A Living Landscape- Growing Together

PEAK DISTRICT
NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan

Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan Mid-Term Review 2001-2007

Contents:

Acknowledgements

This report was written by the Peak District BAP co-ordinator, Karen Shelley.

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Barry Soames for work on the GIS database; Sue McKenzie for initial analysis of the database figures; Rhodri Thomas and Jane Chapman (PDNPA) for their input, advice and support; the members of the habitat and species sub-groups and Biodiversity Implementation Group and Natural England for providing funding towards the production of this review document.

Progress made towards the Peak District BAP targets to date has been a direct result of the work of BAP partners, project officers, land managers and individuals who have been working across the Peak District to conserve, enhance and protect BAP habitats and species for generations to come.

Foreword

The natural qualities of the Peak District underpin much of the aesthetic and economic health of the area. The wildlife of the area, and the habitats on which it depends, enrich our health, well-being and prosperity. Moreover it is important in its own right, and provides an important indicator of how sustainable our impacts on natural resources are.

This Review summarises the main progress since the launch of the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan in 2001 and, equally importantly, identifies where conservation aspirations have not been met as successfully. There has been much progress in particular on protected sites, on moorland and woodland habitats and on several species which have been the focus of conservation action. The day-to-day work of many organisations and individuals, carrying out work themselves and supporting and advising landowners/managers, has been vital in securing many of these gains. In addition a wide range of exciting projects have been bringing real benefit to the biodiversity of the area, from the major Moors for the Future partnership project and the water companies' Sustainable Catchment Management Programmes, through The Wildlife Trusts Rivers & Wildlife Projects, Natural England's Moorland Management Plan project, the National Trust/Forestry Commission's Alport Valley project, the National Park Authority's Biodiversity Vision Project, the RSPB/National Park's Peak Birds Project and many projects by individual landowners.

In other areas of work there is still much to do. There is first of all a need to ensure we have better and more readily available data on the wildlife resource of the area and on conservation activities affecting it. We will need to adapt to changes in agricultural support and agri-environment schemes to ensure environmentally sensitive farming is an attractive enough option to landowners to achieve biodiversity targets. Resources will need to be secured to continue existing projects and develop new ones, and there will be challenges in integrating landscape character and habitat enhancement/creation. Changes in wildlife which are likely to be the result of climate change are already evident and will continue to accelerate. We will need to plan for changes both to minimise risk to existing habitats/species and to maximise the potential for other species of conservation importance to take advantage of new opportunities; and we will need to address the spread of invasive species, which may be influenced by climate change.

The progress achieved since 2001 shows what can be done when commitment, resources and a solid approach to working in partnership are there. I commend this Review to all partners, and look forward to further real benefits for biodiversity through to 2010 and beyond.

Tony Hams
Chair
Peak District National Park Authority

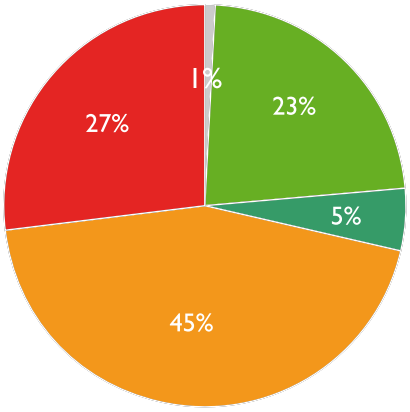
Introduction

A Living Landscape - The Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan, was launched in 2001 to set out priorities for wildlife conservation through to 2010, agreed by a wide range of partner organisations. It set targets by which the success of conservation action could be measured. Six years into the ten-year plan it is timely to take stock. Much has changed since 2001:

- the UK Government set a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target for 95% of SSSIs to be in favourable or recovering condition by 2010;
- in October 2003 English Nature published monitoring results which showed that only 28% of SSSI land in the Peak District met this target, while in April 2007, this figure had risen to 58% (see pie charts below);
- there have been substantial changes to agricultural support and agri-environment and woodland grant schemes;
- the Environmental Impact Assessment (Uncultivated Land and Semi-natural Areas) regulations came into force in 2001 and were revised in 2006;
- the NERC Act (2006) placed an explicit duty on all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity;
- awareness of climate change has grown;
- implementation of the Water Framework Directive has progressed;
- the UK BAP was reviewed (2005-2007);
- a number of important conservation projects were launched locally.

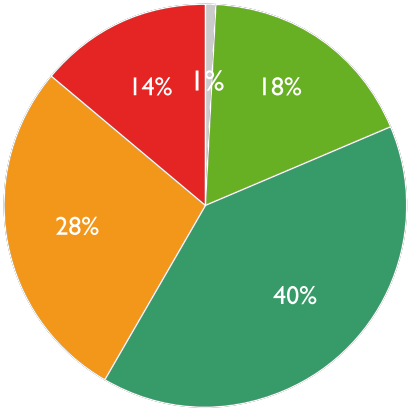
All of these changes have impacted on wildlife in the Peak District.

Peak District National Park SSSI Condition: October 2003



Key:	
Favourable	
Unfavourable recovering	
Unfavourable no change	
Unfavourable declining	
Part destroyed/Destroyed	

Peak District National Park SSSI Condition: April 2007



The purpose of this mid-term review is to **identify what has been achieved to date**; to **amend targets where necessary** in the light of experience and changing circumstances; and to **set out what needs to be done** to meet those revised targets. New Habitat or Species Action Plans have not been included as part of this review, but will be produced as additions to the BAP where appropriate.

As with the UK BAP many of the original Peak District BAP targets were set with insufficient knowledge of the resource. A major element of the review has been to improve our knowledge of BAP habitats in order to provide a baseline from which we can measure achievement. The targets have been revised to ensure they remain challenging yet realistic to achieve given the experience of conservation bodies and individuals over the last six years, and the resources to which the BAP partnership might realistically aspire over the coming years. The opportunity has also been taken to simplify and clarify the targets for increasing biodiversity, and to ensure that they can be measured.

Target Types

Revised PD BAP targets have been assigned to one of six categories, in line with the UK BAP.

For Habitats:

- Maintaining Extent - No reduction in the area of BAP habitat.
- Achieving Condition - Maintain and/or improve the condition of the existing BAP habitat.
- Restoration - Improve the condition of relict or degraded habitat.
- Expansion - Increase the extent of BAP habitat.

For Species:

- Range - Maintain or increase range compared to range in 2005.
- Population Size - Maintain or increase population size compared to level in 2005.

Progress Towards Key Actions

Throughout the Peak District BAP and its Habitats and Species Action Plans there are recurring themes, some of which are central to meeting the BAP objectives and targets as a whole. The BAP partners identified a number of key actions grouped under seven headings. Progress towards these key actions is summarised here.

Data Collation and Survey

A GIS-based database of Peak District BAP habitats and condition has been developed by the National Park Ecology Team in liaison with BAP partners. Information for some habitats is incomplete or dated, and the use of remote sensing data is being evaluated by the National Park Authority (PDNPA) as a means of helping address this in the future. Collation of information on conservation action by a wide range of partners remains problematical but has been significantly improved by the allocation of the post of BAP Co-ordinator within the PDNPA, supported by funding from Natural England (NE).

Strategic Policies

Achievement of BAP targets is now embedded into the National Park Management Plan, and the BAP is routinely referred to in Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs). At the regional level the Peak District is identified as a Biodiversity Conservation Area (BCA) within regional policy documents. Local experience has also been used to influence national policy and implementation, including the EIA Regulations for Uncultivated and Semi-natural Land, regulations relating to overgrazing of land, and the proposed adoption of metalliferous habitats as a UK BAP priority habitat.

Conservation Action and Incentives

Agri-environment schemes have played a fundamental role in helping to achieve BAP targets. The negotiation of Moorland Management Plans under Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) agreements, for example, has been central to achieving recovering condition on SSSI moorland. The replacement of ESAs and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) by the two-tier Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ESS) is welcomed in principle, but limits to available financial support are restricting the higher tier (HLS) to a much narrower range of sites. The PDNPA is using other incentives such as the Environmental Enhancement Scheme (EES) and the Environmental Quality Mark (EQM) to encourage delivery of BAP objectives.

Resources

The majority of other work contributing to BAP targets has been funded independently from the BAP process through core partner funding and projects with external funding, such as Moors for the Future. However, resources specifically related to BAP delivery have included 12 months' funding from NE towards the BAP Co-ordinator post; over £140,000 from the Aggregates Levy for setting up the Biodiversity Vision Project; and Landfill Tax (£58,129 via the SITA Trust) for work on grassland conservation and restoration, and pond conservation and restoration within the Vision Project area. More recently, the appointment of the BAP Co-ordinator has allowed the BAP partnership to access £6,500 from NE for BAP delivery work.

Monitoring

Monitoring progress against the actions identified in the Action Plans has been hindered by inadequate baseline information about BAP habitats and species; by the difficulty of collating information on conservation action from a wide range of partners; and by a lack of resources to assess changes in condition other than on SSSIs.

It should be noted that directly monitoring the condition of sites has only been possible for SSSIs, through EN/NE's monitoring programme. For non-SSSI sites, however, direct information on condition has largely been unavailable. For this reason a proxy measure has been used to assess progress against existing targets, whereby if sites are entered into an appropriate conservation scheme they have been deemed to be in favourable or recovering condition.

Awareness Raising and Public Enjoyment

Direct public engagement in the BAP has been addressed particularly through the Biodiversity Vision Project, where the role of a dedicated Community Conservation Officer has been very successful, working alongside rangers in engaging local schools, community groups, local residents and others in conservation activities in their local environment. Between 2003 and 2006 this has included 43 walks, 17 talks, 71 school activities, 21 village events and shows, 65 practical conservation tasks, six community-led projects, 14 training events, 15 interpretive projects, and 21 wider awareness raising events.


Grass identification course

The Peak Birds Project also includes significant awareness raising, advisory and public involvement elements. Over 230 farmers have been visited and more than 90 are known to be implementing bird-friendly management. Management for Birds open days have been attended by 180 farmers and land managers, two on-farm training events attracted 200 people, three project newsletters have been produced and 30 illustrated talks given to farmers and wildlife groups.

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) also provides a programme of educational and awareness raising events and conservation activities within the BAP area including wildlife walks in Millers Dale, Chee Dale, Hopton, and Rose End Meadows, and conservation work parties at Rose End Meadows, Chee Dale, Millers Dale and Priestcliffe Lees.

Whilst many of the BAP achievements have been at least facilitated if not delivered by conservation bodies, the contribution of individuals, businesses and non-conservation organisations should be stressed. These include quarry companies who manage nature reserves on their holdings and contribute materials for habitat restoration projects, contractors who deliver wildlife benefits alongside routine work, farmers and local businesses who care about wildlife conservation, as well as local schools, groups, and individuals involved in practical conservation tasks.

Research

Most opportunities for learning have been on an informal basis arising through implementation, with the notable exception of the successful research programmes developed within the Moors for the Future partnership. This partnership has been investigating patterns and processes on moorlands and conducting baseline surveys of breeding birds, vegetation condition, gully blocking, footpath condition, recreational use and visitor attitudes. It also supports independent research and provides a range of data sets, access to GIS facilities and small project grants to researchers. Moors for the Future has hosted four moorland conferences giving partners the opportunity to highlight and discuss research and practical management issues on moorlands.


Bird survey training

Other examples of expertise developed in the course of implementing Peak District BAP objectives include dewpond restoration techniques, hay meadow seed collection and spreading, and practical management techniques for farmland birds.

The following table provides an overall assessment of the level of progress made towards achieving the targets for habitats and species set out in the BAP. At a glance, this shows where progress has been significant and also highlights areas demanding increased effort. The remainder of this report sets out progress towards targets, revised targets and how those targets will be addressed, for each of the major habitat groups (Woodlands, Grasslands, Wetlands and Moorlands) and for priority species in turn.

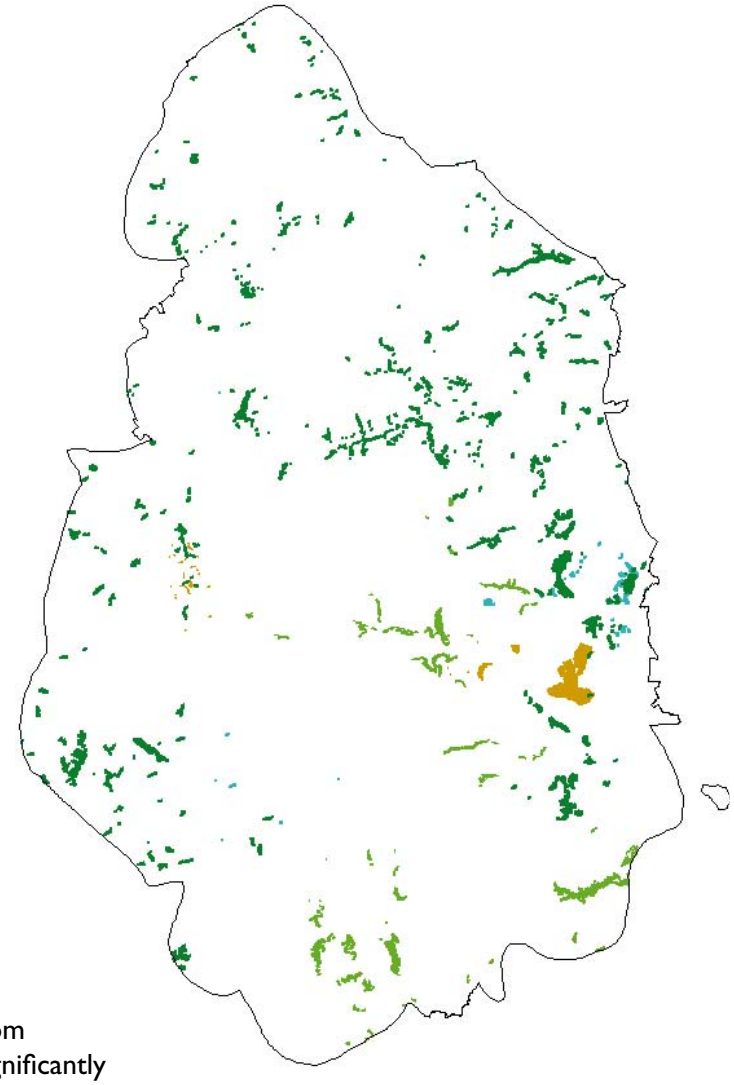
Progress Towards BAP Targets, 2001-2007

Key:	
Target already met or exceeded	
On target	
Progress made but target may not be fully met	
Not on target	
Data insufficient	

	Conservation	Restoration	Expansion
Woodland Habitats			
Upland Ashwoods			N/A
Upland Oak/Birchwoods			
Wet Woodlands			
Parkland and Veteran Trees			
Grassland Habitats			
Limestone Dales			
Hay Meadows			
Unimproved Pastures			
Rough Grazing			
Rush Pasture			
Lead Rakes			
Wetland Habitats			
River Corridor Habitats			
Ponds			
Moorland Habitats			
Limestone Heath			
Blanket Bog			N/A
Heather Moorland			
	Habitat Management	Range	Population
Species			
Water Vole			N/A
Curlew		N/A	
Lapwing		N/A	
Twite		N/A	N/A
White-clawed Crayfish			
Appleyard's Feather-moss	N/A	N/A	N/A
Derbyshire Feather-moss		N/A	N/A

The figures provided in this report are based on the best available data, it is acknowledged that this may not be complete, and work is ongoing to increase the accuracy and reliability of data.

Woodlands



Changes in Extent

Currently, around 5130 ha of upland ashwoods and oak/birchwoods occur in the Peak District, equating to 2.8% of the land area. As upland ashwoods are largely confined to the limestone dales, the majority are contained within designated sites such as SSSIs, SACs and NNRs, whilst approximately 734 ha of oak/birchwoods are within SSSIs. Only two parkland sites are well known in the Peak District, and there is limited knowledge of the distribution and condition of veteran trees in the wider countryside.

There has been a modest increase in the extent of oak/birch woodland across the Peak District with 155 ha of new native woods planted through the WGS Challenge Scheme between 2000 and 2005 (planting also took place prior to 2000), additional planting by Severn Trent Water (STW), and selective felling by the National Trust (NT) to encourage natural regeneration at Alport Dale; and with 70 ha planned by United Utilities (UU) over 2006-2007. The overall extent of other woodland types is likely to have remained relatively stable.

Changes in Condition

The condition of upland ashwoods and their restoration from Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) has been significantly improved due to the implementation of the **Ravine WoodLIFE project** by EN/NE, the Forestry Commission (FC), NT and DWT, funded through the European LIFE fund. The project has assisted landowners with works including erecting fences to control stock grazing, thinning out non-native species and managing deadwood habitats. The future and conservation of other woodlands in the Wye Valley now appears secure, including Cramside Wood which has been acquired by DWT.

Taking woodlands covered by Woodland Grant Schemes (WGS) as a measure of condition, targets for conservation and restoration of oak/birch woodland have mostly been met or exceeded largely due to the FC taking an active lead. Additional progress has been made through management on BAP partner-owned land such as work by the NT and STW at Alport Dale and the Upper Derwent.

Whilst the extent and condition of the limited areas of parkland has remained stable over the period, data on the extent and distribution of veteran trees remain lacking. The same is true of wet woodlands, which for the most part comprise small areas within oak/birchwoods, and their condition is therefore likely to parallel changes in condition of the latter.

Woodland fencing

Target Progress

	Amount achieved	% of overall resource	Progress towards target
UPLAND ASHWOODS			
Achieve Condition (ASNW in SSSI):	461 ha	70%	↑
Achieve Condition (non-ASNW in SSSI):	329 ha	92%	↑↑
Restoration (PAWS within SSSI):	83 ha	72%	↑↑
Expansion:	Not considered appropriate		X
UPLAND OAK/BIRCHWOODS			
Achieve Condition (ASNW in SSSI):	112 ha	51%	↓
Achieve Condition (non-ASNW in SSSI):	396 ha	77%	↑↑
Restoration (PAWS):	334 ha	63%	↑↑
Expansion:	178.5 ha		↓
WET WOODLANDS			
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	Insufficient data		?
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	Estimated 5-10 ha		↓
Restoration:	Estimated 1-2 ha		↓
Expansion:	Progress unknown		?
PARKLAND AND VETERAN TREES			
Achieve Condition (SSSI parkland):	60 ha at Chatsworth	100%	✓
Achieve Condition (veteran trees):	Progress unknown		?
Restoration:	Progress unknown		?
Expansion:	Progress unknown		?

Key:	
Met/on target	✓
Exceeded	↑
Greatly exceeded	↑↑
Below target	↓
Far below target	↓↓
Unknown	?
Target dropped	X

The Way Forward

Key issues remaining to be addressed include:

- the control of grazing in ancient woodland in the Dark Peak and South West Peak;
- the control of non-native species in ancient woodland in all three natural areas;
- the reversion of PAWS to semi-natural woodland across the BAP area, but especially in the Dark Peak;
- identifying oak/birchwood expansion opportunities in the Dark and South West Peak and on the limestone plateau;
- identifying the existing wet woodland and veteran tree resource and securing their sustainable management.

Targets for woodlands have been revised to be in line with the UK BAP target of achieving condition on 65% of semi-natural woodland; the Peak District BAP targets have been split for SSSI and non-SSSI to take account of different monitoring and reporting methods. As progress towards ashwood and oak/birchwood targets has been so good to date, targets for conservation and restoration have been modestly increased to maintain the momentum towards improving biodiversity within these woodlands. The expansion target for oak/birchwoods has been increased to include future planting plans by UU.

Conversely, the expansion target for wet woodlands has been reduced to 'where appropriate' as it is considered more beneficial to focus efforts on gaining a better understanding of the current resource. Targets for condition, restoration and expansion of wet woodland remain conservative, and additional data and resources will be required in order to address these. Targets for parkland and veteran trees remain more or less the same except that figures for restoration and expansion of parkland are given as number of sites rather than hectares, following the protocol used in the UK BAP.

Revised Targets to 2010

	Target	% of resource	Target changes
UPLAND ASHWOODS			
Maintain Extent (ancient):	663ha	100%	=
Maintain Extent (non-ancient):	1116 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	856 ha	95%	↑
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	322 ha	35%	↑
Restoration:	117 ha	50%	=
UPLAND OAK/BIRCHWOODS			
Maintain Extent (ancient):	1190 ha	100%	=
Maintain Extent (non-ancient):	140 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	697 ha	95%	↑
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	1467 ha	56.5%	↑
Restoration:	370 ha	70%	↑
Expansion:	400 ha		↑
WET WOODLANDS			
Maintain Extent:	c.200-250 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	Unknown	95%	=
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	25 ha		=
Restoration:	18 ha		=
Expansion:	Where appropriate		↓
PARKLAND AND VETERAN TREES			
Maintain Extent:	c.110 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (parkland):	70 ha	65%	=
Restoration:	3 sites of derelict parkland		*
Expansion (parkland):	2 sites		=
Achieve Condition (veteran trees):		20%	=
Expansion (veteran trees):	corridors connecting 20% of groups		=

Key:	
Target remains more or less the same	=
Target increased	↑
Target decreased	↓
New target	*

Continuing direct management by conservation bodies is likely to be adequate to meet our targets for ashwoods, while further progress on oak/birchwoods and wet woodland is reliant on the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) and direct management by public bodies/utilities (especially water companies), including the **Sustainable Catchment Management Planning (SCaMP4)** project. A proposed large-scale **White Peak Project** together with land acquisition by conservation organisations may be key mechanisms for delivery of targets on the limestone plateau. The availability of local provenance seed will also be a key factor in achieving restoration and expansion targets. DWT's **Great Trees of Derbyshire** project will be a key delivery mechanism for parkland and veteran trees, informing the extent and distribution of the resource and providing management guidance to achieve long-term benefits for biodiversity.

Great Trees of Derbyshire

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, have been recruiting volunteers across Derbyshire and the Peak District to seek out and survey veteran trees as part of their Great Trees of Derbyshire project. Veteran trees are an important part of our heritage, often the oldest living things in our countryside, surviving hundreds of years. Whilst all around them has changed beyond recognition, our majestic parkland oaks, squat hedgerow ash trees and collapsed pollard willows have survived. Veteran trees are enormously important for wildlife. Water pools, sap runs, loose bark, rotten heart wood, large cavities, dead branches in the canopy, and dead wood on the ground all create a haven for invertebrates that have been able to colonise the trees slowly over centuries.

It has been estimated that there are more than 1700 species of invertebrates that are dependent upon dead and dying wood in Britain. This 'saproxylic' community has been identified as being the most threatened group of invertebrates in Europe. It is estimated that the UK may hold up to 80% of North-West Europe's resource of ancient trees giving us a very special responsibility to protect and conserve them. In the Peak District, Chatsworth and Lyme Park are known parkland sites supporting veteran trees and their associated invertebrate and fungal communities. Outside of known parkland sites there are likely to be many more, as yet undiscovered, veteran trees in danger of being lost.

The Great Trees of Derbyshire project was launched in the summer of 2006 and will run until 2008. Trust staff have been identifying potential sites and trees for survey, and have run training sessions on survey techniques for members of the public to enable a comprehensive survey of the County's grand old trees. So far, records of over 2000 veterans have been sent in by volunteers, and 2007 will see a move further into the Peak District. The project also produces information sheets and provides management advice to landowners to take forward the survey information into practical management and protection for veteran trees and the wildlife that depends on them.

Veteran tree training day

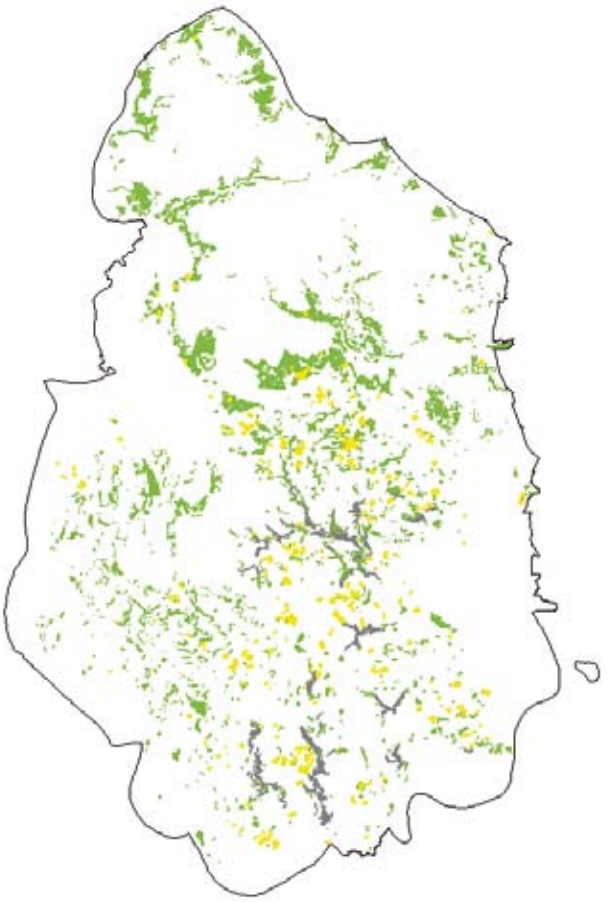
Old Man of Calke *photo by Nick Brown*

Grasslands

Changes in Extent

Across the Peak District, BAP grasslands constitute approximately 20,000 ha of land area. The different grassland types encompassed by the BAP support a wide range of flora and associated insects, birds and mammals. Grasslands of high ecological value are, perhaps more than any other habitat type, vulnerable to management changes which can significantly alter or remove their biodiversity interest extremely rapidly. Partly for this reason, obtaining an up-to-date and accurate picture of the true extent and condition of BAP grasslands is a difficult task.

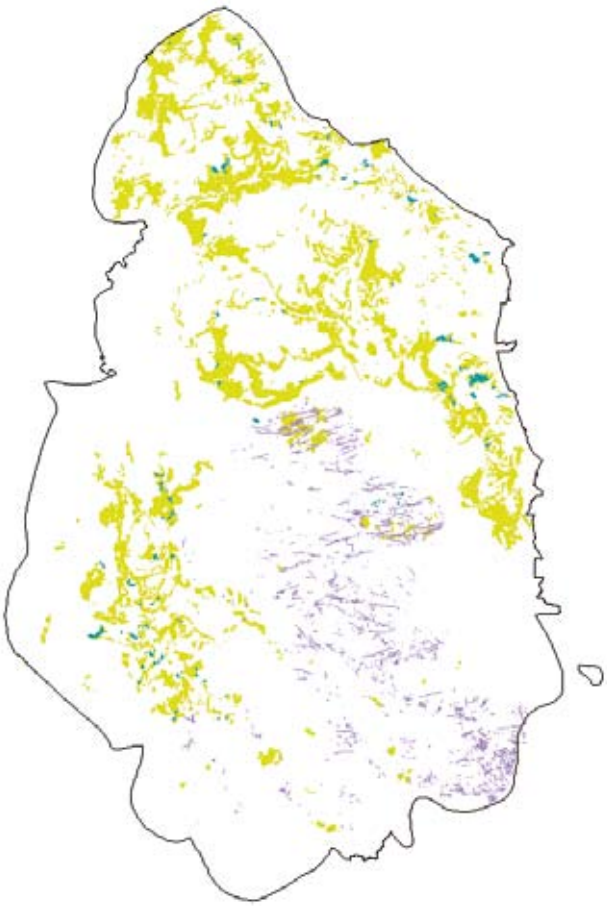
It is likely that there have been overall reductions in the extent of hay meadows and rough grazing across the BAP area. There were known losses of approximately 13.5 ha of rough grazing land near Bradfield following the publication of the provisional CRoW access map in December 2001. The extent of limestone dales and lead rakes will have remained largely static. An accurate measure of the extent of unimproved pastures is not currently available, as surveys date back several years. Opportunities for grassland expansion have been limited to date.



Changes in Condition

There will have been various positive and negative changes in the condition and diversity of grasslands since 2001 as farm holdings have been entered into appropriate agri-environment schemes on the one hand, and as a result of agricultural intensification on the other.

Progress towards grassland targets has been largely dependent upon the success of agri-environment schemes with additional progress through land acquisition and management, SSSI condition work, and targeted projects. A number of projects have been working across the BAP area to improve grassland biodiversity. The **Hay Meadows Project** (1995-1997) surveyed 959 meadows; 151 of these were entered into 10-year agri-environment agreements, which delivered biodiversity gains into part of the BAP period. The recent lapse of many of these agreements is a key reason why the achievement of hay meadow condition has fallen well below target, although in practice the majority of these probably remain in favourable condition, and work is progressing to secure their continued favourable management.



The Vision Project has initiated the restoration of 3.5 ha of limestone dales habitats, over 27 ha of hay meadows, 15 ha of rough grazing (plus a further 3 ha created), and over 3 ha of lead rakes; plus over 40 ha of grasslands have been entered into agri-environment schemes or other conservation agreements to maintain and increase the biological interest.

The Peak Birds Project is working with farmers to encourage targeted management of rush pasture for lapwing and curlew, and hay meadows for curlew and twite. Management of partner-owned land remains important in securing grassland conservation, with NE, The Wildlife Trusts, NT, Plantlife and the PDNPA all managing important sites.

Target Progress

	Amount achieved	% of overall resource	Progress towards target
LIMESTONE DALES			
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	1361 ha	93%	↓
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	76 ha	16%	↓↓
Restoration:	3.5 ha		↓↓
Expansion:	None reported to date		↓↓
HAY MEADOWS			
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	29 ha	79%	↓
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	156 ha	14%	↓↓
Restoration:	32 ha		↓↓
Expansion:	None reported to date		↓
UNIMPROVED PASTURES			
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	332 ha	76%	↓
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	499 ha	22%	↓↓
Restoration:	None reported to date		↓↓
Expansion:	None reported to date		?
ROUGH GRAZING			
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	4224 ha	57%	↑↑
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	3977 ha	69%	↑↑
Restoration:	15 ha	30%	↓
Expansion:	3 ha underway		✓
RUSH PASTURE			
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	125.3 ha	52%	↑
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	63 ha	70%	↑↑
Restoration:	136 ha		↑↑
Expansion:	None reported to date		?
LEAD RAKES (of ecological interest)			
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	26.8 ha	96.5%	↓
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	62 ha	52.5%	✓
Restoration:	4 ha		↓↓
Expansion (metallophyte):	Less than 0.1 ha		↓↓
Expansion (species-rich grassland):	Progress unknown		?

Key:	
Met/on target	✓
Exceeded	↑
Greatly exceeded	↑↑
Below target	↓
Far below target	↓↓
Unknown	?

Scrub clearance, Longstone Edge, February 2007

The Way Forward

The key issues remaining to be addressed for grasslands include:

- limited availability of HLS funding outside SSSIs, and the requirement for an alternative method of securing favourable management;
- further survey and monitoring work to record the ecological value of the remaining Lead Rakes;
- assessing the condition of non-SSSI grasslands using NE's 'Lowland grassland non-statutory condition assessment'.

Some notable alterations to targets have been made. For limestone dales, the target for achieving condition on non-SSSI land has been lowered in order to be realistic in light of the resourcing challenges ahead. Similarly, limestone dale and hay meadow restoration targets have been reduced by 50% or more, as their achievement depends upon securing funding for a **White Peak Project**, which will target key BAP habitats on the White Peak plateau. Retaining a target for restoration of rough grazing is considered to be unnecessary, as the aim would be to restore degraded land to other BAP habitats. The Action Plan for rush pasture is being dropped due to difficulties in defining and mapping the resource, and the low priority of sites with limited botanical or breeding wader interest. Those which are important botanically will be addressed though the Unimproved Pastures Action Plan, and those which are important for breeding birds will be picked up through the Species Action Plans. Others will no longer be considered a Peak District BAP priority.

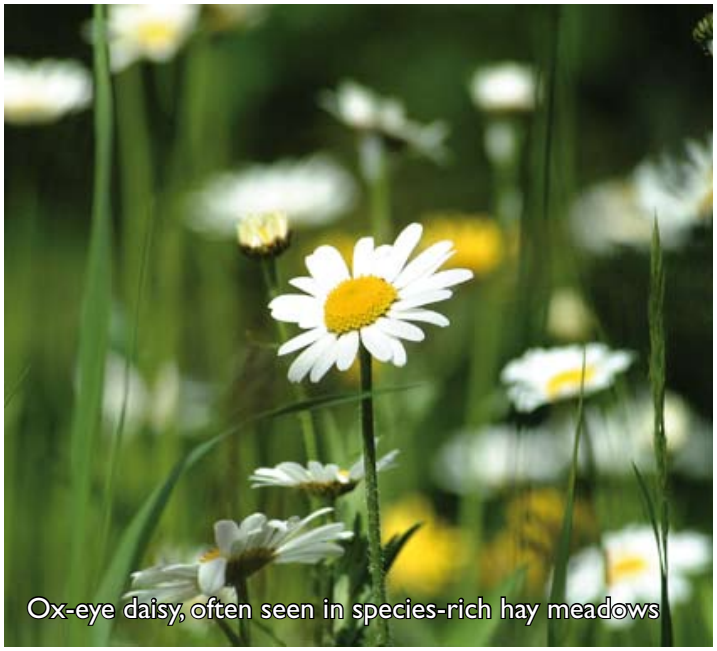
Revised Targets to 2010

	Target	% of resource	Target changes
Limestone Dales			
Maintain Extent:	1946 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	1391 ha	95%	=
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	240 ha	50%	↓
Restoration:	15 ha		↓
Expansion:	10 ha		=
Hay Meadows			
Maintain Extent:	c.1120 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	34 ha	95%	=
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	546 ha	50%	=
Restoration:	100 ha		↓
Expansion:	10 ha		=
Unimproved Pastures			
Maintain Extent:	2744 - 4047 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	412 ha	95%	=
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	1155 - 1806 ha	50%	=
Expansion:	10 ha		↑
Rough Grazing			
Maintain Extent:	13153 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	7045 ha	95%	↑
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	4303 ha	75%	↑
Expansion:	85 ha		↑
Rush Pasture			
The Action Plan for Rush Pasture has been removed as targets will be delivered as part of action for Unimproved Pastures or birds.			
Lead Rakes			
Maintain Extent:	c.172 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	c.51 ha	95%	=
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	c.89 ha	75%	↑
Restoration:	30 ha		↑
Expansion (Metallophyte vegetation):	1.4 ha		=
Expansion (species rich grasslands):	15 ha		=

Key:	
Target remains more or less the same	=
Target increased	↑
Target decreased	↓
New target	*

The future of **agri-environment scheme** availability will be central to achieving condition on many grassland habitats; however, current tight targeting of schemes means that the BAP targets will be challenging to meet. Other management and restoration opportunities are going to play a key role in compensating for the reduced availability of agri-environment schemes. A large-scale project such as the proposed **White Peak Project** may prove to be the most effective way of addressing restoration and expansion targets for hay meadows along with a number of other BAP habitats, provided funding can be secured by the BAP partnership. Opportunities for habitat expansion will come from **quarry and mineral site restoration** over the longer period, while protection of the existing resource will rely upon the work to get SSSIs into favourable/recovering condition and, outside SSSIs, on mechanisms such as **cross-compliance and the EIA regulations**. The role of the Entry Level Scheme (ELS) in securing grassland conservation needs further exploration.

Jacobs Ladder can be found in the limestone dales



Ox-eye daisy, often seen in species-rich hay meadows

Beyond the Hay Meadows Project

A programme of identification and conservation of the highest quality Peak District hay meadows began with the **Hay Meadows Project** in 1995. The production of the 'Meadows beyond the Millennium' report helped to highlight both the loss of hay meadows in the late twentieth century and the issues surrounding their conservation. Subsequently, and contributing towards Peak District BAP objectives and targets, EN (now NE) in partnership with DWT and the PDNPA identified a number of sites as potential SSSIs and have to date notified two of these – at Hurdlow and Sparrowpit. Hurdlow Meadows, comprising six fields, supports the largest area of species-rich unimproved hay meadow on the Peak District limestone plateau and has a long history of low intensity management. Lower Peaslows Farm Meadow near Sparrowpit, is a smaller site consisting of only one field, yet over 50 wildflower, grass and sedge species have been recorded there.

Thanks to this notification process the future of these sites is now secure. Significant effort has also gone into the negotiation of positive management at the other potential SSSI hay meadows in the National Park and all are now secured within an appropriate management agreement.

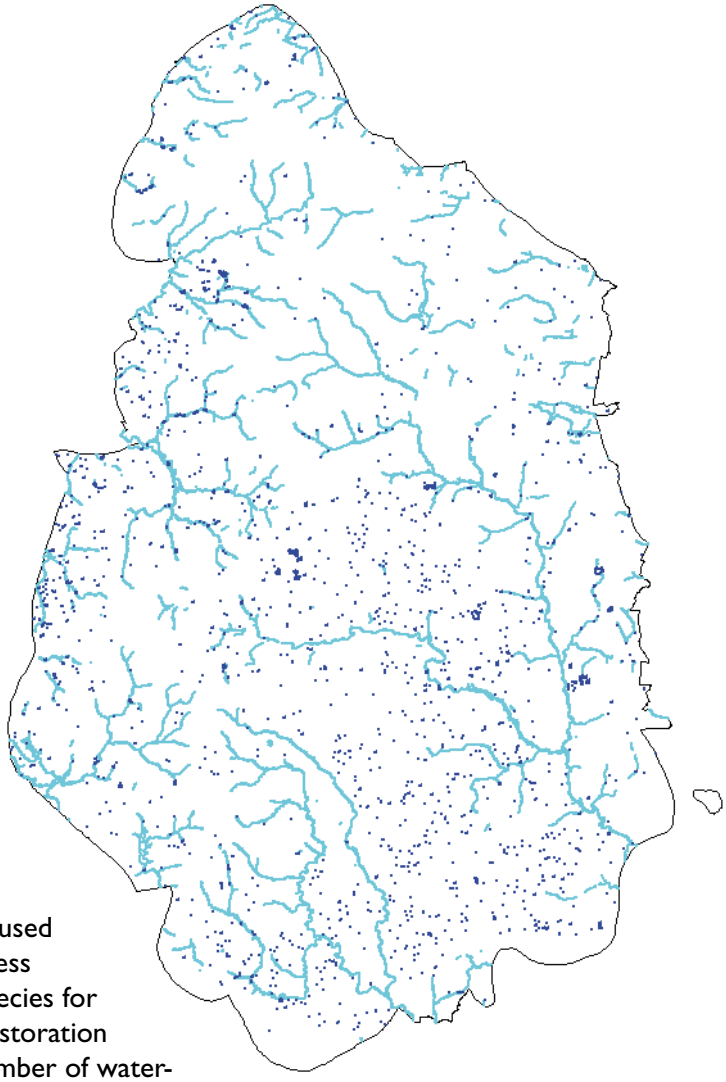
The Hay Meadows Project also identified an important site near Hartington, part of which DWT have since purchased, and part of which is leased from the Chatsworth Estate through the PDNPA. This new DWT reserve is managed as part of a working farm, with unimproved livestock grazed pastures which provide breeding sites for ground-nesting birds, and traditionally managed hay meadows supporting hay rattle and meadow vetchling. Continued appropriate management, coupled with restoration measures where necessary, will maintain the diversity of flora and fauna to be found on this site.

The **Value in Meadows** project is a DWT initiative supported by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and NE, which aims to identify the best ancient pastures and meadows in the Derbyshire Dales and surrounding areas and provide advice and practical support to help their owners manage them in a wildlife-friendly way. The project consists of several different elements:

- Providing management advice.
- Local grazing scheme.
- Local seed procurement.
- Awareness raising.

EQM award holder Arthur Gee pictured in his species-rich meadow

Wetlands



Changes in Extent

The extent of river corridor habitats in the Peak District remains essentially unchanged. The Lathkill and Dove are the only SSSIs in the BAP area to be notified specifically for their river interest. Key rivers and their catchments support populations of water vole (Derwent, Wye, Dove and Etherow) and white-clawed crayfish (Manifold and Lathkill). Other charismatic species associated with rivers and streams in the Peak District include dipper, brown trout, brook lamprey, and Daubenton's and Natterer's bats. Wetland sites are limited in the Peak District, and mostly comprise small areas of mire, fen or swamp in the lower reaches of river valleys.

Ponds in the Peak District are represented in the White Peak mainly by dewponds dating from the nineteenth century, while the Dark and South-West Peak ponds are more often millponds and farm ponds. The exact number of water-holding ponds, and hence changes in the numbers, has been difficult to determine. Pond creation and restoration by the **Vision Project** (with donations of materials from Tarmac and Glebe Mines Ltd) and on targeted sites elsewhere in the Peak District has focused on those ponds important for linking pond clusters to address great crested newt conservation - a European protected species for which Britain is a stronghold. However, such active pond restoration and creation projects are unlikely to counterbalance the number of water-holding dewponds being lost due to neglect or damage, with half the great crested newt ponds recorded on NE's protected species database recently estimated to have been lost in some key areas.

Changes in Condition

Data concerning progress towards many of our wetland targets are deficient, and better methods of collating this information need to be considered. However, rivers and streams have experienced both enhancement and deterioration, with a general improvement in water quality in Midlands rivers, and positive work by the Environment Agency (EA) resolving low flows in a section of the River Noe. Wetland and riverbank enhancement work by the Vision Project has partly been offset by significant damage to the Stoke Brook at Calver, caused by a recent pollution event.

The condition of ponds has also been difficult to assess. Although many are on landholdings covered by agri-environment schemes, the extent to which these address pond conservation issues is limited. Recent survey in some areas suggests that, as well as significant loss of dewponds in parts of the White Peak, the condition of many others has declined through neglect and drying out. Climate change may become an increasing threat to this habitat.

Target Progress

	Amount achieved	% of overall resource	Progress towards target
RIVER CORRIDOR HABITATS			
Achieve Condition (rivers and streams outside SSSIs):	Insufficient information		?
Achieve Condition (rivers and streams within SSSIs):	14 ha	24%	↓↓
Achieve Condition (wetlands within SSSIs):	1009 ha	84%	↑↑
Achieve Condition (wetlands outside SSSIs):	132 ha	43%	↑
Restoration:	Small-scale work at Wardlow Mires, Stoke Brook and the River Derwent		?
Expansion:	10 ha at Tittesworth Reservoir		↑
PONDS			
Achieve Condition (all ponds):	1212 ponds	33%	↑
Achieve Condition (highest quality ponds):	77 ponds	45%	↓
Restoration:	14 ponds		↓↓
Expansion:	34 ponds		↓

Key:	
Met/on target	✓
Exceeded	↑
Greatly exceeded	↑↑
Below target	↓
Far below target	↓↓
Unknown	?

The Way Forward

The key issues remaining to be addressed are:

- controlling water quality as a result of agricultural and industrial run-off and high silt levels;
- land drainage;
- bankside management, especially inappropriate grazing;
- low flow in some White Peak rivers and streams;
- consideration and forward planning for the impacts of climate change.

Targets for river corridor habitats have been separated into 'Rivers and Streams', and 'Wetlands' in order to better define the resource and target the assessment and monitoring of condition. Separate targets for water quality, flow rates, habitat diversity and species diversity have been replaced by targets for achieving favourable or recovering condition on SSSI river units, and achieving high Water Framework Directive standards on non-SSSI rivers, as the criteria for assessment include all of these factors.

Given the large number of ponds in the Peak District, and the incomplete information regarding condition, the emphasis for the immediate future will be on achieving condition on those of the highest ecological quality, followed by survey and assessment of others wherever possible. Restoration of damaged ponds and creation of new ponds is extremely costly, hence the targets have been reduced to take this into account.

The river in Monsal Dale

Revised Targets to 2010

	Target	% of resources	Target changes
RIVER CORRIDOR HABITATS			
Rivers and Streams:			
Maintain Extent:	c.900 km	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	54 ha	95%	=
Achieve Condition (all rivers):	c.900 km	100%	↑
Restoration: 2 km			*
Wetlands:			
Maintain Extent:	c.1523 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	1150 ha	95%	↑
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	156 ha	50%	↑
Expansion:	20 ha		↑
PONDS			
Maintain Extent:		100%	=
Achieve Condition (highest ecological value):	170 ponds	100%	=
Achieve Condition (other ponds):		20%	*
Restoration:	60 ponds		↓
Expansion:	60 ponds		↓

Key:	
Target remains more or less the same	=
Target increased	↑
Target decreased	↓
New target	*

The **Catchment Sensitive Farming Project**, a new joint initiative between Defra, the EA and NE, employs dedicated advisers to help farmers tackle the causes of water pollution. Catchments will be targeted under a range of measures aimed at improving farm practices and reducing water pollution from agriculture. Area-based projects such as the **Vision Project** and the proposed **White Peak Project** are likely to be key delivery mechanisms for river corridors in the future. Sensitive management on land owned or managed by BAP partners will be key to addressing condition on rivers and streams, while continued gully blocking and erosion control work by **Moors for the Future** and the **SCaMP4** project will be key to improving moorland water courses and reducing sediment run-off. Agri-environment scheme incentives for achieving pond conservation or restoration are likely to be limited; therefore, other financial incentives together with continued external funding for capital works are likely to be critical, delivered through area-based projects such as the **Vision Project** and the proposed **White Peak Project**.

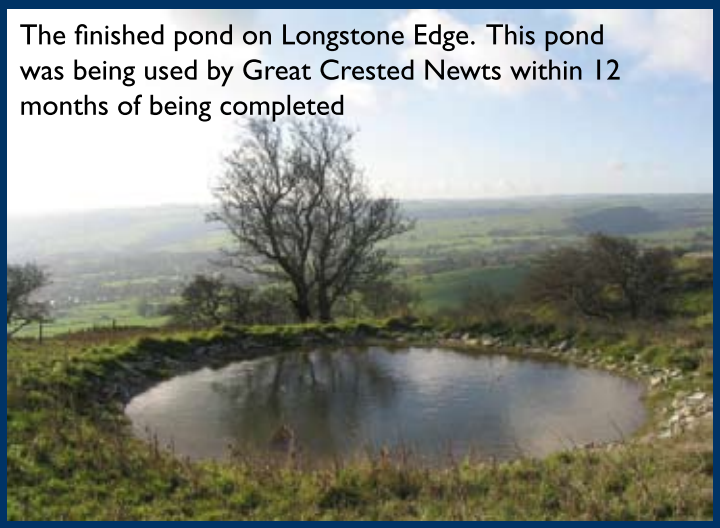
Doing the Business for Wildlife

Dew ponds are a characteristic feature of the White Peak plateau, many dating back to the nineteenth century. The **Vision Project** has employed a variety of techniques using contractors and volunteers to restore and re-create over 30 ponds in the Vision area (from Ashford in the Water, extending north to Bradwell, and from Great Hucklow in the west to Grindleford in the east), and has contributed substantially to Peak District BAP targets for the restoration and re-creation of ponds as well as regional and national BAP targets for great crested newts. One method of re-creation involved fully replacing a traditional clay and stone sett pond.

Puddling the clay lining donated by Glebe Mines Ltd.

Laying the limestone grit donated by Tarmac

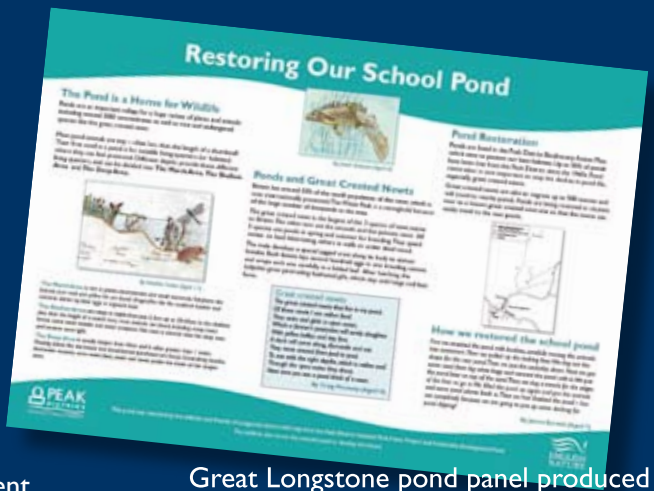
Laying the clay setts. This is a very labour intensive process and makes the pond re-creation very costly. Much of the work has been funded initially by a grant from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund and more recently by Landfill Tax (through the SITA Trust)



The finished pond on Longstone Edge. This pond was being used by Great Crested Newts within 12 months of being completed

A completely new method of pond repair has been trialled in the Vision Project area by contractors who re-lined a concrete pond with fibreglass and epoxy resin. This novel method for pond restoration is very similar to mending boats, so should hold water!

Children and parents helped to repair a school pond in Great Longstone which now supports frogs, smooth newts and great crested newts. Another nearby pond which was repaired by a group of local people supported great crested newts within 12 months, and is now managed within a HLS agreement. Another suite of ponds along Pennyunk Lane were restored/enhanced by volunteer action, the number of great crested newts has increased and the ponds are now managed within an ELS agreement.



Great Longstone pond panel produced by the children of Longstone School

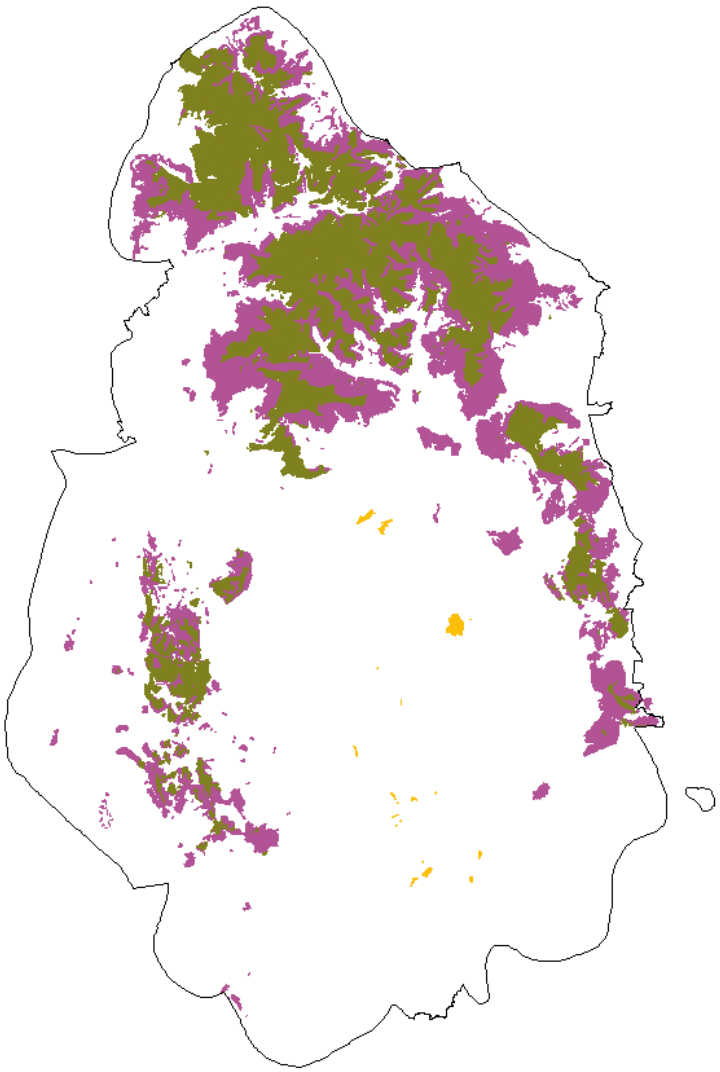
Moorlands

Changes in Extent

Some 22.7% of the Peak District supports moorland habitats which are of international importance for their wildlife, a fact recognised by the confirmation of some 42,000 ha as part of the South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in 2005.

There were a few losses of heather moorland shortly after the publication of the provisional CRoW access map in December 2001, notably 15 ha ploughed near Hayfield. An Order under Section 42 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) was consequently served in 2002 to protect all remaining moorland outside SSSIs and conservation scheme agreements. These losses have been more than matched by heathland creation work by private landowners and BAP partners, with Geoff Eyre having restored large areas from grass moor on NT land in the Upper Derwent, and 80 ha created by Richard May at High Moor (Macclesfield Forest) with a further 40 ha seeded in 2006. The PDNPA has also been trialling restoration techniques on 47 ha at Big Moor.

The net result of these changes is a modest increase in the extent of heather moorland in the BAP area since 2001. No known changes in the extent of blanket bog have taken place during the review period and the extent of limestone heath has remained largely static as this habitat represents a very limited resource.



Changes in Condition

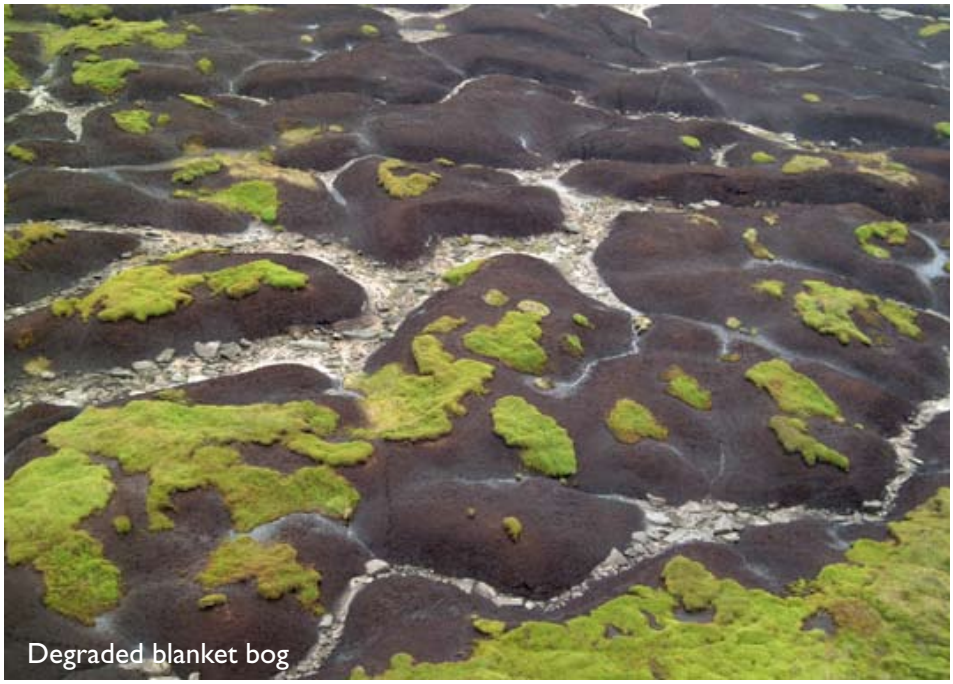
Moorland habitats continue to be threatened by problems of erosion, air pollution, over-grazing, inappropriate/accidental burning and past drainage. Wider environmental issues such as water quality and carbon sequestration are dependent upon the persistence of a healthy moorland ecosystem.

Excellent progress towards achieving condition on moorlands has been made, led particularly by NE working with moorland managers towards the Government's PSA target of achieving favourable/recovering condition on 95% of SSSIs by 2010. A large amount of work has gone into upgrading ESA agreements to address continuing grazing issues, and in the production of moorland management plans agreed between owners and NE, particularly to identify appropriate burning regimes. Since January 2004, when figures were first available, over 2461 ha of upland heath and 7842 ha of blanket bog within SSSIs have been brought into favourable or recovering condition. The **Moors for the Future** partnership has been vital in resolving some of the most severe problems, revegetating nearly 4km^2 of bare peat at sites including Bleaklow, Kinder, Black Hill and Amfield with support from the Heritage Lottery and Capital Modernisation Funds, and in eliciting, supporting and conducting moorland research work including a major moorland breeding bird survey.

Target Progress

	Amount achieved	% of overall resource	Progress towards target
LIMESTONE HEATH			
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	2 ha	2.5%	↓↓
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	23 ha	67%	↓↓
Restoration:	Trials on three small plots		↓↓
Expansion:	Opportunities identified		?
BLANKET BOG			
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	11424 ha	51%	↑↑
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	1039 ha	88%	↑↑
Restoration:	3075 ha		↑
HEATHER MOORLAND			
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	9119.92 ha	54%	↓
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	1141 ha	46%	✓
Restoration:	1124 ha		↓↓
Expansion:	c.120 ha		↑↑

Key:	
Met/on target	✓
Exceeded	↑
Greatly exceeded	↑↑
Below target	↓
Far below target	↓↓
Unknown	?


Degraded blanket bog

Work on BAP partner-owned land has included United Utilities' **Sustainable Catchment Management Programme** (SCaMP) supported by the RSPB and the **Peak Birds Project**, helping to restore blanket bog and heather moorland; gully blocking by the NT; management of the PDNPA's Warslow and Eastern Moors estates; and work by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and STW.

The net result of all this work is a substantial improvement in the quality of the Peak District moors during the review period, although the scale of the remaining task is massive.

Progress on limestone heath has been limited as opportunities for achieving condition on the largest remaining site, supporting some three-quarters of the Peak District resource, have not been available during the review period.

The Way Forward

Key issues to address are:

- continued restoration of bare and eroding peat;
- ensuring sustainable grazing and burning levels (a review of the burning regulations is currently underway);
- improving fire prevention and mitigation measures;
- continuing hydrological restoration work to maintain a healthy moorland ecosystem.

The likely impact of climate change, with increased fire risk and decrease in conditions favourable to blanket bog, make resolving these issues in order to create more resilient moorland habitats even more imperative. Air pollution also continues to be a problem.

In recognition of the challenges ahead some notable alterations have been made to targets. Those for achieving condition and restoration of blanket bog have been increased, reflecting the importance of arresting peat erosion and the success of projects such as Moors for the Future and SCaMP and their anticipated continuation, and the production and implementation of ESA moorland management plans. The target for heather moorland restoration has been reduced, however, reflecting the priority of achieving favourable condition. Nevertheless this still leaves a target of around 900 ha restoration to achieve over the coming years.

The target for achieving condition on non-SSSI limestone heath has been lowered to be realistic in light of the limited incentives available. There are likely to be greater opportunities for improving the condition of SSSI sites between now and 2010, so this target has been retained despite limited progress to date. Two sites with restoration potential have been identified, which would meet the 2010 target, provided resources can be secured. Expansion of limestone heath remains an important objective, but opportunities on land in private ownership may be limited due to inadequate incentives being available.

Revised Targets to 2010

	Target	% of resource	Target changes
LIMESTONE HEATH			
Maintain Extent:	c.110 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	c.73 ha	95%	=
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	c.25.5 ha	75%	↓
Restoration:	80 ha		↑
Expansion:	20 ha		↑
BLANKET BOG			
Maintain Extent:	23626 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	21328 ha	95%	↑
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	1118ha	95%	*
Restoration:	4000 ha eroded or bare peat		↑
HEATHER MOORLAND			
Maintain Extent:	19290 ha	100%	=
Achieve Condition (within SSSIs):	15954 ha	95%	=
Achieve Condition (outside SSSIs):	1250 ha	50%	=
Restoration:	2000 ha of acid grassland/bracken moor		↓
Expansion:	500 ha		↑

Key:	
Target remains more or less the same	=
Target increased	↑
Target decreased	↓
New target	*

There is still more work to do in order to meet the 2010 targets, notably for achieving condition on SSSI land. Although excellent progress has been made, this remains a tough challenge. Meeting the revised moorland targets will be reliant on the continuation of large-scale projects such as **Moors for the Future** and **SCaMP4**. The proposed **White Peak Project** may prove to be the most effective way of addressing restoration and expansion targets for limestone heath. The continued negotiation of **ESA moorland management plans** will help to address condition on blanket bog and heather moorland, as will continued management work on BAP partner-owned moorland.

The challenges involved in delivering condition and restoration on moorlands relate primarily to time and resources; these are complex ecosystems which may take several decades to reach favourable condition; however, measures can be taken to initiate that process. The ability to secure adequate funding for landscape-scale projects will be a crucial factor in meeting the 2010 moorland targets.

Gully blocking with coir logs

Moorland Restoration on a Massive Scale

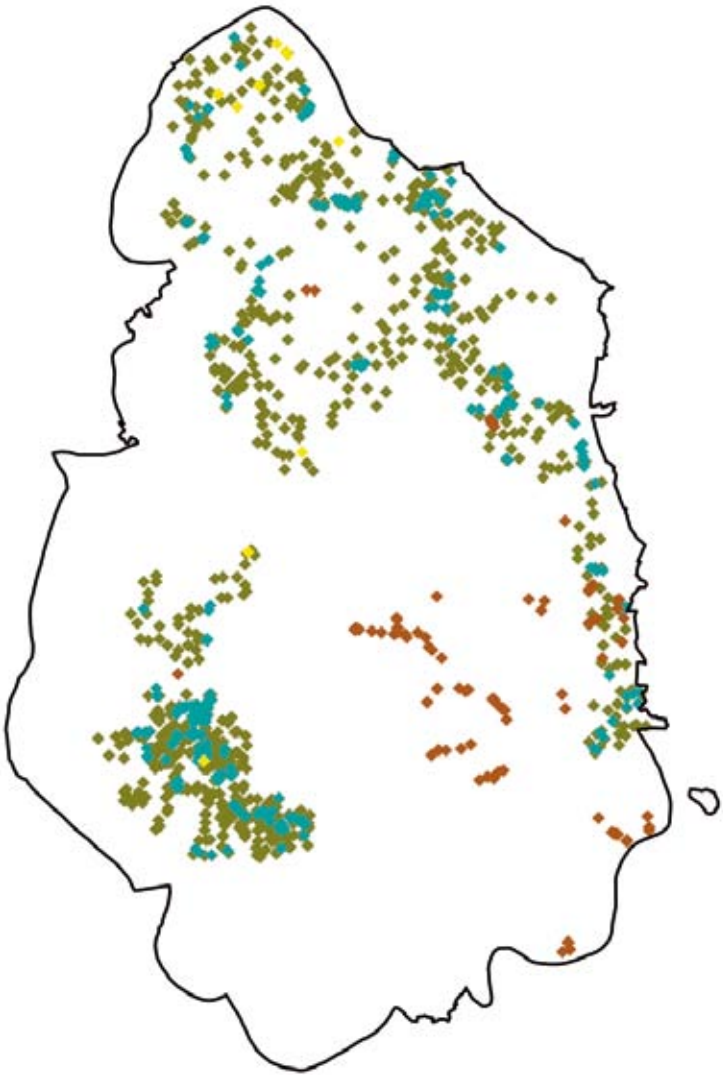
They don't do things by halves in the Peak District Moors! The **Moors for the Future** project began in 2003 and since then has achieved some remarkable feats of landscape-scale restoration. This is a partnership project aimed at reversing the degradation of large areas of bare and eroding peat resulting from a combination of air pollution, sheep grazing pressure, uncontrolled fires, climate change, recreational trampling and natural processes across the moors.

- Since it began, the partnership has erected a 35 km long fence around Bleaklow, and stock have been removed from 25 km^2 of moorland under ESA agreements.
- They have spread approximately 1490 tonnes of heather brash and 130,000 m^2 of geo-textiles to help stabilise the eroding peat.
- Heather and mixed grass seed have been spread over approximately 800 hectares.
- Fertiliser has been applied to help lower the extremely acidic fire-damaged areas and improve the chances of seed germination.
- 57,000 plugs of bilberry, crowberry, common cottongrass, hare's-tail cottongrass and cloudberry have been planted, with a further 55,000 planned for planting in 2007.
- To help reduce the amount of water running off the moors, 200 coir logs have been used to block gullies with help from Sheffield University conservation volunteers.
- To increase understanding and awareness of moorland issues amongst the wider public, a new visitor centre opened at Edale in September 2006.

Seeding operation, June 2004

Species

The Status of Species



Since 2001 there have been some significant changes in the fortunes of many species. Amongst mammals, substantial reports on the status of mountain hares and water voles were produced by the DWT. The former appear to be doing well whilst the latter have suffered declines in some areas. Since 2005 new procedures in the National Park have ensured that the possible presence of bats is fully considered in planning applications, with several important roosts benefiting. Dormice have been introduced to two sites though it is not yet possible to gauge their likely success.

Our knowledge of birds continued to expand, with a major resurvey of moorland birds commissioned by the **Moors for the Future** project in 2004. Comparison with the 1990 survey suggests that overall most species appear to have maintained fairly stable populations. Ring ouzel and dunlin have shown some decline and twite maintain a tenuous foothold in the Peak. Stonechat have continued to expand spectacularly (83 pairs in the National Park in 2004, compared to none in 1990), possibly benefiting from climate change; raven continue to expand and raptors such as peregrine, goshawk, buzzard and barn owl appear to be doing well overall. In 2006 hen harriers returned to nest on the Peak District moors for only the second time in over 100 years, with ten young raised from two nests. STW are leading attempts to reintroduce black grouse to the Peak District, and woodland bird surveys revealed a significant population of nightjar on one site. Concerns remain over declines in farmland birds, however, particularly ground-nesting waders such as curlew, snipe and lapwing, whilst yellow wagtail and tree sparrow have maintained very small and vulnerable populations. A resurvey of key species is being coordinated by the **Peak Birds Project** during 2007.

White-clawed Crayfish
picture courtesy of Natural England

As regards other animals, the white-clawed crayfish may now be on the verge of extinction in the Peak (pictured left). Great crested newts have suffered mixed fortunes with several sites being lost but other newly restored dewponds being colonised. An important brook lamprey spawning site was affected by a major pollution event recently, and it remains to be seen if there are long-term impacts. Several invertebrates have colonised or spread in the Peak District over the last six years, with climate change possibly being a significant factor. These include the slender groundhopper, black-tailed skimmer, orange ladybird and hornet.

Amongst plants, the three clubmosses appear to have been lost from their White Peak sites and alpine clubmoss may now be extinct. Several scarce species have been increasingly reported from the moorlands including fir clubmoss, bog rosemary and a remarkable record for northern bilberry, new to the Peak District. Mosses and lichens continue to benefit from reduced air pollution and surveys have revealed the considerable importance of some local grassland sites for fungi, including scarce species such as the pink waxcap and date waxcap.

Target Progress

		Progress towards target
WATER VOLE		
Habitat Management:	Habitat management work in four important sites	✓
Range:	Restoration schemes at four sites	✓
Range:	Survey and mink control (in four river catchments)	✓
CURLEW		
Habitat Management (moorland):	961 birds (88%) on land in a management agreement	↑
Habitat Management (farmland):	87 pairs (33%) on land in a management agreement	↓
Population Size:	Awaiting results of 2007 lapwing and wader survey	?
LAPWING		
Habitat Management (moorland):	442 birds (82.5%) on land in a management agreement	↑
Habitat Management (farmland):	519 pairs (46.5%) on land in a management agreement	↓
Population Size:	Awaiting results of 2007 lapwing and wader survey	?
TWITE		
Habitat Management:	12 feeding sites (71%) are in management agreements	↓
Habitat Management:	Management advice implemented on 11 sites	?
WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH		
Habitat Management:	Unable to prevent destructive spread of crayfish plague in 2005	↓↓
Range:	No increase due to crayfish plague	↓↓
Population Size:	70 reintroduced to River Lathkill, unlikely to be self-sustaining	↓
APPLEYARD'S FEATHER-MOSS		
The Action Plan has been removed as this is no longer considered a separate species		X
DERBYSHIRE FEATHER-MOSS		
Habitat Management:	The single site is in favourable management	✓

Key:	
Met/on target	✓
Exceeded	↑
Greatly exceeded	↑↑
Below target	↓
Far below target	↓↓
Unknown	?
Target dropped	X

Water Vole at Wardlow Mires
picture courtesy of David Mallon

Changes in the Status of Species

Overall progress towards BAP species targets has been mixed; our ability to control environmental factors such as alien species introductions has played a huge role in the fates of two BAP species – water vole (pictured above) and white-clawed crayfish. Thanks largely to the hard work of the dedicated **Water Vole Recovery Project**, work on a number of the major rivers in the area has helped to stabilise and increase water vole populations. White-clawed crayfish have fared less well as a result of the introduction of North American signal crayfish and the resultant spread of crayfish plague. Control measures to halt the spread of the disease were unsuccessful and the largest remaining wild Peak District population was lost from the River Dove in 2005. A reintroduction programme by EN (now NE) is ongoing.

Progress towards birds targets has been made via the **Peak Birds Project**, coupled with **agri-environment casework** targeted at encouraging appropriate management. A repeat of the 2002 Lapwing and Wader Survey in 2007 will inform progress towards targets for increasing the population size of curlew and lapwing. Research on twite has suggested that nesting habitat loss may be more significant in their decline than hay meadow loss, as was originally thought, but an encouraging development has been the unexpected colonisation of unusual White Peak habitats by small numbers.

The Way Forward

Key issues remaining to be addressed for BAP species include:

- availability of funding for predator/competitor control work and species reintroductions;
- continuing survey and monitoring to ensure that habitat management advice is focused and effective.

Targets for species focus on maintaining and increasing both range and population size. For water vole, the UK BAP target of achieving a 7% increase in range has been followed (although it is considered more informative to measure the Peak District range by 1 km squares rather than 10 km squares). For curlew and lapwing the targets have been separated into moorland and farmland to take into account the different comparison survey data available, and in light of a noticeable habitat shift by lapwing from farmland/in-bye to moorland (presumably as a result of reduced suitability of their traditional habitats). For twite, the focus is on increasing the number of birds within the existing range to a more sustainable level. Targets for white-clawed crayfish focus efforts on maintaining the remaining populations and establishing ark populations at isolated sites free from colonisation from signal crayfish and the spread of crayfish plague.

Ditch clearing at Wardlow Mires
picture courtesy of David Mallon

Revised Targets to 2010

		Progress towards target
WATER VOLE		
Range:	Maintain the 2005 range (199 occupied 1km squares)	=
Range:	Achieve an increase in range by 14 occupied 1km squares	↑
Population Size:	Maintain or increase populations at 27 sample monitoring sites	↑
CURLEW		
Range (moorland):	Maintain or increase*	=
Range (farmland):	Maintain or increase*	=
Population Size (moorland):	Maintain or increase breeding pairs*	=
Population Size (farmland):	Maintain or increase breeding pairs*	=
LAPWING		
Range (moorland):	Maintain*	=
Range (farmland):	Increase*	=
Population Size:	Maintain or increase breeding pairs*	=
TWITE		
Range:	Maintain or increase	=
Population Size:	Increase by 50% within the existing range	↑
WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH		
Population Size:	Maintain the River Manifold metapopulation	=
Population Size:	Establish two ark populations	*
Range:	All known sites are in favourable conservation management	=
Population Size:	Self-sustaining reintroduced population (R. Lathkill)	=
DERBYSHIRE FEATHER-MOSS		
Population Size:	Maintain the existing population	

* Targets to be informed by results of 2007 survey

Key:	
Target remains more or less the same	=
Target increased	↑
Target decreased	↓
New target	*

The continuation of DWT's Water Vole/**Water for Wildlife Project** and the PDNPA/ RSPB **Peak Birds Project** is vital for the delivery of BAP targets. The continued availability of small grants for capital works such as scrape creation will be important in achieving an increase in lapwing numbers on farmland, together with ongoing monitoring of the factors affecting breeding success. Additional efforts will be required to halt and reverse the dramatic decline in twite numbers, informed by research. Work aimed at improving the management of hay meadows and moorlands will also contribute towards supporting this species. White-clawed crayfish may need a radical new approach requiring a significant input of funds and effort in order to establish viable wild/ reintroduced populations. Derbyshire feather-moss needs only small input to meet its target, but close monitoring is necessary due to the rarity of the species.

Gladwin's Mark and the Peak Birds Project – Farming for Birds

Gladwin's Mark is an arable and livestock farm on the edge of Beeley Moor. The farm supports one of the biggest lapwing populations in the Peak District, with 33 breeding pairs in 2006. The arable rotation includes spring-sown barley and spring/summer fallow, both of which provide the bare soil and sparse vegetation that lapwings need throughout the breeding season. The pastures are managed without artificial fertilisers and are grazed with cattle, providing ideal conditions for lapwings. The farm also supports breeding curlews and skylarks, and provides food for seed-eating birds such as linnets and yellowhammers.

Gladwin's Mark is one of the farms linked with the Peak Birds Project (jointly funded and supported by the RSPB and the PDNPA) which was launched in 2001 as a means of delivering the Peak District BAP objectives for birds. The aim of the project is to encourage targeted habitat management to restore populations of lapwing, curlew and twite. Management aimed at lapwing and curlew also has benefits for snipe, golden plover and the Peak District's very small population of redshank. The project focuses on several key habitats: wet rush pasture (breeding habitat for lapwings and curlews), hay meadows (breeding habitat for curlews and feeding habitat for twite), and arable (breeding habitat for lapwings).

Lapwing chick in barley
picture courtesy of Chris Tomson

Breeding waders such as lapwing and curlew require wet pasture with a short, tussocky sward. Many upland pastures in the Peak District are severely infested with rushes, a result of undergrazing or misguided conservation advice against controlling rushes. This makes large areas of pasture unsuitable for these birds. The Peak Birds Project advises farmers on rush management and funds this work, either through the project's own budget or through grant schemes such as Higher Level Stewardship.

The project's success is largely thanks to the enthusiasm of farmers. Since the start of the project, more than 90 farmers have made at least small changes to help birds, and some are restoring large areas of bird habitat. Over 450 hectares of pasture and 75 hectares of hay meadow have gone into conservation agreements, and still more habitat is being managed for birds. The farms involved in the project support some 800 pairs of lapwings, around two thirds of the Peak District's lapwing population.

Rush infested pasture
picture courtesy of Chris Tomson

Wet pasture where rushes have been controlled
picture courtesy of Chris Tomson

Summary

Progress towards the Peak District BAP targets has been mixed as a result of a variety of factors governing the delivery of BAP objectives. Changes to Government incentive schemes have had their part to play, as have issues of finance, staffing and time. In keeping with Local BAPs across the country the timeless issue of monitoring and reporting across the BAP partnership remains to be addressed. Progress towards targets has generally been good where dedicated projects have been in place, such as on moorlands where Moors for the Future, Sustainable Catchment Management Plans and ESA Moorland Management Plans have been implemented; and has been less, and harder to measure, where the resource is widely dispersed amongst numerous smaller landowners and where the economic advantage of undertaking conservation management is less clear-cut, as for many grassland habitats.

The targets set in the BAP were challenging, and they remain so for the next few years. In a dynamic and often fragile environment, the managers of the landscape should not become complacent, or give way in the face of adversity. It is important to recognise the difficulties as well as the opportunities and set our standards to take account of these. Where targets are ambitious, they are so for a reason. It is in recognition of the value of our landscape and the diversity of the habitats and species within it. We have set the standards high, but not outside our reach, we recognise our limitations but as a partnership we also acknowledge our ability to rise to the challenge.

Despite the inherent difficulties involved in delivering biodiversity objectives in the Peak District, crossing as it does several county and unitary authority boundaries, and four regional boundaries; it remains imperative that organisations and individuals with an interest in and a love for the Peak District take on board the Biodiversity Action Plan and its objectives and targets, and pledge to play their part in shaping the future of this Living Landscape.

Cowslips

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