

COMMON LAND A PRECIOUS RESOURCE



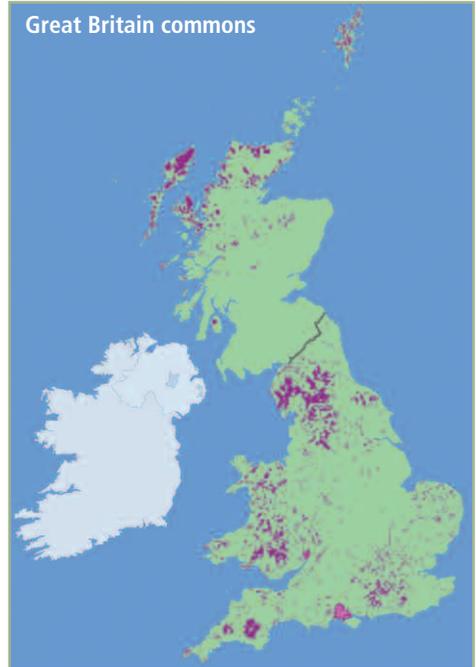
The common land of England and Wales, and the common grazings of Scotland, are nationally important for access, tourism, wildlife, carbon storage, water supply, and archaeological conservation.

Fundamental to the provision of these benefits is the role of commoners, whose collective stewardship of the resource, often spanning centuries, has helped to create and conserve the landscape.

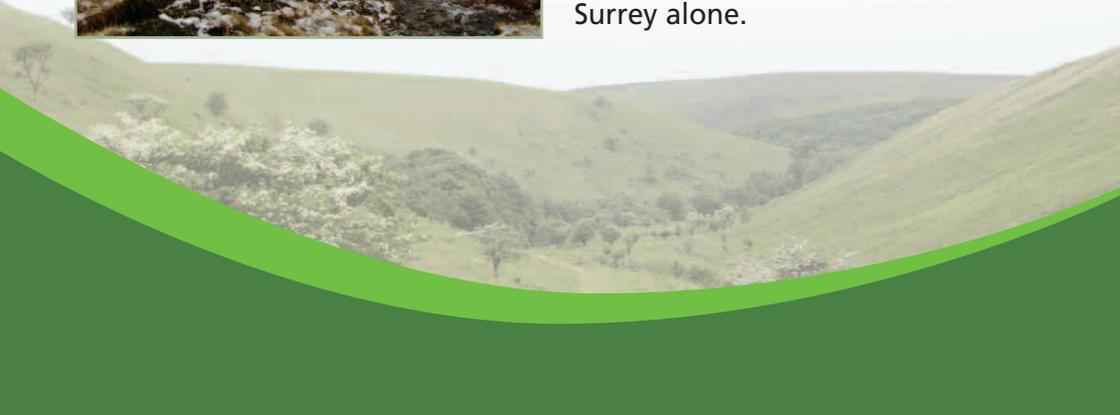


There are 546,000 ha of registered common land in England and Wales and 590,000 ha of common grazing in Scotland. Whilst covering just 4.8% of Britain, they provide public benefits out of all proportion to their area. In England alone, some 88% of all common land is nationally or internationally important for its wildlife, landscape or archaeological interest, whilst almost all is available for public access.

The majority of common land is found in the uplands, and is closely associated with iconic landscapes such as the Brecon Beacons, Gower Peninsular, Hebrides, Lake District and North York Moors. However commons also occur within towns and cities, like Town Moor in



Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and there are even a hundred commons in London, such as Hampstead Heath and Blackheath. A large number of small commons found near to major centres of population provide scarce opportunities for recreation and observing wildlife. There are over 9,000 ha of common land with open access in Surrey alone.





○ Commons support a greater diversity of wildlife than any other category of farmland. Half of common land in England and Wales is nationally important for wildlife, whilst over 20% of the Scottish common grazings are of European significance for birds.



○ Around 10% of Britain's water supply derives from upland commons, with key supplies in the Welsh Borders, Lake District and Dartmoor.

○ Nearly all common land is available for public access – over 1 million hectares. Some 40% of all open access land (with the 'right to roam') is registered common land.



○ Common land contributes to carbon storage, holding a significant proportion of the 3 billion tonnes associated with upland peat.

○ Many of Britain's heritage breeds are closely associated with common land. Some 75% of Swaledale, Herdwick and Shetland sheep, and half of Exmoor pony brood mares are kept on holdings with common grazing.



○ There are tens of millions of day-visits to common land each year, making a significant contribution to the rural economy through tourism.

○ Some 11% of all Scheduled Ancient Monuments in England are on commons, where they have been preserved by sympathetic management on unploughed soils.



The environmental and public interests of common land are closely linked with a history of traditional and sympathetic land management.

Grazing at appropriate levels maintains landscape and wildlife, facilitates access and tourism, whilst revealing and protecting features of archaeological interest.

There are an estimated 8,000 commoners exercising their grazing rights in Britain. Farms with common land have an annual output of £840 million. In addition to their agricultural significance, the role of commoners, particularly as livestock graziers, remains crucial to the continuing provision of public goods and services from common land.



Keeping commons alive by active grazing

www.foundationforcommonland.org.uk

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Our vision is of thriving commoning communities across Great Britain and beyond making real contributions to economic, cultural and environmental wellbeing

