



Key Characteristics

- Elevated, gently rounded hills, often with stepped sides facing valleys, forming east-west trending broad plateaux to the north and south of Swaledale interconnected at the head of the dale.
- Plateau edges are often defined by dark, blocky gritstone outcrops, with scree below, sometimes sitting above exposed, banded Yoredales Series limestone and sandstone outcrops.
- Occasional gritstone outcrops and scattered boulder fields are found on the moor tops.
- Steep-sided, sometimes rocky side valleys cut into the main plateau areas, which are further sub-divided by steep, incised, winding gulleys.
- Watercourses are rocky, with grass, heather or rush banks and occasional trees on rock and cliffs in sheltered gills, widening out and accompanied by increasing tree cover and marginal herbs at lower elevations.
- Landcover comprises extensive tracts of acid grassland, blanket bog and upland heath, mainly over peat on the poorly drained gritstone plateaux. Heather moorland is mainly managed for grouse shooting, producing a distinctive mosaic pattern of different-aged plants.
- Settlement is absent from the open moor tops. Scattered traditional farmsteads with modern outbuildings are found on the dale fringes and in dale heads, accompanied by walled upland meadows, improved pastures and field barns.
- Gritstone drystone walls are concentrated around the dale fringes with occasional isolated meadows and sheep pens set within the open moor. Some moorland tops are broadly enclosed whilst others remain open.
- Evidence of coal mining and, to a much greater extent, lead mining workings and tips remains, mainly across the eastern half of the character area.
- Roads and footpaths are isolated in character with panoramic views of the northern dales and Cumbrian fells.

