



## LOWLAND HEATHLAND

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Lowland heathland is typified by the presence of heathers, dwarf gorses, and cross-leaved heath and is generally found below 300 metres in altitude on poor acid soils. Areas of good quality heathland should consist of an ericaceous layer of varying heights and structures, some areas of scattered trees and scrub, and areas of bare ground, gorse, wet heaths, bogs and open water.

Lowland heathland is a priority for nature conservation because it is a rare and threatened habitat. In England only one sixth of the heathland present in 1800 now remains. The UK has some 58000 ha of lowland heathland of which the largest proportion (55%) is found in England. The most significant areas for lowland heathland include the counties of Hampshire, Cornwall, Dorset, Surrey, Devon, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, Pembrokeshire, West Glamorgan and West Gwynedd. The UK has an important proportion (about 20%) of the international total of this habitat.



Heather © Natural England

### 2. OUR OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

#### Target

- |           |   |                  |
|-----------|---|------------------|
| <b>A.</b> | <b>To maintain the current extent of all heathland above 0.5ha</b>  | <b>2002-2015</b> |
| <b>B.</b> | <b>To improve the condition of all heathland above 0.5 ha, that is currently in unfavourable condition to favourable or improving</b> | <b>by 2006</b>   |
| <b>C.</b> | <b>To increase the extent of the habitat by creating an additional 10ha of heathland, including one site of at least 5ha.</b>         | <b>by 2010</b>   |
| <b>D.</b> | <b>To promote good management practice and to share knowledge</b>   | <b>2002-2015</b> |
| <b>E.</b> | <b>To enhance public appreciation of heathland</b>  | <b>2002-2015</b> |
| <b>F.</b> | <b>To update the Habitat Biodiversity Audit with all known heathland sites</b>  | <b>by 2003</b>   |

**ASSOCIATED HABITAT PLANS**

- Lowland Acid Grassland

**ASSOCIATED SPECIES PLANS**

- Adder

**3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGETS**

- *Maintain the extent of all existing lowland heathland (58,000 ha). **Revised***
- *Improve by management all existing lowland heathland currently in unfavourable condition. **Revised***
- *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. **Revised***

**4. CURRENT STATUS**

Heathlands are rare and not extensive in the sub-region, being mainly associated with common land or woodland. They are confined to the acid glacial soils in the north of the County on the Midlands Plateau Natural Area and can be seen as outliers to the very extensive areas of Heath in neighbouring counties, eg. at Sutton Park, Chasewater and particularly Cannock Chase. Heathland has been lost from Warwickshire largely as a result of urban development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is now just recalled in place names, eg Dickens Heath, Hockley Heath.

Existing knowledge of heathlands across the region estimates the total resource at around 20 ha on nine sites. The largest area is in the order of 15 ha at Grendon and Baddesley Common, where much of the heath has developed on restored open cast coal workings since the 1950s. Other fragments of heathland, mainly of 1 ha or less, occur at Clowes Wood, Rough Hill Wood, Coleshill Pool, Kenilworth Common and Yarningale Common.

In 1997 at Grendon and Baddesley Common, the Merevale Estate began a plan to manage Warwickshire's largest heathland commenced with financial support of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Natural England estimates of heathland in Warwickshire are:

Site	Heathland area ha	Associated habitat	Site status
Baddesley common (includes restoration of some bracken)	3.0	Acid grassland	SINC
Grendon Wood (includes heath under tree cover)	12.2	Acid grassland/ Woodland	SINC
Coleshill Pool (not on HBA)	1.0	Swamp/Woodland	SSSI
Clowes Wood (Not on HBA)	0.25	Acid grassland/ Woodland	SSSI
Rough Hill & Wirehill wood	0.25	Acid grassland/ Woodland	SSSI
Yarningale Common	Present	Acid grassland/ Woodland	SINC
Alvecote Pools/ Pooley colliery	Present	Acid Grassland Bare ground	Outside SSSI
Corley Moor	Present?	Woodland	?
Kenilworth Common	Present	Acid grassland/ Woodland	SINC
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16.7</b>		

#### 4.1 Legal and Policy Status

Only about 10% of the known area, is on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The largest area of heathland on an SSSI (c. 1ha) is at Coleshill Pool, with other small areas at Clowes Wood and Rough Hill Wood.

Work within the LBAP area is currently underway to classify other heathlands as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).

#### 4.2 Current Factors Affecting The Habitat

In the past heathland was lost across England primarily to agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction and development. Uncontrolled burning has also been a particular threat to bryophyte and lichen-rich heathland. The main factors affecting the habitat in our area at present are:

- **Encroachment of trees** and scrub and the simplification of vegetation structure due to a lack of conservation management such as light grazing, controlled burning and cutting.
- **Fragmentation and isolation** as the few sites in Warwickshire are widely scattered.

- **Danger of fires** particularly in the large areas at Grendon and Baddesley Common.
- **Lack of public awareness** as most heathland has been lost from development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and is not part of the public perception of the area.
- **Development of post-industrial sites and disused railway lines** which contain fragments of developing heath.

## 5. CURRENT LOCAL ACTION

The existing management of most sites is known.

- In 1997 at Grendon and Baddesley Common, the Merevale Estate began a plan to manage Warwickshire's largest lowland heathland and its associated acid grassland, with financial support of the Countryside stewardship scheme.
- The fragments of heathland on SSSIs are also actively managed.
- Further new heathland creation schemes may be possible based on present or proposed new nature reserves.
- At Kingsbury the old colliery the MoD Defence Estates have restored a spoil heap to acid grassland with some heather.
- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is actively managing an area of about 1 ha of heathland at Clowes Wood and Rough Hill Wood SSSIs and also at Alvecote Pools outside the SSSI.
- Statutory conservation agencies, WWT and RSPB staff can provide advice on appropriate management, rehabilitation, extension and creation of heathlands.
- DEFRA have a Countryside Stewardship Scheme management agreement for heathland at Yarningale Common.

## 6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS (some dates amended – Core Steering Group – Feb 2008)

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By	Meets objective
<b>Policy &amp; Legislation</b>				
<b>PL1.</b> Ensure that all relevant habitat policy is included in Local Planning Documents (see ODPM Planning Policy Statement PPS9).	LBAPSG	SDC WDC NWBC SMBC	2002-2015	A
<b>PL2.</b> Ensure that any site meeting the relevant criteria is considered for designation as an SSSI.	NE	WWT WM	Review in 2007	A
<b>PL3.</b> Review and select all qualifying heathland sites >0.5ha as SINCs and enter onto database.	WSP	NE WDC SDC WM SMBC NWBC	2003	A, F
<b>Site / Species Safeguard &amp; Management</b>				
<b>SM1.</b> Actively promote appropriate management of all heathland sites over 0.5ha.	WWT	NE WBRC LOs	2002-2015	B, D
<b>SM2.</b> Continue heathland restoration at Grendon and Baddesley Common.	LBAPSG	NE LOs	2007	B
<b>SM3.</b> Identify sites for potential heathland expansion and recreation.	NE	WWT WM	2004	B, C
<b>SM4.</b> Establish heathland recreation/restoration on 5ha of appropriate acid ground by 2005 and 10ha by 2010.	NE	WWT WM	2005 – 2010	C
<b>SM5.</b> Actively recommend measures to increase the extent of connectivity and maintain options to expand area of habitat.	LBAPSG	WCC LAs NE WWT	2008-2015	C
<b>Advisory</b>				
<b>A1.</b> Inform landowners of their heathland resource and provide management advice, sources of machinery etc.	FWAG	NE WWT	2005	B, D
<b>A2.</b> Provide Best Practice Guidelines to appropriate landowners.	NE	WWT FWAG	2003	B, D

Research & Monitoring				
<b>RM1.</b> Define area of current heathland and update Habitat Biodiversity Audit.	HBA	NE WWT	2003	F
<b>RM2.</b> Re-assess current condition of all heathland.	NE	WWT	2005	A, B
Communication, Education & Publicity				
<b>CP1.</b> Hold three open days to increase public awareness of the importance of, and threats to heathlands and their conservation management requirements.	WWT	NE FWAG	2004	E, D

**Abbreviations:** NE – Natural England, FWAG – Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, HBA – Habitat Biodiversity Audit, LBAPSG – Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, NWBC – North Warwick Borough Council, SDC – Stratford District Council, SMBC – Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, WDC – Warwick District Council, WM – Warwickshire Museum, WSP – Wildlife Sites Project, WWT – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

## 7. REFERENCES (see LBAP Bibliography web page)

## 8. FURTHER INFORMATION (see separate Links web page for links to web sites)

UK Lowland Heathland Biodiversity Action Plan no.15:

Buglife (2004) Information on the habitat-management requirements of key invertebrates. CD-Rom £34.99 from Beverley Doyle by email at:

[beverley.doyle@buglife.org.uk](mailto:beverley.doyle@buglife.org.uk)

Guide to Grazing on Lowland Heaths. From Jenny Goy, RSPB, Ryan House, Ryan Business park, Sandford Lane, Wareham, Dorset BH20 4DY, Tel.01929 556651, cost £5.00 including P & P.

A Practical Guide to the Restoration and Management of Lowland Heathland. Also from the RSPB

Thames Basin Heaths – Pulling together for access, conservation & development. Leaflet from 01635 268881 or Thames & Chilterns page of [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

Heathland re-creation on agriculturally improved grass fields. Contact [Martin.Allison@rspb.org.uk](mailto:Martin.Allison@rspb.org.uk) or [Malcolm.Ausden@rspb.org.uk](mailto:Malcolm.Ausden@rspb.org.uk)

Natural England (2005) *Grazing management of lowland heathlands and Management of bare ground*. Leaflets from NE Enquiry Service: 01733 455100

Natural England (2005) *The Importance of Livestock Grazing for Wildlife Conservation*. Leaflet from 01733 455100 or email:

[enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk). Also see [www.grazinganimalsproject.org.uk](http://www.grazinganimalsproject.org.uk)

Herpetological Conservation Trust – Urban Heaths Partnership video 'Backfire'. Information from HCT, 655A Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset BH1 4AP. Tel. 01202 391319. Website: [www.herpconstrust.org.uk](http://www.herpconstrust.org.uk)

## 9. CONTACT

Email: [anton.iring@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:anton.iring@naturalengland.org.uk)