

Crowle Moor

Location and Access

OS: 112 • **GR:** SE 758140 and SE 756137 • 188 hectares (401.70 acres) • Management agreement: 1971, Freehold from 1980
Habitat type: Heathland, woodland and peat bog.

Crowle Moor lies in the north-west corner of the Isle of Axholme and is reached from an unclassified road running north-west from Crowle village. It is part of the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve. For the southern area, park at grid reference SE 756137 where there is a visitors' car park from where a waymarked route of about 2 km (1.25 miles) starts. For the northern area, where there is a longer waymarked route of some 6 km (3.75 miles), park at the roadside at SE 758140. It is advisable to follow the waymarked routes, as the reserve is large and complex. There is a particular danger of fire and therefore visitors are requested not to smoke while on the reserve.

Description and Management

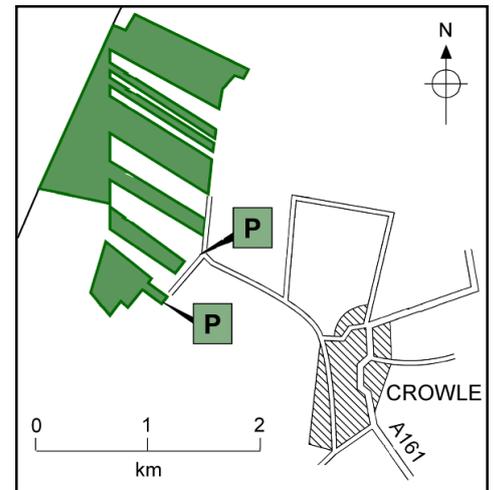
The still extensive tract of Hatfield, Thorne, Goole and Crowle Moors is but a remnant of the vast complex of moor, bog and fen that once surrounded the head of the Humber estuary and included much of Lincolnshire's Isle of Axholme. Drainage and clearance for agriculture from the 17th century onwards left the present moors as 'islands' of raised peat bog, formerly used as turbaries by the villages around. It is likely that the peat on Crowle Moor was not as thick as that on the Yorkshire moors (though it still averages about 3 m) and certainly less seems to have been extracted. The Moor is divided into 'ribbons' running into the moor from the warpings - the cultivated land near Crowle village - and represents holdings carved out of once common turbarry.

The reserve is one of the richest lowland peat vegetation areas in the north of England. The higher, drier areas carry

heather, bracken and birch scrub; the wetter parts have reedbeds, cottongrass, Sphagnum bog, willow carr and open water. Rarer plants include bog rosemary, dune helleborine and greater yellow rattle.

These varied habitats support a rich bird, mammal and insect fauna. The large heath butterfly occurs here at the south-eastern limit of its range in Britain. More than 30 breeding birds have been recorded, including long-eared owl, woodcock, nightjar and tree pipit. Grass snake and adder are present.

Management is chiefly concerned with the maintenance of a high water-table and the control of scrub encroachment. Extensive areas of wet heath have been cleared of invading birch scrub and are now grazed by the Trust's flock of Hebridean sheep.



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