

Blanket Bog

Mesolithic
(10 000 to 4000 BC)

Climatic warming at onset of Early Mesolithic promotes development of peat, ca. 9000 BC

Widespread blanket bog development, ca. 6000 to 4000 BC

Anthropogenic activity in uplands - wood clearance, burning, grazing/trampling
Hunter-gatherers and early farming societies from ca. 4000 BC

Neolithic
(4000 to 2200 BC)

Climatic deterioration from Late Bronze Age (cooler and wetter) - widespread expansion in blanket bog

Fluctuating intensity of upland land-use, some landscapes abandoned (e.g., Dartmoor)

Widespread woodland clearance by end of Iron Age contributed to development of blanket bog

Bronze Age to Iron Age
(2600 BC to AD 43)

Continued development of blanket bog - little evidence for degradation

Variable intensities of land-use in uplands

Roman
(AD 43 to AD 410)

Continued development of blanket bog - little evidence for degradation until Medieval period

Low intensities of upland land-use, primarily for pastoral agriculture. Little change in vegetation of some upland landscapes between Iron Age and Early Medieval period - continuity in land-use practices and development of upland commons?

Early Medieval to Medieval
(AD 410 to 1540)

Climatic change - Medieval Climate Anomaly (ca. 10th to 14th centuries AD) - shift to drier vegetation in blanket bogs

Increased anthropogenic pressures by Medieval period - changing patterns of upland land ownership following Norman conquests AD 1066. Increased livestock stocking densities, expansion in extractive industries

Erosion in some blanket bogs triggered by climate change and anthropogenic activity

Post Medieval
(AD 1540 to 1901)

Patterns of land ownership changed from 16th century - increasing fragmentation of 'common land' with expansion in rights of a few powerful landholders

Major degradation and damage to blanket bog, especially by 19th century - drainage, atmospheric pollution, afforestation, agricultural 'improvement', peat extraction, intensive livestock grazing, repeated burning

Early to Mid-20th century
(AD 1901 to 1966)