



Location and Context

The *Boggy Moorland – Outer Hebrides* Landscape Character Type forms extensive inland areas of Lewis, North Uist and Benbecula, and smaller areas which fringe the rocky moorlands of South Uist and Barra.

Key Characteristics

- Large scale, gently undulating peat moorlands.
- Relatively few landscape elements.
- Numerous large and small rounded lochs, interconnected by narrow, slow-moving rivers.
- Occasional small, shallow-sided hills.
- Sea cliffs with eroded gullies at the coast.
- Remote upland character.
- Predominantly uninhabited.
- Visible cultural elements dominated by shielings and township boundary dykes.
- Expansive horizontal scale and remoteness.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Boggy Moorland – Outer Hebrides* Landscape Character Type is characterised by large scale, gently undulating peat moorlands, indented with numerous large and small rounded lochs, which are frequently interconnected by narrow, slow-moving rivers. Loch edges are highlighted by their deep, dark, peat margins and rivers are cut into smaller peat edged valleys. Occasional small shallow sided hills rise from these gently undulating surroundings. The natural patterns of water bodies, flows and eroding peat hags which can best be experienced from the air, or higher ground.

Where *Boggy Moorland* extends to the coast, it often terminates in sea cliffs with eroded gullies cut into it. The perception of this coastal edge is dominated by the foreground, with the sea as a background, as it is only very close to the coastal edge that the cliff landscape

can be experienced.

Landcover

Modern cultural elements of diversity, such as peat cuttings, roads and sheilings (often ruined) are often confined to the edges of extensive tracts of this character type, creating a perception of more extensive human influence than is perceived from the air. Along the edges of the *Boggy Moorlands – Outer Hebrides* where road access is available, occasional fields of apportionment occur, their bright green colour, smooth texture and straight edges standing out strongly against the rougher textures, more muted colours and natural shapes of the *Boggy Moorlands – Outer Hebrides*. As these re-seeds are often located near roads and along the edges of these moorlands, they give a particularly strong perception of human influence which has an effect on the overall remoteness quality of the *Boggy Moorland – Outer Hebrides*.

There are occasional isolated small and medium scale areas of conifer forest which pay little attention to the nature of the underlying landform and their long straight edges, and uniform green colour stands out against the more muted tones and gently undulating nature of the landscape surrounding the *Boggy Moorland – Outer Hebrides*. Shelterbelt planting is a relatively recent feature of these moorlands, although mostly immature and relatively infrequent. Due to the open and exposed nature of the moorlands, isolated croft houses are occasionally sheltered by small conifer, or mixed woodlands. Small areas of mature wind-clipped mixed woodland are occasionally found associated with older croft houses. The wind-clipped outlines and diverse textures of the deciduous trees help integrate these woodlands with the surrounding landform. In more recent years, a number of small coniferous woodlands have been planted on inbye land adjacent to the croft house. These woodlands have a number of configurations from single lines of trees, to linear blocks. The strong vertical edges and uniformity of colour and texture of those woodlands tend to contrast strongly with the horizontal character and subtle tones and colours of the surrounding moorlands.

Settlement

Boggy Moorlands – Outer Hebrides are now predominantly an uninhabited landscape, with very occasional small groups of isolated croft houses sited low in the landscape, taking advantage of any shelter afforded by landform.

Prehistoric and historic use of the moorland is reflected in widespread paths, path markers, crossing places and stepping stones over streams, outfield township boundaries, and settlement mounds with small farm or shieling ruins perched on top. These cultural remains are typically clustered around the rivers which form a natural route into the moorland, and reflect the radical change and abandonment of the use of the moorland between the beginning and end of the 20th Century. The deep peat conceals the remains of prehistoric wooded landscapes, and in places, farming landscapes. It is also the site of numerous ritual and other deposits of artefacts and human remains.

Perception

Relatively few simple and contrasting elements combine to give this character type a remote upland character, which is unusual in a lowland area. These elements include: the muted

tones of the heather moorland vegetation, gently rolling topography, frequent and reflective water bodies, and inland locations of much of the *Boggy Moorlands – Outer Hebrides*.

The vast *Boggy Moorlands - Outer Hebrides* offer a wildness experience that is possibly only matched by the flow country of Caithness in Scotland.

This is one of 390 Landscape Character Types identified at a scale of 1:50 000 as part of a national programme of Landscape Character Assessment republished in 2019.

The area covered by this Landscape Character Type was originally included in the Western Isles LCA (John Richards), published 1998.