# WILD OPEN SPACES

Over one third of the AONB is ‘moorland’, making up the wild open spaces that are so characteristic of the Forest of Bowland. This is a truly unique quality of the area - a quality that we should celebrate and promote using inspiring images. Encourage your visitors to experience it first-hand and not just by driving across the fells. Get out and explore it, enjoy the sense of space!

The central upland of the AONB is typical Millstone Grit country: hard rocks lie beneath the gentle fells - the rounded shapes are a result of repeated glaciation during the Ice Age. The fells are covered with peat, blanket bog, acid grassland and heather moor, and occasionally broken through by rocky outcrops. The highest point is at Wards Stone (560m), with Pendle Hill reaching 557m, almost a mountain!

These fells were once cloaked in trees, but a combination of changes in climate and woodland clearances by Bronze Age farmers has left them largely treeless today. The resulting open views and fells give the impression that this is a wilderness, an untouched natural landscape. But it is in fact the result of human influences: there has been long term management of the land for grazing sheep and cattle, and for game shooting (primarily red grouse). The fells are criss-crossed with dry stone walls and, on the lower slopes, you will see the isolated field barns, which traditionally housed cattle and hay in the winter. Shooting butts and huts also mark out the activities of humans on this environment. As do the conifer woods and forests amongst the fells.

The fells are crossed by a few minor, unfenced roads. The Trough of Bowland is perhaps the most famous, following a narrow valley that once carried melting ice from the glaciers covering the fell tops. Routes from Slaidburn to Bentham, Stocks to Keasden, and the Salter Fell track (now part of the North Lancashire Bridleway) will also take you on a journey through this wild open space.

There are fewer Rights of Way on the fells than in the valleys, and until recently, only limited access on foot. However, much of the moorland is now classified as ‘open access’ and you can experience this wild open space for yourself. Open Access means that you are able to walk across these designated areas, within certain restrictions, and make your own way to the fell tops and moors [www.forestofbowland.com/walking-information](http://www.forestofbowland.com/walking-information).

**DARK SKIES**

 The landscapes of the Forest of Bowland are captivating by day but after the sun sets   
there’s a whole new world to discover in the dark skies.

Truly dark skies are becoming increasingly rare in our crowded little country. Light pollution is creeping into almost every corner of the UK, diluting the pitch blackness of night and   
obscuring the stars for much of the population.

The night skies over Bowland have recently been recognized as some of the darkest in   
England and granted official status as Dark Sky Discovery Sites.