



# A Guide to Good Practice

# Management Planning

On Upland and Moorland  
Commons



The Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Moorland  
Graziers aims:

1. To be a representative voice to support and protect the commons
2. To support better collaboration amongst commoners
3. To ensure that hill farming on common land is a worthwhile and viable activity
4. To promote positive management of the environment by commoners
5. To improve public understanding of the commons
6. To these ends, to engage with all interested parties to put forward the case of the commoners in a vigorous and constructive manner.

The Federation has prepared a series of 'Guides to Good Practice' which are intended to help commoners to deal with selected key issues. The Guides aim to share experience from different commons and to help commoners understand how others approach key issues.

Guides to Good Practice have been prepared for the following issues:

Vegetation Management

Management Planning

Agri-environment Schemes

Marketing

Each 'Guide to Good Practice' generally consists of a 2 page summary together with the main guide and Appendices.

It is intended that the Guides will be updated on a regular basis, as new information is gathered and new policies or advice are introduced. Please contact the administrator of the Federation with any comments or suggestions.

The other Guides are available from:

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## 1. Summary

The purpose of this guide is to provide a useful source of advice and information to members of the Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Moorland Graziers, and others, on the process of management planning for commons. It is intended to assist commoners and graziers in the preparation of a Management Plan for their common.

Management planning provides a means of identifying the issues affecting the commons, and a means of dealing with competing issues through setting achievable targets. The recent Commons Bill sought to encourage management planning as part of sustainable agricultural management because of the benefits that having a Management Plan can bring to the common.

The Bill enables the establishment of a Commons Associations. This provides a new opportunity to bring people with an interest in the common together to discuss how it is managed and to facilitate the sustainable management of the common at a local level. Commons Associations should establish a Management Committee to coordinate a management planning initiative. The Association should take the leadership of this committee, but it should bring together other interested parties to facilitate the preparation of the Management Plan.

A collaborative approach should be adopted so that all interested parties have an opportunity to participate from the outset. Agreement on the management objectives and prescriptions will be needed and collaboration will give legitimacy to the plan. The landlord or their agent may wish to participate as they will usually reserve shooting and burning rights over the common.

The Management Committee will decide what information is required and who will be responsible for gathering it but Commons Associations may need some professional support to prepare the plan. The principle landowner or manager can provide assistance in some cases (e.g. National Trust or National Park Authority). English Nature may assist where conservation is an important interest and English Heritage may help where archaeology is present.

There may be single-issue management plans in place for many commons such as SSSI management plans prepared by English Nature. Management Plans must be compatible with these, whilst identifying and addressing other issues affecting the common. Similarly, many commons will be subject to management agreements and Management Plans should recognise the commitments made under such agreements.

Management plans usually begin with a survey / information gathering exercise which brings together the information relating to the site from all the relevant sources such as commoners and graziers, landowners, shooting tenants, English Nature (to be Natural England from 2007) etc.

Analysis and evaluation of the survey information describes how the survey information has been evaluated and what obligations and constraints have been taken into account when reaching decisions. The process should be rational and objective.

The management objectives set out what the site managers want to achieve in the form of a list of objectives which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timetabled (SMART) and which take into account legal constraints and obligations. The objectives are used to decide on prescriptions / proposals which detail the methods by which the objectives are to be achieved. The proposals may be presented in the form of a five year work programme.

Monitoring and review are an essential part of the management planning process, and this information is fed back into the process. Adjustments may be made to the policy objectives where necessary.

Management Plans should be comprehensive, practical to implement, with clear work programmes and achievable targets.

## **2. Why prepare an Integrated Management Plan?**

Many commons are multi-use and many issues need to be resolved. The process of preparing an Integrated Management Plan brings commoners, graziers and others with an interest in the common together to decide on the appropriate way of addressing certain issues and to set achievable targets.

Certain areas of the common may already be subject to management agreements, for example Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) agreements, Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) agreements and Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES) agreements. However, an Integrated Management Plan is all encompassing and it attempts to reconcile the different interests such as generating an income from agricultural production, conserving designated sites, landscape issues and recreation.

Management Plans can:

- Demonstrate what the Common managers intend to do and how they intend to do it.
- Reduce conflict and build consensus between all interested parties.
- Ensure continuity of management
- Gather information about the site in a structured way and act as a record against which the effectiveness of management policy can be judged.
- Explain and justify management decisions.
- Plan and monitor the programme of work.
- Determine financial and labour requirements
- Agree respective responsibilities i.e. who will do what and when.
- Determine legal agreements

## **3. The Structure and Content of the Management Plan**

Although there is no single model that can be applied to all situations, all Management Plans generally include the following sections and sub-sections.

### **3.1 Survey / Information Gathering**

A survey or desk study will require a study of all documentation and current management agreements relating to the common. Some aspects of the survey such as the biological survey will require on site investigation and professional input.

#### **General Information**

- Name of Common, CL registration number and RLR parcel reference.
- Commons Association contact name and address
- Size / area
- Ordnance survey sheet number

#### **Site Description**

- A summary statement which puts the site in context.
- Identifies key landscape and conservation features and issues.
- Describes current management practices

#### **Legal Information**

- Owner
- Common rights and heafs
- Live register details
- Non graziers details
- Common rights: minerals, timber gathering, fishing, shooting, turf cutting, bracken gathering etc.
- Specific Acts of Parliament, byeways, covenants, wayleaves, restrictions.
- Access; open access areas as defined under the CROW Act, public rights of way etc.

#### **Designations**

- Landscape designations including National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Heritage Coast.
- Wildlife designations including National and Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and RAMSAR sites.
- Historical designation or listings including Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and Sites and Monuments Record (SMR),
- National Trust ownership.
- Less Favoured Area or Moorland designations, Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) and Environmental Stewardship agreements, Woodland Grants Scheme (WGS)

and other Forestry Commission agreements, Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES) agreements.

- Joint Character Areas.
- Existing planning permissions.

### **Physical**

- Geomorphology
- Hydrology
- Soils
- Climate

### **Land-use**

- Indicate land uses on a map including agriculture, conservation, forestry, amenity woodland, tourism / recreation, mining / quarrying and Ministry of Defence training areas.

### **Current Management Plans / Agreements**

- Refer to any existing agreements including ESA / CSS / WES agreements and existing management plans.

### **Biological**

- Phase 1 habitat surveys for all sites.
- National Vegetation Classification surveys where SSSI or other designated sites are present.
- Identify Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats and species.
- Indicate Red Data Book species

### **Landscape Features**

- Joint Character Areas, Natural Areas and Landscape Classification.
- Any other distinctive landscape features.

### **Archaeological and Historical Information**

- SAM, SMR, listed buildings, conservation areas, English Heritage sites.

### **Recreational and Tourism Uses**

- Walking, horse riding, mountain biking, hang gliding, mountaineering, hunting, shooting, fishing and water sports, off-road vehicle use.

### **Public Safety**

- Identify potential hazards, health and safety issues, burning code, public liability insurance etc.
- Identify rescue procedures and contacts.

### **Drawn Plans**

- Drawn plans are often included for each topic area: legal, land use, physical, biological, landscape, archaeological and recreational.

## **3.2 Analysis / Evaluation**

This section records the relative value and importance of all features of the site and attempts to reconcile competing demands and demonstrate how and why decisions have been reached. The evaluation procedure should be objective and follow agreed standards where possible.

For example, rare species may be assessed according to their international, national, regional and local significance.

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis may be a useful tool for evaluating sympathetic and competing issues.

Legal obligations and other major constraints will also need to be taken into account in order to produce a legitimate set of management objectives.

### 3.3 Management Policy, Objectives, Prescriptions and Implementation

#### Management Objectives

- This section sets out what the site managers intend to achieve.
- To be effective, the objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timetabled (SMART).
- Major constraints and obligations must be clearly stated and taken into account.

#### Outline Prescription / Proposals

- This details the method by which the objective will be achieved.
- Measurable targets and limits need to be set in order to assess progress towards reaching the objectives.
- For clarity, the objectives and prescriptions may be tabulated, as below.

Table 1

Objective	Proposal	Target	Limit
To conserve and enhance the heather habitat	To produce a diverse age structure over the heather habitat by introduction of an appropriate burning policy and reducing grazing.	To achieve favourable SSSI condition by 2010 in accordance with English Nature targets	To reduce grazing in accordance with WES agreement for SSSI management
To minimise erosion and loss of habitat caused by access, recreation, and illegal use of 4x4 vehicles	Maintain and replace gates and styles at agreed access points, repair and maintain boundaries	To incorporate into Yorkshire Dales / North York Moors National Park Authority access plan by 2006	Complete by 2008
To enhance the semi natural ground flora	Introduce an appropriate burning and grazing to prevent encroachment / succession resulting from the removal of grazing	To achieve favourable SSSI condition by 2010 in accordance with English Nature targets	To increase grazing in accordance with WES agreement for SSSI management

#### Five Year and Annual Work Programmes

- Work should be subdivided into topic areas and into short term and long term operations.
- Programmes are best tabulated, as below. Five-year programmes would contain columns 2006-2011 and record the year the activity takes place.

Table 2

Operations	Compartments	Area/Length	Unit Cost	Total
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Repair wall	Boundary A	50m	£20 per m	£1,000
Heather burning	Block A	0.6 hectares	4 man days @ £60/day	£240
Bracken control	Block B	0.4 hectares	2 man days @ £60/day	£120

### 3.4 Monitoring and Review

It is essential that there is a mechanism for discussing the results of monitoring exercises, feeding this information back into the management planning process and readjusting the policy objectives where necessary. The monitoring and review process needs to be clearly stated along with methodologies, targets and measurements to be employed. Such information may be tabulated, as below.

Table 3

Topic	Method	Timing	Action by	Feedback to Policy
Regenerate heather block A	Grazing indices	Late summer	English Nature	Decrease / increase stock
Increase golden plover population	Population count	Assess breeding population by May 2007	RSPB	Extend blocking of moorland grips to extend favourable habitat

The Management Committee should decide who is responsible for monitoring and the findings should be reported back to the Committee on a regular basis. The timing and frequency of monitoring will depend on the feature and a number of other factors.

## **4. Features of a Management Plan**

The ideal management plan should:

- Be comprehensive in content, reflecting the needs of the site, whilst meeting the requirements of the site users and managers.
- Be clear, concise, logical and easy to follow.
- Clearly show how information has been gathered and evaluated.
- Clearly show how decisions have been reached.
- Be practical to implement, containing clear work programmes and measurable targets.
- Be cost effective.

## **5. Who should prepare the plan?**

The Commoners Association should coordinate any planning initiative but it will normally need to rely on some outside professional support to help prepare the plan.

In some cases the principle landowner / manager can provide assistance (e.g. National Trust or National Park Authority), and English Nature (Natural England from 2007) may be prepared to assist where nature conservation is an important interest.

A Management Committee should be set up to oversee the process. The Commons Association should take the leadership of this committee but it should draw its membership from all interested parties.

The committee will need to agree:-

- Who will coordinate and draft the plan?
- What information is required?
- Who will gather the information?

## 6. Collaboration

It is recommended that all interested parties be involved from the outset. Late involvement may create the impression that the major issues have already been determined and that the consultation is not sincere. This may ultimately affect the legitimacy of the plan, especially where there are conflicting interests.

## 7. Sources of Information and Advice

### The Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Moorland Graziers

Address: The Administrator  
2 Woodland Dell  
Hebden Bridge  
West Yorkshire  
HX7 6NJ

Telephone: 01422 845399

### English Nature

Address: Northminster House  
Peterborough  
PE1 1UA

Telephone: 01733 455000

Local Offices: North and East Yorkshire Team

Genesis 1  
University Road

Asquith House  
Leyburn Business Park

Heslington  
York  
YO10 52Q

Harmby Road  
Leyburn  
DL8 5QA

Telephone 01904 435500

01969 623447

Local Office: Humber and Pennines Team

Bull Ring House  
Northgate  
Wakefield  
West Yorkshire  
WF1 3BJ

Telephone: 01924 334500

Website: [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)

Specific web pages:  
[www.english-nature.org.uk/special/sss1](http://www.english-nature.org.uk/special/sss1)

[www.english-nature.org.uk/special/sss1](http://www.english-nature.org.uk/special/sss1)

Information on managing an SSSI, SSSI details such as maps, reasons for designation, operations requiring English Nature consent, English Nature views on the management of the SSSI, condition assessment etc

[www.english-nature.org.uk/pubs/Handbooks/](http://www.english-nature.org.uk/pubs/Handbooks/)

The Upland Management Handbook (downloadable) - Information on appropriate stocking rates and management techniques

Publications:

The Upland Management Handbook

State of Nature - The Upland Challenge

Land Management for Upland Birds

Common Land - Unravelling the Mysteries

Common land and Conservation -  
Biological Surveys in England and Wales

**Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs -  
Rural Payments Agency**

Address (local office):

Alverton Court  
Crosby Road  
Northallerton  
DL6 1AD

Telephone:

-main switchboard: 0845 605 6509

-local office: 01609 773751

-single payment scheme helpline: 0845 603 7777

Website:

[www.rpa.gov.uk](http://www.rpa.gov.uk)

**Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs -  
Rural Development Service**

Address (Yorkshire and the Humber Office):

Government Buildings  
Otley Road  
Lawnswood  
Leeds  
LS16 5QT

Telephone:

-main switchboard: 0113 2303750

-Environmental Stewardship helpline: 0845 6024096

Website: [www.defra.gov.uk/rds](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rds)

Specific web pages:

[www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/default/htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/default/htm)

Information on Environmental  
Stewardship

Publications:  
Handbook

Entry Level Stewardship

Higher Level Stewardship Handbook

Higher Level Stewardship: Farm  
Environment Plan: Guidance  
Handbook



Website:

[www.yorkshiredales.org.uk](http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk)

## North York Moors National Park Authority

Address: The Old Vicarage  
Bondgate  
Helmsley  
York  
YO62 5BP

Telephone: 01439 770657

Website: [www.moors.uk.net](http://www.moors.uk.net)

## Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Address: Monkstone House  
City Road  
Peterborough  
PE1 1JT

Telephone: 01733 562626

Website: [www.jncc.gov.uk](http://www.jncc.gov.uk)

Publications: Caring for our Uplands

Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - A Technique  
for Environmental Audit

An Illustrated Guide to British Upland Vegetation

## English Heritage

Address (Yorkshire Office): 37 Tanner Road  
York  
YO1 6WP

Telephone: 01904 601901

Website: [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)