

Nature in the Dales:

2020 vision

The second Biodiversity Action Plan for the
Yorkshire Dales National Park

Upland Heathland Habitat Action Plan

Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum, 2011
Amended Feb 2015

UPLAND HEATHLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN

DEFINITIONS

Heathland vegetation occurs widely on mineral soils and thin peats (<0.5 m deep) throughout the uplands and moorlands of the UK. It is characterised by the presence of dwarf shrubs at a cover of at least 25%. Blanket bog vegetation may also contain substantial amounts of dwarf shrubs, but is distinguished from heathland by its occurrence on deep peat (>0.5 m).

For the purposes of this plan upland heathland is defined as lying below the alpine or montane zone (at about 600-750 m) and usually above the upper edge of enclosed agricultural land (generally at around 250-400 m, but descending to near sea-level in northern Scotland).

Upland heath in 'favourable condition' is typically dominated by a range of dwarf shrubs such as heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, crowberry *Empetrum nigrum*, bell heather *Erica cinerea* and, in the south and west, western gorse *Ulex gallii*. In northern areas juniper *Juniperus communis* is occasionally seen above a heath understorey. Wet heath is most commonly found in the wetter north and west and, in 'favourable condition', should be dominated by mixtures of cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, deer grass *Scirpus cespitosus*, heather and purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, over an understorey of mosses often including carpets of *Sphagnum* species. This habitat is distinct from blanket mire which occurs on deeper peat and which usually contains frequent occurrence of hare's-tail cotton-grass *Eriophorum vaginatum* and characteristic mosses. High quality heaths are generally structurally diverse, containing stands of vegetation with heather at different stages of growth. Upland heath in 'favourable condition' also usually includes areas of mature heather.

Upland heathland encompasses a range of National Vegetation Classification (NVC) plant communities. *Ulex gallii* - *Agrostis curtisii* (H4) and *Calluna vulgaris* - *U. gallii* (H8) are restricted to southern Britain. *Calluna* - *V. myrtillus* (H12) is particularly widespread in the east. *Calluna* - *E. cinerea* (H10), *Calluna* - *V. myrtillus* - *Sphagnum capillifolium* (H21), and *Scirpus cespitosus* - *E. tetralix* (M15) are especially characteristic of western margins. *Vaccinium myrtillus* - *Deschampsia flexuosa* (H18) is generally widespread in the uplands but other communities are more local in distribution, notably *Calluna* - *D. flexuosa* (H9), *Calluna* - *Arctostaphylos uva-uri* (H16) and *E. tetralix* - *Sphagnum compactum* (M16).

STATUS IN YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK 2011

ESTIMATED AREA IN THE YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK IN “GOOD CONDITION”

SSSI (Favourable, Unfavourable-recovering):	98%
Non-SSSI (Condition A):	17%
Total (SSSI Favourable, Unfavourable-recovering, Non-SSSI A):	80%

UK & REGIONAL BIODIVERSITY TARGETS 2011

UK BAP Targets	Priority Actions for YDNP LBAP
Maintain at least 981,500 ha of upland heathland in the UK by 2010.	Yes
A total of 366,760 ha of upland heathland, within A/SSSIs, in the UK to be in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition by 2015.	Yes
Achieve a measurable increase in the extent of upland heathland outside A/SSSIs in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition by 2015.	Yes

Regional Biodiversity Targets	Priority Actions for YDNP LBAP
Achieve Condition of 78531ha of SSSI by 2015 (requiring 66084.44ha additional gain)	Yes
Non SSSI – Area as of yet unspecified	Yes

**NATURE IN THE DALES: 2020 VISION
OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS, TARGETS & MILESTONES**

Objective

UH1: To have 95% of Upland Heathland in “Good Condition” (Favourable, Unfavourable-recovering in SSSI, A outside SSSI) by 2020.

UH2: To move 25% of SSSI Upland Heathland in Unfavourable-Recovering Condition to Favourable Condition by 2020.

Actions & Targets

Actions	Target (% of total target)	Main Delivery Mechanism	Lead Organisation	Indicator
UH1.1: Maintain existing area of SSSI Upland Heathland in “Good Condition”.	98%	Agri-environment schemes	Natural England	Area of habitat in “Good Condition”
UH1.2: Maintain existing area of non-SSSI Upland Heathland in “Good Condition”.	17%			
UH1.3: To enhance degraded non-SSSI Upland Heathland to “Good Condition”.	16%			
UH2.1: To move 25% of SSSI Upland Heathland in Unfavourable-Recovering Condition to Favourable Condition by 2020.	25%			

Milestones

Actions	Target	When?
UH1.1: Maintain existing area of SSSI Upland Heathland in “Good Condition”.	98%	Ongoing
UH1.2: Maintain existing area of non-SSSI Upland Heathland in “Good Condition”.	17%	Ongoing
UH1.3: To enhance degraded non-SSSI Upland Heathland to “Good Condition”.	8%	2016
	16%	2020
UH2.1: To move 25% of SSSI Upland Heathland in Unfavourable-Recovering Condition to Favourable Condition by 2020..	12%	2016
	25%	2020

Nature in the Dales: 2020 Vision was written and co-ordinated by Tim Thom, Ian Court, Frances Graham & Hannah Fawcett of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority in 2011, following consultation. The production of the plan was steered, advised and supported by the Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum who will be responsible for ensuring that the actions and targets in *Nature in the Dales: 2020 Vision* are achieved. Minor revisions made Feb 2015.

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For citation purposes please use the following format:
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