

**LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE
LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

**HEATHLAND
HABITAT ACTION PLAN
2006 - 2010**



Prepared by the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership



Finalised in November 2006 following consultation

HEATHLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN

TREND IN LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE: Historically heathland was more widely distributed than it is today. Cameron's *The place-names of Derbyshire*¹ includes a number of place names with heath/heather/heathland references. Today the lowland Derbyshire area contains 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

ESTIMATED EXTENT IN LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE: A total of 82ha of heathland in the LBAP area has been mapped. In addition there are some sites where heathland forms a small part of a habitat mosaic.

NATIONAL BAP HABITATS: Lowland heathland and Upland heathland

ASSOCIATED NATIONAL BAP PRIORITY SPECIES:

Species which occur in Derbyshire: Penny royal, great crested newt, argemone and sable moth, bats, skylark and grey partridge.

ASSOCIATED LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE BAP AUDITS: Initial Lowland Derbyshire Heathland Audit, 2006

SPECIES FOR WHICH HEATHLAND IN LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE IS A KEY HABITAT: See Appendix 1 of the document 'Heathland habitats in Lowland Derbyshire'.

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

A vision for the future of heathland in Lowland Derbyshire

There are small, but sustainable, areas of heathland within areas that historically supported heathland. These areas of heathland are large enough to support sustainable populations of locally characteristic reptiles, birds and invertebrates. This can be achieved through working with the appropriate landowners and being opportunistic to create links between existing areas of habitat.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background information on heathland in lowland Derbyshire can be found in the document “Heathland habitats in Lowland Derbyshire”.

2. FACTORS WHICH HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON HEATHLANDS

An impact ✓ *A significant impact* ✓ ✓

	Historic	Current
Land Management		
Lack of appropriate regular traditional management (grazing and burning) leading to scrub and or bracken encroachment	✓✓	✓✓
Overgrazing, changes in stock and grazing at the wrong time of year	✓	✓✓
Conversion to forestry	✓✓	
Agricultural improvement	✓✓	✓
Nutrient enrichment, particularly deposition of nitrogen compounds emitted from intensive livestock farming, or from other sources.	✓	✓
Others		
Lack of awareness of wildlife value of heathland	✓✓	✓
Fragmentation of remaining heathland sites	✓	✓
Uncontrolled burning	✓	✓✓
Unrestricted access by people and dogs		✓

3. CURRENT ACTION

3.1 Legislation

Lowland heathland and examples of purple moor grass habitats are listed in Annex 1 of the EC Habitats Directive; this provides some protection but does not prevent loss due to lack of management.

Under the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), land with more than 50% coverage of heathland can be designated as areas of Open Access. This does not provide any further legal protection. Heathland sites which are designated as Open Access can be assessed and registered as ‘sites at risk from fire’ and can be closed if they are imminently at risk from catching fire.

3.2 Designated Sites

There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the LBAP area which have areas of heathland.

SSSI	Lowland heath (size in ha)	NVC community
Carver’s Rocks	0.15	H9
Hulland Moss	0.03	H9

A number of areas of heathlands have been identified as Wildlife Sites. Policies exist in development and local plans which seek to afford these sites some protection. Although coverage of sites is ad hoc, Wildlife Site status can provide important protection especially within towns and cities.

Wessington Green, which contains small areas of heathland, was declared a Local Nature Reserve in 2004.

3.3 Current Initiatives

- Wessington Green was declared a LNR in 2004 and the management committee are carrying out management on the site to enhance the area of heathland.
- Natural England is working with the owner of Hulland Moss SSSI and BTCV bring the site into favourable condition.
- Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is removing birch and bracken to increase the area of heathland at Carvers Rocks SSSI. They are also clearing further areas of scrub and bracken on the site and creating additional areas of heathland. The Avenue Washlands site has an area of wet heathland and they are restoring a wider area of acid grassland adjacent to the heathland for the heathland to extend into.
- The National Forest Company is encouraging landowners to create heathland in appropriate places using their grant scheme the National Forest Tender Scheme.
- The Wildlife Sites initiative run by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust aim to survey a proportion of Wildlife Sites each year. Management advice and where possible assistance is provided to Wildlife Site owners.
- The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) also provide management advice to owners of land.
- A number of heathland sites are now designated as Open Access land, under the Countryside Rights Of Way Act (CROW). These are either sites that are registered as common land, such as Wessington Green or sites with more than 50% heathland cover. The designation of land as Open Access does not provide any more protection for the heathland nor does it place any obligation on the landowner to manage the heathland. The areas designated as Open Access will be reviewed at least once every 10 years. The area covering Lowland Derbyshire is due for review before 2015 and this will be carried out by Natural England.

3.4 New Initiatives

- The Environmental Stewardship Scheme which replaced the Countryside Stewardship in 2005 has payments for managing existing heathland, restoring and creating new ones. The Entry Level Scheme pays landowners a flat payment per year if they score sufficient points per hectare. The Higher Level Scheme pays for capital works including hedgerow management, gapping up and planting. Farm Environment Plans which accompany Higher level Scheme applications identify areas of heathland which need restoration, management or where opportunities exist for creating new areas.
- In May 2006 the Forestry Commission removed approximately 7ha of conifer plantation to create heathland at Black Rocks. This area was historically part of Cromford Moor and early indications show that heather seeds have begun to germinate in the clearings.

3.5 Land management by LBAP partners

- **Derbyshire Wildlife Trust** manages Carvers Rocks SSSI on behalf of **Severn Trent Water Ltd** and Avenue Washlands
- **Wessington Green LNR Management Committee** manage Wessington Green LNR on behalf of the Parish Council
- **Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service** is responsible for Highoredish and Eddlestow Lot which both include areas of heathland.
- The **National Trust** own an estate at Calke Abbey, where historic evidence suggests used to be heathland. This area may have some potential for heathland recreation. They also manage Alport Heights.
- The **Forest Commission** manage most of Shining Cliff Woods SSSI on behalf of the **National Trust**. There are parts of this site which have the potential to sustain restored heathland. They also manage the woodland at Black Rocks where they are in the process of creating heathland.

4. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

4.1 National Targets

The UK Lowland Heathland Habitat Action Plan (currently under review)

- Maintain the extent of all existing lowland heathland (58,000 ha).
- Improve by management all existing lowland heathland currently in unfavourable condition.
- Encourage the re-establishment by 2005 of a further 6,000 ha of heathland with the emphasis on the counties of Hampshire, Cornwall, Dorset, Surrey, Devon, Staffordshire, Suffolk and Norfolk in England and Pembrokeshire, Glamorgan and west Gwynedd in Wales, particularly where this links separate heathland areas.

The UK Upland Heathland Habitat Action Plan (currently under review)

- Maintain the current extent and overall distribution of the upland heathland which is currently in favourable condition.
- Achieve favourable condition on all upland heathland SSSIs/ASSIs by 2010.
- Achieve demonstrable improvements in the condition of at least 50% of semi- natural upland heath outside SSSI/ASSIs by 2010 (compared with their condition in 2000).
- Seek to increase dwarf shrubs to at least 25% cover where they have been reduced or eliminated due to inappropriate management. A target for such restoration of between 50,000 and 100,000 ha by 2010 is proposed.
- Initiate management to re-create 5,000 ha of upland heath by 2005 where heathland has been lost due to agricultural improvement or afforestation, with a particular emphasis on reducing fragmentation of existing heathland.

4.2 Regional targets

Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8) sets the following targets.

Upland heathland:

- In addition to any existing management agreements, manage 17,000ha of existing upland heathland by 2010
- Create 100ha of new upland heathland by 2005.

Lowland heathland:

- In addition to any existing management agreements, manage 1,000ha of lowland heathland by 2010
- Create 600ha of new heathland by 2005.

4.3 National Forest Targets

The National Forest BAP, which includes the southern part of Derbyshire, has targets for lowland heathland:

- Increase the extent of lowland heathland, through restoration and recreation by a further 40ha by 2010.
- Ensure all heathland sites in the National forest are under appropriate management by 2010.

4.4 Lowland Derbyshire objectives and targets

Objective 1.

To identify and maintain the existing resource of heathland and heathland mosaic sites within the LBAP area.

Target

To maintain the current extent of heathland in the LBAP area by 2010. (Currently this is estimated at 82ha).

Objective 2.

To bring into favourable condition heathland and heathland mosaic habitats within the LBAP area.

Target

To restore 12ha of heathland by removal of scrub/trees and invasive species by 2010.

Objective 3.

To extend and enhance existing heathland areas and to create heathland on appropriate sites.

Target

To create 10ha of heathland by linking and extending existing sites or creating new heathland on sites which could support heathland communities by 2010.

4.5 Main factors likely to affect achievement of targets

Resources and Land management

- Most sites with heathland are within private ownership.
- Providing management advice to landowners is time consuming and current resource for such advice is limited.
- The current payment rates for heathland creation are not economic for arable reversion to heathland.

Planning and Regulations

- Lack of enforcement of planning conditions and retention of existing features through the planning process.

Conflicts with other Conservation priorities

- Resolution of conflicts between other habitats of high value.

Practical difficulties and lack of knowledge

- Inadequate survey/base data for many areas of the LBAP areas

Pollution and climate change

- Climate change

5. ACTIONS

FC = Forestry Commission

LDGAG= Lowland Derbyshire Grassland Action group (all of below)

NE = Natural England, DWT = Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, NT = National Trust, LA = Local authorities, FWAG = Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, NFU = National Farmers Union, GW = Groundwork, DCC = Derbyshire County Council, DCC (CDT) = Derbyshire County Council (Conservation and Design team), LRC = Local Record Centre, WSP = Wildlife Sites Panel, BTCV = British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

Community groups = Other local, community and Friends Of Groups

	ACTIONS	TIME - SCALE	LEAD AGENCY (in bold) & Partners
	DATA COLLATION		
HE1	Continue to collate information on heathland habitats and update GIS layers.	Ongoing	LRC, DWT
	SURVEY		
HE2	Survey heathland Wildlife Sites on a rolling programme of at least once every 15 years	Ongoing	DWT
HE3	Survey potential heathland Wildlife Sites, assess them against the WS Selection guidelines and designate if appropriate.	Ongoing	DWT, WSP
	RESEARCH		
HE4	Carry out research into the historic landscape characterisation of the LBAP area and draw conclusions on historic heathland distribution.	By 2010	DCC (CDT)
HE5	Interrogate the field survey database associated with Landscape Character of Derbyshire to inform the survey data for heathlands.	By 2010	DCC (CDT)
	CONSERVATION ACTION AND INCENTIVES		
HE6	Promote the Environmental Stewardship (ELS and HLS) to landowners as a way of sustainably managing and restoring areas of heathland.	Ongoing	FWAG, DWT, NE, NFU
HE7	On land owned and / or managed by LBAP partners ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of heathland, or heathland mosaic, are managed favourably and opportunities taken to restore heathland in poor condition. • Appropriate opportunities are taken to extend existing areas and create new areas of heathland. 	Ongoing	NT, FC, LAs, DWT, GW, BTCV and other Community Groups
HE8	Where appropriate promote to landowners extension of existing areas of heathland or the creation of new areas on appropriate sites and ensure their future management	Ongoing	FWAG, NE, DWT
	MANAGEMENT AND CREATION ADVICE		
HE9	Promote favourable heathland management, through advice to landowners	Ongoing	FWAG, DWT,
	REGULATION		
HE10	Ensure all planning applications and General Development Orders are adequately assessed in relation to heathland. Appropriate opportunities are taken to protect, maintain and manage areas of heathland through decisions and conditions.	Ongoing	LAs, DWT, NE
HE11	Ensure policy documents, including LDFs include appropriate protection for heathland.	Ongoing	LAs, DWT, NE
	AWARENESS RAISING		
HE12	Inform and educate children and adults about the importance of heathlands and their management.	Ongoing	DCC, DWT, NT, FC, NF

6. RESOURCES

It is envisaged that the majority of actions proposed will be carried out by the relevant organisations using current resources. These include:

- continuing investment by landowners and managers managing their land sympathetically for wildlife
- continuing management of heathland in the ownership of conservation organisations or public bodies

The Environmental Stewardship is a two tier scheme comprising of the Entry level and Higher level scheme. The Entry Level Scheme (ELS) is designed to encourage a large number farmers and land owners into environmental management. The Higher Level Scheme (HLS) is highly targeted and discretionary. HLS will offer options to carry out maintenance, restoration, and creation. In addition the Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) is a whole farm scheme, similar to ELS but is open to all farmers who manage all or part of their land organically and who are not receiving aid under the Organic Aid Scheme or the Organic Farming Scheme.

Additional resources will be required to:

- Maintain the digitised heathland information and distribute to LBAP partners.
- Increase the resources providing farmland management and agri-environmental grant advice to landowners.
- Enhance management and restore some of sites in the ownership of LBAP partners.