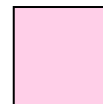


## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE:

### Open Heath



Present in the central New Forest. Although small areas of open heath exist in the Western Weald and plateau gravel areas of north east Hampshire they are not considered extensive enough to be mapped.

#### SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT AND BOROUGH LEVEL ASSESSMENTS

<b>Basingstoke:</b>	n/a
<b>East Hampshire</b>	n/a
<b>Eastleigh</b>	n/a
<b>Fareham</b>	n/a
<b>Gosport</b>	n/a
<b>Hart</b>	<b>Primary association:</b> Extensive Open Heathland, Mixed Heathland and Woodland, Coniferous Forest on Heath <b>Secondary association:</b> Disturbed Ground, Parkland Estate or Farmland.
<b>Havant</b>	n/a
<b>New Forest</b>	<b>Primary association:</b> Heathland, <b>Secondary association:</b> n/a
<b>Rushmoor</b>	n/a
<b>Test Valley</b>	n/a
<b>Winchester</b>	n/a

#### SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES IN NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITY ASSESSMENTS

<b>Dorset</b>	
<b>West Berkshire</b>	
<b>West Sussex</b>	
<b>Wiltshire</b>	

## KEY IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS AND BOUNDARY DEFINITIONS

- Predominantly light sandy and sand and gravel based soils, with thin humic surface horizons, often on locally high ground.
- Unenclosed scrub or furze (gorse) and heathland occasional small copses of birch and pine.
- The acidic sandy soils supports internationally important both wet and dry associated lowland heath habitat.
- Seasonally boggy ground with areas of impeded drainage, which give rise to mire and fen – there are few streams.
- Undisturbed and similar appearance / management over a very long period retaining the quintessential characteristics of open Forest and very limited modern intervention by man.
- Considerable association with Bronze Age ritual sites and extensive exploitations and Iron Age and defence sites. .
- Large areas of open access land with few lanes and roads.
- Often regarded as being highly tranquil.
- Open and exposed landscapes with big skies and sense of space and uncluttered expanse.
- Tend to have associations with large parishes.

## PHYSICAL

### GEOLOGY, LANDFORM, ELEVATION:

**Bedrock and Superficial Geology:** The sandy bedrock geology is a key determinant in the boundary of this type. In the New Forest, the only location where this type occurs, the underlying geology formations are composed from the Barton Sands Group of which the Becton and Headon formations are most prevalent.

**Landform and Elevation:** The landform generally consists of locally elevated gently undulating plains, with occasional moderately steep sided shallow valleys.

### SOILS TYPES:

**Typical soil type pattern:** Easily leached, very acid podzolic soils. Naturally very acidic sandy over clayey with peaty surface horizons. In the New Forest the distribution of acid soils, which include 643a and c, 631c and 572j are mixed with occasional presence of clayey soils.

### FUNCTIONS:

**Hydrological function:** This is of very limited in importance in this LCT.

**Food and Biomass:** Associated with very low agricultural grade, 4 or 5.

**Biodiversity potential:** Undoubtedly the heathland opportunity function is the major soils function in this LCT.

### LANDCOVER AND LAND USE PATTERN:

This landscape consists of a varied mosaic of open heathlands, with a complex pattern of scrub, grassland, streams and bogs. Grazing and burning are key management techniques in heath areas. In the New Forest, commoner's livestock have the freedom to roam and graze. The landscape is essentially unenclosed but closely linked with back up grazing land in the adjoining Lowland Mosaic Heath Associated type. This LCT has supported small scale soft sand and sand and gravel extraction, but there are no modern extensive workings. The limited modern intervention by man in this landscape is a key feature.

**HYDROLOGY:**

Locally raised or perched water tables provide intermittent boggy and marshy ground and small areas of standing water. Streams restricted to lower areas and relatively narrow and due to the peaty stream bed, have characteristically dark water.

**EXPERIENTIAL****ACCESS AND TRANSPORT ROUTES:**

Most of the roads and lanes are unfenced and together with the fact that the majority of land has been designated as open access, gives many different users a vast accessible area. There is a very strong relationship with a very low density road and lane network density and this LCT. Where this type occurs in the New Forest it is classified as open access land under CROW.

**TRANQUILLITY:**

This type is consistently mapped at a local scale, as amongst the most tranquil areas, in the CPRE 2006 national mapping. This is attributable to the high coverage of semi-natural habitat, isolated locations, long open views and little development.

**BIODIVERSITY**

The Open Heath landscape character type is largely a semi-natural landscape, comprising habitats with a strong heath association.

Dry heath exists, along with dry heath and acid grassland mosaics, wet heath, acid fens, ponds and bracken. There are also patches of woodland, often ancient, semi-natural woodlands. Habitat variation is dependent on underlying soil structure, permeability and the effects of grazing.

Heathland is an important habitat and the New Forest represents one of the largest areas of this habitat in Europe, with much of the heathland existing continuously. The manner in which all three heath types – wet, humid and dry – all exist in combination with each other in the Open Heath landscape character type is unusual and noteworthy.

Heathland habitats exist when tree growth has been suppressed, often historically through clearance and grazing. Dry heath supports heather and bristle bent grass and mainly exists on higher, better drained ground. When drainage is impeded the species mix alters, indicating a wet heath habitat. Species such as purple moor grass and cross leaved heath are typical of wet heath, a type of acid mire. When wet heath remains inundated with water it is classified as valley mire and can support hydrophilic species including cotton grasses, bog mosses and bog myrtle. In the most poorly drained areas heather becomes less dominant and species such as rushes and mosses prevail. Fauna associated with heathland includes the smooth snake and sand lizard, both of which are nationally rare species. Heathland also support a rich range of lichen, fungi, bryophyte and vascular plants.

Other habitats are associated with the peripheries of heathland mosaics, including woodland, some of which is ancient semi-natural woodland but also mixed and coniferous plantations as well as improved grasslands. In places, from within the heathland mosaics, dense scrub generation provides a linking habitat between woodland and heathland.

The New Forest BOA exists within this landscape character type. This BOA identifies opportunities for lowland heath, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland mixed deciduous

woodland, purple moor grass and rush pastures, lowland meadow and wet woodland habitat creation and enhancement.

## HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

### ARCHAEOLOGY:

The range of archaeological sites in this landscape is very limited. There is only light evidence of Mesolithic and Neolithic activity. The considerable presence of Bronze age burial mounds without equivalent evidence of settlement suggests that the landscape exploitation is extensive, such as grazing or hunting, probably by settled populations in the Avon valley and possibly on the coastal plain. Likewise in the Iron Age Hillforts without a wider range of settlement and fields system suggest this landscape is controlled for grazing or hunting rather than being settled. It is perhaps related that these landscapes emerged subsequently as Saxon forest. The evidence for the Roman period is sparse, despite the activity noted in the woodland heath landscape type. Association with military use from the 19<sup>th</sup> C onwards including training grounds of North East and East Hampshire to disused and abandoned WW2 airfields especially in the New Forest.

### HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Unenclosed common. Predominantly open in character may include a few copses and maybe small inclosures. Falls within the perambulation of a Forested area. Excludes areas of enclosed fields.

### HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT

**Settlement types by form:** Very occasional farmsteads, otherwise devoid of settlements.

## VISIBILITY

**Prominency:** Often located on locally high ground and plateaux.

**Enclosure:** Generally open and expansive but depends on the extent and pattern of the surrounding forestry over heath and traditional heath landscapes, of gorse and scrub, heather and grassland mosaic. Surrounding woodland in adjoining Lowland Mosaic landscapes forms single rather than multi layered wooded horizons.

**Public perceptions:** These LCTs provide significant recreational space and places which attract visitors; such as camp sites and car parks, tend to be the most significant visual receptors, along with where the A35 crosses the New Forest.