

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Information Sheet

Wet Pasture Meadows

Landscape Type Description

A flat, low-lying, largely uninhabited landscape associated with irregularly shaped, poorly draining basins fringed by low hills or scarps. This is a secluded pastoral landscape characterised by a regular pattern of hedged fields and ditches fringed by lines of willow and alder.



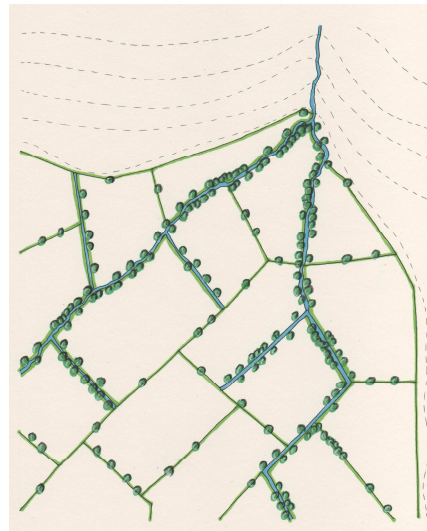
Key Characteristics

Primary

- Flat low-lying topography
- Pastoral land use with patches of wet grassland
- Tree cover character of individual trees as opposed to woodland
- Tree cover pattern of linear tree belts along ditches and water-courses—particularly lines of alder and willow

Secondary

- Regular pattern of hedged fields with ditches
- Rushes, reeds and other marginal/aquatic vegetation
- Unsettled with few roads



These are landscapes which have in the past been buffered from change due to the difficulties of cultivating soils with such poor drainage. They have consequently been avoided as sites for settlement and roads, and have often remained of low key agricultural status, often in an “unimproved condition”, thus retaining a certain wilderness quality

The key feature has been the widespread pastoral land use, and associated traditional methods of management, which in turn have supported wetland habitats of considerable wildlife interest.

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The patterns of hedged fields provide structure to the landscapes, the hedgelines invariably associated with ditches. Further structure is provided by tree cover, usually of alder and willow, along the ditches pollarded willows being a distinctive feature in places.

Today these landscapes are vulnerable to changing agricultural practices, from improvement to the sward and to the drainage regime, from the change from hay-making to silage production from lowering of the water table and from cultivation, bringing the land into arable land use. The traditional management of pollarding willows is often neglected and the selection of these areas as sites for the creation of new ponds or water features of commercial use, can invariably destroy habitats of greater ecological value.

The sustainable land use for these areas would appear to be pastoral, which in turn is compatible with the great ecological potential these landscapes possess and the exciting opportunities they offer for wetland creation or restoration. They should be regarded primarily as areas of conservation and the unsettled, undeveloped character perpetuated.

The management strategy for the wet pastures is, therefore, to conserve and restore the distinctive unity and pastoral character of the landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

- conserve all permanent pasture
- conserve and restore linear tree cover along watercourses, ditches and hedgelines
- seek opportunities to encourage the conversion of arable land back to pasture
- encourage the retention and appropriate management of existing wetland habitats
- encourage the creation of new wetland habitats
- discourage activities likely to increase the drainage, or lower the water table of these areas
- discourage any building or construction works in these landscapes

For more information visit our website www.worcestershire.gov.uk/lca or contact the Worcestershire County Council Environmental Policy Team on 01905 766038