



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE 23: HUMBER BANKS

COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER AREA: Humber Estuary

Location

This landscape type is located east of Elloughton-cum-Brough along the banks of the Humber at its confluence with the River Trent.

Key characteristics of the Coastal Farmland of Holderness

- Flat low lying flood plain of the River Humber with man made river banks to defend neighbouring farmland from flooding.
- Grassed banks grazed by livestock.
- Reed beds are a unique feature.
- Extensive views across the river and neighbouring low lying farmland, particularly from top of river bank.
- Diversity of river habitat.



View from the south bank of the Humber looking east (2005).

Physical Influences

The underlying solid geology of the area was laid down during the Cretaceous period and is overlain with glacial till and more recent tidal flat deposits.

The area is very flat and land is below 10 metres AOD. Man made riverbanks prevent tidal flooding.

Soils are a combination of surface water gleys and brown earths that have been reclaimed and drained resulting in an agricultural land use classification of Grade 2 with small areas of grade 1 and grade 3.

Ditches drain land into the Humber.

Human Influences

The landscape is dominated by the river and the man made river banks that protect the neighbouring farmland from flooding. There is evidence that the Humber has been embanked to varying degrees for many centuries. Small villages and large farmsteads are present protected by the riverbank. Yokefleet (on the edge of this character type), Blacktoft and Faxfleet are small settlements spread out along the river. Farm houses and traditional buildings are red brick with grey slate or tile roofs.

No visible evidence of prehistoric activity but there are moated sites at Faxfleet and Broomfleet. The Market Weighton Canal enters the river Humber in this character type. Market Weighton Lock is located south of Broomfleet.

The river banks are heavily grazed or mown. The dominant land use is arable farming. Much of the land is grade 1 agricultural land. However, the area relies on a pumped drainage system.

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Ecological Influences

The river Humber is a SSSI and Blacktoft Sands on the south bank is a nature reserve managed by the RSPB. There is no woodland in the area. Trees and bushes are sparse. Reed beds are an important ecological resource.



View south across the Humber east of Elloghton cum Brough (2005)

The broad river Humber has several sand bars that have developed providing habitat for wildfowl. The largest of these sand banks is Whitton Sand located in the river south of Broomfleet.

The river banks are grazed grass and offer limited habitat value. The neighbouring arable farmland is intensively managed.

CHARACTER AREAS

Two character areas have been identified in this landscape character type. They are:

- Character Area 23A: Brough to Yokefleet Riverbank
- Character Area 23B: Blacktoft Sands

Character Area 23A: Brough to Yokefleet Riverbank.

The River Humber broadens on its way to the sea through this character area. The man made riverbanks are an important defence for the neighbouring fertile farmland. These low lying areas of farmland have been drained to allow for agricultural production. The tidal nature of the river influences its character. Mudflats are exposed at low tide and at high tide are covered. From the river banks there are views across the River Humber and neighbouring flat farmland.

Agricultural land adjacent to the Humber Estuary would have at one time consisted of wet pasture. Much of this has been drained, however it is still important for many birds including pink-footed goose, wigeon, lapwing and golden plover.

Roosts of pipistrelle, daubenton's and other bats have been found in the vicinity of Broomfleet, Brough and Faxfleet, whilst otters are known to use the Market Weighton Canal.

Occasionally cetaceans have been found stranded on this section of beach. One such example was a minke whale, which was stranded at Broomfleet Island in 1985.

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COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER AREA: Humber Estuary

Character Area 23B: Blacktoft Sands

This character area is located where the Ouse and Trent meet to become the Humber. The two rivers are narrower than the River Humber and at their meeting point Blacktoft Sands is an important wildlife habitat managed by the RSPB consisting of tidal reedbed, saltmarsh, mudflats and brackish lagoons. It is the largest area of inter-tidal reedbed in England.

Blacktoft Sands is located at the confluence of the rivers Ouse, Trent and Humber. The 192 hectare site consists of England's largest tidal reedbed, with saltmarsh, mudflats and brackish lagoons. This mosaic of habitats is important for a large number of birds, especially waders and waterfowl. Over 170 species are recorded here each year, including little-ringed plover, avocet, lapwing, reed bunting, reed warbler, shoveler and little grebe. Birds of prey include marsh harrier, hen harrier, short-eared owl and merlin.

The area includes the sand bars in the river Humber. The largest of these is Whitton Sand. There are also sand bars at Trent Falls where the river Ouse meets the river Trent, Faxfleet and in the river Trent on the boundary with North Lincolnshire.

Various mammals are also present including water vole, water shrew, brown hare and roe deer.

EVALUATION

Positive Landscape Features

- Habitat value of the river and associated features provide contrast amidst the intensively farmed landscape.
- Broad River with grazed grass river banks.
- Bank side vegetation adds to habitat diversity.
- The navigable river has a steady flow of traffic.
- No large scale industry to detract from tranquil and isolated character.
- Tidal reed bed natural habitat.

Condition and Strength of Character

The river is a great unifying characteristic. Man made river banks are important features. Views of the surrounding landscape from the footpaths on the top of the north bank are extensive across the river and surrounding low lying open landscape.

There are few roads and there is relatively little traffic on the river making this a tranquil character type.

The landscape is large scale as a result of openness, the width of the river and the scale of fields in and adjacent to this character type.

Quality

The characteristics that define this unique landscape are largely in tact. Habitat value contributes to the quality. Large boats move slowly up and down the river. There are elements of high quality to the landscape. For example there is limited access to the riverbanks resulting in a remote character and the riparian habitat contrasts strongly with the neighbouring arable farmland. There are very few

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properties nearby. The historic use of river for transportation continues to contribute to its character.

Forces for Change

Changing land management practices of the grass river banks would potentially change character. The changing management regimes of bank side vegetation may also impact on character.

There is evidence to suggest that sea level is rising. This would affect the low lying area adjacent to the river banks which may end up under water in time. There are proposals to return areas of farmland immediately adjacent to the river to natural habitat. This would involve re-organising flood defences and allowing areas of land to become periodically inundated by the tidal river. This would help improve habitat diversity in the area and provide a buffer between the river and agricultural land. It would also extend the influence of the riparian characteristics beyond the immediate environs of the river bank.

Water courses are particularly susceptible to pollution and the changes such an incident could bring. River traffic is a potential source of pollution as are the drainage ditches that feed into the river from the surrounding agricultural land.

Increased river traffic may be encouraged by government and European policy. This would potentially impact upon the tranquil character of the river.

Recreations and tourism is a growing industry. The river is used by some pleasure craft. There are also fishing opportunities on the river corridor. Facilities for recreation and tourism may affect landscape character.

Renewable energy targets for the East Riding may result in pressure for wind farm development in this corridor. However, the high value of the habitat may reduce the pressure for wind turbines in this remote area.

Sensitivity and capacity

This tranquil and open area that has high habitat value is assessed to have high sensitivity to built development. Blacktoft is the main settlement in the area. It is a small village adjacent to the north bank of the river Humber. Yokefleet is on the edge of the character type to the west. The character type includes Ousefleet and Adlingfleet on its southern boundary. The character of the landscape would be sensitive to development that extends these settlements. Further development along the river corridor would change the rural character of the area by potentially resulting in the coalescence of development.

Recreation and tourism facilities that are small scale and low key using vernacular materials may be accommodated without detriment to character. Such facilities should recognise the landscape and habitat value of the river corridor.

Wind turbines would add detractors to this tranquil landscape and result in detrimental impact.

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COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER AREA: Humber Estuary

Strategy

Opportunities to return land to the river should take account of farm economies. The loss of high grade agricultural land may affect farm businesses and as a result the management of the land. This would potentially result in change to landscape character.

Bank side vegetation and reedbeds should be retained and extended where possible to strengthen the character of this area.

Promote the management of the river corridor for its habitat value.

There are few built structures in this corridor landscape. Fences and hedgerows mark the boundary of the river banks with neighbouring arable farmland. Pump houses contribute to the drainage of the agricultural land. New built structures would impact upon the character of the area, particularly vertical structures that may impact on views across the wide, open river channel and should be avoided.

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