
Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan

Annual Report No. 1 - October 2002



Introduction

This report reviews actions between June 2001 and September 2002 which have contributed towards the delivery of objectives and targets in the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan (PD BAP). It must be pointed out that this is not presented as a complete record of progress towards targets, nor has the Peak District BAP process necessarily led or even had significant input into the actions outlined below. In many cases it has been difficult to obtain data against which progress towards targets can be measured quantitatively. Nevertheless for the first time it collates information on some of the most significant actions for biodiversity conservation across the Peak District. Further development of monitoring systems will be required to ensure that progress against targets can be measured in future. The following issues have presented particular difficulties in compiling information during this first year:

- The difficulty of monitoring across part of 4 regions, 6 old counties and 12 local authority areas. The PD BAP area overlaps different reporting areas for many organisations. Much information has only been extractable for the National Park or on a whole-county basis.
- Lack of feedback from relevant organisations. In some cases feedback has been received for some areas but not others.
- Obtaining data for the relevant time period, given differing internal reporting periods between organisations.
- The difficulty in obtaining quantitative data on hectareage or population size affected by actions.
- It has not been possible to distinguish between those actions which have been led by the BAP process, those which it has significantly influenced and those which have gone ahead irrespective of the BAP process.

25 Key Actions

Data collation and survey

A Partnership project to collate the major "phase 1" habitat survey information, and more specific information on woodland and associated habitats, is currently in preparation. This project is led by the Forestry Commission, National Park Authority and English Nature, with funding from several other partners. It will be expanded to produce a GIS-based database for all the major PD BAP habitats.

A feasibility study to identify options for co-ordination of biological recording in Derbyshire and the Peak District is being proposed by the Derbyshire Biodiversity Network.

English Nature have produced and distributed a GIS-based protected species database for the Peak District and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust have done the same with a County Red Data Plants database.

Policy

The Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations for Uncultivated Land and Semi-natural Areas, which came into force on 1st February 2002, provide an important mechanism for safeguarding sites of wildlife importance. DEFRA and the PDNPA have been raising awareness of the regulations amongst land managers in the Peak District and providing advice.

The National Trust launched their Nature Conservation Strategy for the Peak District in September 2002, incorporating BAP objectives.

Conservation action and incentives

Agri-environment schemes run by DEFRA and forestry grant schemes run by the Forestry Commission remain one of the most important tools through which biodiversity objectives and targets are delivered. From June 2001 to June 2002 there were 21 Countryside Stewardship (CS) applications within the National Park, and 9 new applications and 15 applications to upgrade agreements in the North Peak ESA. To date there are 230 Countryside Stewardship agreements in the National Park (plus 16 currently being added), including approximately 4000 ha. moorland. Within the Derbyshire part of the Peak District there are also an estimated 600 haymeadow and 1500 ha. pasture in CS agreements.

As an example of the benefits to landowners, over £208,000 income has been generated to farmers in the Peak District over next 10 years through the Peak Birds Project (see under Species below).

Two projects linking environmental management with economic benefits are being developed. The Land Management Initiative (LMI) is a national Countryside Agency project looking at alternative ways of funding rural enterprises. The Peak District is one of the trial areas. The Environmental Quality Mark (EQM) is an accreditation scheme awarded to businesses (including farming) fulfilling certain environmental criteria. PD BAP objectives have been an important consideration in developing grant rates/eligibility criteria for these projects.

A Biodiversity Vision Project is underway in a trial area, aimed at delivering a wide range of biodiversity objectives in an integrated way at a whole landscape scale (PDNPA/EN).

Resources

Most action and projects have been funded directly through partner funding, either individually or as joint projects, or through external funding generated by individual partners. In some cases this has been directly stimulated by the BAP process, such as the Biodiversity Vision Project the Peak Birds Project and the GIS database project. There may be scope for greater co-ordination of external funding bids for priority actions through the BAP steering group.

Monitoring

See Introduction.

Awareness

An Awareness Group has been established to take forward the publicity, education, information and community engagement aspects of the BAP.

The BAP has been published on the National Park Authority's website (www.peakdistrict.org). An educational website is currently being developed for the Peak District, for which the wildlife section is based on the BAP.

A PD BAP display and leaflets have been produced. These have been shown at many venues and distributed through a wide range of outlets. Leaflets are obtainable, and the display can be booked, through Anne Loy at the National Park Authority's office (tel- 01629 816383).

A series of fact sheets to provide further information on what people can do to help wildlife are currently being developed by members of the Awareness Group.

Publicity about the BAP or specific aspects of it has been through press releases, radio interviews, articles in various publications and newsletters and the Peak District Accommodation Guide

Copies of the BAP leaflet have been distributed to all Parish Councils within the National Park, offering support for projects within their parish which would contribute towards BAP objectives. Local Authorities have been approached to encourage inclusion of BAP issues in Community Strategies, and two Village Design events have been attended.

Woodland

Oakwood

22 ha. of new Upland Oakwood will be created on 3 sites, supported by the Forestry Commission's New Native Woodland Challenge Fund during 2002. This includes 9.7 ha. of Severn Trent Water/National Trust land at Slippery Stones. Since the Fund's launch in 1998 it has supported the creation of 166.2 ha. of Upland Oakwood (13 sites) in the Peak District.

Management/monitoring continued at 5 oakwood nature reserves (approximately 35 ha.) (Derbys WT).

Sheffield City Council has reviewed the management of a number of their woodland properties. At Wyming Brook, 19 ha. of oak will be allowed to grow through dying and non-regenerating conifers; at Blacka Moor (leased to Sheffield Wildlife Trust) natural regeneration of up to 30 ha. of oak-birch woodland will be encouraged; and at Burbage Moor plantations a feasibility study for conversion of conifers to 10 ha. upland oak and 20 ha. moorland is being carried out.

160 ha. of land was surveyed in the Upper Derwent Valley during 2001 by the National Trust, Severn Trent Water and the National Park Authority, to assess the potential for native woodland creation. This included 100 ha. of plantations on ancient woodland sites and 56 ha. of open ground. Work has continued on a similar scale during 2002.

Local source oak and aspen have been grown and planted (National Trust and Derbys WT High Peak Group).

Ashwood

Management to improve the condition of existing ashwoods has included removal of Beech and Horse Chestnut and reintroduction of Lime, Hazel and Field Maple at High Tor Matlock (Derbys Dales District Council). The Arkwright Society have carried out a lime survey and control and monitoring of sycamore in the Via Gellia.

Approximately 6 ha. of new ashwood has been established at Eldon Quarry during 2001/02 as part of restoration scheme (RMC Aggregates), and approximately 1 ha. grazing was excluded at Weags Barn to encourage natural regeneration and enhancement of ash woodland. (Staffs WT).

Since the Forestry Commission's New Native Woodland Challenge Fund's launch in 1998 it has supported the creation of 0.4 ha. of Upland Ashwood (1 site) in the Peak District (none in 2001/02).

Dormouse were introduced to a limestone dale woodland in the Peak District in late summer 2002 as part of English Nature's Species Recovery Programme (EN, NT, Mammal Society).

Wet Woodland

Small areas of wet woodland will be created within blocks of upland oakwood through the Native Woodland Challenge Fund.

At Blacka Moor and Wyming Brook 6.4 ha. wet woodland is secured under favourable management through a long term forest plan.

The Arkwright Society, Derby University and Sorby Natural History Society have carried out a botanical and entomological survey of Slinter millstream (Via Gellia) to guide management.

Grassland

Survey methods, evaluation and favourable management of a range of grassland types have been agreed through the Grassland BAP Group.

Haymeadows

Both the Pastures Project and Sheffield Fringe Grassland Project (see below) have led to survey and negotiation of conservation agreements on a number of haymeadows.

Haymeadow data for the Peak District was reviewed with a view to SSSI designation for important sites. Candidate sites have been surveyed during 2002 (EN, PDNPA).

Experimental haymeadow restoration by English Nature in 2000 at Lathkill Dale is showing signs of success. A demonstration day for landowners, and a further one for conservation organisations, was held in 2002. The National Trust also carried out haymeadow restoration at Edale.

Approximately 6.4 ha. of haymeadows in the Via Gellia were surveyed re possible purchase and conservation management (Arkwright Society)

30.96 ha. of haymeadow have been brought into agri-environment schemes through the Peak Birds Project (see under Species below).

Unimproved Pastures

A joint National Park Authority/English Nature Grassland Project in 2001/02 surveyed all known unimproved pastures of ecological importance in the Glossop/New Mills/Hayfield areas, and other sites around Winster and Bradfield, based on data held by Derbys WT and PDNPA. 53 'Category A' (highest quality) and 42 'Category B' sites were covered, including extensive areas of neutral, acid and wet grasslands, grass/heath mosaics and curlew breeding sites. Farm reports have been produced for owners and negotiation of conservation agreements has started.

In partnership with the Sheffield BAP, a joint project (EN/PDNPA/Sheffield WT/FWAG/DEFRA/Sheffield City Council) has surveyed around 70 fields on the Sheffield/Peak District fringe. Negotiation of agri-environment scheme agreements is taking place.

0.7 ha. of species-rich grassland has been restored on semi-improved species-poor pasture at Weags Barn, using local hay as seed source (Staffs WT)

There was serious damage to pastures at Bradfield (up to 7 fields, 5.5 ha.) as a result of cultivation, possibly in response to the draft map of open country on which access rights will be based.

43.5 ha. of unimproved pasture have been brought into agri-environment schemes through the Peak Birds Project (see under Species below).

A survey of acid grasslands for fungi is underway at several sites. Some appear to be of international importance (NT/PDNPA).

Rough Grazing

1.7 ha. of rough grazing have been brought into agri-environment schemes through the Peak Birds Project (see under Species below).

Rush Pasture

1 ha. rush-pasture has been restored by rush cutting and grazing at Hammonds Field (YWT).

Cattle grazing has been introduced on 6.5 ha. of overgrown rush pasture at Black Brook NR (Staffs WT).

The NT have carried out rush pasture restoration/rewetting at 2 sites in Edale in partnership with the farmer.

6.25 ha. of land is being rewetted and 4 scrapes created under agri-environment schemes through the Peak Birds Project (see under Species below).

There was serious damage to 12.4 ha. of rush pasture at Bradfield through cultivation, possibly in response to the draft map of open country.

Lead rakes

A joint National Park Authority/English Nature/National Trust project to survey and negotiate agreements on lead rakes of ecological importance around Monyash and Sheldon. 52 fields (112.9 ha. of grassland, including 8.1 ha. of lead rake) were surveyed including sites with Mountain Pansy, Frog Orchid, Leadwort, Bilberry and Grass of Parnassus. A report has been produced and negotiation to secure appropriate management continues.

Archaeological work is also contributing to BAP objectives. English Heritage (EH) recently scheduled 36 (260 ha.) lead mine sites within the Peak District orefield as Scheduled Ancient Monuments, and a poster/leaflet/media campaign is proposed to raise awareness/appreciation of the resource.

Approximately 5 ha. of lead rake habitats are under favourable management at Rose End Meadows and Gang Mine (Derbys WT), with further areas within the Derbyshire Dales NNR (EN), High Tor and Lovers Walk (DDDC) and Hard Rake Sheldon (PDNPA).

Wetland & Aquatic Habitats

Action for Water Voles (see below) has benefited river corridor habitats.

A Fisheries Action Plan for the River Dove has been produced (EA/NT/Fishing Clubs).

67 of the 117 ponds on the NT's South Peak Estate have been surveyed, and 3 ponds restored or improved this year.

A dewpond has been restored at Weag's Barn (Staffs WT) and monitoring of other dewpond restoration trials continues (EN/PDNPA).

Improvements to bank side habitat have been made at Baslow (EA/BTCV/Chatsworth).

Several pools have been established at Eldon Hill quarry as part of the restoration scheme (RMC).

Moorland & Heathland

Limestone Heath

Creation of approximately 15 ha. of limestone heath has been trailed at 4 sites using different techniques (EN, PDNPA,NT). Further monitoring is required to determine success but early results are promising.

Blanket Bog and Heather Moorland

The HLF bid by the Moors for the Future partnership has been successful. Staff for this £4.7 million project are currently being recruited. Over the next 5 years this will enable restoration of over 300 ha. of bare eroding moorland, 19 km of eroding moorland paths, moorland research and survey, a "Moor Care" initiative, development of a moorland centre at Edale and the provision of appropriate interpretive and educational facilities.

English Nature have secured £400,000 towards moorland restoration in the Peak District, to be targeted at restoration of eroding areas and enhancement of degraded blanket bog through the Moors for the Future project.

25 hectares of very degraded Blanket Bog at Arnfield Moor has been revegetated (United Utilities).

Restoration of 160 ha. of heather moorland, including regeneration from Molinia moor, is planned in the SW Peak supported by the ESA (private owner/Moorland Association/CLA/DEFRA)

Experimental gully blocking has been carried out on Bleaklow (NT, EN)

A report on restoration of heathland from Molinia moor in the Upper Derwent was produced (NT/Geoff Eyre), and work on the ground has continued.

65 ha. of heather restoration has been undertaken at Mam Tor (NT/DEFRA).

Consideration of a "wild by design" approach to restoring moorland, native woodland and other habitats is under consideration for the Alport valley (NT/FC/PDNPA).

A management plan for Blacka Moor has been completed (Sheffield WT/Sheffield City Council/HLF/PDNPA/DEFRA/EN).

An ex-situ stock of Bearberry has been established (DWT High Peak Group, NT)

Research on the role of peat erosion on water discolouration has started (NT/STW), and further research on management solutions to reduce erosion is planned as part of Moors for the Future (Yorkshire Water).

Invertebrate monitoring was carried out on Kinder Scout (NT).

There was serious damage to 2 moorlands at Hayfield and Bradfield (18 ha. and 2.5 ha. respectively) as a result of cultivation, possibly in response to the draft map of open country on which access rights will be based.

In response to the cultivation of the above areas of moorland following production of the draft map of open country, the National Park Authority and DEFRA secured an Order under Section 42 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act to pre-empt further damage to moorland. The Order applies to all areas of moorland in the National Park which are not otherwise protected through SSSI designation or ESA agreements.

The results of the Mountain Hare survey in 2000 were published (DWT/NT/PDNPA).

Species

Water Vole

A Water Vole action group has been established. Surveys (Derbys and Staffs WTs) have revealed that narrow moorland streams support important populations. Other key areas include the River Wye and its tributaries and stretches of the Rivers Derwent and Dove. However declines continue- the last known population in the Goyt catchment was lost during 2001. Surveys have been followed up by discussions with landowners re management.

A mink control seminar for the Peak District was held in June and a proposed mink control strategy has been produced.

Birds

A joint 3-year RSPB/PDNPA Peak Birds Project was launched in September 2001 focusing on Lapwing, Curlew and Twite. Surveys have been carried out in 2001 and 2002 by volunteers co-ordinated through local bird groups. The Project Officer has contacted land managers covering 28% of the Peak District Lapwing population, and management advice will be implemented on sites covering 17% of the population. 13 Twite sites, supporting approximately 50% of the Peak District population had owner contact, and on 7 sites agri-environment schemes to benefit Twite will be implemented.

Only 2 pairs of Twite remain in Barnsley within the Peak District- an alarming decline.

Experimental measures to rewet fields for breeding waders are being trailed at Padfield (RSPB/United Utilities).

Survey of moorland fringe sites suitable for Twite feeding sites has been carried out (United Utilities, Bird Groups)

A survey of Golden Plover moorland fringe inbye feeding grounds was carried out (NT/RSPB).

Derbyshire Feather-Moss

Water quality continues to be monitored by EA/EN.