



Back to the Future

Widdale wasn't always wild and windswept – in fact, its name comes from the Norse for wooded valley. The Woodland Trust has raised £3.5 million to restore its ancient habitats and the new, greener landscape could alleviate the effects of climate change and provide a haven for endangered species.

Bare, bleak, barren – these are adjectives often applied to the polar ice caps and the most inhospitable deserts. Yet for some people, when used to describe the uplands of the Yorkshire Dales, they conjure up positive images of rare opportunities to escape the hustle and bustle of modern life – in places such as Widdale in upper Wensleydale, one of the last remaining strongholds of the red squirrel in the national park.

But a new Woodland Trust initiative is set to turn the clock back still further. Five hundred and fifty acres of open, sheep-grazed land in the dale's remote tributary valley of Snaizeholme will be replaced by a mosaic of habitats, ranging from new native woodland to riverside meadows, with scattered montane trees on the exposed upper slopes.

The flagship project aims to increase biodiversity, encourage nature recovery, develop resilience to climate change and help with flood management. Although Snaizeholme is best known for its red squirrel reserve, tree planting could also help to support populations of two more iconic species – otters and white-clawed crayfish – by improving the water quality of the streams and becks. Much-loved birds such as herons, kingfishers, dippers and grey wagtails could also benefit.

But, importantly, the charity does not plan to cover the landscape in an alien blanket of tree cover. Instead, the aim is to make the valley more attractive to people as well as animals.

'After the last Ice Age, 90% of the Yorkshire Dales would have been wooded, before settlers began to clear the forest for dwellings and farming,' says project lead Al Nash. 'We've already discovered remnant ancient woodland indicators, hidden away in crevices of the rocky outcrops high on the hillside.'

'But we'll also be keeping plenty of open habitat and allowing existing wooded gullies to regenerate naturally. Apart from planting trees, we'll be restoring and caring for over 150 acres of meadow and peatland.'

To see what could be achieved you need look no further than Carrifran Wildwood in the Scottish Borders, where volunteers have spent 20 years working to recreate the countryside of six millennia ago on previously denuded hillsides.

foraging for species like the red squirrel and black grouse in the early stages of restoration.

Eight hectares of blanket bog to the north-west will be left unplanted so that it can develop naturally to offer cover and food for ground-nesting birds. And some boundary dry-stone walls will be repaired and maintained to preserve landscape character while sheltering wildlife.

Eventually natural regeneration will shape the countryside around Snaizeholme but until then another £400,000 is still needed to carry out restoration work. To donate visit www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/support-us/give/appeals/snaizeholme/

Lynn Leadbeater, Life member

A Varied Landscape

In Snaizeholme's open valley bottoms habitats will be managed for existing wading birds such as curlew, lapwing, oystercatcher and snipe. Barns will be retained as landscape features; the meadows will be maintained by grazing with cattle; and the river channel will be allowed to flood and move naturally. Scattered trees will provide pockets of scrub and dappled shade along the banks while leaky stone dams will help to reduce flooding and erosion and trap sediment without obstructing the movement of fish and crayfish.

Irregular woodland will cover the mid-level slopes but planting will be avoided near streams, gullies and wet flushes. Scots pine will help to landscape the edge of the existing spruce plantations and provide habitat and



Carrifran landscape. Photo courtesy of Al Nash, WTML

Woodland cover in Yorkshire Dales: **4.3%** compared to national average of **9%**

Only just over **2%** of this is broad-leaved and **0.84%** ancient – a critically low figure

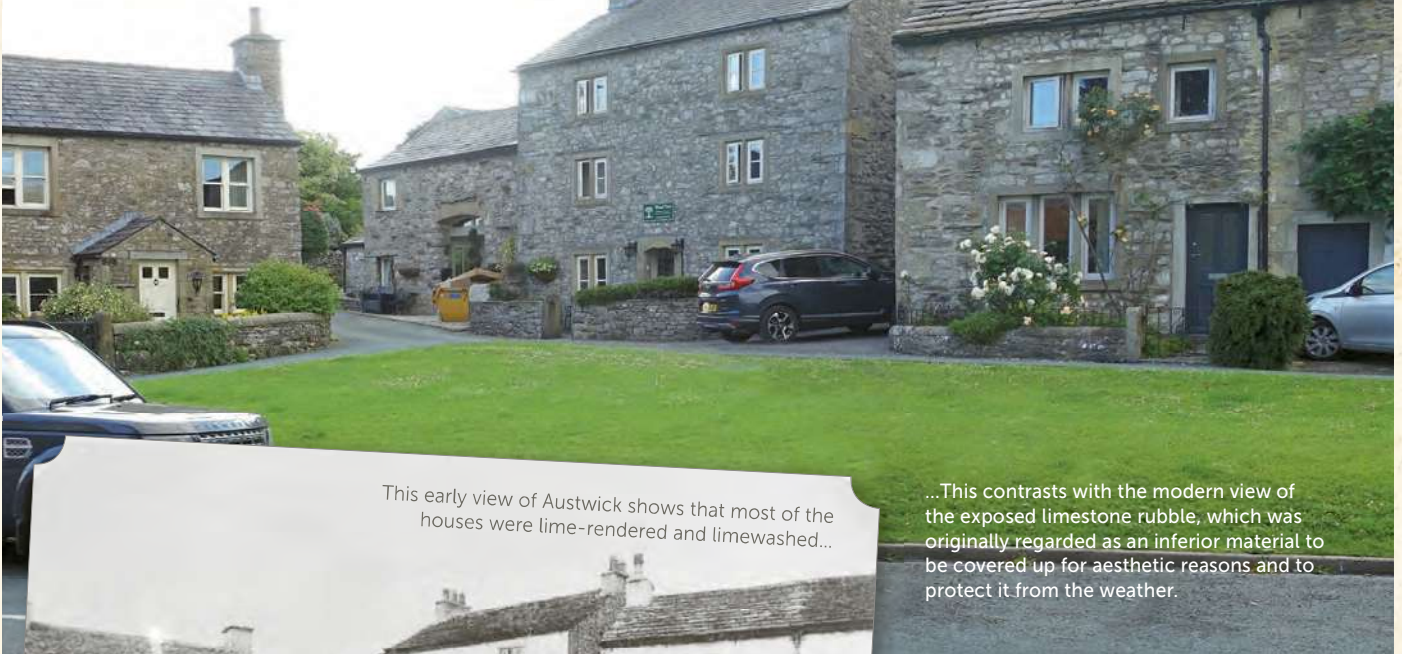
Number of young native trees to be planted at Snaizeholme: **250,000** including birch, oak, rowan, aspen, alder, willow and Scots pine

Estimated number of red squirrels in England: **15,000** – the new site will extend and protect the existing reserve

The Woodland Trust has pledged to use **plastic-free alternatives to tree guards** at all its reserves, including Snaizeholme, by the end of 2021



Build To Last



This early view of Austwick shows that most of the houses were lime-rendered and limewashed...

...This contrasts with the modern view of the exposed limestone rubble, which was originally regarded as an inferior material to be covered up for aesthetic reasons and to protect it from the weather.



Photos: Yorkshire Dales Community Archives

When I was the Building Conservation Officer for the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority in the 1990s, the most common problem that house owners asked me about was damp coming through their solid stone walls because of driving rain. Many of the Dales churches also had problems.

These were the early days of the 'lime revival', following recognition of the issues caused by using modern cement mortars and gypsum plasters on traditional, solid stone walls. I started to become interested in how the walls of local houses and churches were originally finished and to closely examine their stonework. It became obvious that many of the problems had been caused by the removal of the original lime protective coatings, usually a long time ago.

The fashion for exposed stone, even if it is inferior rubble, began in the Victorian period. Many people still think that exposed stone is always attractive, their belief reinforced by the dead, grey appearance of modern cement renders and pebbledashes.

Is it time to forget our love affair with exposed stonework?

Chartered surveyor Jonathan Ratter says the old ways are often the best.

Lime was an essential building material. Numerous lime kilns remain in the Dales, where limestone was mixed with fuel and burnt to produce quicklime. When used for building, this was combined with sand and slaked with wetted sand or water to produce mortar for building walls, for rendering their external faces and for plastering their internal ones. If the slaked lime was diluted, it could be used like a paint to cover the insides or outsides of walls.

Turning The Clock Back

In recent years there has been a return to the original method of using lime as 'hot lime', with quicklime being mixed directly with wet sand or water. It is referred to as 'hot' because of the heat and steam that is produced. It has several properties that make it superior to processed lime products.

The walls of many local houses built before the mid-19th century were originally finished with lime, either with many coats of limewash applied directly onto the stone or over a type of render



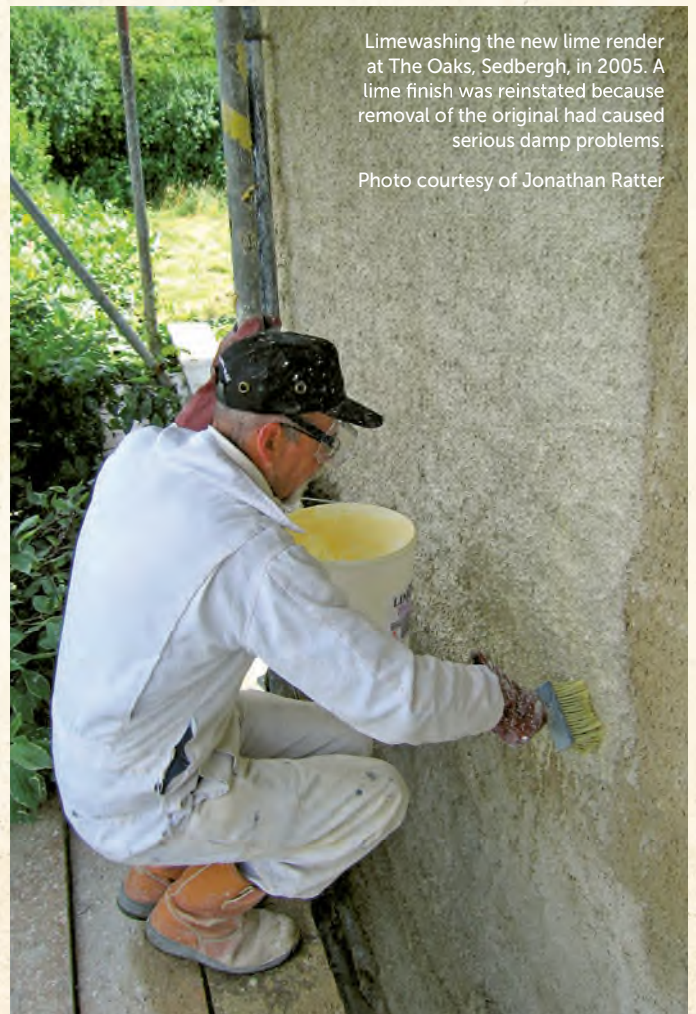
When photographed in 1974, Knight Stainforth Hall had the remains of a lime render, patched with cement. Its removal led to years of damp problems. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Ratter



that is simply a thin coating of sand and lime applied by throwing it from a trowel. The practice seems to have been almost universal in the limestone areas of the national park and on the blue ragstone around Sedbergh, and limewashing persisted for longer in Dentdale and Garsdale than in other dales. If not maintained by periodic recoating, lime finishes will erode away almost completely but traces can often be found in sheltered parts of walls. Evidence can often be found on rubble buildings in the sandstone areas as well. Unfortunately some buildings that still have their stone covered have been coated with synthetic masonry paints, which can bring their own problems.

It is now generally accepted that stone should be repointed with lime mortar. It is less commonly recognised that walls can greatly benefit from a protective coating of lime that allows any water that penetrates the surface of the wall to safely evaporate when weather conditions are favourable. Old lime surfaces are precious and should be conserved, and where there are persistent damp problems reinstatement should be considered.

Jonathan Ratter , JWRC Conservation
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Limewashing the new lime render at The Oaks, Sedbergh, in 2005. A lime finish was reinstated because removal of the original had caused serious damp problems.

Photo courtesy of Jonathan Ratter

Andrea Hunter

Natural beauty of the Dales – the image that immediately springs to mind is that of the cotton grass, sometimes referred to as bog cotton due to its abundance in boggy areas on high ground. This very modest little flower, which appears in June, just makes me smile and every year inspires me to try to capture its beauty in my work. The stoic nature of this little plant reflects how I think of the Dales and their people, but it has also in recent times made me reflect on how delicate the balance is between nature and our modern lives. The flowers nod in the breeze like little flags of surrender telling me that we must change our ways and respect our planet.

www.focusonfelt.co.uk

Andrea Hunter is a professional artist living in Hardraw, who specialises in using felt as an art medium.



Photo courtesy of Delphine Ruston



Battalions of Peacemakers (medium felt), Andrea Hunter.

Vision of the Future

Across the Dales artists are out in all weathers, inspired by their unique beauty but also witnessing how we are shaping the landscapes of tomorrow. We asked them to share their thoughts about the delicate interaction between people and nature.

*On Lunds Fell
The Cotton-grass blows:
A battalion of peacemakers,
Dressed in their small
flags of hope.*

Poem by Mavis Fawcett

Bev Parker

I am fascinated by how centuries of upland farming have shaped a natural beauty and mosaic that supports a diversity of habitats for nature. My art aims to celebrate the part sheep have played in the evolution of the Dales landscape. I fear that some 're-wilding' conceptions may not actually deliver the intended outcomes, preferring our world-beating animal welfare standards along with nature-friendly grazing patterns as key to sustaining the natural beauty of our Yorkshire Dales.

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Bev Parker is a landscape and agrarian artist who worked for the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority for many years and has lived on a moorland sheep farm.



Hesleden to Potts Moor, watercolour, Bev Parker

Mark Corner

The interaction of people with nature in the Dales has produced a landscape of remarkable beauty and distinctive character, which I think is framed and enhanced by its iconic dry-stone walls and barns: a wonderful combination of our natural and cultural heritage. It has a spirit which lifts me, and is 'picturesque', and that's what inspires me to photograph and, more recently, to draw and paint it.

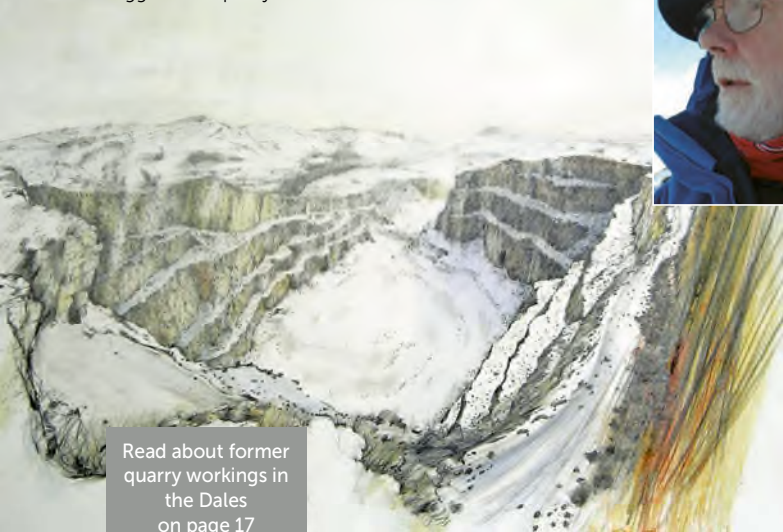
This natural and built environment will be impacted by climate change, where warmer and wetter winters and hotter and drier summers will affect the land, wildlife and trees and buildings will be adapted to the changing conditions. Whilst nature is remarkably resilient I do fear what the future holds if we ask too much of it through our own actions or inaction. Follow Mark on Instagram @dalesexplorer

Mark Corner is vice-president of Friends of the Dales and a Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority member, who started painting during lockdown in spring 2020.



Moss, watercolour, Mark Corner

Giggleswick quarry, watercolour, Frank Gordon



Read about former quarry workings in the Dales on page 17



Frank Gordon

We often speak of the 'natural beauty' of the Dales but so much of it is made by those who work the land. The underlying structure may be unchanging but the familiar pattern of dry-stone walls is, of course, artificial, superimposed. The apparent naturalness arises from the harmonious relationship of line and form, the ephemeral and the eternal. These rhythms and echoes are a constant source of inspiration for me – a well that never runs dry.

How does climate change fit into my particular vision of the Dales? I'm not sure I know – but a recurring subject is the Ribble's floodwaters at Long Preston Deeps and they seem to hang on a little longer each year.

www.frankgordon.co.uk

Frank Gordon is a landscape painter and long-distance walker whose work focuses mainly on scenes close to his Giggleswick home.

Brian Burton

What we often consider 'natural beauty' is actually the result of considered management by our farmers. Much unnoticed is the hedgerow: an historic living landmark, that stitched line around the borders of our patchwork fields, the perfect carbon-capturing boundary, home and open larder to a myriad of creatures.

I am fascinated by its structure, the horizontal layers that echo the history of their pruning and regrowth. I look forward each spring to the 'resurrection' moment when the first hawthorn leaves unfurl on the bare, tortured winter branches.

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Brian Burton is a fine artist specialising in contemporary landscapes based in Hetton.



Flailed Hedge, acrylic and oil pastel, Brian Burton

Hester Cox

The Yorkshire Dales landscape has been shaped by thousands of years of human intervention to become the iconic and beautiful place that it is and the wildlife that lives here reflects its diversity. I gain inspiration for my prints whilst walking and fell running, seeking out seasonal indicators such as the arrival of the first curlews, swallows and swifts and the flowering of certain plants, for example purple saxifrage and bird's-eye primroses, and I have noticed some strange anomalies during the last few years such as plants flowering out of season and migrating birds arriving later than usual. Recently I found blackthorn blossoms on the bushes at the same time as sloes were ripening.



These, combined with the more regular instances of flooding, cause me to reflect on what the Dales may be like in years to come and what we may stand to lose if we don't address climate change.

www.hestercox.com

Hester Cox is a printmaker based in Horton-in-Ribblesdale, whose current exhibitions include a solo show at Masham Gallery.



Above: Waymarks, The Swale. Hester Cox

Left: The Watering Hole. Hester Cox

Use Them or Lose Them?

Barns in Swaledale. Photo courtesy of Ian Harrison

How can planners strike a balance between preserving the iconic architecture of the national park and allowing development that might damage the wider landscape?

Business member, developer and co-author of *Barns of the Yorkshire Dales* Andy Singleton, and past Secretary of State Member of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Nancy Stedman, weigh up the pros and cons.

Moving with the times

I am a long-standing supporter of Friends of the Dales but sadly find myself at odds with what appears to me to be the popular but far too cautious opinion regarding reuse of redundant buildings, particularly barns, in the national park.

I am exasperated when people assume that the rural landscape has to be preserved exactly as it is today instead of encouraging it to evolve creatively and sensitively. In the past some appalling buildings have been constructed but now it is rare for unrestricted development to get through without further scrutiny.

If barn conversions are opposed due to their location, how can we maintain these structures? Occasional grant funding can't be relied upon and what is the justification for protecting buildings that can't be used when we are so short of houses? 'The Silent Traveller' Chiang Yee noted, when gazing at Barden Tower, that only the English enjoyed

looking at the rubble of formerly grand structures. But if you allow them to be used, they can be maintained.

Strict planning control is necessary to protect this special landscape but why dictate that the Dales must always look as they are now?

Do we want to say to our grandchildren: 'I was one of the lucky ones. When I was young, there was a barn in every field. Look over there, where that grassy mound is -- that used to be a beautiful stone building.'

It is perverse to maintain an empty built structure just to look at from a distance.

A landscape created by humans can be remodelled, restored and reused and still be beautiful and functional. Why should anyone seeking to do so be treated as a potential vandal?

Minimising visual impact

Through careful design, planning and the use of craft skills in the local vernacular, married to 21st-century technology, many

redundant buildings can be converted without harm to the landscape.

Innovative ventilation apertures with splayed reveals internally instead of traditional windows; car parking in open-fronted sheds served by gravel tracks with grass allowed to grow over; electric bicycles; underground cables and storage tanks and state-of-the-art technical innovation – these can all contribute to preventing domestication of the landscape.

Is it so tragic to see a human living in harmony with nature in a remote location? Communication technology, changing work patterns, electric cars and bicycles, sustainable lifestyles and the internet make the argument that this should be discouraged because it will stretch emergency services and contribute to climate change outdated.

Following that logic means that we all have to live in urban environments when the closer to nature we are, the healthier we become.

Andy Singleton, Consultant, Ecovril

Preventing Inappropriate Developments

The issues around the conservation and conversion of barns in iconic Dales landscapes are many and complex. Andy Singleton's contribution to the debate is welcome, but I do feel I need to address some misconceptions.

Friends of the Dales are well aware that landscapes constantly change; nowhere do we say that we are trying to preserve them exactly as they are today, or at any other point in time. In our policy on built heritage we clearly state that we support the sensitive, creative and appropriate reuse and adaptation of listed and vernacular buildings where this is necessary to their survival.

But change in such a special landscape, valued by so many, needs to be managed to be effective, and the planning system is, of course, one of the main tools to achieve this. According to a report presented to the national park authority's audit and review committee in November, under the new barn conversion policies 198 new residential units have been granted permission over the six-year period (94% approval rate). Of those granted permission, 53 are in what we would consider to be sensitive locations – that is, outside villages, hamlets or farmsteads.

Over the same period we lodged objections to 23 applications (10.5%), and expressed reservations about a further 21. Our concerns included remoteness of location, visual impacts and sustainability. We also think that the need to reduce emissions should be taken into account – yet more car use should not be encouraged. It is unrealistic to expect families living at the far end of a dale to use bicycles. Then there were concerns about loss of historical integrity of the building and poor design, often an excess of glazing. Andy makes very good points about how careful design can mitigate impacts.

So I believe we are in agreement with Andy about accepting change, but I don't see our position on barn conversions as trying to prevent change: rather it's trying to prevent inappropriate developments.

Supporting Dales Communities

We agree that it is hard to justify funding for buildings that are not used. But it is worth noting that £3.5m went into restoring and weatherproofing farm barns under the Pennine Dales Environmentally Sensitive Scheme, and subsequently some 95% of those barns were back in use. We also accept that in some instances 'managed decline' is an option – where the building is demolished, and the materials reused, but only after comprehensive records are taken and archived.

It is difficult to see the full effects of the new barns policies as yet, as only 42 have been completed. We would disagree that 'we are so short of houses'. Firstly, there are over 600 outstanding planning permissions for new dwellings in the national park, but there is no mechanism to ensure that they reach completion. Secondly, there is a very high proportion of second homes and holiday lets in the Dales, up to 40% in some settlements. This leads to an increase in house prices, a 'hollowing out' of villages, and a loss of amenities like shops and pubs. We believe that both these issues need to be addressed first, rather than simply continuing to provide more, relatively expensive, units.

The issues are many, and often the subject of judgement; the debate will continue, and further contributions are very welcome.

Nancy Stedman,
volunteer member of policy & planning committee

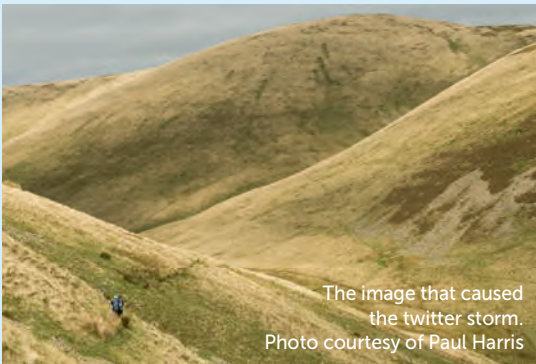


In the Eye of the Beholder

What makes a beautiful landscape? Is it trees, shrubs and flowers?
Long-vanished iconic species like golden eagles and wild boar?
Or can solitude and stunning geomorphology make up for lack of biodiversity?

The publication on social media in August 2020 of a photograph of a lone walker traversing the great, and apparently empty, spaces of the Howgill Fells brought the debate into sharp focus. Outraged users compared the view to a lunar landscape and a war zone and called for the area to be rewilded. A selection of their comments is reproduced below, together with the responses posted by the national park authority.

But is it possible – or desirable – to change landscape management practices in our uplands in order to promote biodiversity? We would welcome the opinions of our members to feed into our policy development – contact Ann Shadrake at ann.shadrake@friendsofthedales.org.uk



The image that caused the twitter storm.
Photo courtesy of Paul Harris



Love the Howgills - so unspoiled. They look so rounded and cosy and velvety as you drive by on the motorway. We always called them the 'elephants' bottoms'!

National Park responses

Most of the Howgills are commons or privately owned land, and we'd like to see land owners/managers moving forward with agri-environment schemes - though we can't insist that happens.

Historically this area hasn't had the same kind of agri-environment scheme funding as other parts of the Yorkshire Dales National Park as the geology and landform has limited the grassland habitats, as well as sheep grazing.

Some farmers still need this land for grazing as their farmsteads around the edges of the Howgills are too small to be profitable without the large area of common for sheep. This may change as the new ELMS [Environmental Land Management Schemes] come in.

If you're looking for wooded areas, these are on the north-west flank of the Howgills – below Tebay – and there are acres of land planted with open woodland and scrub along Mallerstang on the eastern flank.

Nice geology underlying an ecological disaster zone.

Beautiful! You're 'avin' a larff. Sheep-wrecked ecological desert, more like. Where are the trees? Where are the raptors?

Are you joking? This has been stripped bare of life. For goodness sake, re-wild it. Stop showing off a destroyed landscape as if it's desirable.

Barren, denuded of life, destroyed. Like some post-apocalyptic landscape. We desperately need rewilding.

Time for a radical rethink.

Imagine what they could really look like if nature had its way?! A mosaic of habitats, rich with a multitude of wildlife species. This is a dead and barren landscape.

Yes, bleak, barren, denuded. An over-grazed wasteland devoid of biodiversity. Is there anything above knee height for miles around? It could be so much more.

'I can't believe I'm reading all those dreadful things about some of my favourite walking places. But as with many things there is a strong element of truth. The Howgills are a pretty sterile environment from the point of view of wildlife.'

Response from trustee Kyle Blue

That's a barren artificial desert... it's not remotely natural or beautiful.

My most diverse meadows look the same from a distance. It's only when you down the long lens and get close that you see the diversity.

There's a reason why the UK is one of the least biodiverse countries globally. Those pictures demonstrate why.

Thanks for encouraging me not to visit. If I wanted a desert and dunes, I would go to Dubai.

The Australian outback has more vegetation than that.

Is it the moon? Sorry, but my carpet at home has more wildlife.

Neil Armstrong thought the moonscape was beautiful. Dead zones can be beautiful too...

An overgrazed ecological calamity

Is this where The Clangers was filmed?