastoral commoning interfered with their training objectives so in 2003 bought all the common rights and now let the grazing to selected graziers bringing them control and ensuring they meet their training objectives.

Natural England however is the organisation with the most impact on pastoral commoning. They own some commons and have purchased common rights but their main influence is through the agri-environment schemes they administer. These have transformed the intensity and pattern of pastoral commoning on all participating commons.

On lowland commons the result has been to reintroduce grazing and to manage scrub. Often on the ground this has been implemented by non-governmental organisations such as the National Trust, Wildlife Trusts or community groups. This has brought back grazing where commons were abandoned and improved the environmental quality of the common. The level of grazing in many cases is not sufficient to be significant to the economy but it still has to be economically worthwhile to those taking part.

In upland commons the schemes have reduced stock numbers and perhaps more importantly changed the pattern of commoning through seasonal restrictions on grazing and the reduction in the number of active graziers. Numbers have also reduced as the abolition of the headage subsidy systems reduced the incentive to maintain high numbers of sheep. Many of the individual commons descriptions comment that fewer stock mean they spread out further and the reduced levels or absence of stock in winter mean the sheep and cattle are no longer well heafed to particular areas. This combined with the reduced numbers of graziers has increased the effort per grazier involved to manage fewer sheep. On the uplands many graziers commented that Natural England do not understand or do not recognise the implications of the change in grazing patterns on the management of stock on common land and hence the reduced incentive to continue grazing commons. For instance off-wintering ewes results in an increased incidence of twin lambs which then cannot be put back to the fell until July instead of May. This not only increases the requirement for in-bye grazing land but also reduces the grazing pattern on the fell, the whole farm system has therefore had to be adjusted.

With limited winter grazing and the need to improve profitability the descriptions highlight a trend with both sheep and cattle to change livestock away for hardy native breeds to more productive continental breeds but these require more inputs.

Several commoners and stakeholders raised the issue of defining conservation objectives and the subsequent setting of stock levels. Many Commoners and stakeholders agree that the sheep quota system lead to the overgrazing of some commons, even from an agricultural perspective, but the situation is now very different as incentives have changed. The very clear difference in perception on grazing levels indicates that while Natural England have encouraged commoners to enter schemes, through financial incentives, commoners have

not accepted the objectives of the schemes and consider them at odds with their objectives of agricultural productivity.

5.2.5 Management: Governance and Collaboration

All the commons in this study had some form of management association from the ancient Court Leet in Danby to more informal commoners associations. On some the management is driven by the National Trust while on others such as South Stainmore there is a strong Board of Conservators with statutory powers. The role of management associations has increased over the last twenty years. It should not be concluded that all commons have management because of the findings here as the selection of commons was probably biased in this direction as they are the commons that were known about.

Aside from the formal structures for governance the day to day collective management of a common is achieved through collaboration between commoners for gathering the hill/fell, sorting out sheep that have strayed, clipping and other sheep husbandry tasks. It is this collaboration between farmers that marks out pastoral commoning from hill/fell farming on private land. The size and geography of many commons would make it almost impossible for a single farmer to gather the area but by working together the objective can be achieved. This collaboration often covers more than one common where commons are contiguous.

5.2.6 Other Recreational Interests

Common Land is a significant asset for the public as a place for recreation activities both active and passive. In some lowland commons recreation is a significant problem conflicting with the objectives of stock management, for instance the National Trust indicated that at Maidenhead and Cookham they may have to consider haymaking if grazing becomes impossible. This has already occurred on other heavily used commons such as Maidensgrove in Oxfordshire.

Recreation is predicted to increase on both upland and lowland commons with mixed views on whether it will be an increasing problem for grazing. It does cause problems with stock worrying and the unauthorised use of bikes and motorised vehicles but is not nearly as significant as farm profitability. Some evidence also emerged that reductions in grazing have impacted negatively on recreation as vegetation has increased e.g. scrub encroachment inhibiting access.

5.3 Conclusions from the Questionnaires on the Current State and Trends of Pastoral Commoning by Type of Common

5.3.1 Hill and Upland Commons
(Lake District, North Pennines, North York Moors, Pennine Limestone, Pennine Urban and Midlands)

5.3.1.1 Past Trends and Current State

All upland commons surveyed are managed by an association and all except two are in an agri-environment scheme. Of these two one will apply as soon as they have identified who the owner of the common is (owner's consent is required) and the second is not of any particular environmental interest therefore does not expect to be accepted.

On all commons the number of active graziers has declined over the last twenty years as has the number of sheep and cattle in both the summer and winter. In particular by 2007 none of the upland commons surveyed out winter cattle. Graziers are spending more time managing the commons but have less time available, public access issues increase the time required on over 30% of upland commons.

Commoners and stakeholders both consider there is a difference in perception of appropriate grazing levels on commons. This is reflected in the concerns expressed by both groups and from the desk study that the reductions in stocking required by agri-environment schemes, combined with the lack in profitability of hill farming, mean the incentives to graze commons are minimal and not sufficient to attract a new generation of commoners.

5.3.1.2 Drivers for Change

Farm profitability is the primary and over-riding driver for change in the uplands though in many cases it is livestock price rather than profit which motivates farmers. This was reflected through the responses from commoners, stakeholders and the desk study. The economic data provided in the background and in the farm business survey report (see appendix A) back up the perceived decline in the economics of hill farming. The striking result from the commoners' and stakeholders' questionnaires is that young people when deciding what career to follow compare farming with other options; it not only has to be profitable, it has to offer as good a standard of living as other options and the ability to own a home. In areas that are within commuter range of cities or popular for second homes this is a major constraint.

The two main components of farm income are livestock prices and government support, particularly agri-environment payments. The former will motivate farmers to continue as grazing commoners but the latter is recognised as a necessity in the majority of cases though there is a concern that the changes required by schemes prejudice the ability to run a profitable hill farm enterprise.

5.3.1.3 Future Scenarios

Commoners were not keen on predicting the future but were clear that improved livestock margins and a farming system that is workable on the ground would result in much more positive outlook. If livestock prices do not improve and environmental payments do not continue there is a risk there will be limited succession of farm businesses and lack of starter farms for new entrants.

While commoners are motivated by price of stock due to the increasing costs of production notably fuel, feed and fertiliser the net margins of grazing the common is likely to remain low even if prices increase substantially. The next generation are likely to look at the overall net income before making a decision to graze commons and until this increases new entrants are not predicted to increase.

The views of the young commoners' stakeholder group were particularly strong on this point saying commons would be ranched such that the hefting system collapses. (Ranching is where sheep are not shepherded on a regular basis and do not have a particular grazing area or heft. Instead, they range at free will across an extensive area. There is therefore no management of the grazing).

Numbers of active commoners are predicted to fall and the stakeholders were more pessimistic than the commoners about this. One stakeholder concluded that the commoners are resilient and will stick at what they know taking the rough with the smooth for their lifetime.

When considering nature conservation, bracken and scrub is predicted to increase particularly if agri-environment schemes end. Stakeholders also expect a loss of landscape features such as walls and hedges and were also concerned about a negative impact on biodiversity particularly bird populations. In respect of the impact on the community, full time farmers are expected to decline with a significant decline in traditional skills and heritage.

There is direct evidence for the above predictions from the completed questionnaires and from commons that have already been semi-abandoned e.g. on some lowland commons and the North Yorkshire Moors.

In the uplands there is a growing view that agri-environment schemes have become too focused on delivering the recovery of specific species and habitats while ignoring the wider implications of their prescriptions on the farming system, the broader range of habitats and wider public benefits which include the ancient systems of stock and common land management. Commoners after more than ten years of schemes are beginning to question the proposals for the next ten years but, as in the auction ring, they are the price takers and have limited negotiating powers.

5.3.2 Lowland Commons

5.3.2.1 Past Trends and Current State

The 1958 Royal Commission on Common Land estimated the grazing level on commons in the south-east was very low at 9%. As already mentioned grazing on lowland commons is increasing as environmental schemes pay to reintroduce grazing as an environmental management tool especially to control scrub. Stakeholders involved in managing commons including the National Trust and FWAG note that commons are often not of economic significance to those undertaking the grazing but there is a strong desire not to lose grazing from commons from a socio-cultural perspective as well as the environmental perspective. All recognise the necessity of agri-environment support in retaining grazing on lowland commons.

The Town Moor in Newcastle is an exception to this pattern. It is successfully managed without any government support with cattle stints being let out to local farmers as the Freemen of the City no longer use the grazing. The Freeman are positive about the future and do not perceive any threats to the future management of the Moor as there are plenty of farmers who want to graze the Moor.

5.3.2.2 Drivers for Change

The ability to attract farmers to graze common land will be the key driver for change. Commons appear to be split among those where grazing is peripheral to the local farming system and has been reintroduced or is heavily subsidised and those where commons remain an integral part of the local farming system.

Where grazing is peripheral, few farms in the areas near lowland commons run hardy native stock that thrive on commons and many farms have been bought up by the horse set or non-farmers. Stakeholders and commoners accept that agri-environment schemes are essential to deliver land management and subsidise rents of stints as the commons cannot be financially self-sustaining.

Where grazing of commons has been maintained it is the profitability of farming enterprises which will drive the future of commoning. On these commons the impact of nuisance from recreational activities can be very significant to the costs of commoning.

5.3.2.3 Future Scenarios

There has been a huge effort by environmental stakeholders and conservators to invigorate the management of lowland commons such as Malvern, Selborne and the Cotswolds Commons network. The general view is that stock levels in the lowlands are as likely to increase as decrease over the next twenty years depending on the profitability of farming and the availability of environmental schemes. Without this support numbers of graziers are predicted to decline.

Recreational users are expected to continue to increase though any increase in vegetation and scrub would be expected to have a negative impact on recreation. Scrub on lowland commons is expected to increase if agri-environmental schemes cease where schemes exist. Where schemes do not exist the continuation of grazing and scrub control is dependant on agricultural profitability. The wider impacts of an increase in scrub would be to reduce the biodiversity created by grazing and reduce the value to the local community as access is impeded.

The diversity of lowland commons from Town Moor in Newcastle, to Corfe Common in Dorset and the Herefordshire commons illustrate the difficulty of a single policy for Common Land. Some are at risk from abandonment (Corfe) while others are secure (Town Moor), some are integral to the local agricultural economy (Cefn Hill), others are peripheral (Cotswolds). The most prevalent comment was that in all cases Common Land is recognised as important as a cultural, recreational and environmental asset and that without grazing its value will decline. Retaining graziers is therefore essential and at current market prices it will not happen without public funding.

5.3.3 Coastal Commons

5.3.3.1 Past Trends and Current State

Coastal commons occur predominately in Cumbria and Lancashire. They are on the whole stinted pastures that were used seasonally by local farmers. Over the last twenty years they have become used les by local farmers but are let out via auction. As a full time herdsman is employed the use of the land is not dependant on day to day labour by the farmers whose cattle are on the marsh.

The commons are valued as useful grazing land that is in demand. Coastal commons have a high conservation value particularly for bird life as they tend to be estuarine. This makes them eligible for environmental schemes which underwrite the management costs and ensure the owners of the stints make a reasonable return either from using the stints themselves or letting them out.

5.3.3.2 Drivers for Change

No change is predicted as the demand is still good but if the economics of the livestock industry improve then the demand for grazing will increase.

5.3.3.3 Future Scenarios

Sea level rise and increased storms are expected to be a significant driver that could change how the marshes can be used in the long term. In the short term ensuring the marshes are accepted into agri-environment schemes is the priority.

5.3.4 The New Forest

5.3.4.1 Past Trends and Current State

The New Forest is unusual in that grazing numbers are officially unrestricted but limited to those whose properties have the right to pasture attached. Grazing and management of the forest is controlled by the Verderer's Court which has statutory powers and the ability to make bye-laws. It has full time staff herding the checking stock the Court seeks prosecution through the magistrates for those who persistently breach bye-laws.

In the last five years there has been a huge incentive to maintain grazing levels that deliver favourable condition of the complex mosaic of habitats through a Countryside Stewardship Scheme that has minimum as well as maximum grazing levels prescribed. Stock numbers have therefore increased but are not expected to remain stable. Commoners are split between those who graze the Forest as part of a full time agricultural business and those who turn out a few ponies. To all those who graze the land the cultural and community aspects of maintaining traditional grazing is most important. The number of graziers has increased by 50% over the twenty years 1987 to 2007.

5.3.4.2 Drivers for Change

The stewardship scheme is critical to providing an incentive for continued grazing. A replacement scheme in 2013 will be essential to maintain grazing levels.

The price of livestock is also a major driver; this is for ponies as well as cattle as ponies comprise the majority of the grazing pressure.

The condition of the local economy is also key, currently high house prices in the locality result in local houses being unaffordable for those in agriculture and being bought by outsiders not active in pastoral commoning. This is being tackled through local initiatives.

Recreation is a major management concern for the New Forest which much effort placed on reducing the conflict between recreation users and cattle and ponies. If this cannot be effectively managed commoners will reduce grazing effort.

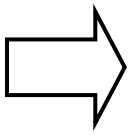
5.3.4.3 Future Scenarios

The future of grazing in the New Forest is effectively underwritten by the Countryside Stewardship agreement for the next few years. To maintain an active core set of commoners will require an increase in livestock margins. The large payments made under the Single Payment Scheme are also underpinning the incentive to maintain grazing. All could change if the level of support declines as grazing would reduce, scrub increase and biodiversity reduce.

5.4 Scenarios for Pastoral Commoning

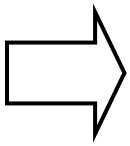
Two over-arching factors can be used to consider future scenarios. These are not exhaustive but allow a focus on the key drivers affecting pastoral commoning. They are the profitability of livestock farming and the presence, absence and form of agri-environment schemes.

Livestock Enterprises become significantly more profitable



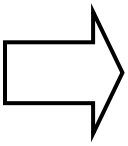
There will be an incentive for graziers to continue using common land and a new generation enters the industry so pastoral commoning continues and is invigorated.

Continued decline in the livestock sector



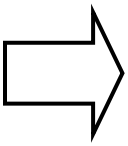
Commoner numbers decline as current graziers retire or die and the next generation take alternative employment. The scenario in the lowlands may be abandonment while in the uplands ranching will replace hefted flocks and lead to a decline in public goods.

Current agri-environment schemes continue



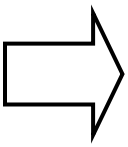
Grazing of commons continues at similar levels for the current generation of graziers where payments are dependant on grazing but entry into schemes by the next generation is less likely unless livestock prices rise.

Agri-environment schemes end



Pastoral commoning by multiple graziers will cease in most cases unless there is a significant upturn in the livestock sector. Ranching will take over on the upland commons but smaller graziers will not be able to afford the time required to manage the common. Lowland commons are no longer grazed.

Agri-environment schemes adapted to value wider public goods



A rosier future is predicted as commoners are valued for delivering landscape, biodiversity and cultural benefits through a low input farming system and continue pastoral commoning.

5.5 Safeguarding Pastoral Commoning through the Commoner

This report has by researching the past, assessing the present and predicting the future examined pastoral commoning across England. The background and context in chapter 2 stressed the diversity of commons and the results have confirmed that hypothesis. In making predictions about the future of pastoral commoning great care must be taken not to extrapolate from the data from a sample common used here to another in the same type. A difference in one factor e.g. role of the owner can change the whole scenario as the pick-up-sticks are reordered (see figure 5.1).

This diversity has not prevented themes and patterns arising and they have been presented above. Furthermore an over-riding conclusion has emerged. It will be of little surprise to those involved on a day to day basis with grazing commons, as any commoner knows it. What is interesting is that the data from all the commons has confirmed the hunch of many that the existence of pastoral commoning in England is utterly dependant on the presence of an active community of commoners.

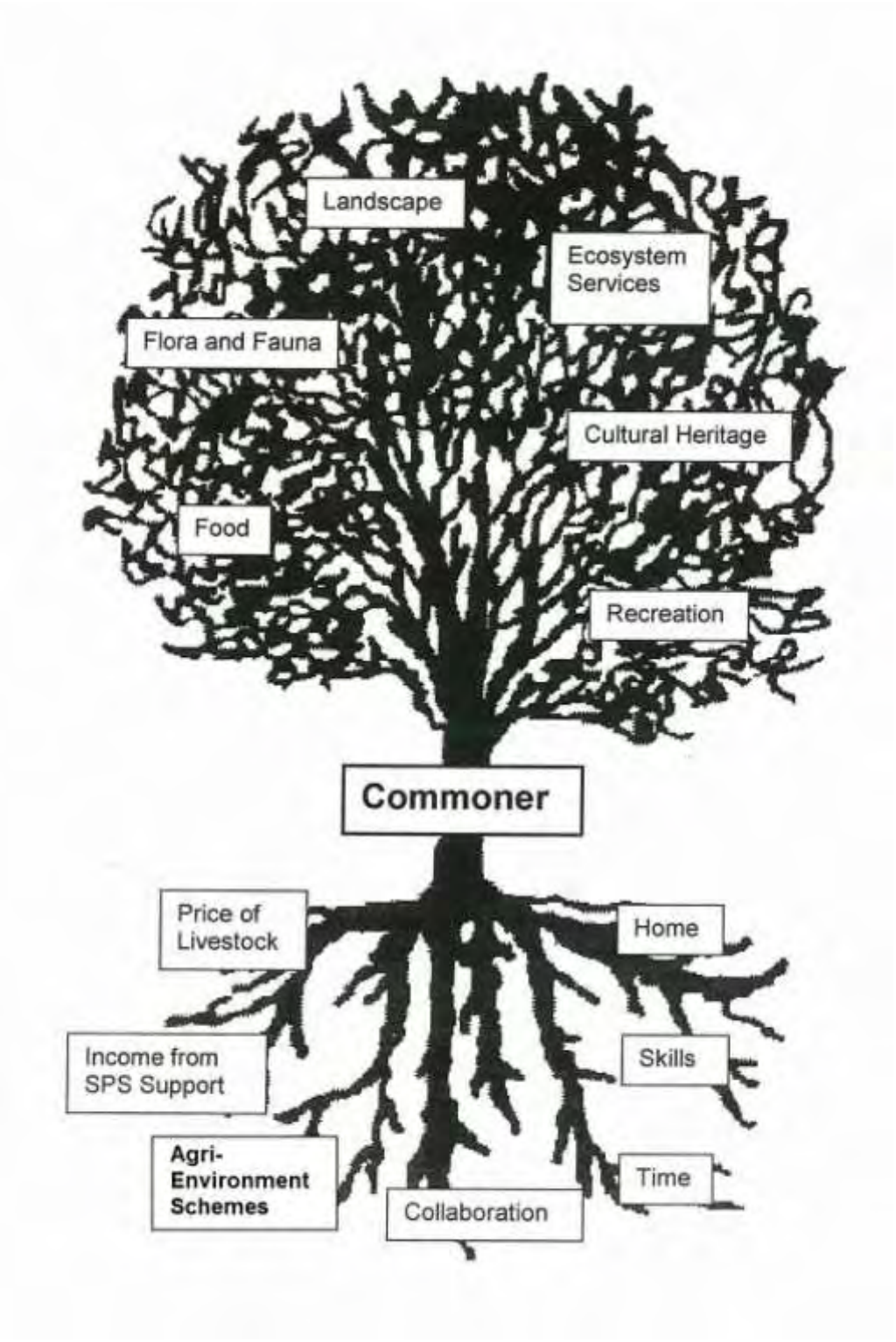
The process of pastoral commoning is like a tree with the commoner as the trunk; the roots represent the inputs to the commoner and the branches, leaves and fruit the goods and services produced (fig 5.2). The analogy can be taken a step further, to maintain the commoner, as with a tree trunk, a range of nutrients are required; a profitable livestock business with acceptable stock prices being the essential input, his life blood, but additionally housing, skills, and time are necessary. It is also recognised that government support is essential through agricultural support and environmental schemes.

With these ingredients the commoner can produce:

- quality breeding stock and prime stock he/she is proud of and a wide range of public goods
- bio-diverse flora and fauna
- environmental goods and services
- cultural heritage both physical and social
- landscape management
- areas for recreation

Despite their diverse backgrounds, locations and interests the commoners and stakeholders interviewed came up with the same conclusions; in order to manage common land do not forget the central role of the commoner.

Fig 5.2 INPUTS TO AND OUTPUTS FROM THE COMMONER



6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. There is huge diversity in the range of pastoral commoning systems practised across England. A large range of factors affect the diversity and so broad government policies have different impacts depending on the particular circumstances of each common. This diversity is both between common types and within common types.

6.2. There has been a significant reduction in the numbers of grazing livestock on commons over the last twenty years and particularly the last ten years.

6.3. There is a large difference in the perception of commoners and stakeholders as to the appropriate level of grazing on common land.

6.4. The price of livestock is the key motivating factor for commoners as is the profitability of their farm business.

6.5. Agri-environment schemes have had a significant influence on the numbers and type of livestock on commons. The seasonal exclusion of cattle and sheep has reduced the requirement for hardy native stock and allowed a change in farming system or breed as farmers aim to maximise carcass size and quality.

6.6. Agri-environment schemes are significant also because the financial payments often underpin a business and its continued use of the common. This is recognised by many commoners though concerns were repeatedly raised regarding the narrow focus of the schemes on particular vegetation types.

6.7. The entry of the next generation of commoners into the industry will be determined by the profitability of livestock farming compared with alternative careers with the availability of appropriate local and affordable housing a key factor.

6.8. Numbers of commoners in the hills & uplands are expected to reduce over the next twenty years as individuals retire or die. On some commons this will result in a total breakdown in collaborative commoning systems during this period. This is a picture that is already frequent on many lowland commons.

6.9. The activity of commoners associations has increased significantly in the last twenty years. As commoning is a collaborative activity encouraging organisations which foster collaboration is recommended to improve the governance and management of common land.

6.10. Collating data on common land was difficult, the data is available but scattered across many sources and often inaccurate. It is recommended that efforts are made to collect data related to common

land and its usage, as well as the economic performance of farms with common land, and to make it readily available. This will assist the development of policies that will ensure pastoral commoning remains viable.

Glossary of Terms

CL number	Common land number (A number given to each registered common by RPA)
CSS	Countryside Stewardship Scheme
ELS	Entry Level Scheme (part of ES)
ES	Environmental Stewardship
FBS	Farm Business Survey
Heafed	Sheep on open fells are “heafed” to a particular area of hill/fell where they have been trained to graze
Heft	The area of hill/fell where they have been trained to graze
HFRO	Hill Farming Research Organisation
HLS	Higher Level Scheme (part of ES)
Inbye	Enclosed fields often on the valley floor
JCA	Joint Character Areas (Areas with similar characteristics by NE)
LSU's	Livestock units (a way of comparing grazing livestock. 1 LU = 1 dairy cow)
LU's	ditto
NA	Natural Area Profiles (a method of categorising land by NE)
NCC	Nature Conservancy Council (now part of NE)
NE	Natural England
PSA	Public Service Agreements
RAMSAR	Wetland sites, designated of international importance by the Ramsar Convention
RPA	Rural Payments Agency
SAC	Special Area of Conservation, given special protection under the European Habitats Directive
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument
SPA	Special Protection Areas, given special protection under the EC Birds Directive
SPS	Single Farm Payment Scheme
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
SWES	Sheep Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (a NE scheme used to give payments to farmers to reduce sheep numbers)
WES	Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (a NE scheme to pay farmers to improve wildlife)

APPENDIX A

Farm Business Report on the Economics of Hill Farming, with and without Common Grazings. A comparison of Hill Rearing farms in Northern England 2004 to 2006

Charles Scott

A report for the Federation of Cumbria Commoners prepared by the Farm Business Survey Unit, Newcastle University

January 14th 2008

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX A

Introduction

There is considerable interest in monitoring and researching the profitability and sustainability of farms that incorporate tracts of Common or Shared grazings in their farming systems. This interest includes the impacts/effects of a whole range of environment preserving or enhancing measures that cover large areas of the SDA of England. Northern England (Cumbria, Northumberland and County Durham) with large areas of SDA forming the Lake District and the Pennines is particularly affected by these measures. As a baseline to this interest the Farm Business Survey Unit are commissioned to conduct a comparison study for a group of "Hill Rearing" farms over the period 2004 to 2006. The farm data used in this analysis has been weighted in accordance with the incidence of that farm (in terms of size and type) in the farm business population.

Classification of Hill Farms

Hill farms are extensive, primarily fell or moorland, farms in the Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA) designation of the LFA. The ewe flocks are typically closed, hefted and of a native breed (Cheviot, Scottish Blackface, or Swaledale). Hill farm output is targeted at producing cross bred ewe lambs using (typically) Leicester rams. Male wether lambs, draft ewes, ram lambs and cull ewes are other outputs. Hill farms typically only buy in breeding rams, or stock to maintain small Leicester flocks for domestic ram production. Hill farm lamb output has to be cleared in the autumn, as the farm will be unable to support a stock level above its basic breeding flock. Hill farms may also produce suckler calves (typically from native breeds).

Upland farms are also primarily located in the SDA, may also have common grazings but will have a larger area of in-bye land. Upland farms will consequently support a higher stocking rate, may finish their male lamb output, and are more likely to have a cattle enterprise – again typically producing suckler calves.

In the following data analysis Hill farms are differentiated from Upland farms according to the following criteria:

(a) ratio of actual hectares of rough and common grazing to inbye is at least 5:1;

(b) grazing livestock units attributable to sheep are at least 50 per cent of total grazing livestock units;

(c) grazing livestock density is at least 2 actual hectares per grazing livestock unit.

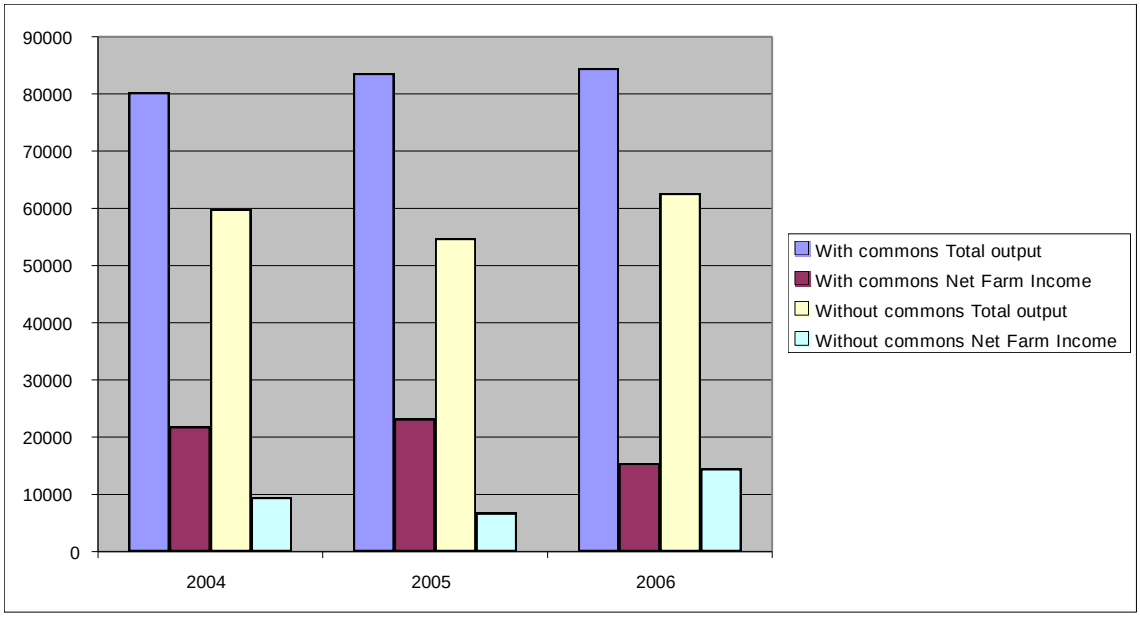
Farms satisfying two or more of the criteria are classified as Hill, the remainder as Upland.

Hill and Upland farms span the Defra main farm types of: Specialist sheep (SDA) Specialist Beef (SDA) and Mixed Grazing Livestock (SDA).

Summary of results

Figure 1 shows how over the period under review there is an apparent consistent gain, albeit narrowing, both in terms of farm Total output and Net Farm Income (NFI) for those farms with common grazings over those without. In general terms the farms in the sample that do have common land are larger in adjusted farm area than their counterparts without common grazings; they have larger sheep flocks and have smaller beef herds. They also have been consistently able (until 2006) to derive more income from the HFA and environmental schemes than their without-commons counterparts.

Fig 1 – Hill Rearing farms 2004 to 2006; Total output & Net Farm Income



APPENDIX A

The data table below describes further outputs and costs on a per farm basis for the farm groups under review.

Table 1. Profitability of Hill Rearing Farms in Northern England 2004 to 2006

		2004	2005	2006
With commons	Total output	80256	83607	84470
	Total variable costs	23673	23092	26500
	Farm Gross Margin	56584	60515	57970
	Total fixed costs	34759	37311	42553
	Net Farm Income	21824	23204	15417
	Management & Investment Income	8404	10100	1359
Without commons	Total output	59868	54779	62670
	Total variable costs	19987	16329	17328
	Farm Gross Margin	39882	38450	45342
	Total fixed costs	30387	31679	30815
	Net Farm Income	9495	6772	14527
	Management & Investment Income	-1541	-4309	1416

A full, detailed analysis of these farm groups is available in tables 1.1 to 3.3 below.

HILL REARING FARMS
WEIGHTED SAMPLE
2006

Table 1.1 Land Use and Tenant's Capital

	2006 with commons		2006 without common	
	Actual Ha.	Adj. Ha.	Actual Ha.	Adj. Ha.
Land Use				
Cereals	0.0	0.0	0.0	-
Inbye forage	68.8	68.8	36.9	36.9
Total inbye	68.8	68.8	36.9	36.9
Rough grazing	88.0	21.9	337.0	78.7
Common grazing		57.4		0.0
Summer grazing		3.5		3.6
Woodland	2.0		2.8	
Buildings, roads, etc.	1.8		1.1	
Total area	160.5	151.5	377.8	119.2
Forage area		151.5		119.2

	with commons		without commons	
	£	No.	£	No.
Tenant's capital & Stocking (per farm)				
Beef herd §	13670	22	13639	25
Other cattle	9925	29	9325	24
Breeding flock #	48656	874	31542	531
Other sheep	2182	76	671	25
Other livestock	100		23	
Total livestock	74532		55199	
Total crops	1587		579	
Machinery and equipment	38366		26605	
Livestock quotas	0		0	
Single farm payment entitlement	45891		38451	
Stores and other assets	37047		28158	
Total tenant's capital	197424		148992	
Breeding livestock appreciation				
£ per farm	629		725	
£ per Grazing Livestock Unit	6		10	

HILL REARING FARMS

Table 1.2 Financial Results	2006 with commons £ per farm	2006 without commons £ per farm
Enterprise Output		
Beef cattle *	11021	9665
Sheep & wool *	26247	12090
Other livestock	0	45
Total livestock	37268	21800
Crops and miscellaneous	8236	10093
Environmental payments & HFA	17897	13860
Single farm payment	21069	16917
Total output	84470	62670
Variable Costs		
Concentrates	8605	8001
Coarse fodder & agist	4021	2656
Veterinary & medicines	4063	1682
Sales commission etc	2188	1272
Other livestock costs	4433	2878
Fertilizers	2425	597
Other crop costs	765	242
Total variable costs	26500	17328
Farm Gross Margin	57970	45342
Fixed Costs		
Labour - regular	7092	3185
Labour - casual	656	561
Machinery - contract	1357	733
Machinery - depreciation	7681	5228
Machinery - repairs	3254	2314
Machinery - fuel & oil	4320	2470
Rent or rental value & keep	9255	7725
Occupier's repairs	1895	3548
General overheads	7043	5053
Total fixed costs	42553	30815
Net Farm Income	15417	14527
Farmer & Spouse labour	14058	13136
Paid Management labour	0	25
Management & Investment Income	1359	1416
HFA	5912	6074

HILL REARING FARMS

Table 1.3 Efficiency Measures		2006 with commons	2006 without commons
Output			
Total output per GLU	£	825	906
Grazing livestock & forage output per GLU	£	364	315
Gross margin per GLU	£	567	657
Stocking Density			
Total GLUs		103	69
Total GLUs on farm		99	67
GLUs per adj. forage ha.		0.65	0.56
Labour & Machinery			
Gross margin per £100 of:-			
Labour (paid & unpaid)	£	266	269
Machinery costs	£	349	422
Labour and machinery	£	151	164
Gross margin per £100 fixed costs	£	136	147
Return on Tenant's Capital			
Management & Investment Income per GLU	£	16	22
Tenant's capital per GLU	£	1926	2151
Return on tenant's capital	%	0.8	1.0
Other Data			
Average herd size (beef cows)		22	25
Average flock size (breeding ewes)		634	399
Lambs born & reared per 100 ewes		1.21	0.95
Wool (value per fleece)	£	0.38	0.39
Lamb disposals			
Ewe lambs sold	%	16	14
Ewe lambs retained	%	24	28
Finished lambs sold	%	45	22
Store lambs sold	%	16	35
Average prices (£/head)			
Store cattle		483	438
Draft ewes		36	45
Ewe lambs		51	48
Finished lambs		40	39
Store lambs		26	26

HILL REARING FARMS
WEIGHTED SAMPLE
2005

Table 2.1 Land Use and Tenant's Capital

	2005 with commons		2005 without common	
	Actual Ha.	Adj. Ha.	Actual Ha.	Adj. Ha.
Land Use				
Cereals	0.0	0.0	0.0	-
Inbye forage	56.6	56.6	40.2	40.2
Total inbye	56.6	56.6	40.2	40.2
Rough grazing	124.9	31.0	363.3	76.0
Common grazing		54.8		0.0
Summer grazing		4.4		22.7
Woodland	3.5		4.0	
Buildings, roads, etc.	1.9		1.1	
Total area	186.9	146.8	408.6	138.9
Forage area		146.8		138.9

	with commons		without commons	
	£	No.	£	No.
Tenant's capital & Stocking (per farm)				
Beef herd §	13231	22	16524	30
Other cattle	7406	24	10650	31
Breeding flock #	48435	903	31372	545
Other sheep	2686	97	1198	40
Other livestock	3		0	
Total livestock	71761		59744	
Total crops	1435		590	
Machinery and equipment	36279		23127	
Livestock quotas	4709		3891	
Single farm payment entitlement	16456		14021	
Stores and other assets	34576		23014	
Total tenant's capital	165215		124388	
Breeding livestock appreciation				
£ per farm	0		0	
£ per Grazing Livestock Unit	-		0	

HILL REARING FARMS

Table 2.2 Financial Results	2005 with commons £ per farm	2005 without commons £ per farm
Enterprise Output		
Beef cattle *	8663	11638
Sheep & wool *	27204	9248
Other livestock	6	0
Total livestock	35874	20886
Crops and miscellaneous	6138	4651
Environmental payments & HFA	19632	10547
Single farm payment	21964	18696
Total output	83607	54779
Variable Costs		
Concentrates	7792	5640
Coarse fodder & agist	3806	3809
Veterinary & medicines	3753	1640
Sales commission etc	1821	1006
Other livestock costs	3266	3259
Fertilizers	2129	805
Other crop costs	526	170
Total variable costs	23092	16329
Farm Gross Margin	60515	38450
Fixed Costs		
Labour - regular	4779	6001
Labour - casual	1811	576
Machinery - contract	963	870
Machinery - depreciation	6842	4266
Machinery - repairs	2411	2173
Machinery - fuel & oil	3422	2619
Rent or rental value & keep	8929	9761
Occupier's repairs	1645	1110
General overheads	6508	4303
Total fixed costs	37311	31679
Net Farm Income	23204	6772
Farmer & Spouse labour	13103	11258
Paid Management labour	0	177
Management & Investment Income	10100	-4309
HFA	5373	5463

HILL REARING FARMS

Table 2.3 Efficiency Measures		with commons	without commons
Output			
Total output per GLU	£	852	672
Grazing livestock & forage output per GLU	£	365	256
Gross margin per GLU	£	617	472
Stocking Density			
Total GLUs		98	81
Total GLUs on farm		94	80
GLUs per adj. forage ha.		0.64	0.57
Labour & Machinery			
Gross margin per £100 of:-			
Labour (paid & unpaid)	£	307	216
Machinery costs	£	444	387
Labour and machinery	£	182	138
Gross margin per £100 fixed costs	£	162	121
Return on Tenant's Capital			
Management & Investment Income per GLU	£	103	-56
Tenant's capital per GLU	£	1683	1527
Return on tenant's capital	%	6.1	-3.7
Other Data			
Average herd size (beef cows)		21	30
Average flock size (breeding ewes)		665	381
Lambs born & reared per 100 ewes		1.08	0.87
Wool (value per fleece)	£	0.40	0.89
Lamb disposals			
Ewe lambs sold	%	12	11
Ewe lambs retained	%	26	31
Finished lambs sold	%	46	26
Store lambs sold	%	15	49
Average prices (£/head)			
Store cattle		444	409
Draft ewes		53	47
Ewe lambs		56	51
Finished lambs		39	42
Store lambs		30	27

HILL REARING FARMS
WEIGHTED SAMPLE
2004

Table 3.1 Land Use and Tenant's Capital

	2004 with commons		2004 without commons	
	Actual Ha.	Adj. Ha.	Actual Ha.	Adj. Ha.
Land Use				
Cereals	0.0	0.0	0.0	-
Inbye forage	53.4	53.4	47.0	47.0
Total inbye	53.4	53.4	47.0	47.0
Rough grazing	121.1	28.3	348.0	69.4
Common grazing		48.6		0.0
Summer grazing		11.4		0.8
Woodland	2.5		3.1	
Buildings, roads, etc.	1.9		1.2	
Total area	178.9	141.6	399.3	117.2
Forage area		141.6		117.2

	with commons		without commons	
	£	No.	£	No.
Tenant's capital & Stocking (per farm)				
Beef herd §	13965	23	18786	34
Other cattle	7498	24	11237	36
Breeding flock #	47361	876	33028	577
Other sheep	2296	83	1438	39
Other livestock	5		0	
Total livestock	71125		64489	
Total crops	1353		784	
Machinery and equipment	35534		23801	
Livestock quotas	8970		8847	
Single farm payment entitlement	0		0	
Stores and other assets	23704		16674	
Total tenant's capital	140686		114594	
Breeding livestock appreciation				
£ per farm	-368		285	
£ per Grazing Livestock Unit	-4		3	

HILL REARING FARMS

Table 3.2 Financial Results	2004 with commons £ per farm	2004 without commons £ per farm
Enterprise Output		
Beef cattle *	15464	19710
Sheep & wool *	37864	25347
Other livestock	5471	5689
Total livestock	58799	50745
Crops and miscellaneous	6687	4581
Environmental payments & HFA	14770	4542
Single farm payment	0	0
Total output	80256	59868
Variable Costs		
Concentrates	8016	7137
Coarse fodder & agist	4299	4714
Veterinary & medicines	3652	1808
Sales commission etc	1816	1208
Other livestock costs	2749	3929
Fertilizers	1752	958
Other crop costs	1390	233
Total variable costs	23673	19987
Farm Gross Margin	56584	39882
Fixed Costs		
Labour - regular	3063	6669
Labour - casual	909	581
Machinery - contract	1304	1258
Machinery - depreciation	7149	4171
Machinery - repairs	2556	2096
Machinery - fuel & oil	3780	2054
Rent or rental value & keep	8558	8193
Occupier's repairs	1153	1169
General overheads	6288	4196
Total fixed costs	34759	30387
Net Farm Income	21824	9495
Farmer & Spouse labour	13420	11225
Paid Management labour	0	190
Management & Investment Income	8404	-1541
HFA	5471	5689

APPENDIX B

Commoners Questionnaire

Notes:

1. Introduction for the interviewer:
   Each commons group to be interviewed will get a payment of £100 if they want this. I suggest that this is best dealt with by you making a cash payment of £100 (for which a receipt will be needed) and then claimed back from H&H Bowe Ltd along with your final invoice.

   The first step is to put the group at ease, with some informal chat after introducing yourself and getting the group to introduce themselves.

   Background to the research:
   This interview will form part of a research report for Natural England which we are due to complete by 31 March 2008. The work is being completed by a consortium of consultants and agriculturalists with a direct interest in common land, located throughout England. The purpose of this work is to, "provide an understanding of pastoral commoning in England and to establish trends from which future scenarios can be predicted". Note that Natural England mean by this, looking at common land in England that is grazed.

   We intend to publish the results of interviews in the appendices. These results may be aggregated where appropriate, but some results will be quoted verbatim. If you want any comments kept confidential, please let me know and we will respect this request.

2. The forms are designed to be used by the interviewer as a face to face interview. Please send the main contact with the commoners group a copy of the questions beforehand, so they can collect some of the basic facts we are wanting in advance.

3. If you wish to record the conversation by tape, ask permission first

4. If any useful information comes out after saying the interview is closed, ask permission if this can be used before recording it.

5. Please complete questions 1-9 before sending to the group. I am working with Andrew to try and get as much of this as possible for you.

6. Definition: Hill/Upland is predominantly above the LFA line

7. The interviewer must not lead the respondent and not give their own opinions.

8. Record answers using the form, with responses typed up and emailed to Paul Harper paulharperrural@tiscali.co.uk
   We would like the form completed please and a short summary under the following headings (guide is up to 4 pages each):

   - Description (Location, area, general farm details, No. of commoners & grazing rights details, statutory designations, management structures & systems, restrictions on exercising grazing rights, agri-env agreement, other interests)
   - Grazing Management & Past Impacts (How grazed incl levels, types, pattern over the year & how has changed over the past 20 years, & impact on the environment, economy – incl farm businesses and local community)
   - Drivers for Change for the next 20 years (Economic, Environmental, Social)
   - Future Scenarios & Implications (2 (or 3) scenarios maximum – environment, economy incl farm businesses & local community)

   Paul Harper, 01768 898555

   paulharperrural@tiscali.co.uk

APPENDIX B

Commoners Questionnaire

Current Situation

1. Name of Common: ……..…. 2. CL Number: ……..
3. Location of Common: ……..….4. Area (ha): ……
5. Type of Common: Hill & Upland/Lowland rural/Lowland urban/Coastal/Forest/Other…….....
6. Who Owns the Common: ……..……7. Number of rights holders: ……...
8. Description of Grazing Rights provided by RPA: …….
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……
9. Statutory Designations (www.magic.gov.uk): ……....
   ……
   ……
   ……
10. Names of group being interviewed: ……
    ……
    ……
11. Give brief details of any management structures and systems that relate to the use of the common e.g. Commons Association or similar : ……..
    ……
    ……
    ……
12. How do you work with any wider group representing Commoners?.....
    ……
    ……
    ……
13. Describe any legal restrictions on the exercising of grazing rights (except agri-env agreements – **prompt** e.g. rights leased by owners or withheld for sporting interests): ……
    ……
    ……
    ……
14. Main elements of any agri-environment agreement (**prompt** e.g. winter feeding, seasonal stock reductions, heather management, type of stock specified): …….
    ……
    ……
    ……
15. What other interests/uses are there in the common (**prompt** e.g. recreation - shooting, walking, climbing, bird watching etc., archaeology, quarrying, rare breeds, other commons rights being exercised – turbury, wildfowling etc)? ……..
    ……
    ……
    ……
16. Do you think there are any differences in perception about grazing levels on the common between different stakeholders? Yes No

If yes answer questions 17 and 18, if no, go to question 19

17. Why do you think there is a difference? ……
……
……
……

18. How could any differences be reduced? ……
……
……
……
……

19. Estimate in round figures the number of stock grazed for the whole common (**prompt** under "other" please specify the type of stock)

	Winter			Spring			Summer			Autumn		
	1987	1997	2007	1987	1997	2007	1987	1997	2007	1987	1997	2007
Breeding ewes												
Other sheep												
Breeding Cattle												
Other cattle												
Other												
Not Known												

20. Describe any major movements of grazing stock on and off the common throughout the year:
Winter……
……
.....Spring……
……..Summer……
……
……
……Autumn……
……
……
.....

21. A*ssuming no changes* to the current agri-environment schemes and other public funds to commoners *and ignoring temporary market factors*:

	1987 10= very important 1= not important at all	1997 10= very important 1= not important at all	2007 10= very important 1= not important at all
For those exercising rights*, score how important is the common in maintaining the current farm enterprises of the farms concerned?			
For those exercising rights*, score how important is the common to overall profitability of the farms concerned?			

*Includes those actively grazing or who have temporarily withdrawn stock under an agri-environment scheme

22. Please specify:
a)

	1987	1997	2007
Number of farms actively grazing the common			
Average size (ha) of farm holdings where using fell rights			
Number of active graziers			

Main breed of sheep grazing			
Main breed of cattle grazing			
Average age of farmers			
Average age of people shepherding/herding			
Are contract shepherds used on the common for shepherding & gathering?			
Where farms with grazing rights have been sold or subject to a tenancy change within the previous 10 years, how many rights have: a) continued to be exercised by the new farmer?			
b) continued to be exercised by the previous farmer?			
c) continued to be exercised by another farmer?			
d) not continued to be used?			
Number of farms where grazing rights are being used, that have transferred management to the next generation in the previous 5 years			

b)

	Increased a lot	Increased a little	Stayed the same	Decreased a little	Decreased a lot
Recreational users in the last 20 years					

c)

	1987		1997		2007	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Level of involvement in grazing management by commons associations or equivalent						

d) Specify details of any involvement by the Association with outside organisations (**Prompt** e.g. National Park, Natural England) ……
……
……

e)

	Increased a lot	Increased a little	No change	Decreased a little	Decreased a lot
How much has the **time needed** to manage the grazing activity on the common changed over the past 20 years for each grazier?					
How much has the **available time** to manage the grazing activity on the common changed for each grazier over the past 20 years?					
How much has the time needed to manage the grazing activity **for the whole common** changed over the past 20 years?					

i. What are the main reasons for each of the above? (**prompt** to consider impact of quad bikes if not mentioned) …….
……
……
……
……
……
……
……
……
……

f) How has the area of each of the following changed on the common over the past 20 years?

	Increased a lot	Increased a little	No change	Decreased A little	Decreased a lot
Bracken					
Heather					
Grassland					
Rushes					
Woody scrub					

Woodland					

i. What are the main reasons (**prompt** climate changes, changes in burning patterns)?
……
……
……
……..

ii What evidence have you to back up your answer on (f) above? (**Prompt** observations, photos, reports etc)
……
……

g) How has the economic return gained from the common changed in real terms over the past 20 years?

	Risen significantly	Risen a little	No change	Fallen a little	Fallen significantly
Agricultural					
Shooting					
Other recreational activities					

23. What have been the main social and other consequences of a-g above, not identified elsewhere
.....
……
……
……
……
……..

24.

	Within the next 5 years	Within the next 10 years	Within the next 10+ years	No interest
For those exercising rights, what % of farms have sons/daughters who are likely to take over the farm				

25. We are keen to know how important the following factors are that **motivate** commoners to graze the common. Please score the following factors, adding any factors that we have not identified:

	Score 10=very important 1= not important at all
The level of environmental payments	
The level of other payments from government	
The price of livestock sold	
The margin between livestock sale prices and inputs	
So that they can hand over their farm to their children in good condition	
So they are respected by neighbours	
To enable the current farm system to be maintained	
To maintain a tradition	
Flock/herd too small to justify using common	
Other factors (specify):	

i. Please explain the reasons why for any scored very important:
……
……
……
……
……
……

26. Looking forward 10 years on your common, what do you think will happen to the following?

Factor	Within any existing agri-env scheme*				If any existing agri-env scheme ceases & not replaced			
	Increase	Decrease	None	Stay the same	Increase	Decrease	None	Stay the same
Nos. of grazing sheep								
Nos. of grazing cattle								
Nos. of other grazing stock								
Nos. of F.T. farmers managing the common								
Nos. of P.T. farmers managing the common								
Nos. of F.T. gamekeepers active on the common								
Nos. of P.T. gamekeepers active on the common								
Nos. of other people managing the common (specify)								
Nos. of recreational users								
Area of bracken & scrub								
Nos. of wildlife species								

* Extra guidance was issued to the interviewers to complete this section in cases where no existing agri-environment scheme

a. What will be the likely effects (with reasons) on the following: (**Note** it is important to probe to understand the reasons for the opinions mentioned, to test how robust the answers given are. Try and identify key reasons that drive the main effects)

Landscape ……..
……
……

Nature Conservation ……..
……
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Agriculture ……
……
……
……
……

Recreation ……
……
……

Local Community (**prompt** cultural heritage, skill levels, succession, local economy) ……
……
……

Yes	No

27. Do you think there will be any difference to these trends from 2017 – 2027?

i) If yes, please say how you think they will differ and why: …….
……
……
……
……

28. What actions could be taken to make the use of common land more self-sustaining in the long term with less need for grants and subsidies, excluding additional legislation? (**Prompt** invest to develop new markets/better returns for farmers, visitor levy, new environmental standard, branding + ?)

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29. We are keen to find out the **most important** drivers for change in relation to the future management of your common for the next 20 years. Please score the following

	2007 – 2017 10=very important 1= not important at all	2017 – 2027 10=very important 1= not important at all
Profitability of farm enterprises		
Profitability of forestry and recreation enterprises		
World population		
Carbon footprint		
Climate change		
Renewable energy		
Transfer of knowledge/skills		
Age of farmers working on the common		
Labour shortage		
Living costs		
Available affordable local housing		
Other (specify):		

30. Please explain the reasons why for any scored very important: ……
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……
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31. Any other comments you wish me to record? ……..
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APPENDIX C

Stakeholder Questions

Notes:

9. Introduction:

   Each stakeholder group to be interviewed will get a payment of £100 for the people who attend to cover travel expenses if they want this. I suggest that this is best dealt with by you making a cash payment of £100 (for which a receipt will be needed) and then claimed back from H&H Bowe Ltd along with your final invoice.

   For telephone interviews, give the respondent an idea how long the interview will take

   The first step is to put the interviewee(s) at ease, with some informal chat after introducing yourself (and getting the group to introduce themselves where relevant).

   This interview will form part of a research report for Natural England which we are due to complete by 31 March 2008. The work is being completed by a consortium of consultants and agriculturalists with a direct interest in common land, located throughout England. The purpose of this work is to, "provide an understanding of pastoral commoning in England and to establish trends from which future scenarios can be predicted". Note that Natural England mean by this, looking at common land in England that is grazed.

   We intend to publish the results of interviews in the appendices. These results may be aggregated where appropriate, but some results will be quoted verbatim, although not linked to an identifiable person. If you want any comments kept confidential, please let me know and we will respect this request.

10. The forms are designed to be used by the interviewer as a face to face or telephone interview. Please send the main contact of any group, or individual being interviewed a copy of the questions beforehand, so they can collect some of the basic facts in advance.

11. If you wish to record the conversation by tape, ask permission first.

12. If any useful information comes out after saying the interview is closed, ask permission if this can be used before recording it.

13. Definition: Hill/Upland is predominantly above the LFA line

14. The interviewer must not lead the respondent and not give their own opinions.

    - Record answers using the form, with responses typed up and emailed to Andrew andrew@humphries.co.uk and Roger rconnard@ukonline.co.uk , so they can incorporate some of the info into the part 1 stage of the report.

15. Broad common types are defined as Lake District, Pennine North, Pennine Limestone, Pennine Urban, North Yorkshire Moors, Malvern Hills, Exmoor, Dartmoor, Bodmin, Lowland Rural, Lowland Urban, Coastal, Forest.

Paul Harper, 01768 898555
paulharperrural@tiscali.co.uk

APPENDIX C

Stakeholder Questions

1. Name: …….. 2. Organisation Name: ……
3. Organisation aims: ……
   ……..……
   ……..……
   ……....
4. How relevant is pastoral commoning to your aims…….……
   …….
5. Contact details: ……..
6. Do you think there are any differences in perception about grazing levels on common land between different stakeholders? Yes No

   If yes answer questions 6 and 7, if no, go to question 8
7. Why do you think there is a difference? ……
   ……..……
   ……..……
   ……..
8. How could any differences be reduced? ……..
   ……..……
   ……..……
   ……..……
   ……..……
   ……
9. For any of the **broad common types** specified by the interviewer [broad common types (Lake District, Pennine North, Pennine Limestone, Pennine Urban, North Yorkshire Moors, Malvern Hills, Exmoor, Dartmoor, Bodmin, Lowland Rural, Lowland Urban, Coastal, Forest] that you are familiar with, please indicate what level you think the overall grazing status is?

   a) Mainly actively grazed **with intervention** by agri-environment agreements or other interventions (e.g. purchase and non-use of grazing rights). Not classed under this category if intervention is tier 1 ESA only.
   b) Mainly actively grazed **with no intervention** by agri-environment agreements or other interventions (e.g. purchase and non-use of grazing rights). Included under this category if intervention is tier 1 ESA only.
   c) Mainly minimum/no grazing with no intervention.
   d) Mainly minimum/no grazing with intervention.

   Please also indicate the current level of management of each common:

Broad Common Types	Grazed Status (a) – (d) above			Current management (specify active or none)		
	1987	1997	2007	By graziers	By shooting interests	By others

10. Please indicate for each type of common specified that you are familiar with, what is the main grazing activity (if any), and the value to society:

Broad Common Types	Main type of grazing activity	Value of the agricultural use (specify high, medium, or low)		
		To the environment	To the economy	To the social & cultural wellbeing

11. Please give reasons for the value attributed and state what evidence you have considered in coming to your judgement in question 10?

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12. Please indicate for each type of common specified that you are familiar with, what are the main recreational uses (if any), and the value to society of:

b. Shooting, hunting
c. Walking/hiking/climbing/cycling/riding
d. Sightseeing/enjoyment by observation from roads/rail
e. Other sports
f. Other

Broad Common Types	Main recreation uses (a-e)	Number of people enjoying the common High, Medium, Low	Value (specify high, medium, or low)		
			To the environment	To local economy	To wellbeing of users

13. Please give reasons for the value attributed and state what evidence you have considered in coming to your judgement in question 12

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14. What actions could be taken to make the agricultural systems using pastoral commons more self-sustaining in the long term with less need for grants and subsidies, excluding additional legislation? (**Prompt** invest to develop new markets/better returns for farmers, visitor levy, new environmental standard, branding +)

……
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15. A*ssuming no changes* to the current agri-environment schemes and other public funds to commoners *and ignoring temporary market factors*, looking forward 10 years, what do you think will happen to the following on each main common type specified that you are familiar with:

Broad Common type	Factor	Increase	Decrease	None	Stay the same
	Nos. of grazing sheep				
	Nos. of grazing cattle				
	Nos. of other grazing stock				
	Nos. of F.T. farmers managing the common				
	Nos. of P.T. farmers managing the common				
	Nos. of F.T. gamekeepers managing the common				
	Nos. of P.T. gamekeepers managing the common				
	Nos. of other people managing the common				
	Nos. of recreational users				
	Area of bracken & scrub				
	No. of wildlife species				

Broad Common type	Factor	Increase	Decrease	None	Stay the same
	Nos. of grazing sheep				
	Nos. of grazing cattle				
	Nos. of other grazing stock				
	Nos. of F.T. farmers managing the common				
	Nos. of P.T. farmers managing the common				
	Nos. of F.T. gamekeepers managing the common				
	Nos. of P.T. gamekeepers managing the common				
	Nos. of other people managing the common				
	Nos. of recreational users				
	Area of bracken & scrub				
	No. of wildlife species				

Broad Common type	Factor	Increase	Decrease	None	Stay the same
	Nos. of grazing sheep				
	Nos. of grazing cattle				
	Nos. of other grazing stock				
	Nos. of F.T. farmers managing the common				
	Nos. of P.T. farmers managing the common				
	Nos. of F.T. gamekeepers managing the common				
	Nos. of P.T. gamekeepers managing the common				
	Nos. of other people managing the common				
	Nos. of recreational users				
	Area of bracken & scrub				
	No. of wildlife species				

a) What will be the likely effects (with reasons) on: (**Note** it is important to probe to understand the reasons for the opinions mentioned, to test how robust the answers given are. Try and identify key reasons that drive the main effects. Continue on a separate sheet for different broad types if familiar with more than one type)

Landscape ……
……
……

Nature Conservation ……
……
……

Agriculture ……
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……
……

Recreation ……
……
……
……

Local Community (**prompt** cultural heritage, skill levels, succession, local economy) ……..
……
……
……

16. What evidence have you considered in coming to your judgement in question 15?

……
……
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……
……

Yes	No

17. Do you think there will be any difference to these trends from 2017 – 2027?

i) If yes, please say how you think they will differ and why: ……..
……
……
……
……
……

18. We are keen to find out the **most important** drivers for change in relation to the future management of your common for the next 20 years. Please score the following

	2007 – 2017 10=very important 1= not important at all	2017 – 2027 10=very important 1= not important at all
Profitability of farm enterprises		
Profitability of forestry and recreation enterprises		
World population		
Carbon footprint		
Climate change		
Renewable energy		
Transfer of knowledge/skills		
Age of farmers working on the common		
Labour shortage		
Living costs		
Available affordable local housing		
Other (specify):		

19. Please explain the reasons why for any scored very important: ……
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20. Are you aware of any published information that you feel is particularly relevant to the above issues (extra to that mentioned in question 16)? …….
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21. Any other comments you wish me to record? .....…….
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DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARIES FOR SAMPLE COMMONS

Case Study– Lake District Above Derwent Common, Cumbria, CL 11

Description

Above Derwent Common lies in the centre of the Lake District National Park and is part of a much larger expanse of unclosed freehold fell and common. It is subject to extremely high recreational use and includes such iconic Lake District landmarks as Catbells and the Newlands Horseshoe. It comprises landscape of the highest visual, environmental and cultural quality. Above Derwent is part of the larger Buttermere Fells SSSI, designated for the range and extent of its montane and sub-montane dwarf shrub heath communities. The Above Derwent area also includes the nationally important sessile oakwoods of Keskadale and Birkrigg. There are a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments on the common including Force Crag mine – the last mine worked in the Lake District - and Goldscope mine.

Agriculturally the common is harsh, with steep sided rocky slopes rising to over 700metres. It extends to 3,220 ha**,** and is part of the larger Buttermere fells group which are formed from the oldest of the Lake District rocks – Skiddaw Slate. The Above Derwent slates differ from those of the Skiddaw massif in their tendency to form cliffs.

The common is in the main owned by the National Trust having come to them from the Leconfield estate in 1979 in lieu of death duties. The Trust holds some of the grazing rights in hand and does not let all rights registered to a holding when letting a farm in its ownership.

There are over 24,000 rights registered on the common but under 5,000 of these are now actively exercised. Most of the grazing rights are attached to land in Borrowdale and the Newlands Valley although some have been converted to rights in gross. There are more than ten CL numbers for Above Derwent common which reflects overlaps and boundary areas in a number of the original 1965 Act registrations. The main CL numbers for the common are CL11 and CL168 (??)

There is an Above Derwent Common Group but this was set up solely to administer agri-environment schemes on the common when MAFF agreed that the larger Buttermere group could be subdivided for ESA purposes in the 1990s. The commoners are all members of the Buttermere Commoners Association which establishes rules on grazing and stock management on the common; landowners are also represented on this association.

The ESA scheme on the common ended in 2005 and it, together with some WES (sheep grazing) agreements, was superseded by an HLS agreement in 2006. The main impact of the HLS agreement was further stock reductions on the common, particularly during the winter months. Stock numbers are averaged over the year at 0.6 ewes/ha but between 50 and 100% of sheep are away wintered, depending on individual farmer's average stocking rates over the year. All sheep must be off the common from mid November to the end of December and full stocking only occurs during July and August. In addition the HLS requires that no ring feeders are used and feed blocks can only be used for shepherding or holding sheep up. About 200 ha of mechanical bracken control is carried out.

Grazing Management and Past Impacts.

Above Derwent is grazed entirely by sheep and these are a mix of Swaledale and Herdwick with numbers of the latter showing an increase in recent years. There are very few deer in the area due to the high level of recreational use of the common.

Grazing levels have fallen dramatically over the past 20 years from a summer peak in 1987 of 7460 ewes to a summer peak now of only 3620. Winter numbers have declined from 5370 in 1987 to 1600 now. This decline in numbers is almost entirely due to agri-environment schemes, although FMD did have an impact with many farms losing a generation of replacements when away wintered hoggs in the Eden valley and north Cumbria were culled. Commoners also acknowledge that there would have been a major fall in numbers even without ESA due to the removal of headage payments.

Prior to agri-environment schemes the typical grazing calendar would have seen ewes coming off the fell to lamb in mid March and being returned with mainly single lambs in late May through June. Away wintered hoggs and shearlings would have gone back to the fell on 1st April. Numbers increased to a maximum during July and August after which numbers showed a steady decline to tupping time in mid November. All sheep except draft ewes and hoggs would have gone back to the fell in December and some supplementary feeding would have occurred.

The main change in grazing regime introduced by agri–environment schemes has been the away wintering of ewes and shearlings resulting in much lower stocking rates on the common during the winter. The HLS also requires that the common is stock free from tupping until the end of the year. The impact of these changes has been a higher insistence of twin lambs born to away wintered ewes on easier ground. These ewes can not be returned to the fell as early as ewes with single lambs and as a result the hefting instinct in these twin lambs is weaker. The reduction in numbers has damaged the natural hefting instinct of the sheep and as a consequence gathers and general shepherding duties are more difficult than 20 years ago.

The ESA had a major impact on the farming systems of those farms with rights on the common. The reduction of sheep numbers and large compensatory payments resulted in farmers buying land away from the central fells; as this happened the significance of the common to the farm enterprises declined and farmers spend less time on the common and home holding. This has occurred despite the fact that the fragmentation of the hefting system has meant that more time is actually required to manage the remaining flocks on the fell. Despite this shift in importance to the farming enterprise the common has remained central to the farms' profitability due to the high levels of agri-environment payment.

The number of farms actively grazing the common has declined over the past 20 years although most of the grazing rights are still exercised or are included in ESA or HLS agreements.

The area of bracken on the common has increased considerably over the past 20 years due to reduced grazing and a lack of hard winters. Heather has also increased which reflects the agri-environment scheme objectives.

Drivers for Change for the Next Twenty Years

The factors that motivate the commoners to graze Above Derwent are extremely traditional. Most important is their general interest in shepherding, farming and sheep breeding with the respect of neighbours, maintenance of the current farming system and tradition close behind. The level of agri-environment payments is understandably significant but is not the prime motivation. There is a very strong sense of pride and tradition amongst the commoners.

The main driver for change on the common is the profitability of farm enterprises, as the production of an income for the farmer is central to his continuation on both the holding and the common. The age of graziers on the common will become more important as the next twenty years progress; this average age looks likely to rise and unless new entrants can be encouraged to take on available farms the system on the common will breakdown. The aging farmer population also increases the importance of knowledge and skill transfer; with fewer new entrants and less succession within a family many of the customs of commoning are in danger of being lost. Labour shortage is a major problem for commoners; as the number of graziers has fallen so the need to bring extra help for gathering has increased but reasonably priced, skilled labour is in short supply and this has the potential to change the approach to management of the common.

World population increases and climate change both have the potential to push up the price of cereals which will add to farmers costs and make livestock production even less profitable.

Future Scenarios and Implications.

If agri-environment schemes are withdrawn at some point during the next twenty years the traditional communal grazing practices on hill commons such as Above Derwent are likely to undergo massive changes. Whilst the current commoners to not believe that the agri-environment payments are the main motivation for their commitment towards, and management of, the common they acknowledge that they are a financial necessity for their farming businesses. The loss of these payments would force many farmers to reassess their business activities; a likely result would be a major withdrawal of graziers from the common in order to concentrate their labour and investment on inbye land on the holding or low-lying land away from the holding. These activities would intensify in order to compensate for the loss of agri-environment income. Farmers who wished to maintain commoning practices on the fell would find it almost impossible to do so as the withdrawal of other graziers and their hefted flocks would destroy the stocking equilibrium which is essential for successful common management.

The continuation of agri-environment schemes is recognised by all the graziers on Above Derwent as essential for the long term survival of their business. Nonetheless the ESA and HLS are driving changes in traditional common management and the potential implications of these need to be recognised. High levels of away wintering will over time weaken the natural resistance, hardiness and hefting instinct of fell flocks and this will make the management of common land more difficult for farmers. The impact of these changes on the farmer range from high mileage spent collecting straying sheep, higher vets bills and less satisfaction and pride in the job due to poorer sheep. There is a

danger that a point will come for individual farmers when these forced changes to their management, which seemingly disregard their knowledge and experience, lead to despondency and a lack of desire to continue. The resulting withdrawal from the fells will have similar implications to the scenario above and will in time result in a loss of important habitat. Consequently it is important that agri-environment schemes adapt and learn to recognise and respect the knowledge and experience of the shepherd as well as the ecologist.

Case Study – North Pennines: East Stainmore Regulated Common; South Moor, Cumbria CL18

Description

East Stainmore South Moor is located on the south side of the A66 as you cross from County Durham to Cumbria at the highest point of the A66. The two moors, north and south are now completely divided by the A66 being a dual carriageway but they are still managed together by the Scheme of Regulation for the East Stainmore Regulated Common. This is a local Act of parliament dating from 1890 under the 1876 Act allowing for the establishment of Regulated Commons with statutory board of Conservators. The act dealt with both the enclosure of land around the common and a scheme of regulation. The seven Conservators are all farmers on the two moors with the addition of the agent of the Lord of the Manor who owns the North Moor.

The South Moor can broadly be divided into two ecologically, the north half is a grass moor as a result of heavy grazing pressure over many decades; there is some limited limestone grassland. The southern half is a more diverse mix of habitats with considerably more heather and dwarf shrub species as well as blanket bog. These habitats have improved over the last eight years as a result of the prescriptions of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

The common is owned by the John Brazil Trust, a shooting syndicate who run the common as a driven moor together with the adjacent Winton and Kaber Moor. They employ two gamekeepers and are active burning the common to improve heather cover for red grouse. They have also built a stone track across the common and plan to extend it to reach their lunch hut which they have recently restored next to Aygill waterfall. The keepers are also active controlling vermin on the moor and adjacent farmland.

One interesting impact of the scheme of regulation is that the Conservators can approve works to improve the common including drainage, fencing, tracks and tree planting without reference to the Secretary of State.

The changing social profile of the area caused by the increased incidence of second homes and holiday houses means that the local community has lost almost all community facilities such as the pub, village hall and chapel. Recreation on the moor by walkers etc is not an issue though Mountain Rescue exercises can cause disruption particularly when not notified in advance.

Grazing Management and Past Impacts.

The distribution of the stints was determined by the Scheme of Regulation in 1890. The following the 1965 Commons Registration Act the stints had to be re-registered with the County Council. There are on the County Council register rights for 1700 ewes with their un-weaned lambs. The conversion of the rights is as follows but currently and for many years it is only sheep that have been grazed on the moor.

"One sheep without a lamb or lambs to represent one stint
Four Ewes with unweaned Lamb or Lambs to represent five stints
One Cow or Beast three years old and upwards
Or one and half Cows or Beasts two years old to represent five stints
Or two yearling Cows or Beasts
One three years old Horse or one Mare or Ass with unweaned Foal to represent ten stints
One yearling Horse Mare or Ass to represent five stints
One two year old Horse Mare or Ass to represent seven and a half stints
Two Geese to represent one stint
That no Bull or Stallion be admitted on the said Regulated Common"

While there are approximately 15 rights holders registered in the County Council register the vast majority of the rights are held by 5 farmers who are the active graziers which has been a stable number for the last 20 years. Also one of the non-active rights holders lets his rights to an active grazier. The moor is an actively grazed moor and fundamental to the farming businesses that use it. This is the centre of Swaledale sheep territory adjacent to the Yorkshire Dales National Park. There is huge pride in the sheep.

Current management is that the sheep are on the hill/fell all year and are fed on the hill/fell using quad bikes or a 4x4 vehicle from the track that crosses the hill/fell. Winter numbers are half the summer numbers due to the prescription of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. No reduction in summer numbers was required to enter the scheme as not all the rights were being exercised. The number of graziers was not affected by Foot and Mouth and sheep numbers have not changed as a result.

The scheme of regulation gives significant powers to the Conservators to manage the grazing and effectively takes away the owner's right to graze any surplus on the common as this surplus was translated into stints. This is though diminished in practice by the ability of graziers to sign up to agri-environment schemes without the involvement of the Conservators.

Drivers for Change for the Next Twenty Years

The key drivers for change on the management of the common from 2008-2018:

the profitability of farming – Sheep farming has been through the doldrums from the late 1990s to late 2000s with decreasing net return from hill/fell sheep. Since the decoupling of government support from ewe numbers there has been less incentive to increase ewe numbers but if the profitability were to increase there would be a significant drive to increase flock sizes again.

the age of the farmers –All the farmers except one have a successor and one has two grown sons working on the farm. The farmers do not expect to do anything else while there was uncertainty about future profits and

a desire for improved profits. No intention to give up was expressed by any of the farmers in fact the opposite. The presence of successors has meant the younger farmers are driving the desire to maintain flocks of a reasonable size rather than wind down; there is enough young labour to look after the sheep.

agri-environment schemes- the current CSS is due to end in 2009 and while there is a desire to enter into a new scheme it is not at any price, the scheme must provide adequate compensation for the reductions required. Natural England has indicated that an HLS will require increased off-wintering to deliver an improvement in vegetation.

the Shooting Syndicate – the relations between the graziers and the shoot have been strained in that the shoot is looking for significant reductions in grazing pressure and feeding practice in certain areas to improve heather cover. The role that this private interest may have in influencing changes in grazing pressure is not yet known but change is likely in the next few years as the CSS runs out and the requirements of an HLS are not known.

Future Scenarios and Implications.

The commoners were clear that the future is unknown and is in their view dependant on sheep prices; they very much view the common as integral to their farming businesses not an adjunct while some have now established in-bye flocks. The option to enter agri-environment schemes is seen as an opportunity that must be properly reviewed and investigated but serious consideration needs to be given to the impact of any prescriptions on their farm. They are motivated by the production of good quality breeding and store/fat lambs.

There is current uncertainly with regard the future with some farmers being more dependant on the income from agri-environment schemes than others, the shoot are keen for a scheme to be developed to continue the improvements to the heather cover on the moor. The presence or otherwise of a scheme will be a significant factor in the future as will the profitability of sheep farming. The farmers on Stainmore are committed to grazing the common but the nature of their use will be altered according to external factors.

Pennine Limestone: Scales Moor

General Description & Context

Scales Moor is located in the Pennines at Ingleton, North Yorkshire and contains probably the most appreciated area of Limestone Pavement in Britain. It fits into the Pennine Limestone category perfectly. A Site of Special Scientific Interest, European Heritage Site and a Limestone Preservation Order make this common possibly one of the most studied and preserved commons in England.

The 413-hectare fully enclosed common has 7 right holders, including Natural England, and 4 active graziers. The area is split roughly equally between limestone grassland & pavement and heather. In 1995, due to the heather being suppressed, Natural England (then English Nature) purchased 245 rights and still holds them, not allowing them to be grazed. The organisation takes no further active role in the management of the common. Since then there has been an increase in the amount of heather appearing on the common. There has, however, also been an increase in woody scrub due to less intensive grazing over some areas of the common.

Grazing rights are for sheep and cattle and are interchangeable. In living memory, however, no cattle have been grazed – only sheep. The graziers agreed in the early 1960s that only 75% of the rights can be used through winter, as there is no mention of hoggs in the commons register. Only one farm entered this in the commons registration process in 1967 but all graziers abide by the rule. Some turberry and rush rights are held but these are no longer exercised.

The common is managed by the right holders as an association, The Scales Moor Stakeholders Association, who meet on a regular annual basis and more often when required. They have recently employed a solicitor to track down the new owner of the common. The previous private owner died and the common has not been informed of the new owner's identity. In 1997, the association arranged to restore and repair the only section of boundary wall belonging to the common using funding from English Nature and the Yorkshire Dales National Park and their own labour. Any issues requiring dialogue with various outside stakeholders are first discussed between the graziers. This system of overall management seems to work well, with all decisions – so far – being unanimous.

Once the ownership of the common is established it is intended to investigate the possibility of entering an environmental agreement, either the Entry Level Stewardship Scheme (ELS) or preferably the Higher Level Scheme (HLS). The maximum stocking rate at the moment is approximately 1.35 sheep per hectare and, therefore, there would have to be some adjustment to stocking and seasonal grazing to meet a prescription under HLS. Natural England, as both a rights holder and administrators of ELS and HLS, are placed in a difficult position and any application could be used as a test case; at best it could take a while to reach a conclusion.

All graziers have adjacent land to the common, which is only crossed by a bridleway but comes under the Countryside and Rights of Way (2000) Act regulations. It is, however, located in an area popular with tourists and is being increasingly used by walkers, mountain bikers, potholing organisations and horse riders.

Farms using grazing rights on the common are predominantly beef and sheep units typical of the area, mostly run by family labour (only one employs labour on a regular basis). One family runs a dairy/sheep farm. All farms are owner occupied (one also has some rented land) and are of reasonable size, averaging 150 hectares.

Grazing Management & Past Impacts

There has been some movement of rights during the last twenty years. The principle change has been the purchase of 245 rights by English Nature in 1995. These rights were purchased to reduce the grazing density on the common. Removal of these rights led to an area in the centre of the common being undergrazed until the neighbouring flocks adjusted to their increased foraging areas. Other rights have been purchased or transferred from retiring graziers, together with inbye land, by those continuing to graze. This has led to a reduction in graziers from 6 to 4 but all rights (excluding those purchased by English Nature) are still being used. Overall, in the last 20 years there has been a 31% reduction in sheep numbers on the common.

This re-organisation of farms within the dale and a reduction in the number of active farmers has led to most of the former farmhouses being sold off. These are now inhabited by commuters, people working from home or retired people. This has led to a vast reduction in people being actively involved in the community, with loss of the primary school (30 years since) and Post Office store (3 years since). Presently, there are no primary school aged children in the dale. Community social events never now take place, in contrast to the well supported locally based social activities that have occurred within living memory. A good example of this is the local sheep and produce show, last held 9 years ago.

With the increased popularity of the mule gimmer lamb market, the principle breed used has changed from Dalesbred to Swaledale. The main output from the common are 3 crop, draft breeding ewes, to be either sold or used to replenish the farm's inbye mule lamb producing flock. Decreasing prime lamb prices has had the knock-on effect of reducing the value of these draft ewes and, therefore, the profitability of the hill/fell flocks. The disappearance of store lamb trade has led to all farms now having to finish the hill lambs before marketing. Since the continental (Spanish and Italian) markets for light lambs have disappeared, to get a reasonable return for the lamb produced it is imperative that the finished Swaledale lambs weigh more than 15kg deadweight. This is difficult to achieve with a percentage of lambs produced. The pure-bred hill lamb, therefore, has a lower value than the larger (better) lamb produced on the inbye. These factors put a financial strain on the

remainder of the farm enterprise, as maintenance of the hill/fell flocks presently operates at a loss.
Management of the sheep on the common is traditional. Tupped and lambed on the inbye, ewes spend the rest of the year – up to 10 months – on the common. At the present stocking level, including a 25% reduction in winter, there is usually little need to supplementary feed the sheep, unless storm conditions prevail. Hoggs are off wintered before returning to the common in April. As a rule, only single carrying ewes are summered on the common. During the 2001 foot & mouth outbreak, hoggs from the hill/fell that were being off-wintered on tack returned far later than usual to the farms of origin and common grazing. This led to a vast increase in time having to be spent on re-hefting these hoggs to their own ground.

Reducing the stocking density by 31% has had an effect on the vegetation. There are obviously more areas being colonised by heather and also more ungrazed grasses on the limestone areas, especially in the cracks of the pavement where there is now evidence of some shrub growth.

The value of agriculture to the local economy has diminished over the past twenty years, due to falling farm profitability and a smaller number of personnel being involved in the industry. The people that left the agricultural industry in the area have been replaced by people who add very little to the local economy, as they work and shop principally elsewhere. Conversely, there are an increasing number of tourists using the area, in no small part due to the farmers' and commoners' efforts in maintaining the physical features that are feeding the local economy.

Drivers for Change

The main driver for change has to be farm and enterprise profitability. The more profitable the farm business is, the more likely the present system on the common will be maintained. It is more important that the farm business is profitable on this particular common than the actual profitability of the sheep enterprise carried out on the common. This is mainly due to the following facts, which could be fairly unique:

1. Pride in the quality of livestock produced
2. Pride in the tradition of maintaining a hill/fell flock and way of life
3. Pride in maintaining the farm in good order and being able to hand it over to someone in the future
4. Not wanting to let their neighbours and friends down by allowing the present system to slip

If farm profitability continues to be low then financial pressure on the desire to maintain the status quo on the common will be enormous, especially if the hill/fell flock is performing poorly. If this scenario continues then it would be likely that perhaps half of the present graziers would bow to financial pressure and quit being active graziers. Unfortunately, this would not mean that the remaining graziers would be able to improve their own profitability, and the

underlying trend would continue. They would probably continue to be graziers for their lifetime but do not have a guaranteed successor, so grazing would probably cease with the present farm ownership.
All other drivers for change are only added factors, as the economic argument is especially strong in the younger generation. The present farmers are at an age when economic concerns can be over ruled by satisfaction in their way of life and fear of the unknown. Neither of these factors is as important to younger members of the community, who need to take up the mantle in the future if a similar commons structure is to continue.
Earning potential in comparison to non-farming professions is seen as more important a reason for allowing younger people to continue farming the common and associated farms than the provision of low cost housing.

Future Scenarios & Implications

1. Farm profitability does not increase

If farm profitability does not increase in the future, and the profitability of hill/fell sheep in particular continues to be negative, then it is likely that eventually all sheep will be removed from the common. Without sheep to manage the grazing on this particular common there will be an environmental disaster. Heather and scrub will grow stronger, smothering other species out in the process, leading to adverse visual amenity and loss of vital diversity. Limestone grassland requires close cropping after flowering to encourage indigenous species to flourish. Excessive growth that is not managed in any way, either by farmers, stock or gamekeepers, will look awful and downgrade the appeal to visitors and tourists at the expense to the local economy. There will also be a great risk of accidental moorland fires and a reduction in safe access for visitors, as limestone paving overgrown by rank vegetation is an unsafe walking environment.

2. Farm profitability increases

If farm profitability increases to a sustainable level then it is likely that, for the lifetime of the present farmers, the status quo will persist on the common. Alternatively, there will be a slight reduction in sheep numbers to allow some part time work to be undertaken. This would have little effect on the future local community, local economy or the local environment. The one unknown on this common is what happens after this generation, as there is only likely to be a 25% succession rate. It is unlikely that the common can function with only one grazier. Therefore, to continue to maintain a balance on the common and within the community in the future, there needs to be new blood brought in. Where will new hill/fell farmers with the necessary skills, knowledge and ability come from?

3. Successful application to the HLS scheme

With one exception, the majority of the farms' inbye is not of significantly high environmental value. For these farm businesses, therefore, environmental

income is limited to ELS at best. The limestone grassland on the common is a target habitat and a SSSI and, therefore, the common stands a good chance of making a successful HLS application. Payment rates could be in excess of £200 per hectare – £9,000 for the common or £16 per grazed right. At this level of compensation, the hill/fell flock would have been profitable even in 2007-8. Being in an HLS should allow the common's sheep to be farmed profitably in the future; presently this is supported by the remainder of the farms' enterprises. If the commons sheep was the most profitable element – or at least on an even footing with other enterprises on the farms – then the future of this particular common would be guaranteed for the next 15-20 years. If still profitable in 2027, it is possible that there will be suitable candidates ready and willing to take over from the present generation of farmers. However, this may mean a reduction in graziers in the future, as there will still be financial pressure to create efficiencies with increased size of sheep flocks.

Pennine Urban: Haslingden

General Description & Context

Haslingden Moor is an urban common of 228 hectares, principally grass (*Molinia*) with a very small amount of heather scattered over 50% of the area. Approximately 50 years ago, the whole of the area was "gripped" by the water board. This led to the Moor being "drained" with a subsequent increase in agricultural production. Within the last 20 years, the practise of cleaning out these watercourses has ceased with the inevitable result that the land is once again becoming waterlogged, with an increased area of rushes at the expense of productive grassland. Within the Severely Disadvantaged Area, the lowest point of the common is approximately 280 metres but is relatively flat, with easy access for farmers with quad bikes and the general public, as it is situated within a mile of the town of Haslingden, Lancashire.

There are 10 rights holders, with 4 active graziers at present. The farms, all commercial beef and sheep, are small hill farms typical of the area, varying in size from 14 to 81 hectares and averaging 38 hectares. As small farms have become vacant in the area, the houses have been sold off and the land has been acquired in some cases by other local farmers together with their common rights. This has led to no increase in actual numbers of farmers using the common, but the active farmers increasing their own number of rights. Interestingly, the last farm to be sold has been bought intact by "lifestyle" farmers from urban Manchester. All three of the new owners have highly paid jobs in the city which they intend to keep, but would love to have full time careers in farming. Their first interest is horses but it is their intention to use some of their fell/grazing rights for cattle and sheep in 2009.

The majority of farms are owner occupied, only one having the advantage of a "tied cottage" in addition to the farmhouse. None of the farms employ outside labour but two of them have one son fully employed. All businesses have added income from either agricultural contracting or off-farm employment. On the other farms, offspring help out on the holdings after finishing their full time jobs and would like to return full time to farming if economics would allow. All four farmers actively grazing the common are 65 years old and over, with the oldest being 84. The two sons actively involved in the day-to day management of their parents' farms are aged 42 and 48 respectively, but neither are part of their respective businesses.

Rights are described as cattle and sheep in the commons register, with a typical entry being 45 cattle and 90 sheep. Therefore, the common has been grazed by a proportionately higher number of cattle than sheep than is usual. Until the 1990s, most of the cattle were outwintered on the common. However, with increasingly wet winters and the common becoming waterlogged, this practise has ceased and all cattle in the area are now inwintered in newly erected cattle sheds. This allowed the breed of cattle to be changed to a more productive breed. Initially, the main breed was Galloway but this has changed through

Welsh blacks and Welsh Black crosses to the modern Limousin and British Blue crosses put to continental bulls.

As an all grass hill/fell, without much environmental merit or designations, the common is not presently within any environmental scheme and will find it difficult to gain enough points to enter HLS. However, it has undergone an investigation into overgrazing by DEFRA's unit at Leeds. This concluded that indeed it is being overgrazed and initial recommendations are that only 25% of rights can be used in the future or subsidy payments will be withheld.

The common is used moderately by the general public for low impact access, generally only for walking a short distance – usually only to exercise a dog. However, there has recently been a circular right of way established – the Rossendale Round – which is likely to increase the amount of walkers and hikers using the section over the common. A bridleway over the common to cater for the many horse riders in the area is due to be opened within the next 6 months. There are no shooting interests over the common. A wind farm is to be erected in Rossendale, which will include some of the common. No-one was sure of any impact this will have on the ground, regarding grazing, flora, fauna or visitor numbers.

Grazing Management & Past Impacts

The majority of grazing is by suckler cattle. Bulls are turned out onto the common with the agreement of all right holders. Dates for “loosing the bull” are agreed by the association annually depending on several factors, e.g. the amount of grass, personal preference etc. Cattle are usually turned out from mid- to late-May straight from the buildings and spend all summer on the common. Fell/moorland gates are left open from September onwards to let the cows and calves access to the lower, better grazing before housing in late October. In the past, cows were outwintered on the common but, due to poaching problems, numbers were reduced and housing provided. This housing allowed less hardy more productive breeds and crosses to be kept, with continental cross cows now being dominant.

Sheep numbers have approximately halved during the last 20 years on the common. This is also true with stocking on the inbye. In general, the majority of the farms’ sheep flock is kept on the hill/fell from lambing through to tupping, only twin carrying and older ewes being kept on the inbye. From mid-September onwards, the sheep are allowed to “rake” into inbye, allowing the ewes to be flushed before tupping. From tupping through to lambing, ewes are allowed to wander onto the common through open gates, although in reality very few do so. Hoggs are turned out to the common when they have returned from being away wintered. The breeds of sheep kept have changed over the years. Initially, the majority were Swaledale and Gritstones. Due to increased popularity of white-faced sheep, Cheviots are now the dominant breed with only a few Gritstones and Swaledales kept.

As there is no stock on the common during winter, no supplementary feeding takes place. Removal of stock (cattle in particular) from the common during winter has allowed the common to restore a "sod". If the grips had been kept open, this would have been even more pronounced. However, due to wetter underfoot conditions, areas that were previously good grassland have been invaded by rushes. These rushes seem to be getting stronger and the remaining cattle on the common less inclined to eat them down. Having to supply housing for the cattle led to a reduction in cattle numbers, due to housing costs.

Not only has there been a reduction in stock kept on the common, this trend has been reflected on the inbye. This has allowed the farms to manage with less labour and has helped in reducing the amount of inputs required by each business; the farms have become more reliant on home grown inputs to achieve the desired production. Also, there has been a move towards selling finished animals – especially lambs in response to a disappearing store lamb market. However, with the recent increased price of inputs – fertiliser and feeds especially – thoughts are returning to selling stores in the future.
It is probably not insignificant that reductions in stocking levels on the common and inbye coincided with the closure of the local Haslingden Auction Mart. A sign of the times, the site was sold for residential purposes.

Although living reasonably locally, the offspring of the common graziers all are travelling further afield to work. Many of them are still using the skills learned on their home farms to earn a living, e.g. digger drivers/contractors, estate handyman including some stud work, gardening etc.

Drivers for Change

Without doubt, the single most important factor driving change is present and future profitability. At the present level of profitability, the younger generation cannot see any realistic future for themselves in the family business, especially when compared with potential non-farm income that can be gained with less physical effort and time than through farming. All other drivers are significant – but only if profitability is firstly addressed.

In relation to the age issue, although this is not a direct driver of change on this common it will nevertheless cause change through death, as none of the graziers has any intention of retiring, even the 80-year olds. As the proprietors are older, the lack of part-time staff is a problem that is presently being solved by family members being prepared to help out after completing their own non-farm work. This ultimately is unsustainable, as the children themselves age and have other responsibilities. Unless profitability changes substantially for the better, there will be much pressure (in at least 50% of the graziers' families) from non farming siblings to realise the assets of their parents' farm business. Any offspring that would wish to carry on the family business will not be able to raise the capital required to do so without selling the family holding.

Increasing world population, climate change and carbon footprint were all seen as areas that would ultimately lead to improved prices for the common's output.

However, all these factors would also increase costs to the business. Two areas of concern were firstly the price of crude oil, fertiliser and fuel and secondly biofuel demand, which will probably maintain high concentrate feed prices. Housing prices in general were felt not to help with the feasibility of continuing to farm in a traditional way. However, provision of affordable homes was not seen as a positive driver to change the farming future of the common.

Overall, the lower income expected, coupled with the unsocial hours and hard outdoor work, has outweighed the wish to continue the farming tradition on this common and associated farms for the majority of the next generation. It is felt that for this trend to be reversed it requires principally a large surge in profitability; any other factor is secondary.
As an urban common, there has never been a rural community as such, as they have integrated with the adjoining towns people. Any disappearance of the present way of life will be fully integrated into the nearby town.

Future Scenarios & Implications

It is unlikely that the present system will remain similar over the next 20 years, due to the present lack of profitability and a lack of willing, able and capable people to carry on in the traditional manner. Compounding this is the likelihood that Haslingden Moor has not got enough environmental or historical value to enter successfully into a HLS scheme.

1. *Successful application to Environmental Stewardship*

Through their rights, the graziers control approximately ¾ of the forage area, about 340 hectares. Compensation of £10-40 per ha would allow at least one, possibly two commoners to continue to graze cattle on the common. The compensation, especially at the higher end, should allow the grazing cattle to be kept at a profit, approximately £60-200 per cow. This together with the inbye should make the 2 farms viable. Unfortunately, the other 2 present graziers will cease to graze their rights, which will possibly be used by the 2 future active graziers. The future active graziers are likely to be those that now have heirs working within the present business.

2. *No Environmental Scheme*

If no environmental scheme can be accessed and the overgrazing regime is implemented, the stocking rate would be similar to that under HLS but without any compensation. There is no reason to think that the graziers in scenario 1 that would cease commoning under an HLS agreement would carry on grazing if there was no compensation payable. However, they would probably carry on in a similar way for longer before quitting. The 2 farms with heirs would attempt to carry on with as many cattle as their rights would allow to try to generate a profit. Without compensation, there is a good chance that profit would be hard to obtain. Therefore the present situation would arise again; it would be just delaying the inevitable.

It is assumed under the above 2 scenarios that the environmental condition of the commons would be similar under the guidance of Natural England via HLS or the Overgrazing Unit. It is also assumed that any farms becoming vacant are acquired by lifestyle farmers who will not use the common in a significant way. Also, the level of public encroachment – walking, riding, mountain biking etc. – will increase as the local population increases and people take more outdoor exercise.

3. All graziers cease being active – abandonment

In this scenario, the common becomes overgrown with rank *Molinia*, shrubs and bushes, due to no vegetation being grazed down. This will lead to an increased risk of accidental moor fires leading to environmental damage as well as danger to nearby areas of settlement. Diversity of wildlife is likely to change from open space-liking species to shy, possibly nocturnal creatures.

Access for people becomes difficult due to overgrown, dense shrub and vegetation and will be concentrated into smaller accessible areas, especially on the edges of the moor. This will have the effect of reducing total visitor numbers enjoying the common. The proposed bridleway will become well used if the path is kept cleared (by someone), especially by horses in this commuter area for the more affluent North West cities, leading to increased enjoyment for a few extra people.

Abandonment of the common would lead to all the present farms supporting active graziers becoming non-viable full time units. This would either lead to these being part time units – probable for the next generation, debatable thereafter – or being taken over by non farmers. Ultimately, from an environmental and agricultural angle this would have nothing but detrimental effects. From a social and community angle then in this particular area the effects would be relatively neutral.

North York Moors: Manor of Danby

General Description & Context

Danby Common incorporates both the high and low Moors, consisting of Danby, Commondale, Glaisdale, Castleton and Lealholme Moors and covers nearly 6,500 hectares. Situated in the heart of the North Yorks Moors, the commons are predominantly low lying and covered in heather. Grazing is by sheep but the local estate (Lord Viscount Downe) owns and exercises the shooting rights. Managing the shooting rights on this heather moor is often at odds with the commoners' aims, due to reduced sheep numbers, but both farmers and gamekeepers work together on improving the environmental merit of the Moor. Latterly, the Estate has re-let farms but withheld common rights from the tenancies.

There are 121 farms with sheep grazing rights, 253 with turberry rights. Only 11 of the rights holders are active graziers with the majority of the active graziers coming from owner occupied farms. Occasionally turberry rights are used. The average farm belonging to the active grazier is 75 hectares and supports sheep usually together with beef and occasionally with dairy herds. The average size of flocks grazing the common is 190 ranging from 40 to 500 head. Few of the farms employ labour; any additional labour required is done by outside contractors or more usually by family labour.

The Moors are within the North Yorks Moors National Park and are classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area. They are under a Sheep Wildlife Enhancement Scheme agreement signed in 2003. This was originally a five-year scheme but it has been extended by one further year. It is intended to apply for a Higher Level Stewardship agreement to replace this. However, there are fears that the extremely low stocking rate (0.32 sheep per hectare) could jeopardise this. The present scheme (and former 5B scheme) has led to reducing the area of bracken by spraying and improved environmental and shepherding practise through management grants.

The common is criss-crossed by roads, which both local commuters and tourists use, often at high speeds. Losses due to traffic are high in both adult sheep and lambs. Typical traffic accident losses can be 2% of the ewe flock and 3% of the lamb crop. The major health problem on the common is ticks. Treatment is vital if any reasonable level of production is to be achieved. Vaccination against louping ill and dipping or pour-ons against Tick Pyaemia are essential husbandry tasks that need to be carried out to contain losses to an acceptable level. It is not unusual for 20% of the lamb crop to be lost on the hills/fells; many of these losses can be attributed to tick related illnesses. As the moors are low lying, fly strike is another problem that requires above average shepherding time to be spent on the common.

The common and surrounding area has always been popular with tourists and day trippers, latterly increasingly so. Walkers in particular, but also horse riders and mountain-bikers are using the common in increasing numbers. The

local villages have adapted to reap their harvest from the tourism trade. These villages all now contain tea rooms, bakeries, B&B and guest houses etc. There are two annual organised motor cycle events that take place upon the common. It is only due to the fact that these are historic events that they are still allowed in the area.

The Moors are administered by the "Danby Court Leet" – a "court of 13 true and just men". The Leet has to grant any new rights holder the right to graze amongst its many duties. The Danby Leet also acts as the first port of call for dialogue with all stakeholders and resolves any disputes arising on the common. On other commons in the country there are similar bodies sometimes referred to as Executors, Elders or Conservators.

Grazing Management & Past Impacts

During the last 20 years the number of graziers has reduced by 23% and sheep numbers by 50%. The main reason for this was the catastrophic foot & mouth outbreak in 2001. Some graziers lost their flocks and some lost their replacements, while others were not allowed to move their flocks to and from the common. Upon re-using the Moor, extremely high losses in terms of death and production caused by ticks meant that many did not re-stock. Furthermore, any farms belonging to the Downe estate that were re-let were done so without grazing rights for shooting reasons.

Stocking density has reduced from 0.65 sheep per hectare to a low of 0.32 at present. This extremely low level of stocking has meant that each flock now covers a larger area and hefting is not as good as it was formerly, due to there being less sheep to "hold" the neighbouring sheep back. Areas of the Moors are now being left virtually ungrazed. This has resulted in areas near to roads being stocked reasonably well while less penetrable or more remote areas are being undergrazed. More sheep grazing on the road side is leading to increased losses due to traffic accidents. As vegetation in the undergrazed areas becomes ranker and less palatable to the sheep, this movement of sheep is becoming more noticeable.

Fewer sheep on the common has not meant less ticks. Instead, it has resulted in more ticks appearing to bite each sheep with increased losses recently from tick carried diseases. (This also has had the same affect on the grouse population.) It is apparent that the higher grouse population is on areas of the Moor that carries the higher number of sheep. This could be because the sheep are being used as "tick mops", allowing a higher percentage of hatched grouse to be reared.

Sheep are managed traditionally on the Moor, being brought onto the inbye for a month at tupping and lambing. Hoggs are away wintered and vaccinated against louping ill before being re-introduced on the common. In general, the sheep are wintered on the common without excessive additional supplementary forage and are only fed for production. Lambing takes place from mid-April,

with both singles and a proportion of the twin carrying ewes being turned back to the common in May.

Reducing the area of bracken by spraying, under Objective 5B, has led to a reduction in bracken and an increase in both heather and available grassland. Routine heather burning by the gamekeepers keep selected areas of heather in a youthful and healthy state. Natural England, however, are now trying to increase the time lapse between burns. This will not be beneficial to either the grouse or sheep population.

A reduction of graziers on the common has not reduced the number of farms in the area – it has basically made them smaller farms. Only two graziers have increased their number of rights in the last 20 years by amalgamation. The remaining farms have not increased the area farmed significantly. A general move from dairy to beef has happened over the majority of farms. However, those that ceased to be active graziers have made a significant move into dairy farming. This was probably due to a change in management personnel (e.g. the son taking over from the father post foot & mouth) with a preference for dairy cows over sheep, rather than any financial decision at that particular time. The local community still benefits from the input of the local farming community and, indeed, relies on it to maintain the traditional social events of the area. However, the agricultural industry is no longer a significant employer of labour in the area, even family labour. In terms of employed personnel (rather than people being self employed), agriculture has been replaced by the tourist/visitor industry, which employs some of the former agricultural employees. However, this industry relies heavily on the ability of the agriculturalists to maintain conditions in the area that will continue to encourage people to visit. The workforce, both in the agricultural and tourism industries, are finding it hard to compete in the local housing market, whilst working in a low wage industry.

Drivers for Change

The main driver for change is the ability to make a living from farming in this area. Increasing world population, increasing land use for growing renewable energy crops and housing, reduced land area for cropping due to climate change all point to a greater world demand for food and hence a substantial price increase.

As profitability decreases there is added pressure to withdraw from grazing the common. Conversely, increased profitability will not necessarily lead to increased sheep grazing. The Danby Court Leet will have a stabilising effect. It will mean, however, that there would be an increased probability that the next generation would want to carry on farming in the area and being active graziers. Until that time, they would probably stay within the area and become experienced whilst being self employed and forming a pool of skilled labour for use by the whole community, not just for farming.

Increased profitability is defined as a profit compared with remuneration gained through taking employment in a non farming industry. This would then allow

the farming community to compete on an equal footing with the remainder of the community for housing and other essentials. Unless this level of income can be reached, it is unlikely that a significant number of the next generation will be interested in entering their parents' profession. Unless they do succeed their parents, then the skills, local knowledge and culture they have gained will be lost, not only from the industry but the area as well. Once lost, these skills and knowledge will never return. It is therefore critical that signs of a significant upturn in profitability are seen sooner rather than later.

All other drivers fall into place after the economic argument; if the farmers cannot afford to continue farming and looking after the commons, they will give up the struggle. The task would then be who could repair the damage to the environment and community. Without stock on the common it would be difficult or impossible to maintain the delicate ecosystems and diverse flora and fauna presently found. This would have an adverse effect on both shooting and landscape and hence tourism income into the local economy.
As graziers become older, especially if they have no natural successors, it is easier to manage inbye, rather than grazing the common single-handed. A shortage of labour, therefore, becomes increasingly important as the commoners age. If there is no suitable labour then the temptation to withdraw from the common and continue farming the inbye is stronger.

On this common, the availability of an accessible environmental scheme has the potential to maintain a structured grazing pattern on the Moor for the next 10 years at least. Without this safety net, it is likely that within five years some irreversible decisions will be taken by some farming families that will result in the family ceasing to graze the common in the future, with the next generation leaving the industry and area altogether.

The statutory conservation designations and the fact that the Moor lies within the National Park boundaries can have two opposing effects:

1. The National Park restricts options for bringing diversified income into the graziers' farm businesses, e.g. camping caravanning. The SSSI restricts opportunity for any ground works or removal, such as peat extraction.

2. Due to high recreational and environmental interest it is more likely that funding can be brought into the area.

It will be interesting to see which of these opposites comes out on top in the long term!

Future Scenarios & Implications

1. A successful HLS application is made and farm gate prices refuse to improve

This is, in fact, the status quo. The majority of the graziers are of an age that are likely to continue grazing the common in a similar pattern in the future. However, it is unlikely that the financial and satisfaction returns would be

enough for the next generation to see a future in the industry. They would leave for a better rewarded career and the present farmers would be left to cope on their own. To enable these farmers to continue farming as they age, the system would have to be modified to fit in with the ability to cope with the workload. At this moment in the future the commons grazing system is at a point of no return, as the will, knowledge and skills required will be lost forever. At this time, it is possible to envisage that the inbye will continue to be farmed – either full or part time – but not the common grazing.

The implications are that the primary tool for environmental stability and enrichment – sheep – has been lost forever and the local economy and community are changed forever, relying on tourism with a less attractive countryside. Shooting is likely to be continued on the moor, but with diminishing returns, the enthusiasm and financial incentive to reinvest could wane.

2. *A successful HLS application is made and farm gate prices improve with increased profitability*

This scenario gives hope of a positive future. As in 1 above, the present system is likely to remain in place for the present generation, bringing with it positive environmental and community factors. However, if the profitability of livestock farming improves dramatically then a future for the younger generation can be seen. As the present generation ages and requires help to maintain the present farming system, then profit can and will be re-invested in labour – either family or employed. This in turn will regenerate the local economy and communities and vital knowledge and skills will continue to be handed down through the generations. Either heirs will take over the family farms or there will be a skilled labour force eager and ready to do so. This eventuality relies on the younger people being encouraged to remain in the area in the near future and have belief in the future prosperity of hill sheep farming utilising common grazing. The 2 drivers of change that are required to bring this about are future profitability of the enterprise and of hill farming and the ability of the community to maintain the younger interested parties in the locality until this change in prosperity occurs. This may mean providing temporary affordable housing and linking direct subsidies – possibly through HFA – to employed units of labour in the short term.

Exmoor: Brendon Common.

General Description and Context

Brendon Common lies towards the western end of Exmoor National Park almost on the Somerset/Devon boundary. It is one of only two commons on Exmoor that has an association and 28 people have rights only seven are active graziers. The land is owned by one owner. The common is 1,384 ha in area and notified as an SSSI and is part of the Exmoor SAC. The common also has an array of archaeological sites including notable stone circles. The area is visited and used by a large number of people although the commoners consider the number has recently fallen slightly.

It is predominately a grass moor with some areas of heather. Gorse and other scrub is encroaching.

Grazing management & Past Impacts

The Association has had an ESA agreement for just under 10 years that has reduced stock numbers overall especially in winter. All cattle have to be removed from the moorland from 1 November and can return on 15 April. Numbers of animals have been significantly reduced. Twenty years ago in the winter there would have been in excess of 3000 sheep, 300 cattle and over 120 ponies. Today in winter there might be up to 1000 sheep, no cattle and about 40 ponies. The agreement also seeks to reduce burning and few, if any, controlled burns have taken place over the last 5 years.

Exercising the right to graze the common is considered an essential part of the hill farms close to the common. Common grazing remains important to the profitability of the hill farm. However this is not because of the stock but due to the income from the ESA. For one commoner the combined funding from the ESA, SPS and HFA was responsible for 75% of his income.

Fewer farms provide less employment. There were 11 twenty years ago and 7 now. The size of the farms vary but are either small c50 ha or large 200+ ha. Cattle breeds have changed over the last 20 years moving away from hardy Galloways to more Hereford crosses.

Mild winters (vegetation grows all year round) together with low stocking rates has encouraged rank grasses and bracken. Tick borne diseases are on the increase.

Drivers for Change

All the commoners would wish that the price paid for their calves and lambs was sufficient to sustain their business but it is not. The income from agri-environment payments are essential and must reward the range of public goods

provided by the grazing animals especially cattle. They consider their way of farming to be part of the valued historic tradition of the area and are proud of it.

Future Scenarios

The ESA must be flexible. HLS will be essential but it must reflect local conditions including the need for winter grazing. If global markets drive up prices then this will help but additional support for moorland farming will continue to be essential. If the farm is profitable then the next generation will continue to farm. The important role of hill farms of providing calves and lambs for finishing in the lowlands must be recognised.

Dartmoor: Peter Tavy Common

General Description and Context

The landscape on Dartmoor is the result of 4,000 years of agricultural activity principally grazing cattle, sheep and ponies. Hill farming and the management of extensive grazing is an essential component of Dartmoor's cultural heritage, the conservation and enhancement of the Dartmoor National Park. Visitors are often not aware of the essential role played by grazing stock and farmers in maintaining the landscape they see and enjoy through easy access.

Peter Tavy common is approximately 1,103 hectares and lies on the western edge of the Dartmoor National Park in the South West of England. The common rises from a level of 210m to its highest point of 517m above sea level. The common abuts three others without physical boundaries between. The land is classed as Severely Disadvantaged (SDA) land in a Less Favoured Area (LFA). The north end of the common is within the North Dartmoor SSSI and candidate Special Area for Conservation (cSAC). The land around Cox Tor is part of the Merrivale SSSI and a site of outstanding geomorphologic importance. Peter Tavy common contains many features of archaeological interest, including cairns, reaves, stone circles, numerous hut circles and enclosures. The common is managed under an ESA agreement.

Peter Tavy Common, which has 45 commoners registered with the Dartmoor Commoners Council, has rights to graze 9104 sheep, 1527 cattle and 237 ponies (Max: 3035 LUs). Today there are only 16 of the 45 potential commoners who continue to put out a greatly reduced number of stock (Max: 624 LUs) on the common. Reasons for the decreasing numbers are various, for example: sale of property to non-farmers, amalgamation of the land, and retirement without a successor. The remaining farms are run as small to medium sized family businesses handed down from one generation to another. Enterprises consist principally of suckler cows, breeding ewes and a few breeding hill ponies. Cattle are allowed out on the common from May until October but after negotiation with Defra, some cattle are kept out for an extended period until December. Calving takes place traditionally in the spring and stores are sold in the autumn. However, the increasing trend is towards autumn calving, grazing the common throughout the summer with the cow and well grown calf and selling mature progeny straight to the abattoir.

The land is also extensively used by walkers and for riding, together with a range of seasonal recreational activities. The whole common is open access land. The Northern part of the common is within the Ministry of Defence's Merrivale training range with regular military training involving live firing, taking place throughout the year. Before training can begin, stock are driven off the ranges onto the other half of the common at least 4 days a week. This constant disruption of stock adds to the grazing pressure in other areas of the common.

Grazing Management and Past Impacts

The level of stock required to maintain the commons remains a contentious issue between farmers and conservationists. The ecologists uphold that excessive numbers of grazing animals have caused severe overgrazing during the past 50 years, together with ecological damage and heather loss. The Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme was introduced on Dartmoor in 1995, and an important feature of the scheme was to drastically reduce the number of animals grazing the common in order to restore the natural environment. The ESA scheme on Peter Tavy Common (taken up in 2003), and latterly cross compliance, sought to reduce the stocking numbers on that common by at least 85% in order to assist the recovery of the vegetation.

Most of the vegetation is rough acid grassland of bent and fescue with small areas of blanket bog or valley Mire. In more recent years gorse and bracken have become increasingly invasive species with an extended growing season due to a combination of to mild winters, drier summers and lack of grazing stock. Increased scrub has caused problems for walkers who have difficulty in crossing previously open grazed areas and farmers are unable to effectively gather stock with their working dogs.

Milder winters have increased the growth of long rank grass, encouraged tick borne diseases and heather beetle damage. In the past bracken was controlled by cattle trampling the young fronds. However, this no longer happens as cattle are restricted in their grazing to certain times of the year. The increasing density of vegetation is a fire risk particularly in the long dry spells of summer, whether caused by accident or arson. Such fires may cause significant damage to archaeological sites, historic features and peat bogs where enormous amounts of carbon would be released.

Changing Trends under the ESA agreements

In the past the density of the flocks and herds ensured the moorland stock were kept in place (hefted or leared) and the commons were grazed evenly. The removal of cattle and to a lesser extent sheep was considered necessary under the ESA agreement to recover the heather on the common. The reduced numbers of stock has enabled unpalatable grass and scrub to grow where the animals will not graze as they cannot digest and thrive on the vegetation.

The reduction in the amount of time the cattle spend on the common has resulted to some extent in a lack of leared stock which were the building blocks of good grazing management in the uplands. The cattle have been wintered off the common in buildings or on inbye and rented land. This scenario has created greater intensity of the use of inbye to produce sufficient fodder in winter. The costs incurred are not covered adequately by the ESA payments (costs £300 per cow, profits foregone £250 per cow).

Some farmers consider the small numbers of stock now allowed on the common are not viable, as the animals require a disproportionate amount of time and effort to manage. It will prove far more difficult to increase the stock numbers than reduce them as not only is the animal lost to the common with its learing/hefting capacity, but the immunity to diseases such as red water is significantly reduced.

The type of hardy stock required for grazing the uplands is gradually changing to commercial crossbreds because they are better suited to housing in winter and produce a more marketable carcass. This type of animal is not appropriate to grazing the exposed upland areas. Hill farms are increasingly acquiring better grade farmland to finish stock and gain a better return.

There is concern that a considerable portion of the ESA money goes to the landowners and non-graziers many of whom contribute nothing to the management and maintenance of the common. Approximately 50% goes to the graziers but it is difficult to cover rising costs and does nothing to encourage farmers to stock the common, which accounts for the poor take up of ELS in the Dartmoor area. A whole range of "public goods" delivered by the farmers will become untenable without the necessary grazing stock (e.g. access, habitat management, protection of historic monuments and natural resources such as water and carbon storage).

Future Scenarios and Implications

There is minimal profit from farming stock in the SDA. The Single Payment Scheme has dramatically reduced income to hill farmers compared to the previous headage payments, which amounted to £120 per hectare. This will be reduced to £35 per hectare when SPS becomes entirely based on area payment. There is increasing concern about the reduction of income from Environmental Schemes causing further insecurity among hill farmers as the Agri-Environmental payments are essential to the viability of the farm business. The adverse impact of SPS payments on hill farmers has been far greater than that experienced by lowland farmers, who continue to be well supported by government, and will not suffer the dramatic cut backs in income experienced by those in the uplands.

Habitat management required by the ESA agreements is often seen as complex, inappropriate, inflexible and costly. Many of the schemes' prescriptions are more suited to the north of England and are not appropriate to the southern uplands and their farming methods. Obtaining consents for controlling bracken by spraying is complex given the number of people walking on the moor. Swaling (controlled burning) is essential but has been much reduced in recent years because if the fire gets out of control the commoners suffer financial penalties. The height and density of vegetation make fires more difficult to control and there is a lack of farmers in sufficient numbers and with the time to help.

Hill farmers with the necessary skills and experience have continued to fall in numbers and the average age of farmers on Dartmoor is now 60 years old and many have no family successors coming through to take over the farm. There are examples where the number of farmers retiring over the next 5 years is greater than those remaining. Peter Tavy commoners are younger than most with an average age of 45 years old. Four out of the 16 farms remaining, have sons in their late teens or early 20s working at home learning the necessary skills from their fathers. There is widespread concern that the next generation will not continue to farm the common because of severe weather, hard working conditions and insufficient financial reward relative to the alternatives. Part-time farming appears to be an option for some. However, those youngsters that have learned new skills and taken up better-paid jobs outside the farm find such employment demands a full time commitment, which is incompatible with the hours demanded by hill farming. These young people have left the industry. The lack of affordable housing available and the inflexibility of the National Park planning policy on conversion of traditional buildings into dwellings offers little long-term security or incentive to those starting up in farming.

Conclusion

Dartmoor is a farmed landscape kept open and accessible by grazing stock. The management of the moor is dependent upon the skills and experience of hill farming families and their grazing systems. Achieving the correct grazing regimes and retaining the necessary skills are looking increasingly difficult to maintain in the future because of the lack of income to sustain farming and the increasing age of the average farmer without a family successor. There is an urgent need to ensure the correct support systems are in place to provide confidence to the hill farmers that their traditional skills are required and that there is a future for their families on the moorland.

Bodmin Moor: Davidstow, West Moors and High Moors

General Description and Context

Covering 1,481 ha. the area is managed by one Association and is composed of four common units. There are five owners who operate through one agent. The Common Association works with an interim Bodmin Moor Commoners Council (awaits legislation) and the Cornwall Commoners Association, although the influence of this later group is waning.

The common is considered typical of those commons on Bodmin Moor apart from the significance of the Davidstow airfield that lies within the common's boundary. This abandoned airfield allows easy access onto the common; so access issues and the impact of the public are very important. The dominant farming system is suckler cows (Galloways) and breeding ewes producing calves and lambs sold for finishing elsewhere. Bodmin Moor was subject to a special project in the 1990s designed to address the widespread over-grazing. Twenty years ago there might have been 3,000 sheep and 300 cattle on this moor in winter. Today in the winter there may be 300 sheep and no cattle.

The Common is within the North Bodmin Moor SSSI. The common is largely a grass moor with significant areas of humid or Western heath. This is predominately composed of Western gorse. The SSSI objectives seek to establish more heathland at the expense of the gorse and grassland and its condition is considered by NE to be unfavourable recovering. The common holds an impressive array of archaeological sites many of which are of national or international importance.

The moor is under a Countryside Stewardship agreement. The agreement is overseen by a company established by the association. The CSS agreement requires total cattle removal and the removal of most of the sheep between 1 September and 15 April. However recently there has been some flexibility on the autumn date allowing stock to stay on the moor until early October and this may be reviewed further. The cost of wintering away from the moor is a considerable financial burden and although costs (feed, fuel and straw) continue to rise the CSS payment remains constant.

Grazing Management & Past Impacts

There are 26 graziers all of whom are active. All the commoners will have rights tied to their home farm or other enclosed land close to the common. Bodmin Moor is a complex mix of enclosed and moorland. Today a significant proportion of the graziers' income arises from the CSS. The return from their sales of calves and lambs (for finishing in the lowlands) is poor and insufficient to support their farm enterprises. The low return and rising costs is little incentive to increase stock numbers and the permitted totals may not always be reached. This together with recent mild winters is leading rapidly to an under-grazed situation. This is not only the opinion of the commoners but also of the owners

and visitors. The CRoW Act opened up the moorland but access is becoming increasingly difficult due to gorse and bracken.

The number of active farmers has fallen over the last 20 years and many consider their current permitted stocking rates to be unsustainable as leers/hefts break down and it becomes less economic to manage so few animals. Property is expensive and the amalgamation of land reduced employment. Most of the current graziers are full time farmers but this might change.

The general feeling of the nine commoners present was that the future is very bleak and uncertain. This was having a very detrimental impact on recruiting younger members of farming families to stay farming. There was little or no incentive. The poor return from selling calves and lambs was further aggravated by the steadily rising costs (fertiliser, fuel, winter feed).

Drivers for Change

Their Countryside Stewardship Agreement was considered essential in retaining stock on the common. Although two commoners said that without the agreement they would increase the number of stock, most thought the opposite. The impact of SPS will be very significant as would the loss of HFA. The agri-environment scheme had to be reviewed and become more able to reflect local conditions. A longer grazing period and higher stocking levels might make it more sustainable. Reducing costs associated with winter removal, especially of cattle, is essential.

Hardy hill breeds of cattle are essential in maintaining the common. However the 30 month rule is pushing farmers to keep less hardy animals.

The commoners understood their role in managing the common and SSSI. They are willing to take responsibility but the reward is too little and uncertain. The lack of a confident future is a further disincentive for the next generation.

Future Scenarios and Impacts

Stock numbers need to be viable and other traditional land management, including controlled burning, permitted. Above all else the farmers want a fair price for their produce. A better dialogue is needed so that everyone understands the problems faced by hill farmers. There has to be support or reward for hill farming that recognises the benefits it provides for access, management of the archaeology and natural environment. There must be confidence in the future for the next generation to become involved.

Case Study – Upland Other - BLACK HILL/BLACK MOUNTAIN

Description

Black Hill common is situated towards the Hereford end of the Black Mountain range which runs from Breconshire (Powys) through into Herefordshire. It is a S.S.S.I. bordering the Brecon Beacons National Park. The particular area is situated close to Craswall and Llanveynor and covers an area of some 635 ha.

The common is owned by the Lord of the Manor and there are 38 right holders currently only 8 of whom are active graziers. Sheep and ponies, both hill types, are run and the common is described as hill and upland. Management of the area comes under the aegis of the Black Mountain Grazier Association and this is tied to an agreement with Natural England.

The Graziers Association which straddles the Welsh / English border has regular meetings itself but also links in to the newly formed Welsh commons Forum, an organisation which covers the whole of Wales. The Association has played a key role in its development and see it as an important resource for information exchange on issues to do with commons and commoning.

Grazing Management and Past Impact

There are no restrictions on grazing except those which are imposed under the agri-environment agreement with natural England, these include seasonal stock reductions, heather management, bracken/gorse control etc.

In addition to its main use as a grazing common the area is also used for shooting, walking, bird watching and bracken is taken off for bedding.

As a consequence of the agreement with Natural England there has been a significant change in the pattern of sheep being grazed with all sheep currently being removed in the winter and lower numbers in the spring summer and autumn. Pony numbers have remained roughly the same. Generally speaking, sheep are put onto the common in spring, taken off for clipping, dipping and general welfare treatments put back on and only taken off otherwise for marketing. The common is seen as a vital part of the farming system and essential to viability.

It is clear that recreational use has increased during the last 20 years and as a consequence more time has been needed by the grazier to ensure that sheep are where they need to be.

One of the main reasons for this is that most people walking with dogs are a source of “worry” for the sheep. Some visitors allow dogs to herd sheep down the hill, they then have to be driven back up. This all takes time. Large groups of people can have the same effect. Time available for the grazier has decreased due to same/similar amount of work and less available labour. Time needed to shepherd the whole common has increased due to less graziers, same numbers of stock and greater required input from those remaining.

Drivers for Change

Drivers for change for the next 20 years will include financial aspect of farming/grazing as the key element. That is why whenever there is a discussion on the future the profit or loss aspect seems to dominate the thought process. Other issues include increase in interest and attention by third parties – welcome when there is a financial incentive otherwise a hindrance. Increase in bureaucracy also seen as an impediment to progress against the background of increased work generally, more controls and reduced income.Local economy can be positively and negatively affected by influx of greater numbers, some use local hostelries but not always the case and the problems created by visitors especially in large numbers of with dogs can easily outweigh any economic benefit.

Nature conservation is also challenged by visitors with dogs and has a negative effect on ground nesting birds. Growth in numbers of visitors therefore seen as a quite major potential problem unless there is a very carefully targeted educational programme. This really should take priority due to the fact that a great deal of effort has been put in to raise awareness of access to the countryside with a relatively low level approach to have a commensurate approach to the potential for problems.

The whole of the agricultural aspect of commoning will depend on the overall financial state of farming and the controls imposed. Given a better economic position and a very serious and successful attempt to reduce controls, there is little doubt that a common will remain an important part of farming. It will critically be impinged upon by a lack of proper understanding and respect by a visiting public.

Recreation therefore will play a key role in the success or failure of a common and there would be good sense in instituting an education system to ensure that visitors to a common not only stay within the CROW guidelines but also learn about the potential they have to damage the environment which they are visiting.

Local communities which are a part of the cultural heritage are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain a foothold due to high costs of housing, fuel and the low profitability of the farming communities which they are serving. Loss of the source of skilled labour is seen as potentially extremely damaging.

Issue of profitability/economic viability therefore seen as essential – better returns might be developed on the back of trend to local marketing. This relies on local slaughtering facilities, cost structure needs to be looked at urgently. Local cannot be local without in carbon footprint terms. Could also be an opportunity to develop an income stream through generating a commoners key card similar to National Trust membership.

Other stakeholders should be held responsible for their actions.

Upland CEFN HILL AND VAGAR HILL

Description

The Cefn Hill and Vagar Hill commons are contiguous areas of common situated to the West of Hereford on an upland area running up to the Eastern side of the Black Mountains which run from Brecon across Monmouthshire and just into Herefordshire. The areas cover in total in excess of 181 ha and are owned by the Lord of the Manor, a Mr John Williams.

Both commons come within the interest range of the Herefordshire Nature Trust which runs a Community Commons project whose aims include to work towards the sustainable management of 12 commons in Herefordshire so that their biodiversity is maintained and enhanced, commoners can exercise their rights and they are available for leisure and recreation as defined under CROW.

The commons are described as hill and upland types and there are 7 farmers who currently use their grazing rights. Main use of the commons is for sheep grazing but there are a relatively small number of ponies. Grazing is managed by the Cefn and Vagar Grazing Association and they work with the Herefordshire nature Trust to obtain improved gorse and bracken management.

Essentially, the commons are very much farming commons used in the traditional way by the commoners as a part of their family farming systems. In addition they are also used by walkers, bird watchers and archaeologists and there is some bracken taken for bedding.

Grazing Management and Past Impacts

Levels of grazing have been maintained at similar levels over many years only varying to reflect economic and disease conditions prevailing. Whilst recreational use of the commons are currently quite limited, the reduction in labour available to manage them due to the general economic pressure on agriculture has resulted in a decrease in the total number of graziers during the last 20 years as a result of which those who are left have to shoulder a greater part of the burden.

Even though the recreational use of the commons is considered to be low by comparison with some others, the increased number of visitors which often have a disruptive effect on stock has resulted in a need for a greater proportion of time being spent on the management of the common.

Considerable attention is paid by the grazier to maintaining grazing at sustainable levels. This is thought to be particularly significant against the background of the somewhat subjective nature of the science of grazing levels.

There is also a clear perception among the commoners concerned that the incursion of walkers especially at peak periods of nesting and lambing can have a serious negative effect particularly on populations of ground nesting birds and on young lambing ewes.

This is particularly so when consideration is given to the fact that many visiting walkers do not keep their dogs under proper control and have a tendency to allow dogs to "play" with the sheep. In this case a dog's playing is a sheep's worst nightmare, often leading to death.

With regard to the issue of non farm dogs, the commoners involved had concerns for the fact that many of these dogs were not subject to regular worming and this could pose problems for the human food chain.

Hydatidosis is a serious health issue in some areas and as farm dogs on farm assured farms were considered to be "safe" due to the fact that they were required to be involved in regular worming, it was thought this ought also to apply to visiting dogs.

On the issue of economic impact in general terms, it was felt that should livestock farming become even more economically challenged, the traditions of commoning would be the first to suffer due to the fact that further cutbacks in labour would not allow time needed to farm the common and it could easily fall into dereliction. Also considered that this was not likely at the present time but it was something which should be faced.

The question of fencing against roads was considered in a fairly general way and a firm view accepted that in order to maintain the custom and right of commoning steps needed to be taken wherever possible to ensure traffic and stock could not mix. The only alternative being to make effective use of traffic calming systems.

Drivers for Change

Drivers for change in the next 20 years would include economic, environmental and social issues. Fundamental was the need for livestock farming to be economically viable. With that comes the social structure involving people in farming families and other labour skill providers for services such as hedging, ditching, fencing, shearing etc. All depended on a viable business basically providing food which was sold at a profit having taken in all costs of production including investment and return on capital, labour, depreciation etc.

It was also clear that without adequate income from sales and agri-environment schemes it would be necessary to farm more intensively to generate income with potentially negative environmental effect.

With proper balanced approach to farming the common nature conservation was likely to be enhanced, but great care had to be taken to manage the influx of visitors. Education was the key and there was a need to inculcate a spirit of respect for the countryside.

The key to holding a sustainable structure of commoning and farming with the twin benefits of good landscape and nature conservation was largely financial but also hinged on the need to strip out unnecessary, costly and time consuming controls on farmers with minimal/no controls over visitors.

MALVERN HILLS

Description

The Malvern Hills are situated at the West of Worcestershire running along the Herefordshire side with some spillover into both counties. They run for some 12 miles North to South and are described as lowland rural/lowland urban, the area covers some 1,200 ha. The commons areas cover some 10 registered commons, some contiguous and others not.

Most of the commons would be described as unimproved lowland pasture running from strict lowland to rough hill grazing.

For many years the 'Hills' were virtually devoid of any grazing animals due to the considerable influx of walkers and it is only in recent years that the Malvern Hills Conservators have reintroduced sheep and cattle grazing in order to get the considerable growth of scrub back under control. Clearly this has entailed a considerable cost by the Conservators and consideration is now being given to return it to a more traditional farming system.

Ownership and management of the area is vested in the Malvern Hills Conservators under the Malvern Hills Acts (of Parliament) 1884, 1909, 1924, 1930, 1995 and whereas this has total responsibility for the operation of the commons there is a Commoners Co-ordinating Committee on one of the largest commons (Castlemorton) to try to ensure a proper level of grazing and appropriate use of the common..

The area is covered by 3 scheduled ancient monuments, includes some 80% in SSSI and the whole area is within the area scheduled as A.O.N.B. with 10% designated as conservation area under Malvern Hills District Council.

Grazing Management and Past Impact

Within living memory the Malvern Hills used to be home to some 3,000 head of sheep but it dwindled to virtually zero and has then gradually been returned to grazing although to nothing like that extent, although this is balanced out by a conservation grazing herd of cattle.

A great deal of the conservation grazing is grant aided by Natural England as well as the Malvern Hills District council and longer term viability is currently being investigated by more traditional routes.

Drivers for change will undoubtedly focus on finance and economic viability but it is quite clear that the ability to absorb increasing numbers of visitors (currently in excess of 1 million annually) will impinge on the ability of the grazing animal to thrive.

Taking into consideration the way in which visitors impinge on the grazing animal, sheep, tend to be moved off the favoured walking areas at peak periods, i.e. Christmas.

Stock are fenced into large paddocks on the hill using temporary electric fencing, the paddocks or blocks would comprise areas of up to 25 to 40 ha at a time.

A great deal of work has been carried out to reduce scale of quite substantial areas of bracken and scrub trees with the object of allowing significant bracken cover to support the High Brown Fritillary butterfly.

Some of the recreational activity involves the local fraternity, i.e. horse riding, hunting, bird watching, cyclists and walking while some of this is also carried out by a visiting population which would also include hang gliding, archaeology and geology.

The perception of visitors about the importance of the grazing animal and grazing levels has been lifted to an improved level due to very considerable work which has been done by the Conservators to educate the public using information boards. Even so, the varied use of the area inevitably draws differing opinions. The local press also takes a keen interest in what takes place on the Hills and the conservators involve themselves in other education systems which include leaflets, personal emails and evening talks to local interest groups.

Future Scenarios and Drivers for Change

Due to maintenance of work now being carried out, it is envisaged that the landscape value will be enhanced with well managed woodlands and less scrub.

The grassland will be rich in wildlife and there will be a return to sustainable grazing levels on both hills and commons with stock and grazing levels being maintained by commoners.

The recreation values will be managed in a way which balances with the agricultural/environmental plans and the whole will benefit from a development of mutual understanding of the issues with steps being taken to absorb change where possible.

Education will play a key role in ensuring a sustainable future for the hills and commons but the metaphoric path currently being traversed should provide the background to develop more of the same approach.

Lowland Rural: Corfe Common

General Description & Context

Corfe Common is a small lowland common located to the south of the village of Corfe Castle in the Isle of Purbeck, Dorset. The common extends to 123.59 hectares**,** half of which is rough grazing and the other half semi-improved pasture. The common is owned by the National Trust, having been bequeathed to them, along with Corfe Castle, in 1982.

There are 400 rights registered on the common. These appurtenant rights are attached to various parcels of land in and around Corfe Castle village. Some of the dominant tenements have been built on and none are now in agricultural use. Many of those owning the dominant tenements are commuters and none of the right holders exercise their right to graze the common. This has been the case since the 1950s when the Corfe Commons Management Committee was set up to let grazing on the common to farmers and horse owners in the area.

The Committee comprises the landowner, graziers, Parish Council and right holders. However, right holders rarely attend meetings. The committee lets the grazing through "beast leases" for which the current charge is £40 per annum. A beast lease is equivalent to 1 cow or 0.5 horses. The income from the beast leases goes to the management committee who pay the National Trust warden and ecologist for time spent working on the common and also any contractors that are required. They also employ a hayward whose role is to manage the beast leases and notify graziers if their animals are unwell. The hayward is employed for a few hours each week for which he is paid a small annual stipend.

The common is a SSSI and a self contained hydrological unit and this is one of its most important ecological attributes. There is also considerable archaeological interest on the common and there are several Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

The common is in a Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which has about 5 years to run. The main requirements of the scheme are that cattle and ponies graze the common for at least 10 weeks every year but with a maximum stocking density of 0.6 livestock units per hectare imposed from May to the end of July to avoid damage to ground nesting birds. Poaching must also be avoided all year round. Supplementary feeding is allowed in specified areas only. The Stewardship scheme had a capital element which is now complete. This consisted of scrub clearance, mechanical bracken control and some wetland creation. The Stewardship grant is paid directly to the management committee. Single Farm Payment is not currently paid on the common.

Grazing Management & Past Impacts

The current grazing regime on the common consists of mixed breeding beef cattle and horses. There is a predominance of Dexter and Dexter cross cattle. No sheep graze the common. Twenty horses graze the area all year round along with 60 cattle during spring, summer and autumn. The number of cattle is halved during the winter months when they are removed from the rough grazing on the common but left on the semi improved part. Cow numbers have increased from 0 in 1987 to 30 in 1997 and 60 today. This has largely been because the Committee have found a farmer who is happy to farm marginal land in an area of otherwise semi improved and improved grassland and who understands the objectives of the grazing regime. All the cattle grazing the common now belong to this one farmer although in 1997 there was second farmer using the common. The current grazier farms part time and does not derive his entire income from agriculture. The area of his own holding is estimated at 100 acres.

Horse numbers have shown a decline over the past 10 years as horse owners seek better facilities and land. Horses on the common run as a herd and individual management of them is difficult. There is little shelter during the winter months and although it is cheap, at £80 per annum, increasing affluence in the area means that price is not the main motivating factor for horse owners looking for keep. The Management Committee would like to maintain horse numbers at the 1997 level as the combination of horse and cattle grazing is beneficial to the ecological interest of the grassland.

Due to the increase in cattle numbers, the time required from the grazier to manage his interest on the common has increased but this has not presented a problem to him. There has also been a small increase in the management time spent on the common by the National Trust due to the Stewardship requirements to control scrub and bracken. This work has resulted in a decreasing area of scrub and bracken on the common and a corresponding increase in grassland.

The impact of agricultural activity on the common on the economy of the area is negligible; it is a small area of marginal land that is not key to the agricultural functioning of the surrounding area. The increase in cattle numbers has, however, provided an increased economic return from the common to the sole agricultural grazier.

The grazing activity and vegetation management have had benefits for landscape and recreation, allowing much greater freedom of access than occurred in the 1980s. Local reaction to scrub management was initially negative and English Nature helped the National Trust to explain the need for, and rationale behind, the work. Most local people now welcome the change and support the current management regime.

Drivers for Change

The main factors that motivate people to graze the common are financial and revolve around price received for livestock, cost of inputs and the cost of beast leases. The current grazier depends on the common to maintain his farming system as his own holding is small.

The key drivers for change on the management of the common over the next 20 years will be:

- The profitability of farming – if the financial return on cattle continues to fall then it may prove very difficult to persuade a farmer to graze the common

- The age of the sole farmer (late 50's) will also have a major impact on the common as he is likely to retire from farming during the next 10 years and has no successor; it is anticipated that if his farm is sold it is likely to be purchased by a non farmer

- Climate change has the potential to have a major impact on the common due its self contained hydrological nature; drier summers may lead to the drying up of the springs that supply the common and contribute to its specific nature conservation interest

- The changing social profile of the area caused by the price of houses and the cost of living is likely to result in fewer horse owners looking for cheap shared grazing

Future Scenarios & Implications

The current management of the common is highly dependent on the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which effectively subsidises the rents charged for the beast leases and enables the National Trust to carry out management works on the common which are not reflected in these rents. If the Stewardship scheme is not renewed then there is likely to be a decrease in the time spent by others managing the common on the control of scrub and bracken. It is also possible that the management committee would no longer be able to hire a hayward, as the anticipated decrease in cattle and horse numbers will result is a fall in income from beast leases. This decrease in management activity on the common would result in bracken and scrub encroachment and a fall in biodiversity as the area of acid grassland declines. Such a change in management would impact on the landscape of the common fairly rapidly and would also impinge on the enjoyment of the common by local people as their current freedom to roam widely over the area would become gradually restricted by gorse and dense bracken.

It is likely that over the course of the next ten years grazing levels on the common will fall dramatically as the sole cattle grazier who is now in his late 50s will probably retire soon. It is likely to prove difficult to find another grazier as there are not many farmers in the area with mixed beef herds and most are not interested in grazing marginal land. One option will be for the landowner/management committee to pay a farmer to graze the land; if this proves impossible then the National Trust could graze the common with their own cattle as they do this on neighbouring properties. However, such a scenario would be dependent on continued agri-environment funds to support the costs as without this the Trust would not be able to finance such high intensity management.

Lowland Urban: Newcastle Upon Tyne Town Moor, CL 888

General Description & Context

The Town Moor is a large urban common located in the centre of Newcastle Upon Tyne. The common extends to 388.15 ha**,** although only around 273 ha of this is grazed. The remainder is let off as "intakes" for use as parks, allotments and the Newcastle United Football Club ground at St. James's Park. The Town Moor is owned by Newcastle City Council but the Freemen of Newcastle have absolute right to herbage. Consequently mutual agreement is required on nearly all matters relating to the land. This "dual control" was established in Victorian times and consolidated by the 1988 Newcastle Upon Tyne Town Moor Act.

The Moor comprises at least nine different grazing units including Nun's Moor north, Nun's Moor south, Hunter's Moor, Leazes Moor, Town Moor and Duke's Moor. Each of these moors is fenced and let to a different grazier (with the exception of Nun's Moor North which is shared by three graziers). Consequently the grazing of the Moor is more akin to managed grass lets than a common.

Every freeman of the City of Newcastle has the right of "sole or several pasture" for cows on the Moor. As Freemen gradually ceased to exercise these rights during the first half of the last century, the grazing was taken in hand by the Steward's Committee of the Freemen and let by way of stints to farmers from the surrounding area. The 1988 Act states that the Steward's Committee shall decide the number of cows grazing the moor but that this should not exceed 800.

There is a right of air and exercise for the general public on the Town Moor and it is very heavily used by the people of Newcastle for walking, jogging, cycling, and riding. The Moor is heavily used for organised events such as sponsored walks and runs and for the Great North Run. The annual Hoppins Fair takes place for a week each June. No motor vehicles are allowed on the Moor but there is an increasing problem of unauthorised vehicular exercise.

The Town Moor is not in a Stewardship Scheme. ELS was considered but it was felt to be too restrictive, particularly given the high levels of public access and numbers of organised events.

Grazing Management and Past Impacts.

The Stewards Committee of the Freemen represent the Freemen in connection with the Moor; these twelve individuals meet once monthly whilst a smaller sub-committee of five – the Management Executive Committee - deals with the letting of grazing and the day to day management of the Moor. This Committee also meets monthly. The Freemen employ a Superintendent and two further members of staff to manage and let the grazing, check on the well being of stock and provide general management of public access issues.

Stints are usually let to the same farmer year after year. A stint allows the grazing of one beast (cattle) for one season. A season used to run from the end of March to the end of November but was recently changed to January to the end of October with the proviso that graziers should avoid grazing the Moor before the end of March. This change allowed compliance with the 10 month rule and has enabled graziers on the Moor to obtain Single Farm Payment.

The stint rents are paid to the Freemen who are a Charitable Trust. The money is distributed by way of a ballot to Freemen of Newcastle who still live within the city walls. These Freemen must apply to take part in the ballot held each April. A small amount is deducted from the stint income to cover administration costs. A stint is currently let for £18. The rent is held artificially low to ensure that graziers continue to use the Moor thus ensuring that it remains an open space for the use of the residents of Newcastle. This is the primary objective of the Freemen in their management of the Moor.

The current grazing regime on the Moor consists entirely of beef cattle most of which are Limousin crosses. Occasionally breeding cows are put on the Moor but graziers are discouraged from doing this due to risk to the public. Whist sheep would have a beneficial impact on the herbage, the fencing of the Moor is not adequate for them and the high number of dogs on the common makes it impractical.

The current stocking rate adopted by the Management Executive Committee is 0.6 LU/ha. Maximum numbers of cattle on the common are usually seen in late May and June when in the region of 550 beasts will graze the various compartments. These numbers gradually decrease over the summer and autumn months as beasts fatten and are taken to market. The numbers of cattle have been fairly constant over the past twenty years and this reflects the fact that the Stewards have no difficulty finding graziers because of the low rent they charge and also the management provided by the Superintendent and his team.

There have been nine active graziers for the past twenty years although 3 of these are now dealers rather than farmers. Their farms are widespread, being located in Ponteland, Heddon on the Wall, Wark in Northumberland, Morpeth and Consett. Most of these farms are medium to large in size but the grazing on the Moor is a very important aspect of the farming system, providing clean grazing and allowing more stock to be carried on the home farm. The change in the hours worked by the Superintendent and his team, to provide 24 hour cove, has reduced the time needed by individual graziers to manage the Moor.

The age of graziers is not a cause for concern on the Moor as new graziers are readily available. Occasionally the grazing of the Moor passes from one generation to the next; there is no right for this to happen but if the Steward's Committee are happy with a family they will let the stints to a son or daughter without advertising them.

Part of the Moor (Fenham Barracks) had been used by the MOD since the early 1800s under the intake rule. When this came back to the Freemen in the early

1980's it was not possible to return it to its agricultural state and the site was developed. The income from this development has provided the Freemen with much greater financial security in their management of the common and has enabled improvement works and a higher standard of management

Drivers for Change

The Town Moor provides an unusual case study of a common in a stable state with little likelihood of change over the next twenty years. The dual control exercised by the City Council and Freemen of Newcastle, with the primary aim of management to protect this unique area of open space within the City boundaries, means that change is very unlikely. The charitable status of the Freemen and their financial security following the development of the Fenham Barracks site means that they can keep stint rents at very low levels and consequently have no difficulty in finding new graziers. If the profitability of farming falls dramatically then it is possible that even low rents will not attract new graziers. In such circumstances the open nature of the Moor and the recreational and spiritual values that go with that will be threatened. In such an event pressure to develop peripheral parts of the Moor would be likely to intensify but its status as common land and the affection with which it is held by the residents of Newcastle make such development highly unlikely.

Lowland Urban: Maidenhead and Cookham

General Description & Context

The commons are all scattered around Maidenhead and Cookham, situated in the Thames Valley. Given the close proximity to major centres of population, the commons are heavily used for recreation, with walking and riding being the main activities. One common supports an SSSI while all the commons are designated for open access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

All of the commons are owned and managed by the National Trust and are subject to inalienability and the Trust's byelaws. Four commoners attend the Management Committee, but all graziers may attend the AGM. Rights exist for grazing cattle, sheep, goats, geese and horses but cows in calf are the main beast used for grazing. There are also rights for taking minerals and firewood.

Grazing Management & Past Impacts

Cattle go on in April and are removed by November. Stocking levels are up to one beast per acre but the National Trust restricts the overall time that the animals can graze the common in order to prevent over grazing. Scrub is periodically cleared to prevent excessive colonisation and maintain a balance between the area for grazing and conservation. Two haywards monitor and help manage the grazing.

Drivers for Change

Little has changed over the last twenty years and much of the vegetation pattern remains the same. An increased use for recreation is most notable and conflicts do arise between walkers and grazing animals. The trend towards continental breeds and potential safety issues requires a greater input of time by the National Trust staff.

Future Scenarios & Implications

Due to the lack of designations, it is unlikely that all of the commons would be eligible for Higher Level Stewardship and no agreements are in place. However, negotiations are progressing to secure the Single Farm Payment. Should access and grazing conflicts necessitate the cessation of grazing then haymaking could be introduced as practiced elsewhere on other National Trust properties. Whilst the Trust is aware of the socio-economic issues and changes that farming is currently facing, it anticipates little change in the future and remains confident that grazing will continue. However, the Trust has employed its own cattle and sheep to graze other Trust properties in the past and licensed grazing remains an alternative option if all else fails.

Coastal: Burgh by Sands, Cumbria

General Description & Context

Burgh by Sands Marsh is situated on the Solway Estuary and covers an area of some 500 hectares, consisting mainly of marshland and inter-tidal mudflats. The common was established under the Enclosure Act of 1845. The area is of international importance for its populations of breeding and wintering wildfowl and wading birds and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area, Special Area for Conservation and RAMSAR site. The marsh also falls within the Solway Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in recognition of its scenic qualities. As a common, it is also designated for open access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The Common is managed by a management committee consisting of ten members and four trustees. The committee employs a part-time reeve and full-time herdsman. The Earl of Lonsdale retains the mineral and wild fowling rights, whilst the grazing rights are divided into 783 stints, being held by 97 stint holders. One stint equates to one beast and two and a half sheep. Turf cutting is restricted to ten acres over five years but remains unused.

Grazing Management & Past Impacts

The marsh is predominantly grazed by cattle throughout the spring, summer and autumn, with cattle being put out in May and removed in October. Sheep can also be grazed during the same period, but greater numbers are off wintered after the cattle are removed.
The committee states that few changes to the marshland vegetation have been observed over the past twenty years and, apart from the reduction in stocking levels required by the Countryside Stewardship Agreement, the grazing levels have remained fairly consistent overall. Current stocking levels amount to 1050 sheep or 783 cattle or equivalent grazing units thereof.

Drivers for Change

Whilst the committee acknowledges the economic difficulties that farming community is currently facing, stints are easily let and no serious decline in take up has been observed. However, it should be noted that only one third of the stints are held by local farmers, whilst the remaining two thirds are auctioned as annual lets to farms that are more remote from the marsh. This trend is said to be due to rights being left to daughters marrying outside of the farming community.

Future Scenarios & Implications

Whilst the future viability of farming is vital to the continued grazing of the marsh, there is every expectation that this will continue, even though there may

be changes in the number of holders and fluctuations in the numbers and types of animals. Over the last ten to twenty years there has been a move away from traditional breeds of cattle and sheep to more continental breeds and it is anticipated that this will continue unless incentives for salt marsh lamb and local produce encourage a revival of a more traditional approach.

With regard to environmental impacts, global warming and rising sea levels were identified as issues for the greatest concern. Currently, the marsh is inundated by high tides and more frequent flooding is likely to change the vegetation type and reduce the grazing area. This will impact upon both the biodiversity and farming system. Increased use of the marsh for recreation was also identified, as recreation and tourism are likely to be promoted as part of the diversification of the rural economy.

The income received from the Countryside Stewardship Agreement was identified as being the most singly important issue. Cessation of the scheme or a significant reduction in stocking levels or payments will have a drastic effect on the level of income and impact upon the management. The current Agreement pays for the employment of a full-time herdsman, which permits twice daily inspections and the implementation of a seasonal programme of ditching and fencing.

Lowland: Selborne Common, Hampshire CL 103

General Description & Context

Selborne Common is an area of beech hangar woodland, relict coppice and pasture woodland located on a north-east facing chalk scarp above the village of Selborne in East Hampshire. The common extends to 100ha and was traditionally split into two units; the Sheep Down (60ha) was open wood pasture used for grazing between May and Christmas, and the Hangar and 2high wood2 was coppice woodland used for providing the village with fuel and wood. The common is owned by the National Trust who acquired it in 1932.

Selborne was made famous by the writings of Gilbert White, an 18th century curate and naturalistwho was born at the vicarage in 1720. His book "Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne" is still in print today. He describes Selborne Common on the opening page:

> *"The high part to the south-west consists of a vast hill of chalk, rising three hundred feet above the village; and is divided into a sheep down, the high wood, and a long hanging wood called The Hanger. The covert of this eminence is altogether beech… The down, or sheepwalk, is a pleasing park-like spot…"*

Many people are drawn to Selborne today to visit the village and Gilbert White museum and to walk through the landscape White described over 250 years ago. White's zigzag path is the main route up the scarp from the village.

Selborne Common is a SSSI designated for the ancient woodland on the chalk scarp –and its well developed ground flora. 99%of the SSSI is in favourable condition. Part of the common also falls into the Wealdent Edge Hangars SAC.

There are two registered right holders on the common. One right is for 28 cattle and the other for 1 pony, although it is possible that this latter right has been extinguished as the National Trust acquired the land to which it was appurtenant. The holder of the 28 cattle rights does not exercise them but has been happy for the National Trust to invite other farmers to graze cattle in the woods.

The common is in a Countryside Stewardship Scheme which ends in 2010. The main aim of the scheme is to recreate areas of wood pasture on the common by the gradual reintroduction of grazing. This has required the fencing of the common boundaries and the clearance of scrub and woodland to create more open areas within the wood.
The Stewardship grant is paid to the National Trust.

Grazing Management and Past Impacts.

Grazing on Selborne Common ceased in the 1950s and was only reintroduced in 2004 by the National Trust, with support from a Countryside Stewardship

Scheme. As the commoner with rights to graze the common had no interest in doing so the Trust sought other farmers to graze the wood. For the first three years one grazier brought 6 Shetland cattle to the common from late April/May through to November. No payment was made for the grazing and the National Trust undertook to carry out daily "lookering". One animal was fitted with a radio collar to assist in locating the herd. There is no grazing over the winter months due to issues of poaching. Also it was traditional practice to remove all cattle from the common between Christmas and 1st May and this was enshrined in local byelaw. In 2007 a different grazier brought some Hereford cross cattle to the wood but he experienced a lot of difficulties due to Foot and Mouth and will not be grazing the wood again. The National Trust is currently in discussions with two farmers about grazing in 2008.

Grazing has been reintroduced slowly, in part because until the Trust began to clear scrub and woodland there were very few forage areas in the wood, and also to give local people a chance to get used to the idea of cattle in the woods again.

Finding farmers willing to graze cattle in an area such as this is not easy and is becoming increasingly difficult as more land in the area is put to arable crops or used for horses. Those farmers who do allow their cattle onto Selborne Common are doing so to help the National Trust and from a desire to see the conservation benefits of grazing rather than from any financial motivation. The common has no link to the farming systems of the graziers and very little economic benefit accrues from grazing it.

The grazing activity has already begun to show benefits in terms of a return of some of the species associated with the chalk grassland on the common which were lost after grazing ceased in the 1950s. Flora and fauna records of the common are extremely detailed due to the work of Gilbert White and subsequent naturalists influenced by him.

Drivers for Change

The key driver for change on the management of Selborne Common over the next 20 years will be the policy and management approach of the National Trust. This will be influenced by the presence of agri-environment funds but due to the considerable investment of time and effort put into reintroducing grazing on the common it is likely that the Trust will continue their management even if agri-environment schemes cease. How they do this will depend on other drivers for change which may affect the agricultural systems of surrounding farms; for example if world population pressures and climate change push up the profitability of the arable sector much of the land in this part of the country may convert to arable use. This will make it difficult for the Trust to find graziers willing to use the common. Maintaining the wood pasture habitat in favourable condition and the historic landscape of Selborne Common is paramount to the Trust and options such as purchasing and managing their own conservation herd will need to be explored.

Transfer of knowledge and skills at Selborne is not a driver for change due to the cessation of grazing 50 years ago. Most awareness and knowledge of the grazing management of the common has died out and this part of the county no longer has a culture of commoning.

Future Scenarios and Implications.

The farm to which the grazing rights for 28 cattle are attached is currently a livery unit and given the demand for such facilities in this increasingly affluent area of Hampshire, it seems likely that it will continue to be used in this way. However, there is possibility that the farm could be purchased in the future by a livestock farmer with a desire to exercise the grazing rights on Selborne Common. Such an outcome would be welcomed by the National Trust as they would no longer have to find someone willing to graze the wood and some of the day to day management responsibility for the herd would be taken on by this farmer. It would also reinstate the tradition of local landowners and tenants exercising their right to graze adjacent common land.

If agri-environment schemes cease to operate, or Selborne is unable to access a new scheme, then the National Trust will have to consider their ability to continue the current management of the common. Whilst it seems likely that they would continue this management there is always a possibility that due to financial pressures within the organisation a decision will be taken to stop this labour intensive approach at Selborne. If such a scenario were to occur there would be an increase of woodland and scrub, particularly in those areas which have been cleared since 1990, and much of the floristic interest which has begun to reappear would soon go. The continuity of Selborne Common as a wood pasture landscape over the last thousand years and much of the diversity celebrated by Gilbert White in his letters would be lost.

The New Forest

Description

The New Forest is a National Park of some 30,000 hectares which is located in Hampshire, close by the South coast. It is owned largely by The Crown but which also has other privately owned commons which run contiguous with the Crown lands. The owners include National Trust and members of the public.

There are some 600 right holders who exercise their rights and a number probably running into several thousand who do not exercise their rights.

The use of the New Forest is overseen by the Verderers, a statutory body with the power to regulate commoning and certain development within the Forest. Commoners are represented by the Commoners' Defence Association of which most commoners and verderers are members. The Defence Association makes regular submissions to the Verderers' Court. Generally the graziers are expected to operate within the byelaws set down by the Verderers and the Verderers hold a public meeting (Open Court) once a month with the exception of August and December.

Grazing Management and Past Impacts

A 10 year agri-environment scheme, started 1 October 2003, described as the New Forest Countryside Stewardship Scheme extends to some 19,000 hectares constituting all the unenclosed areas of the New Forest except for a number of privately owned contiguous commons.

Main objectives of the scheme are: grazing with a mixture of cattle and ponies within defined upper and lower limits on numbers with key objective to achieve a minimum ratio of 25% cattle to ponies overall. Target is to achieve favourable or recovering status where grazing is the primary factor affecting this and supporting heathland restoration following woodland clearance. Some 8,500 hectares are enclosed by the Forestry Commission for timber and are not available for the exercise of common rights.

The New Forest has a wide range of recreational interests including walking, riding, cycling and archaeology.

Grazing rights are unrestricted and control of grazing status is effected by adherence to byelaws set down by the Verderers which allows for the removal of stock in poor condition. This allows the condition of the stock to be the major guide of whether the grazing is at an adequate level, i.e. stock poor, the land considered overgrazed.

This has resulted in greater interest being taken in maintaining improved welfare standards by graziers, in addition to which some of the increased workload has been absorbed by Agisters, i.e. stockmen employed fulltime by the Verderers to monitor welfare standards and assist commoners in the management of their stock.

The involvement of the Verderers with the graziers allows for a high level of grazing control and has developed a community spirit beneficial to everyone.

Tradition is a strong driver in maintaining the use of the common and it would be fair to say that the grazing animal plays a key role in shaping the general landscape. Financial returns also play a significant part and as the New Forest lies in the affluent South East side of Hampshire it will play a significant part in shaping the future due to the difficulty in achieving enough income to keep young people involved with stock and farming. The maintenance of quality commoning will therefore depend significantly on the need for good market prices for stock and agri-environment payments to be maintained.

This will also affect the issue of nature conservation as the entire process of proper balanced grazing systems is driven by the need for adequate financial incentives, in addition to which in the New Forest consideration has to be given to the Forest Design Plan owned and implemented by the Forestry Commission.

Drivers for Change

Some of the issues affecting the future have already been touched on, finance will be a key issue as well as ensuring the retention of younger interests in the skills necessary for working with a commoning fraternity.

Currently housing, or the lack of affordable housing, is a matter of considerable concern, but where this will be placed in the future is difficult to forecast due to the number of variables at play, i.e. higher costs of fuel could have negative effect on prices of rural housing. This might be considered unlikely in the present climate but needs to be thought about.

Then there is the effect of increased numbers of people involved in recreation and the disturbing and destabilising effect these people could have on livestock. Equally, some recreational activity might well be harnessed to provide economical benefit and it is clear that tourism and recreation will become more important and provide opportunity for economic benefit.

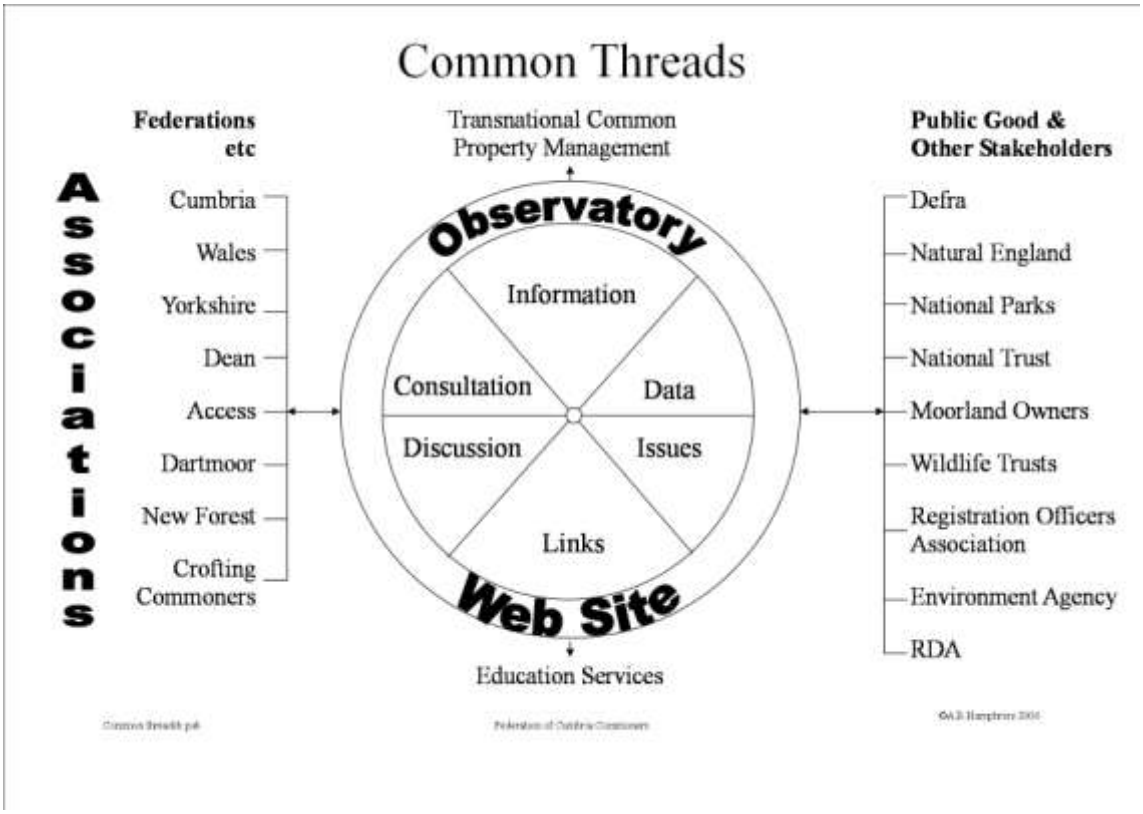
A key driver to maintaining the commoning fraternity in the future will be maintaining the interests of young people, providing them with an adequate and comparable living with their peers and having a minimalist approach to outside/official, unnecessary interference.

SUMMARY OF DATA FROM THE REGISTER OF COMMON LAND (RPA)[112]

	Agricultural Hectarage	Total Number of Livestock Units	Cattle Rights	Horse Rights	Pony Rights	Sheep Rights
North West	138,599	114,725	38,160	1,947	754	492,962
Yorkshire & Humber	112,144	37,154	9,499	583	8	174,830
East Midlands	359	532	309	-	-	249
East	5,586	26,008	24,140	435	6	9,108
North East	58,671	17,406	1,612	1	8	96,999
South East	27,454	12,379	16,569	1,200	278	9,966
West Midlands	7,955	46,669	23,495	1,971	2,482	127,644
South West	65,449	121,042	94,428	466	14	17,510
Total	**416,216**	**375,915**	**208,212**	**6,602**	**3,550**	**929,269**

[112] This is a summary table collated from the raw data provided by the RPA for this project, some errors have already been identified so while it is interesting in showing the magnitude of area and rights it is not accurate. Furthermore it only includes land on which entitlements have been established.

Common Threads – An observatory for Pastoral Commons *[proposed by the Steering Group of the Foundation for Common Land in Britain and Ireland.]*



Source, A Humphries Federation of Cumbrian Commoners2006.