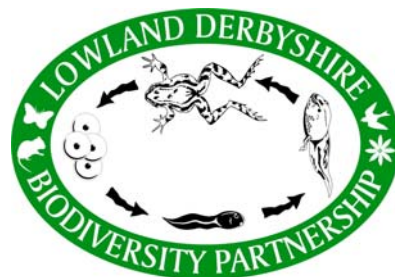


**LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE  
LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

**HEATHLAND HABITATS IN LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE**



**Prepared by the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership**



**Last updated November 2006**

**This document provides the background information for the Heathland Habitat Action Plan**

# Heathland Habitats in Lowland Derbyshire

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## 1.Introduction

Lowland heathland and upland moorland are being dealt with together in the Lowland Derbyshire Heathland HAP. They have distinctive communities and faunas, but do contain a number of very characteristic and conspicuous species in common. Within this Local BAP area there is no true lowland heathland; in some areas heath is only a successional stage towards woodland and needs to be considered in relation to those Habitat Action Plans. The main blocks of upland heathland or heather moorland occur within the Peak District in the Dark Peak and are covered by that BAP. (Small remnants of heath developed on acid soils over limestone also occur in the Peak District.).

Heathland is normally found on low nutrient status soils and is defined as having more than 25% dwarf shrubs. The soils are usually mineral soils but heathland is defined as also occurring on peaty soils where the peat is less than 0.5m thick. Heaths below 250m are described as lowland heathland while those above that height are upland heathland or moorland. Heathlands are an internationally important habitat usually maintained by some form of management such as burning or grazing. A large percentage of European heathland is in Britain.

A variety of bogs (peatlands) exist in Derbyshire but the majority are found in the Peak District, where valley bogs and blanket bogs are significant. In this Local BAP area there are small valley mires (dealt with under the Swamps, reedbeds, mire and fens Habitat Action Plan) and other very small areas of Sphagnum moss where a layer of peat, which is often very shallow, has developed. There are some specific issues, for example vegetation and hydrological management that are peculiar to peat bogs, and these need to be considered, where relevant. For example, controlled, rotational burning may be acceptable for heathlands but would be damaging to bogs.

Dry heathland consists of small bushes of heather, western gorse, bell heather and bilberry, interspersed typically with tormentil, sorrel, heath bedstraw, wavy hair grass and sheep's fescue. Scattered scrubby oaks and birches occur. Lichens may grow on the shrubby plants or on the bare ground between. Small heath and small copper butterflies occur on heathland. There are moths specifically associated with the habitat, which due to its losses are now rare. The relatively few species which occur in heathland, compared with for example calcareous grassland or ancient woodland have led to its perception as an unimportant habitat; however the very specialised nature of the habitat has led to specific associations and the species are often confined to heathland and the conditions it provides. Hence the national and international concern for its protection.

The perception of heathland as a low value habitat has led to its conversion to forestry; whilst the fragmentation which this causes, with remnants along rides and on the edges, the heath species do survive and it is possible to restore heath from conifer plantations, whereas this is not possible from agricultural improvement or over grazing.

### 1.1 Landscape Character Assessment

The Countryside Commission (now former Countryside Agency) in partnership with English Nature, now Natural England, has produced the 'Map of England', a map that depicts the natural and cultural dimensions of the landscape. At the national scale this work has defined English Nature's Natural Areas and the Countryside Agency's 181 Landscape Character Areas.

There are ten national Joint Character Areas within Derbyshire. Derbyshire County Council has undertaken a detailed landscape character assessment for the county outside the Peak District National Park, which has further subdivided these ten broad character areas into thirty nine distinct Landscape Character Types (LCT). These have subsequently been described in the 'The Landscape Character of Derbyshire'<sup>2</sup>.

As part of the assessment, the document has identified for each of the Landscape Character Types the habitats that naturally occur in these areas and the potential for protection and expansion of these habitats.

**Table 1** outlines appropriate heathland habitats by Natural Area, Character Area and Landscape Character Type. This information can be used by a variety of interest groups including developers, planners, foresters and wildlife groups when considering the appropriateness of particular developments, planting and habitat creation schemes in a specific area.

**Table 1 Heathland habitats characteristic and appropriate within each Landscape Character Type**

- P Primary habitat – prominent and key characteristic
- S Secondary habitat – variable and local characteristic
- L Locally significant, containing rare species

Natural area	Joint Character Area	Landscape Character Type	Lowland heaths	Upland heaths
Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent	Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent	Enclosed Moors and Heaths		P
		Wooded Slopes and Valleys		
		Wooded Farmlands		
		Gritstone Heaths & Commons	P	
		Settled Farmlands		
		Riverside Meadows		
Coal Measures	Notts, Derbyshire & Yorkshire Coalfield	Wooded Hills & Valleys		
		Coalfield Village Farmlands		
		Estate Farmlands		
		Wooded Farmlands		
		Coalfield Estatelands		
		Riverside Meadows		
		Plateau Estate Farmlands		
Southern Magnesian Limestone	Southern Magnesian Limestone	Limestone Farmlands		
		Limestone Gorges		
Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands	Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands	Settled Farmlands	S	
		Settled Plateau Farmlands	S	
		Sandstone Slopes & Heaths	P	
		Estate Farmlands	S	
		Riverside Meadow		
Trent Valley and Rises	Trent Valley Washlands	Lowland Village Farmlands		
		Wet Pasture Meadows		
		Riverside Meadows		
Trent Valley and Rises	Melbourne Parklands	Estate Farmlands	P	
		Wooded Estatelands		
		Sandstone Slopes & Heaths	P	
		Riverside Meadows		
Coal Measures	Leicestershire & Derbyshire Coalfield	Coalfield Village Farmlands		
Trent Valley and Rises	Mease & Sence Lowlands	Village Estate Farmlands	S	
		Riverside Meadows		

## 1.2 Species associated with heathland

There are many species associated with heathland habitats, some of which are priority biodiversity action plan species. Appendix 1 lists priority and locally important species associated with heathland habitats.

## 2. Heathland in Lowland Derbyshire

Historically heathland was more widely distributed than it is today. Cameron’s *The place-names of Derbyshire*<sup>1</sup> includes a number of place names with heath/heather/heathland/moorland references. Such names exist primarily within the Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent Natural Area but also occur in the area to the south of Calke Abbey near Ticknall, and to the south of Swadlincote.

The lowland Derbyshire area now has only tiny areas of heathland within areas of acid grassland and amongst acidic oak and birch woodland. It is primarily located within the millstone grit outcrops within the Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent Natural Area and a small area of the Trent Valley Rises Natural Area

Figure 1 shows known areas of heathland, details can be found in Table 1. To date 85ha of heathland is known and can be mapped in the LBAP area. The largest area of heathland in the LBAP area occurs at Longstone Moor and Slagmill. Both sites are very close to the boundary of the Peak Park and are at the start of the extensive area of moorland on the Peak District Moors SPA. The millstone grit outcrop within the Trent Valley Rises Natural Area gives rise to a small area of heathland within Carvers Rocks SSSI, south of Foremark Reservoir. There is also an area of heathland at Hlland Moss SSSI which is associated with an area of sphagnum bog.

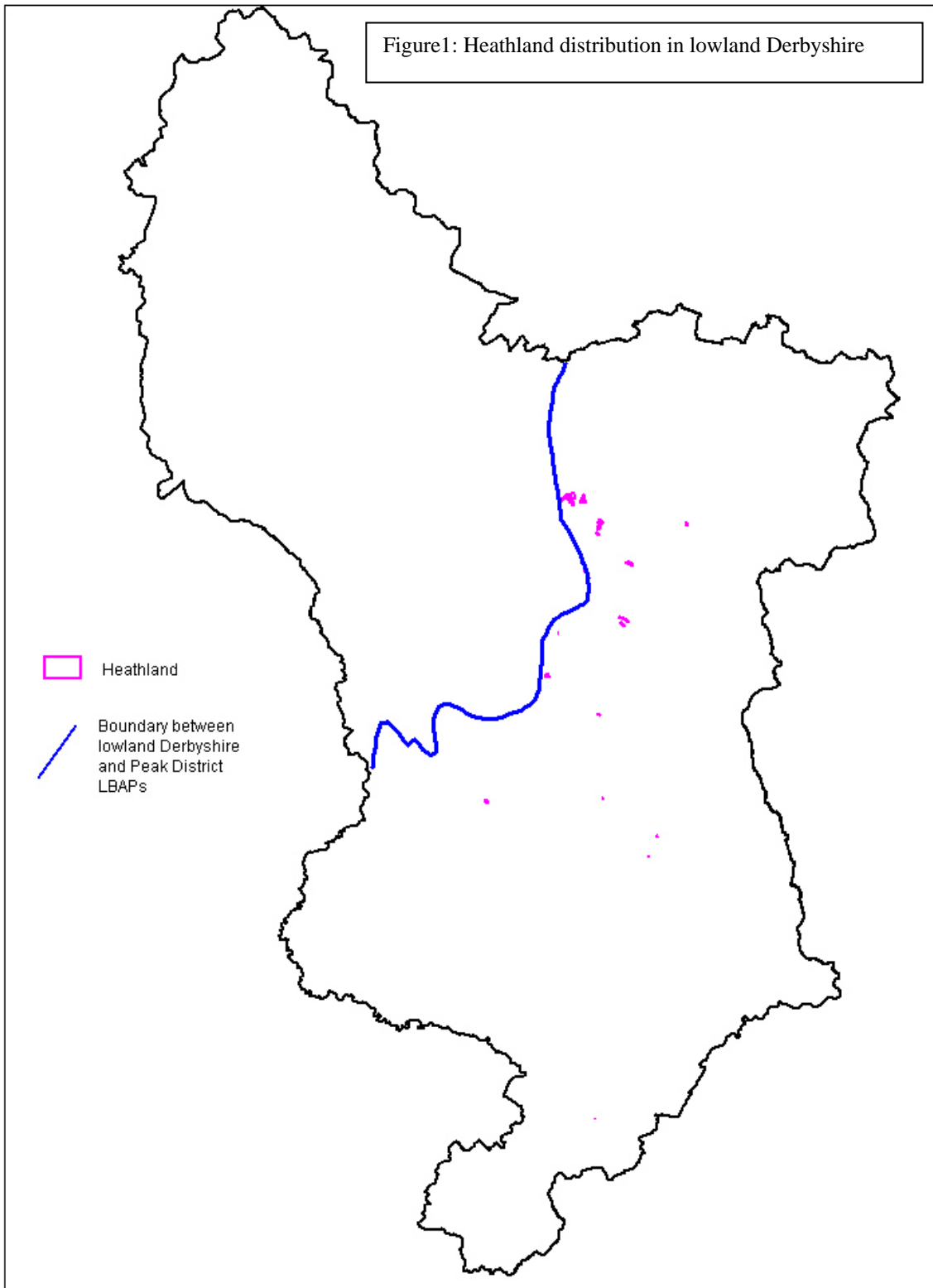
In addition to a small number of heathland sites shown on Figure 1, there are a number of sites which have small areas of heathland that occurs as part of grassland and mire habitat mosaics. Wessington Green contains elements of heathland/acid grassland with mire adjacent to the spring. Crich Chase in the Derwent Valley contains areas of open heathland amongst oak and birch woodland and rocky outcrops. Other areas of heathland can be found on former sandstone quarries and other area of exposed acidic rocks and soils.

Outside the Lowland Derbyshire LBAP area there are significant areas of upland heathland and moorland. This includes the area of the Dark Peak, outside the Peak District National Park, around Matlock moors.

**Table 1: Heathland sites in lowland Derbyshire**

Site name	Local Authority area	Site Grid Reference	Area of heathland
Alderwashley	Amber Valley	SK 334525	1.35
Firestone Hill	Amber valley	SK 336462	0.65
The Warren	Amber Valley	SK 377435	0.50
Black Rocks	Derbyshire Dales	SK295554	6.91 (of which approx 6ha is newly created)
Hlland Moss SSSI	Derbyshire Dales	SK 250461	0.03
Starkholmes	Derbyshire Dales	SK 303585	0.52
Little Eaton	Erewash	SK 370420	0.96
Alicehead	North East Derbyshire	SK 333659	1.90
Avenue Washlands	North East Derbyshire	SK 399667	0.75
Coldharbour	North East Derbyshire	SK 351592	2.45
Cupola Ponds	North East Derbyshire	SK 334667	13.33
Eddlestowe Lot	North East Derbyshire	SK 323632	0.79
Highoredish	North East Derbyshire	SK 353596	3.93
Holy Moor	North East Derbyshire	SK 322685	12.38
Longstone Moor	North East Derbyshire	SK 313686	23.79
Slagmill	North East Derbyshire	SK 307686	6.49
The Fabric, Ashover Rocks	North East Derbyshire	SK 356637	5.19
Carvers Rocks SSSI	South Derbyshire	SK 330226	0.15
		<b>Total</b>	<b>82.07</b>

<sup>1</sup> Cameron, K. (1959) *The Place-Names of Derbyshire*. The English Place-Name Society



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## Appendix 1 Species for which heathland is a key habitat in Lowland Derbyshire

### Priority Species

#### Vascular Plants

Penny Royal *Mentha pulegium*

#### Amphibians

Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*

#### Birds

Grey partridge *Perdix perdix*  
Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

#### Mammals

Pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

#### Invertebrates

Argent and Sable moth *Rheumaptera hastata*

### Locally Important Species

An important feature of Local BAPs is the selection of locally important, threatened, declining or rare species which add local distinctiveness. Using Endangered Wildlife in Derbyshire (Elkington and Willmot, 1996) and with the help of county recorders the following species have been selected for this category.

#### Vascular Plants

Pale Sedge *Carex pallescens*  
Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*  
Pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium*  
Heather *Calluna vulgaris*  
Wavy Hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*  
Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile*  
Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*

#### Amphibians

Toad *Bufo bufo*  
Palmate newt *Triturus helveticus*

#### Reptiles

Common Lizard *Lacerta vivipara*  
Adder *Vipera berus*  
Grass snake *Natrix natrix*  
Slow worm *Anguis fragilis*

#### Birds

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*  
Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*  
Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*  
Barn owl *Tyto alba*  
Meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*  
Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*  
Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*  
Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

#### Invertebrates

##### Diptera

*Cheilosia mutabilis*  
*Triglyphus primus*  
*Chrysogaster virescens*  
*Trichopsomyia flavitarsis*  
*Melanogaster aerosa*

##### Lepidoptera

Wall *Lasiommata megera*  
Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*  
Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*  
Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*