

**WOKINGHAM DISTRICT
BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

**5. HEATHLAND HABITAT ACTION
PLAN**

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5 HABITAT ACTION PLAN – HEATHLANDS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This Habitat Action Plan (HAP) covers all types of lowland heathland, lowland valley mires or bogs and acid grassland. Lowland heathland is characterised both by the presence of dwarf ericaceous species such as heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), gorses (*Ulex sp.*) and cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) and by the typically undulating landscape forms associated with it (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 1998). Within Wokingham District they occur where the acidic Reading or Bagshot Beds are exposed, which is mainly towards the south in the parishes of Finchampstead and Wokingham (Without). In the valley bottoms or where drainage is impeded lowland valley mires occur.
- 5.1.2 The Wokingham District Heathland Habitat Action Plan includes the following UK BAP broad habitat classifications Dwarf Shrub Heath and Bogs. These in turn includes the following UK BAP priority habitats lowland heathland and lowland raised bogs (UK Biodiversity Group, 2000).

5.2 LINKS WITH OTHER HABITAT ACTION PLANS AND SPECIES ACTION PLANS

- 5.2.1 Heathland does not occur in isolation, it forms a diverse mosaic with other habitats such as scrub, woodland and open water. The transition zones between heathland and scrub or open water, are critically important for many of the UK BAP heathland species
- 5.2.2 Coniferous plantations, secondary birch woodland and bog willow and alder carr are often associated with heathlands but will be addressed by the Wokingham District Woodland HAP.
- 5.2.3 Acid grassland is often associated with lowland heathland within the district, and will be addressed as part of the Wokingham District Grassland HAP.
- 5.2.4 The following UK BAP species, Nightjar, Woodlark, Silver Studded Blue butterfly and Pillwort all occur within Wokingham District, and will be the subject of future local Species Action Plans (SAPs). These SAPs will have an impact on the development of the Lowland Heathland HAP.

5.3 CURRENT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STATUS

- 5.3.1 The South East England holds just over 23000ha of lowland heathland which constitutes 40% of the total UK resource of 58000ha. This a particularly important resource as the UK holds around 20% of the global heathland area (Cloughley,P and Wicks,D, 1998). Only around 1% of the SE resource or 310ha is found in Berkshire (Cloughley, P and Wicks, D, 1998).
- 5.3.2 All of Berkshires heathland falls into the London Basin Natural Area. Only 10% of the Thames Basin Natural Area's 3200ha of heathland occurs within Berkshire. Whilst a small part of the total picture, Berkshire heathlands are a significant component of this Natural Area (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 1998)
- 5.3.2 In England only 17% of the heathland present in 1800 survives today (Berkshire Heathlands Project, 1998). The situation is even worse in Berkshire with over 98% of it's heathlands lost since 1760 (Cloughley, P and Wicks, D, 1998). These losses have been attributed to agricultural intensification and abandonment of traditional management practices (especially the loss of grazing from many sites) and more recently forestry and urban development (Cloughley, P and Wicks, D, 1998).

5.4 EVALUATION OF WOKINGHAM DISTRICT'S HEATHLANDS AND BOGS

- 5.4.1 There are approximately 17.1ha of heathland in Wokingham District occurring at 6 main sites: Simon's Wood, Longmoor Bog SSSI, Heathlake SSSI, Shepperlands Farm, Highwood LNR and Gorrick plantation. Only 2 sites, Longmoor Bog SSSI (6.3ha) and Simons Wood (6ha) are significantly greater than 1ha in extent. This is only 5.4% of the total Berkshire heathland resource of 314.1ha.
- 5.4.2 Only 0.09% of the district land area is known to support lowland heathland, it is an extremely scarce resource. Wokingham District is of county importance for its heathlands (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 1999).

5.5 THREATS TO WOKINGHAM DISTRICT'S HEATHLANDS AND BOGS

- * Residential and commercial development.
- * Agricultural conversion.
- * Conflict with recreational use of heaths (i.e. trampling of vegetation and disturbance of wildlife).
- * Lack of active management leading to scrub encroachment.
- * Sustainability of heathland grazing schemes.
- * Water abstraction.
- * Accidental fires.

5.6 NOTABLE SPECIES ASSOCIATED WITH WOKINGHAM DISTRICT'S HEATHLANDS

5.6.1 UK priority Species

Birds	Mammals	Herpetiles	Invertebrates	Plants and Fungi
Nightjar			Silver studded blue butterfly	Tower Mustard
Woodlark			Asilus crabroniformis (a robberfly)	Pennyroyal
Dartford warbler				Pillwort
Tree pipit				

5.6.2 Local Priority Species

Birds	Mammals	Herpetiles	Invertebrates	Plants and Fungi
Stonechat		Adder	Bog Bush Cricket	Round leaved sundew
Hobby		Common Lizard	Gloworm	Common Winter green

The list of local priority species is subject to periodic review and will be added to as the distribution other species becomes better understood.

5.7 ASPIRATIONS, OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC TARGETS

5.7.1 Introduction

The aspirations, objectives and targets included in the Wokingham District Heathland Habitat Action Plan were developed in consultation with residents of the District at a series of public meeting. Initial workshops at the November 2000 meeting of Wokingham Biodiversity Forum, identified the key concerns. These key concerns were then refined put into the national and regional context at subsequent meetings for each of the 5 Habitat Action Plan Steering Groups in late 2000 and early 2001.

5.7.2 Aspirations - What do we want in 100 years time?

The following aspirations represent the visionary aspect of the Wokingham District Heathland Habitat Action Plan. They have been formulated to set the long-term context for the specific targets for the next ten year period.

There is no decline in area or wildlife value of current heathland sites within the District.

Total area of heathland is increased from 17.1ha to 200ha.

All heathland WHS and SSSIs have achieved either favourable or unfavourable, recovering, management status.

That heathlands are a valued and appreciated part of our natural heritage.

5.7.3 Berkshire HAP targets 2002-2012

The following targets are contained within The Berkshire Heathland Biodiversity Action Plan (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 1998). Wokingham District has a responsibility to make a significant contribution to these countywide targets

To maintain/restore through management 18.1ha of heathland in Wokingham District by 2005.

To re-create 10ha of heathland in Wokingham District by 2005.

These targets are felt to be appropriate and this plan proposes that a further target of 10ha by 2012 be adopted.

5.7.4 Wokingham District Heathland HAP Targets 2002-2012

The following targets have been set in order that we can implement both the aspirations above and contribute to the countywide targets.

5.7.4.1 There is no decline in area or wildlife value of current heathland sites within the District.

Create comprehensive Heathland data management system by 2004.

Ensure that all heathland sites over 1ha and potential heathland restoration sites over 5ha within the District are designated as Wildlife Heritage Sites by 2003.

Ensure that all "developments" affecting heathland sites are objected to within the relevant consultation processes.

5.7.4.2 Total area of heathland is increased from 17.1ha to 200ha.

Identify priority areas for future heathland re-creation by 2002, 2006 & 2012.

Re-create 20ha of heathland within the District by 2012.

Ensure that all District, Parish and Town council owned priority heathland restoration sites are restored to heathland by 2010.

5.7.4.3 All heathland WHS and SSSIs have achieved either favourable or unfavourable, recovering, management status.

Ensure that at least 30% of the number of heathland WHS sites have achieved either favourable or unfavourable, recovering management status by 2012.

Ensure that at least 10% of private heathland WHS owners have an appropriate management plan in place by 2012.

Ensure that all District, Town and Parish Council owned heathland sites have an appropriate management plan in place by 2012.

5.7.4.4 That heathlands are a valued and appreciated part of our natural heritage.

Promote the use and appreciation of heathlands to the general public

5.8 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTIONS FOR ASPIRATION : THERE IS NO DECLINE IN AREA OR WILDLIFE VALUE OF CURRENT HEATHLAND SITES WITHIN THE DISTRICT.	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE						
	Lead	Partner	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2012
<i>Target : Create comprehensives heathland data management system by 2004.</i>									
Produce a GIS based phase 1/Broad habitat Type survey (using 2002 aerial photographs) of the entire District by 2003.	WDC	Berks UA's		*					
Adapt Oxfordshire Wildlife Heritage Site monitoring database for use in Berkshire by 2003.	BNCF	WDC	*	*					
Adopt and maintain BBOWT site monitoring access database linked to GIS by 2003.	WDC	BNCF		*	*	*	*	*	
Ensure that monitoring of biodiversity actions is compatible with national systems.	WDC	DEFRA/JN CC		*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Target : Ensure that all heathland sites over 1ha and potential heathland restoration sites over 5ha within the District are designated as Wildlife Heritage Sites by 2003.</i>									
Establish and maintain county wide Recorder system	TVERC	All Berks UA's	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Review survey data on all known heathland sites to assess which meet the new requirements for designation as WHS	WDC	BBOWT/E N/EA		*					
<i>Target : Ensure that all "developments" affecting heathland sites are objected to within the relevant consultation processes.</i>									
Ensure that Wokingham District Local Plan contain policies on WHS, habitat/green corridors and associated protected species conforming to RTP1 model policies.	WDC	RTP1/ Berks UA's	*				*		
Ensure that Berkshire Structure Plan contains policies on WHS and associated protected species conforming to RTP1 model policies.	WDC	RTP1/ Berks UA's	*	*	*				

Ensure that Wokingham District 's Development Control Team and Policy and Plans Team utilise ecological advice prior to determining applications/plans which may affect Protected sites/species.	WDC	BBOWT/E N/EA	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Designate comprehensive system of green/habitat corridors for district by 2004.	WDC	Berks UA's		*	*				
Ensure that relevant organisations have access to all ecological data held by WDC including County Recorder Database and GIS alert maps.	WDC/Berk UA's	BBOWT/F C/EN/DEF R/TW	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

ACTIONS FOR ASPIRATION : TOTAL AREA OF HEATHLAND IS INCREASED FROM 17.1HA TO 200HA.	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE						
	Lead	Partner	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2012
Target : Identify priority areas for future heathland re-creation by 2002, 2006 & 2012.									
Identify sites for restoration to heathland within the plan period 2001-6 by 2003.	WDC	PC/TC/LO		*					
Identify sites for restoration to heathland within the plan period 2006-12 by 2006.	WDC	PC/TC/LO					*		
Identify sites for restoration to heathland for plan period 2012-22 by 2012.	WDC	PC/TC/LO							*
Target : Re-create 20ha of heathland within the District by 2012.									
Continue development of heathland restoration/re-creation project at Simons Wood	NT	WDC/EA/EN/DEFRA		*	*	*	*	*	*
Undertake restoration/re-creation of heathland at Heathlake LNR by 2006	WDC	DEFRA		*	*	*	*	*	*
Investigate potential heathland restoration at Gorrick plantation by 2006.	WDC/FC	RSPB		*	*	*	*		
Undertake restoration/re-creation of heathland on other identified sites by 2012.	WDC	EA/EN/DEFRA/LO/PC/NT		*	*	*	*	*	*

ACTIONS FOR ASPIRATION : ALL HEATHLAND WHS AND SSSIS HAVE ACHIEVED EITHER FAVOURABLE OR UNFAVOURABLE, RECOVERING, MANAGEMENT STATUS.	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE						
	Lead	Partner	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2012
Target : Ensure that at least 50% of the number of heathland WHS sites have achieved either favourable or Unfavourable, recovering management status by 2012.									
Adopt/produce simple system of Site Condition monitoring criteria by 2003.	JNCC/ EN/BBOW T	WDC	*	*					
Ensure that Site Condition Monitoring criteria take account of the presence of associated habitats and national or local BAP priority species.	JNCC/ EN/BBOW T	WDC	*	*					
Produce an inventory of all sites containing both national and local BAP species by 2005.	WDC	BBOWT/E N	*	*	*	*			
Draw up program of site condition monitoring visits and record results on database by 2003.	WDC	BBOWT/L O		*	*				
Advise all owners/managers of WHS and SSSI heathland sites of appropriate management and sources of funding by 2012.	WDC	BBOWT/E N/FWAG/ DEFRA	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Compile and maintain an inventory of livestock owners in order to facilitate grazing of heathlands and grasslands sites by 2004.	WDC	BBOWT/E N/LO			*	*	*	*	*
Target : Ensure that at least 20% of private heathland WHS owners have an appropriate management plan in place by 2012.									
Produce Management Plan for heathland at Simon's Wood by 2003.	NT	WDC/BBO WT/DEFRA							
Produce Management Plan for heathland at Shepperlands Farm by 2004.	BBOWT/L O	WDC	*	*	*				
Assist private heathland WHS owners to produce and implement site management plans.	LO	WDC/BBO WT		*	*	*	*	*	*

Target : Ensure that all District, Town and Parish Council owned heathland sites have an appropriate management plan in place by 2012.									
Produce an appropriate Management Plan for Heathlake LNR.	WDC	EN/DEFR A			*				
Produce an appropriate Management Plan for Highwood LNR	WDC	WTC/ETC			*				
Produce an appropriate Management plan for Longmoor Bog SSSI.	WDC	EN/DERF A	*			*			*
ACTIONS FOR ASPIRATION : THAT HEATHLANDS ARE A VALUED AND APPRECIATED PART OF OUR NATURAL HERITAGE.	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE						
	Lead	Partner	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2012
Target : Promote the use and appreciation of Heathlands to the general public									
Ensure that at least 10 educational walks/talks/events/articles on heathlands have been produced by 2012.	WDC	PC/TC/LO/ BBOWT	*	*	*	*	*	*	*