



Ten principles to guide our approach to securing the future of England's upland environment



The principles

1. Natural England's actions will sustain and enrich the natural resources and biodiversity of the uplands for their **intrinsic worth**.
2. The **benefits to people** that arise from a high quality upland environment (ie 'ecosystem services') will be recognised and enhanced. For example:
 - landscapes for recreation, tourism and their distinctive historic and cultural associations;
 - habitats and species for inspiration, education, health and enjoyment;
 - land management for carbon storage, flood alleviation, and drinking water supply;
 - products from sustainable agriculture and forestry systems;
 - small-scale renewable energy generation.
3. We will improve the ability of the upland environment to **adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change**, by ensuring that ecosystems are as healthy and naturally functioning as possible. We will resolve existing pressures, support environmental restoration and create robust habitat networks at the appropriate spatial scales.
4. We will seek to maximise the contribution that upland land use and management can make to **reducing the rate of climate change** by protecting vulnerable soil carbon stores, and improving the ability of upland habitats (such as blanket bog and woodland) to capture and lock-up carbon dioxide.
5. We will encourage **innovation and flexibility** to achieve sustainable upland land use and management that is fit for the future. This will include the development of a broader spectrum of approaches than now, that enables natural processes and promotes multiple benefits.
6. We will promote and support the role of **land managers as environmental managers** of the uplands, recognising the importance of the role they can play now and in preparing for the future. We will also promote the role of a **high quality environment in sustaining rural businesses**.
7. We will take a **long-term view** when making current decisions about land and resource use and management (eg development planning, renewable energy schemes, transport infrastructure, woodland and water management). This will reflect the fragility of upland environments, where damage can take a long time to recover.
8. Our decisions will take into account the **distinctiveness** of each upland area, and the links between the uplands and lowlands. We will consider the consequences of our decisions beyond the boundaries of our actions.
9. **Evidence** will be at the heart of our decision making – research, practical experience, demonstration, and future-proofing.
10. Working in **partnership**, and promoting wider **understanding** of the uplands, is essential to securing their future – we will seek to understand the views of others, collaborate with them and strive to achieve consensus.

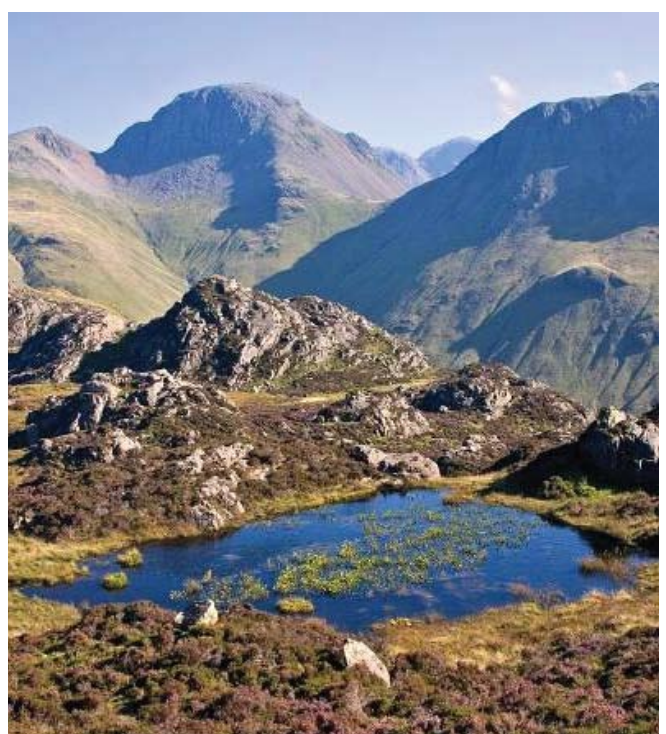


Black grouse © Philip Newman (rspb-images.com)

What are these principles for?

These ten principles will guide our approach to securing the future of England's upland environment (see map on page 4). We will use them to ensure that our decision making today will support our forthcoming vision for tomorrow's upland environment.

The principles are designed to focus debate and interest in the future of the uplands, and our approach to it. They can be used as a checklist to guide and inform decisions made about land use and management in the uplands. Through discussions with our partners and stakeholders, we want to encourage these principles to become shared, and build on them to develop our long-term direction for the future.



From Haystacks, Lake District © A Bannister

What do we want to achieve for the uplands?

Our vision is one where people help shape a vibrant and robust upland environment, well-fitted to withstand and adapt to climate change and other pressures, in a way that secures and enriches both the intrinsic worth of its wildlife and landscapes, and the many benefits it provides to people. The detail of our vision is being developed and is expected to be available in 2009. We hope to involve a wide range of stakeholders and work towards a shared view of the future.

Natural England's key role is to lead the adoption of sustainable land use and management that meets the requirements of the vision.

The vision will develop our aspirations about how people might interact with the habitats, species, landscapes and natural processes that comprise the upland environment. It will include social and economic aspirations in so far as these affect the environment and the sustainable use and development of it. The action plan to achieve the vision may include:

- options to change the rules around regulations, designations, public funding and their delivery;
- opportunities for novel methods of funding sustainable land management;
- changes to governance of public decision making;
- proposals for communicating important messages to the public and major stakeholders;
- plans for practical projects to achieve change on the ground.



Above: Derwent Water, Lake District © C Reid
Below: Wind farm, South Pennines © R Goodison

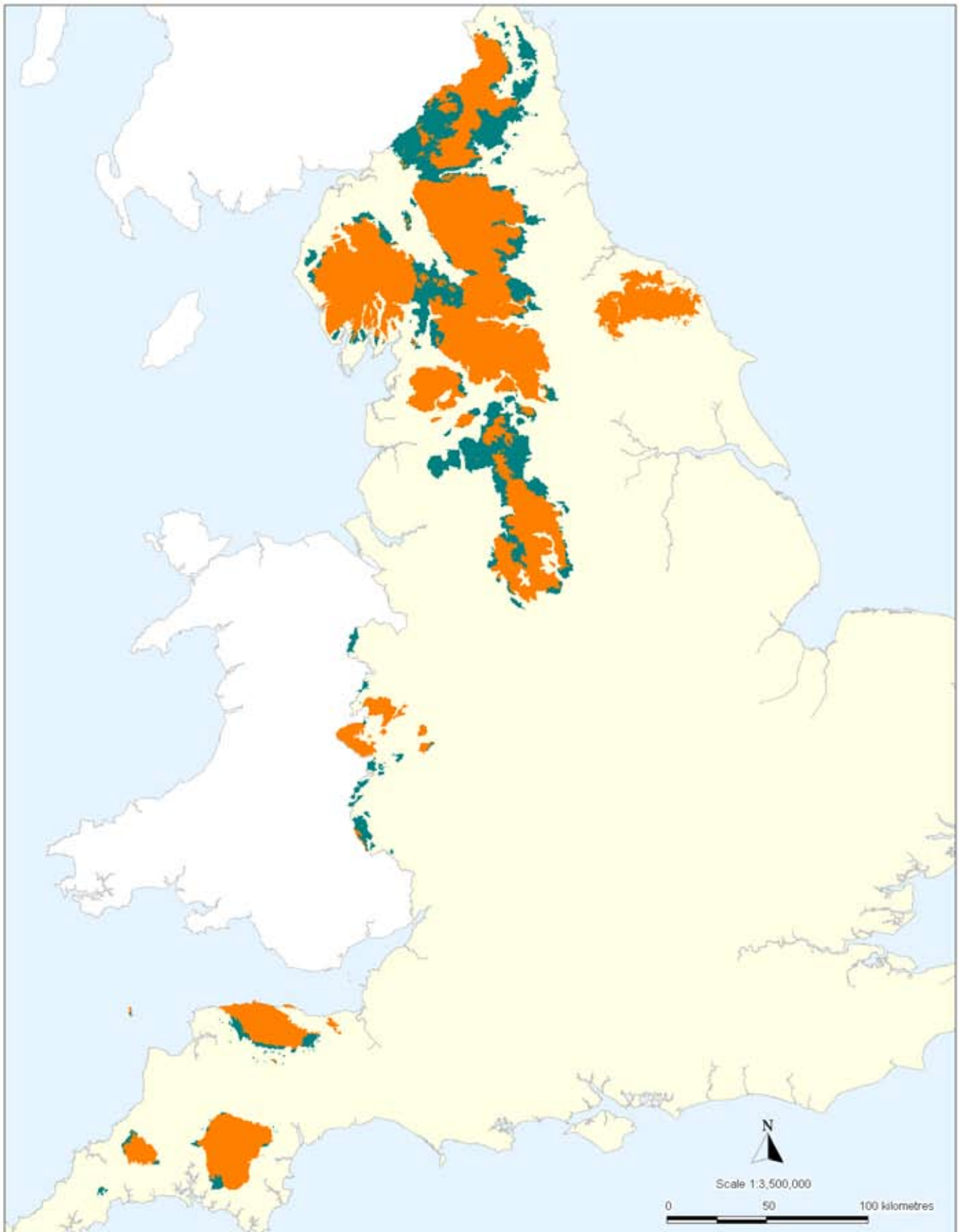




Uplands (based on Severely Disadvantaged Area)



Uplands covered by designations (AONB, National Parks and/or SSSI) 74%



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What is important and distinctive about the uplands, for the outcomes we are seeking?¹

Outcome 1

England's natural environment will be conserved and enhanced

- The uplands contain the largest remaining tracts of un-fragmented semi-natural habitat in the country. They cover only 12 per cent of England but contain 53 per cent (by area) of the country's best sites for wildlife (Site of Special Scientific Interest – SSSI), most of which are also covered by international designations under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives.
- The uplands have concentrations of landscapes of national significance. National Parks cover 50 per cent of the uplands; with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covering a further 21 per cent.

A large proportion of the important upland habitats and species are in a degraded condition for historic and/ or current reasons (such as air and water pollution, inappropriate grazing, burning and drainage of moorland and blanket bog, loss of woodland and persecution of birds of prey). Upland habitats are intrinsically fragile and can take a long time to recover from damage. There is however the opportunity to make a major contribution to improving the condition of upland habitats and landscapes if we work together to resolve these issues and support sustainable

management. We can learn a lot from the increasing number of initiatives and individuals successfully demonstrating more sustainable upland management.



Blue-grey cattle, Yorkshire Dales © C Reid

¹Outcomes from *Natural England Strategic Direction 2006-2009* (NE1)

Outcome 2

More people enjoying, understanding and acting to improve the natural environment, more often

- The uplands are particularly important for countryside access, recreation and our understanding of the past through their rich historic and cultural legacy. There are nearly 70 million visitor days per year to the upland National Parks; and the uplands contain some of the best loved national trails (such as the Pennine Way) and rights of way (eg the Lake District contains over 3,500km of public rights of way).
- The uplands provide a source of inspiration, national identity, and a resource for outdoor education.
- They contribute to the nation's physical and mental health.

The uplands are clearly already hugely significant for people's enjoyment and understanding of the natural environment. There is opportunity to build on this foundation and increase the reach and effectiveness of upland benefits across society, whilst ensuring that this is done in a sustainable way without damaging the resource people come to enjoy.

Outcome 3

The use and management of the natural environment is more sustainable

- The upland environment provides opportunity for businesses such as farming, forestry, tourism, and grouse shooting, as well as more high tech businesses attracted by the inspirational quality of the natural environment or opportunity for renewable energy generation.
- The uplands provide water storage and supply for major centres of population (70 per cent of UK drinking water comes from the uplands) and, by changing land management, there is the potential to reduce downstream flooding and improve water quality.

(CAP). Other land uses (water storage and supply, recreation, tourism, renewable energy generation, carbon storage, defence training) often require similar land management (ie extensive livestock farming and forestry). But there is often a lack of connection between those supplying this management and the income generated from these uses.

There is opportunity to resolve these issues through our approach to the reform of the CAP, the delivery of agri-environment schemes, and through identifying new sources of income to support the land management that is needed. In some cases a full or partial withdrawal of formal land management (sometimes characterised as '(re)-wilding') may also deliver benefits to society and support the intrinsic value of the natural environment. It is timely to think strategically about the locations where this could be the case, as land managers reassess their options following recent and forthcoming CAP reforms.

Current land management in the uplands is to a large extent a product of previous public policy and funding decisions. The core land use industry, livestock farming, which has both shaped, and sometimes damaged, the upland landscape, would have been largely uneconomic without public subsidy through the EU's Common Agricultural Policy

Outcome 4

Decisions which secure the future of the natural environment

- Upland peat soils are England's most important, but also most vulnerable, carbon store – providing both an opportunity and risk for climate change mitigation. The amount of CO₂ being emitted each year from degraded blanket bog is estimated to be in the region of 2 million tonnes – although equivalent to less than 0.5 per cent of the UK's total CO₂ emissions, it is a similar amount to CO₂ emissions from domestic aviation (2.5 million tonnes) and railways (2 million tonnes). It is estimated that around 55 per cent of English upland peats are in a degraded condition.
- The uplands are a high energy environment – there is untapped potential for renewable energy generation in the right locations and at the right scale, in particular, wind, hydro, biofuel from wood, and biogas.

Climate change may cause significant direct impacts on the uplands (eg potentially exacerbating loss of soil carbon and changing habitat and species composition) and could result in changes to the way we use land, with possibly adverse implications for the natural environment, such as increased pressure for agricultural production, and large scale wind-farm developments.

Land restoration and sustainable management can enable recovery of currently degraded upland ecosystems, secure fragile resources such as blanket bog peat, and increase the capacity of the uplands to adapt to climate change impacts.



New native woodland, Cheviots © N Raja

What are your views?

We would very much welcome your thoughts and ideas about these principles and any experiences you have of applying similar approaches. We will use feedback received to help contribute to the development of our vision for the upland environment. For more information about our Upland Futures project, or to provide your feedback, please contact Christine.reid@naturalengland.org.uk nationally, or follow-up with your regional contact:

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Front cover image: Wast Water, Lake District, Joe Cornish © English Heritage
Back cover image: Black Hill, Peak District © Natural England



Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.

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