

The ten most critical steps to deliver environmentally sustainable management of the uplands

The Upland Challenge

Targeting of agri-environment schemes - Target agri-environment schemes in the uplands at biodiversity priorities, tackling environmentally unsustainable management, to ensure that SSSIs are restored and maintained in favourable condition.

Sheepmeat and beef regimes - Reform the Sheep Annual Premium, Suckler Cow Premium and Beef Special Premium schemes to an integrated area-based scheme, with payments conditional on practical environmental standards, at the next review of the CAP.

Overgrazing rules - Give higher priority to an adequately-resourced implementation of the overgrazing rules, with an effective reporting procedure and a simpler methodology to encompass the full range of overgrazed habitats.

Rural Development Programme - Promote the effective implementation of the England programme as a mechanism to maintain the rural environment and viable rural communities in the Less Favoured Areas.

Common land legislation - Secure new legislation for common land, implementing the proposals in the recent consultation *Greater Protection and Better Management of Common Land in England and Wales*.

Grouse moor management - Promote environmentally sustainable moorland management, including sensitive burning practices.

Raptors - Implement the recommendations of the UK Raptor Working Group, including greater enforcement of existing legislation to prosecute those found disturbing or killing birds of prey.

Access and recreation - Provide advice and demonstrate good practice in managing land for people and wildlife.

Climate change - Provide a landscape which allows wildlife to move in response to climate change.

Diffuse atmospheric pollution - Reduce the impacts of diffuse atmospheric emissions from agriculture and vehicles, basing targets on the protection of sensitive ecosystems backed by regulation.



State of nature

The upland challenge - summary

English Nature is the Government agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and natural features throughout England.

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Top left: Black grouse require a mosaic of upland habitats.
Photograph - A. R. Hamblin.
Middle left: Visitors to raptor watchpoint.
Photograph - Malcolm Stott.
Bottom left: The giant bellflower picture-winged fly.
Photograph - Roger Key.
Main: Mosaic of upland habitats, South Pennines.
Photograph - Andy Brown/English Nature.



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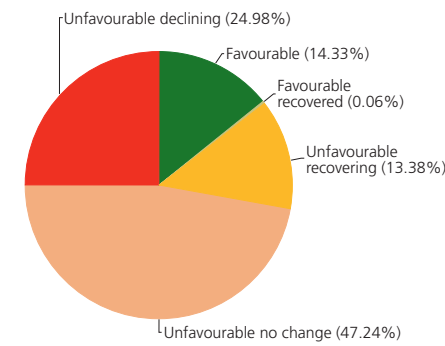
Executive summary



Reform of the sheepmeat regime is urgently needed to remove the incentive to overgraze the uplands. Photograph © English Nature.

The uplands, although a landscape shaped by centuries of human activity, are the nearest that England has to wilderness. Behind the face of scenic beauty, however, the English uplands are suffering from economic crisis, social change and environmental degradation.

We wish to see a sustainable future for upland wildlife, agriculture, economies and communities. These are interdependent in the uplands. We seek to ensure that changes to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), including the new Hill Farm Allowance Scheme, are good for wildlife, but at the same time have benefit for all in the uplands.



Condition of upland heathland SSSIs.

The importance of the uplands for wildlife is clear - almost a quarter of the English uplands is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). These sites have many plant and animal communities that are found only in the uplands, and many species are rare and threatened. A high percentage of upland SSSIs are in poor condition, that is they have species or habitats which are declining and which will eventually disappear without some form of management intervention. For example, over 70% of heathland on upland SSSIs is in poor condition.

The main pressures on upland wildlife are heavy livestock grazing, made worse by unco-ordinated management of common land, inappropriate management on some grouse moors, increased access and recreation, climate change and atmospheric pollution. For each of these pressures we have identified the priority actions that are needed to tackle the problems. Effective action will require real commitment and co-ordination from all those whose policies and decisions influence upland areas.

Yellow marsh saxifrage, *Saxifraga hirculus*, Moor House, Cumbria. Photograph © Peter Wakely / English Nature.



Heather thrives when grazing is low, but is lost when overgrazed (right hand slope). Skiddaw, Cumbria. Photograph © Peter Wakely / English Nature.

Wildlife in the uplands is intimately linked to livestock farming but is sustained only through sensitive management. CAP subsidies which are based on the number of livestock, encourage more stock than is environmentally sustainable, and, as a result, many hill areas are overgrazed. There is also a crisis in the upland farming industry with many farmers struggling to retain viable businesses. To achieve sustainable land management for the uplands, and maintain viable upland communities, there is a need to:

- target agri-environment schemes at biodiversity priorities;
- reform the sheepmeat and beef regimes;
- enforce the overgrazing rules more effectively;
- promote the implementation of the Rural Development Programme.

Tackling unsustainable livestock management on common land is made more difficult because there is currently no legal requirement to co-ordinate management of commons. Management committees, with management plans and registers of activities, could co-ordinate livestock grazing on common land and ensure that it is environmentally sustainable. To tackle this we need:

- new legislation for common land.

The other major land use in the uplands of England is the management of grouse moors for shooting. This has had the very real benefit of saving heather moorland from post-war afforestation and agricultural intensification. However, some management practices have negative impacts on wildlife, such as intensive burning, drainage and illegal predator control. To deliver many of the nature conservation targets for upland heathland, there is a need to:

- promote environmentally sustainable grouse moor management;
- enforce the law to end persecution of raptors.



Grouse moors must be managed sensitively to protect the full range of wildlife. Photograph © Laurie Campell.



Footpath management can protect sensitive upland habitats. Photograph © David Woodfall.

Increased access to the open land in the uplands, provided for in the new Countryside and Rights of Way Act, must be managed to prevent damage to wildlife features, for example the disturbance of breeding birds. To be effective there is a need for:

- advice and demonstration of managing land for people and wildlife.

The wider environmental pressures from climate change and atmospheric pollution, much of which results from human activities away from the uplands, must be tackled at all levels from individual action through to Government policy and international agreements. Critically, there is a need to:

- provide a landscape which allows wildlife to respond to climate change;
- reduce the emissions of diffuse atmospheric pollution.

We hope to see progress on these vital issues within the next two years and intend to conduct a review of progress in our state of nature report in 2003.

Our vision for the uplands is a mosaic of more diverse habitats supporting characteristic wildlife and at the same time environmentally sustainable agriculture, economies and communities. We hope that this report achieves a wider ownership of the vision for the uplands and the problems facing wildlife there. We share responsibility for securing a sustainable future for the uplands and can achieve this only by working in partnership.

Hence, we urge everyone to work with us to meet the Upland Challenge.



Hen harriers are severely threatened by illegal persecution. Photograph © Richard Brooks.

