10.5 LEAD RAKES AND LEAD SPOIL HEAPS

Centuries of mining the mineral veins in the White Peak (and to a lesser degree the Derbyshire Peak Fringe) have resulted in a distinctive landscape of hillocks and hollows referred to by the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan (PDNPA, 2001) as lead rakes. Lead rakes support a complex mosaic of vegetation types reflecting their great range of topography and the varied nature of waste material. The toxic nature of some of the lead rake material results in unique 'metallophyte' vegetation communities (metal tolerant) which are considered to be internationally important.

Lead Rake Selection Guideline

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

LeRa1 Lead rakes and spoil heaps supporting characteristic semi-natural grassland vegetation communities including elements of open vegetation referable to the NVC community: -

OV37 Sheep's Fescue (*Festuca ovina*) – Spring Sandwort (*Minuartia verna*) community.

UKBAP Habitat Action Plans – Lowland Meadows and Upland Hay Meadows, Lowland Dry Acid Grassland, Lowland Calcareous Grassland.
LBAP Habitat Action Plans – Lowland Meadows (LD), Lowland Calcareous Grassland (LD), Lowland Dry Acid Grassland (LD), Lead Rakes (PD)

Application

This guideline can be applied to vegetation associated with former lead mine workings in White Peak or rarely Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent. The grassland communities should be agriculturally unimproved and usually there will be an element of open vegetation referable to the OV37 NVC community. Typically this community is found in mosaics with other grassland types including calcareous, acid or neutral communities and rarely heathland. Very poor examples of the habitat may be excluded from selection.

Justification

This community is a local community restricted to the spoil heaps or outcrops of veins of heavy metals among calcareous bedrocks around the upland fringes of northern and western Britain. It is especially associated with the Carboniferous Limestone of the Derbyshire Dales in the White Peak. The community has declined by 50% this century in the Peak District. Lead rakes are a priority habitat in the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan.