

# Upland Heathland



## Description

Upland Heathlands are generally found above 300m, where rainfall is in excess of 1,000mm per year. They are areas with underlying peat, formed many thousands of years ago, dominated by shrub plants such as Heather, Bell Heather, Bilberry, Crowberry and Cottongrass in the shallow peat pools.

Due to altitude and diverse weather conditions, unique communities of flora and fauna are found in the habitat. Upland Heathlands are home, for whole or part of the year, to Mountain Hare, Red Grouse, Merlin, Golden Plover, Curlew, Dunlin, Ring Ouzel, Twite, Green Hairstreak Butterfly, Emperor Moth and Viviparous Lizard. The moorland streams associated with the fringes of the Upland Heathland can be important for Water Vole. Modern management for this habitat mainly favours Red Grouse with strip burning or flailing, but there are benefits for other upland species. Cloughs are mainly unmanaged and these zones provide a stable environment.

## National Status

Dwarf shrub heaths are derived from upland woodlands and are almost entirely confined to the western seaboard of Europe. The UK holds a high percentage of the world total and is therefore responsible for retaining this unique habitat.

Most of the habitat lies within National Park boundaries in England and Wales.

## Local Status

Most of the Upland Heathland is within the Peak District National Park in Barnsley, and there are a total of 14 sites identified.

It is an important and distinct habitat within the borough, existing as remnants of very old landscapes containing good assemblages of species.

## Legal Status

The area within the Peak District National Park is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This area is controlled by the Peak District National Park Authority as Planning Authority.

Some of the area within the Peak District National Park is classified as an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA).

Sites in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as Natural Heritage Sites (NHS) have a presumption against development but have no protection against operations which do not require planning consent.

The DEFRA Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) Regulations may apply.

## Links with other Action Plans

SAP3 Water Vole  
SAP7 Kestrel  
SAPI3 Twite

### **Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline**

- Inappropriate management, such as over-grazing, due to large stocks of sheep on the moor as a result of EU agricultural policy.
- Heather burning may affect the character of the habitat and its wildlife.
- Bracken invasion in some areas.
- Climate change and its effects, such as infestation of Heather Beetle due to mild winters and wet springs.

### **Current Local Action**

- Ongoing Annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) of selected areas of Langsett and Ladycross Moor commissioned by BTO, RSPB and DEFRA.
- Survey of some areas by Barnsley Bird Study Group and other interested individuals.
- Water Vole survey of some moorland fringe streams

### **Proposed Local Action**

- Provide an inventory of Upland Heathland sites, their status and ownership.
- Encourage participation among farmers in Environmental Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship Schemes.
- Encourage the appropriate management of Upland Heathland, including works beneficial to Bumble Bees.
- Survey and monitor all known Green Hairstreak sites.
- Extract past records, survey and monitor Mountain Hare.
- Extract any past records, survey and monitor for Adder and Common Lizard.
- Extract information from the *Barnsley Bird Study Group Breeding Bird Survey* to provide populations and mapping of breeding Red Grouse, Curlew, Nightjar, Cuckoo, and Ring Ouzel and Twite.

### **BMBC Planning Policy Actions**

- Encourage the creation of new habitat through the requirement made under Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9, to incorporate biodiversity enhancements into development wherever possible.

### **BMBC Land Ownership and Management Actions**

- Work with Coalfield Heathland Project to identify and develop new western gorse Upland Heathland sites on Barnsley MBC owned land.