

COMMON LAND AND THE UPLANDS



More than a million hectares of common land are located in the uplands. These areas form important components of National Parks and iconic landscapes, host internationally important wildlife, and protect thousands of archaeological monuments. They are also major carbon stores important in mitigating climate change, and include catchments supplying a high proportion of drinking water. Almost all are available for public access.





The uplands are defined as those areas beyond the limits of enclosed farmland, and comprise largely moorland, heath, bog and rough grassland. More than 80% of common land and common grazings are found in the uplands.

These include 300,000ha in England, with major concentrations on the hills of North Yorkshire, Devon, and Cumbria, over half a million hectares in Scotland, largely located along the western seaboard and in the Hebrides and Shetlands, and 130,000ha in Wales especially in the hills of Powys and Denbighshire.

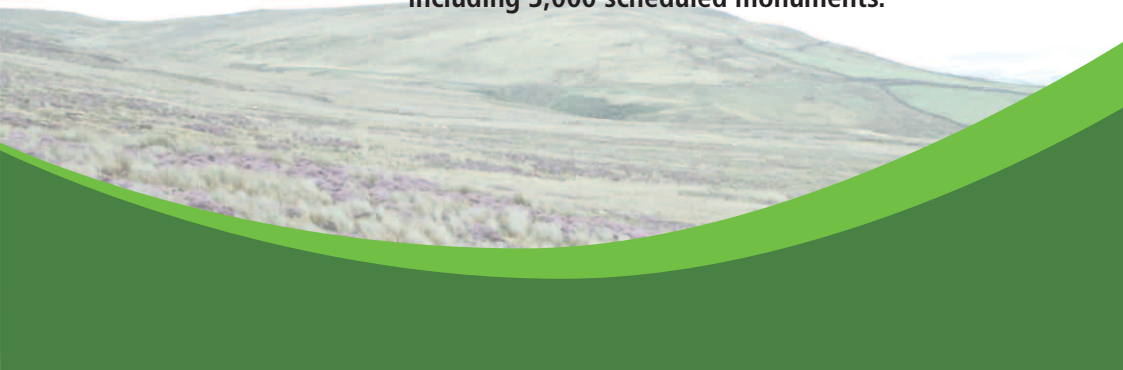
Common grazing remains a fundamental part of rural economies. Upland farms with

commons generate £840 million per year. Hill commons also play a strategic role in the wider sheep industry, with hardy heritage breeds such as Swaledales (some 70% of which are kept on common land) contributing to crossbred 'mules', which are important in the production of fat lambs.





- Nearly all Scotland's common grazings, and 75% of Welsh commons, are in the uplands.
- Over 45% of English and Welsh commons lie within National Parks, mostly in the uplands.
- In England common land accounts for 37% of all land above the Moorland Line.
- 30% of common land in England, is designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, mainly in the uplands
- A high proportion of common grazing in Scotland is located in National Scenic Areas such as Skye, Lewis, and Sutherland.
- Upland commons represent over 30% of Welsh and English open access land.
- Some 70% of Britain's water is collected from upland catchments, of which 14% is common.
- Half of Scotland's common grazings are on peat soils which act as carbon stores.
- Over 45% of upland commons in England and Wales are nationally important for wildlife.
- Birds of conservation concern breeding on upland commons including black grouse, merlin, golden plover, and ring ouzel.
- The unploughed soils of common land and grazings support tens of thousands of archaeological sites, including 3,000 scheduled monuments.



Commoning has been a traditional practice in the uplands for hundreds of years, where it has provided a beneficial use for marginal agricultural land. It has protected the landscape, wildlife, and archaeological features valued today whilst also facilitating water provision and flood control. It has free public access, and it plays a major role in tourism and the wider economy. The conservation of these interests is dependent upon the maintenance of commoning communities managing the land sympathetically. There may be no category of farmland which delivers more public benefits.



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

