



## Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership



# Lowland heathland Habitat Action Plan 2009-2013

<b>Plan Lead Organisation</b>	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
<b>Plan Coordinator</b>	David Spencer
<b>Action Group</b>	Rural
<b>Associated Plans</b>	None
<b>Latest version</b>	Published March 2009

## Description

Lowland heathland is a broad term that refers to a mosaic of wet, damp and dry habitats, characterised by ericaceous dwarf-shrubs such as bell heather and ling, with associated areas of freshwater pools and bogs, scattered trees and shrubs, bare ground and acid grasslands. They are generally found on poor acidic soils below an altitude of 300m.

Lowland heathland is a natural habitat in some coastal areas but it is largely man-made. Most heathland developed during or after the Stone Age (3,500 years ago) in areas of poor soil where tree removal was followed by grazing livestock. Without either grazing or burning most heathland would revert to woodland, losing many of the species that have specialised and adapted to open heathland habitat.

Lowland heathland is a priority for nature conservation because it is an internationally rare and threatened habitat. Britain is a stronghold for lowland heathland, with about 20% of the world resource. In the UK it is becoming an increasingly rare habitat with around 80% of lowland heaths being lost to agricultural improvements, development or lack of management in the last 200 years. Those heaths remaining are increasingly fragmented making them susceptible to local species extinction.

## Current factors causing loss and decline

- ◆ Loss and fragmentation of habitat by agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction and urban developments.
- ◆ Encroachment by scrub and trees due to lack of management.
- ◆ Intensive recreational pressures leading to erosion of vegetation from fly tipping, nutrient enrichment from dog faeces and damage from uncontrolled fires.
- ◆ Agricultural improvement such as fertilizer and lime application, intensive livestock farming and overgrazing.

## Conservation Status

EC Habitats Directive, Annex I.  
UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat.

## The Habitat in the Tees Valley

In the Tees Valley, Eston Moor is the only extensive area of lowland heath. This area is a Local Nature Reserve and actively managed by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council to maintain a mosaic of heathland habitats.

Other areas of heath below 300m do occur, these are within the North Yorkshire National Park and are covered by their Local Biodiversity Action Plan,

## Current Activity in the Tees Valley

Eston Moor is managed by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council's Countryside Service. The site has a 10 year conservation management plan which is being implemented with support from Higher level Countryside Stewardship grants. This plan has brought a high proportion of the lowland heath into favourable condition by controlled burning, tree and scrub removal and bracken management.

## Further Information

English Nature (2002). Lowland heathland: A cultural and endangered landscape. Natural England

Hewins, E., Toogood, S., Alonso, I., Graves, D.J., Cooke, A. & Alanander, R. (2007). The condition of lowland heathland: Results from a sample survey of non-SSSI stands in England. Natural England Research report NERR002

Michael, M. (1996). The lowland heathland management handbook booklet version 2.0. Natural England.

Webb, N. (1986). Heathlands: A natural history of Britain's lowland heaths. Collins

## Vision Statement

To maintain a mosaic of heathland habitats at Eston Moor restoring all the habitat into favourable condition

## Targets

LH. T1 Ensure no loss of heathland habitats.

Goal: Maintain extent of habitat in December 2007- 101 ha.

LH.T2 Maintain existing heathland that has achieved favourable condition

Goal Retain 83 ha of existing habitat in a favourable condition of a mosaic of dwarf shrub, wetland, woodland, scrub with 33 ha of this lowland heathland

LH.T3 Restoration of heathland into favourable condition

Goal: Target of 14.5 ha restored.

## Actions

Code	Action	Organisational lead	Action contact	Partners	End date
LH.A1	Implement management operations as outlined in Eston Moor LNR management plan to maintain existing heathland habitats in favourable condition.	Redcar and Cleveland BC	David Spencer		Ongoing
LH.A2	Work to reduce damage by to heathland by arson attacks by dosing burn areas after fire service put out fire to reduce probability of fire reigniting.	Redcar and Cleveland BC	David Spencer	Cleveland Fire Service	Ongoing
LH.A3	Working to reduce damage to heathland by arson attacks by creating a network of fire breaks.	Redcar and Cleveland BC	David Spencer		Ongoing
LH.A4	Working in partnership with Cleveland Fire and Rescue Service to develop programme of arson preventative measures.	Redcar and Cleveland BC	David Spencer	Cleveland Fire Service	Ongoing
LH.A5	Implement a programme of bracken control and tree and scrub removal outlined in Eston Moor management plan to bring additional areas into favourable condition.	Redcar and Cleveland BC	David Spencer		Ongoing
LH.A6	Establish a fixed point photography survey and conduct annually.	Redcar and Cleveland BC	David Spencer		Annual
LH.A7	Carry out favourable condition assessment to Natural England guidelines.	Redcar and Cleveland BC	David Spencer		Every two years