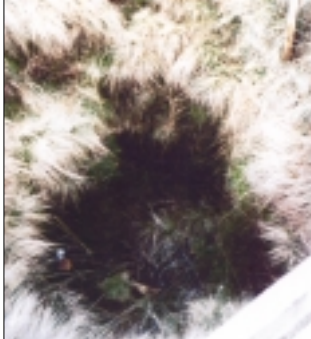


Special Scientific Interest

Issue 10 of the Environment News reported on the use of a helicopter to airlift 40 tonnes of stone to the Leek Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) near Buxton in Derbyshire. This had been necessary in order to carry out essential remedial work in the area, which was inaccessible via land transport as the area was covered with around 2.5 metres of wet peat.



Goyt's Moss and Axe Edge Moor Update

The Goyt's Moss and Axe Edge Moor area, situated in the Peak District National Park contains a total of 424 coal mine shafts or shaft like features and 8 adits. The years between 1790 and 1810 were key to mining in the region and a number of closely placed shafts were sunk until the shallow coal reserves were exhausted. By 1893 all the economical reserves were exhausted and mining ceased in the area.

An area of the Goyt's Moss Colliery site, containing thirty nine shafts and their associated earthworks had been identified as an Ancient Monument. The location of the majority of the shafts were identifiable by shallow depressions, some filled with water, with associated small mounds of colliery spoil. Over a period of time the fill of the shafts had subsided to a depth that was considered a hazard to the public and were subsequently fenced off on behalf of the Authority. Shafts with little settlement were not considered to be a hazard and at the request of English Heritage and the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNRA) were not fenced.

Within the monument area nine shafts had been identified as requiring attention due to the depth of the depression and had been fenced as a temporary measure whilst all necessary consents were obtained.

This consent was required under the Ancient Monument and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended), Section 2. Work on the six shafts in the areas outside the monument needing remedial works required SSSI consent from English Nature.

An application was made to the Secretary of State for Culture,

Media and Sport to carry out shaft filling works to the shafts with deep depressions. English Heritage and the Peak District National Park Authority were consulted and approval for the works was granted subject to conditions.

The main condition of this consent was that all works must be carried out as detailed in an Archaeological Watching Brief approved by English Heritage, with an archaeologist in attendance during excavations. Due to the importance of the site, work could only be carried out with a minimum of vehicle movements when ground conditions were good during the summer months.

The proposed works entailed the removal of the soils covering the depression within the shafts, and carefully stockpiling to preserve the seed bed. The depression was then filled with stone to within one metre of the surface, replacing the soils to leave a shallow depression to identify the shaft location and removing the need for permanent fencing. The shafts outside the monument requiring treatment were dealt with to the same specification with the approval of the PDNRA and English Nature.

The treatment of the shafts was carried out over two summers because work had to be abandoned in the first year due to adverse weather conditions. The last shaft to be treated under the current approval by the Secretary of State was completed in September 2002. Any future treatment of shaft collapses within the monument area will require a new approval to be applied for.

A shallow mine workings collapse in November 2002 in the Leek Moors SSSI was treated with 20 tonnes of stone after the

construction of an access road with 200 tonnes of stone. This collapse was treated with the approval of the PDNPA and also English Nature under Section 28H of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Because it was not in the Monument area the approval of the Secretary of State was not required.

Treatment to all the shafts, whether within the Monument or SSSI, was carried out under an Archaeological Survey and Watching Brief as required by the Secretary of State. This brief consisted of two elements, a topological survey and a watching brief as excavations were carried out. A survey of the shaft area and 10 metres around the shaft, together with any important features and access roads, was carried out by a total station theodolite. All excavations were carried out with an archaeologist in attendance to record and preserve, if necessary, any interesting artefacts. Nothing of interest was found on any of the locations.

On completion of the works a report was published by the Archaeological Research and Consultancy at the University of Sheffield and was deposited with Sheffield City Museum, English Heritage and the Derbyshire Site and Monuments Record.

Axe Edge and Goyt Valley have been scheduled under the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2003 for open access, which will put the onus on the landowners to ensure the safety of the public exercising their rights. The Authority will respond as normal to any shaft or mining collapse posing a risk to the public.