



1. Summary - A Vision for Wildlife in the Peak District

1.1 Overall Aims

We are fortunate in the Peak District to have inherited a landscape with such a rich diversity of wildlife, the result of past land-use activities. However, the more recent increasing pace of change has led to the loss or decline of many habitats and species. This Plan sets out specific objectives, targets and actions, agreed through consultation with a wide partnership of land-use, conservation and recreation interests, to conserve our existing wildlife resource and where possible to restore previous habitats and species so that we can hand on a countryside richer in wildlife to future generations.

15 Habitat and 7 Species Action Plans have been drawn up for those habitats and species which are a particular priority, with further work proposed for identifying others of concern. Other Action Plans will be developed as this work progresses.

The Peak District has seen substantial changes in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Our vision is not to “fossilise” the landscape, but to ensure that land-use is sustainable for wildlife. The Plan aims to influence and manage changes so that priority habitats and species are safeguarded and enhanced as far as possible and opportunities are created for change to benefit wildlife for the future. It aims to encourage a diverse countryside where wildlife is an integral part of the landscape, not confined to specially protected sites (although such sites would continue to give particular priority to wildlife). A more diverse mosaic of linked habitats is envisaged, ensuring a sound future for those species that depend on a variety of habitats and providing a network of corridors and stepping stones for wildlife (particularly to allow more effective dispersal and migration in the face of climate change). The encouragement of ecological processes such as natural colonisation, retention of local genetic distinctiveness and extensive grazing regimes is an important objective alongside the conservation of specific habitats and species in their own right.

An important objective of the Plan is to increase the social and economic benefits of wildlife conservation so that it becomes increasingly regarded as more of a positive asset and less of a constraint.

For land managers to be successfully encouraged to

manage their land sympathetically for wildlife it must be economically viable for them to do so. There is already a very strong emphasis and reliance on a voluntary approach to wildlife conservation, and it will be important to build on this further so that the need for implementation of more regulatory mechanisms is minimised.

Landowners, farmers, local residents and businesses in

The Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan:

- is a Plan for conserving and enhancing the wildlife resource of the Peak District and delivering associated socio-economic benefits
- is one of a series of Local Biodiversity Action Plans throughout the country contributing towards the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the international Biodiversity Convention signed at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992
- covers the “wider” Peak District including areas outside the National Park
- has been produced through consultation with a Peak District Biodiversity Partnership which has been established, involving a wide range of land management, recreation and conservation interests
- seeks to conserve and enhance our existing wildlife and to redress past losses through habitat restoration, (re-)creation and targeted action for priority species
- identifies priorities based on international or national importance, local distinctiveness, and vulnerable or declining habitats/species
- sets clear objectives and measurable targets through a series of Habitat and Species Action Plans and Key Actions
- sets ambitious but realistic targets, dependent in part on the success of attracting additional resources
- will be implemented through the Biodiversity Partnership
- is one of the detailed Action Plans forming part of the Peak District National Park Management Plan
- will be monitored and periodically updated, with a full review in 2010

the Peak District already benefit from wildlife conservation, for example through the large uptake of conservation grant schemes and income from tourism. They could benefit further from increased resources attracted to the area for conservation purposes. Those who live or work in the Peak District, and those who visit, will have greater opportunities for deriving enjoyment from the area's wildlife and for helping to safeguard and enhance it. They will increasingly value and understand the area's wildlife as part of the distinctive character of the Peak District. Partnerships between different interest groups will develop further to take forward shared objectives and resolve differences more effectively. Our knowledge of the Peak District's wildlife and its requirements will increase through further survey and research, and more effective sharing of information and experience between land managers, conservation organisations and local naturalists. The proposed establishment of a biological records system for the area, as part of a network of local and national record centres, will play a central role in this.

1.2 The White Peak

The rich wildlife resource of the dales will be enhanced and expansion of semi-natural habitats will be encouraged on the limestone plateau and in river valleys. Valuable habitats will be extended over the brows of dales to link plateau and daleside and sites of importance on the plateau will be extended and linked where possible. The mosaic of habitats will provide a secure future for species of importance that are

currently declining and the recolonisation or reintroduction of species we have lost will be possible.

Daleside **ashwoods** will be enhanced through control of non-native trees and reduction in grazing, where appropriate. The daleside woodlands will be extended upslope onto the plateau as **oak/birch woodland** and associated areas of scrub, and downslope into dale bottoms as **wet woodland** where appropriate opportunities exist. Old **veteran trees** and dead wood habitat will be encouraged in the daleside woods, plateau shelterbelts and as a network of trees along field boundaries, where appropriate.

The rich mosaic of **limestone dales** habitats will be maintained and enhanced, ensuring the diverse character of individual dales remains with priorities determined on a site-by-site basis. Areas of species-rich grassland, species-rich scrub, scree, limestone cliffs, daleside heath, lead rakes, springs and flushes will be enhanced through better management, benefiting species such as the nationally rare Jacob's ladder. Development of transitions between habitats (such as grassland-scrub-woodland) and habitat mosaics will be encouraged. Creation of appropriate mosaics of daleside habitats will be encouraged when restoring disused limestone quarries and, where these go below the water table, opportunities will be taken for maximising the creation of new wetland and open water habitats. Ravens will hopefully continue their recolonisation of the Peak District and perhaps regain their historic associations with place names in the dales.



On the limestone plateau flower-rich **hay meadows** and **unimproved pastures** will be safeguarded and enhanced through appropriate conservation incentives and management. The bubbling call of the curlew could again become a familiar sound in the White Peak. The reversion of more species-poor semi-improved grasslands to unimproved flower-rich grasslands will be encouraged through less intensive management, adding colourful swards of oxeye daisy, hay rattle and meadow cranesbill to the landscape. Means will be sought to increase the economic benefits of maintaining and enhancing such grassland habitats. **Lead rakes** of particular wildlife and historical importance would be conserved and their management enhanced, whilst methods of reconciling mineral working on other sites with their conservation interest will be explored. The (re-)creation of specialised metalliferous habitats following reworking will be encouraged.

The existing remnants of **limestone heath**, which are such an important window to the past, will be safeguarded and opportunities will be sought to expand them. The heathland will be extended over dale brows and developed on species-poor grasslands on limestone hills where appropriate. The wildlife value of **rough grazing** land on the limestone hills will be conserved and enhanced through improved management and incentives to increase the quality of the grassland habitat and by linking isolated sites with a mosaic of semi-natural habitats. Where appropriate, the creation of limestone heath will be encouraged on species-poor grassland.

River corridors will be enhanced through the safeguard of existing habitats of value, protection of rivers against pollution, enhanced riparian management, retention and, where appropriate, restoration of natural hydrological regimes and the reinforcement of habitat corridors through appropriate habitat restoration and creation. Such habitats of value will include the rivers/streams themselves, bankside vegetation, valley bottom marshes, valley-side flushes, flood meadows, wet grassland, unimproved pasture and wet woodland. The recovery of the water vole population will be encouraged, aquatic species such as bullhead and brook lamprey would flourish and there may be opportunities for otters to recolonise Peak District rivers.

The distinctive network of **dewponds**, and their associated wildlife such as great crested newts, will be retained and reinforced as far as possible. This would be secured through the safeguarding and enhanced management of existing ponds and surrounding habitat and restoration of dried out ponds. The significant cost of restoration means this will have to be carefully targeted. Other important ponds (e.g. disused silica



sand pits) will be safeguarded.

1.3 The Dark Peak and South West Peak

The wild and remote character of the moorland areas will be maintained and their wildlife enhanced. Links between moorland and farmland habitats will be strengthened through enhancement of the mosaic of moorland edge habitats such as rough grazing, rush pasture, hay meadows, unimproved pastures, scrub and clough or valley-side woodland. In the valley bottoms the conservation and enhancement of semi-natural habitats will be encouraged and sites of importance will be extended and linked where possible.

On the moorlands the areas of **blanket bog** on deep peat will be safeguarded and measures to restore eroding and degraded areas will increase. There may be opportunities to diversify the vegetation in some places through changes in grazing and burning management and by restoring more natural drainage systems where these have been disrupted. Species such as bog rosemary would be given the chance to flourish locally and the golden plover population would be secure. The condition of the drier **heather moorland** and the associated mosaic of habitats will be improved and a more diverse structure and composition encouraged which will benefit birds such as grouse, short-eared owl

and merlin. Opportunities will be sought, where appropriate, to re-create areas of heather and bilberry heath where they have been replaced by species-poor grassland or bracken, though it will be important to maintain significant areas of these latter habitats as part of the moorland mosaic. Invertebrates such as the green hairstreak butterfly and bilberry bumblebee would benefit from such measures. Associated habitats such as wet heath, moorland streams, springs, flushes, gritstone edges, rock outcrops, boulder slopes and moorland scrub will be safeguarded and enhanced.

The rich tapestry of grassland habitats on the moorland fringe will be enhanced by diversifying the structure and composition of extensive **rough grazing** on the moorland edge and on more isolated gritstone hills. Reversion of some areas to heathland will be encouraged, where appropriate. **Rush pasture** is a particularly important habitat on which many moorland fringe birds depend and which sometimes also supports a very rich flora and invertebrate fauna. Sensitive management of this habitat will be encouraged. Restoration of compacted soils in rush pasture to benefit both wildlife and farming is currently being trialed and will be more widely applied if successful. The decline in moorland fringe bird populations such as curlew, snipe and lapwing would be halted and then reversed. Flower-rich **hay meadows** and **unimproved pastures** will be safeguarded and enhanced through appropriate conservation incentives and management. The reversion of more species-poor semi-improved grasslands to unimproved flower-rich grasslands will be encouraged through less intensive management, allowing the recovery and spread of twite back onto areas such as the eastern moors. As in the White Peak, means will be sought to increase the economic benefits of maintaining and enhancing grassland habitats.

More favourable management of **oak/birch woodland** will be encouraged and areas will be restored or created in cloughs and on valley sides in appropriate locations. Such sites will provide habitat for buzzards and possibly even opportunities for colonisation by red kites. On the upper slopes transitions through grazed woodland and scrub to open moorland will be encouraged. Restructuring of plantations offers further opportunities for oak/birchwood creation. Ancient woodland sites and those with relic ancient woodland species will be particular priorities for restoration and expansion. **Wet woodland** will form an important component within these woods and opportunities for creation or restoration of more extensive wet woodland will exist in river valleys. Old **veteran trees** and dead wood habitats will be encouraged in the woodlands, in **parkland** and as a network of trees along field boundaries, where appropriate.

As in the White Peak, **river corridors** will be enhanced through the safeguarding of existing habitats of value, protection of rivers against pollution, enhanced riparian management, retention and, where appropriate, restoration of natural hydrological regimes and the reinforcement of habitat corridors through appropriate habitat restoration and creation. Such habitats of value will include the rivers/streams themselves, bankside vegetation, valley bottom marshes, valley-side flushes, flood meadows, wet grassland, unimproved pasture and wet woodland. **Ponds** will be safeguarded and appropriately managed and new ponds will be created in appropriate locations.

1.4 Putting the Plan into Action

The overall implementation of the Plan will be overseen and co-ordinated by the Wildlife Executive Group with guidance from the wider Biodiversity Partnership to which it will report. Individual Habitat and Species Action Plans will be progressed and monitored by a series of Habitat and Species Groups.

Many actions will be carried out using existing resources. Some of these will be a continuation of existing action, some will be through re-prioritisation or redirected targeting of existing resources and some will be through the pooling of existing resources and efficiency savings through partnership working. Other actions are essentially seeking a consensus amongst different organisations about the approach to specific issues and have limited resource implications. There are nevertheless a significant number of actions which will require additional funding. In some cases this may become available through existing initiatives such as the 'Moors for the Future' Heritage Lottery Fund bid. Additional resources have also recently been confirmed for the first phase of a grassland project during 2001 which will address key parts of several grassland Action Plans. In other cases resources will need to be secured, either as bids for discretionary grants or as additional core funding by partner organisations, in order to progress parts of the Plan.

The Action Plans have not been costed at this stage because of the considerable complexities of doing so, the limited value of using a broad figure when resource implications will be different for different organisations and the inevitable changes in funding requirements over the lifetime of the Plan. However, the main actions likely to require additional resources have been identified at the end of each Action Plan and for the 25 Key Actions. These will be costed individually prior to implementation and the appropriate resources sought.