

## 10.6 HEATHLAND AND MIRES

Heathland and mires are comprised of a complex series of inter-related vegetation communities often found together in mosaics of habitat. These vegetation types are typically most extensive in the uplands of Derbyshire usually within the Peak District National Park. However, areas of ‘heathland’ are recorded from outside the Park boundary between Buxton and Chapel-en-le-Frith, in the Glossop and Charlesworth area and in the east above Matlock. Some of these such as Comb’s Moss are extensive areas of land, but more commonly they occur as smaller (5 – 20 ha) areas. For some heathland sites the wildlife value is related to size and small sites may be of limited interest, but where wet heath and/or moorland flushes are present the botanical and invertebrate interest may be high. Mire communities in lowland Derbyshire are typically small and restricted to a very few sites. In the uplands there is a far greater range of mire communities and several are relatively widespread. Most of the upland mire communities are within the Peak District National Park and therefore not covered by these guidelines. However, High Peak outside the Park may support examples of some of the mire communities.

### **Application (all heathland and mire guidelines)**

Heathland habitat includes any areas of semi-natural vegetation in which dwarf shrubs, particularly heather are prominent. It is a habitat of international importance. The importance of upland heath (moorlands) on the fringes of the National Park for birds has been recognised recently with their designation as SSSIs and SPAs. Much of the heathland outside the National Park is in small areas often in a matrix of acid grassland and should be assessed accordingly. The presence of breeding populations of waders or significant assemblages of invertebrates or other faunal interest should be assessed according to the Species Guidelines.

### **Justification (all heathland and mire guidelines)**

Heathland is a valuable wildlife habitat. In the uplands it is still relatively abundant and much of it is designated under statutory legislation. Small areas outside of the statutory sites are nonetheless of value. In the lowlands heathland is a rare habitat restricted mainly to a few sites in the Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Trent Valley and Rises. However it is also to be found on former mineral workings in some areas.

## **Heathland and Mires Selection Guidelines**

Sites that meet one or more of the following guidelines will be eligible for designation as a Wildlife Site.

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**HM1** Areas greater than 5 ha (Urban Mersey Basin, Dark Peak and South West Peak) in which the vegetation is dominated by assemblages of at least 25% heath (*Calluna vulgaris* and/or *Erica cinerea* and/or *Erica tetralix*) and/or *Vaccinium myrtillus* (bilberry), *Empetrum nigrum* (Crowberry) and *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* (Cowberry) cover.

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**UKBAP Habitat Action Plan – Upland Heathland**

**LBAP Habitat Action Plan – Upland Heath (LD), Heather Moorland (PD)**

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### **Application**

This guideline should be applied to any site in the upland areas of Dark Peak and South West Peak over 5ha. Smaller areas of moorland in these areas should be considered under HM2.

### **Justification**

Areas of heathland of this size are likely to be more viable and less easily affected by adjacent land uses. They will be large enough to support a diversity of species of plant and animal typical of the habitat.

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**HM2** Areas smaller than 5 ha (Urban Mersey Basin, Dark Peak and South West Peak) that support moorland vegetation occurring in association with other semi-natural habitats of nature conservation interest such as acid grassland.

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**UKBAP Habitat Action Plan – Upland Heathland**

**LBAP Habitat Action Plan – Upland Heath (LD), Heather Moorland (PD)**

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### **Application**

This guideline should be applied to any site in the upland areas of Dark Peak and South West Peak less than 5ha that occur in mosaic with other semi-natural vegetation communities. The Wildlife Sites Selection Panel should discuss these sites.

### **Justification**

Heathland occurs often in a mosaic with other vegetation types such as mires and acid grassland and in these instances a site may also comply with other guidelines. When designating the site all relevant guidelines should be listed and the most appropriate highlighted as the primary selection guideline.

**HM3** Areas of blanket bog, typically referable to the NVC types listed below:

- M19 and M20 and

often in association with flushes and wet heath NVC types:

- M15/M16, M18, M2 and M3
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**UKBAP Habitat Action Plan – Blanket Bog**

**LBAP Habitat Action Plan – Blanket Bog (PD)**

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**Application**

Small areas of blanket bog may occur on the fringes of the Peak District National Park in High Peak, Derbyshire Dales and North-east Derbyshire. Any area of blanket bog found on the fringes of the National Park can be considered under this guideline.

**Justification**

There is little detailed information on the extent of these vegetation communities outside of the National Park boundary. It is likely that only small examples are present, but they may still be of substantial ecological interest within their locality.



Cross-leaved Heather

**HM4** Upland areas that support vegetation referable to or characteristic of the NVC mire communities listed below,

- **M4 Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) – *Sphagnum recurvum* mire.**
- **M6 Star sedge (*Carex echinata*) - *Sphagnum recurvum/auriculatum* mire.**
- **M9 Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) – *Calliergon cuspidatum/giganteum* mire**
- **M10 Dioecious sedge (*Carex dioica*) - Common butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) mire**
- **M21b Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) – *Sphagnum papillosum* valley mire**
- **M22 Blunt-flowered rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) – Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) fen-meadow.**
- **M26b Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) – Marsh Hawk’s-beard (*Crepis paludosa*) mire, Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) sub-community.**
- **M32 *Philonotis fontana* – *Saxifraga stellaris* spring.**
- **M35 Water crowfoot (*Ranunculus omiophyllus*) - Blinks (*Montia fontana*) rills.**
- **M37 *Cratoneuron commutatum*- *Festuca rubra* (Red Fescue) spring.**

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**UKBAP Habitat Action Plans –Fens, Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture  
LBAP Habitat Action Plans – Rush-pasture (LD&PD), Heather Moorland(PD)  
Blanket Bog (PD), River Corridor Habitats(PD)**

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**Application**

This guideline should be applied to upland mire communities found in High Peak outside the Peak District National Park. These sites should be evaluated in relation to the extent of the habitat within the Peak District National Park and in relation to Ratcliffe’s Criteria described in Part A. Other NVC mire communities may be present in the area covered by the guidelines and if identified should be assessed in relation to their known conservation interest and value.

**Justification**

The extent and distribution of these communities in this area is not known in any detail. It is probable that they are relatively rare, but some rush-pasture and wet heath communities in particular may occur more frequently.

**HM5** Upland areas that support vegetation referable to or characteristic of the following NVC communities and that include 10 or more plant species listed in Table 3:

- M23b Soft rush-marsh bedstraw rush-pasture.
- M23a Sharp-flowered rush- marsh bedstraw rush-pasture.
- M25 Purple Moor Grass (*Molinia caerulea*) – Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) mire.

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**UKBAP Habitat Action Plan – Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture**  
**LBAP Habitat Action Plans – Rush-pasture (LD&PD), Heather Moorland (PD), Blanket Bog (PD), River Corridor Habitats (PD)**

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#### **Application**

This type of rush-pasture is present both as discrete stands of vegetation but also in transitions with wet rush dominated grassland and unimproved grassland communities. In some cases the wet grassland guideline may be more appropriate, but where the community is a reasonably good fit for the NVC M23 or M25 community this guideline should be used. Sites supporting this community should be assessed in terms of their overall ecological attributes. Plant diversity should be considered for the site as a whole.

#### **Justification**

These types of rush-pasture often occur in mosaics with other habitats especially grasslands. They are a distinctive semi-natural vegetation community and can be relatively species rich both in terms of plants, invertebrates, mammals and birds.

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**HM6** Areas greater than 0.25 ha in which the vegetation is dominated by assemblages of at least 25% heath (*Calluna vulgaris* and/or *Erica cinerea* and/or *Erica tetralix*) and/or *Vaccinium myrtillus* (bilberry), *Empetrum nigrum* (Crowberry) and *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* (Cowberry) cover (in White Peak, Derbyshire Peak Fringe, Coal Measures, Southern Magnesian Limestone, Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands, Potteries and Churnet Valley and Trent Valley and Rises).

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**HM7** Areas greater than 0.5 ha that support heathland vegetation occurring in association with acid grassland communities referable to the NVC acid communities listed in Gr3 and including at least 6 species from Table 3 (in White Peak, Derbyshire Peak Fringe, Coal Measures, Southern Magnesian Limestone, Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands, Potteries and Churnet Valley and Trent Valley and Rises).

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**UKBAP Habitat Action Plan – Lowland Heathland**  
**LBAP Habitat Action Plans – Lowland Heath (LD), Lowland Dry Acid Grassland (LD), Limestone Dales (PD), Limestone Heath (PD), Rough Grazing (PD), Unimproved Pasture (PD), Heather Moorland (PD)**

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**Application**

These guidelines should be applied to heathland vegetation in the Natural Areas listed. Whilst all sites over 0.25 ha are eligible each should be assessed by the Wildlife Sites Selection Panel based on individual attributes.

**Justification**

The occurrence of these vegetation types in these areas is generally very low and even small examples of the habitat may be of interest.

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**HM8 (a) Lowland areas that support a mire community referable to any listed in the NVC or  
(b) Vegetation displaying characteristics of mire vegetation in terms of species composition and structure and scoring 10 or more from the species listed in Table 3.**

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**UKBAP Habitat Action Plans – Fens, Wet Woodland, Coastal and Floodplain  
Grazing Marsh**

**LBAP Habitat Action Plans – Lowland Fen Meadows (LD), Floodplain Grazing  
Marsh (LD), Wet Woodland (LD&PD), Rush-pasture (LD&PD), River Corridor  
Habitats (PD)**

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**Application**

This guideline can be applied to all lowland sites supporting mire communities. Very degraded sites should be excluded.

**Justification**

Lowland mires are very rare and any sites supporting such vegetation may be of nature conservation significance. They should be assessed in terms of the site and community attributes listed above.



Butterwort