

## 11.7 LOWLAND AND UPLAND HEATHLAND, BLANKET BOG AND OTHER MIRES, AND LIMESTONE HEATH

Heathland vegetation occurs on acidic mineral soils and thin peats (<0.5 m deep) and is characterised by the presence of plants such as heathers and dwarf gorses. Lowland heathland generally occurs below 300m and is limited in its distribution and extent in Derbyshire. Upland heathland generally occurs above 30m and is far more extensive occurring widely in the Peak District. Blanket bog occurs where peat layers are deeper (> 0.5 m deep) and is characterised by a mixture of Heather, Cross-leaved Heath, Cottongrass, Deergrass and bog mosses (Sphagnum species). Mires are closely related and often these habitats comprise a complex series of inter-related vegetation communities occurring along gradients or in mosaics. Other mire habitats are characterised by rushes and are more likely to occur in association with grassland vegetation stands. For some heathland sites the wildlife value is related to size and small sites may be of limited interest, but where wet heath and/or moorland flushes are present the botanical and invertebrate interest may be high. Lowland mire communities in Derbyshire are typically small and restricted in distribution, generally occurring below 300m. There is a far greater range of upland mire communities, which generally occur above 300m, and several are relatively widespread. Most of the upland mire communities are within the Peak District National Park and therefore not covered by these guidelines. However, High Peak outside the Park may support examples of some of these mire communities.

### Application (all heathland and mire guidelines)

These habitats are of recognised international and national importance for their flora and fauna. Whilst most of the larger stands of these vegetation types have already been included within SSSIs and SPAs, smaller areas have sometimes been excluded. Much of the heathland, blanket bog and mire habitat that remains outside the National Park is in small areas often in a matrix of acid grassland and should be assessed accordingly. The presence of breeding populations of waders or significant assemblages of invertebrates or other faunal interest should be assessed according to the Species Guidelines.

### Justification (all heathland and mire guidelines)

These habitats are of great value and interest for their flora and fauna, and even small stands may support excellent examples of the habitat types or provide a home for breeding birds, mammals and/or invertebrates. Lowland heathland is very rare and any stands, however small, may have nature conservation value.

Cross-leaved Heather



## Heathland and Mires Selection Guidelines

Sites that meet one or more of the following guidelines will be eligible for designation as a Local Wildlife Site.

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**HM1** Areas in which the vegetation is dominated by assemblages of dwarf shrubs (*Calluna vulgaris* and/or *Erica cinerea* and/or *Erica tetralix*) and/or *Vaccinium myrtillus* (Bilberry), *Empetrum nigrum* (Crowberry) and *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* (Cowberry).

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### UKBAP Habitat Action Plan – Upland Heathland

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#### Application

This guideline should be applied to any site supporting lowland heathland or upland heathland.

#### Justification

Small areas of heathland vegetation along road verges and in the corner of fields and post industrial sites like disused railway lines may still be of value and interest despite being potentially small and fragmented.

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**HM2** Areas of blanket bog, typically referable to the NVC types listed below:

- M1, M2, M3, M15, M17, M18, M19 and M20 and M25
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### UKBAP Habitat Action Plan – Blanket Bog

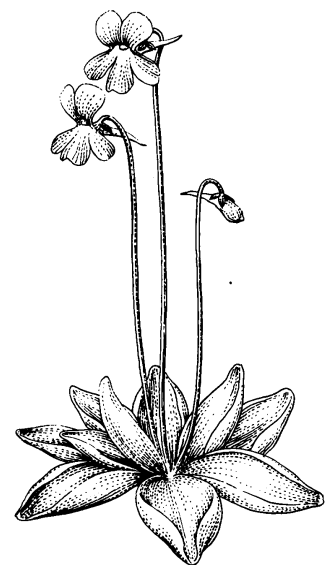
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#### Application

Small areas of blanket bog and mire may occur on the fringes of the Peak District National Park in High Peak, Derbyshire Dales and North-east Derbyshire. Any area of blanket bog found on the fringes of the National Park can be considered under this guideline.

#### Justification

There is little detailed information on the extent of these vegetation communities outside of the National Park boundary. It is likely that only small examples are present, but they may still be of substantial ecological interest within their locality.



Butterwort

**HM3** Upland (above 300m) areas that support vegetation referable to or characteristic of the NVC mire communities listed below;

- **M4** Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) – *Sphagnum recurvum* mire.
  - **M6** Star sedge (*Carex echinata*) - *Sphagnum recurvum/auriculatum* mire.
  - **M9** Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) – *Calliergon cuspidatum/giganteum* mire
  - **M10** Dioecious sedge (*Carex dioica*) - Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) mire
  - **M21b** Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) – *Sphagnum papillosum* valley mire
  - **M22** Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) – Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) fen-meadow.
  - **M26b** Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) – Marsh Hawk’s-beard (*Crepis paludosa*) mire, Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) sub-community.
  - **M32** *Philonotis fontana* – *Saxifraga stellaris* spring.
  - **M35** Round-leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus omiophyllus*) - Blinks (*Montia fontana*) rills.
  - **M37** *Cratoneuron commutatum*- *Festuca rubra* (Red Fescue) spring.
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**UKBAP Habitat Action Plans –Lowland Fens, Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures**

**LDBAP – Generic Action Plan**

**PDBAP – Rush Pasture, Heather Moorland, Blanket Bog, River Corridor Habitats**

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### **Application**

This guideline should be applied to upland mire communities found in High Peak outside the Peak District National Park. These sites should be evaluated in relation to the extent of the habitat within the Peak District National Park. Other NVC mire communities may be present in the area covered by the guidelines and if identified should be assessed in relation to their known conservation interest and value.

### **Justification**

The extent and distribution of these communities in this area is not known in any detail. It is probable that they are relatively rare, but some rush-pasture and wet heath communities in particular may occur more frequently.

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**HM4 Upland (above 300m) areas that support vegetation referable to or characteristic of the following NVC communities and that include 10 or more plant species listed in Table 3:**

- **M23b Soft-rush-Common Marsh-bedstraw rush-pasture.**
  - **M23a Sharp-flowered Rush- Common Marsh-bedstraw rush-pasture.**
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**UKBAP Habitat Action Plan – Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures**

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**Application**

This type of rush-pasture is present both as discrete stands of vegetation but also in transitions with wet rush dominated grassland and unimproved grassland communities. In some cases the wet grassland guideline may be more appropriate, but where the community is a reasonably good fit for the NVC M23 or M25 community this guideline should be used. Sites supporting this community should be assessed in terms of their overall ecological attributes. Plant diversity should be considered for the site as a whole.

**Justification**

These types of rush-pasture often occur in mosaics with other habitats especially grasslands. They are a distinctive semi-natural vegetation community and can be relatively species rich both in terms of plants, invertebrates, mammals and birds.

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**HM 5**

**(a) Lowland (below 300m) areas that support a mire community referable to any listed in the NVC**

**or**

**(b) Vegetation scoring 10 or more from the species listed in Table 3.**

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**UKBAP Habitat Action Plans – Lowland Fens, Wet Woodland, Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh**

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**Application**

This guideline can be applied to all sites supporting lowland mire communities. Very degraded sites should be excluded.

**Justification**

Lowland mires are very rare and any sites supporting such vegetation may be of nature conservation significance. They should be assessed in terms of the site and community attributes listed above.